



FACTS ON *Poverty in Africa*

“The principle route out of poverty is work. Building that route requires the harnessing of the unique power of governments, employers and workers, all of them working together—globally and especially at the national level—to bring progress and hope to our societies.” — Juan Somavia, Director-General of the ILO.

Nearly three billion people around the world live on the equivalent of US\$2 a day or less. Some 500 million of them are in Africa, where three-quarters of the population lives in poverty. Of these, some 320 million live in extreme poverty on US\$1 a day or less.

At the current rate of economic growth, the objective for halving extreme poverty in Africa by 2015, as called for by the UN Millennium Declaration, will not be reached.

The ILO’s Decent Work Agenda (DWA) provides the tools leading to the attainment of goals and human development outcomes of the Millennium Declaration. In the African context, the DWA provides the stimulus for a socially inclusive and economically dynamic African development framework. At its core, the DWA promotes equality—in particular gender equality—and tackles root of poverty head on.

However, creating decent work is not just about creating jobs. It’s about adopting policies that make employment central to economic and social policies. It’s about making the global economy more inclusive by facilitating a more equitable system of growth—a globalization where no one is left behind. It’s also about promoting ownership and participation by decentralizing decisions about priorities, both *to* countries and, *within* countries, to communities.

Poverty in Africa – Basic Facts

Poverty in Africa is preventing the continent from realizing its vast potential.

- A rapidly expanding urban informal economy coexists with an agricultural sector where more than 70% of the population work.
- Women and girls are disproportionately affected by poverty and are frequently trapped in the lowest paid, least-skilled and most precarious occupations.
- Youth are particularly at risk, in some countries, representing about 60% of the unemployed. African youth had the highest unemployment rate in the world in the 1990s. Young women are even less likely than young men to have jobs.
- Nearly 20 million African men and women are migrant workers. By 2015, one in ten Africans will live and work outside of his or her country of origin.
- HIV/AIDS is eroding development by decimating the work force and destroying families. Deaths in countries with high levels of HIV and AIDS will cause huge losses of labour over the next decade.

The Decent Work Agenda:

Putting the Decent Work Agenda into practice is achieved through the implementation of its four strategic objectives:

Creating Jobs—an economy that generates opportunities for investment, entrepreneurship, job creation and sustainable livelihoods;

Guaranteeing rights at work—obtain recognition and respect for the rights of workers. Disadvantaged or poor workers need representation, participation, and good laws that are enforced and work for, not against, their interest;

Providing basic social protection—marginalization and poverty mean that those most in need do not have minimum protection against low or declining standards of living, and;

Promoting dialogue and conflict resolution—people in poverty understand the need to negotiate and know dialogue is the way to solve problems peacefully.

Global poverty and unemployment are growing

- Unemployment - currently at some 180 million people worldwide and growing – is at its highest point ever.
- The world's labour force is increasing by about 50 million people each year, as the number of entrants exceeds those who stop working. Ninety-seven percent of this increase is in developing countries.
- In 1960, the "income gap" between the wealthiest and poorest fifths of the world's population was 30 to 1. By 1999, it had widened to 74 to 1.
- Poverty occurs in every society. Even in the 20 most industrialized countries, over 10% of the population live below a poverty line of less than 50% of median income.

Relevant Conventions:

1930: ILO Convention No. 29 on **Forced Labour**

1957: ILO Convention No. 105 on the **Abolition of Forced Labour Convention**

1948: ILO Convention No. 87 on the **Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention**

1949: ILO Convention No. 98 on the **Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention**

1951: ILO Convention No. 100 on the **Equal Remuneration Convention**

1958: ILO Convention No. 111 on **Employment and Occupation**

1973: ILO Convention No. 138 on **Minimum Age Convention**

1999: ILO Convention No. 182 on the **Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention**

ILO activities in Africa: creating opportunities for decent work

Working with governments, representatives of workers and employers, and local communities, the ILO seeks to create opportunities for men and women to earn a decent living, balance family needs and work their way out of poverty.

The ILO's **Jobs in Africa** Programme works to reduce unemployment and poverty. A first phase has been completed in 17 countries and mainstreamed into all ILO employment-related activities.

The ILO and its social partners also work to promote a wide variety of employment promotion activities. These include micro- and small-enterprise creation, creation of savings and credit associations and other micro-finance institutions, skills and human development, reintegration and rehabilitation in countries affected by conflicts and natural disasters, and development of cooperatives. For instance, projects include training and skills development, employment-intensive road building programmes, waste-collection business training and other initiatives which provide vital public services and have helped create thousands of jobs across the continent.

Report and Press release, *Working Out of Poverty*, <http://www.ilo.org>

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