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International Labour Organization

SUSTAIN -
Sustainable Trade and Investment in Southern Africa

SUSTAIN AT A GLANCE

Key areas of work

- Responsible Business Conduct and the ILO MNE Declaration
- International Labour Standards
- Sustainable trade and investment
- Social dialogue

Donor

European Commission

Duration

28 months (4 months inception phase followed by 24 months implementation phase)

Target beneficiaries

- Governments
- Employers' organizations
- Workers' organisations

Geographical & Sectoral focus

- Cross-sectorial
- Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, and South Africa, including subregional activities with the Southern African Development Community (SADC)

The project "*Promoting decent work and capacity building for labour ministries, labour inspections and social partners to advance international labour standards and responsible business conduct (RBC) through sustainable trade and investments in Southern Africa* (SUSTAIN – Southern Africa) aims to further harness trade and investment to advance decent work opportunities for women and men in Southern Africa through increased respect for International Labour Standards (ILS) and the adoption of responsible and sustainable business practices .

The positive impact of international trade and investment on more and better jobs has been widely recognized and documented. However, trade and investment do not automatically lead to inclusive economic growth and can, if not well governed, actually lead to job losses, a downward pressure on working conditions, negative impact on enterprises and adverse environmental impacts.

As a consequence, an increasing number of countries and regions have scaled up trade and investment while addressing human and labour rights through labour provisions in trade and, albeit to a lesser extent, investment agreements. These provisions aim to promote compliance and adherence to social and environmental standards, and by doing so harness the development potential of trade and investment.

In addition, public and corporate policies to advance respect for human rights in business operations and supply chains are also on the rise, including through mandatory due diligence legislations (mHRDD) and other trade related policies adopted by countries aiming at clarifying expectations related to companies' operations in home and host countries. While these policies might apply to specific issues, companies of a certain region/country, size and\or sector, they have global and horizontal repercussions.

Trade and Investment in the Region

Trade and investment are vital for Botswana, Lesotho, South Africa, and Namibia, driving both regional and international commerce.

- South Africa's wine industry has a strong global presence, while Botswana and Namibia's meat production is crucial for exports.
- In manufacturing, South Africa leads in automotive production, while Lesotho specializes in textiles and apparel.
- The region is also rich in natural resources, with South Africa dominating mining, Namibia excelling in diamond extraction, and Botswana known for diamonds and minerals.

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Against this background, the project SUSTAIN, guided by the ILO Strategy on Decent Work in Supply Chains and the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration) aims to support ILO constituents in Southern Africa by promoting international labour standards and responsible business conduct

SUSTAIN will provide national stakeholders with evidence-based insights to inform policy and foster social justice, decent work, and inclusive economic growth.

Additionally, the project will strengthen the capacity of government officials and social partners to effectively implement trade and investment agreements. SUSTAIN will provide a dialogue platform at the national and regional level to facilitate dialogue, knowledge-sharing, and peer learning among SADC member states, ensuring that best practices are exchanged and integrated into regional and national frameworks.

Project objectives and outcomes

The overall outcome of SUSTAIN is enhanced compliance with International Labour Standards and promote and support the adoption of RBC practices in Southern Africa for achieving social justice and inclusive growth. The immediate outcomes are

- Strengthened knowledge base for government officials and social partners on the nexus between trade, investment and decent work informs evidence based dialogue and policies;
- Enhanced knowledge and capacity of government officials and social partners to lead to improved implementation of trade and investment agreements, and advance respect for international labour standards and the promotion of RBC
- Increased dialogue and experience-sharing across and between governments and social partners enhance policy coherence and synergies to promote RBC and sustainable trade and investments.

OUTPUTS

Supporting research

A series of case studies and policy briefs will be developed at the regional and country level on the trade, invetsment decent work and RBC nexus

Capacity development

For ILO tripartite constituents (governments, employers and workers) and critical stakehoders through online elearning, and national and subregional regional workshops on trade, investment, RBC,and decent work

Facilitating dialogue

Strengthening dialogue and experience-sharing between constituents, at sub-regional and national level sharing lessons learned and effective approaches for capacity development of countries on the trade, investments and decent work nexus

CONTACT DETAILS

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