

## ➤ REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: *SUPPORTING AN ILO REPORT ON HOW THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC WILL CHANGE THE WORKPLACE IN AFRICA FOR EMPLOYERS*

**Deadline: Monday 21 June at 23:59 South African Standard Time**

### 1. BACKGROUND

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Across the African continent, the Global COVID 19 pandemic has resulted in a health, economic and social crisis. According to the most recent ILO predictions (October), the total working-hour losses in the second quarter of the year in Africa are estimated at 15.6 per cent, or 60 million FTE jobs. A [report](#) by the African Institute for Security Studies suggests that Africa's economy will be between US\$349 billion and US\$643 billion smaller in 2030.

It has been a year of extreme economic pain and social misery but also one that saw governments enact radical policy choices in days and weeks rather than months and years. 2020 saw the quickest change in how we work in history. It is the year that those that could work from home did just that (about 18% of all workers globally work in jobs that can be done remotely according to the ILO). The repercussions of this massive social experiment are huge and we are only in the early stages of deciphering them.

All this has wide-ranging implications for public policy. Will remote-workers find it easier or harder to bargain with their employer for pay rises and improvements in conditions? Will employers find it easier to fire remote workers than if they had to do it face-to-face – evidence suggest they do. How will firms monitor contractual working time in a world where nobody physically clocks in? Can firms monitor remote workers to assess their productivity? Should a business pay for a worker's internet connection or their heating in winter? Who is liable if employees injure themselves at home? Can remote workers live in another country and what would the tax implications of such an arrangement be? Will the platform economy see exponential growth in a post pandemic world and what does this mean for informal economy workers/firms?

### Themes

The proposed research hopes to address the following broader questions:

- How the pandemic is impacting the workforce, workspace and wellbeing of people? How have companies adapted and continue to adapt?
- Which pandemic-induced changes will be transformative? What would be the workplace issues for business in the "new" normal? What would be the scenarios?

- How the key drivers of change, identified before the pandemic<sup>1</sup>, impacting the current workplace change?
- How the sub-regional, sectoral and occupational differences of the COVID-19 impact are shaping the workplace transformation?
- What are three workplace priorities for employers for the next 1, 5, 10 years?
- What will be the wider societal impacts of changes to the workplace?

The report will examine the above themes under four headings

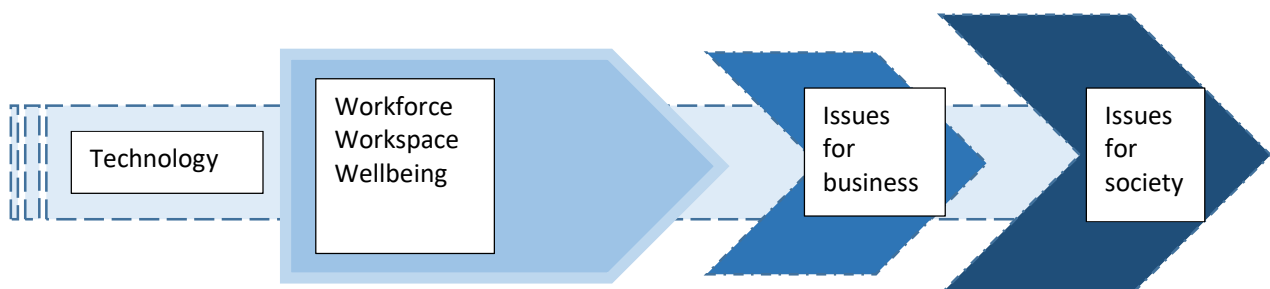
1. **Workforce**
2. **Workplace**
3. **Policy and regulatory framework**
4. **Wider societal impacts**

These issues will be explored with possible scenarios and wider societal impacts. The approach would include consideration of technological impact and gender as cross-cutting issues. The issues and scenarios identified by the proposed research would create a basis for further investigation.

## FRAMEWORK

For the purposes of coherence and focus we propose to use the following overall framework to explore changes in the key areas of workplace.

- Workforce – managing people
- Workspace – rethinking physical spaces
- Wellbeing – supporting and protecting people



More specifically the research could explore the following:

### A. **WORKFORCE**

#### 1. **Workplace relations and working conditions**

- How the pandemic has impacted working arrangements?

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<sup>1</sup> ILO ACTEMP Changing Business report

- Is remote work here to stay? How the remote work redefining the nature and content of jobs? Has the shift to remote working resulted in a shift to an output based employment relation rather than time based?
- How have the workplace effects caused by the pandemic impacted on the employment relationship, including the contractual arrangements? Are business anticipating lasting changes? (would be interesting to see if the reduction of regular contracts is seen as a temporary measure, although this can be very sensitive)
- How remuneration policies changed since pandemic? What are the key factors?
- How companies are managing the issue of choice? What have been the experiences (likely future experiences) in negotiating working conditions and settling disputes (collectively/individually)?
- How companies are managing change, collective interests, disputes and in the remote environment?

## **2. Performance and productivity**

- What are the issues and challenges of managing the performance and productivity of a remote worker (from the clarity of expectations to performance and productivity measurement)
- What are businesses doing (will do) to manage this changed approach to the ER (e.g metrics to measure outputs etc)?
- Are perceptions and practice of employer and employee responsibilities changing?
- How employers are managing conflict
- What is the impact of remote working on collaboration, knowledge sharing and innovation?
- Does business need different management competencies?

## **3. Maximizing skills development, training and knowledge sharing**

- How has the pandemic affect existing skills and knowledge sharing and deployment?
- What are the core skills that were instrumental in pandemic work environment: soft skills, technical skill, managing self?
- What are the new opportunities and future prospects in skills acquisition? What is likely to stay?
- What role the technology is playing in maintaining and developing skills? Have businesses made additional investment to help employees maintain and acquire new skills?
- How would recruitment, onboarding, advancement change in a remote environment?

## **B. WORKSPACE**

### **4. Rethinking workspaces**

- How pandemic redefined the workspace?
- Will companies move away from office-based work? Totally or in hybrid form?
- If companies will regularize more remote work options, what would it mean in terms of physical work environment, safety and health for those who needs to remain at work and for those companies who cannot employ workers remotely?
- To what extent workspaces will be redesigned in function of jobs and vice versa?
- How redesigning of workspaces will affect the operational processes?

## 5. Changing OSH

- How employer can ensure safety at the workplace? Emerging OSH issues and employers' duty of care
- How redesigning workspaces is changing the nature and perception of OSH rights and responsibilities?

## C. WELLBEING

- Is wellbeing more important or less important today?
- How employers assess the future impact of mental health impact of the pandemic on people and productivity?
- How employers are addressing equality, inclusion and diversity?
- How employers see the work-life balance and its impact in a transformed workplace?
- To what extent has the digital transformation driven by COVID been accompanied by development of company policies around privacy, data stewardship and/or outpaced national regulations in this area? What are the key issues companies now face in this area?
- How has the practice of human resource management been impacted by new data protection and confidentiality requirements associated with managing a digital workforce?

## D. SOCIETAL IMPACT OF EMERGING WORKPLACE - BIG PICTURE

- What regulatory reform are needed to allow employers to absorb potential shocks while ensuring adequate workers' protection based on the pandemic experience?
- How the workplace changes can affect local and urban economies?
- What could be the environmental impact?
- What would be impact on talent pools, skills and migration and local employment?
- The role of technology in future mediation, dispute resolution and arbitration
- Building occupational, operational and overall disaster preparedness into the workplace is becoming an imperative which many companies and employers need to address.
- Impacts of potentially-reduced urban work concentration on the environment, infrastructure, markets for goods and services

## 2. MODUS OPERANDI

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The research will employ a mixed methodology based on enterprise level surveys, qualitative interviews with stakeholders (Business leaders, policy makers, academics, media etc); focus group discussions and experts' group meetings. An initial review and assessment of the most recent empirical sources and available data will first be carried out to establish a baseline. The approach suggested will be to use the global enterprise level survey that will be run by Oxford Economics to extract the African specific data. Cognisant of data gathering limitations and survey fatigue the proposal is then to select (a maximum) of 10 countries for a deeper dive. This would entail:

- Specific country level survey (complementing but not repeating the global survey) (would envisage only a few of these surveys);
- In-depth interviews with business leaders, employers and experts (may require national consultant to do some of this);
- Focus groups and other targeted means to ascertain qualitative perspectives from business

- Firm level Case studies;
- Expert group meeting(s) that would review preliminary data/findings;

### 3. DESIRED FINAL OUTCOMES

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1. A high quality report that confirms some current trends, identifies new ones and provides guidance for policy actors across the continent;
2. The report enables follow up national events (in particular in the 10 selected countries) through tailored briefs to engage with policy makers and the wider private sector
3. Raises the profile/brand of the lead authors

### 4. SCOPE OF CONSULTANCY

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The ILO requires support in four areas

1. Survey design and guidance on research questions for both surveys and interviews
2. Case studies of companies from across the continent (how they are managing changing and anticipating it (at least five)
3. High level interviews (at least 10) with senior business figures;
4. Insight piece on how African business and workplaces are changing – what trends are we seeing; how are different sectors reacting;

The consultancy will involve the following responsibilities:

#### **Research design**

1. Work with specialists to select research tools and partners for each country
2. Conduct a literature review (approximately 3 pages)
3. Develop primary Qualtrics survey for member businesses in consultation with specialists
4. Develop draft qualitative interview questions for national partners, and provide feedback if partners customize questions in a national context
5. Provide technical support to specialists/research partners
6. OPTIONAL – Develop country-specific Qualtrics modules in consultation with specialists (additional time would be required)

#### **Research Implementation**

1. Review Qualtrics survey results and qualitative interview findings and work with specialists/national partners to make revisions/clarifications
2. Conduct at least 10 high level interviews to validate findings, gather new high-level insights, and obtain useful quotes for the key materials (ILO to coordinate)

#### **Company case studies (five case studies, 10 approx pages each)**

1. Review and provide inputs on case study proposals from partners (including topics, questions to include and outline of case study write up)
2. Provide comments on first draft of case studies as written by partner organizations (business schools, etc.)
3. Finalize case studies after submission of second draft

### **EBMO Policy Agenda Briefing ( emphasis on being clear and concise)**

1. After a review of Qualtrics and case study information, develop EBMO interview guide/Qualtrics survey.
2. Using findings from the interviews/survey and other materials, develop a first draft of a EBMO policy agenda briefing.
3. Finalize the policy agenda after feedback from specialists.

The consultancy should propose an overall approach to– this can be further refined and agreed upon with the successful bidder.

## **5. QUALIFICATIONS**

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1. Experience from consulting assignments in Africa;
2. At least seven years of research experience with significant experience working on labour-related issues including labour markets;
3. Strong quantitative and qualitative analytical skills;
4. Excellent command of English, both in speaking and in writing;
5. High level communications skills, both oral and written, and proven skills to operate in a multi-cultural environment;
6. A minimum educational qualification of a Degree in Economics or related discipline.

## **6. TIME FRAME:**

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The contract will run from 30 June – 30 November 2021

## **7. SUBMISSION:**

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Bidders are requested to submit an Inception report including fully-fledged technical and financial proposals with at least the following:

- Individual or corporate or consortium profile;
- A detailed work plan including a schedule;
- Detailed methodology to use to execute the assignment;
- A detailed budget showing a breakdown of activities and associated costs;
- CV indicating the relevant expertise and experience of the consultant / each member of the team.

The successful tenderer will be awarded a contract with the ILO. A detailed briefing on the terms and conditions of the contract will be provided to the successful bidder upon signing.

Technical and financial proposals must be submitted electronically to the ILO **not later than 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021.**

Contact details for further information:

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