Our Vision Statement

May 2025

Employment in Investments (EMPINVEST)

Creating more and better jobs is critical for achieving inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (SDG 8).

Investment in job-rich sectors - among others in infrastructure - are at the source of economic growth and provide the basis for enabling productivity gains, promoting trade, and creating positive spillover, which can help spread resources more equitably. Investment has a potential to create job opportunities, stimulate consumer spending (demand), and generate a positive feedback loop that fosters overall economic development and prosperity. Moreover, investment in certain sectors helps in optimizing technological changes and innovations, which in turn will shape employment outcomes in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility.

The growing need to narrow the financial gap to achieve the SDGs underscores the necessity for a systematic approach to inclusive investment policies. Such polices should also be complemented by sectoral policies that are useful in increasing its size and contribution of specific sectors, improve their productivity and competitiveness.

EMPINVEST is made up of one unit and two teams reporting to the Branch Chief. At the end of 2024, the Branch had an active DC portfolio of nearly US$ 220 million, backstopping the Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) and its 7 Regional Specialists and other activities beyond EIIP, spanning 50 ongoing projects and project components across 25 countries in Africa, Asia, the Arab States, and Global Projects. These programmes are in support of governments, social partners and stakeholders, upholding the values of Social Justice and Decent Work, with the aim to implement sustainable national approaches.

Mandate/objective

The main objective of EMPINVEST is to support ILO constituent and partners in implementing and strengthening sectoral policies (incl. trade and industrial policies), with a focus on those sectors with a significant potential for the creation of more and better jobs. By providing targeted support and incentives to these sectors, governments can, inter alia, stimulate inclusive employment growth, increase the labour force participation of vulnerable social groups, women, youth, and people with disabilities as well as provide marketable skills, while encouraging informal workers to transition to formality.

EMPINVEST also addresses the increasingly frequent and intense natural disasters, such as floods and droughts, exacerbated by climate change. These disasters have fuelled inter-state and intra-state conflicts over scarce resources, leading to protracted displacement of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons. Such social instability disproportionately affects marginalized people, deepening inequalities and threatening peace and security. EMPINVEST addresses these challenges by making employment central to preparedness, prevention and recovery.

In summary, EMPINVEST mainstreams employment and decent work into investment policies and programmes, trade and sectoral strategies at national level, while supporting a rights-based approach, and promoting the humanitarian development peace nexus. We support governments, social partners, development partners and international financial institutions to contributing to economic development, transition to formality, resilience, equality and environmental sustainability by:

- Ensuring that measures of quantity and quality of jobs are embedded in sectoral, trade and investment policies, programmes and projects;

- Promoting employment-intensive investments, including through sectoral strategies, supporting job creation, work-based learning and through the provision of transformative infrastructure and services;

- Supporting the transitions towards formal employment and to a greener economy through structural transformation in selected sectors which are crucial for economic stability and shared prosperity;

- Addressing challenges related to the risks of rapid technological change, particularly digitalization with the risk of leaving out the most vulnerable, highlighting the need for appropriate technologies and an inclusive development approach.

Policy fit

The work of the Branch is guided by relevant Global Frameworks and ILO Conventions and Recommendations, including the ILO Fundamental Conventions and not limited to:

- Employment Policy Convention C122;
- Recommendation 204 concerning the transition from the informal to formal economy;
- Recommendation 205 on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience;
- ILO's initiative on the Global Coalition for Social Justice and the Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions; and
- Just Transition Guidelines.

The work of the Branch is carried out through:

- Technical assistance and policy advice;
- Research and knowledge development;
- Capacity building and awareness-raising of the constituents, as well as the larger public.

Functions of EMPINVEST

EMPINVEST is made up of three complementary areas of work as follows:

Job Creation through Public Investments (JCPI) Unit

The JCPI team coordinates, supports and monitors the implementation of the Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP). The work of the JCPI Unit consists of upstream policy advocacy and promotion work, institution building at national, sectoral and local levels as well as downstream works relating to technical assistance and advisory support, development of appropriate technical and operational standards and guidelines, capacity development including training of national and local partners, and knowledge development and dissemination. JCPI coordinates and provides advisory and management support to global employment intensive programmes and projects undertaken in collaboration with national and local partners, with the aim of rolling out EIIP principle and set goals.

The EIIP aims at creating more and better jobs through public/private investments in inclusive, economic, social and environmental infrastructure. The EIIP supports ILO constituent and partners in the conceptualisation, planning, implementation and monitoring of infrastructure development and maintenance works using employment intensive technologies to maximize employment outcomes for vulnerable communities and individuals. The EIIP supports a human-centred approach and promotes the use of local resources and social inclusion by mainstreaming these into the programme/project implementation cycle, i.e., planning, design, implementation (construction), maintenance and evaluation. EIIP creates immediate and longer-term development impacts which arise from improved access to infrastructure and services, and the incomes generated from employment on such projects, which benefits the wider society.

EIIP's works are guided by the ILO's core values, which are integrated in its operations and represent the unique approach of the programme developed over the years. These include gender empowerment and social inclusion, decent working conditions and good labour practice including OSH, and environmental safeguards. The EIIP has been active since the 1970's in more than 60 countries.

Employment Impact Monitoring and Measurement Team

Sector-specific strategies and new investments are needed to create new development paths which are not just more productive, but also sustainable and inclusive. We can achieve all this through evidence-based analysis of the employment impact of these investments. Identifying promising sectors, together with country-level assistance to those most in need contribute to this discourse.

Employment impact assessments (EmpIAs) of infrastructure investments at the project or programme level offer entry points to strengthen the link between infrastructure development and the creation of more and better jobs. EmpIAs will be carried out to quantify and qualify how many and what kind of direct and non-direct jobs specific infrastructure projects and programmes create, including where the use of employment-intensive methods of construction and maintenance are technically feasible and cost-effective.

EMPINVEST is helping ILO's national constituents, but also financial institutions and international organizations to measure and track decent work indicators in investment policies and projects, thus promoting the mainstreaming of decent employment into investment and sectoral (incl. trade, industrial and other) policies; regulating and mainstreaming employment into trade and investment policies and projects.

Investments, Sectoral Strategies and Transitions Team

Sector-specific strategies need to be sustainable and inclusive, while creating decent jobs and addressing the root causes of economic, social and environmental inequalities. A sectoral analysis means looking into sub-sectors or product groups and their related global or regional supply chains, from local production to global markets, while assessing export potential. It also includes an evaluation of technology choices and their impact on employment and trade, meaning its multiplier effect on different types of workers, at a local or national level, its effect on national capability development, and on the quality of employment (both formal and informal).

Informal employment is one of the most challenging features of labour markets today. Formalization of the economy is a complex and long-term process that often requires combining interventions on laws and regulations (e.g. e-formality) aiming to promote access to the formal labour market, reduce decent work deficits and foster productivity.

This team is promoting the inclusion of employment considerations in sectoral and investment strategies with a special focus on informal employment, but also un(der)employment. This will be done by developing and implementing a multipronged approach to support transition from the informal to the formal economy tackling the multiple drivers of informality including sectoral and technological aspects. Innovative approaches will be promoted, through a just transition to a green economy and a more digitalized world economy. Another focus lies on the promotion of the alignment of employment considerations into trade, investment, industrial and general sectoral policies. This more sectoral approach includes a consideration and evaluation of technology choices and their importance for employment, at a local or national level, its effect on national capability development, and on the quality of employment (incl. formal, informal).