

CONFERENCE COMMUNIQUE

15 - 17 SEPTEMBER, 2021 | CONTINENTAL VIRTUAL CONFERENCE



SKILLS ANTICIPATION AND MATCHING/ AFRICA

Raising awareness about the
importance of anticipating
labour market skills need

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“OUR ULTIMATE AIM AT THIS CONFERENCE IS TO ENSURE THAT AFRICAN COUNTRIES HAVE ROBUST SKILLS INTELLIGENCE MECHANISMS AS A STRATEGIC REFERENCE POINT FOR THE DESIGN OF SKILLS POLICIES TO SUPPORT RECOVERY FROM COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND TO DRIVE AFRICA’S ECONOMIC GROWTH AND COMPETITIVENESS.”

**- H.E. Professor Sarah Mbi Enow Anyang Agbor
Commissioner for Human Resources Science and
Technology of the African Union Commission**

“SKILLS ANTICIPATION AND RESPONSIVE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT ARE TOOLS WE CAN USE TO ENHANCE INCLUSIVITY, TO CONTRIBUTE TO TRANSFORMING THE YOUTH BULGE INTO A DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND FOR THE CONTINENT.”

**- Ms. Cyntia Samuel-Olonjuwon
Assistant Director-General and Regional
Director for Africa, ILO**



PREAMBLE



The African Union Commission (AUC) and the African Union Development Agency - New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD) with technical support of the International Labour Organization (ILO) convened the **“Skills Anticipation and Matching in Africa”** continental virtual conference on 15-17 September 2021. The Conference was organized within the framework of the Skills Initiative for Africa (SIFA). SIFA, is a Programme of AUC and AUDA-NEPAD, made possible with the financial support of the European Union (EU) and the German Government. The aim of this partnership is to promote the concept and practice of skills anticipation among African Union Member States.

The objective of the Continental Conference was to raise awareness about the strategic role that skills anticipation and matching plays in guiding labour market actors to identify, plan, and address

future skills needs as a means to avoid potential gaps between skills demand and skills supply.

Skills anticipation is an integral part of Labour Market Information Systems (LMIS), and a strategic and systematic process through which actors in the labour market address the discrepancies between skills demand and skills supply.

The Conference highlighted the drivers of change across the world of work and their impact on skills development and inclusive economic development. Through the Conference, the AUC and AUDA-NEPAD sought to position skills anticipation as one of the tools to attain the Africa Agenda 2063's aspiration for an **'Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of its people.'**

The Conference format was structured around four interrelated components:

- i. Virtual fair showcasing tools, knowledge products, country level experiences and comparable practices on skills anticipation and LMIS;
- ii. Opening plenary and keynote address;
- iii. Panel discussion; and
- iv. Thematic sessions: a) reskilling and upskilling needs arising from the impact of COVID-19 on the labour market; and b) strengthening skills needs anticipation and LMIS and practices.

The three-day conference brought together over two hundred (200) participants representing 40 African countries, namely Algeria, Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Carpe Verde, Cameroon, DRC, Dote D Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Morocco, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, as well as fifty (50)

participants from non-African countries, including Canada, Cambodia, Germany, India, Italy, Kosovo, Mexico, Netherlands, Switzerland, and Vietnam, among others.

Conference participants reflected on the ecosystem of the labour market and skills development stakeholders, such as key labour market actors on the African continent and beyond, high-level government representatives, apex employer organisations, workers' organizations, labour market and skills development practitioners, representatives from national labour market information and statistics organisations, academia, labour policy research institutions, civil society, and development partner organizations. Youth and their specific skills related needs were also represented.



THE CONFERENCE



- » **Guided** by the **African Youth Charter** which underscores the centrality of youth to socio-economic development of the African Continent and the importance of education, skills development, and their inclusion, participation and engagement in matters that affect and impact upon their lives.
- » **Recalling** the **Africa Agenda 2063** Aspiration for an Africa whose development is driven and dependent on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and whereby Africa's prosperity is based on inclusive growth and sustainable development. Both the development and prosperity of the continent are characterised by jobs, decent work, education, and the application of science & technology which catalyse the skills revolution.
- » **Recollecting** the **Abidjan Declaration of 2019**, which emphasizes the prioritization of investments in human capital development and the importance of strengthening education, reskilling, upskilling and lifelong learning as ways to ensure transformative changes in the labour market.
- » **Reaffirming** the global commitment to the **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** to increase substantially the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship by 2030.
- » **Restating** the commitment under **SDG 8** to significantly reduce the proportion of unemployed youth, as well as those not in education or training, and to achieve productive employment and decent work for all women and men including young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of value by 2030.
- » **Appreciating** that the **African Continental Free Trade Area** is the largest free trade area in the world and that it presents extensive opportunities for economic engagement, the generation of decent jobs and increased entrepreneurial activity for the African people.

- » **Acknowledging** that, to engage meaningfully in the African Continental Free Trade Area, African Countries need to develop skills and competencies that meets market demands and that enhance the capabilities of their labour force.
- » **Reaffirming** the commitment to the **Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025** (CESA 16-25) which aims to reorient Africa’s education and training systems to meet the knowledge, competencies, skills, innovation, and creativity required to nurture and reflect African core values, as well as promote sustainable development at national, sub-regional and continental levels.
- » **Committing** to the **Science, Technology, and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024** (STISA-2024) which aims to accelerate Africa’s transition to an innovative-led, knowledge-based economy, and the Continental Strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to Foster Youth Employment (2018).
- » **Noting** that Africa’s population of young people is growing rapidly and predicted to double to over 830 million by 2050 and that, if properly harnessed, this growth in the working age population promises to support increased productivity and demonstrate robust and more inclusive economic growth across Africa.
- » **Considering** that despite the fast economic growth experienced in several countries in Africa, the demand for new jobs has not yet been met. Approximately ten to twelve million young people enter the workforce every year, yet the current rate of employment creation across the continent does not adequately cater for the new job seekers.
- » **Acknowledging** that the primary challenges that Member States currently face are limited job creation and the imbalance between individuals’ skills, qualifications and aspirations. Furthermore, job seekers find it difficult to make an easy transition into jobs with the acquired qualifications.
- » **Noting** that the skills development landscape in most AU Member States is fragmented, inadequately funded and uncoordinated, and often neglecting demand-orientation and quality, thus failing to meet labour market skill and competency needs.
- » **Appreciating** that many drivers of change including demographics, globalisation, trade, digitalisation, technology, and climate change offer prospects to accelerate inclusive economic development; thus, offering growth opportunities for productive and higher value-added employment and entrepreneurship.



- » **Considering** that these drivers of change are affecting economies, re-shaping labour markets, altering skills needs, and presenting human capital challenges because workers and enterprises require agility and adaptation to remain competitive in global markets.
- » **Taking note** of the severe impact that the **COVID-19 pandemic** has placed in the world of work, including the sharp decline in economic activity in sectors such as manufacturing, education, tourism, and hospitality, thus reducing consumer spending, disrupting supply chains, and altering the ways that people work.
- » **Further noting** that massive labour market disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic have affected vulnerable groups more than the general population, e.g., women suffering disproportionate job and income losses as they make up the bulk of the workforce in the most-affected sectors; and young people facing compounded risks as opportunities for education, training, and jobs disappear.
- » **Further noting** that disruptions to work and training are amplified by the widening digital divide.
- » **Acknowledging** the urgent need to address the persistent mismatch between labour market demand and supply of skills through effective and structured anticipation of future skills needs and the necessity to ensure a fair, equitable, inclusive, and secure future of work.
- » **Committing** to foster sustainable ownership by AU Member States, regional institutions, and national actors while leveraging strategic partnerships and collaboration in skills anticipation and matching for the effective realisation of Africa Agenda 2063.



RECOMMENDS TO:

a) African Union, AUDA-NEPAD, and Regional Economic Communities

1. Support Member States to:

- **Develop and strengthen policies, strategies, capacities, institutional arrangements** to adequately identify and anticipate current and future skill needs.
- **Establish** systems to proactively develop the skills and competencies required to exploit the opportunities offered by the **Africa Continental Free Trade Area**.
- **Systematise** the identification of skills **needs arising from the impact of Covid-19 on the labour market**, including the reskilling and upskilling needs in sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture, tourism and hospitality, mining, energy, education and training, and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), health and Information and Technology.
- **Leverage their political and convening power to institutionalise and strengthen platforms for dialogue and sharing good practices** in skills anticipation and matching; foster replication of identified good practice across Africa, as well as enhance collaboration and partnerships that promote responsive skills development across the Continent.
- **Develop** continental and regional level **Labour Market Observatories (LMO)** to support consolidation of critical labour market information, including statistical and non-statistical information, and compilation of labour market trends to inform the development and implementation of continental and regional labour market policies and strategies.

b) Governments of African Union Member States

1. Integrated Policies and Strategies

- Integrate skills anticipation and skills development policies and programmes into broader socio-economic development agendas, policies and strategies. Skills anticipation strategies should be incorporated into employment, trade, investment, digital and environmental policies that support realization of economic and social goals.
- Strengthen Labour Market Information Systems and establish robust governance structures through enhanced legal, policy and institutional arrangements, social dialogue, and coordination mechanisms.
- Ensure strong linkages, social dialogue, and coordination mechanisms at national and sectorial levels, e.g., through establishment of sectorial skills bodies), given their critical importance to ensuring that Labour Market Information Systems support improvements in employment governance and contribute to addressing disparities between market demand and supply of skills.

2. Data Production and Use

Promote and strengthen capacities for the collection of quality and timely data. Data collected should be sufficiently robust to disaggregate information about different categories of the labour force including vulnerable labour force groups such as women and youth. In addition, such data should be adapted and used to strengthen public employment services, career guidance and counselling services that benefit school-to-work and labour market transitions.

3. Methods and Tools

Develop methods and tools for collecting, storing and analysing data required to assess current and future skills needs. These methods and tools of skills anticipation should include qualitative (skills surveys, focus groups, foresights), quantitative (statistical indicators, modelling, forecasting) and mixed method approaches that include sectoral methodologies.

4. Analytical Capacity and Capabilities

Create institutional arrangements that have adequate capacity and analytical capabilities to analyse, interpret, and disseminate data. Ensure that these arrangements are supported by regulatory frameworks required to enhance labour market information and skills anticipation systems.

5. Response to COVID -19 Impact on Labour Market and Skills Development

Invest in data collection and analysis systems for identifying skill needs arising from effects of the COVID 19 pandemic, including the identification of reskilling and upskilling needs for key economic sectors (including but not limited to manufacturing, agriculture, mining, energy, tourism and hospitality, education and training, digital, and health sectors), and invest in related retraining programmes.

6. Social Dialogue

- Through structured dialogue with social partners, facilitate active and inclusive participation and collaboration of key stakeholders including employers, and workers organizations, using a ‘whole of government and whole of society’ approach to develop and implement skills development initiatives. Leverage these strengthened social dialogue opportunities and platforms, which involve young people and local communities, to ensure ownership, sustainability, and impact among beneficiaries and stakeholders.

- Efforts in this regard should extend to promoting life skills, employability skills, and psychosocial support. Such support should facilitate productive mindsets and paradigm shifts and should provide the impetus and the incentives for young people to take on relevant practical skills, reskilling and upskilling opportunities that promote entrepreneurship.

7. Innovative and Flexible Financing

Explore innovative and sustainable financing for skills anticipation and related skills development. Such financing may include (re)structuring implementation of skills development levies to enhance capacities, strengthen capabilities, develop and rehabilitate requisite infrastructure for improved and more responsive skills development.

8. Incentivise Responsive Skills Development

Incentivise entities that provide responsive and evidence-based skills development programmes and initiatives including those that provide

- a) Flexible and innovative skills training payment opportunities to trainees,
- b) Skills training that addresses immediate labour market needs,
- c) Virtual and technology-based skills development platforms among others.



c) Research Institutions, Academia, Labour Market Observatories, and Tertiary Training Institutions (including TVET Institutions)

1. **Conduct** skills anticipation research such as **labour market assessments, sector studies, and regular tracer studies** to inform training policies, curriculum development and other requirements that ensure that education and training are aligned with the skills requisite for current and future labour markets.

2. **Enhance inclusivity, visibility, appeal, and recognition of Technical Vocational, and Entrepreneurship Training (TVET)** as critical and essential to ensuring access to future jobs, and

entrepreneurship opportunities. Efforts in this regard may include international benchmarking and partnerships, twinning programmes with other globally recognised TVET institutes and partnerships with industry, labour, and employers.

d) Private Sector and Employer Organizations

1. **Strengthen partnerships** with governments, training Institutions and workers' organizations to support improvements in anticipating skill needs and related skills development to secure competent labour for sustainable business operations, acknowledging that training systems supported by robust skills anticipation will ensure more effective matching of skills demand to skills supply.

2. Support Governments to:

- **Strengthen** capacities and processes for skills anticipation research, analysis, interpretation and application of research results.
- **Establish** industry-driven sector skills bodies and contribute to the development of industry aligned occupational and competency standards, training, guidelines and mutual recognition systems for internships and training.

3. **Expand** opportunities for quality apprenticeships, mentorship, internships, learnerships and other forms of work-based learning matching of skills demand to skills supply.

4. **Establish** structures that address trainees' ability to survive, thrive and scale their skills and enterprises beyond start-ups.

5. **Contribute** towards financing of skills anticipation and skills development initiatives.

e) Development Partners

1. **Support capacity development** of AU, AUDA-NEPAD, RECs and Member States to design policies, systems, institutional arrangements, governance, and social dialogue mechanisms that enhance skills anticipation and matching and responsive skills development.

2. Support the AU, AUDA-NEPAD, and RECs to establish and **strengthen continental and regional level Labour Market Observatories (LMO)** that can help to track trends and good practice to inform the development and implementation of policies and strategies to support skills sharing across regions and across the continent.

3. Support AU Member States to:

- **Establish integrated labour market information systems** that have robust methods and tools for data collection, storage, and dissemination.

- **Strengthen human resources** with strong capacity to generate and analyse information required for delivery of labour market responsive skills development.
- **Establish systematic processes of identifying skill needs arising from the impact of COVID-19** and other labour market shocks, or transitions linked to labour market drivers of change, such as environmental, digital etc., as well as for developing reskilling, upskilling, and career and vocational guidance measures needed to enhance employability and that contribute towards economy recovery.



PROPOSED NEXT STEPS AND WAY FORWARD

1. Awareness and Advocacy for Skills Anticipation.

AUC and AUDA-NEPAD through the SIFA Programme and with technical Support from the International Labour Organization commits to promoting skills anticipation as a pathway for labour market -responsive skills development and to supporting institutionalisation of platforms for dialogue and lessons sharing related to skills anticipation and matching in Africa.

2. Skills Anticipation Conference Series: AUC, AUDA-NEPAD will, with the technical support of the International Labour Organization, convene **the next continental skills anticipation conference** towards the end of 2022. The conference will **review progress, exchange reflections on trends and opportunities, as well created to raise awareness** among policy makers and relevant labour market actors.

3. Synergized and interlinked Dialogues platforms: AUC, AUDA-NEPAD and its development partners, through the SIFA Programme, will **create synergies and linkages between the skills anticipation dialogue platforms and Africa Creates Jobs (ACJ)** dialogue platforms. Leveraging these synergies will ensure cross fertilisation of lessons and supports coordinated implementation of action plans.

4. Skills Anticipation Policy and Guidance Notes. The AUC, and AUDA-NEPAD, through the SIFA Programme and with the technical guidance of the International Labour Organization will develop Policy Guidance Notes to assist Member States to institutionalize skills anticipation and matching into their labour market information systems and to serve as a guide for responding to Africa's imbalance in the demand and supply of skills.

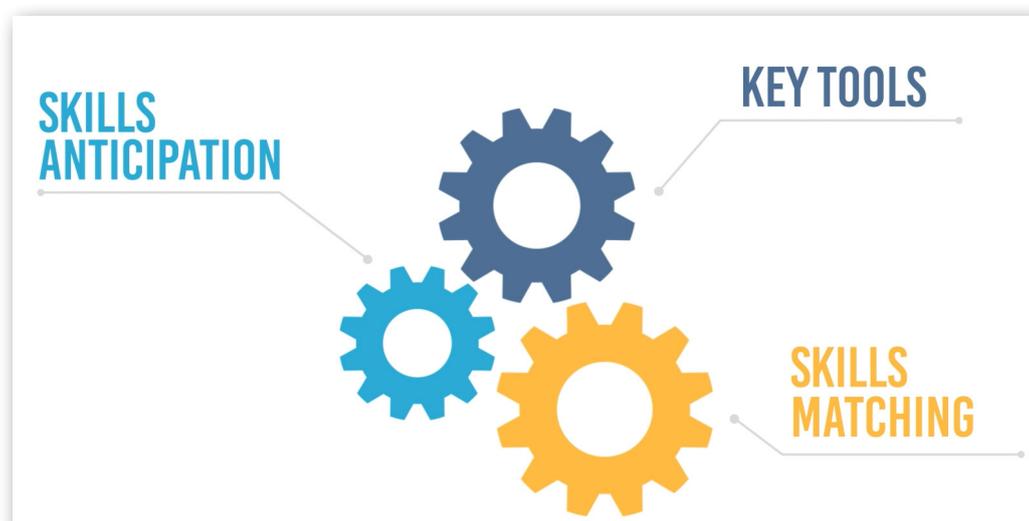
5. Capacities Enhancement. In close collaboration and partnership with development partners, and with the technical support of the International Labour Organization, AU, AUDA-NEPAD, and RECs will support strengthening of the capacity of Member States in three key areas:

- Conceptualising skills anticipation as part of integrated labour market information systems,
- Anticipating Skills for Trade and Economic Diversification (STED).
- Measuring the discrepancies between labour demand and the supply of skills available.

AUC and AUDA-NEPAD will work with member states to ensure that these capacities are anchored on strong institutional and governance arrangements, social dialogue, and coordination mechanisms.

6. Knowledge Management and Sharing. AUC and AUDA-NEPAD, through the SIFA Programme and with the technical assistance of the ILO, strengthen mechanisms for expanding information access and outreach through supporting collection, documentation, sharing and replication of good practices and innovative ideas on skills anticipation and matching.

7. Pilot Skills Anticipation Approaches: Through the SIFA Programme and with the technical support of the ILO, AUC and AUDA will support selected member states to pilot skills anticipation research with a view to demonstrate the practical application of skills anticipation processes and to support the institutionalization of skills anticipation practices.





“ACHIEVING IMPROVED ECONOMIC PROSPECTS FOR AFRICAN YOUTH REQUIRES THE ENHANCEMENT OF SKILLS ANTICIPATION APPROACHES AND PRACTICES, AND NATIONAL LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION SYSTEMS. THIS IS A KEY PRIORITY OF AGENDA 2063. THIS CONFERENCE IS AFFORDING US THE OPPORTUNITY TO IDENTIFY THE RIGHT TOOLS AND SYSTEMS TO ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVE.”

- Dr Ibrahim Assane Mayaki
Chief Executive Officer of the African Union
Development Agency - NEPAD

“IN DYNAMIC AND COMPLEX LABOUR MARKETS, GATHERING INTELLIGENCE ON CURRENT AND FUTURE SKILL NEEDS IS ESSENTIAL FOR ENHANCING EMPLOYABILITY OF YOUNG PEOPLE AND FOR IMPROVING PRODUCTIVITY IN ENTERPRISES”.

- Dr Joni Musabayana
Director - ILO DWT/ CO Pretoria



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