

# DECENT WORK ZIMBABWE



## Assessing the decent employment creation strategies and programmes being implemented in Zimbabwe, and implications for poverty reduction, stability, and sustainability

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## Acronyms

<b>ARTUZ</b>	Association of Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe
<b>BWI</b>	Building and Wood Worker's International
<b>BWI-IKEA</b>	Building and Wood Worker's International - Ingvar Kamprad Elmtaryd Agunnaryd
<b>CAPs</b>	Corrective Action Plans
<b>CBA</b>	Collective Bargaining Agreement
<b>CCZ</b>	Consumer Council of Zimbabwe
<b>CDF</b>	Community Development Fund
<b>CSE</b>	Critical Skills Experts
<b>CZI</b>	Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries
<b>DTUA</b>	Danish Trade Union Development Agency
<b>DOLISAs</b>	Departments of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
<b>DWA</b>	Decent Work Agenda
<b>DWCP</b>	Decent Work Country Programme
<b>EPR</b>	Employment to Population Ratio
<b>EMCOZ</b>	Employers' Confederation of Zimbabwe
<b>FDI</b>	Foreign Direct Investment
<b>FYDP II</b>	Second Five Year Development Plan
<b>FPL</b>	Food Poverty Line
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>HND</b>	Higher National Diploma
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>IFBWW</b>	International Federation of Building and Wood Workers
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>LEDRIZ</b>	Labour & Economic Development Research Institute of Zimbabwe
<b>LFCLS</b>	Labour Force and Child Labour Survey
<b>MMCZ</b>	Minerals Marketing Corporation of Zimbabwe
<b>MNEs</b>	Multinational Enterprises
<b>MoM</b>	Month on Month
<b>MoLISA</b>	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
<b>MSME</b>	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise
<b>MTP</b>	Medium Term Plan
<b>NDS1</b>	National Development Strategy 1
<b>NEC</b>	National Employment Council
<b>NECF</b>	National Economic Consultative Forum
<b>NAWU</b>	National Air Workers Union
<b>NEWU</b>	National Energy Workers Union

<b>NEWU</b>	National Engineering Workers Union
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NGP</b>	National Gender Policy
<b>NSSPF</b>	National Social Security Policy Framework
<b>OSH</b>	Occupational Safety and Health
<b>PDL</b>	Poverty Datum Line
<b>PICES</b>	Poverty, Income, Consumption and Expenditure Survey
<b>PTUZ</b>	Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe
<b>RMG</b>	Ready Made Garments
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SEZ</b>	Special Economic Zone
<b>SME</b>	Small and Medium Enterprises
<b>SMEDCO</b>	Small and Medium Enterprises Development Corporation
<b>STEAM</b>	Science Technology Engineering Arts and Mathematics
<b>TNF</b>	Tripartite Negotiating Forum
<b>TSP</b>	Transitional Development Programme
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UR</b>	Unemployment Rate
<b>VCCI</b>	Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry
<b>VGCL</b>	Vietnam General Confederation of Labour
<b>WDF</b>	Women Development Fund
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization
<b>YETI</b>	Youth Employment Tax Incentive
<b>ZANU PF</b>	Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front
<b>ZCATWU</b>	Zimbabwe Construction and Allied Trades Workers' Union
<b>ZCTU</b>	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
<b>ZIMASSET</b>	Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio Economic Transformation
<b>ZIMCHE</b>	Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education
<b>ZIMRA</b>	Zimbabwe Revenue Authority
<b>ZIMSTAT</b>	Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency
<b>ZiNEPF</b>	Zimbabwe National Employment Policy Framework
<b>ZISEGU</b>	Zimbabwe Security Guards Union
<b>ZUDAC</b>	Zimbabwe Union of Drivers and Conductors
<b>ZLC</b>	Zimbabwe Labour Centre
<b>ZWMB</b>	Zimbabwe Women Microfinance Bank

# Executive Summary

## Background

**Decent work** can be defined as productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. It has four critical pillars namely: employment creation, social protection, rights at work, and social dialogue. It is also a critical component of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with SDG 8 focussing on promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. Decent employment creation focuses on the ability of beneficiaries to achieve better labour market outcomes, through social security provision, social dialogue, increased earnings and decent working time. Given that the majority in developing countries hold poor quality, low productivity and low-income jobs in the informal economy, this policy focus on decent employment ensures that job statuses are reflected through better livelihoods, with a direct relationship between job status and poverty alleviation.

## Overview of the Zimbabwe labour market

Zimbabwe's working age population (aged 15 and above) is about 8.1 million people, of which 45.6% are male and 54.4% are female. The labour force is about 3.5 million in size, with about 56.2% of the labour force being male, about 50.9% being in rural areas, while youths aged 34 and below constitute about 51.1%. About 83.6% of the labour force is employed, implying that unemployment is only at about 16.4%. The economy is dominated by agricultural and informal employment. The country faces a scarcity of regular wage employment for all who would like wage jobs and are capable of performing them. The share of informal employment to total employment is estimated at 75.6% in 2019. Informal employment basically means that the country has abundant labour which is not being productively utilised. Given that decent work outcomes are more difficult to achieve outside the formal sector, there is need to facilitate the transition from informality to formality and also to ensure that economic growth is inclusive and decent work rich.

## Decent employment creation as a national policy instrument

There is need to shift focus from just employment creation to quality employment, which is the general focus of decent work. The focus on decent work acknowledges that it is not only the number (quantum) of jobs that matters, but the quality of the jobs. For example, while 83.6% of the economically active population is employed, this figure hides critical dimensions relating to the quality and sustainability, which can only be addressed if decent employment creation is to be proactively flagged out as a policy objective. Decent work policies also seek to expand employment opportunities to include specific vulnerable or traditionally disadvantaged groups such as persons with disabilities, youths and women, which would not naturally arise if the focus were on just employment in general.

## Policy and institutional gaps

Decent work has not been given prominence in macroeconomic policies and development strategies in Zimbabwe. This is evident in such policy documents as the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIMASSET) and the Transitional Stabilisation Programme (TSP) which lack clear employment creation targets. However, the current National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1) has made major strides in flagging decent work issues although these are still considered as cross cutting issues across thematic areas of focus. The general macroeconomic environment has



also failed to create the necessary conditions for promoting economic diversification and structural transformation necessary for creating decent jobs. While the labour market laws and regulations are in place, their enforcement remains a challenge which militates against decent employment creation. There is also a general lack of consistency in implementing decent work programmes, as evidenced by intermittent commitment to decent work initiatives and failure to capacitate and sustain established institutions.

### **Employment creation strategies in Zimbabwe**

There has been a more pronounced focus on stabilising the macroeconomic environment, which has seen inflation slowing down. A tight monetary policy and fiscal discipline also helped bring back some confidence in the market, resulting in improved performance by business. Capacity utilisation increased from 36.4% in 2019 to reach 54% in 2021. According to the NDS1, the stabilised macroeconomic environment is expected to improve employment targets. These include:

- Increasing formal employment from 24% in 2020 to 30% by 2025.
- Increasing the percentage of qualified professionals in post from 65% in 2020 to 100% by 2025.
- Improving critical skills from 38% in 2019 to 60% by 2025.
- Increasing the number of youths with access to empowerment opportunities from 16,000 in 2020 to a cumulative 648,000 by 2025.

The Government is also shifting emphasis to a more demand-driven education system with emphasis on training for the needs of the industry. This has seen transformation of the education curricula to focus on skills development that focus on production of goods and services, thus creating decent jobs. Focus is also on identifying and capacitating targeted sectors that are locomotives for inclusive growth and development. These sectors are agriculture, mining, manufacturing and tourism.

While efforts are being made to create decent jobs in the country, under employment and poverty remain high. The employment to population ratio, which decreased from 80.5% in 2014 to 35.8% in 2019, indicates a decrease in demand for workers in the economy. In addition, the unemployment rate rose from 11.3% in 2014 to 16.4% in 2019 indicating that more and more people are getting into unemployment. According to the mini-PICES (2019), extreme poverty increased to 38% in May 2019 from 30% in 2017. The number of 'extreme poor' people increased from 4.6 million in 2017 to 6.0 million in 2019. There is also a gender stereotyping in most jobs despite the level of education. Women are either more employed as own account workers or employed in less paying professions like administration, education, accommodation and food services than men.



### **Decent work challenges and opportunities**

There are great employment opportunities in key sectors of the economy. The agricultural sector has opportunities in food supply given arable land. The mining sector prides itself with an endowment of over 40 mineral resources which includes 19 of the world's rare minerals which are underexplored. The manufacturing sector has potential to create jobs through value addition and beneficiation anchoring on the agricultural and the mining sectors. The tourism sector is also another flagship industry for employment creation anchoring on abundant natural resources like wildlife and scenery. The tourism sector is a labour-intensive sector and its full potential can be realised if there is an intrinsic linkage between the sector and the local economy.

There are also some challenges associated with decent employment creation in Zimbabwe. The low employment intensity of growth is one notable challenge. Based on employment and GDP data for 2014 and 2019, the aggregate employment intensity of growth is 0.06 while the figure was between 0.01 and 0.07 at sectoral level. This indicates that employment changes insignificantly to changes in growth.

The other challenges for decent work arise from the low access to and high cost of finance which reduces investments as well as inadequate infrastructure supply which increases the cost of production and reduces labour demand. The economy has also experienced increased de-industrialisation which has led to increased informality. There is also a skills mismatch between education and industry requirements. Another major challenge for creating decent employment opportunities is the challenging doing business environment characterised by administrative hurdles, corruption, inadequate infrastructure, poor tax administration, and other red tape.

### **Lessons for Zimbabwe from success countries on decent employment**

Different countries and organizations have performed differently in areas of decent work with the help of the ILO. African countries namely Benin, Rwanda, Tanzania and Tunisia registered notable progress on formalisation of the informal sector, trade unionism, social dialogue and labour legislation. On the other hand, countries and organisations outside Africa used framework agreements to address decent work challenges. Bangladesh developed the Accord on Fire and Building Safety, while the BWI - IKEA Global Framework Agreement was done at an international level. Indonesia's Freedom of Association Protocol and Vietnam's electronics sector scored well in areas of safety at work place, social protection and the environment, workers' freedom of association, and socially responsible labour practices.

## Proposals to promote and strengthen decent employment in Zimbabwe

The following constitutes some of the key recommendations from the study on promoting decent work:

- **Promoting employment intensive growth**

The Government should promote the development of employment intensive domestic value chains to promote industrialisation and structural transformation. Supporting sectors with high employment intensity/potential would go a long way in ensuring that the twin objectives of economic growth and employment creation are concurrently addressed.

- **Mainstreaming employment in all macroeconomic policies**

The Government should ensure that all macroeconomic policies mainstream decent employment creation within their design and implementation, as this remains the only way in which decent work outcomes can be achieved.

- **Crafting and implementing a national employment policy framework**

Despite the Zimbabwe National Employment Policy Framework (ZiNEPF) having been overtaken by events, Zimbabwe continues to operate without a modern and properly contextualised national employment policy. It is important to ensure that a new policy on employment to anchor decent work outcomes in Zimbabwe is crafted and implemented. This would go a long way in closing the decent work gaps within the current macroeconomic environment.

- **Strengthen social dialogue between social partners**

The case studies reviewed in this study have generally shown that it is possible to enhance decent work outcomes through social dialogue at sector level. While national cohesion can be difficult, it is possible for sector specific trade unions and workers in their respective sectors to ensure that they start negotiation on eliminating sector specific issues that are threatening the realisation of decent work outcomes. There are some sectors that are more prone to challenges compared to others, hence priorities might differ in terms of negotiations.

- **Reforming the doing business environment**

The cost of doing business is considered high in Zimbabwe and this calls for urgent reforms to promote investment. This means that legal, regulatory or administrative reforms are urgently needed to encourage new capital into the economy. This should aim to reduce the costly and cumbersome licencing requirements; permits' issuance and administration; company registration; property registration; and access to utilities.

- **Facilitating transition from the informal to the formal economy**

The informal sector remains the largest employer in Zimbabwe. Given this background, the Government should come up with interventions that seek to facilitate transition from the informal to the formal economy. In 2015, the ILO came up with Recommendation 204 concerning transition from informal economy to formal economy to help member states to: facilitate the transition of workers and economic units from informal to formal economy; promote the creation and preservation of sustainable enterprises in the formal economy; and prevent informalisation of formal economy jobs.

- **Develop labour skills that match the industry**

The Government should mandate and capacitate all institutions of learning to develop learners with requisite skills for the industry. Such skills are critical in promoting sustainable growth and development as they aim on production of tangible goods and services. The economy abounds with great opportunities that need tapping but only when the required skills are available.

- **Reducing tax complexity**

The informal sector is also driven away from formalisation by a complex tax system. In general, tax structures in any country, especially the degree of complexity, is one of the most significant determinants of tax compliance. **Tax compliance** is generally described as the extent to which all agents forming the tax base adhere to tax laws, as reflected by truthful disclosure of the tax base, correct computation of tax liability, timeous filling in of returns, as well as the settling of tax obligations. The degree of tax compliance literacy is a significant determinant of compliance. The complexity of the tax regime generally results in reduced compliance due to the increased costs of compliance, especially the need to hire experts to interpret the complex provisions of the law; an additional cost which can be avoided through tax avoidance. This makes it critical for a review of the Zimbabwe tax regime, as additional resources can be easily unlocked by making the tax regime simpler and less complex for the informal sector to comply.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The concept of 'decent work' can be traced to 1999 when it was proposed as a central priority for the International Labour Organization (ILO) in the Director-General's Report to the 87<sup>th</sup> Session of the International Labour Conference in June 1999 (Ghai, 2002). Decent work can be defined as productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity (International Labour Organization, 2018). This means that the focus goes beyond just focusing on work, to look at desired attributes which work is supposed to provide.

Decent work has four critical pillars namely:

- **Employment creation**
- **Social protection**
- **Rights at work**
- **Social dialogue**

Decent employment creation focuses on the ability of beneficiaries to achieve better labour market outcomes, through social security provision, social dialogue, increased earnings and decent working time (International Labour Organization, 2018). Decent work is also a critical component of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 8 on promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. Countries are required to ensure that they focus on productive employment and decent work for all the working age population. Among other issues, countries are expected to have achieved the following targets by 2030 in line with SDG 8:

- Development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation, and encourage the formalisation and growth of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, including through access to financial services.
- Full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.
- Substantial reduction in the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training.
- Effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.
- Protection of labour rights and promotion of safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment.
- Develop and implement policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products.

Decent jobs facilitate development by providing individuals, families and communities with the necessary means for meeting their social and economic needs while also helping eradicate poverty, thereby laying a foundation for equitable, inclusive and sustainable economic transformation (International Labour Organization, 2015).

At the continental level, Government, Business and Labour (social partners) adopted the Decent Work Agenda (DWA) in Africa (2007-2015) in Addis Ababa in April 2007. The DWA in Africa calls upon African governments to ensure that in their development strategies, they mainstream policies for employment-rich growth and sustainable enterprises. This was within the current context where labour market outcomes in Africa are influenced by the huge size of the urban informal economy and the lack of modernisation and/or transformation of the dominant rural sector (ILO, 2007).

Within this background, this study focuses on decent work, highlighting its importance in Zimbabwe as well as assessing the challenges and opportunities for decent work, including within the policy and institutional frameworks.

## **1.2 Study Objectives**

The study's main objectives include the following:

- To explore the importance of decent employment creation as a national policy instrument.
- To identify and assess the policy and institutional gaps regarding decent employment creation in Zimbabwe.
- To assess the challenges and opportunities for employment creation in Zimbabwe.
- To assess the various employment creation strategies, programmes and interventions in Zimbabwe and their impact on poverty, stability, and sustainability.
- To identify lessons from other countries with successes in implementing and creating decent employment.
- To provide proposals on how to promote and strengthen decent employment, including how to address informality in Zimbabwe.

### 1.3 Methodology

The study was prepared based on a review of literature and secondary data analysis. Literature review includes a number of existing studies, reports and other publications on decent work and employment in general in Zimbabwe and globally. Secondary data includes utilisation of the findings from comprehensive Labour Force surveys, especially the 2019 Labour Force survey produced by ZIMSTAT. The study also uses secondary data from other publications and surveys by different institutions and organisations.

While secondary data helped contextualise the findings, the study also relied on primary data from select interviews with stakeholders in the labour market. The stakeholders were largely selected based on some identified knowledge gaps which required further insights from those on the ground. Specifically, Box 1 constitutes the institutions engaged in primary discussions using structured questions.

#### **Box 1: Stakeholders consulted for the study**

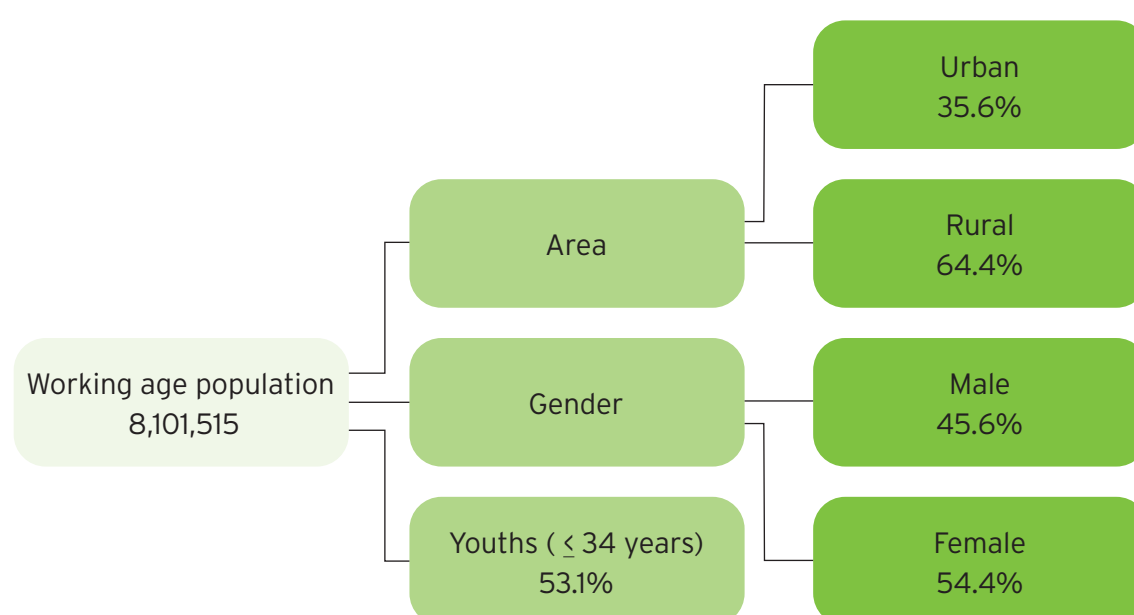
1. Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ)
2. APEX Council
3. Zimbabwe Labour Centre (ZLC)
4. National Air Workers Union (NAWU)
5. National Energy Workers Union (NEWU)
6. National Engineering Workers Union (NEWU)
7. NEC for Leather and Allied Industry
8. NEC for the Commercial Sector
9. Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (PTUZ)
10. Zimbabwe Union of Drivers and Conductors (ZUDAC)
11. Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU)
12. Zimbabwe Construction and Allied Trade Workers' Union (ZCATWU)
13. Zimbabwe Security Guards Union (ZISEGU)

## 2. Overview of the Zimbabwe Labour Market

### 2.1 Labour force and working age population

Zimbabwe's working age population (aged 15 and above) is about 8.1 million people, of which 45.6% are male and 54.4% are female (Figure 1). About 35.6% of the working age population resides in urban areas, hence the rural economy contains the bulk of the working age population. The working age population is also dominated by youths, as those aged 34 years and below constitute about 53.1% of the working age population.

**Figure 1: Overview of the working age population and distribution in Zimbabwe**



Source: Construction from ZIMSTAT (2020)

Only about 42.8% of the working age population are part of the labour force (i.e., those that are willing and available for employment). About 41% of those outside the labour force are out because they are engaged in household or family responsibilities; 38% are studying or in training programmes, while 11% are engaged in farming/fishing for consumption (ZIMSTAT, 2020). This has critical implications on gender dynamics of decent work, as women constitute the bulk of those where family responsibilities deny them an opportunity to be actively participating in the labour market.

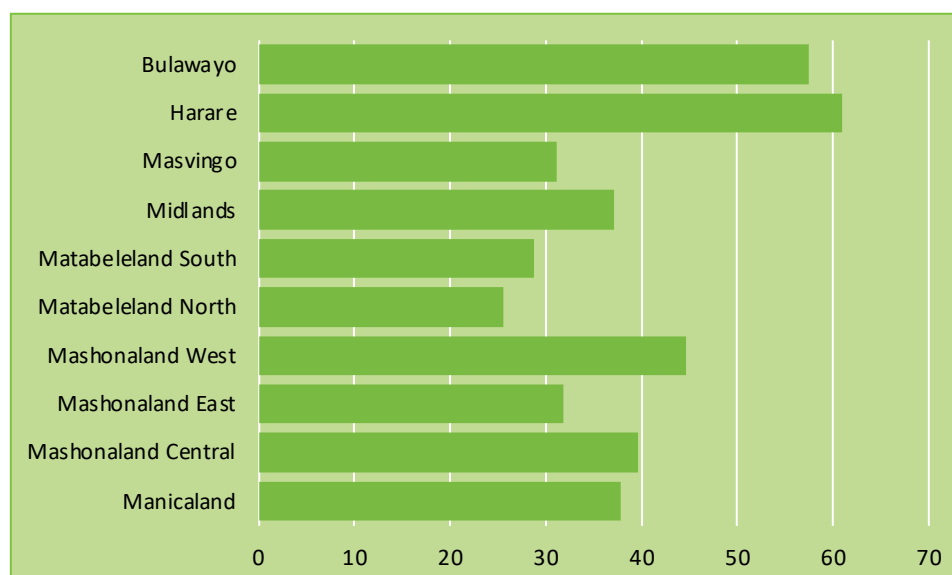
The Zimbabwe labour force is about 3.5 million in size, with about 56.2% of the labour force being male, about 50.9% being in rural areas, while youths aged 34 and below constitute about 51.1%. Although the labour force participation rate at the national level is 42.8%, only 34.4% of the economically active women participate, while 52.7% of the economically active men participate in the labour market.

A look at the distribution of the labour force participation rate by province shows that it is mainly in the metropolitan provinces of Harare and Bulawayo where it is the highest (Figure 2). This means



that the majority of the population in rural communities are not actively looking for employment, despite being of working age, due to other responsibilities.

**Figure 2: Zimbabwe labour force participation rate by province**

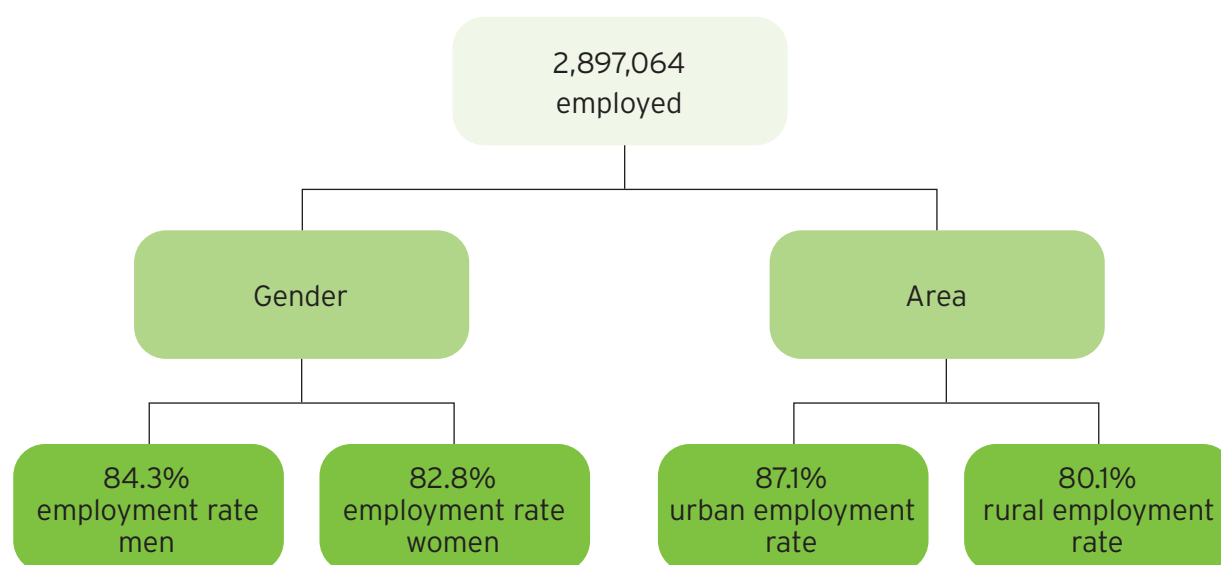


Source: Construction from ZIMSTAT (2020)

## 2.2 Employment and informality

People in employment can be defined as those of working age (15 years and above) who are engaged in any economic activity to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit, who comprise those who worked in a job for at least one hour during the reference period as well as those absent due to temporary absence from a job (ZIMSTAT, 2020). There are about 2.9 million people employed in Zimbabwe, implying that about 35.8% of the working age population (employment to population ratio) are employed. About 44.4% of the male working age population is employed, while only 28.5% of the working age female population is employed. About 52.6% of the working age population in urban areas is employed, although only 26.5% of the working age population in rural areas is employed.

About 83.6% of the labour force is employed, implying that unemployment is only about 16.4%. About 84.3% of the men who are part of the labour force are employed while the employment rate is 82.8% for women. About 87.1% of the urban economically active population is employed, while the rate is lower at 80.1% for rural areas (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Employment rate in Zimbabwe by gender and area**

Source: Construction from ZIMSTAT (2020)

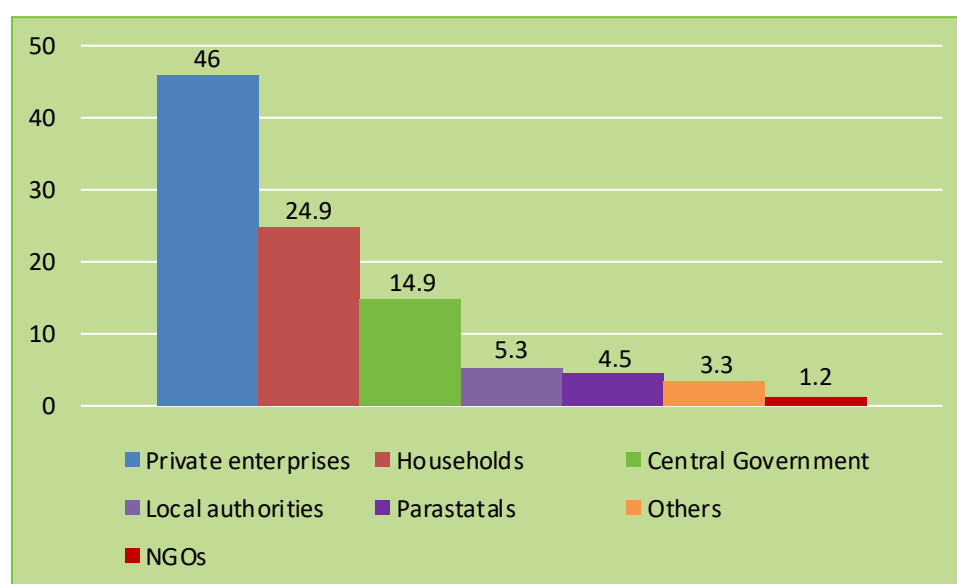
With respect to employment status, the majority of people are employees, although own account workers are also significant (Table 1). About 39% of the female employed are own account workers, while 3.2% are employers, which is below the national average of 4.6%.

**Table 1: Employment status in Zimbabwe (Percentage)**

	National level	Male	Female
<b>Employers</b>	4.6	5.6	3.2
<b>Own Account workers</b>	35.1	32.3	38.8
<b>Employees</b>	59.9	61.8	57.4
<b>Contributing family workers</b>	0.4	0.26	0.6

Source: Construction from ZIMSTAT (2020)

The private sector accounts for about 46% of total employment in Zimbabwe (Figure 4). About a quarter of the employed are employed by households, which also compounds decent work outcomes as the remuneration is low. Central Government constitutes the third highest category, employing about 15% of the total employed. The NGOs sector employs 1.2% of the total employed.

**Figure 4: Distribution of employment by institutions in Zimbabwe (Percentage)**

Source: Construction from ZIMSTAT (2020)

The level of qualifications of the employed has a bearing on their potential remuneration hence decent work status. However, the majority of workers in Zimbabwe only have lower secondary school as the highest level of qualification (Table 2). This implies that the majority of workers are likely to be found in low paying casual labour, which also has a bearing on poverty. Only 13.3% of the workers have at least some technical qualifications which can enable them to be better positioned to get decent remuneration.

**Table 2: Highest level of qualification for the employed workers (Percentage)**

Qualification level	Employees
Primary	25.3
Vocational-national foundation certificate	0.3
Lower secondary	54.3
Upper secondary	2.8
Vocational-certificate	2
Vocational-apprenticeship	3.5
Tertiary-short cycle	3.3
Tertiary-HND/Bachelor's Degree	5.3
Masters/Doctorate medical	1.2
No education	1.7
Others	0.3

Source: Construction from ZIMSTAT (2020)

Finally, the sector of employment also determines the level of remuneration. The formal sector only employs about 32.1% of the total employed, hence about 67.9% are in the informal and household sectors (Table 3). About 62% of the urban workers are outside the formal sector, while 75% of those employed in the rural areas operate outside the formal sector. With respect to the gender dimensions, about 66% of the male employed are outside the formal sector, while for female the rate is at about 71%. Given that decent work outcomes are more difficult to achieve outside the formal sector, a transformation would be needed if decent work outcomes are to be achieved in Zimbabwe.

**Table 3: Distribution of the employed by area, gender and status of employing institutions (Percentage)**

Sector	Area		Gender		National picture
	Urban	Rural	Male	Female	
<b>Formal</b>	38.3	25	34.4	29.1	32.1
<b>Informal</b>	40.3	26	33.7	33.7	33.7
<b>Household</b>	21.6	49	31.9	37.2	34.2

Source: Construction from ZIMSTAT (2020)

### 3. The importance of decent employment creation as a national policy objective

The focus on decent work acknowledges that it is not only the number of jobs that matter, but also the extent to which the jobs are able to be ingrained with the necessary quality dimensions to enable sustainable and inclusive economic growth (Ripley & Hartrich, 2020). A job should be seen to be a pathway out of poverty rather than keeping people locked into vicious cycles of poverty, which is what would result if focus were only on the number of jobs created (Ripley & Hartrich, 2020). This makes it critical for positioning decent work as a focus area in policy development. In Zimbabwe, if policy were to focus only on the number of jobs created, policy would miss the quality dimensions. For example, while 83.6% of the economically active population is employed (ZIMSTAT, 2020), about 60% of the population is food insecure (Robalino et al, 2021). The employment number, therefore, hides critical dimensions for sustainability, which can only be addressed if decent employment creation were to be flagged out as a policy instrument.

Decent employment policies are also concerned with creating outcomes that capacitate young people to enter the labour market, improve performance of the labour market and enhance the demand for labour and skills by employers (ILO, 2018). Decent work policies also seek to expand employment opportunities to include specific vulnerable or traditionally disadvantaged groups, which would not naturally arise if the focus were on just employment in general. This also makes decent employment creation critical as a national policy instrument.

It is necessary to ensure that the supply side of the labour market is adequately assessed in line with the expected outcomes, including literacy and numeracy, technical skills or soft skills. Thus, adopting decent employment as a policy instrument would also see efforts and strategies being put in place to ensure that the quality of labour is upgraded to match the desired levels for the envisaged industrial expansion path.

As a policy objective, decent work addresses the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, especially since jobs connect people to society, the economy and the environment (ILO, 2015). Thus, currently not all jobs being created are productive, neither are they all conducive to economic development and poverty reduction, as they are confined to less productive sectors, characterised by low earnings and poor working conditions (Reeg, 2015). Without a policy objective that is deliberately addressed to address these outcomes, these challenges will remain, hence the importance of decent work as a policy objective.

In general, decent employment creates development by providing individuals, families and communities with the means to meet their social and economic needs and aspirations, which helps in poverty eradication while providing the foundation for equitable, inclusive and sustainable economic transformation (ILO, 2015). Thus, decent work focus ensures that not only are new jobs generated, but that they are also stable enough to prevail during economic shocks, while also offering decent working conditions in terms of productivity growth; i.e., employment growth with job quality (Reeg, 2015).

Given this prominent role that decent work plays in reducing poverty and inequalities as well as empowering people especially the vulnerable, it is critical to ensure that it is placed at the centre of macroeconomic and development policies in developing countries such as Zimbabwe. There is a need to redefine macroeconomic objectives so that there is an equal focus and prioritisation of both economic growth and employment creation. Explicit employment creation targets must be incorporated in National Budgets, monetary policies, investment policies, as well as national development strategies.

## 4. Policy and institutional gaps regarding decent employment creation in Zimbabwe

### 4.1 Policy gaps on decent employment creation

Policies necessary for decent job creation can be classified into two: macroeconomic policies affecting the general economic performance, and labour related policies that are designed to help achieve decent work outcomes in the market. Thus, the gaps in the policy framework can also be assessed from those two respects.

#### Macroeconomic policies

The current employment outcomes are a result of a number of macroeconomic policies which have been implemented over the past decade. The Medium-Term Plan (2011-2015) (MTP) was the first long term economic blueprint introduced after hyperinflation. Among other objectives, MTP sought to achieve broad based economic growth; increase economic empowerment; create decent jobs and improve the economic and social wellbeing of Zimbabweans. Employment creation and poverty reduction were key targets of the MTP, with the intention being to create an enabling and conducive environment for sustainable average employment creation rate of 6% per annum. The MTP also sought to promote and secure sustainable, full, productive and freely chosen decent employment under the conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. The marginalised and vulnerable groups such as women, youths, people with disabilities and the retrenched were targeted for integration into the mainstream economy.

The MTP also sought to review the regulatory framework to encourage the growth of SMEs and promote decent employment creation and to support SMEs and cooperatives to facilitate integration of small businesses into the mainstream economy. However, this could not be achieved within the lifespan of the MTP, as most of the SMEs continue to operate informally. This means that the necessary institutional and regulatory framework to facilitate the achievement of the MTP objectives did not follow as expected.

The MTP also sought to align wage increases to productivity growth, in response to concerns about high labour costs in Zimbabwe. This measure was, however, difficult to enforce given the difficulties in estimating productivity across all sectors, with the envisaged National Productivity Institute which was to be established for that purpose not in place. The MTP also sought to target sectors and processes that enhance the labour absorptive capacity of the economy as a way of creating employment.

Following a change of government in 2013, the MTP was abandoned for a new economic blueprint, the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (2013-2018) (ZIMASSET). Although ZIMASSET had a number of employment creation objectives, the focus on decent employment that had been recognised under MTP was not accommodated. In 2018, government introduced a short-term economic blueprint, the Transitional Stabilisation Programme (2018-2020) (TSP). Just as the case with ZIMASSET, decent work was not given prominence in the TSP, as it was mainly focused on achieving fiscal discipline and government expenditure containment.



The National Development Strategy 1 (2021-2025) (NDS1) is the country's current economic blueprint NDS1 and has provided for employment creation as cross-cutting issue to be mainstreamed in all the thematic working group programmes. Some of the targets sought on employment creation include: increasing formal employment from 24% in 2020 to 30% by 2025; increase the percentage of qualified professionals in post from 65% in 2020 to 100% by 2025; increase the retention rate from 15% in 2020 to 65% by 2025; improve critical skills from 38% in 2019 to 60% by 2025 and increase the number of youths with access to empowerment opportunities from 16,000 in 2020 to a cumulative 648,000 by 2025.

Sector-specific strategies under the NDS1 expected to help in employment creation include:

- **Agriculture:** The agricultural sector remains the backbone of the Zimbabwean economy in terms of food and nutrition security and exports. According to NDS1, the food self-sufficiency currently stands at 45% providing scope to increase it to 100% by 2025 and at the same time reduce food insecurity from 59% in 2020 to less than 10% by 2025. As a result, the Government proposes to improve land tenure security and adopt smart agriculture such as Pfumvudza/Intwasa strategies to increase the contribution of agriculture to economic growth through investment. The NDS1 also seeks to facilitate access to affordable agricultural financing using such strategies as contract farming, use of public-private partnerships (PPPs) and establishing the Land Bank. In addition, the Government seeks to strengthen value chains to increase the contribution of the secondary sector and value added exports to GDP. Lastly, the NDS1 will operationalise the commodity exchange, supported by a well-functioning regulated warehouse receipt system to ensure that agricultural commodities realise their true value.

The Government has already started to implement the Pfumvudza/Intwasa programme by availing free inputs to farmers. The programme has been a success in the 2020/21 agricultural season. It is expected to boast local cereal production and reduce food poverty. The Land Bank has also been formed specifically to provide concessionary financing to the agricultural sector. However, the issue of bankable collateral security remains a stumbling block given the lack of land tenure by both small and large scale farmers. With respect to the Commodity Exchange, the Government is expected to partner with the private sector. However, a fund of ZWL\$500,000 supposedly to establish a pilot Commodity Exchange project remains work in progress to date.

- **Mining:** The mining sector is another flagship sector capable of turning around the fortunes of the Zimbabwean economy. The economy should take advantage of an endowment of more than 40 mineral resources. The NDS1 seeks to improve the legislative framework governing the exploitation of these minerals to benefit the economy at large. This includes the formulation of Rare Earth Minerals Policy to govern exploitation of 19 of the earth's rare mineral deposits. This is envisaged to improve weak governance and improve the ease of doing business in the sector. A budget of ZWL\$18.2 million was set aside in the 2021 National Budget for the finalisation of various mining policies and acts including the Mines and Minerals Act, amendment of the Gold Trade Act and Precious Stones Trade Act and development of the Minerals Development Policy. However, the finalisation of these legislative processes could not be completed in 2021 as envisaged. The Government will also prioritise, under NDS1, the approval of Exploration Title and capacitation of the Mining Promotion Corporation to undertake targeted exploration. The Mining Promotion Corporation is a government-owned entity responsible for mineral exploration

and gathering geological information for awarding mining investment to prospective investors to avoid underestimating mining deposits.

The Government will also capacitate small scale miners through the Mining Industry Loan Fund under the “use it or lose it” principle. The 2021 National Budget allocated ZWL\$198.5 million towards capacitating the Mining Industry Loan Fund which is expected to support small-scale miners. The NDS1 also seek to accelerate the Operationalisation of the automated Mining Cadastre Information Management System to increase efficiency and transparency in mining title management. Some resources to the tune of ZWL\$247.4 million have been allocated in the 2021 National Budget towards this noble cause expected to be operationalised in early 2021. The Government will also transparently engage investors in the mining sector as well as strengthen metallurgical accounting by capacitating the monitoring and surveillance under the Minerals Marketing Corporation of Zimbabwe (MMCZ) and the Minerals Fauna and Flora Unit. A Gold Reserve Fund is also prioritised as a long-term funding vehicle for the mining sector. This is complemented with a minerals commodity exchange except with respect to gold meant for transparent trade of mineral resources.

While the above initiatives are noble and are expected to lubricate the production process, the shortages of foreign currency, the COVID-19 pandemic, power shortages, policy inconsistencies and unavailability of long-term capital are likely to affect the mining sector negatively through reduced production and employment. Furthermore, smuggling of minerals is another challenge facing the mining sector.

- **Manufacturing:** The manufacturing sector is another engine for growth by producing complex products through value addition. Priority is given to value addition of agricultural produce, mineral resources, pharmaceutical and bus and trucks. This means that both existing and new value chains are targeted. All this will be supported by innovation hubs and industrial parks constructed in state universities and colleges. However, the manufacturing sector has also not been spared by the COVID-19 pandemic. This has seen some firms downsizing their operations while others have struggled to remain afloat. The sector has also been affected by foreign currency shortages. While the formal auction system is able to provide some of the industry’s foreign currency requirements, the balance can only be obtained from the illegal parallel market. This has affected industrial operations by reducing capacity utilisation. The bulk of spares for most manufacturing firms are imported which creates a challenge when foreign currency can only be obtained on the parallel market at a huge premium. The other challenges affecting the manufacturing sector are shortages of utilities such as electricity and water; shortage of finance to upgrade antiquated plant and machinery, which limit the ability of the sector to create employment.

- Tourism:** The tourism sector is a key sector in Zimbabwe with potential to stimulate growth. The sector is the most hit by the current COVID-19 pandemic. However, it has potential to grow if it rides on its low investment but high output potential. The sector's contribution to GDP under NDS1 is expected to improve from 1.1% in 2020 to 5% by 2025. The NDS1 expects to achieve this through increasing investment in diversified tourism products such as heritage tourism, medical tourism and community-based tourism. The opening up of new tourism resorts at Kanyemba, Tugwi Mukorsi, Kariba and the development of new nodes anchored on the Victoria Falls Special Economic Zone, notably in Masuwe, Batoka, Gwayi Shangani Dam, Binga and Sijarira are the key flagship projects for the tourism sector during NDS1. Some critical interventions include: the up-scaling of the implementation of the National Tourism Recovery and Growth Strategy, the National Tourism Master Plan, Review of the Tourism Policy and Legislation, ease of doing business reforms and improved use of ICTs in the sector. Besides the COVID-19 related lockdowns, this industry has also been affected by the slow pace in re-engagement efforts. This is likely to impact on the industry's goal of achieving the US\$5 billion tourism economy by 2025.

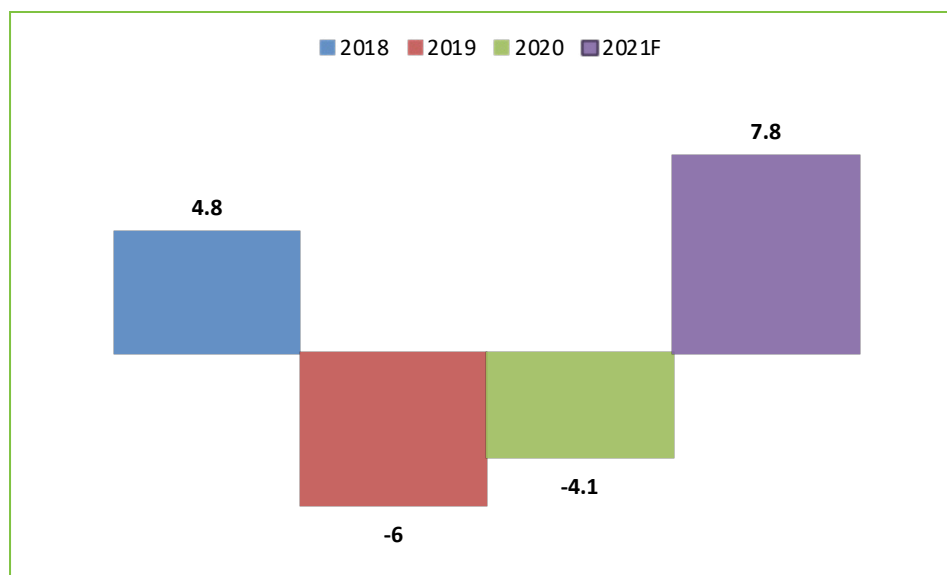
The new thrust for economic development is a knowledge driven economy. This will focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM). A new education curriculum focussing on producing learners with requisite skills for industry with a focus on production of goods and services has been developed in the country. This applies to all levels of education in Zimbabwe. There has been a skills decline which poses a threat to industrial development. A knowledge and innovation driven economy should produce specialised workers, innovation for industrialisation and improved access and utilisation of advanced knowledge and technologies. The institutions of higher learning have migrated from education 3.0 focusing on teaching, research and community service (which produces only literate job seeking graduates) to education 5.0 which extends education 3.0 to include innovation and industrialisation (which produces entrepreneurs, quality goods and services). This has culminated in the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE) overseeing the review of degree curricula across all national universities. In addition, innovation hubs and industrial parks have been established in institutions of higher learning. The NDS1 seeks to increase Critical Skilled Experts availability from 38% in 2020 to 51% by 2025.

Furthermore, NDS1 seeks to prioritise development and implementation of a national action plan to facilitate the transition from informality to formality. The NDS1 also seeks to strengthen social dialogue institutions with priority being given to the full operationalisation of the Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF). There is, therefore, scope for decent work objectives to be enhanced under NDS1 if the policy provisions are implemented.

Sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth has remained a challenge in Zimbabwe, as the country experienced economic decline for two consecutive years in 2019 and 2020. After contracting by 6% in 2019, the economy further contracted by 5.3% in 2020<sup>1</sup>, implying a contraction by more than 10% points in two years. Although the economy is projected to recover by 7.8% in 2021, the economic decline has created serious challenges with respect to decent work outcomes (Figure 5).

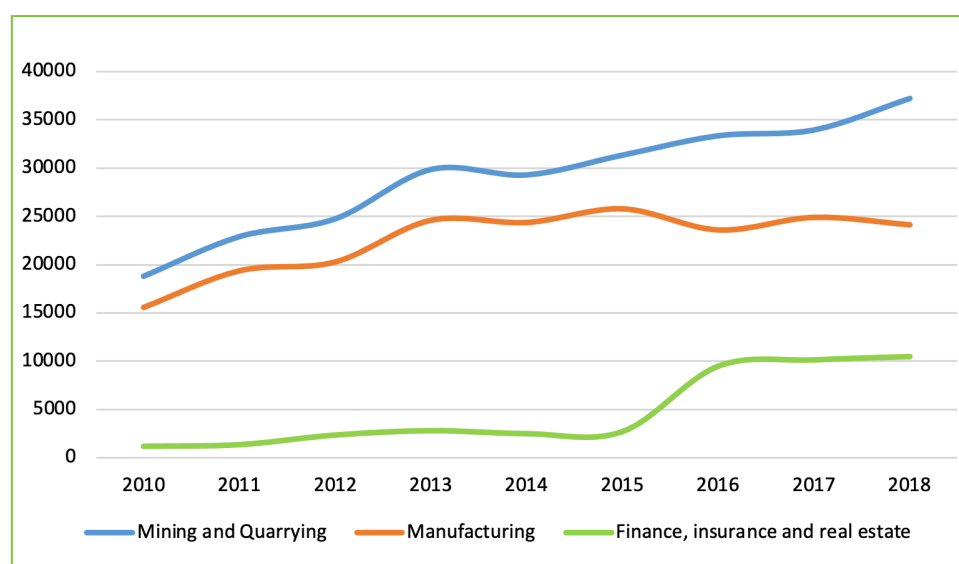
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<sup>1</sup> National Accounts statistics released by ZIMSTAT.

**Figure 5: GDP growth rate for Zimbabwe (2018-2021)**

Source: Government of Zimbabwe (2021)

By looking at trends in sector output in terms of contribution to GDP and dividing by the number of employees per sector, a measure of output per worker can be obtained. It is quite apparent that since 2010, output produced in manufacturing, mining and financial services sector was increasing faster than the number of employees (Figure 6). Thus, the number of employees has been shrinking relative to the output produced, hence labour productivity has been increasing rapidly, which ideally would be expected to be reflected in earnings as well.

**Figure 6: Output per worker in select sectors in Zimbabwe, 2010-2018**

Source: Constructed from ZIMSTAT (2011-2019)

The fiscal and monetary policies have generally failed to create the necessary basis for decent work outcomes. For example, assuming that the labour force participation rate remains constant, the Zimbabwean economy would need to grow by more than 5.5% per year over the next decade to keep

employment rates constant, while needing to grow by more than 7.5% for the unemployment rate to be reduced by half over the next decade (Robalino, 2021). The macroeconomic policy environment has also failed to facilitate private sector development. For example, the growth rate of new formal firms in Zimbabwe is only 5%, at a time when better performing countries such as Ivory Coast and Uganda have rates of 25% and 35% respectively, with the created firms being small, as those that survive ten years add just one or two jobs (Robalino, 2021).

The macroeconomic environment has also failed to create the necessary conditions for promoting economic diversification and structural transformation. About 45% of firms in Zimbabwe have total employees ranging between one and nine, who are also three times less productive compared to larger firms (Robalino et al, 2021). Fiscal and monetary policies have also failed to improve the general ease of doing business, which has imposed challenges in terms of the attainment of decent work outcomes. As a result, while a large number of firms are informal, the transition from informality to formality has also been slowed due to the high costs of formality. The level of taxes, the registration process, as well as the labour regulations are generally considered deterrent to formality.

Given that decent work also encompasses gender dimensions, the policies and strategies on promoting gender equality in Zimbabwe have also not yet succeeded. For example, women are four times more likely to be out of the labour force than men due to social norms, with those entering the labour market more likely to be unemployed than men, while they are more likely to be employed in the informal economy as own-account workers, generating lower hourly earnings (Robalino et al, 2021). Interviews with stakeholders revealed that while it is easy for casual jobs to emerge from the construction sector, the sector has not yet been able to absorb a significant proportion of women workers, as it is estimated that women constitute only 4% of the workers. Thus, the existence of gender gaps in the labour market also points to some limitations in the gender policies in Zimbabwe.

The macroeconomic policy gaps also emanate from the redundancy of education as a critical determinant of labour market outcomes in Zimbabwe. Education no longer reduces the risk of unemployment, with the skills acquired in tertiary education not corresponding with the skill requirements in the job markets, resulting in a longer time period between graduate-employment matching. Given that informal activities dominate employment outcomes, education tends to have little role to play in such activities. The failure of the economy to create new formal jobs generally points to the difficulties that lies ahead with respect to maintaining the current employment rate. For the economy to maintain current employment rate constant, it is estimated that it needs to create around 122,000 jobs per year over the next 10 years (Robalino et al, 2021). This just underlines how the macroeconomic policy gaps have created challenges for decent work outcomes.

Interviews with stakeholders also revealed that decent work challenges in Zimbabwe are a result of the poor economic environment, which makes it difficult for firms to create a good operating environment, hence health and safety are compromised. This is reflected in the number of injuries at the workplaces, which remain high (Table 4). Interviews also revealed that obsolete equipment as well as poor technology adoption by firms under the macroeconomic challenges are also a threat to the workers' health and safety at workplaces.

**Table 4: Occupational injuries in Zimbabwe, 2013-2018**

Year	Number of occupational injuries
2013	5,287
2014	5,391
2015	4,947
2016	4,922
2017	4,594
2018	4,301

**Source:** Constructed from ZIMSTAT (2014-2019)

In addition to the macroeconomic policies, gaps also emanate from the labour policy environment. Well-crafted labour policies would be expected to help improve the quality of employment, while also helping to address the different constraints in the labour market, including access to better-quality jobs. The coverage of labour regulations, social insurance programmes and provision of incentives for hiring workers can go a long way in enhancing decent work activities.

Zimbabwe has, however, historically demonstrated commitment to decent work since the Decent Work Agenda was adopted by the 93rd session of the International Labour Conference in June 2005. This commitment is demonstrated by the adoption of the Zimbabwe Decent Work Country Programme. Zimbabwe was among the first countries in the region to develop and implement a Decent Work Country Programme, with inclusive participation and ownership across the tripartite constituents of Zimbabwe (labour, business and government). There have been three Decent Work Country Programmes, with the first and second having been adopted on 14 December 2005 and 15 January 2009 respectively, while the third was adopted for the period 2012-2015 (Government of Zimbabwe, 2012).

One of the outcomes of the Decent Work Country Programmes was the adoption of the Zimbabwe National Employment Policy Framework (ZiNEPF) in 2010. The overall objective of the ZiNEPF was to promote and secure sustainable, full, productive and freely chosen decent employment for all under conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity (Government of Zimbabwe, 2009). Through the ZiNEPF, the Government recognised that productive employment and decent work, especially for the youths, required sustained, determined and concerted coherence, coordination and cooperation across government institutions and agencies at both central and local levels, and with all stakeholders. Thus, a paradigm shift that requires the integration of employment in all policy frameworks, including macroeconomic and sectoral policies, was needed. One of the strategies (strategy 6) of the ZiNEPF was to promote social security protection through a comprehensive National Social Security Policy Framework, as this is a critical component of decent work. A number of interventions under the ZiNEPF earmarked to increase employability could not be implemented.

Having been prepared during the transition from hyperinflation in 2009, the failure by government to introduce another policy framework up to now, when the economy has passed through different phases from multicurrency regime, mono-currency regime and the current dual currency regime, also reflects a policy gap. The ZiNEPF has since been overtaken by events and no longer fits well within the context of new developments and dimensions to decent work, which evolved over time



since 2009 when the policy was framed. There is need for a new policy on employment to anchor decent work outcomes in Zimbabwe. Thus, the absence of an up-to-date employment framework that contextualises decent work within the current macroeconomic environment is a policy gap that needs closure.

The Government, however, launched some policies in pursuit of the Decent Work Country Programmes, including the National Labour Migration policy (2020), which seeks to provide decent working conditions for labour migrants and protection of their fundamental human and labour rights and those of their families (Government of Zimbabwe, 2020). Zimbabwe also launched a Gender Policy (2013-2017) to ensure gender equality in the workplace. One of the focus areas of the Gender Policy was gender and economic empowerment to promote equality and equity in access to economic opportunities for men and women, and to the benefits from the economic development of the country. The Gender Policy also focused on gender, education and training so as to promote equal access to education for boys and girls and their retention at all levels of education; and on access to training opportunities for men and women, to make possible their equal participation in the workplace, marketplace and in governance structures.

The Gender Policy was later revised and relaunched in 2017, focusing on gender justice, equality, integration, inclusiveness and shared responsibility for sustainable development in Zimbabwe. The revised National Gender Policy (NGP) (2017) seeks to achieve a gender just society where men and women enjoy equality and participate as equal partners in the development process of the country. The NGP has 10 priority thematic areas namely: Gender, Constitutional and Legal Rights; Gender and Economic Empowerment; Gender, Politics and Decision Making; Gender and Health; Gender, Education and Training; Gender Based Violence; Gender, Environment and Climate Change; Gender, Media and Information Communication Technology (ICTS); Gender and Disability; and Gender, Culture and Region.<sup>2</sup> On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of October 2019, Zimbabwe launched the National Gender Policy Implementation Strategy and Action Plan to increase stakeholders' commitment to achieving gender equality and women empowerment.

Given the importance of social protection in decent work, the Government also enacted the National Social Protection Policy Framework for Zimbabwe in 2016. Noting that the economy is highly informal, the policy framework seeks to put in place the necessary measures to ensure that those who are employed in the informal economy can benefit from social security. The policy provisions include the extension of coverage of social insurance schemes to all workers in formal or informal employment and their dependents. However, despite the policy framework, there have not been discernible efforts at ensuring that the informal sector has access to social protection, as the issue has remained a challenge up to now. Thus, social protection for the informal sector also remains a policy gap which needs to be closed off.

Interviews with stakeholders revealed that one of the challenges with respect to the labour policies is the general failure to enhance the quality of the labour force through training. Generally, paid study leave is still a challenge for workers to obtain, thereby destroying incentive for furthering education. In addition, continuous education for workers is generally not mandatory. This prevents continuous improvement of the quality of the workforce, which would enhance their productivity.

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<sup>2</sup> [zw.undp.org/content/zimbabwe/en/home/presscenter/articles/2017/07/06/milestone-as-new-national-gender-policy-is-launched0.html](http://zw.undp.org/content/zimbabwe/en/home/presscenter/articles/2017/07/06/milestone-as-new-national-gender-policy-is-launched0.html)



Interviews also revealed that there is a general lack of enforcement of existing regulations due to the influence of politics. According to stakeholders, the impact of politics in the policy environment is from three perspectives. First, there is politicisation of labour organisations that represent workers, resulting in deviation from mandates when intervention is deemed to be not in line with the political expectations. Second, political economy considerations also affect decent work since those in power are also owners of businesses and happen to be the main abusers of workers' rights. Third, due to the current bad relations with the Western countries, Zimbabwe counts on China as its 'all weather' friend. However, Chinese investors are accused of trampling on workers' rights, ignoring health and safety issues, especially protective clothing as well as the general failure to adhere to the labour regulations on hiring and firing of workers<sup>3</sup>. While all these issues are enforceable, somehow there is laxity in enforcement when it involves Chinese companies.

### Supporting MSMEs, youths and women entrepreneurs

As many youths and women entrepreneurs are actively involved in the MSMEs sector, the Government continues to capacitate the sector through various ways including supporting financing institutions that support the youths and women such as the Women Development Fund (WDF), Community Development Fund (CDF), Zimbabwe Women Microfinance Bank (ZWMB), Small and Medium Enterprise Development Corporation (SMEDCO) and Empowerment Bank.

Indications on the ground shows that there is implementation of the measures. The Government disbursed a total of over ZWL\$77 million by end of September 2020 through these financial institutions to benefit a total of 6,763 SMEs (Government of Zimbabwe, 2020). This was followed by an allocation of ZWL\$1 billion meant for further capacitating MSMEs. The Government is also prioritising operating infrastructure development for MSMEs. Revenue from presumptive taxes is also being ring-fenced for on lending to MSMEs. However, these institutions remain inadequately capacitated to cater for the growing needs of an expanding population of youths and women. In addition, the depreciating exchange rate and the existence of a high parallel market exchange rate poses a great viability risk to MSMEs operations whose participation on the formal auction system is limited. This makes it difficult for them to meet their foreign currency demand at viable rates. Furthermore, there is need for technical assistance to empower women and youths on business proposal development and application for funding. Otherwise, without this requisite knowledge, the initiatives by the Government to promote their empowerment will fail to reach a wider population.

**National Venture capital fund:** To promote participation of the youth in the mainstream economy, a venture capital fund was introduced in 2020. The fund targets youth participation by providing start-up capital for projects in the local content category. The loans are concessional and will create entrepreneurs as opposed to job seekers. A fund of ZWL\$500 million provided in the 2020 National Budget for this fund is inadequate given the local currency depreciation. However, the fund is still too little given the expected capital requirements for such lending institutions. Also, the fund is inadequate to cater for a growing youths (15-35 years) unemployment which increased from 12% in 2014 to 20.8% in 2019.

3 There have been many cases reported in the media about violation of workers' rights by Chinese investors in Zimbabwe. See "Chinese Firm, ZCTU Clash Over Workers' 'Slave' Abuses", at website <https://allafrica.com/stories/202106170173.html>; "Chinese companies free to exploit workers in Zimbabwe" at website <https://www.ituc-csi.org/chinese-companies-free-to-exploit/>; and "Chinese Companies Under Scrutiny In Zimbabwe For Forced Labour, Exploiting Local Employees" at website <https://www.republicworld.com/world-news/africa/chinese-companies-under-scrutiny-in-zimbabwe-for-forced-labour-exploiting-local-employees.html>

**Youth Employment Tax Incentive (YETI):** A fiscal incentive was introduced in the 2020 National Budget to provide support to employers who generate jobs. This incentive implies that there should be a percentage tax credit given the employer for creating an additional job. This is a cost sharing mechanism between the Government and the employer and is meant to reduce employers' cost of hiring youths. The operationalising of YETI involves coming up with a legal and administrative framework to be developed by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development in consultation with ZIMRA, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labour, EMCOZ and other relevant organisations. However, to date, the legal and administrative framework is not yet in place, implying that the incentive is still a white elephant.

## 4.2 Institutional gaps on decent work creation

The envisaged institutional framework that is needed for enhancing decent work outcomes for Zimbabwe is quite evident from Zimbabwe's DWCPs. The 2009-2011 Zimbabwe DWCP called for the establishment of the National Steering Committee to spearhead the decent work programmes in Zimbabwe (Government of Zimbabwe, 2012). The DWCP National Steering Committee was supposed to be a 19-member committee, comprising the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare and eight other Ministries, as well as five representatives from business and five representatives from labour. The ILO Zimbabwe Country Office was to serve as the Secretariat. The Committee was also charged with overseeing the formulation and planning of projects and activities developed within the framework of the DWCP and to approve projects before their implementation. The DWCP National Steering Committee was also expected to lead the resource mobilisation efforts as well as to oversee the work of the tripartite structures created for the management and implementation of all the technical cooperation projects. The Committee was, therefore, expected to perform critical roles to ensure that decent work remains in the limelight to achieve the set targets. The DWCP Steering Committee was expected to meet bi-annually to review updates and reports on outcomes, indicators and activities undertaken within the framework of the DWCP.

The end of the decent work programme for Zimbabwe in 2015 appears to have killed off the momentum, as the Committee is no longer functional, while it also failed to meet as regularly as envisaged, hence it was generally less effective. However, it is quite evident that there had been a realisation that achieving decent work outcomes requires an institutional framework with active participation of all the three social partners. The absence of any active institutional framework at the moment explains why the country is struggling to achieve decent work outcomes.

In the formal sector, the main focus for the attainment of decent work outcomes is the payment of decent wages and salaries. Thus, strengthening the institutional framework for collective bargaining is a critical step towards achieving decent work outcomes for the formal sector. In the Decent Work Programmes that have been implemented in the country, the promotion and strengthening of social dialogue was considered critical, for which the need for the Tripartite Negotiating Forum (TNF) to continue to be strengthened as an institution was flagged out.

In an effort to strengthen the TNF, the Government enacted the TNF Act in 2019. As specified under Section 3 of the Act, through its three main structures (the main TNF, Technical Committee and the Management Committee), the TNF's functions include to:

- consult and negotiate over social and economic issues and submit recommendations to Cabinet;
- negotiate a social contract as and when necessary;
- foster cooperation of the tripartite constituents and consult other key stakeholders and contribute to the formulation and implementation of social and economic policies;
- follow up and monitor the implementation of agreements;
- generate and promote a shared national socio-economic vision; and,
- consult and negotiate Zimbabwe labour laws in line with the Constitution and other international best practices.

In terms of its structure, Section 3 of the Act also specifies that the main TNF consists of:

- Seven Government members appointed by the President representing portfolios from a list of 14 Ministries responsible for:
 

i. Labour (Chairperson to the main TNF)	viii. Energy
ii. Justice	ix. Mines
iii. Finance and Economic Development	x. Public Service
iv. Transport and Communication	xi. Environment
v. Industry and Commerce	xii. Agriculture
vi. Economic Planning	xiii. Tourism and Hospitality
vii. Information	xiv. Health
- Seven labour members nominated by organised labour and appointed by the Minister (responsible for labour).
- Seven business members nominated by organised business and appointed by the Minister.
- Two observers drawn from the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe (CCZ) and the National Economic Consultative Forum (NECF) appointed by the Minister.

However, although the membership appears to be giving equal weight to government, business and labour, the Act also refers to a membership formula as specified in the Fourth Schedule of the Act. The Fourth Schedule specifies that members shall be drawn consistent with a ratio of two Government members, one Business member and one Labour member. It is, therefore, not clear if the seven labour members and seven business members will also be appointed with the addition of more government members beyond the initial seven to match the formula. This means that there is more weight to government representation in the TNF.

The Act also envisages a proper functioning TNF with a fulltime secretariat headed by an Executive Director under Sections 14 and 15. This means that while the legislative backing is now in place, the institutional gap remains with respect to the establishment of the Secretariat, which is still outstanding. Thus, Zimbabwe still has an institutional gap with respect to decent employment as long as the TNF Secretariat is not fully constituted.

Within the context of collective bargaining, a critical institution in enhancing decent work outcomes in the formal sector are the National Employment Councils (NECs). NECs are a form of bipartite social dialogue platform at the industrial level, which are registered with the Registrar of Labour Relations in the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare (Chigumira et al, 2018). The major function of NECs is to negotiate, bargain and dialogue on labour market and welfare issues of a particular industry with a legal and registered Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) being the outcome. The CBA is a legally binding document, binding to all employers and employees falling within the scope of the industry, irrespective of whether the employers or employees belong to the respective trade union or employers' association.

However, although the institutional arrangements are functional, there have been some challenges which include (Chigumira et al, 2018):

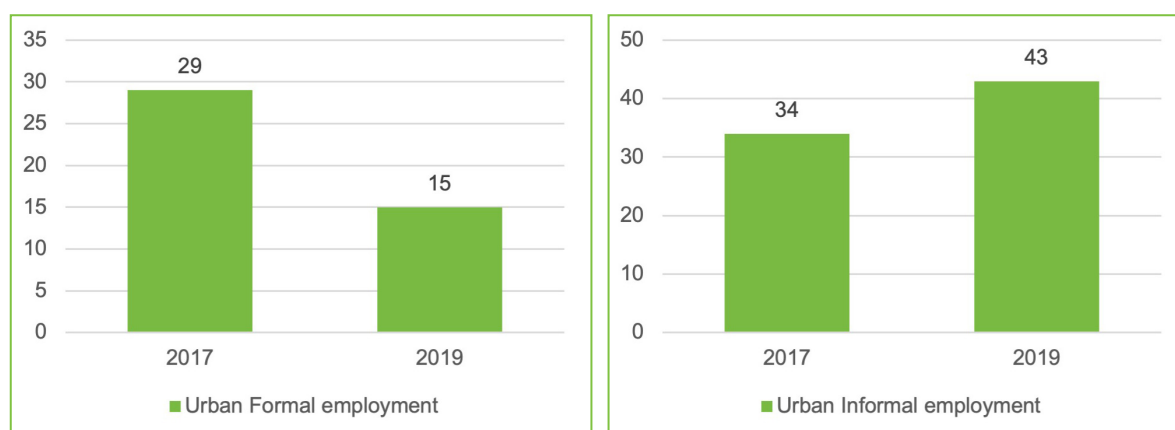
- Registration of a CBA takes long, which results in an impasse in implementation of agreed sectoral wages.
- Ministerial interference with the bargaining process where the Minister can solely give a directive for the CBA not to be registered.
- Some employers sometimes deliberately ignore directives from the NECs.
- Lack of trust among the employers and the employees.
- Limited scope of NECs to wage negotiations only. NECs should also focus on dealing with the state of the economy and sectors, human resource development, issues of productivity and competitiveness.

## 5. Employment creation strategies in Zimbabwe and their impact on poverty, stability and sustainability

We expect poverty levels to decline if most workers engage in formal sector employment where jobs are decent, characterised by income security, social protection, social dialogue and labour standards in which employment regulations are enforced. However, the poverty situation in the country is deteriorating.

Since 2011, extreme poverty has been on the rise despite the decent work policies and strategies adopted by the Government. While there has been a small change in rural employment as reflected by an increase in formal employment by 2% and a decrease in informal employment by 2%, urban employment has shown a significant change over the years. The proportion of working-age adults in formal employment dropped between 2017 and 2019 while the percentage working informally increased. This clearly shows the growing informalisation of the Zimbabwean economy (Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Changes in both formal and informal urban employment**



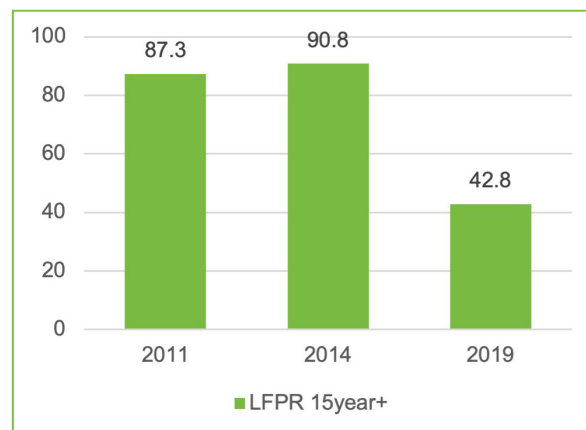
Source: Mini-PICES (2019)

According to the mini-PICES (2019), extreme poverty as measured by the FPL increased to 38% in May 2019 from 30% in 2017. The number of people in extreme poverty increased from 4.6 million in 2017 to 6.0 million in 2019. Estimates from the Zimbabwe Economic Update of June 2021 by the World Bank show that the number of extremely poor Zimbabweans reached 7.9 million - almost 49% of the population in 2020, up from 42% in 2019. Furthermore, surveys conducted in 2020 indicate that nearly 500,000 Zimbabwean households have at least one member who lost her or his job, causing many households to fall into poverty and worsening the plight of the existing poor.

The creation of decent jobs can stabilise and sustainably grow the economy. When workers earn living wages, work on a conducive environment and enjoy labour rights, they are likely to contribute more to productivity and contribute sustainably to economic development. On the other hand, worker morale is affected when workers are not earning enough to survive such as earning below the PDL, work in precarious environments, have no freedom to freely engage the employer and their rights are trampled upon. This is likely to reduce productivity and growth.

The labour force participation rate (also called the Economic Activity Rate) is an indicator of the size of the labour force in the economy. It measures the proportion of the working age population to the total population that engages in the labour market either by working or looking for work. The rate indicates the potential size of the labour market with potential to produce goods and services and lead to economic growth. In 2019, the overall LFPR dropped to 42.8% from 90.8% in 2014 (Figure 8). This indicates decreased potential for economic growth. The rate for males is higher at 57.2% compared to females at 34.4%. This generally shows that the various employment creation strategies over the years created more opportunities for male than female workers.

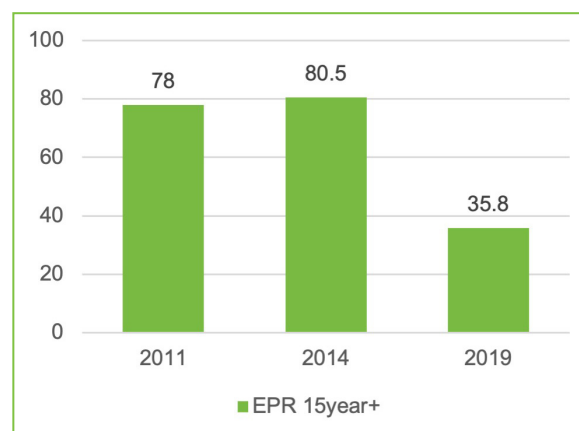
**Figure 8: Labour force participation rate for those aged 15 years and above (2011-2019)**



Source: ZIMSTAT (2020)

The Employment to Population Ratio (EPR), also referred to as the absorption rate of the labour force, measures the percentage of the employed persons to the working age population. An increasing EPR indicates increasing demand for employment in the economy. As shown in Figure 9, the EPR decreased from 80.5% in 2014 to 35.8% in 2019. This is on account of a weakening economy which resulted in a reduction in employment opportunities.

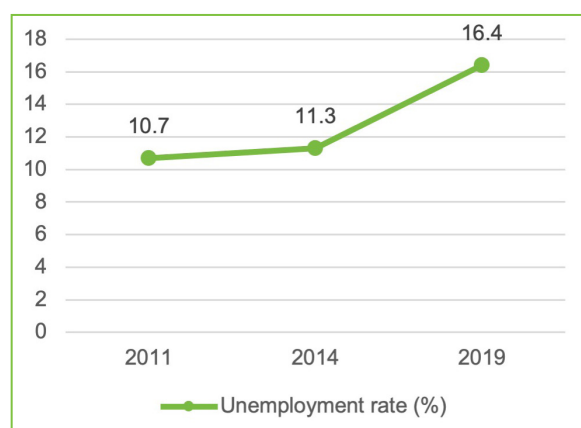
**Figure 9: Employment to population rate for Zimbabwe over select periods**



Source: LFCLS (2011, 2014, 2019)

The **unemployment rate (UR)** is defined as the number of unemployed persons expressed as a percentage of the economically active population. The national unemployment rate for 2019 is 16.4%, which is an increase from the 2014 rate of 11.3% (Figure 10). This shows that more and more people are getting into unemployment, also underlying that the net effect of the various policy strategies introduced over the years was not employment creation.

**Figure 10: Unemployment rate (percentage of the economically active population) in Zimbabwe**



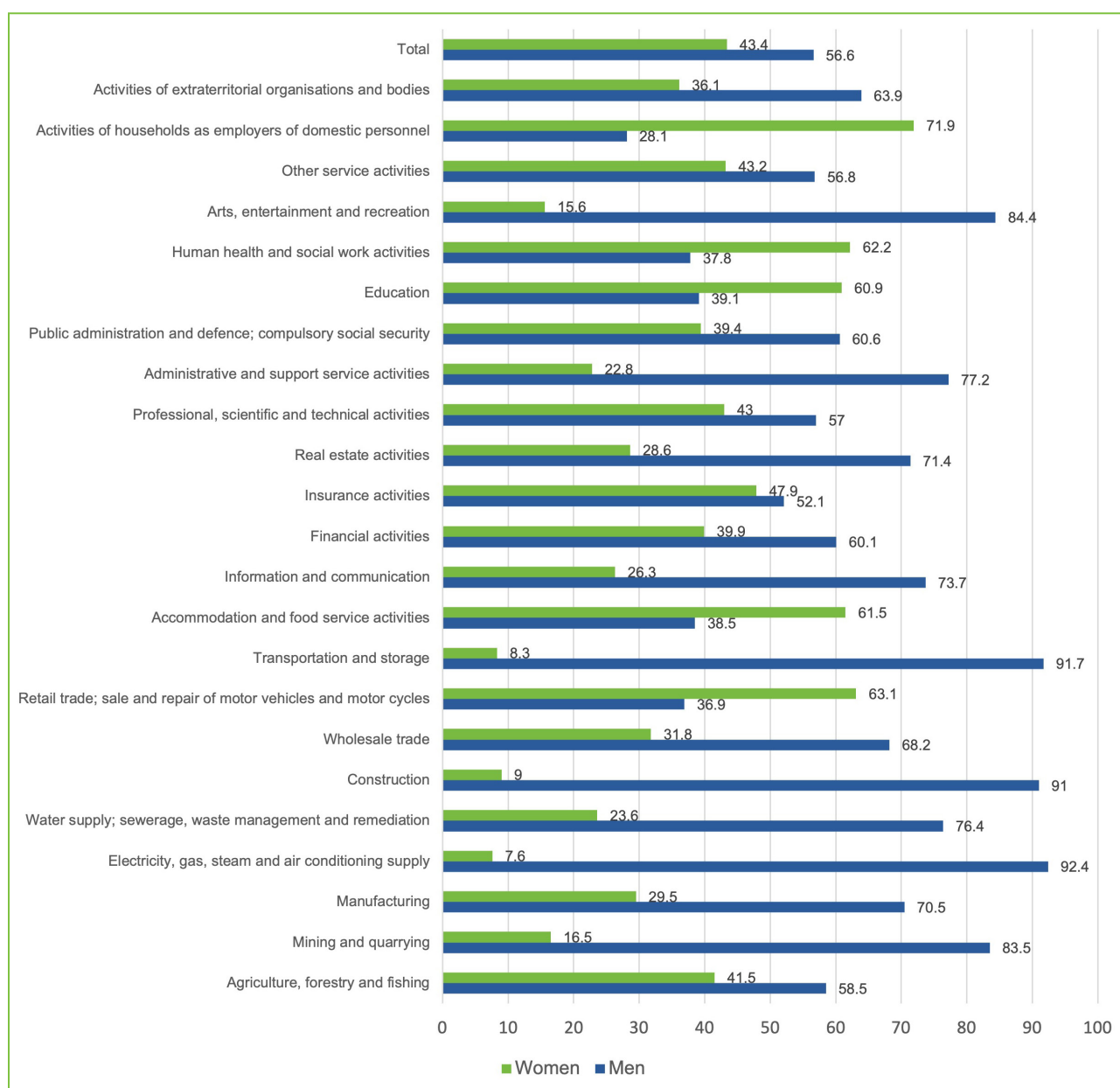
Source: LFCLS (2011, 2014, 2019)



## 5.1 Gender dimensions of the impact of the strategies on employment

ZIMSTAT (2020) shows that most sectors of the economy employ more men than women. There is also a gender stereotype in most jobs despite the level of education. Women are either more employed as own account workers or employed in less paying professions like, administration, education, accommodation and food services. The distribution of currently employed population aged 15 years and above by industrial sector (Figure 11) also underlines that the distribution is skewed in favour of men across all critical sectors.

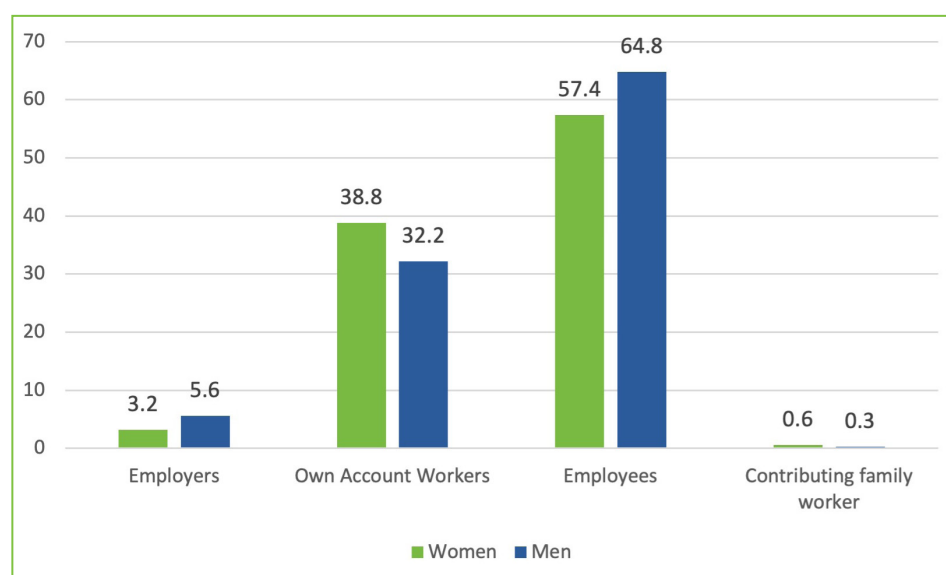
**Figure 11: Percent Distribution of Currently Employed Population by industrial Sector and Sex**



Source: ZIMSTAT (2020)

Despite the increase in women's share in the labour force, the gap between the percentage of women in paid employment and that of men remains wide. Women were more likely to be engaged as own account workers than men (Figure 12). Generally, women are less likely to be employed than men, and when they are employed, they are more likely to be employed in precarious jobs. These include contributing family work or own account work. These jobs are often associated with irregular incomes or no income at all making women to have lower cash labour income compared to men.

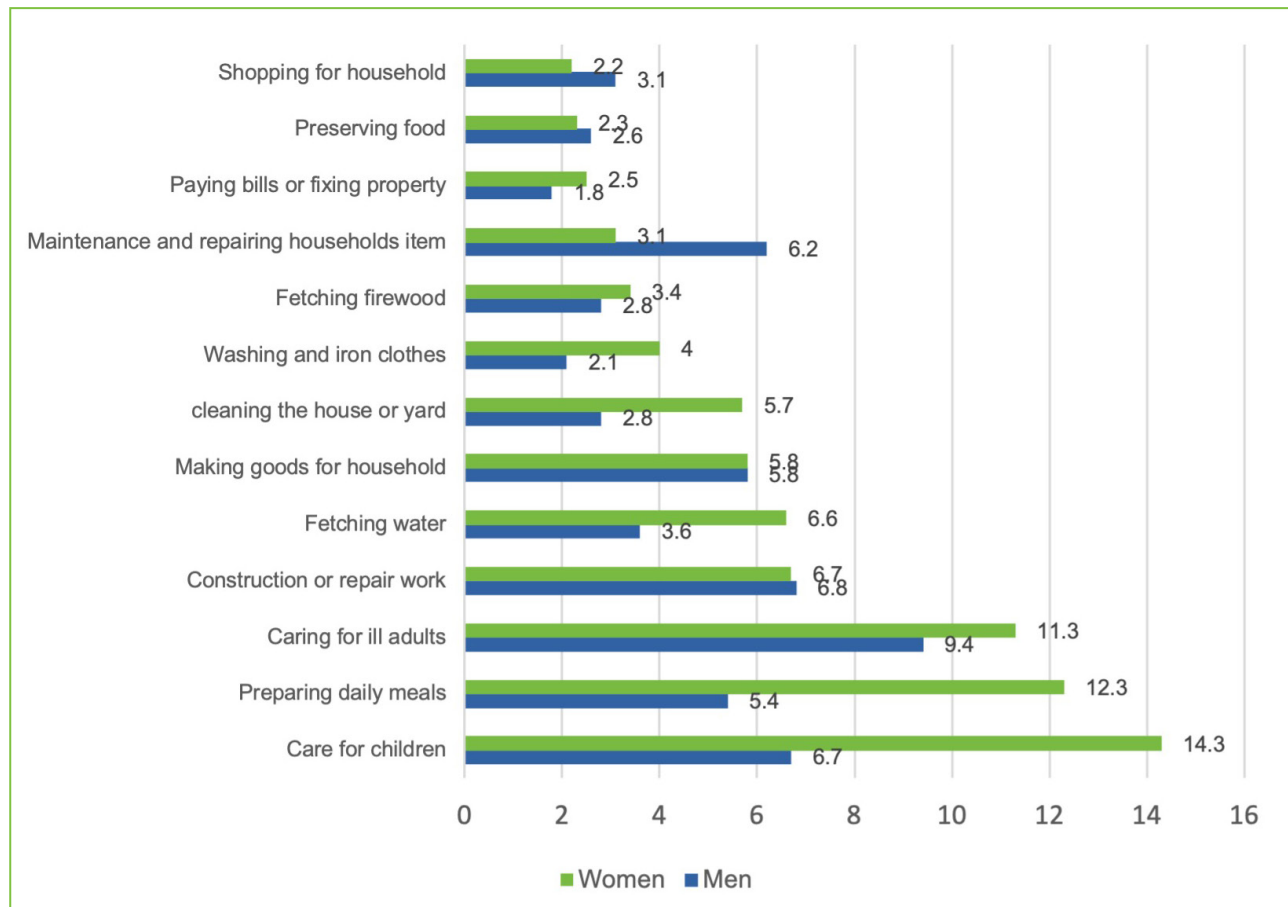
**Figure 12: Distribution of Economically Active Population by Current Activity**



Source: ZIMSTAT (2020)

Women also tend to spend an average of 14 hours per week in unpaid work caring for children under five years in own household compared to about 7 hours spend by men (Figure 13). In addition, women spend an average of 12 hours per week preparing meals compared to their male counterparts who spend an average of 5 hours. Women also spent a substantially large amount of time cleaning the house or yard than their male counterparts.

**Figure 13: The average numbers of hours spend by women on unpaid work**



Source: ZIMSTAT (2020)

## 6. Opportunities and challenges for employment creation in Zimbabwe

Employment creation remains the main avenue through which decent work outcomes can be enhanced. However, firms can only create employment in response to whether the economy is conducive to their enhanced production. The trends that have already been described generally hinge on employment challenges and opportunities that exist within the Zimbabwean economy.

### 6.1 Opportunities

The Zimbabwean economy presents great opportunities for employment creation, as only 32.1% of the labour force is in formal employment (ZIMSTAT, 2020). The opportunities abound in the various sectors of the economy, which include: agriculture, mining, manufacturing, services, tourism, and infrastructure and utilities (Table 5).

**Table 5: Potential of growth of locomotive sectors of the economy**

Locomotive sector	2020	2021	2025
<b>Agriculture and Forestry</b>	-0.20%	11.30%	10.40%
<b>Mining and Quarrying</b>	-4.70%	11%	8%
<b>Manufacturing</b>	-10.80%	6.40%	6.10%
<b>Tourism</b>	-7.50%	5.70%	4.20%
<b>Infrastructure</b>			
<b>Improve quality of overall infrastructure (World Bank index)</b>	115/137	112/137	100/137
<b>Improve energy supply capacity (GWh)</b>	9.23	12.887	19.137
<b>Electricity Access (urban, rural)</b>	44%	46%	54%
<b>Improved water supply</b>	77%	79%	90%
<b>Improved surface roads</b>	6%	7%	10%
<b>Increase percentage of roads in good condition</b>	12%	14%	20%
<b>Increase number of locomotives, wagons and coaches available</b>	32,356,859	36,371,781	94,461,095

Source: Government of Zimbabwe, NDS1 (2020)

In the agriculture sector, the NDS1 identified employment opportunities in food and nutrition security. The NDS1 has proposed measures aimed at increasing food self-sufficiency from the current level of 45% to 100% and reduce food insecurity from the current peak of 59% in 2020 to less than 10% by 2025. These measures are anchored on promoting resilience and sustainable agriculture. The smart agriculture initiative attempts to improve yields using cost efficient and environmentally friendly agriculture.

For the mining sector, the country is endowed with over 40 mineral resources which include 19 of the world's rare minerals which are underexplored (Government of Zimbabwe, 2020). Full exploitation of these minerals has potential to create many jobs and catapult the economy to a US\$12 billion mining sector by 2023. The rapid growth of the mining sector will be anchored on opening of new mines, as well as the resuscitation of closed ones, projects expansion, increased capacity utilisation, and value addition and beneficiation. The NDS1 identifies the key flagships minerals which include platinum, chrome, gold and coal projects.

Employment opportunities also exist in the manufacturing sector through focussing on value addition and beneficiation. Traditionally, the Zimbabwean economy relied on exporting unprocessed raw materials especially from agriculture and mining sectors; a situation akin to exporting jobs. When raw materials are processed into finished and semi-finished products, jobs are created domestically. The economy has great potential in manufacturing particularly value adding in agro processing industries (soya bean, cotton, leather and fertiliser value chains), mining (gold processing, diamond cutting and polishing, platinum base metal refining and ferrochrome processing), pharmaceutical and bus and trucks assembly value chains. The value chains are to be supported by the newly created innovation hubs and industrial parks constructed at institutions of higher learning.

The tourism sector is another flagship industry for employment creation in Zimbabwe. The sector is anchored on abundant natural resources like wildlife and scenery. The sector contributed 1.1% to GDP in 2020 and has potential to improve to 5% by 2025. Employment will potentially be created through increased investments in diversified tourism products like heritage tourism, medical tourism, and community-based tourism. The NDS1 identifies key flagship projects with potential for employment creation which include opening new tourism resorts in Tokwe Mukosi, Kanyemba, Kariba and development of new nodes anchored on the Victoria Falls Special Economic Zone (SEZ), notably Masuwe, Batoka, Gwayi-Shangani Dam, Binga and Sijaria.

Great employment opportunities also exist in infrastructure and utilities, which are key enablers of socio-economic development. This involves maintenance, expansion/upgrading and construction of new infrastructure and utilities. The key infrastructure projects targeted are transport, energy, water, housing, health, education and ICT technology.

## 6.2 Challenges

### Employment intensity of growth in Zimbabwe

One way of assessing the responsiveness of employment to economic growth is calculating employment intensity, which is a measure of the responsiveness of employment to growth. Employment intensity was moderate except for manufacturing during the period 2011 to 2014 (Table 6). At the aggregate level, a figure of 0.56 is within the range of 0.3 to 0.6 found in most developing countries (Kapsos, 2005). Ngundu, Kupeta and Ropi (2018) obtained an aggregate employment intensity of growth of 0.44 and from 0.31 to 0.72 at sectoral levels using data for Zimbabwe for the period 1980 to 2016. The same applies to the employment intensity of growth for agriculture with a statistic of 0.64 and mining with 0.52. These sectors are also labour intensive and thus they respond swiftly to changes in growth. This means that employment was responding moderately to growth changes except in the manufacturing sector. The manufacturing sector was therefore less labour intensive as compared to mining and agriculture. Over the period 2014 to 2019, employment was

changing insignificantly to changes in economic growth and this is evident at sectoral level with the aggregate employment intensity of growth of 0.06 while between 0.01 and 0.07 at sectoral level. This period coincides with the capacity challenges affecting the economy.

**Table 6: Employment intensity of growth in Zimbabwe**

	Employment Intensity of growth (2011-2014)	Employment Intensity of growth (2014-2019)
<b>Total</b>	0.56	-0.06
<b>Agriculture</b>	0.64	-0.07
<b>Mining</b>	-0.52	0.06
<b>Manufacturing</b>	-0.02	-0.01

Source: ZIMSTAT (2011-2020)

### ***The COVID-19 Pandemic***

The COVID-19 outbreak posed a serious threat to employment creation and productivity in the economy. While measures to contain the disease outbreak have been welcome and effective, these have also resulted in increased unemployment or underemployment. The lockdown measures announced by the Government, in line with WHO guidelines have forced firms to reduce labour hours, downsize onsite workers and even terminate the services of some non-essential workers. It also came out clearly in the interviews held that the country lacked preparedness to deal with the devastating effects of COVID-19.

### ***Limited access to and high cost of finance***

Investments in Zimbabwe are usually affected by the limited access to and high cost of finance. The local costs of obtaining funds for investment are higher in Zimbabwe compared to other countries. The current average cost of borrowing in Zimbabwe is 40% per annum with financing largely available on a short-term basis.

### ***Inadequate infrastructure***

There is a huge infrastructure deficit in Zimbabwe creating a barrier to employment creation and growth. Investments in infrastructure have a multiplier effect on the economy through boosting economy-wide productivity growth and facilitating job creation. This is because jobs are created in the development of infrastructure as well as in others productive sectors relying on the infrastructure. In addition, infrastructure is a catalyst to attract foreign investments into the country. The great chunk of infrastructure developed before and after independence is in dire need of repair. In addition, new infrastructure needs to be constructed to match the state of the new world order. Significant progress is being witnessed in new infrastructure development as well as maintenance of old infrastructure such as in roads, rail, water and sanitation, ICT, energy and aviation. However, funding remains a major challenge to realise tremendous infrastructure development.

### ***Deindustrialisation and increased informality***

The industrial sector in Zimbabwe continues to shrink mainly due to the high cost of finance, antiquated plant and equipment, high cost of doing business, shortage of foreign currency to acquire raw materials, competition from imports and costs and unavailability of utilities. This has resulted in some industries closing shop resulting in massive job losses. The deindustrialisation has promoted the growth of informality. However, jobs are usually not decent in the informal sector as they are normally dirty, demeaning and dangerous and subsequently exposing workers to extreme poverty.

### ***Skills mismatch and workers employability***

The high literacy rate in Zimbabwe does not translate to employability of workers as there is a skills mismatch between graduates and the requirements of industry. The recent change of curricula in all levels of education in Zimbabwe is an attempt to match the skills of learners to the demands of the economy. However, the greatest challenge is to finance this new education approach which requires adequate learning materials to all learners including the majority from rural communities. Currently, the Government is not able to adequately finance the new curricula. The LFCLS (2019) indicated that only 15.7% of the employed labour force specialised in a particular field while the remaining 84.3% did not specialise in any field.

### ***Challenging Doing Business Environment***

A major challenge for employment creation and private sector development in Zimbabwe is the highly onerous and cumbersome doing business environment and regulatory framework. Zimbabwe was ranked 140 out of 190 economies in 2019 by the World Bank Group's Doing Business Report. The major factors constraining doing business in Zimbabwe include capital constraints, government bureaucracy, high cost of utilities, high business start-up costs, policy inconsistencies and uncertainties, inadequate infrastructure, exchange rate distortions and corruption. A snapshot between Zimbabwe and Botswana (Table 7) generally indicates higher cost of doing business in Zimbabwe compared to Botswana. The high cost of doing business in Zimbabwe is a major constraint for employment creation as it not only delays production but also prevents other investments from taking off.

**Table 7: Cost of doing business in Zimbabwe compared to Botswana**

Procedure	Zimbabwe		Botswana	
	Time in days	Approximate Cost (USD)	Time in days	Approximate Cost (USD)
<b>Starting a business</b>	31	476	39	474
<b>Getting business construction permits</b>	179	11,251	117	1,283
<b>Getting electricity</b>	111	24,070	77	18,233
<b>Registering property</b>	41	6,535	30	18,596

Source: World Bank Group's Doing Business Website (<https://www.doingbusiness.org>)

## 7. Lessons from other countries with successes in implementing and creating decent and sustainable employment

A number of lessons can be identified and gleaned based on the various policies and programmes that have been put in place to enhance decent work outcomes in different countries. Different countries have performed differently in different areas of decent work. The ILO has been instrumental in providing technical support to achieve the decent work outcomes. In Africa, countries such as Benin, Tanzania and Tunisia have achieved noticeable decent work improvements. At country level, the following case studies provide important lessons for Zimbabwe.

### Country level case 1: Decent work policies in Benin

The Benin economy is one of the fastest growing in Sub-Saharan Africa having attained lower-middle income status in July 2020. The economy's growth rate slowed down to 2.3% in 2020 from a high of 6.9% in 2019 owing to COVID-19 related challenges. The inflation rate remains stable at 3.02% year on year for 2020 and 1.4% for August 2021. This creates a favourable environment for investment and employment creation. According to the labour market profile for Benin for 2021/22, several labour market policies have been activated in the areas of the employment policy, youth employment, skill development, minimum wages, poverty eradication strategy, and industrial policy so as to make work decent.

A specific policy to regularise informal sector workers was put in place to help in the transition of actors from the informal economy to the formal economy. Trade union membership grew by 5.2% between 2012 and 2019. Benin established the National Social Dialogue Council in 2017 as an important institution for social dialogue. The country also ratified the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention in June 2019 to promote social security of workers.

However, the revised labour regulations made in 2017 were considered more favourable to employers than employees. It is also interesting to note that the number of women in leadership positions and decision-making bodies reached 37% in 2020. The percentage of the population covered by social protection was 20% in 2020 including workers from the informal sector. This was made possible through policies put in place since 2016 on Insurance for the Strengthening of Human Capital.

Source: Danish Trade Union Development Agency (2021)



### Country level case 2: Decent work policies in Tanzania

Tanzania is one country that first developed the Decent Work County Programme and has in recent years made significant progress in decent work. This has been driven by a stable macroeconomic environment which has seen a positive growth trajectory and stable inflation. The economic growth in Tanzania was 2% in 2020 having plummeted from 5.8% in 2019. Economic growth is mainly driven by labour-intensive sectors such as tourism, manufacturing and construction which are subsequently creating many formal jobs. On the other hand, inflation remains stable at an average of between 3-4% per month.

The Government has put in place various labour laws and policies to promote employment and employability, enhance fundamental principles and rights at work, social protection and social dialogue. This includes the Second Five Year Development Plan (FYDP II) (2016/17-2020/21) which seek to transform the economy into a middle-income and semi-industrialised nation by 2025 characterised by high quality and sustainable livelihoods; peace, stability, and unity; good governance and the rule of law; an educated and learning society and a strong and competitive economy. The growth of trade unions to represent workers rose by 39% in the mainland between 2016 and 2020. Labour legislation is also considered improved by ILO standards. These laws include the Employment and Labour Relations Act and the Labour Institution Act, both enacted in 2017, and several reforms of social security funds done in 2018. The Government has ratified many international conventions on human rights including those on women. In addition, according to the labour market profile for 2021/22 for Tanzania, there is also some notable improvement in social protection evidenced by a 33% increase in health social protection.

Source: Danish Trade Union Development Agency (2021b)

### Country level case 3: Decent work policies in Tunisia

Tunisia is another country that has registered some progress in promoting decent work. The Government is doing well in legislating labour issues; having last amended the 1966 Labour code in 2017 to reflect improved labour standards. The labour legislation is considered improved by ILO standards according to the 2020/21 Tunisia labour market profile. As a result of the COVID-19 situation in the world, the economy of Tunisia contracted by 8.8% in 2020 and the unemployment rate rose from 15% to 17.8%. This has had a huge impact on women (24.9%) and the youths (40.8%). The inflation rate remains stable around 5% per month. As a result, the economy remains fairly stable.

The economy made notable progress in the areas of tripartite consultations, equality of opportunity and treatment, and social security. There are also some improvements in the social dialogue institutions. This is evidenced by the inauguration in November 2018 of the long-awaited tripartite National Council for Social Dialogue which aims to support discussions on the establishment of 'job-less fund' and national platform for social protection. There has also been representation at the enterprise level on platforms to promote alignment of company policies, to organise Health and Safety Committees. Collective bargaining exists in the formal sector with Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) covering around 56% of employees. There has also been rapid growth in trade union membership rate with trade union density estimated at 38% of total employment in 2019. Furthermore, Tunisia is making progress in formalising the informal sector, with about 50% of the workers being employed in the informal sector. The social protection system in Tunisia is relatively well developed with a compulsory health insurance policy covering about half of the population. In addition, a new system of social security opened for casual workers in 2019, followed by procedures for workers with irregular income to encourage them to join the tax and social security systems.

Source: Danish Trade Union Development Agency (2020)

In addition to enhancing decent work policies through policies at country level, sector specific initiatives can also be used to provide lessons on how decent work outcomes can be enhanced through dialogue and collaboration between the social partners. The following case studies spanning across different geographical areas can provide important lessons for Zimbabwe.

**Case 1 - Dealing with safety at the workplace:  
The Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety**

On 24 April 2013, the Rana Plaza building in Dhaka, Bangladesh, collapsed. The building, which housed five garment factories, killed at least 1,132 people and injured more than 2,500. The accident occurred barely five months from another accident where at least 112 workers had lost their lives trapped inside the burning Tazreen Fashions factory on the outskirts of Dhaka. These accidents generally underlined the decent work deficiencies in Bangladesh in general and in the ready-made garment sector in particular.

In addition to safety deficiencies, wages were among the worst in the world, while millions of people, most of them girls and women, were exposed every day to an unsafe work environment with a high incidence of work-related accidents and deaths, as well as occupational diseases. Most of the factories do not meet standards required by building and construction legislation. As a result, deaths from fire incidents and building collapses are frequent. Following the Rana Plaza disaster, at least 109 more accidents occurred, with at least 35 being textile factory incidents, injuring 491 workers and killing 27. The main challenge was the absence of a well-functioning labour inspection system and lack of appropriate enforcement mechanisms.

In 2013, the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh was established. This agreement was signed in the immediate aftermath to the Rana Plaza building collapse on 24 April 2013. The Accord is an independent, legally binding agreement signed between global brands & retailers on one hand and IndustriALL Global Union & UNI Global Union and eight of their Bangladeshi affiliated unions to work towards a safe and healthy garment and textile industry in Bangladesh.

The Accord covers factories producing Ready-Made Garments (RMG) and at the option of signatory companies, home textiles and fabric & knit accessories are also accommodated. The Accord was created to enable a working environment in which there are no fears from workers with respect to fires, building collapses, or other accidents that could be prevented if reasonable health and safety measures are undertaken.

The five-year Accord saw over 220 companies signing it resulting in a number of observed success factors. By May 2018, it had contributed to significantly safer workplaces for millions of Bangladeshi garment workers. This was also the basis upon which a renewed agreement was signed and entered into force on 1 June 2018, with over 190 brands and retailers signing the 2018 Transition Accord with the global unions.

All factories producing for Accord signatory companies undergo independent regular fire, electrical and structural safety inspections. About 38,297 inspections have been carried out in line with the Accord. The Accord also monitors remediation progress and facilitates brand support for remediation with updated Corrective Action Plans (CAPs) being published online. About 382 Remediated Factories have been established. Joint labour-management Safety Committees are trained and all factory workers are informed about essential workplace safety. About 1,352 Safety Committees have been trained. Workers and their representatives have a right to refuse unsafe work and can raise complaints with the Accord Safety and Health Complaints Mechanism. About 1,475 complaints have been registered.

Source: Extracted from the Accord website <https://bangladeshaccord.org/> as well as from the International Labour Organization online article entitled 'The Rana Plaza Accident and its aftermath' at website [https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/geip/WCMS\\_614394/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/geip/WCMS_614394/lang--en/index.htm)

### **Case 2 - Enhancing social protection and the environment: The BWI - IKEA Global Framework Agreement**

With procurement operations spanning across fifty countries and retailing operations in twenty-two countries, the IKEA Group is considered one of the world's leading home furnishing companies. However, the company faced cultural differences and diverse economic and social conditions in the different countries. There were a number of complaints concerning the manner in which the group adhered to sustainability practices and observing workers' rights. With a primary role of promoting and protecting worker's rights in the building, wood and forestry industries, the International Federation of Building and Wood Workers (IFBWW), now known as the Building and Wood Worker's International (BWI), is an international trade union organisation.

As a way of ensuring that concerns about workers' rights and environment protection are addressed, an agreement was signed in May 1998 between IKEA and IFBWW with the purpose of achieving certain minimum standards based on the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (eight core conventions). The agreement was primarily focused on ensuring the best interest of the child, the best interest of the worker, and the best interest of the environment. The agreement was designed to ensure that IKEA recognises the fundamental principles of Human Rights, as defined by the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (United Nations 1948) and adheres to UN decisions regarding trade boycotts and embargoes. In particular, the following are the key areas of focus of the agreement:

- Prevention of child labour
- Forced and bonded labour
- Severe Environmental pollution
- Severe safety hazards
- Records on working hours and wages
- Workers' accident insurances
- Worker Health & Safety
- Wages, Benefits and Working Hours
- Freedom of Association
- Harassment, Abuse and Disciplinary Actions
- Discrimination
- Housing Facilities

There is a general agreement by both parties that the agreement was very instrumental in enhancing employment terms and conditions. IKEA also established a compliance organisation with the task to support and monitor the compliance work.

Source: Extracts from Ståhl (2011)

### **Case 3 - Ensuring workers' freedom of association: The Freedom of Association Protocol in Indonesia**

In order to ensure that workers' rights are protected, the Freedom of Association Protocol was signed between Indonesian unions, factory owners ('suppliers') and global brand-owning companies ('brands'), including Nike, Adidas, Puma and New Balance. Although freedom of association is protected by legislation in Indonesia, the implementation of the laws were generally considered weak as routine violations continued to occur. As a result, the multi-party agreement was considered an important milestone in ensuring that there exists a mechanism for enforcing the observance of human rights.

The Protocol establishes specific standards for freedom of association in participating factories, as well as grievance resolution procedures for violations of those standards. It currently applies to approximately 300,000 factory workers employed in industrial districts throughout Java, most of whom are young women. It was developed in the context of a long-running global campaign by trade unions and labour rights organisations to persuade sportswear brands to uphold workers' rights in their supply chains.

The Protocol has resulted in a number of benefits. Worker representatives have been active decision makers and participants in the design, dissemination, implementation and governance of the Protocol. This has contributed to relatively high levels of local stakeholder ownership of the Protocol, resulting in the active use of the Protocol as a bargaining tool within individual workplaces. The involvement of Indonesia-based unions and suppliers in Protocol negotiations has also resulted in provisions more tailored to the Indonesian context.

The Protocol helped ensure that union leaders who had been subjected to violent intimidation no longer have to worry about such issues, enabling them to organise freely and negotiate with factory management. Workers also noticed a change in their ability to achieve positive changes on the factory floor by establishing specific standards, broad support networks and a new forum to raise grievances directly with factory management and brand representatives about workplace violations via union representatives.

The Protocol's focus on wage negotiations helped unions in a number of factories to stand firm against efforts by their employer to gain government exemptions from annual increases in the local legal minimum wage. For example, after several disputes on this issue in Nike supplier factories, Nike adopted a policy not to allow its first-tier suppliers to seek minimum wage waivers from the government, with Adidas also adopting the same policy.

Source: Extracted from Connor, Delaney, & Rennie (2016)

#### **Case 4 - Enhancing socially responsible labour practices: The case of the electronics sector in Vietnam**

The electronics sector in Vietnam also offers a good case study on how decent work outcomes can be enhanced through cooperation and dialogue by business, labour and government. Facilitated by an ILO project "More and Better Jobs through Socially Responsible Labour Practices in Vietnam", the project involved Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI), the Vietnam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL), the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA) and a number of enterprises. The project, which was initiated in 2015, works with Multinational Enterprises (MNEs), their direct suppliers and the social partners to promote the application of the principles of the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (MNE Declaration).

The project involves a two-pronged approach by engaging in dialogue with enterprises on their responsibilities, while at the same time strengthening public labour administration, especially the labour inspectorate. It also works from one end of the supply chain to the other, connecting actors at different levels to promote continuous dialogue - at the enterprise, sectoral, and national levels, and between the home and host countries of MNEs - to promote joint action involving all the stakeholders to advance decent work.

The project followed from findings of studies conducted by ILO to inform the structure and design of the project. The first study mapped out the industry situation and sought to address how enterprises can generate more and better jobs through socially responsible labour practices in Vietnam's electronics sector. The second study analysed the working conditions in Vietnam's electronics industry. In September 2016, a High-Level Policy Dialogue on the future of a competitive and socially responsible electronics industry in Vietnam brought together more than 80 representatives from government, employers' and workers' organisations, sectoral and bilateral business associations, Vietnamese electronics enterprises and MNEs operating in the sector. The dialogue also provided an opportunity to jointly develop a Plan of Action for generating more and better jobs through socially responsible labour practices in the sector.

Based on the ILO study on labour law compliance in electronics firms, the MoLISA inspectorate developed a strategy for improving working conditions in the sector in consultation with the VGCL and the VCCI. In April 2017, the MoLISA launched a nation-wide labour inspection campaign aimed at enforcing the labour law as well as raising awareness through regional dialogues between employers and workers on key compliance challenges identified in the sector, such as employment contracts, workplace dialogue, bargaining and collective agreements, working time and overtime, wages, social security and occupation safety and health. For the first time, wide consultations with the workers' organization (VGCL) and employers' organizations (VCCI and business associations) were held to solicit their inputs for drafting risk mapping reports and a national strategy for labour law compliance in the electronics sector. By December 2017, with strong support from the inspectorate of provincial Departments of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (DOLISAs), and Federations of Labour and Industrial Zones Management Boards, nearly 400 factories were directly inspected, and the newly-developed electronics sector self-assessment forms for reporting on issues of concern and compliance levels were widely distributed in the course of the campaign.

Source: Extracted from ILO online article, 'Advancing decent work in Vietnam: strengthening dialogue along the global electronics value chain' available at website [https://www.ilo.org/empent/units/multinational-enterprises/WCMS\\_626441/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/empent/units/multinational-enterprises/WCMS_626441/lang--en/index.htm)

## 8. Proposals to promote and strengthen decent employment in Zimbabwe

This study has revealed that work in Zimbabwe is far from decent mainly resulting from various factors which include a highly informalised economy, inadequate policy and institutional environment and mismatch of skills and requirements by the industry. This requires a general policy shift to ensure decent work is promoted. The following constitutes some of the key recommendations from the study on promoting decent work:

- **Promoting employment intensive economic growth**

Given that economic growth in Zimbabwe has not been necessarily employment enhancing, it is important to ensure that employment creation strategies in Zimbabwe be biased towards those sectors that have the potential to create jobs (labour intensive sectors). The Government should promote the development of employment intensive domestic value chains to promote industrialisation and structural transformation. Supporting sectors with high employment intensity/potential would go a long way in ensuring that the twin objectives of economic growth and employment creation are concurrently addressed.

- **Mainstreaming employment in macroeconomic policies**

It is difficult for decent work outcomes to be obtained unless macroeconomic policies mainstream employment creation. It is therefore important for government to ensure that all macroeconomic policies mainstream decent employment creation within their design, as this remains the only way in which decent work outcomes could be ensured. Explicit employment creation targets must be incorporated in National Budgets, monetary policies, investment policies, as well as national development strategies. Investment incentives for foreign investment must be linked to local content and local employment.

- **Crafting and implementing a national employment policy framework**

There is need to craft, adopt and implement a National Employment Policy anchored on broad-based social dialogue and consultations. The National Employment Policy framework must cut across the macro- and microeconomic dimensions and address both labour demand and supply to deal with labour market challenges. This policy will help to anchor decent work outcomes in Zimbabwe if crafted and implemented.

- **Reforming the doing business environment**

The country must create an enabling and supportive policy, institutional and regulatory framework that reduces the cost of doing business and improves the investment climate as well as lowering the barriers and high cost of transition to formality. The plethora of taxes, levies and statutory fees must be reduced and streamlined through the adoption of a uniform and simplified tax regime. It has been found that high marginal tax rates encourage tax evasion (through illicit financial flows) and force small businesses to go/remain informal.



- **Facilitating transition from informality to formality**

Given the extent of informalisation in the country and the huge potential by informal entrepreneurs, the way forward is neither to encourage nor suppress the informal economy but rather to facilitate transition from the informal to the formal mainstream economy. Gaining formal economy status allows entrepreneurs to access formal markets, invest with security, obtain new sources of credit, and defend their rights. In 2015, the ILO came up with Recommendation 204 concerning transition from informal economy to formal economy to help member states to facilitate the transition of workers and economic units from informal to formal economy; promote the creation and preservation of sustainable enterprises in the formal economy; and prevent informalisation of formal economy jobs. In September 2015, the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which included the transition to formality in the targets for Sustainable Development Goal 8. In particular, target 8.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) stresses the need to ‘... encourage the formalisation and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises...’ in order to promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth. These two instruments represent major milestones in the global approach to formalisation, particularly by providing guidance on the process.

Importantly, an effective approach to transition from informality to formality requires more than just mere registration and enforcement. It requires the elimination of structural barriers and binding institutional constraints at the root of informality to improve the doing business environment for all entrepreneurs. This helps to enhance business opportunities while facilitating compliance. Informal entrepreneurs have tremendous potential, but in order for them to realise that potential they must be enabled to make the shift into the modern market economy. The institutional and regulatory environment for doing business must be improved and simplified so as to provide incentives for informal economy entrepreneurs to formalise their businesses.

- **Develop labour skills that match the industry**

The Government should mandate and capacitate all institutions of learning to develop learners with requisite technical, vocational, and digital skills for the industry. Such skills are critical in promoting sustainable growth and development as they aim on production of tangible goods and services. The economy abounds with great opportunities that need tapping but only when the required skills are available. The skills development should also be gender sensitive to give women an opportunity to work in what are usually considered to be male dominated jobs. The youths should also benefit from internship programmes to equip them with requisite job experiences before they start on their new jobs.

- **Promoting Women Entrepreneurship**

Promoting women entrepreneurship is critical to close gender gaps in the labour market. This can be achieved through targeting and addressing barriers such low skills and education levels as well as lack of access to cheap finance. Additionally, facilitating forward linkages of women-owned informal enterprises with the formal sector, skills and financial knowledge training, reducing costs of formalisation through tax reforms, enhancing access to concessionary finance through microfinance, and lowering the stringent collateral requirements can also go a long way in empowering female entrepreneurs. In addition, enhancing access to secondary and tertiary education especially for girls is critical for increasing the employability and productivity of women.

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