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ZAMBIA

A TRADE UNION FOCUS ON THE SDGs

#HLPF2020

**COVID-19:
WORKERS DEMAND
JOBS, INCOME AND
SOCIAL
PROTECTION**

COVID-19: WORKERS NEED RESPONSES FOR RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

In response to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the government of the Republic of Zambia has put in place certain restrictions, amongst which include limiting public gatherings and travel as well as quarantine for travellers. It has also introduced a number of fiscal measures to respond to the crisis, such as tax waivers; a medium-term refinancing facility for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); and the promotion of local production of goods, along with value addition. These measures have, however, had little impact on workers, especially those in the informal economy. The refinancing facility for SMEs should ensure that eligible enterprises contribute to creating and sustaining employment, and the government should consider waiving tax on electricity tariffs and suspending water bills to increase the disposable income of households.

Although the government has continued to provide social protection packages and subsidised primary health care, no additional scheme has been provided in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the main challenge remains the huge informal economy where workers are uncovered. The government should therefore scale up social protection and increase coverage. It should further provide protective materials to the public, especially informal economy operators.

ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

The government of Zambia has integrated the SDGs into its Seventh National Development Plan (NDP). SDGs 1-5 are prioritised, with the others addressed with lower priority. Overall, 52 per cent of the objectives listed in the NDP are aligned with the SDGs, 15 per cent are partially aligned and 33 per cent are not aligned.

The government entities in charge of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda are the Ministry of National Development and Planning and the Ministry of Finance. Trade unions feel that there has not been enough transparency on the SDG selection and implementation process, and input provided by civil society partners has not been sufficiently taken on board. While on the occasion of preparing the country's voluntary national review (VNR), the Zambian government has set up

ad hoc information sessions on the SDG implementation process, these have not adequately allowed for the provision of feedback. More broadly, trade unions report that although some of the recommendations they made were reflected within the chapter on labour issues of the NDP, the process of formulation and implementation of the NDP is not fully participatory.

Discussions within the Tripartite Consultative Labour Council, where social dialogue takes place, do not touch upon SDG implementation.

Trade unions warn that implementing the 2030 Agenda in Zambia will be a challenge given the lack of adequate financing, information management systems, and communication between the government and other stakeholders.

TRANSPARENCY



Irregular access to limited information

CONSULTATION



Information sessions but no interaction

SOCIAL DIALOGUE



Social partners not involved in defining and realising government's SDG national plan



IS THE (DECENT) WORK GETTING DONE?

Zambia faces significant challenges in meeting **SDG 1 (end poverty in all its forms everywhere)**. In 2018, 53.6 per cent of the Zambian population was living in poverty, only a slight decline from 54.4 per cent in 2015; urban areas were much less affected (23.4 per cent) than rural ones (76.6 per cent). Working poverty levels stood at 51.3 per cent in 2019. The total proportion of the population living below the national poverty line was 60.5 per cent – the highest figure recorded in the past decade, suggesting that **target 1.1 (eradicating extreme poverty)** is far off being met. Indeed, in 2018, the HDI (0.591) increased by only 0.002 points, a slowdown most likely due to high inflation and allocative inefficiencies. Reaching **target 1.3 (implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures)** is far off, as the proportion of the population covered by at least one social protection benefit stood only at 15.3 per cent in 2016. The budgetary allocation towards social protection for 2019 stood at only 2.4 per cent.

Achieving **target 5.4 (recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work)** remains far off, with women in Zambia performing three times more unpaid domestic work than men. With regard to **target 5.5 (ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life)**, the proportion of women with at least some secondary education stood at 73.4 per cent in 2016. As of 2015, the ratio of female to male mean years of schooling of the population age 25 and above stood at 86.5 per cent. Worryingly, the figures are predicted to fall due to the gradual worsening of the economic situation in the country.

There are significant obstacles to Zambia meeting the targets set by **SDG 8 (promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all)**. In 2019, the proportion of informal employment outside of agriculture stood at 64.1 per cent, with much higher rates among women (69.5 per cent) than men (55.7 per cent). 36.5 per cent of workers were in low paid work – more often in urban (41.2

per cent) than rural (14.8 per cent) settings. 19.1 per cent of workers were in precarious employment, an increase from 13 per cent in 2014. This poses a challenge to reaching **target 8.3 (support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalisation and growth of MSMEs)**. The 2019 unemployment rate stood at 11.4 per cent (higher for women – 12.9 per cent than for men – 10.5 per cent), suggesting challenges in fulfilling **target 8.5 (full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men)**. Youth between 15 and 19 years of age had a staggering 30.3 per cent rate of unemployment. The 2018 underemployment rate stood at 7.1 per cent and was predicted to rise due to the impact of austerity measures. At 29.9 per cent in 2018, NEET indicators for **target 8.6 (reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training)** were high, with women more affected (32.4 per cent) than men (26.9 per cent). Delivering on **target 8.8 (protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers)** seems far off, as the number of work-related injuries and fatalities remains high, especially in the mining sector, which accounts for approximately 15 per cent of formally employed workers in Zambia. Trade union density stands at 11.7 per cent and collective bargaining coverage at only 22.9 per cent.

Target 10.4 (progressive achievement of greater equality) remains unmet as inequalities are increasing despite the continuous economic growth. In 2015, the income share of the top ten per cent of earners stood at 44 per cent, while the share of the bottom 20 per cent of earners accounted for a miniscule 2.9 per cent. In order to meet **target 13.2 (integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning)**, the Zambian government has adopted a National Climate Change Policy in 2017. However, a meaningful dialogue with social partners on the issue of the effects of climate change and greenhouse emissions has been missing, trade unions report.

TRADE UNION ASKS TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

The government of Zambia needs to put in place policies and measures in order to tackle the economic and social shocks brought by the Covid-19 pandemic. Today more than ever, the SDGs show the way in building up a sustainable and inclusive economy and society.

Trade unions call on the government of Zambia to ensure urgent action to cope with the pandemic emergency in line with the SDGs, through the following measures:

- Improve social dialogue with unions and other key stakeholders and use established social dialogue structures such as the Tripartite Consultative Labour Council to discuss SDG implementation.
- Increase transparency and improve consultation and interactions with trade unions and other stakeholders in the implementation of the SDGs.
- Scale up social protection programs and coverage to ensure social inclusion, especially for informal economy operators and other vulnerable groups.
- Increase allocations towards social spending in national budgets.
- Establish a long-term macroeconomic framework that will promote local production and value addition to promote employment creation and for the economy to be resilient against external shocks.
- Guarantee a prudent management of national resources by ensuring stringent accountability measures, especially in public finance management.
- Develop a consensus-based national monitoring and evaluation performance framework to ensure that SDG national indicators collated are comprehensive, gender-sensitive and systematically acted upon.



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