



## **International Labour Office**

### **BOOSTING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT THROUGH PUBLIC WORKS: An ILO What Works in Youth Employment Knowledge Sharing Event *Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 29-30 June 2015***

#### **Remarks by Dayina Mayenga Deputy Director, ILO Regional Office for Africa**

Excellency, Madame Evelyn Anite, Minister of State for Youth and Children Affairs  
from Uganda

Representatives of the African Union Commission

Representatives of Governments,

Representatives of Workers' and Employers' Organizations

Representatives of the UN Agencies

Distinguished Participants,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

What works is one of the most recurrent questions we receive from you. Today, we gather here to explore some of the answers and shed light on transformative solutions to address the youth employment crisis; a crisis that is at the centre of our concerns. It is actually a concern shared by most countries across the globe.

Youth labour markets were largely affected by the economic crisis, intensifying the likelihood of unemployment and particularly long-term unemployment among them:

One third of the young unemployed are unemployed for over six months, which makes it even more difficult for them to come back into the labour market. This is the first signal of disaffection, which can end-up in discouragement and detachment from the labour market and from society.

Today, after a period of increasing youth unemployment (from 2007 to 2010), the global unemployment rate among youth have settled at 13.0 per cent. While this is a positive recovery in terms of trends, the rate remains well above the pre-crisis rate of 11.7 per cent and practically translates into nearly 74 million young men and women, aged 15 to 24, looking for a job.

With worsening in unemployment situation, today's challenge for youth is less about "not finding work" and more about "the type of work available". Youth are affected by an increased complexity of labour market entry and shrinking of "stable" employment, something we witness everyday among our African youth. The challenge is therefore not trivial and it is perhaps the greatest of our time.

Africa exhibits two distinct tiers when it comes to youth unemployment: North Africa, where the share of unemployed youth has exceeded one in four (among the active youth) since at least 1991, leading to a youth unemployment rate of 30.5 per cent in 2014, and Sub-Saharan Africa with a rate of 11.6 per cent. ILO projections indicate that these rates will remain stable over the period 2014-2020.

While the sub regional challenges are quite distinct, many young Africans cannot afford to be unemployed, ending up in low quality, low productivity jobs. Informal employment is pervasive and transitions to decent work are slow and difficult. The ILO School to Work Transition surveys have shown that youth in sub-Saharan Africa were the most likely to remain in transition even as young adults.

### **We must act.**

Youth employment is a priority to the ILO. In 2013, "Jobs and Skills for Youth" was selected as one of eight Areas of Critical Importance.

The broad vision and background for our work in this area is embedded in the 2012 ILC resolution “The youth employment crisis: A call for action”. The call for action underlines the urgency of immediate and targeted action to tackle the unprecedented youth employment crisis that is affecting all regions.

Understanding what works is at the core of this Area of Critical Importance. It is an endeavour that strongly relies on evaluation evidence, using the most rigorous and appropriate methods that are consistent with the youth employment interventions we see and design nowadays. It is also an undertaking that builds on your questions and needs, aiming at a strong, coherent link between research and action.

Policymakers and practitioners – some of you in this room - are seeking answers to the youth employment challenge; looking for ideas and evidence on what works and why to improve the labour market conditions of young people.

It is in our interest to share and learn, and this is precisely what this What Works Event is all about.

During the next two days we will be discussing what works to boost youth employment through Public Works Programmes, a common public response intended to increase aggregate demand for labour in times of crisis, or in contexts where markets are unable to create employment at the required scale and unemployment is an on-going challenge.

We look forward to engaging in rich discussions as we explore design features of public works programs and lessons learned from your experiences in Africa and abroad.

I want to express my deep appreciation for your attendance and interest in this event. In particular, I want to acknowledge the presence of her Excellency Madame Evelyn Anite, Minister of State for Youth and Children Affairs from Uganda. I am very pleased to state the presence of representatives of the African Union Commission. Indeed, youth employment is among the top priorities of the

2015 AU Declaration and the Plan of Action on Employment, Poverty Eradication, and Inclusive Development, adopted by the 24<sup>th</sup> Session of the Assembly of Heads of State in January 2015. Thank you very much for joining us!

This meeting is the reflection of great team work and collaboration at the ILO and I am therefore pleased to acknowledge the work of my colleagues from the Regional Office, the Youth Employment Programme and the Employment Intensive Investment Programme in organizing this event.

To conclude, let me say that jobs are priority number one for people around the world and a defining element of identity, dignity and socialization for young people at the start of their active life. They shape perceptions of fairness and social justice.

I am confident that the wealth of knowledge and experience emerging from this meeting will be instrumental to improve our investments and collaboration for better labour market outcomes of youth.

Thank you very much for your attention.