

Promoting Decent Work in English Speaking Africa

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Introduction

- ❑ With a population of nearly one billion people, Africa accounts for over a sixth of the world population.
- ❑ Informalisation and casualisation of work and employment relationships is highly endemic.
- ❑ In some countries the informal economy accounts for 70 – 90% of the labour force – however, the question is on the quality of the jobs generated.
- ❑ A majority of the population is confronted daily with problems of finding and keeping productive work, receiving fair incomes (including the basic minimums set by law, where applicable) as well as an entire gamut of challenges related to equality of opportunity, social protection and social exclusion.

Introduction continued

- ❑ Africa has over 24.7 million people living with HIV/AIDS.
- ❑ The majority of these are within the 15 – 49 years, an age range which is expected to significantly contribute to the labour force, whilst taking care of the children (12 million children are now orphaned, with some among them now resorting to child labour for survival).
- ❑ Africa has a literacy rate of 62.7%.
- ❑ While labour and employment statistics are inadequate for most sub-Saharan African countries, the available data does show that employment in Africa as a whole has not been substantially raised by the recent strong growth performance.
- ❑ This inability of economies to create enough decent and productive jobs is hitting Africa's youths hard.

Introduction continued

- ❑ Sub-Saharan Africa's unemployment rate has seen no improvement in the last 10 years and has remained at around 10% in 2006.
- ❑ Unfortunately it is also the case that the region has the highest incidence of working poverty of all developing regions.
- ❑ The ILO estimates that around 55 % of all people employed in sub-Saharan Africa do not earn enough to lift themselves and their families above the dollar a day poverty line and that about 86% subsist on \$2 a day.
- ❑ In sub-Saharan Africa, increases in total unemployment, stagnation in employment-to-population ratio, and working poverty go hand in hand.
- ❑ The failure of economic growth to reduce the number of the working poor points to the need to critically examine the links between growth, employment, poverty reduction and decent work.

Introduction continued

- ❑ Those of us who occupy privileged positions have a duty and obligation to address and help overcome these challenges.
- ❑ The decent work agenda enables a close partnership between relevant stakeholders, especially the social partners in addressing issues of critical importance to Africa.
- ❑ For instance, placing the whole issue of decent work on the African agenda at the level of the African Union and Sub-Regional Economic groupings as well as at the National, Sectoral and Enterprise level, enables social partners at the domestic, and international levels to focus on the concerns of millions of ordinary Africans and those engaged in the world of work.

Introduction continued

- ❑ Countries can, through standardisation and peer influence impress upon each of the social partners their respective roles in ensuring decent work for all.
- ❑ In this regard, the various labour market institutions, Structures and Processes including all the social partners and especially Labour Inspectorates, have a special role and obligation in this respect.
- ❑ The social partner have a major role in ensuring the implementation of the the decent work agenda

Introduction continued

- ❑ Implementing of the decent work agenda is a good starting point as it helps to shift the development debate from narrow goals dealing with macroeconomic stabilization and an exclusive focus on markets to a broader set of goals that emphasize growth, poverty reduction, and the creation of decent employment for sustainable development.
- ❑ The whole issue of decent work also reminds us that Africa's development challenges need to be addressed in the entire context of globalization and therefore Social Dialogue becomes an important avenue for discourse in this case.

The African Labour Market Continued

- As the world proceeds apace with trade and financial liberalization, Africa is still grappling with issues of structural transformation.
- The predominance of traditional agriculture and the informal sector in many African countries has implications for the continent's ability to compete for job-creating investments.
- While diverse and varied across countries and regions, economic growth in Africa has been on the rise in the recent past, however, it is still less than the 7% per annum required to halve poverty by the target date of 2015.

The African Labour Market Continued

- ❑ Employment creation for the larger part of the population is a very important element in the context of growth.
- ❑ It is therefore of serious concern that economic growth in Africa is not yet job-rich.
- ❑ It is unequally distributed and benefits a small segment of the population leaving out the poor majority, especially women and youth.
- ❑ Equally worrying is the content of existing jobs where the wages paid cannot in themselves lift large numbers of people out of poverty.
- ❑ The informal sector accounts for the majority of jobs in most African countries, and here wages are estimated to be about 44% less than in the formal sector.
- ❑ Better access to decent work will enable greater use of the workplace to combat HIV/AIDS.

The African Labour Market Continued

- ❑ Herculean efforts will be needed to reverse the growing numbers of the working poor by giving them decent work opportunities.
- ❑ There is also great need for structural transformation and diversification of African economies into high growth and employment intensive sectors.
 - ❑ Diversification will deepen production structures and transform African economies so that they can create opportunities for decent work.
 - ❑ Diversification will also need to be matched by equitable access to education and health care to promote the acquisition of the skills required to work in new and dynamic economic sectors and to better manage modern enterprises.
 - ❑ The brain drain of skilled workers from Africa may undercut efforts at skills development but countries could derive compensating benefits from the potential contribution of international remittances, inward investment and transfer of technology by Africans in Diaspora.

The African Labour Market Continued

- Needless to say, Africa advocates for stronger institutional capacities, which will enable better governance, which in turn will help reduce the conflicts and disputes that often arise from perceived unfairness and imbalances in access to opportunities and national resources.
- Similarly, international labour standards especially those that promote social dialogue can contribute to bringing about better political and economic governance.
- The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which has been established by African countries themselves, has a critical role to play in promoting good governance as well as in implementing international labour standards in Africa.
- It is therefore deserving of the support of tripartite partners.

Major Regional Initiatives

- ❑ As a follow-up to the decision of the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU (Lusaka, July 2001), AU Heads of State decided to organize a first-of-its-kind Extraordinary Summit on Employment and Poverty Alleviation in Africa.
- ❑ The Summit took place in Ouagadougou (September 2004) and produced a Declaration, a Plan of Action and a Follow-up Mechanism that paved the way for placing employment at the centre of economic and social policies and will enrich and consolidate NEPAD with social considerations.

Regional Initiatives continued

Ouagadougou can be summarised as follows;

- ❑ Ensuring political commitment for the attainment of the key Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
- ❑ Promotion of agricultural sector and rural development for food security
- ❑ Development of framework for integration and harmonisation of economic and social policies
- ❑ Improvement of existing social protection schemes and OSH by extending coverage.
- ❑ Empowerment of women by integrating them in the labour market for their participation in poverty reduction strategies, policies and programmes

Regional Initiatives continued

Ouagadougou summary

- ❑ Human and institutional capacity building for institutions in charge of employment promotion and poverty alleviation
- ❑ Utilising key sectors with high employment potential to generate more jobs
- ❑ Building international cooperation for enhanced support to Africa
- ❑ Promote regional and economic cooperation among the RECs in order to expand that economic space
- ❑ Targeting and empowering the vulnerable groups
- ❑ Mobilisation of resources at national, regional and international levels.

Regional Initiatives continued

The Ouagadougou Summit also came up with a Plan of Action, to counter the twin challenges of poverty and unemployment.

The objectives that relate to the decent work agenda can be summarized as follows:

- ❑ To establish, extend and enhance social safety-nets including social protection, occupational safety, health and hygiene for better working and living conditions for all men and women.
- ❑ To mainstream gender issues into all poverty reduction and employment promotion policies and programmes by investing in human capital development, especially young women and men.

Regional Initiatives continued

- ❑ To strengthen the capacity of local, national, regional and continental institutions in promoting participation, voice, tripartism, social dialogue and partnership to ensure an equitable and efficient representation of important socio-economic interests and beneficiaries in the formulation and implementation of inclusive development policies.
- ❑ To provide an enabling environment to create productive and decent jobs.

Regional Initiatives continued

- ❑ To strengthen capacities for Africa to meaningfully participate, contribute to and influence global decision making and evolve a new vision of partnership for employment creation and sustainable development.
- ❑ To ensure that employment and poverty alleviation programmes and policies are targeting vulnerable groups and that their participation in the development, implementation and evaluation processes are promoted at all levels.

Regional Initiatives continued

- ❑ Many African countries, in partnership with the ILO, also subscribe to the noble notion of an African employment strategy based on the Global Employment Agenda which aims to place employment at the heart of economic and social policies.
- ❑ The African employment strategy based on the Global Employment Agenda is an ideal framework for the identification of priority sectors to sustain the development of an African decent work agenda.

Role of Government

Part of the Ministerial Statement adopted by the recently concluded Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (on "Ownership and self-belief" which was inspired by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. Reads as follows:

" We are determined to ensure that comprehensive national development strategies are country owned with a strong sense of belief in ourselves that the task can be achieved. In particular, we require sufficient policy space to design strategies adapted to the specific needs of our countries with a view to ending aid dependency over time and to use that space effectively. We commit to redouble our efforts to share experiences among member States to promote peer learning and to building strong African leadership to guide the process "

Role of Government Continued

- ❑ Integrating employment-creating policies into national development programmes and poverty reduction strategies – this enables the translation of the decent work agenda into action to fight poverty and achieve the MDGs.
- ❑ Scaling-up interventions and efforts in the provision of infrastructure and social services in African countries. Balancing these with concrete international action in aid, trade and finance will help to accelerate growth to achieve the MDGs by the target date.
- ❑ Improving the business and investment environment in African countries in order to increase inflows of foreign direct investment. This also enables SMEs to thrive and create jobs.

Role of Government Continued

- ❑ Since African economies are small and fragmented, promoting regional integration and intra-Africa trade remain key objectives.
- ❑ Match improvements in infrastructure and the business climate by skills creation programmes so that the majority of the populace is employable.
- ❑ Tackle youth unemployment by creating decent work opportunities for young people (Thus reduce the spectre of life-risking international migration by the youth.
- ❑ Promote the decent work agenda in post-conflict African countries. There is need to give strong support to the reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in these countries.
- ❑ Enact supportive labour standards and legislative framework that includes a national minimum wage, a maternity protection law and equal opportunity legislation, among others .

Role of Unions

ARLAC works hand in hand with Unions in our constituencies to highlight the following:

- That all work should be undertaken in an environment free from occupational, health and safety hazards;
- Workers receive a decent wage, adequate social protection and other standards consistent with decent working conditions;
- Employers respect core labour standards including the right of workers to collectively bargain and organise.

Role of Unions continued

- Trade unions and labour rights activists are aware of their major part in the campaign for Decent Work.
- For example, meeting at the World Social Forum in Nairobi, Kenya under the banner of the Decent Work, Decent Life campaign, they made a bold move in launching a world-wide campaign to promote decent work in world football, focusing initially on the construction sector, in the build up to the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. This campaign will also link up with initiatives around supply chains in the sporting goods industry.
- For example, for South Africa with a 46% unemployment rate (using the expanded definition of unemployment), this event provides an important opportunity to create over two hundred thousand decent jobs that can help alleviate poverty.
- Trade Unions are using this campaign to fight and ensure that this opportunity is not missed.

Role of Employers

- ❑ Provision of vocational training, which constitutes a vital tool for the promotion and realization of Decent Work because the right to work itself is fundamentally dependent on one's level and quality of training.
- ❑ Contribute significantly to decent work by ensuring a healthy and safe working environment.
- ❑ Develop a long term strategy to substantially increase the level and quality of employment; and
- ❑ Develop and implement strategies to generate higher employment levels, a more equitable distribution of income and promote social stability.
- ❑ Complying with labour standards and legislative framework.
- ❑ Removing discriminatory legislation and special targeting of vulnerable groups.

Role of International Community

- It remains essential for the international community to meet its promises to double official development assistance to Africa and to make such aid effective and predictable in the context of both the Monterrey Consensus and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.
- While several African countries have benefited from debt relief especially in the framework of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries initiatives it must also be acknowledged that aid to Africa actually fell in 2005, if debt relief is taken out of the equation.
- Improvements in trade, aid and financing for development will enhance the ability of African countries to better exploit the benefits of globalization while minimizing its risks.

Role of ARLAC

ARLAC continues to work with the social partners in expanding Decent Work.

ARLAC has adopted the following possible mechanisms.

- ❑ Increase awareness of the concept of decent work.
- ❑ Increase research and knowledge of the concept.
- ❑ Encouraging ratification of fundamental ILO Conventions.
- ❑ Institutionalise social dialogue on vocational training.
- ❑ Pursuant of integrated approach among states/ departments and between State and Industry.

Role of ARLAC continued

- ❑ Pursue a regional approach.
- ❑ Ensure that a comprehensive support environment is developed.
- ❑ Pay special attention to the decent work requirements of disadvantaged groups.
- ❑ Strengthening Labour Inspectorates through institutional development and capacity building because enforcement of basic labour and OSH standards will add value to the decent work agenda

Thank You

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