



Echoes of the Capacity Building Programme

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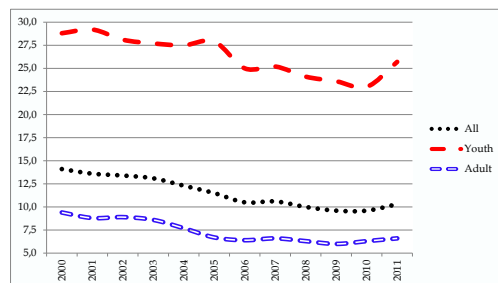
October 2012

Youth unemployment: a structural phenomenon in Africa

More than a development problem, youth unemployment in Africa has become a major concern over the last ten years. According to ILO reports on Global Employment Trends of 2009 and 2012, a comparison of the data about youth unemployment and adult unemployment from 2000 to 2011 shows that youth unemployment in Africa has become a structural phenomenon and calls for urgent actions from public authorities and development actors on the continent.

In North Africa, youth unemployment rate during the period under review ranges from 23% to 29.2%, that is **26.5%** on average. As far as adults are concerned, the minimum unemployment rate is 6% and the maximum is 9.4%, that is **7.4%** on average (Figure 1).

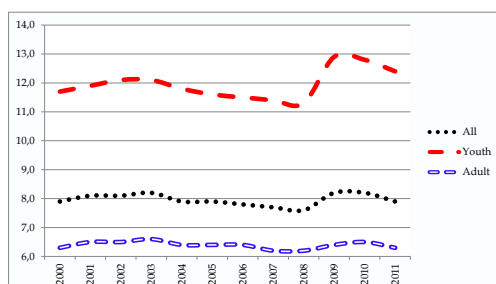
Figure 1: Unemployment in North Africa from 2000 to 2011



Source: Established with Data from Global Employment Trends, 2009 & 2012

In Sub-Saharan Africa, youth unemployment rate ranges from 11.3% to 12.6%, that is **11.9%** on average over the period. As far as adults are concerned, this rate ranges from 6.2% to 6.6%, that is **6.4%** on average (Figure 2).

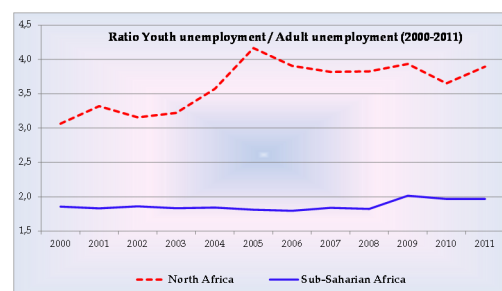
Figure 2: Unemployment in Sub-Saharan Africa from 2000 to 2011



Source: Established with Data from Global employment trends, 2009 & 2012

Thus, compared to adults, over the period under review, the opportunities for young people to access employment in North Africa and in sub-Saharan Africa are generally **four times** and **two times** lower. Consequently, the average ratio of youth unemployment/adult unemployment over the period is **4** for North Africa and **2** for Sub-Saharan Africa (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Evolution of the ratio youth unemployment /



adult unemployment from 2000 to 2011

Source: Established with Data from Global Employment Trends, 2009 & 2012

These findings should challenge public opinion, policy makers and development actors, including trade unions in African states, to undertake appropriate and targeted actions towards youth if the political, economic and trade union leadership want to put an end to the vicious cycle of poverty on the continent.

Trade unions, due to their responsibility towards workers, have a key role to play in order to reverse these unfavourable trends in youth employment and bring out change.

For this purpose, they should, in various countries:

- be actively involved in the formulation and implementation process of employment policies ;
- work towards the implementation of working conditions that are conducive to youth empowerment and that take into account the realities of each area (urban, semi-urban and rural) so that African people can be free from poverty and social inequalities that they have been experiencing for several decades.

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Unemployment by Gender in Africa

Poverty and social inequality affect more women than men in Africa. Indeed, women are victims of all kinds of discrimination which restrict their access to productive resources and employment opportunities. In the labour market, women have more difficulties in finding jobs that can help them reduce their vulnerability. Consequently, they are likely to remain unemployed longer than men.

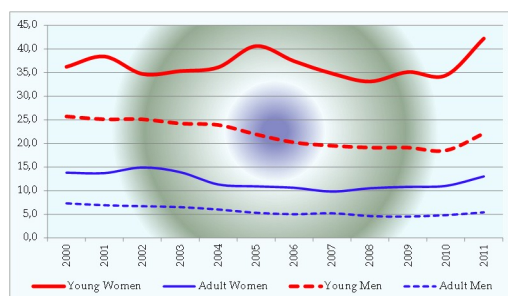
Data from ILO's database "Key Indicators of the Labour Market" (KILM available at: <http://www.ilo.org/kilm>), was used to examine unemployment by gender in Africa on the basis of the situations prevailing in North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa over the period from 2000 to 2011.

The data analysis reveals that in these two regions, unemployment affects more women than men and its incidence is higher in North Africa.

«Targeted actions in favour of women, especially young women, are necessary.»

Indeed, during the period under review, in North Africa, the average unemployment rate for young women is 37% against 22% for young men. For adult women, it is 12% against 8% for adult men (Figure 1).

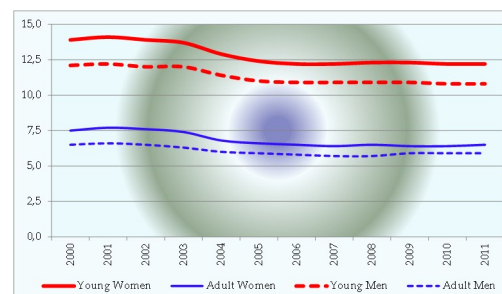
Figure 1: Unemployment by gender in North Africa from 2000 to 2011



Source: Established with Data from <http://www.ilo.org/kilm>

In Sub-Saharan Africa, the same data shows that the average unemployment rate for young women is 13% and 11% for young men. For adult women, the rate is 7% against 6% for adult men (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Unemployment by gender in Sub-Saharan Africa from 2000 to 2011



Source: Established with Data from <http://www.ilo.org/kilm>

No matter the region, these data show that discrimination against young and adult women is a reality. However, the magnitude of this kind of discrimination is higher in North Africa than in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, the magnitude of this discrimination is higher in North Africa than in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Given these realities, targeted actions in favour of women, especially young women are necessary, considering the fact that women are less active when they become older. These actions should help enhance opportunities provided to young women. They need to be given greater possibilities to build their capacity in order to profit more from the economic and social activities on the continent.

Trade unions in Africa should therefore participate actively with governments in the development of employment policies that promote women as well as men to ensure equity and social justice.

Youth-friendly public policies that ensure growth and sustainable development in Africa

"Tell me what kind of youth you have, I will tell you what country you will be "

The former Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade during his swearing in ceremony in April 2000.

With a total population estimated at more than **one billion forty-four million people in 2011**, Africa is the continent with the youngest population in the world because more than 60% of its population is less than 25 years old. Let us look at the following distribution :

Table: African population in 2011

Distribution by age	0-14 years	15-24 years	25-64 years	65 years and more	Total
%	40%	20%	36%	4%	100%
Number of people	417 721 600	208 860 800	375 949 440	41 772 160	1 044 304 000

Source: Established with Data from African Economic Outlook, 2012

The youth aged 15 to 24 years old who are said to be more than 200 million (about 20% of the population) represent a considerable asset for the development of Africa. However, they are also a major challenge for the continent in terms of education, health care and especially employment.

Thus, in view of its potential, African youth have a key role to play in the continent's development process. They should benefit from opportunities that will enable them to contribute to the development process initiated for some time on the continent. It is in view of this that in 2011, the 17th Ordinary Session of African Union Heads of States and Governments held from 30 June to 1 July, was devoted to the theme "Accelerating Youth Empowerment for sustainable development".

At the end of this meeting, the continent's Heads of State and Government adopted a declaration on "Employment creation for accelerating the development and youth empowerment" in which they committed themselves to, among other things:

- *strengthen their commitment to employment creation, poverty reduction, social protection for the benefit of the people and social development of the continent ;*
- *reduce youth unemployment by at least two percent (2%) each year ;*
- *maintain and harmonize information systems related to the labour market in support of formulation, implementation and evaluation of employment policy in the various countries ;*

- *improve the adequacy between education systems and current/future needs of the labour market ;*
- *accelerate expansion of adequate social protection for the youth, young women as well as actors of the informal economy and rural workers to reduce their level of poverty and vulnerability.*

One year after this declaration, the socio-economic situation of African youth remains a matter of concern and raises some of questions, namely:

- *What are the realities facing the youth today in the labour market in Africa? Youth unemployment remains a disaster in Africa. As a matter of fact, youth unemployment rate compared to adults is **4 times** higher in North Africa and **2 times** higher in Sub-Saharan Africa .*
- *What assessment can be made from the implementation of these commitments for African people in general and the youth in particular?*
- *What should be the best policy options to support the youth?*
- *What actions or contributions should African trade unions undertake so that African youth can fully play their role in a society where they have more to give than to receive?*

Let us all think about these questions!

« What should be the best policy options to support the youth ?»



ITUC-AFRICA

Route Internationale d'Atakpamé
Centre FOPADESC Agoè – Nyivé
BP. : 4401
LOME - TOGO

Tel. : 00228 22 25 07 10
Fax : 00228 22 25 61 13
Email : info@ituc-africa.org
Web: www.ituc-africa.org

African Regional Organisation

ITUC-Africa is a pan-African trade union organisation created in November 2007 following the merger of two former African trade union organisations, namely ICFTU-Afro and DOAWTU. Its mission is "to strengthen trade unions in Africa and to enable all African workers to speak with one voice to ensure a healthy and safe working environment and decent life for all by fighting against all forms of exploitation and discrimination, defending human and trade union rights, promoting social justice, peace and democracy while preserving the environment"

ITUC-Africa represents more than 16 million workers organized in 90 trade union centres in 48 countries on the continent.