

SIFA
Skills Initiative
for Africa

CONTINENTAL VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

SKILLS ANTICIPATION AND MATCHING / AFRICA

RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF
ANTICIPATING LABOUR MARKET SKILLS NEEDS

15TH – 17TH SEPTEMBER 2021



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BACKGROUND

Africa's young population is rapidly growing and expected to double to over 830 million by 2050. If properly harnessed, this increase in the working age population has the potential to support increased productivity and stronger, more inclusive economic growth across the continent. However, even though several countries in the continent registered fast economic growth over the past decades, this has not kept pace with the growing numbers of new job seekers. While about ten (10) to twelve (12) million youth enter the workforce each year, the rate of job creation does not adequately cover the new labour market entrants. According to the World Bank, young people account for 60% of all of Africa's jobless of which those not in education, employment or training form the larger part. In addition, the lack of demand-oriented skills means that development leads to young people's inability to find adequate employment. This is one of the greatest challenges for the socio-economic development of Africa.

The skills development landscape in most African Countries typically consists of public and private providers and is often highly fragmented and poorly coordinated. Skills development programmes, however, normally lack demand-orientation and quality and neither meet labour market demand for skills nor social demand for accessible skills development that can lead to better employability. The lack of skills development outcomes relevant for the labour market and related competency standards means that comparability and quality assurance of programmes and certificates is often not possible. This has a negative impact on the reputation of skills development, and hinders articulation in the education and training system as well as labour mobility. As a result, a shortage of skilled workers and at the same time high unemployment, even among graduates from skills development programmes is a very common phenomenon in most African countries. This presents a serious challenge for African decision makers and is a call for action that is more determined and for partnerships towards more informed skills development approaches and more quality jobs for young African.

On the other hand, many drivers of change including, globalization and trade, technological changes, digitalization, and climate change offer opportunities to accelerate economic development, increase output and incomes, and to diversify into economic sectors that offer opportunities for growth in productive and higher value-added employment. These drivers of change, however, also bring challenges where investment in human capital becomes vital for workers and enterprises to adjust and remain competitive in global markets. Skills development therefore becomes instrumental in facilitating access to productive employment and in ensuring that no one is left behind.

It is against this background that the International Labour Conference of 2019 called for urgency in seizing opportunities needed to address these challenges and to act with urgency in shaping a fair, inclusive and secure future of work with full, productive and freely chosen employment and decent work for all. Further, the ILC called for unrelenting vigour in advancing social justice by developing human-centred approaches to the future of work, which put workers' rights and the needs, aspirations and rights of all people at the heart of economic, social and environmental policies.

THE CONTINENTAL CONFERENCE ON SKILLS ANTICIPATION

The Conference will be organized as a three-day virtual event. It will bring together high Africa-level, regional and national labour market actors and experts to discuss key challenges with regard to skills mismatch, the capacity of African Union Member states to effectively anticipate skill needs required to address current and potential labour market imbalances and inform education and training system. The conference will seek to raise awareness and to identify key avenues for the enhancement of skills anticipation approaches and practices, and broader national labour market information systems.

The Conference will be hosted within the framework of the Skills Initiative for Africa (SIFA), an intervention of the African Union Commission (AUC) and the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) which is supported by the German Government and the European Union

The conference will specifically highlight drivers of change in the world of work and the implications for skills development and inclusive economic development. The Continental Conference and the overall capacity building work under the skills anticipation component is therefore a stepping stone toward the much needed systems strengthening efforts aimed at improving evidence based skills policy and strategies development and implementation.

With sufficient capacities and systems in place, African Member States can position structured skills anticipation and matching as one of it's the tools for achieving it's the aspiration for an "Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of its people".

Such an ambition requires the provision of an improved evidence base and calls for production of more reliable data that can facilitate development of trends to determine the kind of skills needed for Africa's current and future labour markets. In this regard, the Continental TVET Strategy emphasises the importance of addressing the mismatch and the gaps in the skills supply and labour market demand for skills, by urging member states to establish effective and integrated labour information systems.

The conference will specifically highlight drivers of change in the world of work and the implications for skills development and inclusive economic development. Through this conference, the African Union Commission intends to position skills anticipation as one of the tools for the achievement of its aspiration for an **"Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of its people"**.

CONFERENCE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Objective of the Conference is to raise awareness about the strategic role that skills anticipation and matching can play in guiding labour market actors to systematically identify and address future skills needs in order to avoid potential gaps between skills demand and supply.

A broad and inclusive process will be employed ahead of the conference, where experts and representatives from relevant organizations and agencies will be consulted to finalize the conference objectives. Stakeholders will agree on how the conference process will be guided to achieve set objectives whilst appreciating the need for systems and agility in the ever-dynamic environments such as the COVID 19 labour market effects.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Delegates to the Conference will be in form of Country teams lead from of key labour market actors, including high level government representatives, apex employer organizations, and labour market and skills development practitioners, representatives from Skills Development Apex Organizations, national labour market information, statistics organizations, academia, and labour policy research institutions.

The proposed configuration of the Country Teams will include labour market demand and supply side actors, experts and practitioners as indicated below:

- Ministry of Ministry of Planning/Economic Development
- Ministry of Trade/Industry
- Ministry of Labour
- Ministry of Education
- TEVETA/Other Umbrella Training related Institutions
- Employer Organization/Chambers of Business
- Workers Organizations/Trade Unions
- Central Statistical Office
- Institutes of Policy Research
- Academia

High level representation for Conference Opening and Closing: A high level opening for the event is anticipated with representation from the Partners (AUC and NEPAD), the donors (EU and GIZ), and the ILO.

High-level participation is also expected during the panel discussion also scheduled for the first day of the Conference, and during the closing session on the last day of the Conference.

Target Countries

While the core participation will be expected from the eleven (11) Project Countries, of Eswatini, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Tanzania, Tunisia,

Zambia and Zimbabwe, the invitations targeting key Country level labour market and skills development stakeholders will extend invitation to all the other African Union Member States.

Representation from Continental, Regional and Global Actors

The Conference will also target the participation key representatives from the African Union Commission (AUC), from the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) and from the African Regional Economic Communities.

The virtual conference will endeavour to facilitate knowledge and experience sharing by also bringing together participants from national, regional, continental and global to present concepts, and good practice which can assist to mobilize action towards integration of skills anticipation into main stream national labour market information systems and a tool for ensuring more responsive skills development.

CONFERENCE FORMAT AND ACTIVITIES

The Conference will be a three days virtual event and will consist of the following main activities: •

- **Pre-Conference engagements:** Participants will be required to register online for the Conference. In addition, pre-conference webinars will be conducted to prepare the various presenters and facilitators of the different conference themes and ensure that the experiences of the Project country Countries are factored into the Programme
- **Plenary Sessions:** Two main plenary sessions will be held as follows:-
 - **Opening session:** The opening session will be a plenary session with participation by high- level official representation from member states governments and key national, regional and continental bodies. The opening session will present the Conference objectives, the keynote address on skills anticipation and an outline of planned and ongoing activities promoting skills anticipation in the continent.
 - **Closing Session:** The closing session will receive the outcomes of the deliberations from the different conference activities and the recommendations on how skills anticipation can be strengthened in member states and how skills anticipation can be rolled out across the Continent.
- **High Level Panel Discussion:** A high panel discussion by representatives from member states to explore the role of skills anticipation and matching plays ensuring more responsive skill development agenda and an opportunity for cross continental collaborative learning.
- **Thematic Sessions:** The thematic sessions will present an opportunity to discuss skills. These themed webinars will also be an opportunity for interactive knowledge exchange, experience sharing among key labour market actors including employers and workers representatives. Two sessions are foreseen:-

- **Assessing reskilling and upskilling needs arising from impact of COVID 19** on the labour market: featuring Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia
- **Strengthening of Labour Market Information systems and practices and action planning in member states and Regional Labour market Skills Observatory:** featuring Eswatini, Ethiopia, Ghana, Gabon and Zambia and SADC Secretariat
- Virtual Fairs: The Virtual Fairs will be an opportunity to showcase and disseminate relevant tools, knowledge products and good practices and will be open to all interested parties and will also be an opportunity for networking among experts and practitioners.
- Working Sessions: Facilitated working sessions with representatives from member states, together with labour market and skills development expert to consolidate the main issues from the different sessions and to draft actionable recommendations that will inform the development of the way forward.

EXPECTED CONFERENCE OUTCOMES

The Conference is expected to deliver the following key outputs:-

- Present a theoretical and conceptual framework for skills anticipation with view to create a common understanding among key policy makers, private sector and other key labour market actors.
- Showcase evidence-based actions and initiatives highlighting innovative approaches to skills anticipation and matching from the continent and beyond.
- Discuss challenges facing member states in ensuring that provision of more response skills development that can produce more employment ready graduates and elaborate possible system based solutions
- Concrete recommendations: High level recommendations on Continental strategic direction for achieving labour market responsive skills development: The technical experts are expected to generate recommendations on how African member states can position structured skills anticipation as a strategic tool for labour market actors to proactively identify and prepare to address current and future skills and competency needs, with the view to mitigate gaps between the demand and supply of skills and thus ultimately improve the employability of African Youth
- Key stakeholder consensus in the form of a Conference Communique and “Call for Action” on the need to develop Continental guidance on how AUC member states can enhance the functioning of their labour market information systems and responsiveness of skills development interventions by strengthening national skills anticipation procedures and processes. Key conference outcomes will be presented at the Africa Creates Jobs Continental Dialogue and within AU high level policy dialogue platforms (e.g. Specialised Technical Committees of the Ministers of Labour and Employment and others)
- Concrete follow-up mechanisms and actions at national level on the implementation of conference outcomes in order to ensure long term sustainability and impact of proposed skills anticipation strengthening interventions

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Date	Activity	Forum	Time (CAT)
15 Sept	Exhibition of Tools, Knowledge Products and Country experiences and good practice skills anticipation, LMIS and Skills Development	Virtual Fair	12:00hrs -17:00hrs
16 Sept	Introductions and Setting the Scene	Conference Plenary	08:30hrs – 09:00hrs
	Opening Remarks by AU, ILO, EU		09:05hrs – 10:00hrs
	Key Note address		10:00hrs – 10:30hrs
	Video Interlude		10:30hrs – 10:40hrs
	High level Panel Discussion	Conference plenary	10:50-13:00hrs
	Tools, Knowledge Products and Country level experiences and good practice (skills anticipation and LMIS)	Virtual Fair	13:30hrs – 16:00hrs
17 Sept	Experiences and Information Sharing Rapid Assessment of reskilling and upskilling needs arising from impact of COVID-19 on Labour Market	Thematic session	08:30hrs – 10:00hrs
	Experiences and Information Sharing Strengthening skills needs anticipation and Labour Market Information systems and practices	Thematic session	10:05hrs – 12:00hrs
	Closing Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation of Conference Conclusions and key Recommendations, • Call to Action and Way Forward • Closing Speech (AUDA/GIZ/ILO) 	Conference Plenary	14:00hrs – 16:30hrs

INFO

PROGRAMME AND CONFERENCE CONTENT PLEASE CONTACT

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