



**Standing Committee
for Economic and Commercial Cooperation
of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC)**

**Proceedings of the 5th Meeting of the
COMCEC Poverty Alleviation Working Group**

**“ACTIVATION POLICIES FOR THE POOR IN THE
OIC MEMBER STATES”**



**COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE
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PROCEEDINGS OF THE 5TH MEETING OF THE COMCEC POVERTY ALLEVIATION
WORKING GROUP

ON

“Activation Policies for the Poor in the OIC Member States”
(February 26th, 2015, Ankara, Turkey)

COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE
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For further information please contact:

Mr. Mehmet Fidan
Expert

Mr. Mehmet Akif Alanbay
Expert

COMCEC Coordination Office
Necatibey Caddesi No: 110/A
06100 Yüce-tepe
Ankara/TURKEY
Phone : 90 312 294 57 10
Fax : 90 312 294 57 77
Web : www.comcec.org
e-mail : comcec@comcec.org
mfidan@comcec.org
malanbay@comcec.org

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Introduction

The 5th Meeting of the COMCEC Poverty Alleviation Working Group was held on February 26th, 2015 in Ankara, Turkey with the theme of “Activation Policies for the Poor in the OIC Member Countries”.

The Meeting was attended by the representatives of 16 member countries, which have notified their focal points for the Poverty Alleviation Cooperation Working Group namely, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Benin, Cameroon, Egypt, The Gambia, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Niger, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Turkey and Uganda. Representatives of COMCEC Coordination Office, OECD, World Bank Ankara Office, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality Art and Vocational Training Courses (İSMEK), IDB and SESRIC have also attended the Meeting.¹

After the opening remarks of Mr. Mehmet Metin EKER, the Director General of the COMCEC Coordination Office (CCO), and Mr. Ismail RAHIMI, Director General of Policy and Result Based Monitoring, Ministry of Economy of Afghanistan and the Chairman of the Meeting, the representative of the CCO made a presentation on “COMCEC Poverty Outlook 2014”. During the presentation of the COMCEC Poverty Outlook 2014, the participants were informed about the state of poverty and efforts on poverty alleviation in the world and in the OIC Member Countries.

The Meeting considered the current activation policies and programmes as well as possibilities to improve them particularly for the poor in the OIC Member Countries and the analytical study titled “Activation Policies for the Poor in the OIC Member Countries” which was prepared by the COMCEC Coordination Office especially for the Meeting with a view to enriching the discussions.

The Representatives of the member countries have shared their experiences, achievements and challenges in activation strategies in the OIC Member States. The Meeting also provided the opportunity for the participants to consider the experience of international institutions, NGOs and local authorities in activation policies and programmes.

¹ The list of participants is attached as Annex 4.

1. Opening Session

In line with the tradition of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Meeting started with the recitation from the Holy Quran. Afterwards, Mr. M. Metin EKER, Director General of the COMCEC Coordination Office shortly introduced the participants the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (COMCEC), which has been working towards enhancing economic and commercial cooperation among the 57 member countries for 30 years. COMCEC meets annually at ministerial level under the chairmanship of the Turkish President in İstanbul to discuss the development challenges of the member countries and review the cooperation efforts.

In his opening remarks, Mr. EKER informed the participants regarding the new vision document of the COMCEC, namely the COMCEC Strategy, which was adopted by the 4th Extraordinary Session of the Summit Conference, held in 2012, in order to give a new impetus and to add new dimensions to the ongoing cooperation among the member countries. He pointed out that two new important mechanisms were introduced with the Strategy. One of them is the Working Group (WG) Mechanism. Regular WG meetings started to convene among experts from relevant ministries and institutions of the member countries to discuss major cooperation areas identified by Ministers. Mr. EKER expressed that Poverty Alleviation is one of the six WGs and each one convenes twice a year. The outputs of these WG meetings are reported to Ministerial Meeting for final deliberation and decision.

Then, Mr. EKER touched upon the second new mechanism: Project Cycle Management through which the member countries as well as the OIC institutions are enabled to apply for financial support to the projects that are prepared to support the COMCEC objectives. This mechanism aims to directly engage the member countries' institutions and the OIC institutions into the cooperation efforts under the COMCEC. He added that regular calls for project proposals being made by the COMCEC PCM Department usually in September. He kindly reminded the participants that in September 2015 there will be a similar call and invited them to consider submitting project proposals on behalf of their Ministries.

Mr. EKER mentioned that the COMCEC Strategy brought a an important mission to the member countries and the OIC Institutions to make COMCEC a platform where knowledge is produced about the member countries' development challenges, experiences are shared and a common language is built over common issues among the member countries and also policy approximation is ensured.

Afterwards, Mr. EKER stated that eradicating extreme poverty in the OIC Member Countries is the primary objective of the COMCEC Strategy in terms of poverty reduction. However, the other aspects of poverty are also dealt with such as improving the productive capacity of the poor which is also an expected output of the Strategy. In this regard, this dimension is on our agenda today: The Activation Policies for the Poor in the OIC Countries.

Mr. EKER continued his speech expressing that there is a considerable poor population in the OIC Member Countries. He stated that 21 out of 57 OIC Member Countries are in the group of the Least Developed Countries according to the UN classification. Furthermore, 350 million poor live in OIC member countries which correspond to 20 percent of the total population of the OIC. This situation seems to be still critical for many years to come.

He pointed out that there are many efforts in the international area including the OIC Institutions and many tools to reduce poverty. Then, he added that the most sensible and sustainable way in the long run to deal with poverty is to achieve decent employment for the poor segments of the

society. Whereas Social Safety Nets provide immediate protection and support for the poor people, creating jobs and ensuring more access to job opportunities are the necessary steps to be taken.

Then Mr. EKER touched upon the analytical study titled “Activation Policies for the Poor in the OIC Member Countries” prepared for this meeting and stated that three dimensions are identified for the public authorities in the study namely, job search support, training and job creation. He expressed that there are 5 case countries in the report. These are Cameroon, Iran, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia and Uganda. Thereafter, Mr. EKER explained the detailed programme of the Meeting.

Subsequently, Mr. Ismail RAHIMI, Director General of Policy and Result Based Monitoring, Ministry of Economy of Afghanistan, was chosen as the chairman of the Meeting and he thanked all participants for electing him as the Chairman and welcomed them all to the 5th Meeting of the Poverty Alleviation Working Group. After the participants introduced themselves Mr. RAHIMI invited Mrs. Hande HACIMAHMUTOĞLU to make her presentation on Poverty Outlook in the OIC Member Countries.

2. The COMCEC Poverty Outlook 2015

Ms. Hande HACIMAHMUTOĞLU, Expert from the COMCEC Coordination Office has presented some of the key findings of the COMCEC Poverty Outlook 2015.

In her presentation, Ms. HACIMAHMUTOĞLU explained the state of monetary and non-monetary poverty in the world very briefly, the state of poverty in the COMCEC Region with much detailed way, the global efforts on poverty alleviation and the efforts on poverty alleviation in the COMCEC Region. She shared some figures that she had created by using the data from the World Bank, the UNDP and IFPRI to reveal the state of poverty in the World and in the COMCEC Region. She demonstrated the similarity between the progress of the monetary and the non-monetary poverty indicators.

With regards to the state of poverty in the world, Ms. HACIMAHMUTOĞLU stated that most of the developing countries have experienced significant progress on poverty alleviation in the last two decades. She mentioned that regarding the poverty in monetary terms, significant decreases had been experienced on the ratio of people who live under US\$1.25 in all the income group countries between 1990 and 2011. On the other hand, she pointed out that poverty levels are still high for a considerable number of countries, and to understand the extent of this disparity, non-monetary indicators of poverty can be examined.

In the presentation she focused on two of the various measures that are used to examine poverty in non-monetary terms: Human Development Index (HDI) and Multidimensional Poverty Index. She explained that HDI reveals the human development levels of the countries by utilizing four indicators, namely long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living, under three dimensions, namely life expectancy at birth, means years of schooling and expected years of schooling and GNI per capita. She addressed that income levels effect other dimensions of human-development for most of the countries.

Ms. HACIMAHMUTOĞLU explained that MPI has been calculating, in order to measure poverty in a much broader context, since 2010, and it considers multiple deprivations of the population and their overlap by utilizing the dimensions of health, education and standard of living. She pointed out that, among the 91 countries in the MPI poor group, 34 of them experience severe multidimensional poverty which is more than 20 percent of their total population. She briefly explained that while 1 percent of the MPI poor group is from high income countries, this ratio is 29 percent for upper-middle income, 40 percent for lower-middle and 31 percent for low income countries. This Picture might point to a fact that income level cannot be defined as the only determinant of well-being, although it is a significant one.

In the second part of her presentation, she addressed the GDP levels of the OIC member countries in order to explain the monetary poverty situation in these countries. In this context, she pointed out that although the total population of the member countries accounts for more than the one-fifth of the world's total population, the total GDP of these countries accounts for the 7 % of the World's total GDP. She stated that GDP per capita levels of the OIC countries display a highly dispersed composition; varying from Current International Dolar 916 in Niger to 137.000 in Qatar. While in high income counties the lowest GDP per capita level is higher than US Dolar 43.000, in low income group it changes between US Dolar 2.900 and 900, and the shares of the poor population in the low income COMCEC countries account nearly for the half of their total populations.

Ms. HACIMAHMUTOĞLU mentioned that looking at the state of poverty in non-monetary terms in the OIC region, it is seen that human development levels of the countries might demonstrate some

slight differences from their economic situations, but in general it is mostly affected by the income of the country. Almost all of the OIC countries in the very high human development category are the high income countries, except one of them is in the high human development category. Similarly, most of the upper-middle income countries exist in the high human development category and most of the low income group countries exist in the low human development category. However, the situation of the lower-middle income group is slightly different, because more than half of these countries take part in the low human development category.

She pointed out that regarding the state of multidimensional poverty in the COMCEC Region, it is seen that while no high income OIC country exist in the MPI poor group, % 24 of the countries in this group are upper-middle income countries, % 39 is lower-middle and % 37 is low income countries. She added that almost 32 percent of the OIC population live under multidimensional poverty and almost 22 percent live under severe multidimensional poverty. She also addressed that deprivation in the dimensions of the multidimensional poverty varies significantly among the member countries. While deprivation in schooling is between % zero and % 61.8, deprivation in school attendance is between % 0.1 and % 58.5, deprivation in child mortality is between % 0.1 and % 57.8, and deprivation in nutrition is between % 0.05 and % 46.6. However, deprivations in living conditions are much higher, since the maximum deprivation percentages are 81.5 in electricity, 83.1 in improved sanitation, 70 in drinking water, 79.8 in flooring, 89.2 in cooking fuel and 76.2 in asset ownership.

In the third part of her presentation, Ms. HACIMAHMUTOĞLU talked about the efforts on poverty alleviation in the World and in the OIC region. As the efforts on poverty alleviation in the World, she mentioned the Millennium Development Goals, Post-2015 Development Agenda, Poverty Reduction Strategies of The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and Official Development Assistance. Then, she addressed the Post-2015 Development Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals in detail. As the efforts on poverty alleviation in the World, she pointed to Islamic Solidarity Fund for Development, OIC Cotton Programme, Special programme for Development of Africa, Vocational Literacy Programme, Microfinance Support Programme, Vocational Education and Training Programme, Youth Employment Programme, COMCEC Strategy and OIC Framework for Cooperation on labour, Employment and Social Protection. Afterwards, she briefly explained the poverty alleviation component in the COMCEC strategy by talking about the strategic objective this component and its output areas, as well as the project cycle management tool of COMCEC strategy and the projects that have been supported via this tool.

In the last part of her presentation, Ms. HACIMAHMUTOĞLU summarized some important remarks related to poverty alleviation in the region as follows:

- While monetary poverty is still relevant in many OIC member countries non-monetary poverty is devastating for a significant number of countries.
- 32 percent of the COMCEC population live under multidimensional poverty and highest deprivations are experienced in living conditions.
- Regarding the Post-2015 Development Agenda finance of the poverty alleviation efforts, and monitoring of these efforts via accurate and reliable data gain the highest importance. In addition, the partnerships, not only between the nations but also between the nations and the international organisations, to support the nations on their development efforts have a significant place in the new global development agenda.

3. Activation Policies for the Poor in the OIC Member States

3.1. Activation Policies for the Poor and Global Trends

Mr. Alexander KOLEV, Head of Unit in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), presented the concept of activation policies for the poor and recent trends in the world.

At the outset Mr. KOLEV expressed that since the context of the OECD countries is different from the OIC member countries some experiences and lessons learned should be carefully considered. He added that the policy makers in the OECD countries attach great importance to activation policies and scope of debate on activation policies has been extended. In the Nineties, the debate was on whether we work or not and under which economic circumstances we work. Today the issue is why some activation policies serve the purpose and which factors ensure that these policies are successful in some specific conditions.

Then Mr. KOLEV mentioned that While there is no agreed definition of activation policies, the concept of activation is increasingly used by the OECD to refer to a combination of policy tools that provide support and incentives for job search and job finding, productive participation in society and self-sufficiency and independence from public support.

Activation measures often include policies that target recipients of public support and encourage them to find work. There are also some measures that strengthen the employability and earnings capacities of low-income families such as conditional cash transfers. He added that activation measures entail a mix of rights and responsibilities. For example the possibility of benefit sanction is an important design element, but the objective is not to curtail benefit provision but to improve the labour market attachment and earnings prospects of the programme participants.

Mr. KOLEV stated that activation policies have a long tradition in the OECD area. Early activation measures focused on the unemployed with the development of active labour market policies (ALMPs), targeting unemployment insurance and unemployment assistance recipients. ALMPs were implemented in a context of relatively strong overall labour market performance. More recent ALMPs were implemented in the context of the Great Crisis and rising unemployment. Activation measures were recently extended to other working-age welfare recipients (disability and sole-parent benefits). In emerging and developing countries, activation principles have been applied more broadly to a range of different population groups, with a view to support human development through conditional cash transfers (CCTs).

Afterwards, Mr. KOLEV stated that research shows that activation measures can contribute significantly to employment and human development. Much of the evidence on the impact of activation measures comes from evaluation of specific interventions, but important knowledge gaps remain. There is, for instance, growing evidence on the impact of CCTs, which are usually found to have positive effects on education and health behaviour. The large literature on the microeconomic impact of ALMPs further indicates that these programmes can have short term positive employment effects, yet impact tends to vary according to the nature of the programmes, design issues and country context. There is also some evidence on the macroeconomic impact of ALMPs on employment. Results show that ALMP spending and activation can help cut unemployment even in period of economic downturn.

Later on, Mr. KOLEV pointed that key lessons from recent OECD country reviews of activation policy further indicate that effective activation strategies can help get unemployment benefit recipients off benefit and into work even when labour demand is depressed. But these measures

seem to work best for those benefit recipients who are close to the labour market. There is also evidence that the role of caseworkers is crucial, and that face-to-face meetings between caseworkers and programme participants matter for successful action, which points to the limits of “e-only services”. Initial results further show that activation can work for lone parents with young children so long as recipients can get support for child care, while there are mixed results for long-term sickness/disability benefits. However, extending welfare to work programmes for disability/long-term sickness and lone-parents benefits, and for older workers seems more challenging.

Lastly, Mr. KOLEV expressed that despite their success, a matter of concern with activation strategies is that many benefits recipients are activated to take low-wage jobs which may not lift them out of poverty. This is why OECD countries have increasingly introduced make-work pay policies in order to accentuate financial work incentives while maintaining adequate support for low paid workers through in-work benefits or tax credits.

Questions and Remarks

Question: Mr. Nevzat KUNDURACI from Ministry of Family and Social Policies of Turkey raised two questions. Firstly, he asked whether there is any special activation policy regarding immigrants in the OECD countries. Secondly, he asked whether there is any connection between CCT programmes and activation policies in developing countries or these programmes simply increase the employability of the poor.

Answer: Mr. KOLEV stated that there are a number of public and non-public programmes that are implemented by NGOs to support migrant workers. Legally unemployed migrants, especially unemployment insurance recipients are eligible to be involved in these programmes. Regarding the second question, Mr. KOLEV mentioned that the effect of CCTs to employment is not clear since some programmes may create disincentives and thus some households may be reluctant to work. He added that more impact analysis should be done in order to have a clear view of the issue.

Q: Mr. RAHIMI, Chairman of the Meeting, mentioned that the national poverty alleviation strategy of Afghanistan includes some activation policies such as job creation and he added that job creation is the macro objective of socioeconomic strategy of Afghanistan. In this regard, some credits or loans and entrepreneurship or technical vocational trainings are provided. Afterwards, he asked whether there is a difference between such activation programmes in a general poverty reduction strategy and focusing on a specific activation strategy.

A: Mr. KOLEV stated that the circumstances in OECD countries are different. While the social protection mechanisms are well developed and there is a focus on beneficiaries of social support in the OECD Countries, the informality is huge and there is not wide spread social protection systems in low or lower middle income countries. Furthermore, activation policies are designed differently to be used for public work programmes or for CCTs in these countries. Besides, some of lower middle income countries implement successful programmes. Therefore, all best practices or other experiences in OECD countries may not be applicable for other countries. There are also some experiences in other countries that OECD countries can benefit from.

3.2. Employment situation and activation policies and programmes implemented in the OIC Member States with special focus on case studies

Mr. Christopher MELVIN, Director at the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (CESI), has presented employment situation and activation policies and programmes implemented in the OIC Member States that explains some of the key findings of the analytic study, which was commissioned by the CCO and carried out by CESI, called “Activation Policies for the Poor in the OIC Member States”.

Giving an overview of the methodology that was used for the study, Mr. MELVIN focused on the overview of activation policies in the OIC Member Countries with special focus on the five case studies namely, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Iran, Cameroon and Uganda. He concluded his presentation by highlighting some recommendations for member countries.

He informed the participants that activation policies are required because many OIC Member Countries do not have developed social assistance systems, making employment a prerequisite for many people to move out of poverty. In some other member countries that have comprehensive social assistance systems, activation can counteract negative incentives, by encouraging jobseekers to find work. In this respect, activation also improves the affordability of social assistance.

Mr. MELVIN brief the participants that employment trends in the OIC Member Countries include jobless growth. Therefore, there is a need to provide quality jobs and youth unemployment. Expressing the need to promote employment in the private sector, Mr. MELVIN mentioned that the skills mismatch problem should be eliminated through vocational trainings.

He furthermore underline that there are many forms of job search support, skill mismatch, and job creation. The programs and policies implemented are linked to a country’s socio-economic context. For many OIC Member Countries, their income grouping can be linked to the type of activation measures used. The measures tend to be used according to the income grouping are as follows:

Income	Job search support	Skills training	Job creation
Low	Lack of data and poor access to services can typify job search support. Jobseekers often use informal networks to find employment.	Expand access to education to improve literacy rates. Countries with higher education levels focus on vocational skills training.	Address immediate or chronic need, e.g. public works programmes.
Lower-middle	Presence of a Public Employment Service (PES), but lack of funding can limit access. Lack of conditionality also limits impact.	Target training at young people due to youth unemployment (in many cases, skills mismatch is a factor).	Combine short-term measures with longer term promotion of the private sector.
Upper-middle	PES collects job vacancy information, provides counselling and holds job fairs. Access can be improved using partner organisations	Focus on developing a skilled workforce in order to meet needs associated with growing high skill industries.	Longer term focus on job creation through economic diversification and the promotion of skilled industries.

High	Extensive investment in services and a focus on different types of jobseekers and their needs, e.g. people with disabilities.	Increasing investment being made e.g. The Colleges of Excellence programme to build 100 new colleges over 10 years. Job Schools are also being used to improve the employability of people far from the labour market.	Focus is on increasing the number of Saudi workers in the private sector through schemes such as Nitaqat and Mazaya.
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Mr. MELVIN continued his presentation by informing the participants on the finding of the analytical study regarding case studies. He mentioned that five case studies were carried out to determine how activation tools are implemented across income groupings and across geographic regions. The case study countries were Saudi Arabia; Malaysia; Iran; Cameroon; and Uganda.

He explained that Saudi Arabia is investing heavily in employment programmes and supporting infrastructure. This investment aims to achieve a large increase in the national population participating in private sector employment and to help diversify the nation's economy away from oil. Activation measures implemented in Saudi Arabia include:

Job search support	Skills training	Job creation
Wide range of programmes. Extensive use of online tools to overcome geographical barriers. Different programmes also target different customer groups, e.g. People with disabilities.	Increasing investment being made e.g. The Colleges of Excellence programme to build 100 new colleges over 10 years. Job Schools are also being used to improve the employability of people far from the labour market.	Focus is on increasing the number of Saudi workers in the private sector through schemes such as Nitaqat and Mazaya.

He emphasized that activation in Saudi Arabia is characterized by the use of private providers contracted to deliver programmes. Contracts include a payment by results element. There is also a focus on innovation and online services to enable access to services.

Regarding the Malaysian case Mr. MELVIN informed that Malaysia's continued economic growth has provided significant employment opportunities and the country has developed a highly skilled workforce. Activation programmes are now being used as a tool to target the most disadvantaged and hardest to help communities. In this respect, activation measures implemented in Malaysia include:

Job search support	Skills training	Job creation
Core service is delivered through an online job matching portal by Jobs Malaysia. Additional services include jobs carnivals.	An alternative, vocational education route is available for students: the National Dual Training System. Training to improve employability is also delivered by providers and NGOs.	Little focus on job creation due to strong economic growth. Micro finance programmes are available to support would be entrepreneurs.

Mr. MELVIN underlined that activation in Malaysia centres around government aims to diversify the skills base to ensure there is labour market opportunity for all skill levels.

With respect to the Iranian case he expressed that Iran has implemented a number of activation measures with a particular focus on job creation and skills training. This is due to the growing young population, meaning jobs must keep pace with the growing population. Activation in Iran is recognized as a valuable tool but measures such as cash transfer payments and food donation

programmes are also prioritized as poverty alleviation tools. In this respect, activation measures implemented in Iran explained as follows:

Job search support	Skills training	Job creation
PES delivers support through provincial branches to ensure a localised approach. The centres also deliver training and job creation initiatives.	Large number of training opportunities available but these tend to be concentrated in urban areas. There is cooperation between government departments to coordinate skills training opportunities.	The promotion of entrepreneurship and credit facilities are largely used as tools for job creation. Several projects are sector specific, e.g. Focused on agricultural sector.

Explaining the Cameroonian case Mr. MELVIN mentioned that Cameroon has made the use of activation a key tool in its poverty reduction strategy. Each ministry now plays a role in employment promotion and a large number of activation policies and projects have been implemented. These are supplemented by projects delivered by NGOs and international agencies. The activation measures implemented in Cameroon include:

Job search support	Skills training	Job creation
PES delivers job search support through job centres and targets employers as well as jobseekers. Customer journeys are adapted to each customer's needs. Informal networks continue to be heavily utilised by jobseekers however.	Focus by the government and NGOs to deliver skills training to agricultural workers to increase productivity.	Government is encouraging entrepreneurship as are other aid agencies. Preference for labour intensive techniques in the development of infrastructure also leads to job creation.

He emphasized that the activation in Cameroon can be characterised by scale in terms of the number of programmes implemented. This means that extensive coordination is required to ensure efficient use of resources.

Regarding the case of Uganda he briefed the participants that the need to prioritise activation has been recognised by the Ugandan government. Comprehensive activation strategies are in place, but actually implementing them is a challenge. Improved targeting is also required to ensure it is those most in need that benefit from activation measures. Activation in Uganda can be characterised by the development of comprehensive strategies whose implementation is constrained due to lack of resources. In this framework, Mr. MELVIN underlined the activation measures implemented in Uganda include:

Job search support	Skills training	Job creation
Lack of funding means there is little job search support available and jobseekers and employers tend to use informal recruitment networks.	Training aims to address skills mismatch and vocational training is being encouraged. However, the training available does not always deliver the skills employers need. Training is also used to encourage entrepreneurship.	Several entrepreneurship schemes are in place. Projects particularly target young people because this group is most affected by unemployment.

Finally Mr. MELVIN explained three main policy elements for effective implementation of the activation policies; national policy objectives and delivery, individual programme design and performance, and supporting infrastructure. He mentioned that with regard to the national policy objectives and delivery, the value of a policy focus on activation should be recognised. To ensure

efficient use of resources and knowledge sharing, it is also best practice for the design and delivery of activation measures to be overseen and coordinated by a lead organisation.

In the context of individual programme design and performance, a Public Employment Services (PES) often being best placed to lead the delivery of activation; the PES engaging with employers in designing and delivering activation programmes; characteristics other than poverty, related to the likelihood of an individual being poor, being used to identify programmes' target groups; the use of loans for beneficiaries to improve projects' sustainability; and programmes' impact improving when programmes contain an element of continuous improvement.

In the context of supporting infrastructure, best practice includes: an overarching monitoring of national activation strategies to improve the effectiveness of activation measures; external organisations providing support for platforms to exchange information and best practice between practitioners and policy makers; a long term commitment to activation policies and ongoing evaluation to improve the performance of programmes.

Questions and Remarks

Question: In many cases the training seems to focus very much on the formal sector. On the other hand, there are too many people working in informal sector. In this respect, did you observe in practice that the training programs really targeting people working in informal sector?

Answer: Mr. We did not observe many examples that try to get informal workers into formal training works. In this framework, we think that this issue should be prioritized during the development of employment strategies as part of activation policies.

Q: Is there a sharing of good models among the Member Countries?

A: The level of economic development among the OIC Member Countries varies considerably. Therefore, the level of economic development should be taken into consideration while sharing best practices. In this framework, we observed some very good practice models during our study. For instance, Saudi Arabia is a very good example regarding how to learn from the mistakes of the OECD Countries, to develop their Social Support Programmes and to support their people in work. Saudi Arabia well benefited from the OECD Countries' experience to avoid from same mistakes.

4. Policy Discussion Session

During the policy discussion session, moderated by Mr. Asif SALEH, Senior Director at the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), the participants focused on mainly two issues; increasing the capacity of the institutions providing Public Employment Services (PES) in the Member Countries and promoting employer engagement in the preparation/implementation of the activation programmes.

At the outset, Mr. Mehmet Akif ALANBAY, Expert at the COMCEC Coordination Office, made a presentation on the policy issues highlighted in the room document which was prepared in line with the answers of the member countries to the policy questions, and to the inventory study sent to the Working Group focal points by the CCO as well as the main policy advices of the analytical study prepared specifically for the 5th Meeting of the Poverty Alleviation Working Group.

In his presentation Mr. ALANBAY informed that participants that they received responses from 15 countries out of 27 countries registered to the PAWG. The answers abled us to see the similarities and differences in these countries. The result of the answers indicates that even if the poor people work, their income is not sufficient to enable them to escape poverty. Therefore, the poor should be employed in more decent works so that they can earn more than now. In this sense, activation measures should support employability in decent works.

He further expressed that social assistances may cause dependency on the social assistance benefits. Therefore, to prevent such a dependency on social assistance there should be a link between social assistance system and employment services. It was observed that there is such a link in most of the member countries. However, in some countries this link is considered as weak. Moreover, for few member countries there is no connection between employment and social assistance system (SAS). Considering the current institutional structure, it can be stated that a link between SAS and employment should be established or strengthened in our member countries.

Mr. ALANBAY informed that for most of the member countries, the main challenges can be seen as insufficient capacity of the Public Employment Services, finding a decent work, limited allocated funds and dependency on public work programmes.

Continuing his presentation He mentioned that linkage between different activation programmes is essential for their effective implementation. For instance, the people attended to vocational training programmes (VCT) can be orientated to public employment services after vocational training. In this regard, it is stated that a linkage between different activation programmes should be established in the countries in which such connection do not exist.

Lastly, Mr. ALANBAY expressed that the conditionalities of the activation programmes create disincentives for the social assistance applications in general. However, for most of member countries the conditionalities are not disincentive in application for social assistance.

Following the presentation of the CCO, representatives of the member countries shared their views and comments. In this respect, it was emphasized that Public Employment Services (PES) aim to provide job search support, refer training programmes to the beneficiaries, and encourage entrepreneurship. The capacity of the institutions responsible for the PES in the member states is not sufficient to provide these services. Therefore, the quality and quantity of the human resources of the PES institutions in the Member Countries need to be enhanced. Furthermore, in order to have an advanced monitoring system for tracking the situation of the beneficiaries in the labour market, information technology (IT) infrastructure of the PES institutions need to be developed in the Member Countries. Accordingly, an effective partnership with the relevant

stakeholders in delivering activation measures in the Member Countries need to be ensured to expand the outreach of the PES.

Regarding the second issue promoting employer engagement in the preparation/implementation of the activation programmes, it was stated that providing young graduates with the skills needed by employers is a prerequisite to ensure their employment in decent jobs. In this respect it was mentioned that designing activation programmes in light of the employers needs bear great importance. Therefore, active involvement of the employers in design of such programs can contribute to mitigating mismatch between young graduates' skills and the needs of the employers. In this framework, two main issues highlighted; establishment of a Skills Development Authority, for ensuring the active involvement of the relevant stakeholders, including employers, in the design and implementation of the activation programs and usage of surveys that can identify the skill-needs in the labour market.

5. Member State Presentations

In this section, member country representatives had chance to present the activation policies/programmes being implemented in their respective countries. Participants from Cameroon, Tunisia and Turkey made presentations.

5.1. Cameroon

The presentation of Cameroon was made by Mr. Jibirila HAMAN, expert on employment, working as employment advisor with Cameroon Public Employment Service (PES); the National Employment Fund (NEF). At the outset, he gave information on the geographical and economic characteristic of Cameroon. He stated that despite having good GDP growth and low unemployment rate with a population of 22.25 million, Cameroon suffers from underemployment and the informal sector which are significant challenges both because of their scale and impact on poverty.

Mr. HAMAN also gave information on the employment rate of the poor and NEF activation policy measures. He stated that a significant portion of those employed are paid less than the minimum wage rate. He elaborated on the four operational services of the NEF which are matching, job creation, vocational training and job market information framework, and NEF Employment programs pointing out their scale and impact on employment and poverty alleviation. He went further to explain the Graduate Employment Program (PED), Urban Special Employment Program (USEP), Self-Employment and Micro Enterprise Program (PAME), and Rural Employment Support Program (PADER).

Afterwards, Mr. HAMAN informed the participants about some characteristics and trends of employment and poverty in Cameroon as below:

- The informal sector absorb more than 85% of the active labour,
- 43.1% of the employment rate are poor in Cameroon, based on the data survey, ECAM3 (INS, 2007),
- Unemployment is more significant in urban areas for youth group (15.5%) and women (16.8%).
- NEF's case load is 3000 job seekers per Employment Advisor,
- Many institutions in Cameroon have job creation programs in operation, but there is no coordination between the different bodies for synergy in service delivery to have maximum impact. In order to remedy the situation, the government is working to put in place a "one stop shop" for coordinating job creation activities.

In conclusion, Mr. HAMAN pointed out that in order to ensure employment and poverty alleviation services and programs have significant impact a number of challenges must be overcome, such as funding to the NEF to enable them open more agencies and recruit more employment advisors to reduce the case load/employer from 3000 to 300. Furthermore, inclusion capacity of programs targeting youth groups should be increased through sharing job seekers data of the NEF Integrated information System between agencies, and launch the "one stop shop".

5.2. Tunisia

Ms. Latifa RAHMANI, Program Manager at Tunisian Union of Social Solidarity (TUSS), made a presentation regarding the activation programmes of the TUSS. At the outset, she mentioned that the TUSS was founded in 1964 and it brings together 24 regional social solidarity associations and 264 local committees of social solidarity as well as 23 associations for the protection of elderly

people. She stated that the TUSS has many programs focusing on persons with disability, elderly and preschool children. Then she gave some examples among the programs such as direct assistance to needy families during natural disasters and promotion of preschool children of needy families.

Later on Ms. RAHMANI presented an activation project based on training and realized by the TUSS and financed by the World Bank titled “Participatory Project Delivery Services for Reintegration in Medenine and Tataouine”. Ms. RAHMANI pointed out that implementation time of the project is 30 months (beginning from October 2012) and the financing of the project is 5 million dollars donation from the World Bank. Beneficiaries of the program are the young people who are undereducated and unskilled from needy families and at least 30% of women who meet the eligibility criteria. The project objective is job creation through a cash transfer for basic social services for vulnerable Tunisian households in the cities of Tataouine and Medenine affected by Libyan conflict.

Afterwards, Ms. RAHMANI demonstrated some indicators of the project and some achievements so far and she mentioned that the achievements far exceeded initial expectations. While there were 40 targeted subprojects 92 subprojects have been realized with participation of partner associations. Similarly, 6182 direct beneficiaries have got involved in the projects whereas the initial target was 4000.

Then Ms. RAHMANI informed the participants about the education level of beneficiaries and stated that more than 80 percent of them are graduated from primary or high school. She expressed that 40 percent of the direct beneficiaries is under the age of 25 while 34 percent is between 26 and 32.

Thereafter, Ms. RAHMANI enumerated some following outcomes of the project:

- The project provided capacity building opportunity for young people excluded from the formal vocational training system in order to improve their chances of getting a decent job.
- The project has enabled young people especially disadvantaged to have expertise to facilitate access to employment.
- The skills are adapted to labor market needs and the needs of local communities.
- Young people have benefited from a network that enables them to more easily find employment or start their own business.

Ms. RAHMANI ended her presentation reflecting some recommendations as below:

- Improving linkages with the formal system of vocational training,
- Ensuring access to skills validation mechanisms,
- Diversifying the skills provided to young people,
- Providing funds for the development of micro and small enterprises,
- Considering the anchoring of such projects through the establishment of a national program with a stable public funding.

Questions and Remarks

Q: Mr. Ismail RAHIMI, Chairman of the Meeting asked whether there is a link between the TUSS and Tunisian government.

A: Ms. RAHMANI expressed that apart from other donations from national or international donors the government make a considerable contribution to budget of the TUSS. Therefore, there is a strong connection between the TUSS’s activities and Tunisian government.

5.3. Turkey

Mr. Oğuz ÖZDEMİR, Social Policy Expert in General Directorate of Social Assistance of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (MoFSP) of Turkey, made a presentation on the link between social assistance and employment in Turkey.

Mr. ÖZDEMİR firstly shared some figures with the participants about general outlook of employment situation in Turkey. He enumerated the key numbers as following:

- Population : 77.695.904
- Labor force : 28.970.000
- Employment participation rate : 50,5%
- Unemployed population: 3.096.000
- Unemployment rate : 10,7%
- Number of beneficiaries from social assistance : 3.005.898 household

Then he gave brief information about the main institutions cooperating on developing social assistance and employment relation. General Directorate of Social Assistance (GDSA) is the institution in which the most resources have been allocated in the field of social assistance in Turkey. Therefore, this directorate has become the most efficient institution regarding poverty alleviation. By using social assistance and solidarity funds social assistance activities carried out throughout the country by 1000 Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (SASF) in all provinces and districts. The main actor regarding employment is the Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) which is the primary government institution.

Regarding the activation policies, İŞKUR carries out job matching, vocational training, vocational counseling and public work programs. GDSA deals with project supports and employment of social assistance beneficiaries. With regards to the coordination between the two institutions and integration of their systems, Mr. ÖZDEMİR mentioned that Economic Coordination Committee decided to activate the relation between social assistances and employment in 2010. After this decision protocols were signed between these institutions and databases of İŞKUR and GDSA was integrated. Since then, those who apply and receive social assistance have been registered into the İŞKUR's database via Integrated Social Assistance Services Information System.

Afterwards, Mr. ÖZDEMİR demonstrated some numbers concerning the outcomes of the link between social assistance and employment as of June 2014 as below:

- Nearly 1 million people between 15-64 years old were directed to database of İŞKUR.
- 396.470 people were registered on the İŞKUR portal.
- 174.395 people were oriented to vacant jobs and 48.532 of them were employed.
- 96.903 people applied to vocational courses in order to improve their employability and 31.763 of them attended the courses.

Later on, Mr. ÖZDEMİR touched upon a new model which is implemented by the officers in SASFs. With this new model, he stated that an "Employment Task List" is prepared by the GDSA by use of its integrated system and conveyed to all SASFs. Afterwards, the officers of the SASFs make interviews with the social assistance beneficiaries. The officers encourage the able beneficiaries to participate suitable employment generating activities such as vocational training and there are some sanctions if they do not attend these activities. Furthermore, the officers help the beneficiaries register/update their registry to İŞKUR. In case the beneficiary decline a job interview or such opportunities other people who are able to work among the household

members are invited to the interview. If there is no other person able to work in the family, then the assistance given to the beneficiary is withheld.

Regarding the incentive supports for employment, Mr. ÖZDEMİR firstly pointed out that job guidance assistance is provided for maximum 3 times in a year so that beneficiaries can afford their transport expenses to go to job interviews or headshot which is necessary for job applications. The amount of the job guidance assistance is between 40 and 100 Turkish Liras (TL). Another incentive is the start working assistance which is one third of gross amount of minimum wage (400TL) and given for once when the guided beneficiary is employed. Mr. ÖZDEMİR also expressed that regular assistances given to newly employed beneficiaries such as Conditional Cash Transfers (CCT) for health or education are not cut off during 12 months after starting work.

Thereafter, Mr. ÖZDEMİR mentioned that if the beneficiaries do not attend employment generating activities they can only benefit from central and in-kind assistances, they cannot benefit from CCTs.

Mr. ÖZDEMİR also shared some statistics to show the result of the integration of GDSA and İŞKUR. He pointed out that 18.719 people registered/updated their registry to İŞKUR by the help of the officials in SASFs. 5.007 people have been directed towards vacant jobs and 608 of them have been employed. Moreover, 40.085TL has been spent for 570 beneficiaries under the job guidance assistance. Afterwards, he stated that 39.941TL has been spent for 104 beneficiaries under the assistance for start work.

Lastly, he touched upon the planned steps to improve the working system. He stated that they will ameliorate the implementation of incentive supports and sanctions. In addition, he expressed that they will subsidize the share of social security premiums of employer and/or employee in order to increase the employment number of the social assistance beneficiaries.

6. Experiences of International/Non-governmental Organizations and Local Authorities in Activation Policies and Programmes

6.1. Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC)

Mr. Asif SALEH, Senior Director in Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), made a presentation regarding the experiences of BRAC on Activation Policies and Programmes.

At the outset, Mr. SALEH shared some figures about Bangladesh. He mentioned that, Bangladesh made huge gains in education and health. He underlined that more than 90 percent of girls was in primary school in 2005 and that was slightly more than boys. He highlighted that for all social indicators, Bangladesh is better than its neighbouring countries. He expressed that since 1999 GDP in real terms has been rising respectively 5% a year. The growth has been helping to reduce the percentage of people below the poverty line. The percentage of people below poverty line was 49 percent in 2000 and it reduced 26 percent in 2013. He mentioned that they believed that economic growth brings development with it. He argued that this view is criticised in some cases, but it is in valid for Bangladesh. He touched upon the following 4 reasons why growth brings development together with it in Bangladesh:

1. Improvement of human capital
2. Green Agriculture Revaluation
3. Remittance from abroad
4. NGOs

Afterwards, Mr. SALEH briefly informed the participants about BRAC. He underline that with over 100,000 employees reaching an estimated 135 million people, BRAC is the world's largest non-governmental organisation. He told that BRAC is one of the few based in the global South, spreading antipoverty solutions born in Bangladesh to 10 other developing countries in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean.

He shared the guiding principles of BRAC with participants. According to his presentation:

- BRAC focuses on women, who are worst affected by poverty,
- Organising the poor is at the heart of its work,
- BRAC acts as catalysts, creating an ecosystem where the poor can seize control of their lives,
- BRAC believes that many of the underlying causes of poverty are interlinked, and takes a comprehensive approach to address them.

Later on, he mentioned that the abovementioned comprehensive approach could split under the three approaches:

1. Poverty Reduction: MF, Enterprises, Agriculture, Ultra Poor
2. Community Mobilisation: Human Rights, Community Empowerment, Gender, Advocacy
3. Capacity Development: Education, Health, Water and Sanitation, Disaster Management.

Lastly, Mr. SALEH informed the participants regarding BRAC's activation intervention. He underlined that the core of BRAC's intervention is economic development and creating livelihood for people. He detailed BRAC's activation intervention under 4 models:

1. Financial Inclusion: Lack of access to economic systems keeps people trapped in poverty,
2. Creating Social Enterprises to create the supply chain for the local producers,
3. Creating new kinds of jobs and training and capacity building in the rural economy,
4. Tapping into apprenticeship model of the informal economy.

6.2. İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality Art and Vocational Training Courses (ISMEK)

Mr. Mehmet DOĞAN from İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality made a presentation with regards to the vocational training courses under the ISMEK. Mr. DOĞAN mentioned that nearly 3million people applied and 2 million people have attended the training courses since the beginning. Last year 221.367 people were trained and the target of this year is about 230.000. Mr. DOĞAN expressed that the ISMEK has 35 training centers in 38 districts of İstanbul and there are 348 training branches.

In the sense of gender, he informed the participants that 80 percent of the trainees are women. He added that there are also foreign trainees from many countries. Furthermore, Mr. DOĞAN stated that there are some courses targeting the disadvantaged groups.

Regarding the external relations and cooperation efforts, Mr. DOĞAN mentioned that Municipality of İstanbul has Memorandum of Understandings with many NGOs in Europe. Moreover, in cooperation with the Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), ISMEK has provided trainings for the master trainers from the OIC Member Countries. So far, trainers from Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea, Jordan, Pakistan, Senegal and Sudan have been trained.

6.3. Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic Countries (SESRIC)

Mr. Mansur BOYDAŞ, Researcher in Training and Technical Cooperation Department of SESRIC, made a presentation on the Vocational Education and Training Programme for the Member Countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC-VET). At the beginning of his presentation Mr. Boydaş stated that the OIC-VET is a programme originally designed and developed by the SESRIC in order to improve the quality of vocational education and training in the public and private sectors in the OIC Member Countries. He added that the programme was officially launched by H.E. Abdullah GÜL, the former President of Republic of Turkey during the Economic Summit of COMCEC on November 8th, 2009, in İstanbul.

Mr. BOYDAŞ mentioned that the previous and upcoming activities under the OIC-VET can be followed through the OIC-VET portal in 22 different social and economic programmes. He enumerated the 4 objectives of these programmes as follows:

- Capacity building,
- Transfer of knowledge,
- Skill development and
- Networking.

He stated that there are three implementing modalities of these objectives namely; Exchange of Experts, Training the Trainers and Study Visits. Since the beginning more than 250 training activities have been organized under 22 capacity building programmes in 14 different fields. Regarding the networking, it was expressed that there are three networks under the OIC-VET. These are:

- Occupational Safety and Health Network (OIC-OSHNET)
- OIC Public Employment Services Network (OIC-PESNET)
- OIC Ibn Sina Health Alliance of NGOs

Regarding the Activation Programmes under the OIC-VET, Mr. BOYDAŞ stated that SESRIC is active in two activation tools: Vocational Training and Job Creation. Under the Vocational Training SESRIC is implementing three programmes namely; ISMEK Master Trainer Programme (IMTP), Public Employment Services Capacity Building Programme (PESCaB) and Skill Development for Youth Employment (SDYE). As for the job creation SESRIC has an Internship Programme.

Afterwards, Mr. Mansur BOYDAŞ explained the IMTP by giving some details. The IMTP is a joint programme between ISMEK and SESRIC. Training the trainers is the main objective of the activities under the IMTP. So far, master trainers from Azerbaijan, Cameroon, Egypt, Guinea, Pakistan and Senegal have been trained. Furthermore, 2 Workshops for Knowledge and Experience Sharing on ISMEK Master Training Programme were held last year in cooperation with NGOs from Palestine and Islamic University in Uganda. Mr. BOYDAŞ informed the participants about the Vocational Education School under this University as well.

Mr. BOYDAŞ continued his presentation by giving some details about SDYE. He stated that the programme began with a study visit to Ankara in January 2012 with the participation of relevant institutions from 8 pilot member countries. The aim of the study visit was to share the experience of Turkey in fighting against youth unemployment through the “Skill 10 Project”. Thereafter, another study visit was organised in Cameroon towards the end of 2012. With this study visit relevant institutions of Turkey as well as IDB and SESRIC shared their experiences and two phases were determined for implementing a project similar to “Skill 10 Project” of Turkey in Cameroon.

As for the PESCaB, Mr. BOYDAŞ enumerated the main subjects and cooperation areas of training programmes as follows:

- Employment Policies and Strategies
- Job Creation for Youth
- Skills Training Services
- Self-Employment and Micro Enterprise
- Managing Information on Labour Market
- Unemployment Insurance and Employment Protection
- Combating Informal Employment

Mr. BOYDAŞ mentioned that 2 training courses were organized till now. Firstly, Training Course on “Job Creation for Youth and Skills Training Services” was held in December 2014 in Azerbaijan. Secondly, Training Course on “Labour Market Statistics” and “Labour Inspection” was organized in January 2015 in Burkina Faso.

Lastly, Mr. BOYDAŞ informed the participants about the SESRIC Internship Programme which was initiated in 2013. The Programme provides the university students to work in an international environment so that they can improve their skills and have experience. So far 20 interns have been included in the programme and 6 of them are still at the center.

Then, Mr. BOYDAŞ ended his presentation and thanked all the participants.

7. The Way Forward: Utilizing the COMCEC Project Cycle Management (PCM)

The last presentation was made by Mr. Aykut YILMAZ, Expert at COMCEC Coordination Office (CCO) on the Project Cycle Management (PCM) mechanism introduced by the COMCEC Strategy.

At the beginning of his presentation Mr. YILMAZ stated that the PCM is one of the implementation tools of the COMCEC Strategy and he would explain basically the rules and procedures of this mechanism. He also underlined that the Strategy envisages a member driven mechanism and the PCM serves to member countries to develop multilateral cooperation opportunities.

Regarding the submission of the projects, Mr. YILMAZ informed the participants that only member countries registered to the Working Groups and OIC Institutions can submit the projects to the CCO. Moreover, at least three countries should be involved to the projects.

He continued his presentation by giving some detailed information on the project selection criteria. He expressed that all project proposals must have direct compliance with the principles of the COMCEC Strategy which are enhancing mobility, strengthening solidarity and improving governance. A project will be eligible for funding if it meets the strategic objectives of the Strategy, focuses on its output areas and pursues multilateral cooperation among the OIC Member Countries. He also mentioned that the nature of the projects would be soft nature related to technical cooperation and capacity building such as trainings, study visits, analytical studies etc. He added that project proposals for infrastructure investments or feasibility studies are not financed since the PCM is soft in character.

After underlining the possible activities, three key actors and their responsibilities during the whole process under the PCM were identified; Project Owner (Project Submission and Implementation); the CCO (Program Management) and the Intermediary Bank (Development Bank of Turkey) (Project Monitoring and Financing). Moreover, the roles of these key actors throughout the project application, implementation and financing process were explained.

Mr. YILMAZ informed the participants that the Bank would be mainly responsible for financial and technical monitoring of the projects while the CCO would oversee the overall implementation of the PCM. In the presentation, reporting procedures of the project activities were also provided.

With respect to the financial framework, Mr. YILMAZ emphasized that the funds are grant in nature and would be provided by the COMCEC Coordination Office for the 2013-2015 period. From the illustration of the indicative grant limits and co-finance rates for the COMCEC projects, it was seen that member countries could submit a project with a budget up to USD 250.000 with the condition that they would cover at least %10 of the total budget (cash or in kind). For the OIC Institutions, this amount would be USD 100.000 and at least %25 should be covered by the project owner.

He noted that the first call for project proposals made in September, 2014. The interest from Member Countries and relevant OIC Institutions was great (from 23 member countries and 3 OIC institutions) so that 8 projects were selected and financed by the CCO in 2014.

As an example, Mr. Aykut YILMAZ mentioned about the implemented project of SESRIC titled "Enhancing National Capacities of OIC Member Countries in Poverty Statistics". The purpose of the project was to contribute the national statistical systems in the member countries in terms of poverty alleviation, monitoring poverty and aid effectiveness. Project's main focus is on preparing a policy-oriented research paper. In order to produce a qualified report SESRIC sent a

questionnaire to the member countries. Afterwards, SESRIC organized two meetings under this project. The project was finalized in December 2014 and a policy oriented research paper has been prepared in English. It will be translated to French and Arabic and published soon. He added that SESRIC applied for the second phase of the same project during the second call. This proposal has been final listed and will be implemented during this year.

Thereafter, Mr. YILMAZ expressed that the second call for project proposals ended by the end of September 2014. Totally 62 proposals were submitted by 20 countries and 3 OIC institutions. 17 proposals have been final listed and 4 of them are related to the poverty alleviation (Cameroon, Iran, Suriname and SESRIC). Then, Mr. YILMAZ briefly informed the participants about these 4 projects.

Mr. YILMAZ touched upon also the recent developments in terms of improving PCM mechanism. He noted the developments as follows;

- The independent appraisal of project proposals,
- Revised durations for project submission periods,
- Upper limit for Project Coordinator's and Project Expert's fees,
- New Criteria: Sectoral themes of Working Group Meetings

Lastly, Mr. YILMAZ reminded the participants that the third call for project proposals will be made at the beginning of the September, 2015. He invited all the member countries of the Poverty Alleviation Working Group and the OIC institutions to submit their new proposals in the third call.

Questions and Remarks

Question: Mrs. Latifa RAHMANI from Tunisia asked whether collaboration with NGOs is convenient while preparing and submitting a project proposal by the public institutions.

Answer: Mr. Aykut YILMAZ responded by stating that there is no harm to cooperate with NGOs. However, he underlined that the proposal should be submitted by the focal point and under the responsibility of public institutions.

Q: Mr. Asif SALEH from BRAC asked whether it would be proper if a model prepared by an NGO was proposed to be implemented by three countries.

A: Mr. YILMAZ mentioned that cooperating with NGOs is welcomed and he added that the proposal should address the strategic objectives and output areas of the COMCEC Strategy. He also stressed that the proposals should have multilateral aspects and serve for more than two countries.

Q: Mr. Ismail RAHIMI, Chairman of the Meeting, asked if there is any budget limitation for each working group.

A: Mr. YILMAZ stated that there is not any limitation concerning the budget.

Q: Mr. Azhari Gasim AHMED from IDB Group mentioned that private sector also should take part in social activities and take social responsibility. Therefore, private companies can also have opportunity to submit proposals to the PCM.

A: Mr. Deniz GÖLE from the COMCEC Coordination Office acknowledged Mr. AHMED was right and pointed out that they have received similar demands from some member countries. Therefore, he expressed that the COMCEC Coordination Office will take into consideration these demands and in the future it might be possible for private firms to submit project proposals.

8. Closing Remarks

The Meeting ended with closing remarks of Mr. Ismail RAHIMI, Chairman of the Meeting and Mr. Metin EKER, Director General of the COMCEC Coordination Office (CCO).

Mr. RAHIMI thanked all the member country representatives as well as participants from OECD, BRAC and other institutions for their very active participation and valuable contributions. Then he summarized the discussions during the meeting and underlined the importance of international institutions and NGOs in activation policies.

Mr. Metin EKER also thanked all participants for their attendance and precious contributions. Mr. EKER expressed that they had a fruitful day of discussion with very valuable participation of the member countries as well as the institutions. He stated that the main outcome of the meeting would be the Room Document which includes a number of policy proposals for the member countries. This document will be revised and circulated to the participants soon for their final considerations. Afterwards, the Room Document will be finalized and submitted to the 31st Session of the COMCEC as an output of Poverty Alleviation Working Group.

He expressed that observations on the documents submitted to this meeting namely analytical report and outlook, would be appreciated if the member countries could convey them in written form so that the CCO can benefit from these views and improve the quality of the studies conducted by the CCO.

Mr. EKER underlined the importance of the PCM mechanism in the sense of taking role by member countries to collaborate under the umbrella of COMCEC. He added some benefits of making use of PCM such as direct involvement of relevant ministry or institutions of the member countries into cooperation efforts through mobilising their institutional and human resources. Furthermore, the PCM projects can serve for the purpose of building or enhancing the capacity of ministries and other institutions in terms of designing and implementing an international project. Lastly, he expressed that the PCM projects can also be useful for improving the skills of national institutions to work with other Islamic countries.

Furthermore, Mr. EKER informed the august house that the 6th Meeting of the COMCEC Poverty Alleviation Working Group will be held on September 10th, 2015 in Ankara with the theme of "Improvement of Basic Services Delivery for the Poor in the OIC Member Countries". He stated that a research report will also be prepared on this theme and will be shared with the focal points and other participants at least one month before the meeting.

Mr. EKER thanked again to all participants and expressed his hope to see them all in September, 2015 in Ankara.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Agenda of the Meeting



AGENDA

OF THE 5TH MEETING OF THE COMCEC POVERTY ALLEVIATION WORKING GROUP

February 26th, 2015, Ankara, Turkey

“Activation Policies for the Poor in the OIC Member States”

Opening Remarks

1. COMCEC Poverty Outlook
2. Importance of activation policies for poverty reduction
3. Current situation of the activation policies and programs in the OIC Member States
4. Roundtable discussion on the policy options for developing effective activation policies to improve the employability of the poor in the OIC Member States
5. Member State Presentations
6. Perspective of non-governmental organizations/international institutions on activation policies targeting the poor
7. Utilizing the COMCEC Project Funding

Closing Remarks

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Annex 2: Programme of the Meeting



PROGRAMME

5th MEETING OF THE COMCEC POVERTY ALLEVIATION WORKING GROUP (February 26th, 2014, Ankara)

“Activation Policies for the Poor in the OIC Member States”

08.30-09.00 **Registration**

09.00-09.15 **Opening Remarks**

09.15-09.45 **The COMCEC Poverty Outlook**

- Presentation: “Outlook of Poverty in the OIC Member States: Multidimensional Poverty”

Ms. Hande HACIMAHMUTOĞLU, Expert

COMCEC Coordination Office

- Views and Comments

09.45-10.45 **Current Developments in Activation Policies**

- Presentation: “Activation Policies for the Poor and Global Trends”

Mr. Alexandre KOLEV, Head of Unit

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

Question(s) for Discussion

- What is the existing employment situation of the poor and people at risk of poverty in your country?
- What are the challenges related to the employment situation of the poor in your country?

10.45-11.00 **Coffee Break**

11.00-12.00 **Overview of the Activation Policies and Programmes in the OIC Member States**

- Presentation: "Employment situation and activation policies and programmes implemented in the OIC Member States with special focus on case studies"

*Mr. Christopher MELVIN, Director
Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (CESI)*

Question(s) for Discussion

- What are the public employment/job search support policies and programmes aiming to match unemployed poor and possible vacancies in your country (like job placement, counseling, job mobility support etc.)?
- What are the training programmes in your country aiming to increase qualifications and skills of unemployed poor?
- What are the job creation policies and programmes (like micro-credit, subsidies, public work programmes for the poor) aiming to support labour demand by expanding the set of earning opportunities for the poor?

12.00-13.30 **Lunch**

13.30-15.30 **Policy Options for Improving Activation Policies**

There will be a moderation session under this agenda item. The participants are expected to deliberate on the policy options/advice for improving Activation Policies in the Member Countries. *The Room Document on Policy Options for Developing Effective Activation Policies in the Member Countries* was prepared by the CCO, in light of the main findings of the analytical study prepared specifically for the Meeting and the answers of the Member Countries to the policy questions which have already been sent by the CCO. This Document has been shared with the Poverty Alleviation Working Group focal points as well as the participants before the Meeting with a view to enriching the discussions during the Session and coming up with concrete policy advice for the policy approximation among the Member Countries in this important field.

Question(s) for Discussion

- Is there any Public Employment Services (PES) in your country; if yes, do you think that the existing PES is effective?
- Is there any mechanism ensuring the active involvement of the employers in the design and implementation of the activation policies in your country?
- Do the vocational training programmes meet the need for skill improvement of the poor?
- Do you think that the funds allocated to the activation programmes are sufficient?

15.30-15.45 **Coffee Break**

15.45-17.15 **Member Country Presentations**

- Sharing Experiences and Good Practices in Activation Policies and Programmes

Question(s) for Discussion

- Is there a link between activation policies/programmes and poverty reduction in your country? If no, is there any future plan to establish such a link?

17.15-17.45 **The Experience of International/Non-governmental Organizations and Local Authorities in Activation Policies and Programmes**

- Presentation: *“Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee’s (BRAC) Experience in the Activation Policies and Programmes”*

*Mr. Asif SALEH, Senior Director
Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC)*

- Presentation: *“The Experience of İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality Art and Vocational Training Courses (İSMEK) in the Activation Programmes”*

*Mr. Mehmet DOĞAN
İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality Art and Vocational Training Courses
(İSMEK)*

- Presentation: *“Activation Policies under OIC-VET”*

*Mr. Mansur BOYDAŞ, Researcher
Statistical, Economic and Social Research and Training Centre for Islamic
Countries (SESRIC)*

Question(s) for Discussion

- What is your country experience in developing/implementing activation programmes with international organizations?
- How the NGOs are involved in the activation programmes in your country?

17.45-18.05 **Utilizing the COMCEC PCM**

- Presentation: *“Utilizing the COMCEC Project Cycle Management”*

*Mr. Aykut YILMAZ, Expert
COMCEC Coordination Office*

Views and Comments

18.05-18.15 **Closing Remarks**

Annex 3: Policy Advices of the 5th COMCEC Poverty Alleviation Working Group Meeting

The COMCEC Poverty Alleviation Working Group held its 5th Meeting on February 26th, 2015, in Ankara with the theme of “Activation Policies for the Poor in the OIC Member States” with the active participation of the member countries. The participants, during the Meeting, have discussed the activation policies and programmes with special focus on employer engagement in these programmes and the PES institutions. These issues were also highlighted in the analytical study prepared specifically for this meeting as well as in the answers of the member countries to the policy questions, sent to the Working Group focal points and participants before the meeting by the COMCEC Coordination Office.

The member countries of the Poverty Alleviation WG are kindly invited to share their views and observations on this document to the COMCEC Coordination Office by **April 24th, 2015**. Any comments received after this date will not be able to be incorporated into the Document. After incorporating the member countries’ contributions, this document will be submitted to the 31st Session of the COMCEC to be held on 23-26th November, 2015 as an outcome of the 5th Poverty Alleviation WG Meeting.

After the discussions on the above-mentioned issues, the Working Group highlighted the policy advices as below.

Policy Advice I: Increasing the capacity of the institutions providing Public Employment Services (PES) in the Member Countries through enhancing the quality and quantity of the human resources and developing information technology (IT) infrastructure of the PES institutions as well as ensuring an effective partnership with the relevant stakeholders in delivering activation measures

Rationale:

Public Employment Services (PES) aim to provide job search support, refer training programmes to the beneficiaries, and encourage entrepreneurship. The capacity of the institutions responsible for the PES in the member states is not sufficient to provide these services. Some important areas for increasing the capacity of PES institutions are given below:

- The quality and quantity of the human resources of the PES institutions in the Member Countries need to be enhanced.
- In order to have an advanced monitoring system for tracking the situation of the beneficiaries in the labour market, information technology (IT) infrastructure of the PES institutions need to be developed in the Member Countries.
- An effective partnership with the relevant stakeholders in delivering activation measures in the Member Countries need to be ensured to expand the outreach of the PES.

Policy Advice II: Promoting employer engagement in the preparation/implementation of the activation programmes through establishing a sound mechanism for ensuring the active involvement of the relevant stakeholders, and conducting employer surveys to identify the skill-needs in the labour market

Rationale:

Providing young graduates with the skills needed by employers is a prerequisite to ensure their employment in decent jobs. Designing activation programmes in light of the employers needs bear great importance in this respect. Therefore, active involvement of the employers in design of such programs can contribute to mitigating mismatch between young graduates' skills and the needs of the employers. Some important measures for promoting employer engagement are given below:

- A mechanism might be set up, such as establishment of a Skills Development Authority, for ensuring the active involvement of the relevant stakeholders, including employers, in the design and implementation of the activation programs.
- Employer surveys can be used to identify the skill-needs in the labour market.

Instruments to Realize the Policy Advices:

COMCEC Poverty Alleviation Working Group: In its subsequent meetings, the Working Group may elaborate on the above mentioned policy areas in a more detailed manner.

COMCEC Project Funding: Under the COMCEC Project Funding, the COMCEC Coordination Office calls for projects each year. With the COMCEC Project Funding, the member countries participating in the Working Groups can submit multilateral cooperation projects to be financed through grants by the COMCEC Coordination Office. For the above mentioned policy areas, the member countries can utilize the COMCEC Project Funding and the COMCEC Coordination Office may finance the successful projects in this regard. These projects may include organization of seminars, training programs, study visits, exchange of experts, workshops and preparing of analytical studies, needs assessments and training materials/documents, etc.

Capacity Building Activities: With the COMCEC Coordination Office's resources and Member Countries' own resources, some capacity building and technical assistance programs on the aforementioned policy areas can be organized in the member countries. These programs and activities may include organization of seminars, training programs, study visits, exchange of experts, workshops and preparing of analytical studies, and other similar activities.

Annex 4: List of Participants

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS OF THE 5TH MEETING OF THE COMCEC POVERTY ALLEVIATION WORKING GROUP (February 26th, 2015, Ankara)

A. INVITED STATES

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN

- Mr. MOHAMMAD ISMAIL RAHIMI
Director General of Policy and Result Based Monitoring, Ministry of Economy

REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

- Mr. KANAN ISGANDAROV
Advisor, Ministry of Economy and Industry

REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON

- Mr. AHMAD MALAM
Research Officer, Ministry of Economy Planning and Regional Development
- Mr. JIBIRILA HAMAN
Employment Advisor, National Employment Fund

ARAB REPUBLIC OF EGYPT

- Ms. RANIA AMER
Researcher, Ministry of Social Solidarity

REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

- Mr. SERING MODOU NJIE
Charge d'Affaires, Embassy of Gambia in Ankara

ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

- Dr. AHMAD MEIDARI
Deputy Minister

HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN

- Mr. BARAKAT SHANAG
Manager of Social Development, Ministry of Development
- Mr. ZAKI AL ROSAN
Manager of Social Development, Ministry of Development

STATE OF KUWAIT

- Ms. SHOROUQ AL KHALIL
Senior Researcher at the Foreign Relations Department, Ministry of Finance

KINGDOM OF MOROCCO

- Mr. OMAR AHL RCHID
Head of Service Studies and Researches

REPUBLIC OF NIGER

- Mr. IRO SOULEY
Programme Coordinator, General Directorate of Planning, Ministry of Urban Development, Housing and Land Registry

THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

- Mr. AHMED AL MAQBALI
Assist General Manager, Ministry of Social Development
- Ms. MAYA AL HAJRI
Financial Analyst, Supreme Council for Planning

KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

- Mr. AFAF AL HAZMI
Deputy Ministry for Social Security
- Mr. AHMED AL OMARI
Assistant Secretary for Loinsions and Assistance, Ministry of Social Affairs
- Ms. HAJER HEJLES
Social Worker, Ministry of Social Affairs

REPUBLIC OF TUNISIA

- Mr. NAJET DKHIL GALAI
Director, Ministry of Social Affairs
- Ms. LATIFA RAHMANI
Program Manager, Tunisian Union of Social Solidarity

REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

- Mr. ERCÜMENT IŞIK
Head of Department, Ministry of Family and Social Policies
- Mr. NEVZAT FIRAT KUNDURACI
Expert, Ministry of Family and Social Policies

- Mr. ERSİN KAYA
Expert, Ministry of Family and Social Policies
- Mr. OĞUZ ÖZDEMİR
Expert, Ministry of Family and Social Policies
- Mr. İLHAN UĞUN
Expert, Ministry of Family and Social Policies
- Mr. EMRULLAH ULUDAĞ
Expert, Turkish Employment Agency
- Mr. ÖZKAN BOLAT
Assistant Expert, Turkish Employment Agency

REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

- Mr. NURH BYARUFU
Counsellor, Acting Head of North Africa Middle East and Rest of Africa
Department,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Mr. GILBERT NAJUNA-NJUNEKI
Ambassador in Charge of Special Duties, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

B. INVITED INSTITUTIONS

BRAC

- Mr. ASIF SALEH
Senior Director

CESI

- Mr. CHRISTOPHER MELVIN
CEO

ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT BANK (IDB)

- Mr. AZHARI GASIM AHMED
Lead Economist, Islamic Solidarity Fund For Development

ISMEK

- Mr. MEHMET DOĞAN
Director, İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality

STATISTICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTER FOR ISLAMIC COUNTRIES (SESRIC)

- Ms. ZEHRA ZÜMRÜT SELÇUK
Senior Researcher
- Mr. MANSUR BOYDAŞ
Researcher

THE ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD)

- Mr. ALEXANDRE KOLEV
Head of Unit

WORLDBANK

- Mr. WILLIAM WISEMAN
Project Leader

C. COMCEC COORDINATION OFFICE

- Mr. MEHMET METİN EKER
Director General, Head of COMCEC Coordination Office
- Mr. SELÇUK KOÇ
Head of Department
- Mr. MUSTAFA TEKİN
Head of Department
- Mr. FATİH KAYA
Head of Department
- Ms. HANDE HACIMAHMUTOĞLU
Expert, Drafting
- Ms. SIRMA DEMİR ŞEKER
Expert, Drafting
- Mr. MEHMET AKİF ALANBAY
Expert, Drafting
- Mr. MEHMET FİDAN
Expert, Drafting
- Mr. AYKUT YILMAZ
Expert, Drafting
- Mr. NAZIM GÜMÜŞ
Expert, Protocol Relations



- Mr. NİHAT AKBALIK
Expert, Protocol Relations
- Mr. ORHAN ÖZTAŞKIN
Photographer
- Mr. KEMAL ARSLAN
Coordinator of Meeting Rooms
- Mr. ERCAN İBİK
Coordinator of Transportation
- Ms. EMİNE DEMİREL
Coordinator of Documentation Center
- Ms. HANDE ÖZDEMİR
Coordinator of Registration Office
- Ms. HAVVA KÖSEOĞLU
Assistant Coordinator of Registration Office
- Mr. OZAN LİF
Assistant Coordinator of Documentation Center
- Mr. ALİ VURAL
Assistant Coordinator of Meeting Rooms
- Ms. NAZİFE GÜLGEN
Social Program