

UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC  
AND  
SOCIAL COUNCIL



53446

Distr.  
LIMITED



E/CN.I4/WP.6/27  
23 October 1968

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA  
Working Party on Manpower and Training  
Second Session  
Addis Ababa, 28 October - 1 November 1968

AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE ON THE PROPOSED JOBS  
AND SKILLS PROGRAMME FOR AFRICA

(prepared and presented by F.W. Mahler (ILO))

M68-1486

An Introductory Note on the Proposed  
Jobs and Skills Programme for Africa

(Presented by F.W. Mahler, Manpower  
Planning and Organisation Branch,  
I.L.O., Geneva)

At its Third Session in Dakar in October 1967, the I.L.O. African Advisory Committee considered the employment situation in Africa and stressed its seriousness. It emphasised that concerted measures are necessary if improvements are to be made and asked the I.L.O. to submit to the I.L.O. African Regional Conference in 1969 proposals for a Jobs and Skills Programme that would study the existing employment situation and future trends and would make practical suggestions, adapted to African conditions, for the solution of unemployment and underemployment problems.

Before discussing the proposals for Africa, however, I shall make a diversion to refer to the I.L.O. World Employment Programme of which an African Jobs and Skills Programme would form part. At its 51st Session in Geneva in June 1967, the International Labour Conference, noting the slow progress in many developing countries in reducing problems relating to employment, adopted unanimously a resolution that the I.L.O. should launch a World Employment Programme. This Programme will commence in 1969 and will be constituted by employment programmes in the main world regions.

There has already been progress in Latin America and the Caribbean. At the Eighth I.L.O. Conference of American States held in September 1966 in Ottawa, resolutions were adopted calling on the I.L.O. to co-ordinate manpower programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean, indicating needs for employment creation and skill development and the means of fulfilling them. The I.L.O. is starting to develop an employment plan, known as the Ottawa Plan, for this region and a team of specialists is being assembled for the work.

The Sixth I.L.O. Asian Regional Conference, held in Tokyo in September 1968, endorsed and adopted the concept of an Asian Manpower Plan as a framework for national, regional and international action concerning employment and manpower policies and programmes. The Conference urged the developing countries of the region to direct their social and economic policies and plans, including population policies, towards the achievement of higher levels of productive utilisation of the active population. It supported proposals to establish a team of specialists whose main task would be to assist individual countries in the region in the formulation and application of employment and manpower programmes within the framework of an Asian Manpower Plan. Anticipating the adoption of the resolution, the I.L.O. has had for some time several specialists engaged on bringing together information and undertaking other preliminary work in connection with an Asian Plan.

The goal of the world-wide action is simple and clear. As the Director-General of the I.L.O. puts it in his introductory statement to the 1969 I.L.O. Programme and Budget, "The people of the developing countries must be enabled to participate in development by working for it and thereby to share in its fruits. To this end the Programme is to aim at the highest possible level of economically and socially sound employment and to increase the value and possible scope of that employment through proper training and through proper working conditions. In other words the Programme would aim to put an end to the situation, now common in developing countries, in which large and growing sections of the population are bypassed by the process of development knowing neither the promise that it holds, nor the efforts that it demands. Where now development and progress remain alien to many people's daily work and life, and hence cannot clearly concern or affect them nor arouse their willing and intelligent support, the Programme would seek to provide them with opportunities for contributing to the development of their country, and to improve their ability to do so. It is in this sense that the Programme would be a World Plan for the Employment and Development of Human Resources".

To help achieve the goals of the World Employment Programme, the I.L.O. will apply all the resources it can possibly muster. It will associate even more closely with other organisations, both regional and world-wide, to have them take better account in their own programmes of employment and manpower development needs. It will also work in as close collaboration as possible with those bilateral agencies that are concerned. It will continue and increase the technical assistance it provides directly to national governments in the many aspects of employment and training.

Returning to the Jobs and Skills Programme for Africa, it is of course the individual countries expressing themselves through the Third I.L.O. African Regional Conference to be held in 1969 that have to decide upon the form the regional employment plan is to take. The I.L.O. will submit to this Conference a comprehensive report on employment policy in Africa. It will associate with this detailed proposals relating to the form of an African Jobs and Skills Programme and an indication of the staff resources that would be required to set up an effective team of specialists in Addis Ababa to operate a regional employment plan. The I.L.O. would expect to receive substantial support for this purpose from the United Nations Technical Assistance Programme and it would also like some assistance from other international organisations and other bodies.

The specific activities to be developed under an African regional employment plan would have to be tailored to the particular problems and needs of the countries of Africa. There are certain fundamental elements, however, which seem to be common to the approach in each region. There is an urgent need to survey the existing administrative machinery in each country and to recommend improvements and technical assistance required to enable it to cope better with employment and manpower problems. There is a need to improve estimates of the current and future needs for employment creation and for skill development in each country concerned. There is an urgent need to study much more intensively the practical measures that can be taken in particular countries, through investment plans and policies and education and training

plans and employment policies of various types and in other ways, so that countries can move more quickly towards the realisation of their employment goals. Once these things are done the developing countries will be in a better position to launch action programmes which take better account of manpower development and employment, and the I.L.O., other international agencies and other technical assistance organisations will be in a better position to help them do so.

As a first step towards an African Jobs and Skills Programme the I.L.O. is bringing together in a systematic way for individual African countries, important information about their administrative organisations, about the extent and nature of their employment and manpower development problems, and about the application and success of various types of policies and measures they are already applying with the object of reducing these problems. There is some information readily available for this purpose. Some African countries have made progress with statistical series and in making analyses relating to the labour force, employment, education and training and other aspects of the employment situation and some of them have associated a measure of manpower planning with their social and economic development plans. The I.L.O. itself has conducted many fact-finding and manpower planning projects in African countries. The Manpower and Training Division of E.C.A. has been active in this field and we are looking to them for assistance. Much valuable data is embodied in a wealth of reports prepared over the years by international agencies and various other bodies.

Nevertheless there are important gaps in knowledge about the situation in many countries and the I.L.O. will have certain staff resources available in 1969 to help fill some of them. It expects to be able to provide some staff to visit selected countries, for which more information is most urgently needed, in order to review and examine what is already available from national sources and what could be obtained fairly readily. These staff resources will be supplemented by having certain I.L.O. experts already in post in some African countries negotiate with governments to provide available data; these experts could, of course, spend only a limited amount of their time on such work so as not to detract too much from their national projects. The I.L.O. Regional Manpower Advisers in Africa will also be able to assist to an extent.

Nothing that has been said, however, should detract from the importance of the role that the African countries themselves would have to play in the framework of a Jobs and Skills Programme. They would have by far the most important part and would, of course, themselves select and apply measures to be undertaken to improve their employment situation. The specialists of a Jobs and Skills Programme team would have to be very closely associated with the appropriate branches of the administration in each country, if they are to help make realistic analyses and projections and to play an effective part in assisting with formulating and applying national action programmes. There would be a need to establish clear and definite operational links between the administrations of each country concerned and the specialist team.

The success of a Jobs and Skills Programme would, in fact, depend ultimately on how well the various elements concerned could be organised to work together. It would call for a very great deal of active and informed co-operation between very many people, in various parts of national administrations and in the I.L.O., E.C.A. and other international organisations and other bodies who are, in one way or another, working towards the better realisation of the most important and urgent goals that are embodied in the World Employment Programme. It is therefore appropriate that this E.C.A. Working Party on Manpower and Training should take account of the proposed Jobs and Skills Programme for Africa. Both E.C.A. and I.L.O. have a great interest in manpower development and employment in African countries and are undertaking considerable work in this field of endeavour. No one could doubt, however, that there is yet a vast amount to be done if the labour force in many of the developing countries of Africa is to be used effectively.