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Promoting decent work in the rural economy

Lessons from Zimbabwe (2008–2018)

Sectoral
Policies
Department

Promoting decent work in the rural economy Lessons from Zimbabwe (2008-2018)

Simbarashe SIBANDA

**International Labour Office
Harare**

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Preface

The rural economy holds significant potential for creating decent and productive jobs and contributing to sustainable development and economic growth. Rural areas generally have poor economic and social outcomes. The challenges of food insecurity, poverty, gender and income inequalities and the lack of employment opportunities are more accentuated in rural areas.

This paper, a desk review, presents a documentation of ILO interventions in Zimbabwe's rural economy during the period 2008–18 that also extracts lessons learnt. The paper presents a situational analysis of the rural economy in Zimbabwe, challenges in the labour market and a summary of the ILO's intervention strategy to promote more and better jobs. It summarises key achievements over the last decade of work and some of the key lessons learnt. Most notable lessons are how national ownership can be enhanced by locally led implementation structures; how to ensure greater engagement of tripartite partners; managing risks and that pursuing several decent work-related objectives at the same time produces solutions that are more lasting.

We hope that ILO staff and constituents will find this paper useful when devising future policy initiatives.

Alette van Leur
Director
Sectoral Policies Department

Hopolang Phororo
Director
Country Office for Zimbabwe and Namibia

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Abbreviations and acronyms

DIC	District Implementation Committee
DWCP	Decent Work Country Programme
E4WAY	Empowerment for Women and Youth
EMCOZ	Employers' Confederation of Zimbabwe
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoZ	Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe
HIV/AIDS	Human Immuno-deficiency Virus – Acquired Immuno-deficiency Syndrome
ILC	International Labour Conference
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISAL	Internal Savings and Lending
JPGE	Joint Programme for Gender Equality
LED	Local Economic Development
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MSME	Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises
MTP	Medium Term Plan
NSC	National Steering Committee
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health
PIC	Provincial Implementation Committee
QIA	Quality Informal Apprenticeships
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
STERP	Short Term Emergency Recovery Programme
TREE	Training for Rural Economic Empowerment
TSP	Transitional Stabilization Programme
TWG	Technical Working Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNWOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VFM	Value for Money
WIND	Work Improvement in Neighbourhood Development
YES JUMP	Youth Employment Support-Jobs for the Unemployed and Marginalized Young People
YWEP	Youth and Women Empowerment Project
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZEDS	Zimbabwe Economic Development Strategy
ZIMASSET	Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation
ZUNDAF	Zimbabwe United Nation Development Assistance Framework

1. Introduction

The rural economy holds significant potential for creating decent and productive jobs and contributing to sustainable development and economic growth. The ILO's work in the rural economy seeks to support the tripartite constituents in developing policies, strategies and programmes that increase productive employment opportunities and decent work in the rural economy.

This is especially important for Zimbabwe where 68 per cent of the total population is rural.¹ Rural areas generally have poor economic and social outcomes where the challenges of food insecurity, poverty, gender and income inequalities and the lack of employment opportunities are more accentuated. These challenges reinforce each other in a vicious cycle by eroding human capital and decreasing labour productivity, thereby perpetuating poverty and social inequalities across generations in rural Zimbabwe. Rural areas are also generally more exposed to the effects of climate change, especially as agriculture is often the mainstay of this economy and its productivity is also highly dependent on the weather and seasonal patterns. Access to services and productive infrastructure is also a major challenge to unleash the productive potential of the rural economy. Through the Decent Work Country Programmes, the ILO has been supporting its tripartite constituents to promote employment and decent work in the rural economy. Since 2008 the ILO has implemented several development interventions, in excess of US\$8 million, largely targeting young people and women.

1.1. Aims and objectives

This paper seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the strategies for promoting decent work in the rural economy in Zimbabwe. This is achieved through an analysis of the ILO's work in this area of significant potential for creating decent and sustainable jobs and contributing to sustainable development and economic growth. The paper also seeks to extract some lessons learnt from past development cooperation interventions that may be useful when designing, implementing and monitoring future programmes targeting the rural economy in Zimbabwe and beyond. By aiming the paper at rural development practitioners it can seek to identify enabling and success factors for functioning interventions in the rural economy as well as reflecting on the challenges and inhibiting factors for the promotion of employment and decent work. It is anticipated some of the lessons can contribute to the ongoing discussions on effective strategies for rural development.

1.2. Methodology and limitations

A review of ILO interventions in Zimbabwe's rural economy in the period 2008–18 is presented and is based on an internal desk review of project documents and evaluations, consultant reports and studies² related to ILO interventions. Some key lessons are also drawn from presentations and discussions from several ILO's international, national and local workshops and meetings focused on the rural economy.³ The discussions in this paper are

¹ ZimStat (2015). *2014 Labour Force Survey*. ZIMSTAT, Harare

² See annex of internal ILO documents reviewed. Studies and reports are cited in text across the document

³ See annex for the list of meetings whose discussions have influenced this paper

restricted to the work done by the ILO and its social partners, leaving out work by other players in the rural economy – this is due to limited information on non-ILO activities.

Chapter 2, introduces Zimbabwe's rural economy and summaries the ILO's interventions related to the rural economy. Chapter 3 discusses what works for promoting employment in the rural economy, examines the enabling and success factors as well as reflects on the challenges and inhibiting factors for employment promotion. Chapter 4 shares the lessons learnt.

2. Decent work in the rural economy

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development embraces the three dimensions of sustainability – economic, social and environmental. The importance of all the four pillars of decent work, namely employment promotion, rights at work, social dialogue and social protection, is highlighted in the Sustainable Development Goal 8 as a key to sustainable development. ‘It is estimated that over 600 million new jobs need to be created by 2030, just to keep pace with the growth of the global working age population.’ There is also a need to ‘improve conditions for the 780 million women and men who are working but not earning enough to lift themselves and their families out of US\$2 a-day poverty’.⁴ Rural development is at the centre of efforts to eradicate poverty, ‘a growing number of empirical studies confirmed ... that growth in agriculture had been more effective in reducing poverty over the past decades than growth outside agriculture.’⁵ ‘...growth in agriculture is in general (two to three times) more effective at reducing poverty than an equivalent amount of growth generated outside agriculture remains confirmed.’⁶ The advantage of agriculture over non-agriculture in reducing poverty is largest for the poorest in society and ultimately disappears as countries become richer. However, in Africa low levels of productivity by smallholder farmers has meant that ‘poverty reduction is much more likely to come from urbanization.’⁷

The rural economy is central to the decent work agenda, ‘Globally, extreme poverty continues to be disproportionately and overwhelmingly rural. The poverty rate in rural areas (17.2 percent) is more than three times as high as that in urban areas (5.3 percent); with approximately 54 percent of the world’s population, rural areas account for 79 percent of the total poor. Rural poverty is strongly associated with the sector of employment; the extreme poverty rate is higher among agricultural workers, and they constitute almost two-thirds of the extreme poor.’⁸ These trends are largely similar in Africa and in Zimbabwe.

A large share of the rural poor still depends on low-productivity subsistence farming for their livelihoods. The poorest rural households lack access to productive assets and often rely on income from wage employment. Of the 300–500 million wage workers in agriculture,

⁴ ILO (2015a). *Decent work and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development*. Geneva. Available online at <http://www.ilo.org/global/topics>

⁵ Christiaensen, L. and Martin, W. (2018). *Agriculture, structural transformation and poverty reduction – Eight new insights*. World Development, Num. 109. pp. 413–416. Available online at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0305750X1830175X>

⁶ Ibid. p.414

⁷ Ibid. p.413

⁸ World Bank (2018b). *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2018: Piecing Together the Poverty Puzzle*. Washington, DC. Available online at <http://tiny.cc/pq024y>

many depend on jobs in the plantation sector⁹. Some 70.9 per cent, or 152 million child labourers (aged 5 to 17), are agriculture (fisheries and forestry).¹⁰

The high rates of poverty in rural areas cannot be separated from the challenge of informality, with the majority of both agricultural and non-agricultural employment in developing countries continuing to be based in the informal economy. In agriculture, the share of informality at a global level is still much higher, at 93.6 per cent¹¹. The informal economy employment tends to be associated with low labour productivity and decent work deficits such as poor skills, low earnings and poor working conditions, and limited social protection coverage.¹²

The bulk of rural workers are own account workers. However, rural wage labour, typically low-paid manual labour, is a crucial form of employment for the poorest households, both for bare economic survival and as a pathway out of poverty. This dimension of the rural economy is not always overt and often missed in policy development. The wage labourers are adversely affected by labour demand which is highly seasonal leading to long spells of un- or underemployment.¹³

A higher rate of agricultural employment is associated with higher rates of extreme poverty¹⁴. This and many other developmental challenges in the rural economy are fuelled by factors such as limited access to extension services (poor crop selection and inappropriate production methods), inputs and finance, high post-harvest losses, and poor access to markets. Land tenure systems can also make it difficult for farmers to become more prosperous. In addition, off-farm enterprises and opportunities for wage employment remain underdeveloped in many rural areas, partly due to inadequate enabling environment for sustainable enterprise development. Business ventures are often underdeveloped because of a lack of supportive policies and the necessary support services. The situation is compounded by under-investment in infrastructure, key rural institutions and poor access to essential social services; government expenditure patterns; levels of income inequality; weakness of governance systems.¹⁵ Additional pressures emanate from climate change and excessive use

⁹ ILO (2017). *The rural economy: An untapped source of jobs, growth and development*. Geneva. Available online at <http://tiny.cc/js024y>

¹⁰ FAO (2017c). *The future of Food and Agriculture: Trends and Challenges*. Rome. Available online at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6583e.pdf>

¹¹ ILO (2018b). *Women and men in the informal economy: a statistical picture* (third edition). Geneva.

¹² ILO (2012a). *The informal economy and decent work: A policy resource guide. Supporting transitions to formality*. Geneva.

¹³ Mueller, B., and Chan, M. (2015). 'Wage labor, agriculture-based economies, and pathways out of poverty: taking stock of the evidence.' LEO USAID report Number 15. Washington, USAID.

¹⁴ ILO (2016b). *World Employment Social Outlook 2016: Transforming jobs to end poverty*. Geneva. Available online at <https://bit.ly/2Ipt1TD>

¹⁵ Anyanwu, John and Anyanwu, Joanna (2017). *The Key Drivers of Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa and What Can Be Done About it to Achieve the Poverty Sustainable Development Goal*. Asian Journal of Economic Modelling, 2017, 5(3): 297-317. Available online at <http://tiny.cc/jl124y> and

and degradation of land, water and other natural resources. Women face additional challenges as they must deal with many social, economic and cultural barriers, including weak access to, and control of, economic and productive resources as well as having to contend with time poverty due to the demands of their care role.

In sub-Saharan Africa growth in the industrial and service sectors has lagged, for instance the manufacturing sector, accounts for just 6.2 per cent of total employment – depriving the labour force of an alternative source of employment.¹⁶ From the above analysis it is evident that the rural economy is unable to provide decent and productive employment opportunities for rural populations and the situation is compounded by the massive numbers of new job seekers who enter the workforce annually. Disillusioned, job seekers migrate to urban areas where they join the ranks of the urban poor or are forced to look for employment elsewhere, leading to seasonal – or permanent – migration.¹⁷ Many migrants, especially those moving from rural to urban areas, migrate in search of better employment opportunities. This trend is likely to continue as young people (ages 15–24) are more likely than adults to have migratory aspirations: over 43 per cent of them would leave their country of origin if they had the opportunity.

2.1. ILO's strategy on promoting decent work in the rural economy

Since its establishment in 1919, the ILO's work has included a focus on the rural economy due to persistent poverty and prevalence of decent work deficits in rural areas as well as for the potential it holds for creating decent and productive jobs and contributing to sustainable development and economic growth. The ILO has adopted over 30 international labour standards that are of direct relevance to agriculture and rural development, covering rights at work, employment, social protection and social dialogue¹⁸. In 2008, the International Labour Conference (ILC) discussion on rural employment culminated in the adoption of a Resolution and Conclusions¹⁹ on promoting rural employment for poverty reduction, thereby setting a mandate for renewed ILO involvement in rural development issues. As a follow-up, in March 2011, a strategy on promoting decent work for rural development²⁰ was presented to the Governing Body. Informed by these developments, the Director-General's Programme and Budget proposals for 2016–17 identified 'decent work in the rural economy' as one of the

World Bank (2016). *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2016: Taking on Inequality*. Available online at <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/25078/9781464809583.pdf?sequence=24&isAllowed=y>

¹⁶ ILO (2019b). *World Employment and Social Outlook – Trends 2019*. Geneva. Available online at <http://tiny.cc/bh124y>

¹⁷ FAO (2017b). Rural areas, too long seen as poverty traps, key to economic growth in developing countries. Rome. Available online at <http://tiny.cc/pk124y>

¹⁸ FAO (2017a). *National Gender profile of agriculture and rural livelihoods: Zimbabwe Country Gender Assessment series*. Harare. Available online at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6997e.pdf>

¹⁹ ILO (2008). Resolutions adopted by the International Labour Conference at its 97th Session. Geneva. Available online at <http://tiny.cc/fndi5y>

²⁰ ILO (2011). *Unleashing rural development through productive employment and decent work: Building on 40 years of ILO work in rural areas*. Geneva. <http://tiny.cc/cjdi5y>

ten policy outcomes for the ILO as a means of continued provision of high-value services to the ILO's tripartite constituents.²¹

As the ILO marks its Centenary, it has produced a landmark report through the Global Commission on the Future of Work titled, *Work for a brighter future*²² which examines how to achieve a better future of work for all at a time of unprecedented change and exceptional challenges in the world of work. The rural economy is identified as a key area for the future of work and notes that the development of the rural economy, where the future of many of the world's workers lies, should become a priority.

The commission report recognizes that transforming economies to promote decent and sustainable work requires urgent measures. In the rural economy efforts should include strengthening land tenure rights, empowering women, improving access to credit and insurance, and establishing measures for fair and stable agricultural prices for food security. In addition, there is a need to upgrade and modernize small-scale subsistence farming as a means to elevate people out of poverty, directing investment to high-quality physical and digital infrastructure. It also recognizes that rural economies are both vulnerable to climate change and are among the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions and notes the urgent need to promote the development of sustainable agriculture with an access to clean, affordable and renewable energy. Lowering our carbon footprint offers tremendous opportunities to meet growth, development and employment needs and improve rural livelihoods.

2.2. Zimbabwe's country context

The Republic of Zimbabwe is a landlocked country located in Southern Africa. It gained its independence from the British in 1980. A country of 16.5 million people,²³ Zimbabwe has 16 official languages, with English, Shona, and Ndebele being the most commonly used. Zimbabwe is a constitutional democracy, and its Constitution of 2013 is the supreme law of the land.²⁴

²¹ ILO. Rural Economy. Available online at <http://www.tiny.cc/be224y>

²² ILO (2019a). Working for a Brighter Future: Global Commission on the Future of Work. Geneva. Available online at <http://tiny.cc/nhdi5y>

²³ World Bank (2017). Available online at <https://www.data.worldbank.org/country/zimbabwe>

²⁴ Parliament of Zimbabwe (2019). Available online at <http://www.tiny.cc/9e224y>

About 68 per cent of the population resides in rural areas.²⁵ Children and youth²⁶ make up 77 per cent²⁷ of the total population and two-thirds of the economically active population²⁸, while women make-up 52 per cent of the population.²⁹

The challenges of persistent poverty continue to weigh down on sustainable economic development. In 2012, 63 per cent of the population lived below the total consumption poverty line, of which 16 per cent were extremely poor.³⁰ Poverty is widespread in rural communities, with Matabeleland North being the poorest – a prevalence of 85.7 per cent, while urban areas have the least prevalence. Poverty is least prevalent in the two largest cities Bulawayo and Harare with rates of 37.2 per cent and 36.4 per cent respectively.³¹

The country faces significant levels of informality, unemployment and underemployment (particularly in the informal economy). Other notable development challenges include food insecurity and gender inequality, as well as vulnerability to climate change and unsustainable use of natural resources.³² As acknowledged in the 2016-2020 ZUNDAF, there is also need for ensuring strong governance and quality service public administration in order to support the enabling environment for sustained peace, security and development.

²⁵ ZimStat (2018b). *Poverty, Income, Consumption and Expenditure Survey 2017 Report*. ZIMSTAT, Harare.

²⁶ The 2013 National Youth Policy defines youth as persons between 15 and 35 years of age (MYDIE 2013).

²⁷ The share of the population between 0 and 35 years of age.

²⁸ ZimStat (2015). *2014 Labour Force Survey*. ZIMSTAT, Harare.

²⁹ ZimStat (2012). *Zimbabwe Population Census 2012*. ZIMSTAT, Harare.

³⁰ This is the latest data available, more recent publications all cite this report – the Zimbabwe Poverty, Income, Consumption and Expenditure Survey 2011/12 Report. Available online at <http://www.zimstat.co.zw/sites/default/files/img/publications/Finance/Income2011.pdf>

³¹ UNICEF, World Bank and ZimStat (2015). *Zimbabwe Poverty Atlas. 2015*. Available online at <http://tiny.cc/a7fi5y>

³² FAO (2019). *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World: Safeguarding Against Economic Slowdowns and Downturns*. Rome. Available online at https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP0000106760/download/?_ga=2.254828493.491293394.1565173392-829499789.1562650980 and

World Bank (2016). *Poverty and Shared Prosperity 2016: Taking on Inequality*. Available online at <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/25078/9781464809583.pdf?sequence=24&isAllowed=y> and

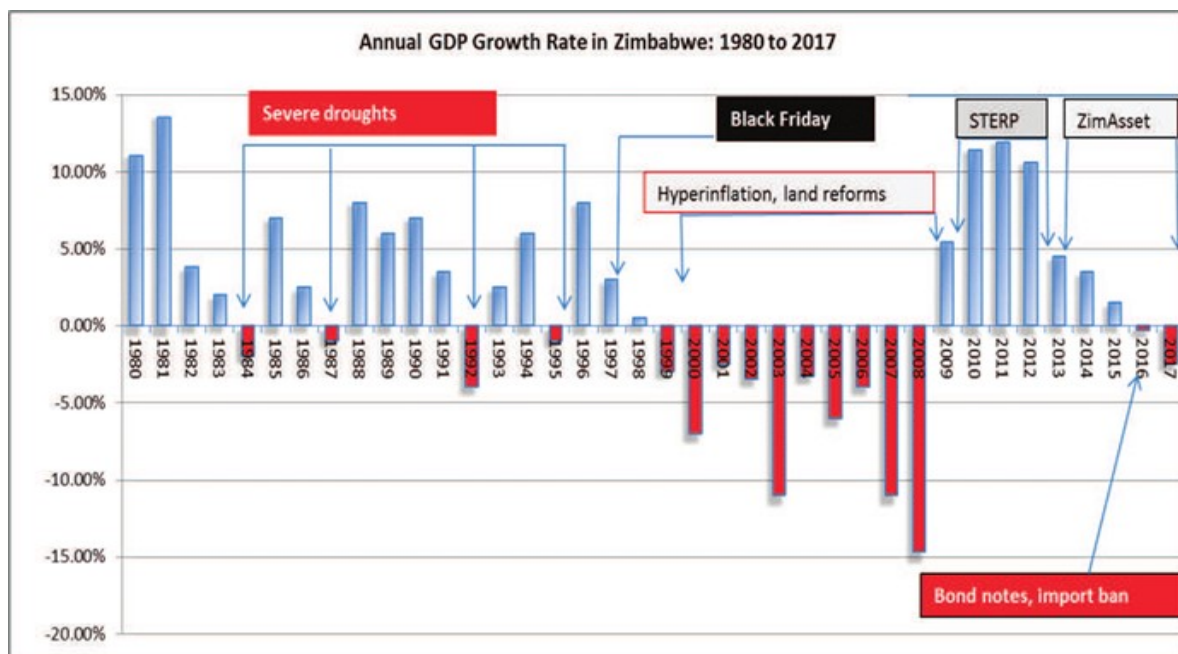
FAO (2017c). *The future of Food and Agriculture: Trends and Challenges*. Rome. Available online at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6583e.pdf>

Over the past two decades, Zimbabwe has run a continuous balance-of-payment deficit with imports vastly exceeding exports. The economic outlook remains uncertain in the face of cash shortages and the three-tier pricing system. This coupled with foreign-exchange shortages has led to excessive parallel market foreign-exchange rates that have dampened demand and supply, thereby constraining the goods and factor markets. Policy-related macroeconomic instability resulting in part from the country's protracted fiscal imbalances, high-debt overhang and the resurgence of hyperinflation in 2019 (58 per cent) have constrained economic growth efforts, expenditure and social service provision, broadly undermining poverty reduction efforts.

The period under review witnessed significant change in the Zimbabwean economy. The GDP declined by 16 per cent in 2008, in 2009 the economy started to recover with growth peaking at 15 per cent in 2011. In the post 2013 period growth continued but was very subdued mostly below the 3 per cent mark. Figure 1 shows the centrality of agriculture and the rural economy to the Zimbabwean economy, years of drought tend to have significant adverse effects on the GDP.

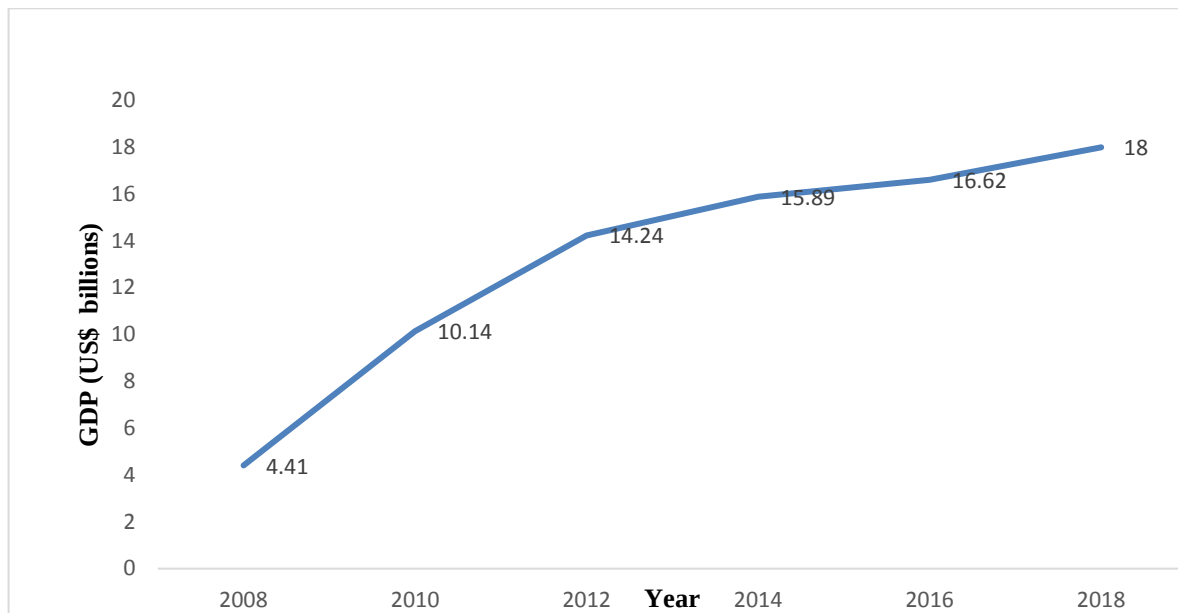
Despite the volatility in terms of GDP growth rate, the economy grew, starting with a GDP of US\$4.41 billion in 2008 and ending the decade under review with a GDP of US\$18 billion.¹

Figure 1: Annual GDP growth rate in Zimbabwe, 1980–2017



Source : Sibanda V & Makwata L (2017). Zimbabwe Post-Independence Economic Policies: A critical Review. Lambert Academy Publishing, Germany.

Figure 2: Zimbabwe's gross domestic product



Source: ZimStat (2018a). *GDP, 2009-2017 figures*. National Account Department. Available online at <http://tiny.cc/scgi5y>

In mid-November 2008, inflation peaked at 79.6 billion per cent but came down significantly to an average of around 0.8 per cent per annum for the period 2009–14. Zimbabwe then struggled with deflation during the period 2015–16. Starting in late 2016, inflation started to increase rapidly by up to 80 per cent on the back of the introduction of a surrogate currency – an export incentive known as bond notes.

In 2008, Zimbabwe was using the Zimbabwean dollar, before adopting a multicurrency system in 2009, largely dominated by the United States Dollar. Bond notes were introduced in 2016 and this largely led to the de-dollarization of the economy and early in 2019 a new national currency was introduced, the RTGS dollar. The economy moved from having too much money in circulation in 2008 to a situation where there was not enough currency to facilitate trade in 2018. As a result of this, the country now has a three-tier pricing system – with prices for those paying in US dollars, a price for paying with bond notes (at some point this was up to 40 per cent higher than the US dollar price) and a price for electronic payments (at some point this was up to 100 per cent higher than the US dollar price).

Despite these many changes in the economy, the sectors driving the economy have remained relatively unchanged, with distribution, hotels and restaurants being the largest contributor.

Table 1: Gross domestic product by industry

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by Industry at Current Prices – Percentage Distribution									
Industry/ Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Distribution, Hotels, and Restaurants	14.4	13.7	11.6	11.4	12.5	12.1	12.3	13.2	13.5
Education	3.6	6.5	7.9	9.4	10	10.6	11.4	11.2	11.4
Agriculture, Hunting and Fishing and Forestry	12.4	11.5	10.1	9.8	9	10.7	10.3	9.6	10
Public Administration	3.9	5.4	7.5	9	8.5	9.1	9.3	9.6	9.4
Transport and Communication	12.9	11.3	10.9	9.5	9	9.3	9.3	9	8.9
Manufacturing	12.7	11	10.7	10.1	9.6	9.1	8.7	8.4	8
Mining and Quarrying	6.7	8	8.3	7.6	7.8	7.3	6.8	7.2	7.2

Source: ZimStat (2018a). *GDP, 2009-2017 figures*. National Account Department. Available online at <http://tiny.cc/scgi5y>

Zimbabwe's Labour Market

At 87 per cent Zimbabwe has by far the highest labour force participation rate and the lowest unemployment rate (5.4 per cent) in Southern Africa.³³ This is a result of the difficult economic situation that forces everyone to work, mostly in the informal economy. In fact, whereas officially the rate of vulnerable employment is estimated at 59.5 per cent, it is widely anticipated that this could be higher, as 94 per cent of all jobs are in the informal economy³⁴. Zimbabwe has the highest proportion of people living in poverty in Southern Africa and the country's Gini coefficient of 50.1³⁵ is slightly below the sub-Saharan Africa average. Zimbabwe occupies the 156th rank out of 188 in the Human Development Index³⁶. The labour situation can also be described in relation to the four strategic objectives of the ILO which are to set and promote standards and fundamental principles and rights at work; create greater opportunities for women and men to decent employment and income; enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all and strengthen tripartism and social dialogue.

Restrained economic growth, decent work deficits and informality have combined to hamper reduction of poverty in Zimbabwe. The challenge in Zimbabwe is not so much unemployment but the lack of decent and productive work resulting in various forms of labour underutilization, including underemployment, low income and low productivity, especially in the informal economy. The size of the informal economy also points to a large population not covered by formal social protection and labour administration systems. The unemployment

³³ ILO (2017). *Southern Africa Resource Mobilization Strategy*. Unpublished.

³⁴ ZimStat (2015). *2014 Labour Force Survey*. ZIMSTAT, Harare

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ World Bank (2018a). *Human Development Indices and Indicators: 2018 Statistical Update*. Available online at <http://tiny.cc/bb224y>

rate masks significant levels of working poverty: 76 per cent of those working have incomes below US\$200.³⁷ In addition, one out of five workers is unpaid.

Underemployment in Zimbabwe was reported at 12 per cent in 2014. However, as this only refers to time related unemployment and does not account for those whose employment is inadequate with respect to their occupational skills, overall underemployment is likely to be much higher.

Significant sections of the population still have limited access to social protection and basic social services. Groups in an acute state of vulnerability, poverty and often social exclusion include undocumented labour migrants, those working in the informal economy, youth and those affected by HIV/AIDS. Labour migration has also seen a sizeable proportion of the working age population living in the diaspora³⁸ which official data suggests to be about 200,000 Zimbabweans. However, this data is disputed, as [South African](#), [Australian](#) and [United Kingdom](#) censuses confirm more than 800,000 Zimbabweans are living abroad. Due to the high levels of migration, remittances have become a significant form of cash inflows, some US\$1.7 billion in 2017 to Zimbabwe.³⁹ However, in some cases migration worsens family situations as those in the diaspora have limited capacity to remit home to the elders and children left behind.

Zimbabwe's Rural Economy

According to the 2012 population census, Zimbabwe defines and measures the rurality of the population using three criteria. For the administrative locality to be designated as rural, it should have inhabitants fewer than 2,500, a non-compact settlement pattern and the majority (more than 50 per cent) of the employed persons engaged in agricultural occupations.⁴⁰

The 2014 Labour Force Survey states that 68 per cent of the total population of Zimbabwe is rural based. Rural areas in Zimbabwe generally have poor economic and social conditions. Food insecurity, poverty, income inequalities and the lack of employment opportunities reinforce each other in a vicious cycle by eroding human capital and decreasing labour productivity, thereby perpetuating poverty and social inequalities across generations in rural Zimbabwe.⁴¹

³⁷ FinMark Trust and Zimbabwe (2014). *FinScope consumer Survey Zimbabwe 2014*. Available online at <http://www.finmark.org.za>

³⁸ IOM (2017). *Migration in Zimbabwe: A Country Profile 2010–2016*. Available online at <http://tiny.cc/ezhi5y>

³⁹ World Bank Estimates. Available online at <http://tiny.cc/wbii5y>

⁴⁰ ZimStat (2012). *Zimbabwe Population Census 2012*. ZIMSTAT, Harare

⁴¹ ILO (2016a). *Decent Work Profile in Rural Economy* – Unpublished

Table 2: Socio-economic indicators of rural and urban areas in Zimbabwe

	Indicator	Rural	Urban
1	Population (% of national total)	68	32
2	Households without electricity (%)	51	10
3	Population using wood as energy source for cooking (%)	93	15
4	Population using electricity as energy source for cooking (%)	5.3	73.9
5	Population using improved water sources for drinking (%)	67	96
6	Population using piped water sources for drinking (%)	6.6	60.7
7	Population using unprotected wells/dam/river/stream for drinking (%)	32	0.9
8	Population using flush toilets (%)	6.4	90.2
9	Population with no toilet facility at all (%) (People practicing open	38	1.8
10	Gini coefficient of average years of schooling. Age 15+.	28.6	16.9
11	Gross attendance rate. Post-Secondary	0.88	8.6
12	Proportion out-of-school. Primary	8.8	5.7
13	Secondary completion rate. Rural	5.3	22.8

Source: ILO, 2016

The difficult economic environment described above has affected those living in the rural areas much harder than those in the urban areas. The 2014 Labour Force Survey shows that consumption expenditure for rural areas is US\$67 compared to US\$114 for urban areas. Poverty is much more pronounced in rural areas, with 84 per cent poverty level compared to 47 per cent in urban areas. Seventy-six per cent of rural population are employed as own account workers (communal, peri-urban and resettlement farming). The few non-agro food wage employment jobs in the rural economy are mostly related to the public service (teachers and nurses etc.).⁴²

The share of on-farm wage employment declined significantly after the land redistribution programme which led to a decline in agriculture productivity. Despite this, agriculture still plays a central role in Zimbabwe's rural economy, and consequently most rural employment opportunities entail agricultural work, including both on-farm self-employment and wage-employment. In addition, the non-farm economy (which is becoming an important source of employment growth in rural areas), depends heavily upon agricultural production (e.g. agro-industry, trade in inputs and products, machinery and transportation services, professional services, etc.).⁴³ Data on employment on plantations is generally limited.

Given the low income returns from rural employment activities (mainly agriculture) most rural residents engage in other secondary activities. The rate of engagement in secondary

⁴² ZimStat (2015). *2014 Labour Force Survey*. ZIMSTAT, Harare

⁴³ ILO (2016a). *Decent Work Profile in Rural Economy* – Unpublished

activities is higher in rural areas, around 12 per cent of rural population compared to 7 per cent of urban population. This shows the extent to which rural occupations provide limited income return necessary for survival, thus forcing people to engage in more than one job.⁴⁴

In addition to the challenges outlined above there seems to be data paucity on aspects with potential to enhance decency of employment such as social dialogue, labour administration, participation in trade unions, occupational health and safety and application of labour laws. Despite the data paucity the majority of Zimbabwe's rural population suffers low educational and skills levels, limited opportunities for formal decent jobs and a generally weak application of labour laws. Workers in the rural economy also have limited knowledge of their rights. This rural scenario is however not limited to Zimbabwe only as evidence from other countries indicate major decent work deficits within the rural economy.

Social security schemes in Zimbabwe are confronted with problems arising from narrow coverage of populations, limited resources, high administrative costs, and the dispersion of target populations over large geographical areas, as well the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Current social protection measures have been eroded in terms of coverage of the population as well as in terms of the level of benefits payable as a result of the weak economic performance. An analysis⁴⁵, of the contributory social security schemes reveals that current schemes cover only a small percentage of the population, namely those in formal employment thus largely excluding the rural population.

Access to education and training data, specific to the rural economy is generally unavailable.

The state's allocation to the education sector exceeds the international and regional norm of 20 per cent, but these budgetary allocations fall far below the sector's resource requirements. Nevertheless, households have upheld the tradition of prioritizing investment in education, and this is consistent with the high demand for education that the country has exhibited over the years. As a result, literacy rates are high (92 per cent), and so are participation rates in basic education. Gross enrolment rates and net enrolment rates for the primary school level are 105.6 per cent and 85.1 per cent respectively, with gender parity.

... As many as 21.4 per cent of primary school graduates fail to transition from primary to secondary level, with a further 18 per cent dropping out before they complete the lower secondary education cycle. As a result, the gross enrolment rate for the lower secondary level is only 76.9 per cent. Although all measures of participation for all levels showed an increase from 2012 figures, gross and net enrolment rates for secondary education stagnated in 2017 while there was a decline in transition rates from primary to lower secondary level. Children with disabilities [and those from rural households] constitute a large proportion of out of school children.⁴⁶

Rural infrastructure has suffered from low investment in expansion and maintenance. This has put the old system under pressure from growing demand. In particular, the rural

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ LEDRIZ (2018). *The Decent Work Agenda in Zimbabwe*. Harare.

⁴⁶ UNICEF (2018). *UNICEF Annual Report 2017: Zimbabwe*. Available online at <https://uni.cf/2Da6uqn>

economy has been affected by an old and inefficient transport system, weak telecommunications infrastructure, inadequate water and sanitation and poor productive infrastructure, particularly for water harvesting, storage and irrigation.⁴⁷ In the early 2000s, Zimbabwe initiated a rural electrification programme which came to a standstill when the ‘domestic power generation capacity fell far below demand due to lack of maintenance of ageing generation plants, and transmission and distribution facilities.’⁴⁸

Gender dynamics in rural Zimbabwe

Beyond the issue of income inequality, other forms of gendered inequality are prevalent in rural Zimbabwe, although they are not effectively captured by gender assessments which mostly focus on income inequality, thereby missing various dimensions of gender inequality and poverty.⁴⁹ Women employed in agriculture largely have their work classified as a family contribution. A lack of voice and representation at the workplace may also put women working in agriculture as wage workers in a weaker bargaining position and more exposed to discrimination.⁵⁰

Women face a disproportionate burden in respect to care and household chores. Often rural areas have less coverage of care services and access to water depends on women fetching water which sometimes involves walking large distances or dedicating a large amount of time to such tasks which prevents them from participating in more productive economic activities. In addition, girls are also held responsible for such tasks and may prevent them from accessing higher levels of education.⁵¹

While men in Zimbabwe eclipse women in terms of ownership of more valuable livestock, decision-making and control of livestock production, women’s ownership of smaller livestock (like goats and chicken) is greater. Women in rural areas work up to 16–18 hours a day, spending at least half of their time on agricultural activities and about a quarter on domestic activities. Both women and men participate in crops and horticultural production and marketing, with a more active participation of women and girls in grading and packaging.⁵²

Women’s access to land is mediated through males, rendering women dependent on men regardless of age, marital status, level of education and other attributes. The lack of access to land titles also causes more challenges when accessing finance, as women may lack the necessary collateral to access certain financial services, mainly credit. Widowhood and

⁴⁷ AfDB (2011). *Infrastructure and Growth in Zimbabwe: An Action Plan for Sustained Strong Economic Growth*. Available on line at <https://bit.ly/2yUeWHw>

⁴⁸ FAO (2017a). *National Gender profile of agriculture and rural livelihoods: Zimbabwe Country Gender Assessment series*. Harare. Available online at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6997e.pdf>

⁴⁹ UNICEF (2016). *Beyond Income: Gendered Well-Being and Poverty in Zimbabwe*. Accessed online in January 2019 at <https://uni.cf/2GgCfjy>

⁵⁰ FAO (2017b). *Rural areas, too long seen as poverty traps, key to economic growth in developing countries*. Rome. Available online at <http://tiny.cc/pk124y>

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² FAO (2017a). *National Gender profile of agriculture and rural livelihoods: Zimbabwe Country Gender Assessment series*. Harare. Available online at <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6997e.pdf>

divorce are important markers of vulnerability for rural women⁵³, considering that Zimbabwe remains largely a patriarchal society. Social norms also make it more challenging for women to access the support of agricultural extension workers, which is predominantly male.

According to UNICEF, 65 per cent of widows' households were rural and they comprised 73 per cent of the poor while 35 per cent were urban, comprising only 27 per cent of the poor. Access to sexual reproductive health is weak with only 57 per cent of rural women using contraceptives. The odds of a woman dying due to pregnancy and childbirth in 2019 are much higher compared to a few decades ago. Maternal mortality stands at 960 per 100,000 live births. Women in rural areas give birth on average of nearly two more children (4.8) than women in urban areas (3.1).⁵⁴

Sexual violence is more prevalent among women in employment (30 per cent) than among unemployed women (20 per cent). Lack of social power may not necessarily follow the contours of lack of income, partly because most women may lack choices and control over aspects of their lives in male-headed households⁵⁵.

Rural enterprises

Data on the performance of enterprises in the rural economy is largely unavailable. However, national averages paint a gloomy picture and it can be assumed the performance of rural enterprises would be worse than average. The 2012 the FinScope survey found that 5.7 million people work in Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)⁵⁶ but of these, 2 million are business owners operating as individual self-employed entrepreneurs and as much as 22 per cent are unpaid or contributing family workers of which the majority are female.

Zimbabwe's current overall ranking is at 155 out of 190 countries on the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business index as it requires 9 procedures, takes 32 days and costs 110 per cent of income per capita to start a business.⁵⁷ In 2018, the World Economic Forum also rated Zimbabwe 128 out of 140 countries in terms of global competitiveness.⁵⁸ A 2011 study by Bindura University demonstrates that after beating the odds and succeeding in setting up a business, an entrepreneur is undermined by a host of challenges resulting in a high rate of failure of 60 per cent of firms in the first year, another 25 per cent failing within three years and only 15 per cent surviving.⁵⁹ More up to date data is generally unavailable.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ FinMark Trust and Zimbabwe (2012). *FinScope MSME Survey Zimbabwe 2012*. Available online at <https://bit.ly/2Use8qM>

⁵⁷ World Bank (2019). *Doing Business 2019: Zimbabwe*. Available online at <https://bit.ly/2UNrYTX>

⁵⁸ World Economic Forum (2018). *The Global Competitiveness Report*. Available online at <https://bit.ly/2yM7uhI>

⁵⁹ Mudavanhu, V., Bindu S., Chigusiwa Ll. and Muchabaiwa L. (2011). *Determinants of small and medium enterprises failure in Zimbabwe: A case study of Bindura*. Department of Economics, Bindura University. Available online at <https://bit.ly/2Iq64Q9>

Although financial inclusion for the rural communities has improved in recent years largely driven by the growth of mobile money, nationally, only 14 per cent of business owners are banked, and only 3 per cent use a bank account in the name of the business. Banking infrastructure and credit is largely inaccessible to most firms in Zimbabwe due to high transaction costs and strict credit assessments and demands for collateral when applying for credit facilities. As many as 72 per cent of business owners do not put their money in the bank but save at home while a negligible 20 per cent of businesses are insured against potential risks.⁶⁰

Both formal and informal enterprises find access to formal finance a severe challenge for business growth. Most of the entrepreneurs operating in both the formal and informal enterprises ranked own savings (70.7 and 84.8 per cent respectively) as the first source of finance for a new business idea.⁶¹

Marketing, value addition and processing

‘Post-harvest losses, estimated at 20 to 30 per cent’ of harvested produce can rise to ‘as high as 40 per cent when including field, transportation, handling and processing losses. In most communal areas of the country, grain production is characterized by one year of good production followed by two or three years of deficit.’⁶² In addition to post-harvest losses, a lot of value has been lost in the agricultural sector due to the marketing of raw as well as semi-finished products. Little is taking place in as far as value addition of agricultural products is concerned despite the known impact of value addition on job creation and economic growth⁶³. Entrepreneurs in the rural economy tend to face significant challenges accessing markets or getting reliable and accurate information about the markets. Data on informality in the rural economy and non-farm economy is generally unavailable.

Relevance⁶⁴ of work in rural economy to national development frameworks

The ILO’s work on rural economy in Zimbabwe was designed and implemented in full alignment with national development frameworks and the Zimbabwe United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (ZUNDAF) for the period 2008–18.

During the period under review Zimbabwe had a total of five national development frameworks – translating to an average of one every two years. The first one, the Zimbabwe Economic Development Strategy (ZEDS) 2007–11 was aborted just after launch. This was followed by the [Short Term Emergency Recovery Programme \(STERP\)](#) which was intended to improve the employment situation in part through the development of a new employment policy as well as to broadly promote employment. STERP referred to the rural population in relation to expanding access to electricity, drilling boreholes, reviving rural tourism and public transport.

⁶⁰ FinMark Trust and Zimbabwe (2012). *FinScope MSME Survey Zimbabwe 2012*. Available online at <https://bit.ly/2Use8qM>

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² FAO (2013). *Post-Harvest Management*. Available online at <https://bit.ly/2UcLXam>

⁶³ Mabuwa, I. (2014). *Value Addition in Raw Material and Agricultural Exports from Zimbabwe*. Available online at <https://bit.ly/2leBNog>

⁶⁴ Relevance here is understood as the extent to which interventions are consistent with the country needs.

The [Medium Term Plan](#) (MTP) which followed in 2011 was more explicit about its aspiration to facilitate the acceleration of rural development. The document was however silent on how this would be achieved, focusing on the same aspects identified in ZEDS and offering more detailed strategy on small grains and livestock production.

The [Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation \(ZIMASSET\)](#) followed the same approach to rural economic development, while introducing some changes such as the introduction of a user-fee policy for social services, rehabilitating roads and the expansion of health and sanitation infrastructure and access to electricity. At the same time, the ZIMASSET had a much stronger commitment to empowerment and employment creation in general and to rural economic development in particular. However, the strategy was not well articulated in terms of the SME development, skills development and provision of funding for indigenous business ventures, especially start-ups and those run by previously disadvantaged individuals.

At the end of 2018 Zimbabwe launched a new national development framework, the [Transitional Stabilization Plan \(October 2018 to December 2020\)](#), which has a strong emphasis on the rural economy in terms of the aspirations. Agriculture is identified as one of the sectors for which there should be reforms towards smart agriculture. Mining, which largely takes place in rural areas, is also identified as a priority sector. Further to that, the document identifies rural electrification as a priority area. Electrification will have major implications in terms of direct job creation (electric infrastructure) but also indirectly by enabling a more dynamic and productive economic environment. However, a significant chunk of these elements is silent in the programme implementation plan.

Table 3: The three ZUNDAF for the period under review set to tackle inequality and reduce poverty

	Years											
Framework	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
National Development Framework	Zimbabwe Economic Development Strategy											Transitional Stabilization Plan
			STERP I		Mid Term Plan							
					STERP II		Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation					
UNDAF	ZUNDAF (2007 -2011)					ZUNDAF (2012 -2015)				ZUNDAF (2016-2020)		
DWCP	1st DWCP		2nd DWCP			3rd DWCP						

The different frameworks consistently had outcomes on improving access to decent work opportunities for youth and women. The [2012–15](#) framework made specific reference to skills development for self- and wage employment in the rural economy. There was another outcome on improving agricultural productivity. The social services aspects were also inclusive of the rural economy – poverty reduction. It is evident that the national development frameworks and the ZUNDAF's are tackling issues affecting the rural economy in most cases but it is not explicit and the approaches are neither coherent nor comprehensive enough to make a change in the rural economy. No deliberate rural-economy policy or strategy could be found for the period under review.

Since 2005, the Government of Zimbabwe together with its social partners and with the technical assistance of the ILO, developed and implemented the Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCPs). Between 2007 and 2018, three DWCPs were developed with support from the ILO. The first DWCP-Zimbabwe was adopted in 2005 and updated in 2008. The DWCPs although largely focused on employment promotion, did not specify if this would be largely in the rural economy or any other specific sector.⁶⁵ All three DWCPs were aligned to Government development priorities as outlined by the various development plans. In addition, the DWCPs were aligned to the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (ZUNDAF) in the respective periods.

Table 4: Priority areas under the DWCP Generations

First Generation (2005-2008)	Second generation (2009-2011)	Third Generation (2012-2018)
1 Poverty reduction through employment creation; 2 Impact of HIV/AIDS at the workplace reduced, and; 3 Enabling environment created through upholding and strengthening social dialogue.	1 Employment and poverty; 2 Social protection and HIV/AIDS at the workplace; 3 Tripartism, social dialogue and industrial relations; and 4 Gender equality and women empowerment.	1 Promoting Productive Employment and Decent Jobs; 2 Improving the application and implementation of international labour standards; 3 Strengthening Social Dialogue capacities and processes for sustainable socio-economic development; and, 4 Coverage of social protection increased through mainstreaming elements of the social protection floor.

Source: ILO, 2018a

2.3. Interventions by the ILO

Looking at programmes in the area of rural development in Zimbabwe between 2008 and 2018, a wide range of development actors have been active, with a significant focus on resilience building⁶⁶. The interventions are aimed at achieving increased adaptive, absorptive and transformative capacities of communities to withstand shocks and stresses, while protecting livelihoods and recovery gains and supporting sustainable transformation. In addition, a significant proportion of the work supports communities to improve access to food and ensure that vulnerable people consume an adequate and nutritious diet in times of need. Other works includes support towards sustainable agricultural production and

⁶⁵ ILO (2018a). Country Programme Review for Zimbabwe – Not published.

⁶⁶ [Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund](#); [Beef and Leather Value Chains Support](#); [Zimbabwe Agricultural Growth Programme](#); [Agricultural Productivity and Food Security](#)

competitiveness, harmonized cash transfers to vulnerable households; work on gender equality; and support towards HIV/AIDS programmes. Below is a summary of some of the main interventions.

2.3.1. Youth Employment Support (YES) Jobs for the Unemployed and Marginalized young People (JUMP): 2009–12⁶⁷

Youth Employment Support – Jobs for the Unemployed and Marginalized Young People (YES JUMP) was a 24-month programme implemented in Zimbabwe and Kenya from 2009 to 2012. The initiative was funded by the Government of Germany (US\$1,299,274) and the ILO (US\$512,134).

The overall objective of the YES JUMP project was ‘to contribute to the poverty alleviation efforts through creating decent and sustainable jobs for the youth of poor and marginalized communities by assisting local communities in three selected pilot districts in Zimbabwe, in collaboration with the Government, workers’ and employers’ organizations, to create 1,000 decent jobs (more than half being young women).’ The project’s objective was pursued through two main immediate outcomes: (i) ‘A total of 1,000 decent and sustainable jobs created for young women’; and (ii) ‘Selected national and local partners are able to design and implement town youth employment projects’.

An independent evaluation found that YES JUMP was fundamentally relevant to the needs of young people and strategically in-line with development agenda key development stakeholders. A highly consultative and detailed problem analysis led to a logical and coherent project design. The use of resources was found to be efficient with only one technical person supporting the coordination of multiple partners. The project also leveraged well on government, partners and community resources especially in the areas of mobilization and capacity building. Project management arrangements were also found to be effective. It played an important role in enhancing stakeholder participation, ownership which offered a strong basis for sustainability.

The project was found to be largely effective in reaching three marginalized communities in Gokwe, Goromonzi and Norton. A total of 1,321 jobs were created surpassing the target by 32.1 per cent. A total of 700 young people were capacitated through training in generating business ideas and identification/selection of business opportunities, business planning and business management skills, financial management including savings mobilization and loan management – thereby again surpassing the project target of 500 by 40 per cent. A total of 600 women were capacitated in accessing business finance through the microfinance challenge funds under the established microfinance schemes.

Lastly, the project contributed to the enhanced capacity of local organizations including relevant government ministries in terms of formulation of improved policy environment for micro- and small-enterprises, youth entrepreneurship development and employment.

⁶⁷ Section based on findings of ‘Final Independent Evaluation of the YES JUMP Programme’. The analysis focused on the aspect related to Zimbabwe.

2.3.2 Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development in Zimbabwe: 2010–15⁶⁸

The Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development in Western and Southern Africa was implemented in Benin, Burkina Faso and Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe component ran from October 2010 to December 2015 with a total budget of US\$6.881 million funded by the Government of Denmark.

The overall objective of the programme was to strengthen skills development systems that improve employability, promote access to employment opportunities and increase incomes for inclusive and sustainable growth. The programme had two components, the first focused on the rural economy to support local economic development using the Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE) methodology, on which the analysis in this paper focuses on. The second component focused on upgrading and delivery of training through Quality Informal Apprenticeship (QIA), which was predominantly applied in the informal economy of urban settings.

The TREE methodology was applied in several rural communities across 32 districts to support Local Economic Development (LED). This component is a community based technical and vocational skills development programme focusing on agriculture and rural development – primarily based on value chain development, skills upgrading and group enterprise community projects for the ‘out-of-school’ youth. This approach was described by the evaluators as ‘a highly standardized and evidence-based working approach for vocational training and employment generation’.

The final independent evaluation found the programme to be highly relevant to the Zimbabwean context and strategically aligned to government and development partner’s objectives for youth employment and empowerment. The design of the programme was found to be highly valid and largely evidence-driven. Through the TREE methodology, the programme reached 5,457 young women and men, being 161 per cent of the set target. The programme trained 116 partners (155 per cent of set target), while 10,292 young people were employed either in wage- or self-employment, or increased their incomes (278 per cent of the set target).

2.3.3 United Nations Joint Programme on Gender Equality: 2014–17⁶⁹

The UN Joint Programme on Gender Equality (JPGE) was a US\$1.1 million initiative funded by the Government of Sweden. The ILO played a role as part of the bigger initiative together with UNFPA; UNDP and UNWOMEN,⁷⁰ seeking to increase the capacity of women and women’s groups to exploit economic opportunities for employment and self-employment and to strengthen capacities for promotion of Women Workers’ Rights (WWR). The project ran from July 2014 to October 2017 in the districts of Chivi, Gutu, Nyanga, Murehwa and Mutoko.

The final evaluation found the programme highly relevant with a reasonable strategic fit to development frameworks and national policies. The selection of ultimate beneficiaries was assessed to have been fair and relevant to the needs of the target communities. Regarding the validity of design, the programme was found to have lacked sufficient conceptualization of

⁶⁸ Section based on findings of ‘Final Independent Evaluation of the SKILLS Programme’. The analysis focused on the aspect related to Zimbabwe specifically in the rural economy.

⁶⁹ Section based on findings of ‘Final Independent Evaluation of the UNJPGE Programme’. The analysis focused on the aspect related to Zimbabwe specifically in the rural economy.

⁷⁰ Total budget for all pillars was US\$5.2 million.

the pathway of change, especially as it related to addressing the underlying problems for women's economic dependency on men. While the introduction of the gender transformation component improved the intervention logic, the results framework was not adjusted to match the realities of the project's intentions. The evaluation also found that the project went beyond economically empowering women to enhancing women's overall empowerment by reducing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and increasing women's self-worth and confidence.

The programme was found to be effective in empowering 290 women group members to access land and grow horticultural produce and venture into poultry production, through knowledge and skills transfer, extensions services as well as encouraging male involvement. It also raised awareness and knowledge of women workers' rights. The project provided women with opportunities for increased access to income and enabled them to take more active roles in their families and communities. The evaluation also found that the programme was effective in creating linkages with other areas of the decent work agenda such as the promotion of improved occupational safety and health. Stakeholders largely viewed the intervention as a pilot which would lead to a larger and more sustained intervention.

2.3.4 Initiatives for Employment in the Rural Economy 2016–17⁷¹

Through ILO funding, a total of US\$450,000 was made available to support initiatives in the rural and informal economy, of which US\$300,000 was earmarked for the rural economy. Working in three districts, the programme sought to promote more and better jobs for young people and women in the rural economy. This was achieved by promoting skills development, entrepreneurship and local economic development to place beneficiaries in self and wage employment. Training and post training support for wage and self-employment was delivered to 150 beneficiaries. Initiative led to increased agricultural production realized in vulnerable communities. In addition, young people and women were provided with support to venture into value-addition initiatives.

2.3.5 Youth and Women Empowerment Programme (YWEP): 2017–20

The last programme for the period under review is the Youth and Women Empowerment Programme (YWEP) which is funded by the African Development Bank with US\$2.77 million. The programme has several components, with the ILO implementing the component on youth and women empowerment. The initiative seeks to promote economic empowerment of women and youth in rural areas of Zimbabwe by facilitating their integration into local value chains as a pathway for employment creation and improvement of incomes and living standards. The Project is supporting the establishment of 'Anchor Processing Enterprises' with the view to strengthening the efficiency of four value chains which provide sustenance to rural communities. Project interventions seek to promote value addition, and to improve performance of local micro-enterprises and cooperatives so that they can leverage economies of scale to supply inputs to the 'Anchor Enterprises' on a continuous and competitive basis. However, as this initiative is still being implemented and not yet evaluated, only limited lessons can be drawn from it.

2.4. Implementation mechanisms

The institutional framework and implementation mechanism of the interventions were mostly headed by the tripartite National Steering Committee (NSC) and its sub-committee on the provincial (Provincial Implementation Committee – PIC) and district level (District Implementation Committee – DIC). The NSC is was composed of government representatives

⁷¹ Analysis based on internal ILO records.

of different line ministries such as those responsible for labour, youth and women's development, agriculture, enterprise development and local government; by trade unions, employers, civil society organizations, including youth and women's organizations. The NSC's role was largely to provide oversight and strategic direction of the programmes, with its members being the different principals of the member organizations.

The Technical Working Group (TWG) at national level provides policy stimulus, implementation advice and guidance on criteria and identification of interventions. The TWG, largely comprised of technical officers from the tripartite partners and other relevant government department, would undertake the analysis and make proposals for the adoption by the NSC on the selection of programme locations and beneficiary groups, prioritizing poor and marginalized communities with urgent needs. The selection and monitoring of project activities in the communities is undertaken by officials at the provincial and district level. It was often the case that the PIC and DIC had sufficient technical and bureaucratic mandates to make and implement decisions. The officials from the different arms of government would agree on a course of action and through a peer review hold each other accountable. Where problems arose the chair of the committee of the Provincial or District Administrator could enforce certain decisions.

The DICs were assisted by Field Officers who acted as a secretariat at district level and were under the payroll of key-sector ministries. The programmes covered the Field Officers expenses for transport and for day-to-day monitoring and reporting on progress. Key equipment was provided to meet their information communication technology (computer, printer and scanner) needs and to improve their mobility (a motor cycle). Specific monitoring and evaluation systems were put in place by the ILO. The Field Officers would be responsible for collecting, analysing and submitting the data on a monthly basis.

These structures became critical to ensure ownership for the programme (part of the Government's contribution to programme resources) and it ensured tripartite partners continued to be accountable for the results. The intimate engagement also built national capacity ensuring at national level, programme lessons could quickly influence the ongoing policy discourse while at a local level it provided practical experience on the design and delivery of employment programmes, thus enhancing ownership and sustainability of the various projects beyond the ILO.

On paper these structures provide technical and training expertise since they utilized expertise that were already on site and were familiar with local dynamics. However these structures were considered by independent reviewers to be too elaborate (see chapter 3.3). In some instances decision-making becomes slow, as different levels had to approve key aspects and at a particular level, issues of protocols (quorum for meetings etc.). Monthly updates would be drafted by a Field Officer and sent to the district head of the department that employs the officer. The district head would wait for the next DIC meeting, present the report, then once approved the report submitted to PIC. Using this process it would lead to a delay in the flow of crucial information.

Tripartite partners in some instances felt the process of decision-making was flawed with the consultation provided being of a token nature as they disagreed with some decisions that would be made. Some of these decisions would be a result of technical guidance from the ILO technical resources, respecting the wishes of the donor agency or a result of the ILO's rules and regulations.

The programmes also relied on a system of champions at political, administrative, technical and community levels. Political champions were key as they usually brought a significant amount of goodwill across all the other levels. But equally, they carried a significant risk of activities being used to get political mileage. In some communities once a champion moved, the activities tended to lose momentum as they were associated with the

official that had left. During the period under review for instance there have been six ministers responsible for Labour, meaning a change in leadership roughly every year and a half. This has led to high levels of investment in generating the right level of awareness of the technical aspects and accumulating political interest. The communities and initiatives that tended to do well would in most instances have a dedicated official driving the processes and holding the other different sections of government accountable for results. This was especially true for the District Administrators, if they were visible in the community the initiative tended to have better outcomes. Among the target audiences (young people and women) some champions would also emerge, usually being recognized by their peers and being elected to formal positions to manage the group. More importantly the youth and women champions proved instrumental as they played a significant role in creating positive group dynamics, encouraging their peers to behave in ways beneficial to the enterprise.

However, one of the limitations of this approach was the limited presence of formal member-based organizations for workers and businesses in most rural communities, the initiatives were used as a means to introduce the spirit of tripartism to local decision-making bodies. In some cases, the ILO insisted on the local committees inviting informal association representatives or prominent business people who would usually enrich the dialogue.

Beneficiary targeting and risk management: Risk management, led by tripartite partners, started with a detailed risk assessment and the development of a strategy to mitigate the risks. The social partners, through the NSC and TWG, update risk matrix on an ongoing basis. The involvement of social partners and other key stakeholders such as civil society and representatives of young people and women play an instrumental role in strengthening the governance of the programmes – providing strategic guidance on key actions required to limit political risk, as well as monitor the environment on an on-going basis to ensure programming remains apolitical. In communities, there is a lower likelihood of diversion from the agreed plan as it is known that representatives of workers and business will scrutinise decisions and demand action where there is no transparency.

Many view empowerment programmes as a source of political currency and as such generate a lot of interest. There is significant pressure to implement activities that provide landmarks and ceremonies – for political actors these provide an opportunity to be seen to be doing something in public – the ribbon cutting phenomena. Activities that provide visibility in communities are prioritized and disincentives to design well or to pay attention to details are created as the main motivator is to have a public launch event.

Another area of interest is in the decisions regarding areas of implementation. There is political capital to be gained from implementing the programmes in as wide a geographical coverage as possible as this maximises political capital. This means there is a push to do as little as possible for every site but to be seen on as many sites as possible. Some of the interventions could have had an even greater impact if they were concentrated in a smaller geographical area with stronger attention to the details. The impact of 10,000 jobs across 32 districts is unlikely to be felt compared to the same number of jobs in five districts. It also makes a lot of sense as it reduces the cost of management and monitoring.

During periods of heightened political and economic risks the strategy has been to adopt a staggered approach, reducing level of community work when political tensions are high. Programmes would start with a vibrant advocacy, communication and stakeholder consultation process to ensure all actors are fully aware of the programme's objectives. The next steps would be to implement some of the elements, monitor and gradually scale up. For example, during the electoral periods community engagement is limited to, and programme activities are restricted to, monitoring activities and returning to full operation in the post-election period.

The selection of beneficiaries is usually a multi-stage process. The identification of provinces and districts is usually a negotiated process at the highest level taking into

consideration the objectives of government, employers, workers and the donor. In the identified provinces and districts, the programmes would then drill down to the specific wards by utilizing existing data (poverty mapping), prioritizing the district and ward using a criteria that considers a mix of factors such as availability of appropriate mix of economic assets (including key infrastructure for operating the business) and poverty levels.

Selecting the individual beneficiaries is usually an inclusive process led by the community (churches, government officials and civil society). The community leaders assist with the identification of the most vulnerable/deserving candidates and the ILO (along with business and workers representatives) drill down to the final number of beneficiaries through a verification process that considers among other factors individual interest, ability and poverty (traditionally this has been established by random household visits to check asset ownership as a proxy of wealth levels). Traditionally the signs of political influence and undue influence have emerged at this stage, once there is external influence in selection of beneficiaries, areas of work and economic sectors the ILO usually informs the highest body of governance (NSC) recommending work is discontinued in that particular area. Getting the selection of beneficiaries' right is a vital determinant of success.

Over the years the investment in project monitoring has significantly gone up. It has become evident that there is a need to have continuous dialogue at the various levels of society. Monitoring activities (such as community visits and progress meetings with DIC and PIC) usually includes the tripartite partners, this allows the various stakeholders to contribute to the identification of variances in a timely manner and offer credible solutions to the problems identified.

Transparency and accountability: One of the emerging lessons is that it is important to manage expectations early and disclose all issues upfront. This ensures a programme is guided only by the programme goals. Widely disseminating information about the budget, source of funds, objectives of the funds, methodology and eligibility has been critical. Sharing information empowers the community to police the interventions and discourages the potential gatekeepers from using the intervention to further their personal interest. It is also an effective way to guarantee the 'powers that be' that the intervention does not have a direct threat to their spheres of influence.

In the earlier interventions the approach was to provide grants to the various DIC's for them to independently manage the budgets in line with the agreed plans. However, over time it became evident that this approach increased the level of risk for several reasons including limited capacity to manage and report on the funds. It also increased the cost of procurement. To mitigate this, significant procurement was centralized and done by the ILO – guided by ILO Rules and Regulations. This also provided the benefit of scale and lower costs, but increased the administrative burden.

Programme duration and sequencing: The programme duration appears to be one of the most important factors in determining the impact of an intervention and the sustaining of the achieved results. It is evident that the duration interventions in Zimbabwe were largely driven by donor funding cycles, not necessarily the complexity of the proposed intervention or the needs of the targeted population. The programmes are given a set period to implement and in most cases the implementer attempts to rollout all the steps and components in the time provided. However, interaction with communities suggests different interventions and different communities require different levels of capacity building and support for the achievements to sustainable.

The situation is often further complicated by delayed release of funds, recruitment and prolonged negotiations with different government and community stakeholders. All these processes end up stealing time from direct contact with the target group. In addition, some communities faced more challenges than others. On some sites there would be a need to fix

the access road, rehabilitate the irrigation system, reconnect the electricity and resolve land squabbles before skills training was delivered and the first production cycle. As a result some groups would have their first production cycle just before project closure. As a result the envisaged support around market linkages and access to finance could not be implemented. This compromised the likelihood of enterprises surviving beyond the intervention. On one site the construction of a production centre was completed with two months left to project closure, which meant a premature exit from the community.

Some of the interventions are introduced to stakeholders as pilots, creating the expectation of a more sustained roll out if the design is proved to be effective. It also creates an impression that good work would attract additional finance to deepen and institutionalize the early results achieved. However in some instances this is not the case and could result in some unfinished business when the programme closes. A number of the evaluations have suggested a realistic implementation period is four years or more.

The Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development was implemented over five years with two phases and arguably has the best results. The evaluation found that a five-year implementation period is comparatively long and appears adequate. Leading to the achievement of a 97 per cent financial delivery and comfortably exceeding the set targets. Arguably this intervention demonstrates the value of a prolonged ‘hand holding period’ as a means to ensure interventions are sustainable after the exit of development partners. However, it is also evident that a long programme faces the risk of significant shifts in the operating environment and changes in policy and development frameworks – such as a change in the priorities of the development partners.

Considering that most of the activities are in the rural economy and agricultural it is important to align the programming cycle with the agricultural cycles. Any work on incomes must be alert to the fact that it will complement existing economic activities, mostly rain-fed agriculture. Thus the rainy season is a poor choice to implement activities that require significant attention from the target group as it will be competing with their tried and tested source of income. It is always best to provide income options during the off-season. Even with women, the demands for time should be sensitive to the demands emanating from household responsibilities. In some instances poorly preparatory activities miss the timing to maximise crop yield and returns from the market.

Cooperatives: The ILO’s work in the rural economy was implemented exclusively through cooperatives. Zimbabwe has a long history with cooperatives, however the experience for most communities has not been a pleasant one. One of the first issues encountered when implementing interventions is the resistance to work in groups. It is an ambitious goal to group strangers together and expect them to collaborate, before the programme some of the group members would be complete strangers and were forced together with an expectation that they could have a common vision. The groups were always provided with training on group cohesion and effective rules and processes for cooperatives.

Groups mostly had 60 members and rarely fewer than 30 members. They are an effective way to group together a significant number of people with a lower investment. In some cases they allow community members to collaborate, promote peer learning and create a significant amount of social capital.

One of the complaints consistently made is the size of the groups, 60 people is too large a group for effective management and functional relationships among the members. The group members themselves were not keen due to different work ethics and backgrounds and huge effort was required to manage conflict. In some cases in an attempt to meet the target of 60 members the groups would incorporate members who were from distant villages, which in the short term would create problems as these members would report high levels of absenteeism

due to the long walking distance. In the later years there has been an increasing effort to ensure groups are clustered within a reasonable walking distance.

The amount of effort and commitment required for certain projects make a group arrangement not conducive, for example, a pen fattening group collapsed as they could not agree on the allocation of the most difficult tasks. Although the different groups have constitutions to manage their interactions, discipline errant members of the groups are always complex, the groups often have to choose between tolerating disruptive behaviour or expelling an errant member and compromise the existence of the entire group. Some of the conflict in groups is driven by different members vying to oust their peers so they can reduce the numbers and increase profitability or to ultimately take over the collective assets. In some cases once the project is formally closed the members would disband and share the project assets and go their separate way.

Despite these challenges, the scale reached by the interventions would not have been possible by supporting individual entrepreneurs. Particularly considering their disadvantaged background and the low-social capital the young people and women have. The groups tended to stay together if they received significant support in developing constitutions and clear code for dispute resolution. Another determinant of success tended to be the level of profitability, those with high incomes tended to have greater incentives to be more cohesive.

3. Results and achievements

3.1. Outcomes and Impact

Influence on policy

Since 2008, the interventions discussed have created mostly own account employment and income generation opportunities for over 6,000 rural young people and women. Although the strategies had slight variations the most dominant methodology was the Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE) methodology, and activities primarily in agriculture and allied sectors. The Government of Zimbabwe adopted the TREE methodology as a broad strategy for youth economic empowerment, and in the 2015 budget the Government committed to allocate funds to scale up the initiative, a first for ILO tools in Zimbabwe.

The Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare; Employers' Confederation of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions and Social partners appear to be in agreement that this is one of their preferred tools to deal with the challenges of youth employment. A number of senior officials, particularly in Government, and workers organizations have appreciated the impact of the interventions in terms of demonstrating low-cost approaches that are scalable. At provincial and district levels there is evidence that the capacity to develop programmes to create more and better jobs has been strengthened, and some provincial and district teams have convinced other development partners to adopt the same approaches, while the implementing committees established remain a tool to coordinate rural economic empowerment and rural youth employment interventions.

Social and economic impacts

An impact assessment of young people⁷² that benefited from the TREE interventions was undertaken. Using 2011 as the baseline the study examined the effects of the intervention, for control and treatment groups (project beneficiaries). The study estimated annual income for controls at the baseline was US\$1,172 per annum. The impact assessment found that even in the absence of the intervention the incomes for both groups would have increased by US\$320 during the 2011–14 period due to other factors. However, over the period the income for TREE beneficiaries increased by US\$787 compared with non-beneficiaries.⁷³

Similarly, during the 2011–14 period, TREE beneficiaries increased the expenses devoted to child welfare and household health by US\$235.9 and US\$101, respectively, compared to non-beneficiaries.

However, there is no evidence that TREE beneficiaries had increased their consumption budget compared with non-beneficiaries. In fact, the estimated coefficient associated with consumption is negative but non-significant, suggesting that:

⁷² Using the national definition of 15 years to 35 years

⁷³ Lachaud, M.A., Bravo-Ureta, B.E., Fiala, N. and Gonzalez, S.P. (2018). *The impact of agri-business skills training in Zimbabwe: an evaluation of the Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE) programme*. Journal of Development Effectiveness, 10(3), pp.373-391.

‘TREE beneficiaries probably devoted money gained to buy assets or incur other expenses instead of consumption. When comparing treated and control groups by gender in terms of differential income, the results suggest that TREE increases the income of male and female beneficiaries by 46.9% and 81.8%, respectively, compared to their counterparts in the control group. These results highlight the significant and positive impact of TREE on women, especially considering that they started the programme with lower income compared to men. In addition, the findings suggest that health expenditures by female beneficiaries’ rose by 37.3% compared to 27.04% for men. However, male household heads who participated in the programme were able to increase expenses related to the welfare of children by 43.2% compared to 23.6% by their female counterparts⁷⁴.

3.2. Sustainability beyond intervention

A tracer study was commissioned in 2017 with the purpose of finding the young people and women who benefited from ILO supported interventions in the rural economy since 2008. The study sought to establish where they are and how they had performed, as well as to identify the changes in their lives resulting from the ILO supported interventions.

Almost two years after the ILO skills training programme ended in 2015, overall 15 per cent are unemployed, down from 44 per cent before the interventions, while 79 per cent are self-employed and 6 per cent are in wage employment – the levels were relatively similar between male and female beneficiaries. Among those who reported to be employed, 78 per cent were in self-employment.

The study looked at the quality of the jobs, and evidence suggested there had been improvements in the number of hours worked, daily wage levels, contracts and issues discussed at work, and expected duration of employment. The programmes generated employment for the youths who had been loitering and engaging in drug abuse and prostitution reducing the crime levels in the communities. Communities can access products and services at affordable prices since they are now accessing them in their area therefore becoming cheaper. The young people reported improved levels of record keeping. Of those interviewed, 6 per cent reported not having any income but on the higher end 35 per cent reported earning more than US\$150 a month. Income for women tended to be marginally lower than those of men.

The tracer study also revealed that some entrepreneurs had created other jobs. Only 14 per cent responding that they had not been able to create any additional jobs, 70 per cent created between one and three jobs, while 22 per cent had created 4 to 10 jobs. Before the interventions 46 per cent of respondents perceived themselves as owners of a business, this number rose to 83 per cent two years after the end of the programmes.

Those respondents who dropped out provided different reasons for their exit. It was established that the leading causes of dropouts during implementation were that the businesses were taking a long time to realize returns, challenging group dynamics or a reluctance to work in groups, and marriage and household demands. Some of the reasons were also positive – some of the young people graduated to ventures that were more profitable as individuals, others used the revenue from the initiative to pursue further education or to ensure safe migration to neighbouring countries by using the income to acquire information and documents to migrate safely.

⁷⁴ Ibid. p.14

Young people in border communities tended to provide their services to neighbouring countries and once they established a strong client list, they migrated to neighbouring countries they considered to have better economic opportunities. Related to the issue of dropout rates is the issue of proxies, some of the people that are now running the business are not the original beneficiaries. In some cases, one person graduates to a more profitable venture but still realizes the value of the venture and appoints a proxy to continue in the business on their behalf. Proxies included spouses or siblings of the original members and appeared mostly in businesses that had received some form of infrastructure and equipment. Closely related to this dynamic is that it is now evident there are informal ways of passing down the production and business skills acquired from the formal skills training.

The entrepreneurs interviewed still aspired to improve their businesses. The top three primary improvements planned are: increasing production, increasing the number of workers and reducing working hours, increasing mechanization and improving workspace, and access to markets. The young people were asked about challenges they were facing. Most of the challenges individuals and businesses face have to do with limited access to finance for working capital and to expand, weak access to markets and market information, and intense competition from other businesses. In some cases, they would secure formal clients but be unable to sustain the levels of quality and production levels required to keep the contract.

Despite the skills training being geared for self-employment, some young people tried to get into wage employment. Those who attempted to get employment highlighted that some employers were reluctant to recognize the certificates young people held. This means, beneficiaries have acquired the skills and knowledge needed for a specific job but remain unemployed.

3.3. Value for money

In this paper, Value for Money (VFM) is defined as a measure of quality that assesses the monetary cost of delivering development interventions against the benefits that those interventions produced, taking into account subjective factors like fitness for purpose, and related longer term cost such as construction installation, training and maintenance.

With the above definition in mind, a value for money assessment was undertaken in 2017⁷⁵ using the United Kingdom's Department for International Development's VFM Framework. The findings of the VFM study confirmed that the interventions in the rural economy were good value for money in many respects, covering both quantifiable and non-quantifiable domains of interventions. Interventions performed well when assessed through three of the four VFM criteria, namely, economy, cost-effectiveness and wider benefits.

Although an extensive value for money assessment was not done for the YES JUMP programme, the programme did benefit from an independent evaluation which highlighted that project funds were used prudently and efficiently. This conclusion was drawn from the use of a proxy-indicator, efficient utilization of project resources to deliver the planned results. The intervention attained set targets by margins ranging from 133 to 165 per cent. The evaluation also noted that 70 per cent of the budget was spent on programme activities and only 30 per cent on administration related costs.

The Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development programme on the other hand, found that the challenging operating environment demanded an elaborate implementation

⁷⁵ The assessment focused on the UNJPGE programme but the lessons are applicable to all interventions as the methodology used for all programmes are very similar, work with similar communities.

structure from village level to national level. This demanded a greater investment in sensitization, capacity building and consensus building. As a result of this structure, there was significant ownership and the programme managed to operate in very challenging context. However, this drove up the transaction costs of the programme.

The UN JPGE final evaluation also established that the elaborate structure for implementing the project, which had been highly effective, was costly for a project implemented on a small scale. The project could have benefited from economies of scale had it been implemented on a larger scale. The situation was worsened by the fact that during the period 2014–18, the economic outlook deteriorated, costing an average of US\$0.50 to transfer a \$1 of benefit to project beneficiaries. The focus on ensuring decency of jobs led to an even higher investment per beneficiary, which some development partners would consider expensive. The value of benefit transferred per beneficiary was undertaken to analyse the efficiency of ILO intervention. The total value of benefit transferred for the ILO for the 3 years was US\$98.70.

Cost effectiveness and return on investment analysis

An analysis on return per dollar investment was also undertaken. The payback for the investments made in supporting young people and women ranged from 5 to 6 years. The investment cost to create a job ranged from US\$500 to US\$600 while the benefit derived for every dollar invested ranged from US\$2.92 to US\$5.16 based on the economic sector, horticulture interventions tended to perform significantly well.

The assessment recognized the wider benefits of the interventions particularly on policy and laws to justify the investment of the resources, especially from the perspective of the larger number of secondary beneficiaries. The impact and indirect benefits could have also been larger if the programmes had been provided with a longer implementation time (at least 4-5 years) since outcomes of policy, legislative and political participation work ordinarily take more time to manifest. The value for money assessment also confirmed that the economic empowerment initiatives of the ILO created multiplier effects building confidence, skills and self-esteem in women enabling them to take more active roles in their families and communities due to their increased knowledge and the experience they gained in public participation. The interventions led to a reduction in gender-based violence in villages and a reduction of early marriages.

Incomes have been reinvested to start new income-generating activities. It was evident that in most communities this approach was being replicated by community members by peer learning with the interventions being used as models. The VFM assessment also found that the implementation had strengthened government structures. It also recognized the need to take into consideration the improvement in the quality of the jobs and the living conditions as a result of the interventions when examining VFM.

3.4. Integrated approaches to programming

The communities that were targeted faced a multitude of complex and interrelated development challenges. The interventions implemented by the ILO recognized this and as such employed strategies to tackle more than one challenge at a time. The different programmes tended to adopt an integrated approach to the employment challenges which usually included the following elements namely: skills training, enterprise development, occupational health and safety, gender equality and non-discrimination, HIV/AIDS, social dialogue and rights at work. The interventions that integrated more elements showed greater promise.

This suggests that efforts must surely not be focused only on creating jobs but better quality jobs which are more sustainable. It is also important to develop interventions that seek

policy coherence between employment policies/programmes and agricultural and rural development policies/programmes. This should be accompanied by the strengthened coordination and cooperation between labour stakeholders and agricultural stakeholders.

The interventions delivered deliberately mainstreamed key strategies to extend social protection to historically disadvantaged women. Coverage of social protection was extended by promoting inclusion and productivity by ensuring that women and men enjoy working conditions that are safe, allow adequate free time and rest, take into account family responsibilities, and put in place measures within a group enterprise to provide some support for lost or reduced income to external shocks.

Improved income security: Beneficiaries have been provided with the skills necessary for them to produce high-value crops and improve productivity which in turn has improved income security. Organizing the women in group-based enterprises and peer learning which improved the business model. Groups have also been supported to diversify their income streams. One group could be engaged in poultry production, horticulture and some other forms of trading. Increasingly, entrepreneurs are being supported to process or add value to their produce and earn higher and more predictable incomes.

Financial inclusion: The beneficiaries have received multiple training programmes on farming as a business. Further training was given on financial literacy including the development of bankable business proposals, access to credit and credit management. Direct linkages to some microfinance institutions were facilitated. The women have been empowered in the areas of record keeping, marketing, business management, and preparing business proposal to access finance.

Cognisant of the challenges facing the formal financial services sectors the women were also trained and assisted to establish Internal Savings and Lending (ISAL) cooperatives as a means to improve their access to finance. The modality has proved instrumental in providing the women with capital for business expansion as well as household consumption. In addition, there is now improved resilience to financial hardship.

Informal community led maternal protection system: A key component of the interventions was to improve awareness of women workers' rights. Special attention was paid to maternity protection in the rural economy and as a result women were supported to develop maternity leave schemes in their group enterprises – pregnant women got 6 weeks off their usual duties. A member managed day-care system was established to allow the women to work – with peace of mind – knowing their children were safe.

Occupational health and safety: Working in the agricultural sector increases attention to the fact that the agricultural sector is one of the most hazardous work environments requiring special and priority attention. The identified risks included handling of heavy materials, strenuous work postures and long working hours. Farmers further suffer exposure to harsh weather conditions, agro-chemicals, pesticides and dust. In small rural holdings, the workplace also includes the family homestead and affects living conditions.

Recognizing the potential of enhanced productivity and quality improvements to creating decent work in the rural economy, employment initiatives increasingly mainstreamed the occupational health and safety element. The focus was on enhancing productivity, safety, health and working conditions for small holder rural farmers. The strategy employed was based on the ILO's Work Improvement in Neighbourhood Development (WIND) methodology of participatory, action-oriented training methods.

Training, with a focus on couples, was delivered for farmers in recognition of the need for dialogue in the home and the fact that in the rural setting the home is part of the production process. Inputs and chemicals are often stored at home and some of the final activities such as

packaging happen at home. At the end of the training local service providers such as extension officers and the farmers had a greater capacity to identify, reduce, manage and mitigate risks using long lasting low-cost solutions.

Farmers were assisted to identify risks across six categories and action plans to deal with the identified risks were developed. The action plans were an expression of intent to make improvements in working and living conditions, as well as to develop and implement long lasting low-cost solutions in real life situations. On average, each farmer committed to making six improvements in their working and living area. The farmers would pay for the improvements using their own profits from the harvest, use their own labour and set deadlines for achievements.

The area identified by farmers, as needing the most attention was Welfare Facilities (26 per cent). This perhaps reflects that most of these areas are new areas (resettlements) dominated by young farmers that are just starting out and thus have limited facilities in the form of permanent structures for accommodation, kitchens and toilets – areas that farmers testified as requiring the highest investment. Materials storage and handling (25 per cent of proposed improvements) was another area identified by farmers as needing attention.

The process had encouraged farmers to compete among themselves in terms of proposing the cheapest or most innovative solution to occupational safety and health challenges. The most exciting ideas would then be adopted by the rest of the farmers. Some of the changes made include the construction of better toilets, houses, kitchens and waste disposal systems. At the workplace paths were cleared, toilets and showers built. Work processes were streamlined leading to improved work postures, use of more appropriate tools and better handling of tools. Some of the practices were also dropped by farmers as they became more aware of the effects to the environment, for example the cutting and burning of wood to dry products.

It was also notable that the farmers who had benefited from the WIND training had made several improvements to their community, in groups. The methodology appears to encourage cooperation among farmers. An example of this is a group of farmers in Chitora. They identified risks associated with the washing of carrots in muddy pits and nearby streams and collaborated in the design and construction of a washing bay. The new bay is much more environmentally friendly, safer for the farmers and improves the quality of their produce.

The training also shared information on prevention and management of HIV/AIDS. Couples were provided with relationship information to reduce violence, encourage healthy sex lives and to share information on getting tested, living positive or staying negative.

Gender transformation: Social and cultural norms act as a barrier to women's economic participation. The resultant poverty and economic reliance on men, increases women's vulnerability to abuse (particularly gender-based violence); child marriages and weakens sexual reproductive health outcomes (sexual abuse, engagement in transactional sex and exposure to HIV/AIDS). In rural Zimbabwe it is evident that women carry a heavy and unequal burden for housework and care. Weak public system for child care, health and protection of senior citizens means the burden falls on women who would under normal circumstances be economically active. Women thus face invisible barriers limiting women's time (time poverty) mobility and aspirations across all facets economic, social and political.

During the period under review, one of the emerging lessons was that economic empowerment interventions can be sustainable if gender equality is mainstreamed upfront. There is a need to be deliberate in understanding the development challenge, stepping back to understand the issues with a gender lens, designing the interventions in a manner that reflects the heterogeneity of any community and delivering the intervention in a manner that allows women the space to participate fully.

Sensitive to these factors, interventions increasingly made efforts to implement interventions in a manner that would allow women to balance reproductive role, productive roles and care giving. Before the core component of an intervention is introduced a community would undergo 'gender sensitization'. Training on gender transformation in the home and the community would be delivered to provincial and district officials. They would be trained to undertake gender analysis and to design gender-sensitive development programmes. Once these officials completed the training they would go into the community and impart the same knowledge to the community leaders, influential men and women as well as the ultimate beneficiaries' young men and women. It is very effective for the training to be done by individuals that interact with the community on a regular basis.

As a follow up to their skills training programme, government officials from the provincial and district level rolled out a series of community sensitization campaigns. Influential community members benefited from this training on women's workers' rights and gender equality in the home and communities. In addition to influential actors the gender transformation activities targeted women, their partners, male champions, traditional leaders, faith-based leaders, government officials and people in business and influential members of the community.

The training improved women and the general community's appreciation of gender issues and women's rights. Other aspects covered included socialization (gender roles and the gender tree), women's transformation (leadership and personal mastery), men and masculinity, gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS linkages.

Personal mastery and transformational leadership enabled the women to confidently project themselves (better appreciation of weaknesses, strengths and opportunities) when they pursued economic opportunities. This change in self-perception positioned the women to be role models and had an empowering effect on the rest of the community.

It was abundantly clear in some communities programmes that specifically targeted women could be sabotaged as the men became disruptive because they felt left behind. One key lesson was that in any initiative even if it was for women, an opportunity must be found for men to channel their energies, 'for them to be useful', to be a positive force for the change. In communities where this was done effectively the men were excited to take up some of the household and care duties to provide the women with more time. In some communities the men were assigned roles that the women felt were too laborious such as security duties and land clearance. One of the most common comments about this effect was that it brought another unintended consequence, better relationships in the home. Community leaders once converted also became more inclined to lead the shift away from some of the more harmful beliefs and practices. One of the more popular messages was that, 'it is profitable for a community head to have men and women that are productive'.

Progress has been made in some communities but it is clear more needs to be done. Some of the women are clearly natural born leaders and have a strong business acumen but they are limited by fears and stereotypes. In a lot of the groups single women take up leadership positions as they do not necessarily have the same restrictions as a married woman would have regarding their movements, e.g. going into the city to do transactions on behalf of the group. Some of the women in business confessed that they do not aspire for the growth of their business as they would like to keep it small so that it does not demand too much of their time or it takes them too far away from the home. All these issues are subtle but important, without stepping back and paying attention the nuanced reality might be missed or one could fall into the trap of the usual stereotypes.

4. Lessons learnt

4.1. Lesson 1: The fortunes of employment programmes for youth and women are closely related to the general macroeconomic environment. If the economy is not performing well a greater investment is needed to ensure success of programmes.

Successful enterprises can also quickly fold if the operating environment changes. The biggest challenge for the efforts to promote decent work in the rural economy has been the volatility of the economy. It has been challenging to plan and deliver in an environment constantly characterized by significant social, economic and political changes.

The employment promotion activities targeted groups with weak access to economic information and largely ill-equipped to respond in a timely manner to cushion their start-ups to the changes in the economy. One factor that has had a significant impact on the young people and women is the price fluctuations, when there is loss of value of a currency, the rural community are the last to understand the implications. Urban dwellers can turn into the rural economy and purchase the produce at bargain prices making it difficult for businesses to finance the next production cycle.

When there are market distortions such as shortages of inputs or materials it is also the rural entrepreneurs who struggle in accessing these. The same group of women engaged in poultry production struggled to get day-old-chicks and stock feeds when there was an avian flu outbreak, with the limited stocks being exhausted by those in urban areas who could respond much more quickly when stock was available. The ongoing cash crisis has also had a disproportionately huge impact on the rural population, which traditionally has lower levels of access to financial services and low levels of ICT literacy to use electronic payment options. This has forced those in the rural economy to rely on barter trade to transact – creating distortions and makes it difficult to transact.

4.2. Lesson 2: Locally led and inclusive (tripartite plus) implementation structures are an effective way to deliver programmes in highly sensitive contexts. They have been shown to work in strengthening building capacity, ensuring ownership and improving likelihood of sustainability.

It could be useful to pay closer attention to the role of local member-based organizations (workers and business – particularly those in the informal economy who do not fit the traditional mold). Employment programmes can be enriched by their participation and can be an opportunity to strengthen the local capacities and the belief in, and the role of, social dialogue. However, the implementation structures can be associated with delayed implementation and higher implementation costs. An inclusive implementation structure, improves ownership – ensuring tripartite partners are accountable for the results while also improving the quality of decisions made. The intimate engagement with ILO programmes also built national capacity ensuring that at national level, programme lessons could quickly influence the ongoing policy discourse while at a local level it provided practical experience on the design and delivery of employment programme, thus enhancing ownership and sustainability of the various projects beyond the ILO.

4.3. Lesson 3: Vulnerability of the target populations introduces significant risk to programme implementation particularly when the interventions may alter dynamics in the political economy. The political and economic risks are externalities that a programme cannot control but come up with prevention and mitigation strategies.

The identification of risks and development of a risk-management strategy together with tripartite partners leads to more effective management of risks, particularly shielding the interventions from political influence. Equally so, an inclusive process to identify beneficiaries increases the odds of identifying beneficiaries that are suitable for the proposed interventions. When interacting with communities it is crucial to be transparent and accountable while actively managing expectations. Sharing information empowers the community to police the interventions and discourages the potential gatekeepers from using the intervention to further their personal interest.

4.4. Lesson 4: Cooperatives clearly have many challenges but remains one of the most attractive options for young people.

Cooperatives allow interventions to have scale more economically as well as offering young people a support system. There is however, a need to restrict group size to a manageable level. They are an effective way to group together a significant number of people with a lower investment. In some cases, they allow community members to collaborate, promote peer learning and create a significant amount of social capital. Group dynamics can be complex and reduce the attractiveness of the cooperative but an effective way to counter this is to ensure a high level of profitability as groups with higher incomes tended to have greater incentives to be more cohesive.

4.5. Lesson 5: Gender mainstreaming is a key ingredient for success. It must be done upfront considering the social and cultural dynamics at play in the rural economy. Efforts must be made to find a role for men in gender equality programmes as it is clear that if they are not integrated they can become a disruptive force.

Social and cultural norms act as a barrier to women's economic participation. In the rural economy it is evident that women carry a heavy and unequal burden for housework and care. Women thus face invisible barriers limiting women's time (time poverty) mobility and aspirations across all facets economic, social and political. A key lesson is that economic empowerment interventions can be sustainable if gender equality is mainstreamed upfront. There is a need to be deliberate in understanding the development challenge, stepping back to understand the issues with a gender lens, designing the interventions in a manner that reflects the heterogeneity of any community and delivering the intervention in a manner that allows women the space to participate fully.

The efforts to promote gender equality and non-discrimination must be multi-pronged. Policy-makers and service providers must be empowered to design and deliver policies and services that are gender sensitive. In all efforts, men must not be left behind but be provided with an opportunity to become agents of change, if they feel left behind it increases the odds

of more resistance. The women must also be empowered with greater awareness of their rights, personal mastery and transformational leadership enabled the women to confidently project themselves.

4.6. Lesson 6: Drivers of poverty in a rural economy are complex, to produce an amplified, lasting impact on people's lives, interventions must use an integrated approach with an intention to improve the quality of living and working conditions.

Interventions that deliberately tackle multiple drivers of vulnerability simultaneously show greater promise. Efforts must not solely be focused on creating jobs but on better quality jobs which are more sustainable. As much as possible the design of employment programmes must aim to promote fundamental principles and rights at work, social dialogue and lead to the extension of social protection. Mindful of resource limitation, it is key to prioritize the mix of interventions feasible. It is also important to develop interventions that seek policy coherence between employment policies/programmes and agricultural and rural development policies/programmes. This should be accompanied by the strengthened coordination and cooperation between labour stakeholders and agricultural stakeholders.

More importantly, when working with small-holder farmers it is important to pay attention to working and living conditions. The WIND approach offers opportunity for replication in other rural contexts. The methodology is based on participatory, action-oriented training, including searching for occupational safety and health solutions to hazards at farm level. Technical training could focus on the household, to ensure all household members have access to the training, especially as farms are managed by family members. Training to local service providers should go hand in hand to such efforts to ensure the sustainability and increase the coverage of the training through them. Key areas in need of further attention are welfare facilities, as well as materials storage and handling.

4.7. Lesson 7: The programme duration appears to be one of the most important factors in determining the impact of an intervention and the sustaining of the achieved results. Interventions that have a much stronger alignment between the expected programme results and the programme duration provided better outcomes.

The programme duration appears to be one of the most important factors in determining the impact of an intervention and the sustaining of the achieved results. The evidence suggests more sustained interventions could lead to better programme outcomes as communities benefit from technical support for longer. In the absence of an inception period and in the case of short implementation period, it could be good to work in communities that require lower investment in relationship building and to manage expectations of results when time is limited. This makes it imperative to have a reflection on the design of programmes if the time frames are beyond control, set more realistic targets and be explicit upfront – informing all actors that the desired change will not be possible in the provided timeframe.

4.8. Lesson 8: Considering that most of the activities are in the rural economy and agricultural it is important to align the programming cycle with the agricultural cycles.

Any work on incomes must be alert to the fact that it will complement existing economic activities, mostly rain-fed agriculture. Thus the rainy season is a poor time to implement activities that require significant attention from the target group as it will be competing with their tried and tested source of income. It is always best to provide income options during the off-season. Even with women, the demands for time should be sensitive to the demands emanating from household responsibilities. In some instances poorly preparatory activities miss the timing to maximise crop yield and returns from the market.

4.9. Lesson 9: Value for money could be strengthened by ensuring a good mix of interventions that provide quick wins, reportable results in the first year (complement already existing efforts) and long-term high impact (employment intensive) interventions.

This would also have implications on beneficiary targeting, a mix of easy to reach and hard to reach (those facing the most challenges or in communities with complex dynamics) could be beneficial. Regarding the selection of economic opportunities the focus should also be on actions with lower unit costs or best return on investment. The main driver of costs are staff costs particularly the role of international experts, and it could be worthwhile to only have the expert on the project at key points and not necessarily across the entire project duration.

4.10. Lesson 10: There is a need for a more nuanced approach in defining success. Often young people and women are interested in different outcomes compared to what is contained in programme documents.

In some cases, some of the increases in incomes may be viewed as insignificant if they are not looked at from the perspective of the beneficiary – a modest increase can translate to a significant change in quality of life. When it comes to employment some young people approach opportunities as a stepping-stone to other goals such as pursuing higher education or acquiring documents for safer migration. The departure of the young person from the local labour market must then not be looked at as a failure. The same is true for enterprises, it is often assumed that any business should naturally grow. However, some of the women interaction did not have growth aspirations, as growth would upset the fine balance of their care and economic roles. In a number of cases when asked how an intervention had impacted them, the first thing on the list was that, ‘society now looks at me different’ – a status issue, or that ‘I have been reminded that I have agency and can make a difference’. It is thus important for initiatives to focus more on understanding what success looks like to different beneficiaries, measuring progress towards these goals and documenting them.

Annex

List of programme documents reviewed

1. Programme Document for Youth Employment Support (YES) Jobs for the Unemployed and Marginalized Young People (JUMP) Programme (2009–12)
2. Mid Term Evaluation of the Youth Employment Support (YES) Jobs for the Unemployed and Marginalized Young People (JUMP) Programme (2009–12)
3. Final Independent Evaluation of the Youth Employment Support (YES) Jobs for the Unemployed and Marginalized Young People (JUMP) Programme (2009–12)
4. Programme Brochure for the Youth Employment Support (YES) Jobs for the Unemployed and Marginalized Young People (JUMP) Programme (2009–12)
5. Minutes: National Steering Committee and Technical Working Group Meetings for the Youth Employment Support (YES) Jobs for the Unemployed and Marginalized Young People (JUMP) Programme
6. Programme Document for the Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development in Zimbabwe Programme (2010–15)
7. Mid Term Evaluation of the Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development in Zimbabwe Programme (2010–15)
8. Final Independent Evaluation of the Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development in Zimbabwe Programme (2010–15)
9. Impact Assessment of the Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development in Zimbabwe Programme (2016)
10. Programme Brochure for the Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development in Zimbabwe Programme (2010–15)
11. Minutes: National Steering Committee and Technical Working Group Meetings for the Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development in Zimbabwe Programme (2010–15)
12. District Economic Assessment of the Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development in Zimbabwe Programme (2010–15)
13. Monitoring and Evaluation Manual for the Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development in Zimbabwe Programme (2010–15)
14. Field Operations Manual for the Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development in Zimbabwe Programme (2010–15)
15. Success Stories of the Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development in Zimbabwe Programme (2010–15)
16. Website articles
17. Work Improvement and Neighbourhood Development Report from Mutoko
18. District Monthly Report for the Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development in Zimbabwe Programme (2010–15)
19. Mission Reports by ILO Official supporting the programmes
20. Programme Document for the United Nations Joint Programme for Gender Equality (2014–17)
21. District Monthly Reports for the United Nations Joint Programme for Gender Equality (2014–17)
22. Minutes: National Steering Committee and Technical Working Group Meetings for the United Nations Joint Programme for Gender Equality (2014–17)
23. Mid Term Evaluation of the United Nations Joint Programme for Gender Equality (2014–17)
24. Final Independent Evaluation of the United Nations Joint Programme for Gender Equality (2014–17)

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25. Programme Brochure for the United Nations Joint Programme for Gender Equality (2014–17)
 26. Stories of Change of the United Nations Joint Programme for Gender Equality (2014–17)
 27. Value for Money Assessment of the United Nations Joint Programme for Gender Equality (2014–17)
 28. Programme Document for Initiatives for Employment in the Rural Economy (2016–17)
 29. District Monthly Report for Initiatives for Employment in the Rural Economy (2016–17)
 30. Minutes: District Implementation Committee Meetings for Initiatives for Employment in the Rural Economy (2016–17)
 31. Programme Document for the Youth and Women Empowerment Programme (E4WAY) Programme (2017–20)
 32. Internal Mid Term Evaluation of the Youth and Women Empowerment Programme (E4WAY) Programme (2017–20)

List of meetings whose discussions influenced paper

1. Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development in Zimbabwe Programme – Stakeholders Consultation (Inception Meeting). August 2010, Harare, Zimbabwe
2. Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE) Programme Stakeholder Capacity Building Workshop. 14–17 December 2010
3. Eastern and Southern Africa Youth Employment Knowledge Sharing Forum. 19–22 July 2015
4. Rural Economy Knowledge Sharing Forum. 23–24 August 2016, Harare, Zimbabwe
5. Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development in Zimbabwe Programme – Evaluation Validation Meeting. October 2015, Harare, Zimbabwe
6. Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development in Zimbabwe Programme – Exit and Sustainability Meeting. December 2015, Harare, Zimbabwe
7. Tripartite Sub-Regional Workshop: ‘Decent work for youth at the centre of rural transformation in SADC countries – Recommendations for future action’ rural Economy meeting. 21–23 August 2018, Harare, Zimbabwe
8. SADC Informal Economy Knowledge Sharing Workshop – ‘Facilitating Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy in Member States’. 15–17 November 2017, Johannesburg, South Africa

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Sectoral Policies Department
International Labour Office (ILO)
4, route des Morillons
CH-1211 Genève 22
Switzerland

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