

The SADC Labour Market Observatory (LMO)

The SADC Secretariat is collaborating with the ILO, through the SAMM project among others, to develop a **SADC Labour Market Observatory (LMO)**. The LMO will integrate and harmonize critical information on labour markets, skills, and labour migration - including statistical and non-statistical information - to inform the development and implementation of regional policies and strategies.

One of SADC's aspirations is to harmonize labour market regulatory regimes across Member States and to ensure a progressive improvement of labour standards. For progress in these areas to be realized data, and hence a functional Labour Market Information System (LMIS), is an essential pre-requisite. To date, however, the region has not been able produce high quality labour market information to track trends and inform policymaking in support of regional integration.

The African Union *Plan of Action on Employment Creation, Poverty Eradication and Inclusive Development (2015)*, includes a Key Priority Area on well-functioning and inclusive labour market institutions, and requires RECs to support or facilitate the establishment of national LMIS. While many Member States have prioritized the development of national data structures, most countries continue to be constrained by data availability limitations, both in terms of complex information such as informality, as well as infrequent data collection. Critical information on such issues as minimum wages, vacancies and skills needs, labour migration and labour market institutions is not easily obtainable nor is it comparable across the region, constraining policy makers from developing, implementing and monitoring responsive labour market policies. Moreover, labour migrants' decision-making is impaired, as they have no signals about where and how to best integrate into the regional labour market; and the business sector is disadvantaged due to the absence of efficient matching of labour demand and labour supply.

The SADC LMO means to address this gap. It is on the one hand a mechanism for the collection, consolidation, storage and management of regional labour market information from Member States through a regional repository and web portal; while on the other hand it forms a central node for a nascent network of national LMIS. The ultimate purpose of the proposed LMO will be to ensure the aggregation and availability of up-to-date and comparable labour market, skills, and labour migration information generated by tracking selected labour market indicators across Member States.

The SADC LMO is currently being developed by a project team consisting of technical experts from SADC and ILO, focusing on:

- setting up governance structures, identifying relevant national stakeholders (i.e. governments, workers' and employers' organizations, academia, civil society organizations, etc.);
- developing a user-friendly web portal which provides access to data as well as other interactivity functionality;
- assessing national data availability, as well as capacity building needs at regional and national levels; and

- developing a data repository (hardware infrastructure as well as implementing ILO's .Stat software suite);
- promoting awareness and visibility of the LMO (through regional publicity and media events).