



BURUNDI

**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

To avoid the spread of Covid-19 in Burundi, the government has limited access to the country and has introduced quarantine measures for people coming from abroad. A diagnostic centre and isolation facilities have been set up and an expanded scientific committee has been appointed for the care and monitoring of Covid-19 patients. However, the social protection measures to respond to the crisis remain weak. Paid sick leave and wage and income protections only apply to public servants and employees in a few public and private companies.

Trade unions are calling on the government to set up a national tripartite structure to manage the pandemic and to strengthen and expand the social protection system. A budget linked to the crisis needs to be adopted to provide support and assistance for vulnerable people. Immediate action is required to increase the number of decent and hygienic isolation facilities and to provide free pandemic-related care and quarantine (food and accommodation), as well as to reinforce human and material resources in hospitals and emergency services and to increase the number of diagnostic and treatment centres.

ARE TRADE UNIONS AT THE TABLE?

The Burundi government has established a national list of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2016-2030 and integrated them into the 2018-2027 National Development Plan (NDP).

The government is working on all SDGs but has chosen not to undertake certain targets of SDG 8 (8.2; 8.4; 8.5; 8.6; 8.7; 8.8). The SDGs have been integrated into national policies: SDG 8 into the national employment policy and SDGs 1, 5, 10, 13 and 16 into the revision of the employment and social security code as well as the Decent Work Country Programme 2019-2023.

Work on the SDGs is coordinated by a multisectoral and multidisciplinary national monitoring commission of experts under the supervision of the second Vice

President of the Republic. Different ministries are responsible for the inclusion of SDGs into their respective policy areas.

Trade unions report that they are not consulted on the planning or implementation of the SDGs and that the 2030 Agenda is not discussed through social dialogue. The national monitoring commission does not include trade union representatives, nor are they informed on the implementation progress. Ministries organise consultation sessions, but these do not involve social partners. Trade unions have made submissions on relevant sectoral policies which contribute to SDG implementation, although they are not directly integrated into the NDP.

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?

Given its placement at the bottom of the global ranking for the human development index (HDI of 0.423 in 2018, 185th place), enormous challenges are in the way of Burundi reaching the SDGs.

Between 2013-2014, 80.2 per cent of the overall population was living below the international poverty threshold of \$1.9 per day, and in 2014, 69.4 per cent of employed persons above 15 were living under the poverty threshold, indicating that **target 1.1 (eradicate extreme poverty for all people)** was dramatically far off being reached. In 2016, nearly half of the households in Burundi suffered food insecurity, placing the country in last place of the 2017 Global Food Security Index.

Only one per cent of women and 1.2 per cent of men between 15 and 49 were part of a mutual social insurance and only 21.8 per cent of women and 21 per cent of men in the same age bracket were covered by sickness insurance in 2017, suggesting that reaching **target 1.3 (implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures)** is far off the mark.

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)**, in 2018, 38.8 per cent of parliamentarians were women, and in 2014, 26.2 per cent of decision-making posts in the administration were occupied by women. However, in the same year only 7.5 per cent of women above 25 years old had at least some secondary education.

There are serious concerns about Burundi meeting the targets set by **SDG 8 (promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and**

productive employment and decent work for all). The percentage of people working in the informal economy in non-agricultural sectors was 89.4 per cent in 2014, posing 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)**. In addition, the average salary in 2014 stood at \$1.37, below the international poverty threshold. Below-subsistence-level wages are effectively legalised, as the minimum wage is fixed at \$0.06 in rural and \$0.08 urban areas. In 2018, 94.6 per cent of all employment in Burundi was classified as precarious. Achieving **target 8.5 (full and productive employment and decent work for all)** is still far off, as in 2015, 41.3 per cent of workers were qualified as underemployed. NEET indicators for **target 8.6 (reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training)** stood at 6.2 per cent in 2017. Reported labour rights violations show big challenges in the implementation of **target 8.8 (protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers)**.

Significant progress remains to be made for Burundi to reach **target 10.4 (adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality)**, as the labour share of GDP (wages and social protection transfers) remained extremely low, at 19.6 per cent, in 2014. In 2013, the share of the top ten per cent of income earners accounted for 31 per cent of GDP, while the bottom 20 per cent of income earners accounted for 6.9 per cent of GDP.

The development of a Just Transition policy which was validated with social partners indicates a first step to reach **target 13.2 (integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning)**.

TRADE UNION ASKS TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

The government of Burundi 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 Burundi to ensure urgent action to cope with the pandemic crisis in line with the SDGs, through the following measures:

- Involve social partners in responses to the Covid-19 crisis as well as in shaping national development policies and implementing the SDGs.
- Adopt and ensure the implementation of all targets related to SDG 8.
- Develop a strategy to mobilise funds to address the flaws in the health system and the economic shocks resulting from the coronavirus pandemic.
- Protect the supply of food and essential services and ensure that appropriate pricing is maintained. Food supply chains, especially priority supplies and access to essential services such as telecommunications and public services, must be guaranteed, and prices must be kept at affordable levels.
- Formulate policy to support public and private companies and informal sector activities likely to suffer the consequences of the Covid-19 crisis.
- Devise strategies to counter rumours and political manipulation of the crisis.



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