

¹SPECIAL REPORT

Understanding employment and the role of public employment services in Africa:

Sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb — Towards enhanced South-South cooperation between public employment services

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Intended for WAPES experts, AASEP and advisers/managers of public employment services in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb

Summary

This report offers a comparative analysis of African labour markets by examining two sub-regions with distinct trajectories but partially converging challenges: sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb. In each of these regions, it analyses the structural characteristics of the labour markets, the limitations of conventional approaches, the renewed analytical framework needed to understand them, and the operational strategies of public employment services (PES).

In sub-Saharan Africa, widespread informality (over 80% of total non-agricultural employment in most countries), poor statistical coverage and the discontinuity of career paths fundamentally call into question the conceptual tools inherited from industrialised economies. Sub-Saharan PES must undergo a profound transformation: from formal intermediation towards comprehensive support for economic pathways, including support for self-employment, the structuring of the informal economy and territorial coordination.

¹ Disclaimer

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In several sub-Saharan countries, PES already perform functions that go beyond mere intermediation: approving employment contracts, issuing certificates, granting licences to private employment agencies, and collecting and analysing labour market data. These quasi-regulatory powers position these PES as key players not only in intermediation, but also in the supervision and regulation of the labour market; an expanded role that SamPES 2.0 aims to promote and systematise.

The institutional landscape of sub-Saharan PES is also undergoing significant change: several countries are undertaking structural reforms of their agencies, whether to specialise functions between job placement and active labour market programmes, to modernise their mandates, or to strengthen their labour market regulatory functions. These trends, observed in particular in several countries in West Africa and the Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger), illustrate a shared commitment to adapting PES to local economic realities, which this report aims to document and support.

In the Maghreb, labour markets in transition—characterised by high graduate unemployment, low female labour force participation rates and persistent informality—coexist with more institutionalised PES (ANAPEC, ANETI, ANEM, Anapec). These institutions possess valuable experience in results-based management, information systems and support for entrepreneurship, which constitutes transferable expertise for sub-Saharan PES.

A comparison of the two sub-regions reveals common challenges: the inadequacy of traditional indicators, the need to account for the informal sector, persistent gender inequalities, demographic pressure from the youth population, ... and significant structural differences in terms of the level of formalisation, the institutional capacity of PES and the nature of prevailing unemployment. These convergences and divergences outline the contours of a South-South cooperation that is both relevant and urgent.

This report concludes with a call for the systematic strengthening of South-South technical cooperation between PES in the Maghreb and PES in sub-Saharan Africa, within the framework of the WAPES network and AASEP, based on peer-to-peer exchange rather than one-way transfers.

Keywords: informal employment, public employment services, sub-Saharan Africa, Maghreb, labour markets, South-South cooperation, WAPES, AASEP, quality of employment, decent work, career pathways.

Table of contents

Abstract.....	1
Introduction.....	5
I.1. The structural characteristics of sub-Saharan labour markets.....	6
I.1.1. The limitations of conventional approaches.....	6
I.1.2. Towards a renewed analytical framework	7
I.2. Strategies of public employment services in sub-Saharan Africa	7
I.2.1. From intermediation to career support.....	8
I.2.2. Addressing the informal economy.....	8
I.2.3. Adapting vocational training policies.....	8
I.2.4. Developing practical information systems	8
I.2.5. Strengthening governance and social partnership	9
I.2.6. Digital technology and artificial intelligence at the service of sub-Saharan public employment services.....	9
II.1. The structural characteristics of Maghreb labour markets	10
II.1.1. Persistent informality in a context of transition.....	10
II.1.2. Graduate unemployment: a specific challenge	10
II.1.3. Gender inequalities: a persistent blind spot	10
II.1.4. Migration flows: a domestic and continental issue	11
II.2. The strategies of Maghreb public employment services	11
II.2.1. The gradual expansion of the agencies' remit.....	11
II.2.2. Targeted schemes for young people and first-time jobseekers.....	11
II.2.3. Information systems: transferable assets	11
II.2.4. Digital technology and the modernisation of services	12
II.2.5. The Maghreb as a player in South-South cooperation.....	12
III.1. Challenges common to both sub-regions.....	13
III.1.1. The inadequacy of traditional indicators.....	13
III.1.2. The persistence of the informal economy.....	13
III.1.3. Demographic pressure and the challenge of youth employment	13
III.1.4. Gender inequalities in access to employment.....	13
III.1.5. The need to localise employment policies.....	13
III.1.6. The digital transformation of public employment services.....	14
III.2. Structural differences between the two sub-regions	14
III.2.1. The extent and nature of informality	14
III.2.2. The profile of unemployment and underemployment	14
III.2.3. The institutional capacity of PES	14

III.2.4. Migration dynamics	15
III.2.5. Regional frameworks for economic integration	15
III.3. What each sub-region can offer the other.....	15
III.3.1. Contributions from the Maghreb to sub-Saharan Africa.....	15
III.3.2. Contributions from Sub-Saharan Africa to the Maghreb	16
General conclusion: A call for structured South-South cooperation between African PES.	16
Why is this cooperation necessary?	16
What this cooperation should entail	18
A call to decision-makers and donors.....	18
Bibliography	19
APPENDIX. Summary operational matrix for African PES	21

Introduction

Africa is often portrayed as a single continent facing the challenge of employment. However, this convenient view masks considerable diversity between sub-regions, which must be taken into account in order to design appropriate employment policies and relevant cooperation strategies. This report offers a comparative analysis of two African sub-regions, sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb, examining both the characteristics of their labour markets and the strategies of their public employment services (PES).

This choice of comparison is not coincidental. These two sub-regions maintain increasingly close economic, migratory and cultural ties. Several Maghreb countries, particularly Morocco and Tunisia, have developed technical cooperation partnerships with PES in sub-Saharan Africa, sharing their experience in institutional transformation. This dynamic is the catalyst for South-South cooperation, the relevance of which this report aims to demonstrate, along with the need to further structure and support it.

The approach adopted draws largely on practical experience gained through missions to support PES in Africa, conducted over more than twenty years in various national contexts across sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb. It aims to:

- analyse the labour market structures specific to each sub-region and the strategies of their PES
- identify the similarities and differences between the two sub-regions
- formulate operational recommendations for structured South-South cooperation.

This report is intended for experts from the WAPES (World Association of Public Employment Services) network, the AASEP (African Association of Public Employment Services), the Public Employment Services Network of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC PESNET), and to advisers and managers of PES in both sub-regions who are committed on a daily basis to promoting employment for their fellow citizens.

PART I

Sub-Saharan Africa: informal labour markets and the transformation of PES

I.1. The structural characteristics of sub-Saharan labour markets

In many Sub-Saharan African countries, labour markets exhibit characteristics that are fundamentally distinct from those of industrialised economies: a predominance of self-employment, widespread informality, weak social protection and diversification of income sources within households themselves. According to ILO estimates, more than 80% of jobs are in the informal sector in several countries in the region. This reality renders the conceptual tools and public policies inherited from Western models largely unsuitable.

I.1.1. The limitations of conventional approaches

The employment policies currently being implemented in many sub-Saharan African countries are based on conceptual frameworks developed in different socio-economic contexts. This mismatch is evident at several levels.

The ILO's definition of 'unemployment' is based on three cumulative conditions: absence of employment, availability, and active job search. However, in the subsistence economies of sub-Saharan Africa, these three conditions are rarely met simultaneously. Active job-seeking is difficult to observe in poorly organised labour markets; total inactivity is rare as it implies a lack of income; and individuals often combine several activities of different types and statuses. The ILO itself revised its framework for measuring labour underutilisation in 2013 by introducing the concepts of underemployment linked to working hours and inadequate work.

The binary distinction between the formal and informal sectors no longer reflects the complexity of contemporary labour markets. Empirical research, particularly in West Africa, shows that the informal economy is deeply heterogeneous: it includes both subsistence micro-enterprises, artisans and traders with stable incomes, and informal enterprises integrated into regional value chains. The Economic Commission for Africa proposes distinguishing at least five sub-segments of the informal economy based on their degree of organisation and their potential for formalisation.

Labour markets in sub-Saharan Africa are also characterised by high levels of mobility: individuals move between wage employment, self-employment, training, inactivity and migration, sometimes within the same year. A static analysis, conducted at a single point in time, is structurally incapable of capturing these dynamics. Finally, conventional approaches tend to underestimate the role of women, who account for over 60% of informal workers in sub-Saharan Africa, whilst enjoying virtually non-existent social protection.

I.1.2. Towards a renewed analytical framework

In light of these limitations, several theoretical and empirical approaches have been developed to better capture the reality of sub-Saharan labour markets. They converge towards an analytical framework based on four complementary pillars.

The first pillar is the measurement of job quality. The central issue for public policy is not access to employment as such – given that almost the entire working population is employed in one way or another – but the quality of the economic activity undertaken. The ILO's decent work framework offers a multidimensional analytical framework incorporating income levels, job stability, access to social protection and representation in social dialogue.

The second pillar is the integration of the concept of vulnerable work, which encompasses subsistence self-employment, unpaid family work and low-productivity activities. It constitutes a key indicator for public policy in sub-Saharan Africa, where it affects the majority of the working population.

The third pillar is the dynamic approach through occupational transitions, which enables the observation of young people's pathways into the labour market, sectoral mobility and rural-urban transitions. It is particularly useful for identifying 'precariousness traps', situations where individuals remain stuck in low-productivity jobs with no possibility of upward mobility.

The fourth pillar is the territorialisation of the analysis. Labour markets in sub-Saharan Africa are highly localised, and a uniform employment policy applied at the national level is illusory. This territorialisation requires local assessments based on data collected at the sub-national level, as exemplified by the deployment of Local Integration Support Committees (CLAI) in Benin.

I.2. Strategies of Public Employment Services (PES) in Sub-Saharan Africa

Public employment services in sub-Saharan Africa were, for the most part, modelled on European public employment agencies, with their core mission being to act as intermediaries in the formal labour market. This approach is now structurally ill-suited to markets where formal salaried employment accounts for between 5 and 20 per cent of total employment, depending on the country. The majority of PES are therefore embarking on transformation programmes, with increased recourse to South-South cooperation, particularly with experts from the Maghreb region. A decree issued by the Ministry of Labour in Niger allows for the granting of In several countries, the regulatory framework entrusts the PES with the task of issuing licences to private employment agencies and overseeing these operators, thereby strengthening their role as labour market regulators and their position as key players in its governance.

I.2.1. From intermediation to career support

Public Employment Services (PES) can no longer limit themselves to registering jobseekers and placing them in formal employment. They are evolving towards roles that support economic pathways, incorporating support for self-employment, skills development and linking individuals with funding bodies. This transformation requires a fundamental review of the skill sets required of employment advisers, who must transition from an administrative role to that of an adviser on economic activity development.

I.2.2. Addressing the informal economy

The role of public employment services (PES) in the informal economy should not be limited to the objective of systematic formalisation. It must aim to improve productivity and incomes within the informal sector, gradually secure incomes, and promote selective and incentive-based formalisation grounded in the tangible benefits perceived by the workers concerned. The formation of groups, cooperatives and associations within the framework of the social and solidarity economy (SSE) is a key lever, in which PES can play a facilitating role. These realities are documented in several countries through business censuses, which reveal that the vast majority of economic units operate without tax registration or formal business registration. Thus, in Niger, the General Business Census (ReGEN, 2022) reports that over 97% of businesses are informal, illustrating the scale of the challenge and the need for differentiated approaches depending on the level of formalisation of each economy.

I.2.3. Adapting vocational training policies

Vocational training schemes must be redesigned to reflect African realities. Short programmes combining technical training and support for integration achieve the best results in low-income countries. Priority schemes include modular and certification-based training, work-based learning linked to traditional apprenticeship systems, and the validation of prior learning (VPL).

VAE is particularly strategic in sub-Saharan Africa for two distinct groups: unemployed young graduates, whose academic qualifications do not match the skills sought in the labour market, and workers in the informal economy without recognised qualifications, who possess practical skills acquired on the job. The African Union, through the ACQF (African Continental Qualifications Framework) project, has been working towards this since 2021.

I.2.4. Developing pragmatic information systems

In the absence of robust statistical systems, PES are adopting pragmatic approaches to data collection and analysis: light and repeated surveys, the use of available administrative data, and the use of mobile digital tools such as smartphones for real-time

data collection. Experiences in Madagascar and West Africa show that these approaches provide sufficiently reliable information to guide policy. Strengthening national employment observatories in sub-Saharan Africa also appears to be an appropriate way to carry out prospective studies and identify skills needs better suited to the economies of these countries.

I.2.5. Strengthening governance and social partnership

The effectiveness of employment policies depends largely on the quality of governance and the capacity of stakeholders to cooperate. In the African context, this involves closely involving employers' organisations—including informal SMEs—trade unions, local authorities and civil society organisations in the PES. At the regional level, the institutional frameworks of ECOWAS and UEMOA offer opportunities for coordination that national PES can further harness. The 'Boulevard de l'Intermédiation' project led by AASEP is part of this initiative. The PES in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger are currently exploring the creation of a regional consultation framework to improve the coordination of labour market management; an initiative which, if realised, could enhance existing cooperation mechanisms within AASEP and contribute to the pan-African dynamic championed by WAPES. These developments also illustrate a trend towards institutional specialisation within national employment systems: some countries separate the functions of intermediation and the implementation of active programmes, whilst others integrate these functions within a strengthened agency that also plays a regulatory role vis-à-vis private labour market operators. These diverse models represent a wealth of experience to be drawn upon within the framework of SamPES 2.0.

I.2.6. Digital technology and artificial intelligence at the service of sub-Saharan PES

The rapid growth of mobile telephony in sub-Saharan Africa (over 650 million unique mobile subscribers by 2023) opens up concrete opportunities to modernise PES. Appropriate digital tools can significantly strengthen PES's capacity to fulfil their new roles: mobile data collection on local labour markets, voice chatbots in local languages operating on basic mobile phones, assisted guidance tools, offline adaptive learning, and automated dashboards for management.

Five conditions appear to be critical to the success of these initiatives: technical simplicity (solutions that work without a stable internet connection), the availability of local training data, ownership by staff and beneficiaries, personal data governance, and local maintenance capacity. The failure of digital ' ' initiatives rarely stems from the technology itself; it is almost always due to organisational and institutional factors that decision-makers must anticipate.

PART II

The Maghreb: labour markets in transition, PES undergoing change

II.1. The structural characteristics of Maghreb labour markets

The Maghreb countries – Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya and Mauritania – have labour market characteristics that differ from those of sub-Saharan Africa, yet which give them a unique strategic position within the African employment ecosystem. Situated at the crossroads between Africa, Europe and the Arab world, these countries have developed relatively structured labour markets and PES, occupying an intermediate position between emerging and developing economies.

II.1.1. Persistent informality in a context of transition

Unlike in sub-Saharan Africa, where informal employment frequently exceeds 80% of total employment, the Maghreb countries occupy an intermediate position: informal employment accounts for between 40% and 60% of non-agricultural employment, depending on the country and the year, with significant disparities between urban and rural areas. Although this proportion remains high, it reflects an ongoing transition towards a more structured economy that public policies are striving to support, without systematic formalisation necessarily constituting a realistic short-term solution.

II.1.2. Graduate unemployment: a specific challenge

Graduate unemployment is one of the most acute challenges facing the Maghreb labour markets. In Tunisia, the unemployment rate among holders of higher education qualifications regularly exceeds 30%, more than double the general unemployment rate. In Morocco, this phenomenon of 'downward mobility' also affects large cohorts of young people whose academic qualifications do not match the skills demanded by the labour market.

This paradoxical situation in economies that have invested heavily in higher education generates significant social pressure and is leading several countries in the region to undertake a thorough review of their graduate guidance and integration schemes. It also illustrates a structural limitation shared with sub-Saharan PSE: the mismatch between the provision of training and the realities of local labour markets.

II.1.3. Gender inequalities: a persistent blind spot

Gender inequalities remain pervasive in the region. Female labour force participation rates in the Maghreb are among the lowest in the world: under 25% in Algeria, around 20% in Morocco, according to recent ILO data. These figures, however, mask a significant female contribution to the informal and domestic economy, which is invisible in official statistics. Women's access to vocational training, entrepreneurship and public

employment services remains constrained by social norms and legal constraints that an effective employment policy cannot avoid addressing.

II.1.4. Migration flows: a domestic and continental issue

Over the past two decades, the Maghreb countries have become both transit and destination countries for migrants from sub-Saharan Africa. This phenomenon has direct implications for Maghreb labour markets, where a growing population of sub-Saharan migrant workers is finding employment in specific informal sectors. Maghreb public employment services are generally ill-equipped to support these workers, who often find themselves in a precarious administrative situation.

At the same time, migration flows to Europe and remittances from the Maghreb diaspora represent significant sources of income in the economies of origin, creating a close link between international mobility, local labour markets and development.

II.2. The strategies of Maghreb public employment services

Maghreb public employment services enjoy greater institutional maturity than most of their sub-Saharan counterparts. ANAPEC in Morocco, ANETI in Tunisia and ANEM in Algeria have networks of decentralised agencies, integrated information systems and diverse support programmes.

II.2.1. The gradual broadening of the agencies' remit

Over the years, these agencies have been led to gradually broaden their scope of action, initially centred on placement in formal employment, towards more comprehensive support: assistance with business start-ups, facilitating access to microcredit, and support for the validation of prior learning. In this respect, their evolution is structurally comparable to that which this report advocates for sub-Saharan PES. However, the constraints remain very real: Maghreb PES are frequently overwhelmed by the influx of young graduates and struggle to reach workers in the informal economy.

II.2.2. Targeted schemes for young people and first-time jobseekers

Maghreb PES have developed specific programmes for first-time jobseekers, project leaders and workers undergoing retraining. ANAPEC, for example, offers professional integration contracts, work-study training programmes and entrepreneurship support schemes that are recognised benchmarks across the continent. Results-based management, which is being gradually integrated into these agencies, enables steering based on measurable indicators: six-month placement rates, cost per beneficiary and satisfaction rates.

II.2.3. Information systems: a transferable asset

Maghreb PES have invested in integrated information systems enabling the tracking of beneficiaries' pathways, the management of job vacancies and applications, and the

production of regular statistics on local labour markets. This technological and methodological capital constitutes one of the most directly transferable contributions to sub-Saharan PES within the framework of South-South cooperation.

II.2.4. Digital technology and the modernisation of services

Maghreb PES have also invested in the digitalisation of their services: online portals, employer-candidate matching platforms, and distance learning modules. Whilst this modernisation is progressing, it nevertheless faces inequalities in digital access that limit its reach in rural areas and among the least-skilled populations. Lessons from the sub-Saharan experience regarding technical simplicity could here enrich Maghreb strategies.

II.2.5. The Maghreb as a player in South-South cooperation

The most decisive factor in this context is the growing role played by Maghreb experts and institutions in South-South cooperation with PES in sub-Saharan Africa. Morocco, in particular, has developed an ambitious African strategy which, in the field of employment, takes the form of bilateral partnerships with several countries in West and Central Africa. ANAPEC has thus seconded technical advisers to partner PES, sharing its experience in information systems, support schemes for young people and results-based management.

Tunisia continues to train labour market and employment policy specialists recognised across Africa, demonstrating the capacity of its institutions to maintain a high level of technical expertise. The linguistic proximity of the French-speaking world, an understanding of the institutional constraints of developing countries, and the technical competence of their experts give Maghreb institutions a relevance that European aid workers cannot always match in the context of short-term missions.

PART III

Comparative analysis: similarities and differences

III.1. Challenges common to both sub-regions

Despite distinct structural contexts, sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb share a set of common challenges that determine the conditions under which their PES must operate.

III.1.1. The inadequacy of traditional indicators

In both sub-regions, indicators inherited from industrialised economies — primarily the ILO unemployment rate — are insufficient to capture the reality of labour markets. In both the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa, a low apparent unemployment rate can coexist with high levels of job insecurity, massive underemployment and persistent working poverty. This shared observation calls for a concerted effort to update analytical and statistical frameworks.

III.1.2. The persistence of the informal economy

Informal employment is a major reality in both sub-regions, although its scale differs significantly. In both cases, public employment services (PES) were designed for formal employment and must adapt their practices to reach workers in the informal economy, who represent the vast majority of their potential client base. This adaptation requires outreach strategies and partnerships with craft trade organisations and associations of informal workers.

III.1.3. Demographic pressure and the challenge of youth employment

Both sub-regions face significant demographic pressure and a massive influx of young people into labour markets that are struggling to absorb this growing supply. Whilst the challenge in sub-Saharan Africa lies in creating viable economic activities for a low-skilled youth, in the Maghreb it takes the form of a 'sur-unemployment' paradox, with young people holding qualifications ill-suited to market needs. In both cases, public employment services are on the front line in supporting these difficult transitions.

III.1.4. Gender inequalities in access to employment

The partial exclusion of women from the formal labour market is a challenge shared by both sub-regions, although its forms and intensity differ. In sub-Saharan Africa, women are over-represented in informal and vulnerable employment without benefiting from protection. In the Maghreb, despite policy efforts, female labour force participation rates are among the lowest in the world. In both cases, a 'gender-blind' employment policy is structurally ineffective and, on the contrary, risks perpetuating existing inequalities.

III.1.5. The need to localise employment policies

Both sub-regions share the experience of highly localised labour markets, where economic realities vary considerably from one region to another and where uniform policies applied at national level are largely ineffective. The localisation of PES analysis and interventions thus constitutes a common principle of action, even if its implementation differs according to the level of decentralisation and the capacities of local actors.

III.1.6. The digital transformation of PES

The digital modernisation of public employment services is a shared challenge. The constraints are certainly different – insufficient mobile coverage in sub-Saharan Africa, and a geographical and social digital divide in the Maghreb – but the underlying logic is similar: adapting tools to users' actual constraints, avoiding solutions that are overly dependent on stable connectivity, and ensuring that digital tools enhance advisers' capabilities without seeking to replace them.

III.2. Structural differences between the two sub-regions

These similarities must not obscure the significant structural differences that determine the needs and modalities of effective cooperation.

III.2.1. The extent and nature of informality

The quantitative gap is considerable: informal employment exceeds 80% in sub-Saharan Africa, compared with 40–60% in the Maghreb. More fundamentally, the nature of informality differs: in sub-Saharan Africa, informality constitutes the structural norm around which the economy is organised; in the Maghreb, it coexists with a more developed formal sector and is perceived more as a transitional stage. This difference has a direct impact on PES strategies: whereas sub-Saharan PES must learn to operate within the informal sector as their natural environment, Maghreb PES seek instead to accelerate the transition to the formal sector.

III.2.2. The profile of unemployment and underemployment

The nature of the labour market imbalance differs fundamentally. In sub-Saharan Africa, the dominant problem is the quality and productivity of existing jobs, not their absence: almost the entire working population is employed, but in low-value-added subsistence activities. In the Maghreb, open unemployment is a real and statistically measurable phenomenon, with rates reaching 30% among graduates: the problem lies as much in the mismatch of skills as in the insufficient number of formal jobs being created.

III.2.3. The institutional capacity of public employment services

Maghreb PES enjoy significantly greater institutional maturity: extensive agency networks, operational information systems, defined performance indicators, and professionalised advisers. This maturity enables them to implement complex schemes and evaluate their results. Most sub-Saharan PES are at earlier stages of institutional

development, where the priorities are first and foremost the establishment of basic functions, the training of staff and the definition of a mandate suited to their context.

III.2.4. Migration dynamics

The two sub-regions occupy different positions in continental and international migration flows. Sub-Saharan Africa is primarily a source of migrants, some of whom transit through the Maghreb to Europe, whilst the Maghreb countries act as host and transit countries. This difference in position entails distinct roles for the PES: supporting outbound mobility and recognising skills acquired abroad on the Sub-Saharan side, and managing the diversification of the workforce and integrating migrant workers on the Maghreb side.

III.2.5. Regional frameworks for economic integration

The two sub-regions are part of regional integration frameworks with very different dynamics. In sub-Saharan Africa, ECOWAS and UEMOA constitute active institutional frameworks that offer opportunities for the coordination of employment policies, mutual recognition of qualifications and the portability of social rights. The regional institutional landscape is, however, evolving: the creation of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), comprising Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, reflects the search for new frameworks for political, economic and social cooperation at the continental level. Regardless of the institutional configuration, the region's public employment services (PES) have a vital role to play in maintaining continuity of services for workers and preserving the gains made in terms of mobility and the recognition of skills.

In the Maghreb, regional integration is following its own trajectory: the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) provides a framework whose coordination potential remains largely to be consolidated, whilst the region's economic and human ties are part of multidirectional dynamics, towards Europe and the Middle East, but also, increasingly, towards sub-Saharan Africa. It is precisely in this developing South-South orientation that a strategic opportunity lies: the strengthening of links between Maghreb and sub-Saharan PES is part of a cooperation space that remains largely open, the contours of which SamPES 2.0 and AASEP can help to shape.

III.3. What each sub-region can offer the other

Comparative analysis helps to identify mutual learning flows that underpin the relevance of peer-to-peer cooperation.

III.3.1. Contributions from the Maghreb to sub-Saharan Africa

- Experience in results-based management and indicator-driven steering
- Models for information systems and tracking beneficiaries' pathways
- Support mechanisms for entrepreneurship and project development
- Expertise in certified vocational training and accreditation of prior learning

- Experience in transitioning from an administrative model to active support

III.3.2. Contributions from Sub-Saharan Africa to the Maghreb

- Innovative approaches to intervention in the informal economy as a natural setting for action
- Experiences in community support and the mobilisation of grassroots organisations
- Mobile data collection tools adapted to limited connectivity
- Experience of localising employment policies in contexts of significant local disparities
- Models for integrating migrants into employment services (applicable to Maghreb PES hosting sub-Saharan workers)

General conclusion: A call for structured South-South cooperation between African PES

The comparative analysis conducted in this report leads to a finding of major strategic importance: PES in sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb face partly converging challenges, have complementary experiences, and stand to gain significantly from sustained and structured cooperation. However, whilst such cooperation exists in a pioneering form through bilateral partnerships, it remains too little institutionalised, too sporadic and too dependent on individual initiatives to produce lasting systemic effects.

Why is this cooperation necessary?

There are three fundamental reasons for strengthening and sustaining South-South cooperation between African PES.

The first is contextual relevance. Maghreb experts working with sub-Saharan PES share institutional, administrative and cultural realities that aid workers from Europe or North America do not necessarily understand. They have experienced, in their own countries, the difficulties of institutional transformation in contexts of limited resources, political- al pressure and weak statistical systems. This shared experience is an invaluable asset for effective operational cooperation.

The second reason is economic efficiency. South-South cooperation is structurally less costly than North-South cooperation: daily allowances are lower, travel costs are reduced, and mission durations can be longer and more frequent. For the same technical cooperation budget, the impact can therefore be significantly greater if priority is given to exchanges between African peers rather than the systematic use of international consultants.

The third reason is the reciprocity of learning. As the comparative analysis has shown, the relationship is not one-way. Maghreb PES also have much to learn from approaches developed in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly regarding interventions in the informal

economy and the management of migration flows. Cooperation based on peer-to-peer exchange generates far greater mutual value than an asymmetric transfer of skills.

What this cooperation should entail

For this cooperation to have a lasting impact, it must meet several requirements:

- It must be institutionalised, that is to say, underpinned by formal frameworks — bilateral agreements between PES, cooperation protocols within WAPES and AASEP — rather than relying on informal networks or fragile personal relationships.
- It must be funded on a sustainable basis, with dedicated budget lines in PES budgets and multilateral funding mechanisms that explicitly include South-South cooperation as an eligible priority.
- It must focus on the capitalisation and dissemination of best practices, with systematic mechanisms for documentation, the sharing of tools and the evaluation of experiences.
- It must be supported by an inter-African training centre for PES, a project led by AASEP and strongly supported by this report, capable of training trainers and developing curricula adapted to African realities.
- It must incorporate an explicit Maghreb regional dimension into the 'Boulevard de l'Intermédiation' project and into the AASEP's common intermediation platform.

A call to decision-makers and donors

To policy-makers in both sub-regions, this report sends a clear message: investing in the transformation of your PES is not an expense, it is a structural investment in economic development and social stability. PSEs that actually work, that reach informal workers, that support young people towards productive activities and that have the skills to analyse their local labour markets, contribute directly to wealth creation and the reduction of inequalities.

To donors and international organisations, this report calls for a reconsideration of their funding priorities regarding technical cooperation in the field of employment: systematically integrate South-South cooperation as a priority implementation modality; support the creation of the AASEP inter-African training centre; fund programmes for the exchange of practices between Maghreb and sub-Saharan PES; and evaluate the results of these exchanges with the same rigour as that applied to North-South cooperation.

Africa does not need to copy external models to develop public employment services suited to its realities. It possesses, within itself, the experience, skills and solutions necessary for this transformation. This report is a plea for these resources to be better recognised, better organised, better funded and allowed to be fully utilised for the benefit of employment for all Africans.

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Decree No. 2017-682/PRN/MET/PS of 10 August 2017, establishing the Regulatory Part of the Labour Code;

Decree No. 2023-154/PRN/MET/PS of 10 February 2023, establishing a public administrative body known as the National Agency for the Promotion of Employment (ANPE);

Decree No. 2023-155/PRN/MET/PS of 10 February 2023, approving the statutes of the National Agency for the Promotion of Employment (ANPE);

APPENDIX. Summary operational matrix for African PES

The matrix below is an operational tool designed to translate the comparative analytical framework into concrete actions. It is derived from the work of the WAPES 'SamPES toolkit' and has been adapted to take account of the dual perspective of Sub-Saharan Africa and the Maghreb. It is designed as an adaptable framework, not as a prescriptive model.

Strategic focus	Priority actions	Key indicators	Expected outcomes	Regional relevance
Career support	Care pathway advisers, personalised support, diagnostic tools	Active follow-up rate, duration of support	Stability of pathways, reduction in dropouts	The two regions
Support for the informal productive sector	Short technical training courses, access to microcredit, organisation into groups	Rate of access to finance, cooperatives established	Increased incomes, better organisation	Sub-Saharan priority
Development of self-employment	Business start-up programmes, post-start-up support, mentoring	2-year survival rate, repayment rate	Sustainable businesses, reduction in early failures	Both regions
Revamped vocational training	Certification modules, work-based learning, accreditation of prior learning, informal partnerships	Post-training employment rate, recognised skills	Improved employability, rapid integration	Both regions
Equality and inclusion	Targeted initiatives for women and young people, removal of barriers, local services	Proportion of female beneficiaries (>50%), reduction in gender gaps	Reducing inequalities, integrating vulnerable groups	Both regions
Localisation	Local assessments, local authority partnerships, decentralised branches	Areas covered, active partnerships	Better-targeted policies, local coordination	The two regions
Information system	Light surveys, mobile data collection, dashboards	Geographical coverage, update frequency	Better market knowledge, responsiveness	Sub-Saharan priority
South-South cooperation	Exchange of best practices between the Maghreb and sub-, cross-training,	exchange missions carried out, shared tools	Strengthened capacities, adapted models	The two regions

Strategic focus	Priority actions	Key indicators	Expected outcomes	Regional relevance
	inter-African centre			

Methodological note: The proposed indicators must be collected in a disaggregated manner (by gender, age, geographical area, type of activity) to enable monitoring that is sensitive to inequalities. The recommended frequency of data collection is half-yearly for process indicators and annual for impact indicators. The last column indicates the sub-region for which the priority is most immediate, without excluding the other.