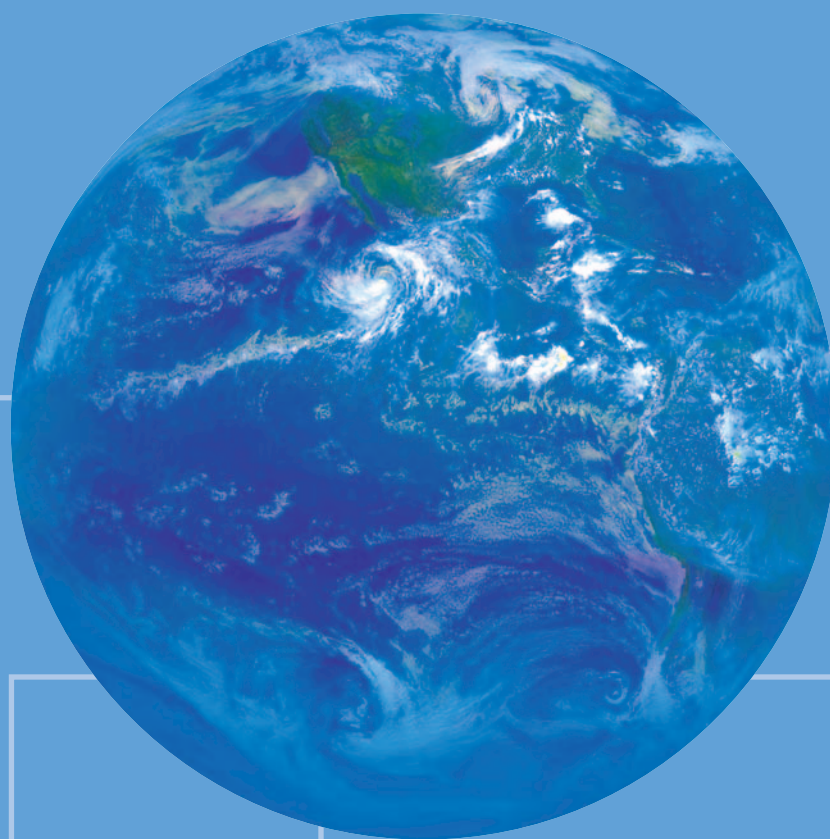




International  
Labour  
Office  
Geneva

# Career Guidance



**A  
Resource  
Handbook  
for Low-  
and  
Middle-  
Income  
Countries**

**Ellen Hansen**

**Skills and  
Employability  
Department**

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**A resource handbook for low- and middle-income countries**

**Ellen Hansen**

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## Preface

The International Labour Organization (ILO) addresses the issue of career guidance at a time of resounding influences on world labour markets and social structures. In the last twenty years the need to adjust to rapid labour market changes is increasingly evident. Recent passage of a new ILO Recommendation, Human Resources Development: Education, Training and Lifelong Learning (No. 195), 2004 provides added stimulus for attention to career guidance. In addition, constituents in many countries are asking the ILO to assist them to promote youth employment. These factors have contributed to the decision to explore this issue, with an emphasis on the situation in low- and middle-income countries.

Research for this Handbook was approached differently in order to take optimal advantage of the knowledge of career guidance professionals around the world. First, a literature review was conducted to determine what research was available on the topic. Second, the contributions of key informants with specific experience on various aspects in career guidance in low- and middle-income countries were sought. Third, an extensive search was instigated for career information and guidance tools available on the Internet. Its purpose is to showcase the diversity of approaches already in place in a range of countries at different stages of development. Financial support for a portion of this research was provided by the Government of the Netherlands through the ILO-Netherlands Partnership Programme.

Chapter I benefited greatly from the research carried out by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the World Bank, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Education and Training and the European Training Foundation. Chapter III on Career Information Resources was based on an essay written by Bruce Mathews. Chapter V on the Organization of Service Delivery drew basic principles from an essay written by Lynne Bezanson and Michel Turcotte. The Tool Kit that comprises Part II was developed with the assistance of Paula Repo and the staff of LogosNet as well as Susan Gleason, Nicholas Mangozho, Silvia Sarazola and Tiina Eskola.

Comments on the overall content of the Handbook were provided by Catherine Casserly, George Gamerdinger, Thomas Ivory, Ronald Sultana and R nette du Toit. Additional comments have been provided by Girma Agune, Beate Andrees, Jean Duronsoy, Ragnar Gussing, John Hunter, John McCarthy, Gianni Rosas, Gregor Schulz, Amy Torres, Fernando Vargas, Tony Watts and Li Xiang Wei. Editorial assistance was provided by Geraldeen Fitzgerald.


The Handbook was also enriched by a discussion of its main themes at a Round Table on School-to-Work Transition and Labour Market Intermediation in Developing Countries in May 2005, which was hosted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in Pretoria, South Africa. Coordinated by Dr. R nette du Toit of the Council, participants included officials from the South African Departments of Labour and Education as well as career guidance professionals from Botswana, Brazil, India and Thailand. Also participating were South African higher education institutions, South African private employment service providers and other HSRC staff.

The audience for this Handbook is twofold. Part I is particularly targeted to those responsible for the national policy development and planning of career guidance activities in low- and middle-income countries – for staff in ministries of education, ministries of labour, public employment services, education institutions at all levels and the consultants assisting them. Part II will also attract a broader audience of those involved in the planning and delivery of career guidance services. The two parts of the Handbook are designed to complement each other, offering a comprehensive look at the present scope of career guidance worldwide.

While this Handbook incorporates the insights of a number of career development professionals and country experiences, the framework of six key elements proposed in Chapter I remains a suggested approach. It is intended to provoke discussion among career guidance policy-makers and professionals on its validity for low- and middle-income countries and the usefulness of the tools provided. This contribution to a significant topic emphasizes the increasing importance of making information on career guidance accessible when and where people need it most.

Mpenga Kabundi, Director,  
Skills and Employability Department,  
International Labour Office, Geneva.

# Contents

	Page
<b>Preface</b>	III
<b>List of abbreviations</b>	VII
<b>Purpose of this Handbook</b>	IX
<b>Part I. A framework for career guidance in low- and middle-income countries</b>	1
<b>I. Career guidance in today's world</b>	1
A. What is career guidance?	1
B. What are the goals that career guidance promotes?	2
C. What approaches are recommended?	3
D. What is the relevance of career guidance in low- and middle-income countries?	4
E. What might be the elements of an approach for low- and middle-income countries?	6
<b>II. Understanding the country context</b> 	7
A. Cultural values	7
B. Labour market characteristics	12
C. Institutional infrastructure	15
<b>III. Career information resources</b>	17
A. National labour market structure and trends	18
B. Local labour market structure	25
C. Information for migrating workers	27
<b>IV. Promotion of work choice, search and maintenance skills development</b>	31
A. Career education	31
B. Career counselling/employment counselling/job placement	33
C. Labour market adjustment/employment/ workforce development programmes	35
D. Skills development for self-employment	37
<b>V. Organization of career guidance service delivery</b>	39
A. In-person services	40
B. Self-service delivery of career guidance	48
C. Tiered services	50
<b>VI. Training and staff development to support service delivery</b>	52
A. Initial training of guidance practitioners	52
B. Continuing staff development	54
C. International professional development initiatives	57
<b>VII. Governance and coordination framework</b>	60
A. Strengthening career guidance at the national level	60
B. Service delivery level coordination	64
C. Basic steps for system improvements	67
<b>VIII. Conclusion</b>	68
<b>Part II. Tool kit of career guidance resources on the internet for low- and middle-income countries</b>	71
Section 1. National career guidance resources	71
Section 2. General references	90
<b>Bibliography</b>	107

## II. Understanding the country context

Chapter I explored the relevance of career guidance to low- and middle-income countries and suggest that the central issue is the degree to which choices about working life are possible in a LMIC context. The context in which career guidance is provided differs significantly between high-income and low- and middle-income countries in three important aspects, which the present chapter discusses. First, the social and political value structure can differ in ways that have a profound influence on receptivity to basic concepts of career guidance. Second, the labour market context of LMIC is characterized by weaker economies and informal economy activity. Third, the institutional infrastructure in these countries is weaker and public resources are often scarce.

### A. Cultural values

How individuals make initial and continuing choices about their working lives is critical to the well-being not only of these individuals and their families but collectively to the viability of their communities and nations. But these choices, taken individually and collectively, are also political; they ultimately determine the allocation and rationing of wealth, power and status in societies. How assistance is given to improve this decision-making process becomes a critically important, complex and sensitive matter.

Central to the provision of career guidance are the basic values of a society towards work and the role of the individual in relation to work. The role of values, as well as information and skills, is often unexamined. But values, more than information, are what motivate people and shape the institutions that form societies. They are also the filter through which individuals process information.

### High-income country values

What are the current values of high-income countries in the realm of career development?

- Career development motivates individuals to be proactive and determine their own role and contribution to society. Guidance is not designed to determine what people should do.
- Career development is an individual responsibility; people are expected to manage their own working lives.
- Career development is an ongoing process throughout working life – and not an activity people participate in once in their youth or only in times of job crisis. It is intended to assist people to adapt to changes in their life cycle and in economic cycles.
- Career development demands worker and learner flexibility and adaptability.
- Career development requires different kinds of tools and services at different points across the lifespan. Support is needed where people learn, live and work. It should be delivered more independently of the interests of participating institutions and enterprises.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> L. Bezanson and R. Kellett: "Integrating career information and guidance services at a local level", paper prepared for the European Commission and the OECD, Nov. 2001, p. 5.

How do these values contrast with those held about work in low- and middle-income countries?

First, there is a dichotomy of values regarding career guidance in many LMIC, where the educated middle and upper classes, and those who aspire to the middle class, often have values very similar to high-income countries. Many of these individuals were educated abroad or in educational institutions established by high-income countries and were exposed to such values. Others work in business environments, such as multinational corporations that transmit developed-world values, professional standards and management practices. These individuals, particularly youth, have high expectations for themselves.

In addition, in LMIC with well-developed education systems, the number of educated young people exceeds the capacity of the labour market to absorb them. In some of these countries, the higher expectations (either of educated youth or of their parents) mean that youth will only consider employment with sufficient professional or social status (“white collar”), regardless of whether there are vacancies in those occupations. This is frequently exacerbated because these youth have received little career guidance and may have no work experience; as a result, they often have unrealistic ideas about the labour market.

However, for most people in LMIC, values are more traditional and aspirations more modest.

Listed below are the main contrasts in values which influence a country’s perspective on career guidance.

### **Position of work in society**

Traditional career guidance in high-income countries is predicated on the notion of a work-centred life, where a person gets most of his or her fulfilment from work. For most people in the developing world (as well as in underdeveloped parts of the developed world) work is what must be done to survive. Fulfilment is not the issue.

### **Attitudes toward change and mobility**

The general attitudes toward change in a society provide the context for how people make fundamental decisions about work. Attitudes toward change are of course determined by the available opportunities, but societies with comparable circumstances may differ in their response – some are more rigid, some more flexible. Throughout history the most successful societies are those with the capacity to adapt to change. This is often related to a society’s orientation to the future: is it viewed as fixed or do people believe that they have the power to change or improve their lives?

Values regarding the importance of individual choice and toward openness to change can differ dramatically among countries and among different groups within a country or culture. The weight accorded to individual choice depends upon the power of the individual to shape his or her own life. Individual choice is closely related to the values toward authority – political, religious, and family.

### **Role of family and community**

“Choice” of work is often heavily influenced by the family and community in LMIC. In a number of countries, prevailing values hold that the role of the individual is subordinate to the collective – the family or the community.

Family values are a decisive influence. In poor countries with limited opportunities, economic interdependence among family and community members is essential. In many LMIC, the influence of parents on the career choices of children may be profound. Opportunities for

girls, for example, may be routinely placed behind those for sons. Girls may also often be expected to assume the care of siblings or ageing parents. When a family owns a farm or small enterprise, the children, particularly sons, may often be expected to enter the family business. Older siblings sometimes lose out on further education owing to the pressure on them to become economically active, although this is not always the case. In addition, family networks and connections play a major role in securing positions or other opportunities.

Group affiliation and community identity may also be perceived differently in LMIC. Ties tend to be deeper and more extensive, defining relations in all spheres of life, including employment. Community leaders, for example, may have a considerable impact in shaping career beliefs in some parts of the world, and denominational schools may influence the vocational choices of their students.

Research conducted on the role of family and community influences upon career decision-making of youth has revealed the strong influence of family. For example, table II.1 compares the dominant influences on the career choices of a group of 650 youth in India.

**Table II.1**

**Relative influence of “significant others” on career choices of 650 youth in India, 2003 (%)**

Parents	46
Parents and youth together	24
Other relatives	15
Friends	11
Youth independently	4

Source: G. Arulmani and S. Arulmani: Career counselling: A handbook, Tata McGraw-Hill, New Delhi, 2004, p. 79.

### Hierarchy of occupational status

In many LMIC (as well as high-income countries) the status and prestige accorded to different occupations strongly affects beliefs about work and also about educational preparation for careers. Prestige is accorded to occupations that have social status and that pay well. In particular, occupations that demand a university education are prized above those requiring vocational training. Often a specific hierarchy of prestige ranks various occupations: most prized are careers in the sciences, then commerce, then those in the humanities, followed by service-sector occupations not requiring university.

There are a number of reasons for the evolution of this hierarchy. In some parts of the world the legacy of a colonial heritage shaped the perception of different types of work. One example is British Commonwealth countries, where employment in the civil service was associated with status, since it brought people in contact with the colonizers. At the same time indigenous populations were directed toward primary sector work (agriculture, mining, forestry) that supplied the colonial powers with resources. This altered the division of labour and changed the traditional status of certain types of work.

### Influence of socio-economic status (SES)

The socio-economic status (SES) of individuals affects their values regarding career choice, particularly their confidence in aspiring to a higher status. Research in India reveals that beliefs about the relative prestige of occupations, and the prestige associated with educational preparation for these occupations, was constant among different SES groups, including the gender appropriateness of various occupations. What differed among SES groups was the perception that higher status could be attained. Lower SES group individuals felt less control over their lives and saw less value in sacrificing for longer term goals. They were less interested in career planning or further education and were more likely to plan to enter the workforce directly. However, while individuals in lower SES groups generally had lower

expectations to pursue higher education, those with higher expectations had parents who were better educated and had steady employment.<sup>10</sup>

## Reward structure

Individual choice is heavily influenced by a society's reward structure. Career guidance is based upon a belief in meritocracy, which drives people to aim beyond their origins. These ideas are less firmly entrenched in some LMIC, where individuals are more strongly contained by the social structures into which they are born.

A culture's rewards may also differ among the members of its community, and these differences may largely determine the distribution of opportunity. Opportunities may be open for some groups and closed for others and may be accorded along tribal, ethnic, religious or gender lines.

Gender inequalities are the most widespread and pervasive example of differences in a culture's values toward choice and change affecting the distribution of work opportunities. Family and community values determine whether it is deemed appropriate for women to be educated and to work outside the home. If it is condoned, these values may also shape what are considered to be appropriate occupations for women.

The following facts amply demonstrate gender imbalances in the world of work:

- Women continue to have less access than men to investments in skills, knowledge and lifelong learning.
- More and more women are entering wage employment but in high-income countries, most new employment has been in part-time jobs; women in low- and middle-income countries have gone mainly into the informal economy and home-based work.
- Half of the world's labour is in sex-stereotyped occupations, with women dominating those occupations which are lowest paying and least protected.
- Women continue to be mainly responsible for the "care economy". If the value of the unpaid, invisible work done by women (approximately US\$11 trillion per annum) is included, global output would be almost 50 per cent greater.<sup>11</sup>
- More women are creating their own businesses, which are important sources of employment. But in LMIC the policy, regulatory and institutional environments are often unfriendly to entrepreneurs, especially women entrepreneurs.
- Women are increasingly migrating, both legally and illegally, and are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. The international trafficking of women and children (boys and girls) is an escalating problem.
- The gender gap is greying into a poverty trap: women face a much higher risk than men of a drastic drop in living standards when they retire. Yet, women account for the majority of the over-60 population in almost all countries.<sup>12</sup>

Against this backdrop, career guidance policies and programmes have a role in redressing gender imbalances in the distribution of work opportunities and in promoting gender equality more broadly. A gender-aware approach means that the model of working life includes a variety of arrangements of equal value, suitable both to men and women at different stages of their life cycle. The following gender aspects in relation to career guidance need to be considered:

<sup>10</sup> G. Arulmani and S. Arulmani: *Career counselling: A handbook*, Tata McGraw-Hill, New Delhi, 2004, p. 79.

<sup>11</sup> "Gender and legislation in Latin America and the Caribbean: An online book", Chapter III, Gender and family, United Nations Development Programme, see <http://www.undp.org/rblac/gender/legislation/index.html>

<sup>12</sup> ILO/ GENPROM web page, see <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/about/> .

- equal access to career guidance services by women and men;
- reduction of stereotyping of female and male roles and career aspirations in guidance services;
- discouragement of occupational segregation;
- promotion of work-life balance for both women and men; and
- gender-aware promotion of entrepreneurship.

### **Communication of values and information**

Methods of communicating values and information vary widely in different parts of the world. In low- and middle-income countries, values are more likely to be transmitted among people living together in close social networks. Role models for making choices, including choices about work, are supplied by parental and community role models.

Improvements in education and communications media are changing this situation. Values and information were first communicated orally in societies; storytelling and folk tales remain powerful tools for transmitting values and knowledge in many societies. Skills transmission was done on an individual mentor or informal apprenticeship basis, as is still the case in many countries today.

The advent of written communication transmitted information and values more broadly, quickly and efficiently. The importance placed upon universal basic education in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals testifies to the centrality of literacy in human development. But written communication has been eclipsed in the past century by the explosive growth and domination of electronic communications media: telephone, radio, cinema, television and the Internet. Cable and satellite transmission technologies have made it possible to extend communications networks globally. Although access barriers (cost, adequate power supply and language) continue to be significant issues, nevertheless, these technologies allow people to communicate relatively easily (and inexpensively in some countries) compared to 20 or 30 years ago. Radio, movies and television can be especially effective media for reaching people with low levels of literacy. Radio, in particular, proves a simple, established and comparatively inexpensive communications medium in many poorer countries.

Part II of this Handbook, the Tool Kit of Career Guidance Resources, is a testimony to the extent to which the Internet is being used in low- and middle-income countries, as well as high-income ones, to transmit career information.

Against the pressures to maintain traditional cultural values and political power, countervailing forces are propelling societies towards change. Besides the economic and labour market changes noted earlier, improvements in ICT have brought many more persons in the developing world into contact with the values of the developed world. The expectations of people are changing more rapidly. This is particularly noticeable among youth and women. Political pressures are forcing increased democracy and transparency in the governance of both the public and the private sectors. In addition, donor countries are increasingly expecting better governance in LMIC as a condition of foreign aid.

## B. Labour market characteristics

### Prevalence of unemployment, underemployment and poverty

The most obvious factor in today's labour market is the prevalence of unemployment, underemployment and poverty. Nearly half of the almost 3 billion women and men workers in the world are unable to earn enough to lift themselves and their family members above the US\$2 a day poverty line. Of that total, 535 million working women and men are surviving on US\$1 a day or less.<sup>14</sup>

Although real wages and per capita incomes increased in most countries over the last 20 years, the disparity between the "top" and the "bottom" is accelerating in many of them. Significant growth in per capita incomes has helped lift hundreds of millions of families out of extreme poverty in India and the People's Republic of China, and as a result, has narrowed the gap between average incomes in poorer and richer countries. However, in most countries for which data are available, groups at the top of the social ladder have done much better than those at the bottom.

At the same time, job growth is not keeping pace with the growth of the labour force. Employment increased on average by 1.4 per cent a year in the 1990s, below the labour force growth rate of 1.7 per cent. In the last few years the global economy has created about 40 million jobs a year but almost 48 million new jobseekers. Of the increase in the world labour force over the next decade, nearly all will be in LMIC and fully 65 per cent in Asia.<sup>15</sup>

Where poverty and unemployment are pervasive, people take whatever work they can get. In LMIC (as well as in underdeveloped regions in more developed countries), the issue of career choice is often reversed: rather than people choosing jobs, jobs choose people. This calls into question the basic theories of career choice.

### Sectoral structure

Although there is wide variation, low- and middle-income countries are often characterized by:

- a large agricultural sector;
- international economic advantage in labour- rather than knowledge-intensive industries; and
- concentration of formal economy jobs in the public sector which, in many cases, cannot be sustained due to structural adjustment policies or other economic pressures. Because of their security these public sector jobs continue to be valued, however.

Owing to their scarcity and attractiveness, access to formal economy jobs is carefully controlled through the educational system and other means.

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<sup>14</sup> ILO: *Working out of poverty*, Report of the Director-General, International Labour Conference, 91st Session (ILO, Geneva, 2003), p. 19.

<sup>15</sup> ILO: *Global Employment Agenda* (ILO, Geneva, Mar. 2002), p. 7.

## Dominance of informal economy activity

In LMIC, a large proportion of the economically active population find work in the informal economy, often in self-employment. Self-employment (which, for most LMIC is a proxy for the size of the informal economy) has increased in all developing regions except for East and South-East Asia. The proportion of non-agricultural self-employment to total non-agricultural employment is 48 per cent in Africa, 44 per cent in Latin America, and 32 per cent in Asia.<sup>16</sup>

The following key aspects of the informal economy need to be taken into account:

1. It characterizes a range of activity, from survivalist activities to successful small enterprises. At one end of the spectrum is employment activity which could lead to absorption into the formal economy while, at the other end, is employment activity that only allows people to survive on a day-to-day basis.
2. Many people in LMIC are active in both the formal and the informal labour market simultaneously. A common pattern is for a person to secure employment in the formal economy, but then earn extra money in the informal, often 'underground' economy, holding down one, occasionally more jobs that can make a significant difference to the family income. The formal economy job can also be used to develop work-related skills and networks which can contribute to success in the informal labour market.
3. Many small and medium-sized enterprises are family-owned. The range of choice for family members may be considerably limited because there are strong expectations on them to remain involved in the family business and also because these enterprises are unlikely to have the capacity to offer career development for their employees.
4. School-age children are often involved in the 'twilight economy' through after-school and holiday jobs. As a result children may have first-hand knowledge of the labour market, and these experiences can play a significant role in their orientation to work.
5. Students in higher education are also often also involved in part-time or even full-time work to offset the costs of their studies.

These factors challenge some of the traditional theories of career guidance practitioners in developed economies about how people gain information on the labour market and navigate it to advance their economic and other interests.

## Demographic factors

Demographic changes are also having a wide-ranging effect on labour forces. By 2015, the world's working-age population is forecast to escalate to about 5.3 billion from the present level of 4.6 billion.<sup>17</sup> Almost all of this increase will occur in the developing world. If labour force participation rates remain the same, this implies about 50 million more jobseekers every year for the next ten years. By 2015, East, South-East and South Asia will be home to nearly two-thirds of the world's total labour force. Africa is projected to increase its share of the global labour force from 11.5 to 13 per cent.

<sup>16</sup> ILO: World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization: *A fair globalization: Creating opportunities for all* (ILO, Geneva, 2004), p. 42.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations: *World population to 2300* (UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs, New York, 2004)

Women workers currently account for slightly over 40 per cent of the employed population, and that percentage is on a steady upward trend. By 2015, the youth labour force in the 15-24 year age group will total 660 million, over 7 per cent more than in 2003. Most of the increase will be in the countries with the highest numbers of working poor and the largest informal economies. At the same time, declining fertility and increasing longevity will first reduce the working-age population and increase the dependency ratio in high-income countries, then in LMIC. For example, the share of China's population that is of working age will start to fall shortly after 2030.

Besides demographic changes, other factors help explain these variations in the size of a country's labour force: whether women work outside the home, how many young people stay and for how long in full-time education, and the effective age at which older people withdraw from the workforce. Public policy, as well as cultural factors and the health status of workers, affect all these variables.

### Impact of globalization

Globalization has intensified the mobility of capital, jobs and people. The increased mobility of capital means that opportunities rise and fall more rapidly, with subsequent losses and gains. As the economic mix changes, the skills demanded of workers are changing rapidly as well. Jobs may shift to locations that offer the best investment climate through outsourcing or offshoring; conversely, workers may move in search of better opportunities for work.

Advances in technology are dramatically lowering the cost of moving information, people, goods and capital across the globe, while global communication is cheap and instantaneous and becoming ever more so. This has vastly expanded the feasibility of economic transactions across the world. Markets can now be global in scope and encompass an intensifying range of goods and services.<sup>18</sup>

### Migration

Cross-border flows of people were on the rise in recent decades, so that by 2000 there were 175 million international migrants – equivalent to the population of the world's fifth most populous country. Of these, 86 million were migrant workers.<sup>19</sup> In addition to movements from South to North, immigration within the developing world is accelerating: It is estimated that flows of remittances sent by migrant workers back to their families now exceed those of official development assistance.<sup>20</sup>

International migration is, however, only a fraction of internal migration. An estimated one million people move from rural areas to urban areas each week. In 2001, in China, for example, nearly 120 million people moved within the country, compared to less than half a million people who migrated internationally. In South-East and East Asia, urbanization and an expansion of manufacturing, especially for export, have led to substantial increases in both short- and long-term migration. In many countries, most landless rural families depend on at least one person outside their village working in a factory or service job. In sub-Saharan Africa, an estimated 50-80 per cent of rural households have at least one migrant member.

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<sup>18</sup> ILO: World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, op. cit., pp. 24-5.

<sup>19</sup> ILO: *Towards a fair deal for migrant workers in the global economy*, Report VI, International Labour Conference, 92nd Session, Geneva, 2004, p. 7.

<sup>20</sup> ILO: *ibid.*, p. 23.

## Urbanization

The United Nations projects that by 2007, for the first time, more than half of the world's population will live in urban areas. Based upon current trends, by 2030 approximately 5 billion people, or nearly two-thirds of the world population, will live in cities, up from 3 billion in 2003. By contrast, the world's rural population will remain at just over 3 billion. Almost all of this urban growth will occur in LMIC, which will have 16 "mega-cities" of more than 10 million inhabitants each.<sup>21</sup> Related to this spatial shift in population is the forecast that the share of agriculture in global employment will fall from about 44 per cent in 2004 to 35 per cent in 2015.

## C. Institutional infrastructure

Career guidance is not a narrowly defined, easily categorized function or set of activities that can be compartmentalized in a single profession and overseen by a single government authority; it is a function provided by practitioners with a variety of training and credentials in a variety of organizational settings. The traditional approach taken in high-income countries was for specialized professionals to provide in-person services in settings that were largely unconnected to one another. This approach has proved inadequate. For LMIC, with far fewer financial resources and practitioners, it has even less applicability and attractiveness.

The relative weakness of public institutions is a limiting factor in many LMIC, this weakness stems from meagre public finances to weak democratic processes and sometimes the absence of the rule of law. In addition, in some LMIC the legacy of planned economies has left them poorly equipped to deal with the competitive forces of an increasingly globalized world.

One example is provided by Joseph Kofi Adda, the Minister of Manpower, Youth and Employment in Ghana. Describing the Ministry's efforts to promote decent work, he enumerated the following institutional weaknesses in his country:

1. marginalized Ministry of Labour and its related agencies;
2. inadequate resources;
3. weak institutional capacity;
4. unsuitable infrastructure;
5. lack of basic equipment;
6. inadequate quality and quantity of staff;
7. incoherent, if relevant, interventions; and
8. inability to assess the state of social well-being or improve it.

To underscore the extent of institutional weakness, he pointed out that there was not a single photocopy machine in the entire Ministry.

In the case of Ghana, however, the Ministry had just been given a significant budget increase. The Ministry's current priority is to find comprehensive and holistic approaches to institutional reforms. Among the specific improvements that have been prioritized are the modernization of labour market information and the establishment of career counselling and job placement centres for youth.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> UNDP: op. cit.

<sup>22</sup> Address to the ILO Employment and Social Policy Committee of the ILO Governing Body at its meeting in March 2005.

In relation to the Minister of Labour's remarks about where investment would be made in Ghana, the lack of labour market information for career information is a particular constraint. Three problems arise in generating the necessary labour market information for career information and guidance. First, the resources might not be available to generate the primary data upon which career guidance information is based. Second, information from a variety of government and private resources may not be shared among agencies. Third, the means may not be available to transform labour market information into career information and distribute it to all those who have to make work-life decisions. This information may therefore only be available to a small, exclusive group of clients.

The limited availability of technology is another constraint. In LMIC, few students have access to the computers that are increasingly used to make career information widely available in high-income countries. In addition, electricity supply can be erratic and the cost of Internet access prohibitive. Even where there are computers, it is often found that only teachers have access to them. For these reasons, even in countries where computers are in use, traditional printed material needs to be available in order to make relevant information accessible to technologically disadvantaged communities.

The improvement of government and service delivery infrastructure in LMIC is often dependent on external funding by international development aid organizations or other donors. While certainly valued, this assistance may result in piecemeal interventions that are not well integrated into the ongoing institutional infrastructure. Unless external interventions are designed to be integrated into national institutions from the beginning, they are unlikely to be sustainable.

When policy-makers in LMIC conduct an assessment of the value and feasibility of an increased national investment in improved career guidance by analysing their cultural values, labour market characteristics and institutional characteristics, five areas of priority for the improvement of career guidance may be identified. They are:

- 1.** the crucial importance of comprehensive educational and occupational information, which needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency;
- 2.** the need to exploit the potential of information and communication technologies, including help lines as well as the Internet, to increase access to services;
- 3.** the need to invest in self-help approaches rather than in those which are heavily labour-intensive and encourage dependency;
- 4.** the need to encourage more specific staff-training courses in career guidance, preferably on a cross-sectoral basis, designed to produce professionals who can manage guidance resources as well as be engaged in direct service delivery; and
- 5.** the need to invest in facilitating measures, including appropriate incentives, designed to encourage the development of career guidance services within the private and voluntary sectors.<sup>23</sup>

The first two items are related to the improvement of career information; this topic is the focus of Chapter III. The fourth item is the subject of Chapter VI. The third and fifth items address service delivery issues, which are the focus of Chapter V.

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<sup>23</sup> A.G. Watts and D.H. Fretwell: *Public policies for career development: Policy strategies for designing career information and guidance systems in middle-income and transition economies*, Discussion Paper (World Bank, Washington, August 2003).