



Bringing Coherence to the Promotion of Just Jobs Around the World

From The Just Jobs Report Series

Sabina Dewan December 2010

Introduction to the series by John Podesta and Sabina Dewan

Center for American Progress



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Introduction and summary

The global recovery from the worst economic and financial crisis since the Great Depression proceeds at a painfully slow pace. Sustained, broad-based global economic growth is hampered by still telling trade and investment imbalances between and among developed and developing nations, and by the need for additional government stimulus spending against the backdrop of rising fiscal deficits among developed nations.

What's more, some countries in the developed and developing world are leveraging their export prowess to grow at high rates, some even more than 8 percent a year, while others are struggling to return to modest pre-crisis levels of economic growth.¹ Then there are misaligned currency exchange rates, some that are undervalued and others that are overvalued. And some countries have high savings rates and fiscal surpluses while others have deficits.

In short, the current state of the global economy is undoubtedly bleak. But the global economic outlook does not have to be if countries in both the developed and developing world—led by the Group of 20 developed and developing nations, and international financial, trade, and labor institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, the International Labour Organization, and the World Trade Organization—get behind a coordinated, consistent, and coherent, or collaborative agenda that focuses on the creation of “just jobs” for rebalancing the global economy.

With 212 million people unemployed around the globe, the most pressing item on the global economic agenda must be the creation of just jobs—employment complete with labor rights; appropriate compensation; social protections such as health care, unemployment insurance training, and pensions; and opportunities for economic mobility.² It is imperative that the G-20, the primary institution charged with global governance, develops a coherent set of actions to promote just jobs working with the IMF and World Bank, the ILO and WTO, and regional development banks. They all need to agree on what reforms to undertake to rebalance the global economy and on how to undertake these reforms.

Just jobs is an issue where the respective mandates and policies of the G-20 and these international financial and trade and labor institutions intersect. It is the issue that is the lynchpin linking individual countries' domestic economic agendas to the global goal of sustained, balanced, broad-based economic growth. Good job creation is the one area where countries can find common ground to forge a substantive partnership that will determine the future course of the global economy. It is therefore a good starting point to establish collaboration across countries and the international institutions that they constitute.

Collaboration and coordination around just jobs means all of these global players agree on a coherent set of principles and then act to put them into practice. Specifically, it means that:

- The G-20 must make the creation of just jobs a top priority, with member countries coming up with a plan on what is needed to spur this kind of job creation in countries at different levels of development.
- International organizations must continue to work with the ILO to prioritize more and better employment conditions, especially by working from a common definition of what constitutes decent work.
- Collaboration between and among the G-20 and the international institutions must go beyond rhetoric at conferences and in press statements, instead playing out in tangible terms through employment policy strategies that are crafted and implemented in concert with national governments and other stakeholders.
- This effort should begin in a few pilot countries to demonstrate its effectiveness. But all of these global institutions in addition should survey the work that already has been done in the areas such as labor markets and economic growth and investment policies to point out gaps in just job creation and come up with plans on how to fill these gaps.

This report elaborates on these four recommendations, examining each in turn, in order to prompt the leaders of the G-20 and other international institutions to think about coordinating their efforts around a specific strategy to cope with the pressing challenge of creating just jobs worldwide.

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