

Learning Brief

Strengthening Skills Anticipation Systems and Processes



The purpose of this Learning Brief is to share the experiences of countries that went through process of planning for strengthening Labour Market Information and Skills Anticipation Systems. This document describes: *How it was done? Who was involved? What good practices were applied? What were the challenges and lessons?*

This learning brief provides an overview of the action planning underway in some countries to address this issue. It all begins with analyzing the situation, formation of appropriate teams, development of action plan and strategizing to make things happen. These four key elements are central to effectively strengthening systems that deal with information in labour markets.

Process of Strengthening Labour Market Information Systems



The following processes apply to all four elements



Social dialogue and coordination involving consultation and exchange of information amongst key labour market actors such as workers, training institutions, people who are looking for jobs and employers.



Building capacities of labour market actors

1. Understanding Skills Anticipation and its links to Labour Market Information System.
2. Understanding Sector-based Skills Anticipation Methodologies.
3. Understanding Measuring Skills Mismatch.



Learning and knowledge sharing on the importance of anticipating labour market skills needs, and guidance to systematically identify and address future skills needs to avoid potential gaps between skills demand and supply.



Situation Analysis: *What's going on?*

In the countries that are participating, a situation analysis was conducted to understand the existing labour market information and skills anticipation systems, practices, capacities and institutional arrangements. Independent consultants were appointed to review, analyze the environment and produce reports. Findings from the situational analysis provided the basis for development of interventions to strengthen countries' labour market information and skills anticipation systems and practices.

How it was done



The methods of collecting necessary information for conducting a situation analysis included interviews with key labour market actors. In addition, there was consultation with various labour market actors through key informants, interviews and focus group discussions, surveys and other engagements. Additional information came from the review of existing literature on the subject.

Who was involved



The process involved engagements with key labour market actors including workers and employers from both formal and informal sectors and government ministries and departments. Students, academic and research establishments were also involved in the process. Furthermore, government ministries and departments, civil society organisations, training institutions and Apex bodies (employers', workers' and other labour market-related associations).

Good Practice



Good practices were identified through the situation analysis process. This included the existence of sectoral bodies that foster social dialogue in Ghana, the understaking of regular skills audits in Eswatini, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The implementation of the skills anticipation component also generated good practice such as the establishment of National Task Teams.

The use of wide array of data collection methods were applied which include surveys, questionnaires, face-to-face meetings and online engagements. Information and Communications Technology platforms like Zoom, WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams enhanced communication, coordination of activities particularly in view of the COVID-19 induced restrictions and recording of the dialogues were used.

Lessons Learnt



During the information gathering process, it was learnt that good relations and understanding of institutional processes is essential for successful implementation of activities.

Timeous and adequate resource planning is critical for effective completion of project activities up to the point of ensuring ownership.

Information that was gathered by independent consultants often came in different formats or at times fragmented. It was found necessary to have standardized formats for information exchange and other processes to minimize incompatibility issues and translation delays.

Example in Zambia

In Zambia, key informant interviews and focus group discussions with labour market actors and skills development actors were held in five provinces, namely; Lusaka, Southern, Central, Luapula and Eastern Province. During consultation process, physical and virtual meetings were conducted to gather information leading to the development of the [Mapping of Existing Labour Market Information and Skills Anticipation Institutions, Data Infrastructure, Capacities and Approaches](#).



National Task Teams: *The driving force behind everything*

The next stage in the process of the establishment of inter-ministerial and tripartite plus National Task Teams to drive the implementation of activities including the development of country level National Action Plans. Establishment of task teams with this diversity of stakeholders was important for ensuring a coordinated approach to implementing skills anticipation related activities.

How it was done



The National Task Teams were led largely by the Ministries of Labour and in certain cases co-chaired by the Ministries of Education. The task teams met regularly to prioritize areas of action, develop related interventions and to coordinate implementation of actions aimed at strengthening Labour Market Information and Skills Anticipation Systems and Practices. The task teams were operating under clearly defined Terms of References.

Who was involved



Establishing task teams involved consultations with government ministries and departments, civil society organisations, training institutions and labour workers, employers and students associations. The composition of the task teams varied between 11 to 15 members in each country.

National Task Team Tripartite-plus and Inter-ministerial

Country level tripartite



Employers' Organization



Government
Labour & social welfare, higher & tertiary education, science & technology, industry & commerce, statistics agencies



Workers' Organization

Collaborators



Academic institution



Policy research institution



Private sector Apex Board

Good Practice



The practice of appointing technical people to the task team ensured that appropriate skills and competences were readily available for the execution of project activities.

The inclusive approach to building the task teams widened the knowledge base and made it possible to capture wider views from the different stakeholders.

Lessons Learnt



Ensuring a common understanding the concept of Labour Market Information and Skills Anticipation made it possible for the task team members to operate at the same level. This reaffirmed the important role that capacity enhancement plays in improving development outcomes.

It is important to include the interests of all key stakeholders in the execution of task team functions. The inclusion of a broad labour market actor base reduced these shortfalls in setting up most task teams.

Case of Ghana



The Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations led the process in setting up the task team by firstly appointing its staff to lead the process. Thereafter, the ministry held a National Stakeholder Conference to inform key labour market actors about the process of building the task team and gather feedback and nominations. Ghana appointed the same consultant that conducted the Situation Analysis to continue working on action planning with the envisaged task team. The task team was handpicked and appointed and thereafter, capacity building workshops were conducted in Zanzibar, Tanzania, and via online sessions.

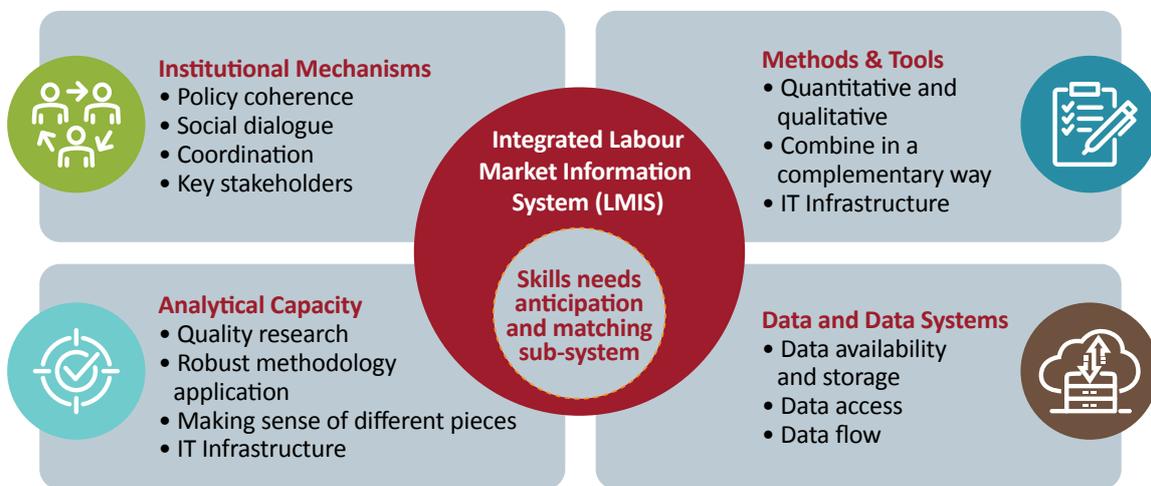


Action Planning: Strategies put in place

After the task teams were formed, they went on to develop National Action Plans. Action plans set the direction for the strengthening of labour market and skills anticipation systems. An integrated labour market system has a Skills Needs Anticipation and Matching sub-system which has four components.

The Institutional Mechanisms component focuses on improving the coherence of policies, social dialogue and coordination of activities. An integrated system will also require high levels of analytical capacities that enable the design of relevant solutions for labour markets. The methods and tools to apply involve a combination of quantitative and qualitative information gathering. Data quality and ease of access for all labour market actors allows for more informed decision-making. All these components require the use of appropriate information technology infrastructure.

Four components of an integrated labour market information systems



How it was done



After the inauguration and capacity building, the task teams worked with the independent consultants on drafting the action plan. This began with the drafting of the work plans that guided the task teams on deliverables, activities, timeframes and resource requirements.

Multiple sessions were held in drafting of the action plans that included collating and reviewing of information through consultative processes. The task teams finalized and submitted the action plans to the relevant labour ministries for implementation.

Who was involved



As mentioned earlier, the task teams were tripartite-plus and Inter-ministerial committees made up of representatives from government ministries and departments, workers, employers and labour market actors.

Good Practices



The task teams drafted the action plans based on the situational analysis and other reliable information. The involvement of the same consultant who prepared the situation analysis ensured continuity and clarity on action planning. This knowledge sharing enriched activity and process outcomes.

Work plans were developed before anything was done in order to ensure the smooth flow of the process of drafting action plans. The work plans helped to monitor performance, coordinate activities and allocation of resource requirements.

Lessons Learnt



Support country task teams to implement measures deriving from the respective national action plans. Skills anticipation is a new concept and in most countries that are investing in it the benefits are becoming visible. This gives rise to the need for continued support in participating countries to keep the fire going and also attract others to come on-board the Skills Anticipation drive. It is important to implement action plans so that stakeholders appreciate Skills Anticipation and share the desire to develop systems to strengthen their capacities to deal with mismatches/asymmetries.

An example of such support could be direct support by stakeholders in a country to give the political and social drive towards skills anticipation systems and get the work done. In the long run, direct Government funding towards this will result in sustainable systems that overcome labour market challenges. In addition, development partners may also contribute resources and technical assistance leveraging on existing programmes that share the same outcomes.

The choice is always up to the stakeholders of any country on the approach and intensity of efforts towards strengthening skills anticipation skills and it is important that there is shared responsibility and desire to succeed.

Collect, assess, and disseminate evidence to support for knowledge sharing, to build trust and to leverage financial assistance. Knowledge sharing is essential for continuous development of Skills Anticipation capabilities. The documentation of the development of systems should be articulate to allow systems to evolve from past experiences and lessons learnt along the way by creating a Community of Practice, adding to AUC/AUDA-NEPAD's toolbox and the [ASPYYE platform](#) (but also to those of other stakeholders and partners). This could also assist in planning the activities and processes that may achieve the desired impact and outcomes of systems. This Theory of Change can serve as justification when leveraging on additional development partner support and funding. It could also help with choosing where to pilot certain activities, what kind of support activities are needed, how additional resources could be sourced.

Use the political consensus forged among AU as a commitment device to mainstream and scale skills anticipation. Many results of the project align well with strategic and operational goals of the AU and its Member States. It is recommended to continue efforts to highlight the relevance and benefits of skills anticipation, mainstream skills anticipation and to reconfirm the political commitment to invest into related activities. This will include setting skills-anticipation on the agenda in future high-level meetings such as the AU Summit and share experiences in skills anticipation at continental level.



Piloting the elements of the action plan: *Putting into practice*

When action plans were completed, the Governments took the responsibility to implement them. In those countries, pilot solutions targeting labour market information and skills anticipation systems are being rolled out. These are being done to demonstrate how action plans can improve the systems for various sectors of the economy. Each economic sector has unique needs for its labour market systems and these pilot projects aim to pinpoint and strengthening them on a case-by-case basis.

How it was done



World-over there are many methodologies applied in strategizing the implementation of action plans. For each component of the action plans, methodologies were selected for pilot implementation. For example, some countries chose the institutional mechanisms component to start off with. Others focussed on analytical capacities to identify skills mismatches.

Workshops were held where governments guided on the selection of priority sectors and value chains inline with their National Development Strategies. Out of these workshops, experts were appointed to draft strategies. Now that the strategies for these countries have been developed, what remains is the application of the methodologies chosen for the different component of the action plans.

Who was involved



Participants to the piloting of the action plan included the task team members as well as interest groups from the selected sectors. For example, in Zimbabwe, the workshops for the horticulture sector were attended by representatives of the farmers and value chain intermediaries like marketers, retailers, financiers, inputs and equipment suppliers and other service providers.

Good Practices



Some of the good practices are retaining the same task team members from the action planning. These promote continuity and consistency throughout the process. In addition, inclusive consultative workshops are being conducted to choose which component to begin within the participating countries. This enables buy-in from the labour market actors in these countries.

The methodologies selected to apply in piloting the action plan are globally appreciated. The advantage of using tried and tested approaches is in high success rates.

Lessons Learnt



Some of the pilot strategies had to be designed in a rushed manner thereby increasing the possibilities of mistakes and omissions. In future, adequate advance planning is critical to avoid rushing through processes.

The consultative processes for piloting the action plans involved new labour market actors with limited knowledge or awareness of its background and broader objectives. This necessitated fresh introductions of concepts that frustrated those who had already gone through them. Going forward, aggressive awareness campaigns should be rolled out across a broader demographic base to ensure that more labour market actors know what's happening.

Case of Ghana and Zimbabwe

[Skills for Trade and Economic Development \(STED\) methodology](#) is used to align skills development to the development of priority sectors in an economy. Capacity building was done with representatives from members states attending Training in Zanzibar, Tanzania.

In Ghana, STED Rapid Foresight Workshop was conducted to apply STED methodology to the Apparel, Garments and Textile sector. The end result of the STED methodology application was a Sector Skills Strategy for the sector. For broad stakeholder engagement, sector body representatives from across the value chain attended the workshop which ensured that everyone involved has a voice and a greater understanding of the skills needs.

In Zimbabwe, Sector Selection Consultative Workshop was conducted to identify a key priority sector to apply [STED methodology](#) in order to promote economic development inline with the country's vision 2030. Resultantly, the Horticulture sector was selected. The University of Zimbabwe an academic institution was appointed to conduct a Sectoral Review Study and develop a Sector Skills Strategy.



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