

			
African Union Commission	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa	African Development Bank Group	International Labour Organisation

# The Joint Youth Employment Initiative for Africa

The Joint Youth Employment Initiative for Africa (JYEIA) was initiated jointly by the African Union Commission (AUC), the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The Initiative is being launched on a background of serious and ever worsening un- and underemployment problems for young people in most African countries and the urgent need to make Africa benefit from this huge untapped potential and reap the “demographic dividend” of its young population, the youngest in any of the continents.

The JYEIA is a response to the call of the African Heads of State and Government at their Summit in Malabo in July 2011 to tackle more decisively the youth employment challenge in Africa and is part of the follow-up to the 2004 Ouagadougou Declaration and Action Plan to the same effect.

The Initiative will seek to add particular value to the youth employment efforts already on-going in Africa by combining in its work the comparative advantages and strengths of its four member institutions. The mandates and expertise of these jointly cover the whole range of areas critical to effective action: Political weight and advocacy capacity, analytical and policy-design expertise, financial resources and instruments, technical expertise in labour and employment, and experience in project and programme implementation.

## The general purpose of the JYEIA

is to increase and improve youth employment in Africa. The action of the Initiative will be organized under three components, each with a specific objective as follows:

- i) Policy support: Youth employment is fully integrated in policy and planning frameworks at national, sub-regional and regional levels
- ii) Implementation support: National, sub-regional and regional youth employment plans and policies are effectively implemented for wider impact
- iii) Knowledge for Informed Action: Generation, analysis and use of information on youth employment challenges and responses have improved

The Initiative will operate both at country level, sub-regional level, and the level of the region as a whole, with a particular emphasis on the country level. At this level, the main partners of the Initiative will be the Governments, while the RECs will be the primary partners at the sub-regional level. At all levels, however, the involvement of all relevant stakeholders in consultation as well as implementation will be considered essential.

While over time the JYEIA is intended to cover the whole of the Continent, countries and sub-regions will be included in the work in a gradual manner, corresponding to the gradual development of experience, capacity, and resources available to the JYEIA.

An essential element of the JYEIA approach is the process by which the Initiative will engage with countries. This will happen not through accepting separate requests for support to particular projects or actions, but through conducting thorough diagnostic work in each country of intervention in order to gain a comprehensive overview and understanding of the situation, its causes and opportunities, and a good picture of the efforts already being undertaken by all relevant stakeholders. Only on this basis can fragmentation of efforts be avoided and policy and planning support as well as support for concrete programme implementation be provided with maximum impact - not only by the Initiative, but by all stakeholders. While the country engagement process will follow a standardized template in all countries, it will vary from country to country in practical terms, depending on how much data, information, and analysis is already available.

Depending on the situation, the Initiative may support a wide range of activities spanning the supply side, the demand side, and the mediation between supply and demand in the labour market. The Initiative will not itself implement activities, but support implementation by relevant stakeholders by offering financial resources and technical expertise. In the selection of activities to support, the Initiative will emphasise such types and approaches of intervention that have proven their value and can be up scaled in order to achieve sizable impact. This is meant to support countries in their transition from a project approach with only small-scale and localized

impact to a genuine programmatic approach with generalised impact on the employment situation. To support this, the Initiative will insist on the importance of data, evidence and knowledge as a basis for action, not only in its own case, but for all stakeholders.

The JYEIA is a long-term endeavour, in line with the youth-employment challenge itself. It will however be implemented in phases that can be reviewed and evaluated individually in order to incorporate the lessons learnt in a systematic manner. The first phase will be a pilot phase of 2 years during which initial experience can be gained and the management and organization needed for larger-scale interventions can be put in place. A limited number of countries and sub-regions that can enable the Initiative to achieve this will be targeted. The following phases will last 5 years each in which the inclusion of new countries will be subject to a standard procedure of application and selection.

The overall decision-making organ of the JYEIA will be a Steering Committee with representatives of the member institutions. It will take decisions pertaining to strategic and longer-term matters, major features of the methods and approaches applied, and will approve work plans, budgets, and progress and financial reports. The operational day-to-day management will lie with relevant departments of the member institutions, later supported by a Management Unit hosted by one of the members.

In each country, a national steering committee will take decisions regarding the work programme of the Initiative. This committee, chaired by the Government, will not be specific to the JYEIA, but will encompass all the main relevant stakeholders. As far as possible, an already existing organ of consultation between the Government and other stakeholders on (youth) employment will play this role. Similarly, as far as possible the work programme of the Initiative in the country will be nothing but a segment of a national action plan for youth employment, whether such a plan already exists before the arrival of the Initiative or will be adopted at the encouragement of the Initiative.

Thus, the Initiative will put the combined weight of its member institutions behind the promotion of coherence not only among its own members, but among all stakeholders playing a role in the national youth employment effort.

The work of the Initiative will be funded partly by the member institutions themselves, partly by the country-level and sub-regional stakeholders, and partly by external partners such as bilateral and multilateral development partners. At the outset, only limited resources from the member institutions themselves are available, pending a resource mobilization effort to be put in place soon after the formal launch of the Initiative. To receive external funds intended for the Initiative a trust or basket fund will be established in one of the member institutions, from which funds can be channelled into the interventions of the Initiative.