

Annex 1



Youth employment in Africa

There is no unique determinant of the youth employment challenge in the African region. Rather, a combination of factors contributes to compound a situation that has become a top political priority for the region.

In sub-Saharan Africa, unemployment rates remain relatively low, as the vast majority of employable active youth cannot afford not to work. However, these youth regularly suffer from under-employment and lack of decent working conditions. Of the 38.1 per cent estimated total working poor in sub-Saharan Africa, young people account for 23.5 per cent. Young girls tend to be more disadvantaged than young men in access to work and experience worse working conditions than their male counterpart, and employment in the informal economy or informal employment is the norm.

In North Africa, unemployment rates (among a generally more educated labour force) are quite high and projected to remain high. For example while the global youth unemployment rate is 13.1 percent, it is 28.6 percent in North Africa. Unemployment can arguably be considered to be at the root of the Arab Spring uprisings. At the same time, labour force participation rates for women are the second lowest in the world. Informality is less marked than in Sub Saharan Africa, but still persistent.

ILO youth employment activities covered three main fields: **technical assistance to tripartite constituents, advocacy, and knowledge development and dissemination**. In terms of technical assistance to tripartite constituents on youth employment, support is mostly, although not exclusively, carried out through technical cooperation projects. Currently, the ILO is implementing youth-employment-specific technical cooperation projects in many countries across the African region. About 60 per cent of ILO work on youth employment takes place in Africa.

Areas of intervention are identified with constituents and vary but include, amongst other things, the following actions:

Policy advisory services. Such services cover a broad range of activities, from mainstreaming decent work into national and regional development, including supporting the design of multi-sectoral public employment strategies targeting youth, to legislative advice on fundamental labour standards, to advice on specific topics of interest to the country (e.g. development of national action plans on youth employment, access to finance legislation, sectoral employment impact assessments);

Employment services, skills development and labour market training, notably focusing on technical and vocational education, apprenticeship schemes, and tailored services for job insertion of most disadvantaged youth;

Employment creation, including enterprise and entrepreneurship development support, business development services and labour-based public works.

Other areas where interventions are carried out, often in conjunction with one of the above, include: data collection and assistance to national statistical offices, workers' rights, migration, fighting against worst forms of child labour, prevention or management of HIV/AIDS in the workplace and support to young people with disabilities.

Turning to **advocacy for youth employment**, the ILO launched a partnership with the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) to jointly address youth employment at regional and country levels. Furthermore, the ILO is the Secretariat to the global initiative for action, which is a hub for catalysing partnerships, collaboration and coordinated action grounded in evidence-based strategies. Amongst its partners are various UN agencies, the private sector and NEPAD.

The ILO is the only tripartite U.N. agency, created in 1919 bringing together governments, employers and workers of 187 member States, to set labour standards, develop policies and devise programmes promoting decent work for all women and men. The main aims of the ILO are to promote rights at work, encourage decent employment opportunities, enhance social protection and strengthen dialogue on work-related issues.

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