



WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Welcome to the second edition of LERASA's Newsletter for 2021, a publication that includes information highlighting important information relevant to Labour and Employment Relations in South Africa.



LERASA NEWSLETTER

ILERA 9th Africa Regional Congress 26 - 29 September 2021 Mpumalanga, South Africa

About ILERA 9th Africa Regional Congress

LERASA together with ILERA will be hosting the 9th ILERA Africa Congress from 26 - 29 September 2021 in Mpumalanga, South Africa.

The world of work and employment relations are being reshaped by crucial developments across the globe; globalisation, protectionism, digitization and the Fourth Industrial revolution (4IR), rising unemployment, inequalities and poverty, and the struggle for decent and sustainable work. The COVID-19 pandemic overlaid with other social, economic and political crises has had unprecedented labour market disruptions and devastating impact on people's lives, an impact unparalleled in modern history.

Workers have suffered job losses as a result of work closures, temporary and remote work, working hour losses and decrease in labour income. This has worsened an already dire situation in Africa enduring faced high levels of poverty. For example, in Sub-Saharan Africa the poverty level has been high over a long period, measuring 46% in 1990 and 41% in 2015 (World Bank, 2020; Addae-Korankye, 2014). According to ILO data, in the second quarter of 2020 Africa lost an estimated 15.6% of working hours, translating to 60 million jobs, as a result of the pandemic (ILO Monitor, 6th edition, September 2020). It has further exacerbated vulnerable groups particularly the youth. Youth informality rate is the highest in Africa at 93.4% (ILO Monitor,

4th edition, May 2020) and 70.1% of these are in self-employment, reducing their chances to escape poverty. Relative poverty rates are expected to increase from 21% to 83% as result of COVID pandemic, and social protection coverage for the youth sector is only 17.8%. Women have suffered disproportionately the impact of COVID-19, with women-dominated sectors being hardest hit by the crisis. Some authors have described the pandemic a “virus of inequality” (Oxfam briefing paper, 2021), increasing the divide between rich and poor, employed and unemployed, regressing the gains achieved in racial and gender equality, decent work and other progressive achievements.

In Africa, the pandemic has exacerbated existing challenges of migrant work, declining trade union and employer organisation membership, limited social protection coverage, growing informal economy, gender disparities and pressures on the public sector, particularly frontline workers.

How governments and social actors respond to the labour market challenges is of critical importance, an impetus for solidarity across boundaries for unified, sustainable and innovative solutions.

Against this background, the ILERA African chapter calls for papers to address challenges in the world of work, employment relations, labour law, social protection and (labour) migration from academics, practitioners across disciplines, including governments and social partners across the African continent.

Congress Theme:

“Challenges facing employment relations, labour law and social protection to reduce poverty, inequality and unemployment in Africa, in the wake of a global pandemic”

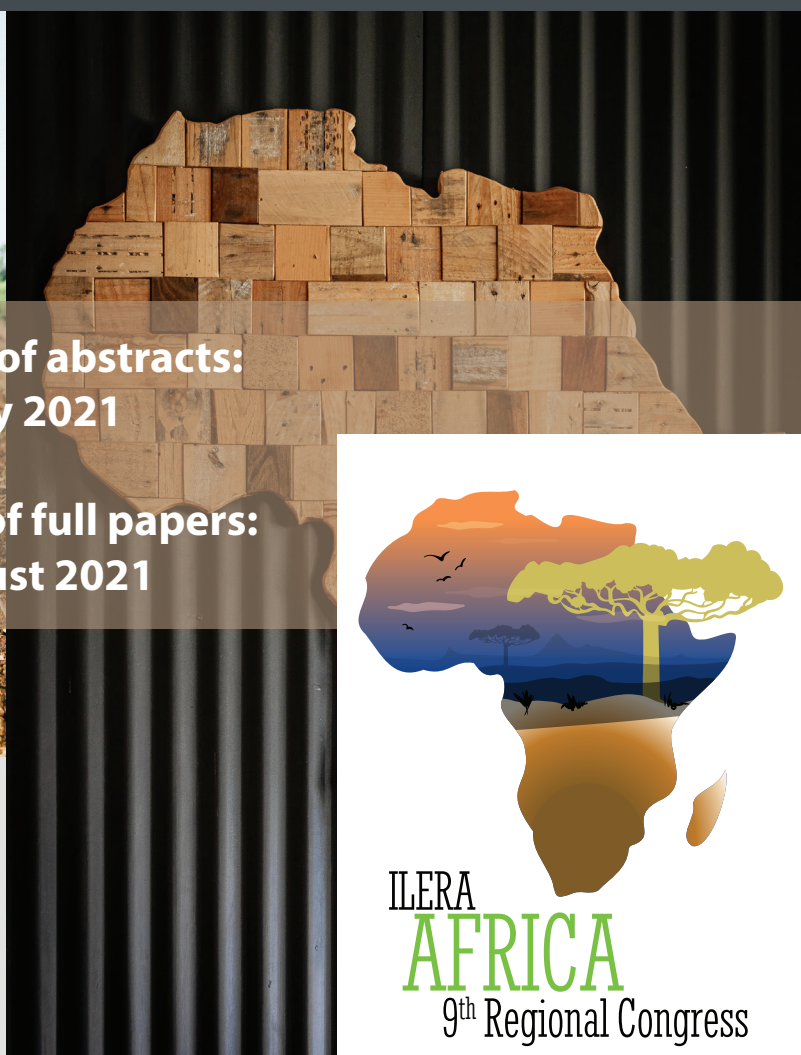


Submission of abstracts:
15 July 2021

Submission of full papers:
16 August 2021

Contact:

abstracts@pscbc.org.za



Feedback: 19th ILERA World Congress

21–24 June 2021

The International Labour and Employment Relations Association (ILERA) was established in 1966 and its general purpose is to promote the study of labour and employment relations throughout the world in the relevant academic disciplines, by such means as:

- encouraging the establishment and development of national associations of labour and employment relations specialists;
- facilitating the spread of information about significant developments in research and education in the field of labour and employment relations;
- organising worldwide and regional congresses; and
- promoting internationally planned research, by organizing study groups on particular topics.

On 21 - 24 June 2021 the International Labour and Employment Relations Association (ILERA) hosted its 19th World Congress from 21 -24 June 2021 on a completely virtual platform.

The Congress was hosted under the theme: "Making and Breaking Boundaries in Work and Employment Relations."

For more than 50 years, ILERA, has promoted the study of labour and employment relations throughout the world and the 19th World Congress ensured this continuation through providing and serving as a vital global platform for; the gathering scholars, social partners, policy-makers, and other stakeholders to engage and exchange ideas and best practices.

The holding of an international congress of this nature is by no means an easy task. LERASA



would like to extend its congratulations to the Association for presenting such a fruitful congress together with an all encompassing programme with superior content. We look forward to attending future successful Congresses hosted by ILERA.

LERASA would further like to extend its heartiest congratulations to Ms Sharlaine Oodit on being elected to serve on the Executive Committee (EXCO) of International Labour & Employment Relations Association (ILERA). This is indeed a remarkable and momentous achievement that we are very proud of.

We are confident that with her vast experience, coupled together with qualifications within the labour relations fraternity, she will make a great contribution towards ILERA. We look forward to working closely together with her to further strengthen our relationship with the Association and to advance our common objective of promoting labour and employment relations.

Ms
Sharlaine
Oodit



ILO Global Wage Report

2020 - 2021

Wages and
minimum wages
in the time
of COVID-19

ISBN 978-92-2-031945-1 (web pdf)



International
Labour
Organization

Preface:

The world has been profoundly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. More than a million lives have been lost, social and economic activity has been disrupted, and the livelihoods and well-being of millions of people worldwide are threatened. The ILO has estimated that the equivalent of 345 million full-time jobs were lost in the third quarter of 2020. In spite of the promising development of vaccines, the crisis is far from over.

This year's ILO Global Wage Report – the seventh in the series – presents the emerging empirical evidence of the effects of the crisis on wages. Part I of the report documents a downward trend in the level and/or growth rate of average wages in two thirds of the countries for which data from 2020 were available. Ten years ago the second report in this series looked at wage policies at the time of the global financial and economic crisis. This time – much more so than during the 2008–10 period – governments have taken unprecedented action to counteract the economic and labour market impact, including through temporary wage subsidies, extending social protection and providing support to keep businesses afloat. Likewise, central banks across the world have intervened with expansionary monetary policies to stimulate economies. These measures have allowed millions of wage earners to retain all or part of their incomes.

Despite these measures, the economic and employment consequences of the COVID-19 crisis are likely to exert further downward pressure on wages in the near future. Hence, if economies are to return to a path towards sustained and balanced economic growth, wage developments will need to take into account the need both for incomes and aggregate demand to be supported and for enterprises to remain successful and sustainable. Constructive social dialogue will be key to success in achieving this goal.

In March 2020 the UN Secretary-General called for action to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on people's livelihoods and well-being. He also emphasized the need to build back better. If we are to lay the foundations for a "better normal", integrated policy responses will be required that focus on people and on what they need in order to build, or rebuild, their livelihoods and make a decent life. The 2019 ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work, with its human-centred agenda, speaks directly to this need.

Part II of the Global Wage Report follows up on the ILO Centenary Declaration's call for "an adequate minimum wage, statutory or negotiated". It provides an empirically based description of minimum wage policies across the world and shows how minimum wages, when well-designed and applied, can become an effective tool to protect workers from unduly low wages while also reducing inequality.

Currently, 90 per cent of ILO Member States have minimum wage policies in place, either statutory or negotiated through collective bargaining. However, 266 million wage earners are paid less than the minimum wage, either because they are not legally covered or because of non-compliance. The report analyses the characteristics of minimum wage and sub-minimum wage earners and finds that women, young workers, workers with lower education, rural workers, and workers with dependent children are all over-represented. These are some of the groups most vulnerable to the current labour market crisis and minimum wages should play a vital role in enabling them to weather such difficult times. Unfortunately, minimum wages are not always set at adequate levels or in consultation with the social partners and are not always adjusted regularly. Most of the workers receiving less than the minimum wage are in the informal economy where they are not protected, or only partly so, by legal and regulatory frameworks.

This highlights the need for minimum wages to be accompanied by measures to formalize the informal economy, if they are to achieve their full potential as a policy device.

Part III of the Global Wage Report suggests a number of policy measures that can help implement minimum wages effectively. Together with the empirical evidence presented earlier in the report, these are intended to provide policymakers, social partners, academics and stakeholders with a valuable source of information and contribute to the urgently needed, human-centred recovery from COVID-19 in the world of work. Appropriate and time-bound wage policies will play an important role in achieving this goal, and the ILO stands ready to provide its support to Member States.

Guy Ryder
ILO Director-General

Read the full report published by the ILO here:

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_762534.pdf

“The world has been profoundly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. More than a million lives have been lost, social and economic activity has been disrupted, and the livelihoods and well-being of millions of people worldwide are threatened. The ILO has estimated that the equivalent of 345 million full-time jobs were lost in the third quarter of 2020. In spite of the promising development of vaccines, the crisis is far from over.”





How to maintain your company culture while working from home

Culture is the heart of your organisation. It's a combination of your business's values, mission, and goals - and it's a long time in the building. In this remote work environment, sustaining organisational culture becomes even more important and reaching everyone in various locations is even more challenging.

Leadership plays a critical role in cultivating an environment of productivity, safety and belonging that brings the entire team together, regardless of where we might be. For several companies flexible and remote working had already been on the cards, but the real world applications required deeper consideration.

So how should a company foster a positive culture for remote employees?

Share your company values

Values are the core pillars guiding your organisation and need to be at the forefront of your employees' minds. For remote employees, company values are a concrete understanding of how your organisation operates and how you create a positive work environment.

It's important to add values to the company website and ask values-related questions from the hiring process. In times of remote working, instituting a weekly email roundup keeps employees feeling integrated and up to date.

Improve communication

One of the largest obstacles to culture in a remote working world is communication and connection. Because everyone is working from different locations, it's easy for things to fall through the cracks. Building better connections builds trust which in turn helps to build culture.

You may wish to establish communication norms to ensure clarity, including chat best practices, response time frames, and email etiquette. Setting communication standards will prevent people being barraged with messages, reduce interruptions, and make communication easier.

These strategies to improve communication can build and maintain your remote culture:

- Give people the opportunity to share what they do and don't like about the current culture and ways to improve it. This could be done through survey feedback.
- Equip people with appropriate tools, and real-time chat applications to enable more seamless communication.

Build camaraderie and avoid isolation

Part of traditional organisational cultures is the environment employees work in. Typically, this is the office space, including open floor plans, breakout rooms, canteen and coffee areas.

Distributed and remote working makes it a challenge to not only form, but preserve a sense of camaraderie typically developed around the 'watercooler.'

These are some ideas of ways to build camaraderie:

- Fun chat channels: Use Slack and Microsoft Teams to start channels for employees to bond over mutual interests such as movies, pets, and fitness.
- After-hours or late afternoon virtual socials: Team cocktail hours, which may include things like games or simply touching base with each other.
- Lunch break wellness activities: Take time at lunch and try to consistently exercise.
- Brunch / lunch learning activities: Short and sharp key learning lessons which focus on the softer skills that are important to navigate times of uncertainty.

Rethink feedback

Feedback remains an important part of building a trust culture. In a distributed workforce, changing the face of feedback will see important strides in continuing to build connections. A few things to consider are:

- Getting to grips with what creates a negative feedback experience or the fear related to feedback and cultivating changes in team behaviours linked to feedback.
- Creating a team feedback framework.
- Sharing your own feedback as a leader with your team – based either on your experience over time or in the moment.
- Make feedback conversational and not an event – always leading with positive intent.

DR Hayley Haupt
Issued By: Bizzcommunity

"Leadership plays a critical role in cultivating an environment of productivity, safety and belonging that brings the entire team together, regardless of where we might be. For several companies flexible and remote working had already been on the cards, but the real world applications required deeper consideration."

Don't forget about your employees during a crisis...



In the first South African study to explore the crisis communication needs of employees specifically, University of Stellenbosch Business School (USB) MBA graduate Leana Kotze highlighted that, in an organisational crisis, "An employee-centred approach is good for employees, and for organisations too."

Environmental disasters, corporate fraud, product failures, the disruption wrought by a global pandemic: any of these can propel an organisation into crisis communication mode, but in the drive to manage the fall-out and protect their reputation, companies often neglect to talk to their most important stakeholders – employees.

The uncertainty, insecurity, fear and anxiety that go hand-in-hand with a crisis impact negatively on employee productivity and engagement, and in turn affect the organisation's performance, yet research shows that employees' needs are often ignored in a crisis.

Executives tend to prioritise communication with external stakeholders such as the media, shareholders, affected communities and government, but neglecting employees' needs not only hinders productivity and performance, it can also backfire on external crisis communication efforts when

staff share their negative views with other stakeholders or on public platforms.

Practical guidelines

Employees need to make sense of a crisis through clear, relevant, useful and consistent communication; they need practical guidance on how to continue doing their jobs; and they need to believe that the employer is showing care and consideration for them, and listening to them.

Kotze said that while managers were aware of the need for communication in times of crisis, it was mostly viewed from the perspective of senders such as senior executives with little attention paid to what employees actually needed from their organisations.

Employees tend to have stronger and more complex relationships with the organisation than other stakeholders, and they are "ambassadors" for the organisation who interact with and influence other stakeholders – hence the need for a tailored and employee-centred approach to crisis communication, Kotze said.

Her research provides new insights into employee crisis communication in South Africa and offers practical recommendations for managers to optimise

internal crisis communication in a more employee-centred way.

Kotze said her study was motivated by a “dearth of both local and global research” on internal crisis communication, particularly in relation to the needs of employees.

“Internal communication has a significant influence on employee engagement, which in turn positively influences their productivity and organisational commitment. This makes internal communication an indispensable element of crisis management, as ineffective communication can significantly worsen a situation that is literally a matter of life and death,” Kotze said.

Focus group feedback

She conducted separate focus groups with senior executives and with employees, drawn from a number of organisations that had previously experienced crises.

“A surprising finding from the feedback of both executives and employees was that South African organisations actually do aim to follow an employee-centred approach to internal crisis communication, and that managers actively strive to understand and meet employees’ needs through internal crisis communication.

“This is a departure from previous research in other countries which found that organisations often ignore employees’ needs during a crisis. Albeit from a small sample, it might suggest a progressive approach by South African organisations, and it warrants further research,” Kotze said.

Her research found that employees have a strong need for “sensemaking” – the process of gathering and processing information to understand and make sense of a crisis, and find meaning, direction and purpose for moving forward. They expect their employers to provide that information and will turn to the grapevine instead if they don’t, causing a risk of unfounded rumours and misinformation spreading.

Consideration and useful, relevant instruction

“Employees want communication that they deem clear, relevant and useful. To be relevant and useful, information should enable employees to do their jobs, help them understand how they and their work are impacted by the crisis, and tell them how to act in response to the crisis,” Kotze said.

Crises are perceived as a threat and they spark fear, she said, and “employees need to believe that the leadership is in control and need to be made aware of what management is doing to manage the crisis.”

A further need is for care and consideration, a need that is met when employees feel their voices are being heard and when the organisation shows that it is acting with consideration for employees.

Kotze recommends a number of guidelines for managers to consider in developing an employee-centred approach to internal crisis communication:

- The most important information that organisations should provide to employees is about the impact the crisis will have on their job security, salary, and related issues. If this information is incomplete or not yet available, the organisation should communicate openly as to the reasons, and assure employees the information will be provided as soon as it is available.
- Internal crisis communication messages must be consistent, and the organisation’s actions must line-up with what has been communicated.
- Managers should make use of surveys, questionnaires, feedback platforms and personal interaction to “ask and listen” to employees’ needs. This should include physical or virtual platforms where employees can air grievances and raise concerns within the organisation.

- Employees should have options to engage anonymously with the organisation.
- Showing care and consideration goes beyond asking and listening, and organisations should take concrete actions aimed at meeting employees' needs, addressing their emotions and reactions to the crisis, and showing that they care.
- Employees know that business must go on in the face of a crisis, but don't want to feel that the organisation is prioritising its own interests and performance over the needs of human beings. Communication that encourages work to go on is necessary, but must show sensitivity to the impact of the crisis on the ground.
- While communication and visibility from the senior leadership is essential, the organisation should also deploy direct line managers and supervisors in the communication effort, as they are closest to and most credible to their teams and can play a key role in gauging sentiment, facilitating collective sensemaking, and giving feedback to the organisation on employees' needs and concerns which can be used to refine ongoing communication.
- Meetings within teams or departments are important to facilitate collective sensemaking, where employees can discuss the crisis and its impact, and share information with colleagues they are familiar and comfortable with.
- As much as employees want information, they also don't want "information overload" which can overwhelm and cause further anxiety or confusion.

"If managers strive to follow these guidelines in developing their internal crisis communication approach, this research suggests that employees will react positively. This positive reaction and the satisfaction of employee needs will ultimately benefit the organisation in terms of employees' identification with the organisation, their trust in the organisation, and increased or sustained engagement and productivity.

"Organisations will enjoy similar benefits if leadership is clearly displayed during a crisis and if the organisation makes employees aware of the tangible actions it has taken in the face of the crisis," Kotze said.

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VISION

To become a vibrant Organisation enhancing Employment Relations through debate and dialogue.

MISSION

- To facilitate an ongoing forum for constructive relationship building
- To deal with themes of relevance to the South African Employment Relations community
- To enhance the understanding, knowledge and practices of Employment Relations at National, Regional and branch levels in South Africa



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