

Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

1. The ILO tripartite workshop on decent work for youth in the rural economy in SADC countries was held from 21 to 23 August 2018 in Harare, Zimbabwe. In line with priorities set out in the SADC Youth Employment Promotion Policy Framework (YEPPF), the purpose of the workshop was to share knowledge and build capacity of SADC tripartite constituents to effectively implement policies and programmes that enhance the attractiveness for people to live and work in rural areas and promote decent work opportunities for young women and men.
2. SADC has one of the youngest populations in the world. Despite rapid urbanization a large share of youth still live in rural areas, deprived of effective infrastructure, quality services and amenities and subject to severe decent work deficits, governance gaps and informality. At the same time, young women and men in SADC can be powerful drivers of agricultural transformation and economic diversification of rural economies. The rural economies in SADC countries have an often overlooked potential to create decent and productive employment for youth and to contribute to food security, economic growth and sustainable development so as to ensure that no one is left behind.
3. The tripartite workshop discussed 3 themes: Unlocking the potential of the rural economy through employment policies and strategies for youth; Enhancing productivity and working conditions of rural youth in agriculture and off-farm activities and; Empowering women and youth to participate in rural labour markets. The workshop agreed on the following conclusions and recommendations.

Unlocking the potential of the rural economy through employment policies and strategies for youth

4. Rural economies are potential engines for inclusive growth, decent work and food security. Structural transformation is required to enable rural economies to reach their full potential. Effective, inclusive pro-employment policies stimulate this structural transformation. Such policies include employment targets in national plans, macroeconomic and sectoral policies, and particularly in national budgets. Dedicated programmes to promote employment-intensive investment and infrastructure development could be considered to promote rural development.
 5. A sound knowledge base on the rural economy with its particular opportunities, potential and constraints for youth employment that informs policies and decisions is needed. This will require upgraded labour market information systems, dedicated research, as well as public-private dialogue systems that allow private sector and worker organisations to share their sectoral and value chain knowledge with policy makers. Concerted entrepreneurship development should be mainstreamed throughout education and adequate support systems
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(including business development services, access to land and finance) to allow youth to start and grow their own businesses. Employment-intensive investments in rural infrastructure such as health, education, quality public and private services, transport and IT are needed in order to make rural areas attractive for young women and men.

6. Dedicated action and political will to achieve necessary progress in the above areas are needed. In this regard, a coordinating role of SADC was raised to support member states and social partners in enhancing implementation capacity, monitoring and evaluating progress and achievements, as well as furthering the implementation of the SADC YEPPF particularly with regard to the rural economy.
7. Governments are tasked to lead and coordinate priorities at the national level, by creating an enabling environment for pro-employment policies and budgeting. but also by enhancing or establishing national steering committees for policy coherence. The private sector and employers organisations will be called upon as the main drivers for job creation in the rural areas, through – where possible – applying employment-intensive production and investment techniques and by promoting PPP dialogues and actively engaging in policy-making and budgeting for maximum employment impact. Workers organisations will need to play an important role in monitoring, advocating and lobbying for rights at work, as well as ensuring that all interventions are pro-poor and people-driven.

Enhancing productivity and working conditions of rural youth in agriculture and off-farm activities

8. Rural areas are diverse and youth are not a homogenous group. Hence, sound diagnostics and multi-sectoral, integrated approaches and targeting strategies are needed. Policy coherence across sectors and enhanced dialogue among the different stakeholders, both at national and local levels, are of paramount importance towards decent work in the rural economy. Interventions are needed for young people in agriculture and those working in rural non-farm activities, such as commerce, mining and tourism.
9. Productivity increases help boost agricultural outputs and incomes, prompt new activities, strengthen value chains and expand agro-industries, which are important drivers of economic diversification in rural areas. Economic diversification creates job opportunities including for youth and women. Integrated approaches for diversification are needed with the following elements: (i) innovative methods of skills development to strengthen youth employability, improve productivity, and address skills shortages; (ii) promoting one-stop centres and incubation centres in rural areas for access to productive assets, technology, information, mentoring and business advice, training, services (finance, marketing, innovation, job orientation), etc.; (iii) promoting and strengthening local initiatives to develop short supply chains, enhance market access and improve coordination between young producers and larger commercial buyers; (iv) facilitating the formalization in rural areas, and in particular of young people's businesses; (v) investing in new technologies which promote increased productivity and facilitate communication and exchange of information (e.g., technical farm advice, price information, cultural and social exchange).
10. Improving productivity of youth in the rural economy must go hand in hand with addressing decent work deficits, including low income, informality and safety and health hazards. In addition safe production inputs and equipment as well as social protection should be made available. Youth should be made aware about their rights at work while ensuring their participation and voice in social dialogue mechanisms, through information campaigns, including social media, and communication materials, and providing training to youth clubs/associations. This can be facilitated through the inclusion of youth groups and young

entrepreneurs in workers', employers' and farmers' organizations as well as support the creation of youth cooperatives and/or participation of young people in existing cooperatives.

Empowering women and youth to participate in rural labour markets

- 11.** Empowering young women and men to productively participate in rural labour markets entails policies and strategies ranging from facilitating their meaningful engagement in decision-making processes, to provision of quality and relevant education and training to improving access to productive resources.
 - 12.** Interventions can include: inter-ministerial coordination; extending TVET to rural areas and improve the quality and relevance; introduce/strengthen apprenticeships and other forms of work-based training; offer entrepreneurial skills development and mentoring as well as access to finance for business start-ups; promote cooperatives; and expand outreach of employment services.
 - 13.** Women play important roles in the rural economy as farmers, wage earners and entrepreneurs. Despite their significant contributions to rural economies and the agricultural sector in particular, women typically find themselves in disadvantaged positions compared with their male counterparts. They bear the burden of unpaid and household work and have unequal access to education and training, markets and productive resources such as land, finance and technology.
 - 14.** Effective policies should be put in place to ensure gender equality and non-discrimination including in rural areas. Quota systems and affirmative actions should be considered to empower women to exercise their rights at work, be included in decision taking processes and ensure equal opportunities and access to rural labour markets and productive resources. Women's credit groups and cooperatives should be supported to empower women to effectively participate in rural labour markets.
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