

'POSITIVE SENSE OF AMBITION'..... ILO LUSAKA'S NEXT LEVEL SUCCESS

SECRET

Exclusive Interview with Martin Clemensson, Director, ILO Lusaka



Mr Martin Clemensson speaking to the ILO Lusaka staff team as the ILO Director General Guy Ryder listens on during his visit to Zambia

The ILO Lusaka Country Office has been on a remarkable ascending pathway over the past couple of years. There has been tremendous growth from strength to strength literally across most areas of its operation.

In an exclusive interview during a recent strategic planning retreat of ILO Lusaka Country Office, ILO Director, Mr Martin Clemensson revealed the factors behind this success and the vision for the next level of success.

Benjamin: Mr. Clemensson, what have been some of the most significant positive shifts that have recently taken place in ILO Lusaka?

Martin: We have had a good period in terms of getting support for the ILO's programme of assistance to our constituents, especially in the areas of green jobs, rural youth employment, social protection and dealing with challenges in the extractive industries. The project portfolio has grown considerably by 60% in the last year so we have recruited some 25 new colleagues.

It is also about working in partnership with other organisations as we deal with more complex and cross-cutting issues. In the recent past, we have not only strengthened working in close collaboration with other sister UN agencies, but we have entered into new

constructive partnerships with Ministry of Finance, International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Benjamin: What can we attribute this achievement to? What has influenced the positive shifts?

Martin: There are many factors but most important is a positive sense of ambition and urgency that the ILO team has now - a sense that we are here to make a positive difference in the lives of people facing vulnerabilities, and that we are well placed to do so. When our constituents experience the support from the ILO, and UN colleagues, donors and the public alike, there is a snowball effect which has led to the positive shifts.

Benjamin: Right! Now, the ILO Lusaka team recently went through a strategy retreat to reforecast the vision of ILO in Zambia. In light of that, how does the vision of ILO Lusaka look like?

Martin: More and better! The ILO's vision is clear in terms of the decent work agenda and the priorities of the decent work country programmes. The ILO has a wonderfully meaningful mandate to address the injustices in these countries, we have the competencies and we can get the resources to meet the expectations.

We just need to be more focussed on making a real impact on the lives of the people that have been left behind: we need to scale up and we need to innovate on ways of doing it.

Benjamin: How will you ensure that this vision is realised?

Martin: By unleashing capacities and creativities. Give people the opportunity and they will innovate, flourish with ideas and concrete strategies for making a real difference. We now have teams of colleagues that are developing four new flagship mega programmes, we have an innovation team to explore creative solutions, we believe in doing more with less, and the team here in Lusaka very well understands the importance of balancing work and life. Most interestingly we meditate together! Three times a week, the ILO Lusaka colleagues have mindfulness exercises, which have made us more focussed, creative and stress resilient.

Benjamin: Finally Mr Clemensson, what are you most excited about in leading this motivated team into the next level of success?

Martin: I am truly excited to have seen the response when I have encouraged colleagues to be bold, think big and achieve real results. I am not interested in us just being busy - it is the results that matter. The new flagship programmes will be released after the current wave of pipeline projects and may well be ground-breaking in terms of the ILO's contribution to development.

That is exciting!

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