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### Original Citation

Jones, Adele (2006) Social and Economic Development: Declaration of Mar del Plata and Plan of Action. In: Roundtable and Special Session of the CISC: "Good Governance and Development in the Knowledge-Based Society", 2nd - 3rd May 2006, Washington D.C.. (Unpublished)

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# Social and Economic Development

Declaration of Mar del Plata and Plan  
of Action

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March 2006

Organisation of American States Roundtable of Civil Society  
Organisations: 'Good Governance and Development in the  
Knowledge-Based Society'. Washington, US.

# Presentation

- Describe the perspective that underpins the approach taken
- Identify key elements of the Declaration & Plan of Action
- Highlight one area of particular concern: youth unemployment
- Demonstrate the inter-linkage of negative social factors
- Call for more targeted focus
- Discuss some impediments to development
- Pose some questions for discussion

# Perspective

- Focus of presentation arises from my profession as a Social Worker – Practitioner, Educator and Researcher
- Underpinned by the concept of ‘Developmental Social Work’ - this provides a critical social context for social work practice in less economically advanced countries
- Development social work is both embedded *within* the processes of development yet also maintains a critical stance to the ways in which development goals may contribute towards inequity
- ‘Development’ is not a neutral or benign term and developmental social work must therefore be critically reflective of the political, social and cultural implications of development

# Developmental Social Work

- Involves the critical review, reformulation and development of social work methods to accommodate indigenous perspectives
- It provides a mandate to
  - ⇒ address the social, cultural and economic factors that contribute to under-development
  - ⇒ formulate strategies for equity and justice in the achievement of development goals

# Compatibility

- This concept coheres in large part with the philosophy and principles of the Declaration and Plan of Action of Mar del Plata
- Provides the lens through which my perspective on social and economic development is constructed. For example, the Declaration talks of ‘including vulnerable groups’ in efforts to raise standards of living – I would argue that these groups be placed at the forefront

# Declaration of Mar del Plata

## Economic Development – key issues

- Creating decent jobs
- Improving working conditions
- Eradicating gender discrimination
- Eliminating child labour
- Ending forced work
- Tackling youth unemployment

# Social Development

- Human Rights
- Tackling HIV-AIDS and other health issues
- Primary & Secondary School Education
- Strengthening Health Systems
- Policy Development



# Democratic governance

- Citizen participation
- Social Exclusion
- Border issues:
  - Drug Trafficking
  - Human Trafficking
  - Terrorism

# Youth Unemployment - Action

*'To reduce youth unemployment and significantly lower the percentage of young people that neither study nor work. We shall target [these] programs, in particular, towards youths that are most vulnerable'*

(Plan of Action - Creating Decent Work  
pt.3)

# Caribbean

- Like in most parts of the world, unemployment in the Caribbean is primarily a youth phenomenon
- Across countries in the Caribbean, youth unemployment rates double to quadruple the adult rates (40-60% of the unemployed -youth comprise 20-30% of the labour force).
- According to World Development Indicators, from 1996-98, St. Lucia had the highest unemployment rate in the Americas and the Caribbean, closely followed by Jamaica (among the countries for which data were available)
- Caribbean-wide data indicate that St. Lucia, Dominica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Jamaica, have the highest youth unemployment rates.

# Case Study: Trinidad

## Some Initiatives

- National Youth Policy
- Helping You Prepare for Employment Programme (HYPE)
- On the Job Training
- Youth Development and Apprenticeship Centres
- Youth Facilities Development Programme
- Youth Training and Employment Partnership Programme (YTEPP)
- Civilian Conservation Corps
- Free tertiary education
- Sport School Programme
- Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme (GAPP)
- Retirees Adolescent Partnership Programme
- Adolescent Mother's Programme
- School support services

# Persistence and escalation: Problems of youth unemployment

- Increasing social problems with youth in Trinidad.
- The 15 to 24 age group consists of about 270,000 persons.
- 30% of unemployed are young people
- Criminal activity is increased because of school drop-outs
- Crime is at unprecedented levels particularly among the young

# The Declaration of Mar del Plata: *Targeted Action*

*“The challenge is to sustain higher rates of growth with equity and social inclusion, and to generate expanded opportunities, social investment, and social development”  
(Declaration pt.8)*

The linking of youth, employment, equity and social inclusion enables us to address cross-cutting issues, such as:

Gender

drug-use

HIV-AIDS

Teenage pregnancy

Crime

Education

Child abuse

youth violence

# General issues

- Declining economic trends in some parts of the region limit employment opportunities for young people
- Social and cultural factors in the region impede the development of a healthy and positive labour force
- Specific negative societal conditions both fuel unemployment and are fuelled by it. These include:
  - Early/risky sexual behaviour
  - Involvement in crime
  - Substance abuse
  - Illegal or hazardous work



# *Early and risky sexual activity – some implications*

- *Non or little use of contraceptives*
- *Adolescent* - Alarming high rate of adolescent pregnancy. About 85 % of children in Jamaica and St. Lucia are born out of wedlock
- *Undesired pregnancy* – infant abandonment, illegal/dangerous abortions
- *Risky sexual behavior* - Following sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean has the highest HIV-AIDS prevalence rates in the world. For one-third of all new cases, the disease was contracted when the individual was 15-24 years. Out of the 12 countries with the highest HIV prevalence in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) Region, nine are from the Caribbean (World Bank 2000). Young women are 3 times more vulnerable to infection than young men

# Crime and violence – some implications

- Based on homicide rates, the LAC region is one of regions most heavily affected by violent crime in the world. (At 22.9 per 100, 000 people in 1990, homicide rates for the Caribbean were almost double the world average of 10.7 per 100, 000)
- Young people (age 17 to 30) commit most offences
- The region has a high rates for weapon and illegal gun possession
- Young men are the main victims of homicides

# Substance abuse and drug trafficking

- Substance abuse and youth involvement in drug dealing are significant problems facing at-risk youth in the Caribbean
- The region also has high consumption rates of alcohol – this is linked to the history of the sugar plantation, rum-based economies and the ready availability of rum.
- Unemployment and economic privation result in high levels of drug & alcohol misuse among young people (with attendant social and health problems)

# Social Inclusion as a keystone of poverty & employment policy

If inclusion is central, then what are some of the challenges that may impede the 'integration' of disadvantaged and vulnerable young people?

# Factors that affect integration

- Negative perceptions of 'youth' lead to discrimination
- Adolescents (15-19) will tend to face greater difficulties than young adults (20-24) for the following reasons
  - less well informed about the labor market
  - regarded as a greater risk by employers
  - less able to obtain credit to start a business or acquire skills
  - less mobile
  - Likely to be less educated
- Poverty – may lack access to tools, transportation, appropriate clothing etc.
- Disadvantaged young women less likely to be integrated into the mainstream labour force than young men because of gender discrimination
- Often live in areas in high-crime areas – risk prevents programmes being set up *within* their communities

# Skills

- Skills possessed by disadvantaged youth **tend not to those** demanded for employment
- Employers in developing countries require basic literacy and numeracy skills and increasingly, computer technology skills. They often also look for ability technical skills and practice in disciplined work habits.
- As non-agricultural employment expands within a global economy, science, technology, mathematics, and foreign language and communication skills are increasingly important
- In all these areas disadvantaged youth lag behind their more privileged peers because of their circumstances

# Gender discrimination and social inclusion

- Young women over-represented among unpaid family workers, part-timers, low-wage-earners, the unemployed.
- These young women at increased risk of being involved in human and drug trafficking coerced sexual activity and prostitution
- However, young women in developing countries are increasingly moving into wage employment although they earn less than their male counterparts
- The biggest obstacle to young women obtaining decent work in many developing countries is gender discrimination

# Gender Discrimination Challenges

- Cultural perceptions and appreciation of women often 'fixes' them in subordinate positions at the psychosocial level regardless of the contributions they may make at the economic level.
- This creates an invisible but pervasive barrier to the elimination of discrimination and women's advancement
- Cultural reinforcers operate at all levels of society to sustain dominant views about women vis-à-vis their roles and relationships with men



# Youth unemployment and poverty policy – some key points

- Low earnings may be a more important factor than unemployment in explaining the cyclical nature of poverty
- Target those least favorably placed in labor markets, (because of gender, ethnic origin, family background, location, physical or mental disability, or HIV status) and those working long hours for low pay, doing unpaid work, or struggling to survive on a city street.
- Focus should be on youth who are at the greatest disadvantage/most vulnerable and not only on those who are unemployed
- Disaggregating data – how many unemployed youth are disadvantaged, in marginalized jobs, special schemes which do not translate into decent work, unpaid family workers, self-employed in hazardous work, poorly paid wage earners, working in the illegal or informal sectors. Also identify issues re: gender, race, disability.

Integrating disadvantaged young people into society and labor markets must be at the center of policies to improve access to and quality of employment

# Questions to consider

1. The social conditions under which the most disadvantaged and vulnerable young people live indicate that their priority is to meet 'lower order needs' (survival, food, safety, housing, etc.). Their inclusion into the labour force however requires attention to the higher goals of self-actualization and intellectual and skill development – how can this gap be bridged?

# Question

2. Cultural factors influence the regard given to the status and voices of children and young people – to what extent might cultural attitudes in the region account for the slow progress in protecting the rights of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people?

# Question

3. The involvement of young people in the drug trade, the trafficking of persons, prostitution, scavenging and other illicit activities are often viewed as viable means of survival by those who have few choices. Some of these activities are lucrative and steeped in risk and danger – all of which may be regarded as attractive features of a youth culture. These are not maladaptive young people - on the contrary, they have adapted to the environment in which they live. How can policies on social inclusion address this issue?

# End

- In ending this present, I refer you back to the Declaration of Mar del Plata and the specific commitment made to supporting “sustainable development policies”
- I suggest that the very definition of ‘sustainability’ means that development must be child/young person centred