

Quality and Sustainable jobs

'Work is considered to be central to people's well-being. In addition to providing income, work can pave the way for broader social and economic advancement, strengthening individuals, their families and communities.' This is put forward by the International Labour Organization (ILO) as the basis of its promotion of the Decent Work Agenda. The ILO advances the position that for workers to attain their goals and aspirations in life, they must be afforded quality and sustainable jobs.

In a free and democratic society, both citizens and residents enjoy the right of freedom of choice. It is therefore a privilege for one to be able to choose the work that he/she wants to do. It is reasonable to assume that each individual will aspire to acquiring a quality and sustainable job. The expectation of acquiring a quality and sustainable job would be to enable the individual to live beyond the margins of poverty.

In some developing societies, the growth and development of the people are sometimes taken for granted. The society sometimes tends to focus on the macro level, by paying more attention to indicators such as its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the foreign exchange position. There is a tendency to look at the domestic spend, standard and quality of life. It would seem that the perception of what exists means more than the reality.

The reality is that when a high percentage of the population is out of work, there is cause for concern as this could impact on the GDP, the growth of the economy in general, and give rise to cut backs of social programmes. The simple answer to this issue is to put emphasis on the creation of quality and sustainable jobs.

There may be the tendency to overlook the fact that too many people are living below the poverty line. The cold facts are that in some instances many persons are employed but find themselves working in poor paying jobs which offer no benefits, security of tenure or opportunity for promotion, and worse yet, offer poor conditions of work. One of the key factors emerging from the Decent Work concept is that persons must have access to productive work. It is hardly likely that these preexisting factors as outlined above, would serve as inducements towards enhancing productivity.

It seems logical to conclude that the economic progress to be made by any nation is dependent upon the productivity of its people. Whilst the creation of jobs becomes paramount, there is nothing to be gained by creating poor quality and unsustainable jobs. It requires good planning, the exercise of creativity and initiative by the government and its social partners, if a difference is to be made. Local investments bringing on stream new projects would be the immediate answer.

It is for the private sector to cash in on such an opportunity. In so doing, the market potential for product and/or services should be taken into account. Both government and private sector investors should look to develop initiatives that for the most part, can utilize the skills of the workforce.

For what it is worth, heed should be taken of the advice given by Mr. Juan Somavia, Director General of the International Labour Organization (ILO), in his address to the 87th International Labour Conference in 1999. He stressed that *'one of the objectives of Member Countries should not only be to create jobs but to create job with acceptable quality.*

A decent work deficit is said to occur when there is involuntary unemployment and poverty, where abuses of rights at work and forced child labour exists, where basic income security is missing, and workplace anxiety, depression and exhaustion are common place, where workers and employers are either not organized to make their voice heard or have obstacles to effective dialogue; and where life at work cannot be properly balanced with the claims of the family.'