Study on the impact of COVID 19 on African workers, Trade Union responses and challenges for the future with key recommendations – Description and Terms of Reference (TORs), 29/08/2020

I. Study Background

The outbreak of the COVID-19 virus has created a health crisis in many African countries. Globally,20,634,064 people have been infected and 749 576 have died of the virus according to John Hopkins University[1]. The figures continue to rise as the infection continue to spread. Africa accounts for 1,073 788 infections, 24 256 deaths and 769023 recoveries according to the Africa Centre for Disease Control (Africa-CDC)[2]. In an attempt to minimise the spread of the disease, many African countries took measures to protect their people. In some countries, the measures were taken in consultations with social partners while in others they were imposed by the government. The measures included full or partial lockdowns, curfews, social distancing, hygiene practices, disinfection, wearing of masks etc. The measures were supported by some pieces of legislation such as emergency powers laws, health regulations and decrees. The police and the military forces were deployed to enforce the measures of which some of the enforcement mechanisms became brutal and undermined human rights.

Although it is critical to resort to reasonable measures, most African countries fall too short to provide income security to the workers and other vulnerable groups. The lockdowns affected the operation of the informal economy, which supports many livelihoods in Africa, created hardships for many people who survive on hand to mouth forcing them to lament that it is better to die of COVID-19 than die of hunger. Most governments were forced to ease the lockdowns, not because the virus had been significantly managed but because of its serious negative impact on economies and people's survival.

II. Terms of reference

This researcher is requested to fulfil the following objectives:

- To provide an overall overview of the impact of COVID-19 on African workers with special focus on human and trade union rights violations;
- To provide a solid overview of measures put in place by governments and employers to minimize the spread of the corona virus, measures for testing, treatment and rehabilitation of infected and affected persons at work places and check if social dialogue was used to come up with the measures.
- To measure the adequacy of the adopted measures as they relate to workers' fundamental rights at work and human rights broadly including OHS, social security and social protection in Africa;
- To show the good and bad practices adopted by some governments identifying areas for improvement
- To show the extent of trade union responses to the adopted measures, their implementation, monitoring, and any success stories
- Identify the challenges faced by trade unions in their response to the measures and the reasons for any limitations;
- To provide recommendations to improve on trade union responses in the future in their attempt to engage governments for better protective measures.

---

[1]Hopkins University https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html accessed 12 August 2020
[2] Africa Centre for Disease Control https://africacdc.org/covid-19/ accessed 12 August 2020

Research Outputs:

- Detailed overview of government policies and measures during lockdown; new legislation, decrees having an impact on freedom of association, collective bargaining, wages, income support, OHS, social protection floors; and trade unions responses to the violations, strategies, best practices and shortcomings.
- Detailed overview and case studies of reported violations by governments and employers on fundamental rights at work (wages, dismissals, freedom of association, OHS etc);
- The extent of government measures' compliance with international labour standards[3]

Methodology:

- Desk research based on ITUC and ITUC- Africa regional and Global survey data;
- Overview of new COVID19 ad-hoc legislation put in place that undermine workers' rights to freedom of association and protection of the right to organise and collective bargaining;
- Analysis of country responses data available via ILO website and available indicators.[4]
- Interviews and case studies with African unions in the region to collect information on violations of workers' fundamental rights and trade union responses and action;
- Any other reliable sources of data and information on the subject.

Research persons:

ITUC in collaboration with FES TUCC will appoint two consultant(s) to carry out the studies during the month of September/October and November 2020. One consultant will cover Southern Africa and East Africa and the other will cover West Africa. The research papers will be consolidated. The study's 1st drafts will be submitted by the 10th of November for proof reading and final drafts will be submitted by the 20th of November 2020.

III. Contact Persons

1) **ITUC International Trade Union Confederation, Brussels**
   Mr. Zakeyo Mtimtema, Human and Trade Union Rights Regions Officer - Africa
   (zakeyo.mtimtema@ituc-csi.org)

2) **FES TUCC, Johannesburg**
   Mr. Bastian Schulz, Director, FES TUCC (Bastian.Schulz@fes-southafrica.org)
   Ms. Iris Nothofer, Junior Expert, FES TUCC (Iris.Nothofer@fes-southafrica.org)

---

[3] https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/WCMS_739937/lang--en/index.htm
[4] https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/country-responses/lang--en/index.htm