



**Questions and Answers – Webinar ILO/WAPES
– “Empowering Labour Markets through Convention 88 and
Employer Outreach: A Global Perspective”–
September 26th, 2023**

- 1) I noted earlier that the PES are finding that salaried jobs are increasingly rare. This is particularly true in African countries such as the DRC. A great deal of effort is being made to promote self-employment, but it is extremely difficult for the PES to find financial credit for those who want to set up in self-employment.

What can WAPES and the ILO do to promote self-employment, especially in Africa, where the problem is almost dramatic, with consequences such as illegal immigration and insurrectionary activities such as those we are experiencing in the Sahel and in the east of the DRC?

(from Patrick KUTELAMA / Democratic Republic of Congo DRC)

Focusing specifically on ILO, there is a lot of information on this topic on the ILO website in connection to employment services under [employment promotion](#). As you state this is a complicated area, especially in hard circumstances as you describe. It's becoming more common to be self-employed in one's career and the digital and GIG-economies continue to expand. This comes with great challenges as it is at this point seldom well-regulated and can create precarious work environments, however there are also great opportunities for individuals as they can access labour markets that previously were beyond their reach.

From an implementation angle in a national context the most efficient ways a public employment service (PES) can promote and support self-employment is by building up a structure of mentorship and guidance. There are several examples from countries at all income levels where they have invested in some employment advisors/PES staff to become specialized in supporting jobseekers towards self-employment. Such staff would know the rules/laws/regulations, guide to develop business plans, know where to be able to look for financial support etc. This should be combined with a mentor system to work well. To engage persons who have become or are/have been self-employed as mentors for jobseekers wanting to follow this path. And to have this mentorship coordinated by the PES. There might be collaborations/groups/organizations already in the country for self-employed that can be used to set up this mentoring system, and then to engage jobseekers getting help from this system as future mentors as well. This makes the workload for a mentor easier and creates a system that can be coordinated and withheld by the PES. It can start at a small scale and need not to cost more than the salaries of PES staff as mentors would need to be there on a voluntary basis – many small business owners or self-employed have welcomed such opportunities as well to be able to



talk about their businesses and work. It's important to have a frame work around it from the PES so it doesn't become overbearing for the mentors. This frame work should also have a time line and clear responsibilities for the jobseeker and the mentor. Commonly the mentor would give advice on the business plan, how to know the market, what to think about when starting etc. Things the mentors has already experienced themselves. While the PES could support in how the labour market is developing, other opportunities and guidance along the way.

Focusing specifically on what WAPES can do to promote self-employment, especially in Africa, the organization can:

- Help with Capacity Building: WAPES can organize training programs and workshops for its member Public Employment Services in African countries. These programs should emphasize the development of PES staff's expertise in supporting self-employment initiatives, including financial literacy, business planning, and mentoring skills.
- Establish Knowledge Sharing: WAPES can facilitate the sharing of best practices and success stories among its member PES. This exchange of knowledge can help PES in African nations learn from the experiences of their counterparts in other regions, enabling them to better assist individuals seeking self-employment opportunities.
- Networking and Partnerships: WAPES can foster collaborations and partnerships between PES in African countries and other relevant stakeholders such as financial institutions, NGOs, and private sector organizations. These partnerships can help PES access resources and expertise needed to promote self-employment effectively.
- Research and Data Collection: WAPES can support research initiatives focused on self-employment in African contexts. By gathering data and conducting studies, WAPES can provide valuable insights to inform policies and strategies for self-employment promotion.
- Capacity Development of PES Staff: WAPES can organize specialized training programs and certification courses for PES staff in African countries to become experts in self-employment support. This includes training on financial access, entrepreneurship development, and mentorship.
- Regional Workshops and Conferences: WAPES can organize regional events, workshops, and conferences focused on self-employment promotion in Africa. These gatherings can provide a platform for knowledge exchange and networking among PES professionals and stakeholders.
- By taking these proactive steps, WAPES can contribute significantly to the promotion of self-employment in African countries, helping to address the challenges of job scarcity and fostering economic empowerment and stability in the region.



- 2) How can trust between the PES and the employer be strengthened? Especially between PES and private sector? (partially answered in session)
How do you win the loyalty of employers who regularly use private recruitment agencies?
(from Issoufou Boubacar / Niger)

Thank you for this great question. PES needs to assert a qualitatively different value proposition around its different caseload and leverage the benefits we identified. These include HR and Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) benefits but crucially assisting employers to access a hidden talent pool and work with a skilled intermediary that can assist them to modify their recruitment and talent acquisition practices and improve their HR practices to the benefit of the organisation.

The employer-facing PES staff need to go out and get to know hiring managers, understand their business and their workforce needs (both immediate and future) and be able to diagnose their requirements. Sometimes employers think they know what they need but their needs are out of step with the current labour market. Their needs also may require shaping based on the PES caseload. It is critical to be honest with employers and to always under-promise and over-deliver. Because the PES-employer relationship is not based on an exchange of money via a contract, the relationship must be built on trust and mutual exchange. So, PES provides labour and services and the employer provides opportunities. There are examples of sustained, trusted relationships between providers/PES and employers. PES must also upskill staff to be able to effectively work with employers.

PES can also offer a different value proposition for small and medium sized businesses and should focus on this market segment.

PES can also work constructively with employment agencies (this occurs in the UK and Australia for example) – this REC podcast talks about this in more detail: <https://podcasts.apple.com/au/podcast/talking-recruitment/id968703734?i=1000497095780>

I am very happy to provide more information – jo.ingold@acu.edu.au

- 3) How will the PES manage to impose itself on the labour market, given that employment agencies have management autonomy?
(from Mahamane Moctar ALI LALI IBRAHIM, Niger)

Thank you for this great question. PES needs to assert a qualitatively different value proposition around its different caseload and leverage the benefits we identified. These include HR and CSR benefits but crucially assisting employers to access a hidden talent pool and work with a skilled intermediary that can assist them to modify their recruitment and talent acquisition practices and improve their HR practices to the benefit of the organisation, for example changing job design to



provide more inclusive and flexible opportunities, upskilling line managers/supervisors.

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