

LERASA NEWSLETTER

WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

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



ILERA 9th Africa Regional Congress 13-17 September 2021, Mpumalanga, South Africa

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”

About ILERA 9th Africa Regional Congress

LERASA together with ILERA will be hosting the 9th ILERA Africa Congress from 13 - 17 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.

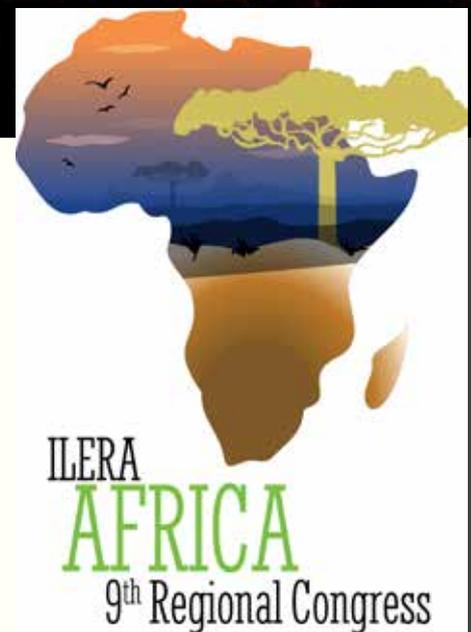
Workers have suffered job losses as a result of work closures, temporary and remote work, working hour losses and decrease in labour income. This has worsened an already dire situation in Africa enduring faced high levels of poverty. For example, in Sub-Saharan Africa the poverty level has been high 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.



13 - 17 September 2021!

We will inform you of further updates on the congress!!

World Employment and Social Outlook: The role of digital labour platforms in transforming the world of work: International Labour Office – Geneva: ILO, 2021. | v

Preface:

Technological innovation is transforming every part of our lives. The ability to quickly and cheaply exchange large amounts of data and information has laid the foundations for the rise of the digital economy and digital labour platforms. In both developed and developing countries businesses and consumers have embraced this transformation, as services and goods are delivered in ways that are cheaper and more convenient. Digital labour platforms are now part of our everyday lives.

This transformation extends to the world of work. Digital labour platforms offer new markets for businesses and more income-generating opportunities for workers, including those who were previously outside the labour market. Such platforms are leading to changes not just to the organization of enterprises and work processes but in many cases to the relationship between workers and businesses as well.

It is widely considered that the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated changes that were already under way, both in society and at work. These include the expanded use of digital platforms and related technological innovations like cloud computing and the use of big data and algorithms. The result has been innovative ways of working, and flexibility for both workers and businesses. The remote working arrangements adopted by many during the past year have brought a rise in e-commerce, e-services and online freelance work. For many who lost their jobs, in both developing and developed countries, digital labour platforms have offered opportunities to earn some income. Many businesses have relied on digital labour platforms to keep operating, reach new markets and reduce costs.

But there are challenges. This new business model allows platforms to organize work without having to invest in capital assets or to hire employees. Instead, they mediate between the workers who perform the tasks and clients, and manage the entire work process with algorithms. Workers on digital labour platforms often struggle to find sufficient well-paid work to earn a decent income, creating a danger of working poverty. Many do not have access to social protection, which is particularly concerning during a pandemic. They are frequently unable to engage in the collective bargaining that would allow them to have these and other issues addressed.

This report is the first major attempt by the ILO to capture the experiences of workers and businesses with digital labour platforms. It is based on surveys and interviews with 12,000 workers in 100 countries, and with 70 businesses, 16 platform companies and 14 platform worker associations operating in multiple sectors and countries.

To address the challenges raised by this new way of working, many governments have taken regulatory steps to tackle issues such as the employment relationship, health and safety standards and inadequate social protection. Private, non-state actors and employers' and workers' organizations have also taken initiatives. However, variations in these regulatory responses have created further challenges. The matter is made more complex because many digital labour platforms operate across multiple borders and jurisdictions. The result is regulatory uncertainty for workers, businesses and governments alike.

Digital labour platforms have the potential to benefit both workers and businesses– and through them, society more generally. But they will only fulfil this positive potential, and help us achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, if the work opportunities they provide are decent. Ensuring that all workers, irrespective of their contractual status, are covered by key labour standards will be critical, as will social dialogue.

A clearer understanding of the operation of digital labour platforms, and a more effective and consistent approach to them, are therefore essential. There is a need for international policy discussions and coordination, which could lead over time to that clearer understanding and a more effective and consistent approach to digital labour platforms worldwide.

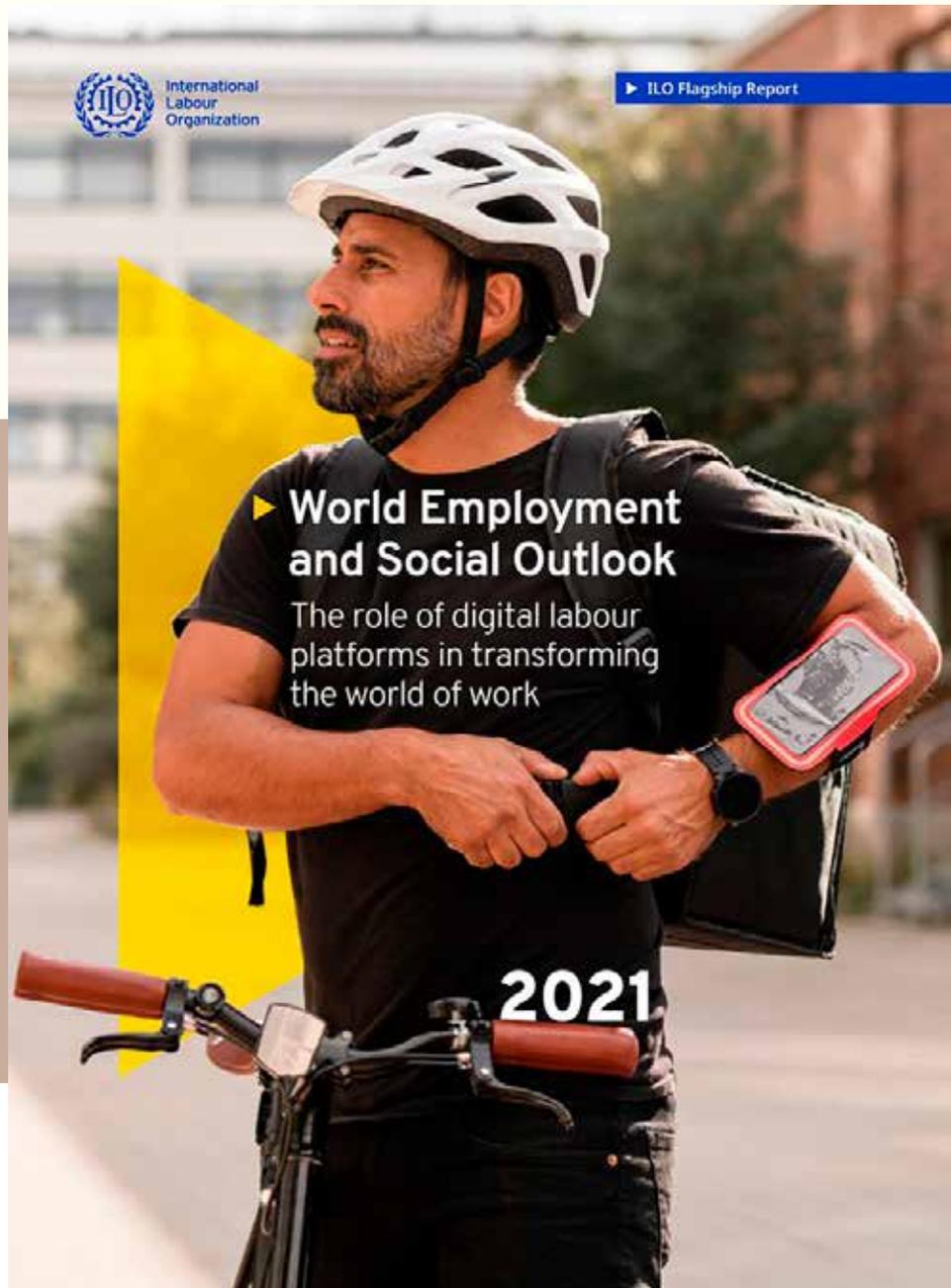
Guy Ryder
ILO Director-General

Read the full report published by the ILO here: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_771749.pdf

“Digital labour platforms have the potential to benefit both workers and businesses– and through them, society more generally. But they will only fulfil this positive potential, and help us achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, if the work opportunities they provide are decent. Ensuring that all workers, irrespective of their contractual status, are covered by key labour standards will be critical, as will social dialogue.”



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Employers' responsibility and the Covid-19 vaccine situation in SA

South Africa has experienced two waves of Covid-19 pandemic with a third one possibly happening in this coming winter.

The infection rates seem more significantly widespread and highly infectious with a new variant compared to early and mid-2020. Until recently the only way to stop and slow down the spread of the pandemic was to stop all social and economic activities globally for an indefinite period while research for a cure or vaccine was being done. Although South Africa is currently in level one of lockdown, the previous levels and period of lockdown has since resulted in massive disruption in businesses, which will take years to recover, if at all. The disturbance has led to permanent shut down of many businesses, which were not resilient to financial losses and socio-economic disruptions. To avert the situation, many companies tried to cope by adopting the 'work-from-home' concept, thus trying to run offices and administration jobs remotely.

Exposure to the virus can occur at the workplace, while travelling to work, during field work as well as on the way to and from the workplace. The risk of contracting Covid-19 in the workplace depends on the likelihood of coming in close contact with or having frequent physical contact with colleagues infected with Covid-19, as well as through contact with contaminated surfaces and objects. It is of utmost importance to minimise the risk of exposure in the workplace as it is a central point and likely a super spread site as we have people coming from all corners having greater chances of coming

into contact. Exposure risk varies from low to high and these ranging with telesales personnel having minimal risk while transporting people and medical care have the highest risk.

In response to Covid-19 pandemic, global efforts have successfully developed advanced quicker means of testing for the virus and developed vaccines. The South African government publicised its Covid-19 vaccine roll-out plan on 7 January 2021. The plan has been effectively executed with over 100,000 health workers vaccinated first before those who have lower infection risk. In businesses where it has been impossible to do remote working, employers may introduce workplace policies which formalise mandatory testing and vaccination to restore operations to normalcy. Some employers may also wish to consider the introduction of workplace policies requiring mandatory vaccination as a precondition for ongoing employment.

Considering the impact of Covid-19 on employers and employees in the private sphere, the prospect of early vaccination is particularly attractive. However, the subject of compulsory vaccinations is argumentative and there are significant legal and moral facets that must be considered. There is lack of legislation that requires vaccinations, employers will need to do detailed analysis in assessing the risk of requiring their employees to be mandatorily vaccinated. Any mandatory vaccination policy could violate section 12 of South Africa's Constitution, together with section 187(1)(f) of the Labour Relations Act of 1995, which guarantees everyone

the right to employment equity and bodily integrity.

In conclusion, considering all the above it is more effective for employers to educate and share as much information as possible about the Covid-19 vaccines with their employees. They should encourage them to be vaccinated and take responsibility for the health and safety of their employees, rather than making it a mandatory employment requirement. Instead it has to be mandated that employers make Covid-19 vaccine information and actual vaccination a part of their employee wellness programmes. This will help ensure a healthy workforce, as well as reduce absenteeism due to illness. Employers can also paste information posters on advantages of vaccine and also vaccination centres in and around their workplace.

Persuade Makore,
Issued By: TR Brand Communications & Events



"Considering the impact of Covid-19 on employers and employees in the private sphere, the prospect of early vaccination is particularly attractive. However, the subject of compulsory vaccinations is argumentative and there are significant legal and moral facets that must be considered. "



Evolution of workforce skills demand - what the future holds

When reflecting on the fourth industrial revolution, or Industry 4.0, a number of things immediately spring to mind. These include the industrial internet of things (IIoT), artificial intelligence (AI), robots and 3D printing for example. Regrettably, little attention is given to individual employees and workers in this emerging industrial world, unless one is discussing the concerns related to potential job losses.

Significantly, many experts are in agreement about the fact that the transformation which is currently underway will surely result in net job creation, as opposed to loss. They do note that different skills will be required, and on the whole, employees and workers of the future will need to be more skilled. As automation and digitalisation advance, it is inevitable that the number of physically demanding or routine jobs will decrease, while the number of jobs requiring adaptable responses, problem-solving, and customisation will increase.

It is interesting to note that the Covid-19 pandemic has played a significant role in accelerating the transition to the automation revolution. Organisations are emerging from the crisis into a world of social distancing and with resulting changes in customer behaviours and inclinations. While recovery is forcing organisations and manufacturing companies to reconfiguring their supply chains

and production lines, service organisations are adapting to emphasise digital-first customer journeys and contactless operations.

Although it is near impossible to see into the future and predict the course of every occupation, there are certain skills that can assist in safeguarding your future career opportunities, as well as your current role. While many traditional skill sets, such as technology and finance will remain in high demand, there is a rising demand for employees and job candidates to attain the soft skills that cannot be automated. These include emotional intelligence, effective communication, conflict resolution, critical thinking, problem-solving, and innovation.

In addition to these soft skills, there is also an increasing need for workers and employees who possess the hard skills to utilise, build and innovate these future technologies.

Hard skills required for 2021 and beyond

As we look to the future, the hard skills that many employers will require are largely based on data analysis and technology. Now more than ever before, organisations are receiving massive amounts of data and employing tools to convert that data into business intelligence and insights. We at ManpowerGroup SA have identified the following hard skills which will be in great demand in 2021 and beyond.

1. Blockchain proficiency

Blockchain development has generated numerous job opportunities for tech enthusiasts and developers. A blockchain developer is someone who possesses a number of skills in areas such as cryptography, data structures, algorithms, and computer networking. Blockchain developers are also responsible for developing smart contracts, web apps, and blockchain protocols.

2. Cloud computing

With the demand for cloud computing skills on the rise, an ever-increasing number of companies are adopting cloud services. With that growth, comes the demand for cloud professionals who will engineer and manage the technology.

3. Analytical reasoning

For those who are not particularly interested in the fundamental engineering aspects of tech, most companies are seeking analysts who can convert endless amounts of data predictive analytics, or insights that can effectively guide business decisions.

4. Artificial intelligence (AI)

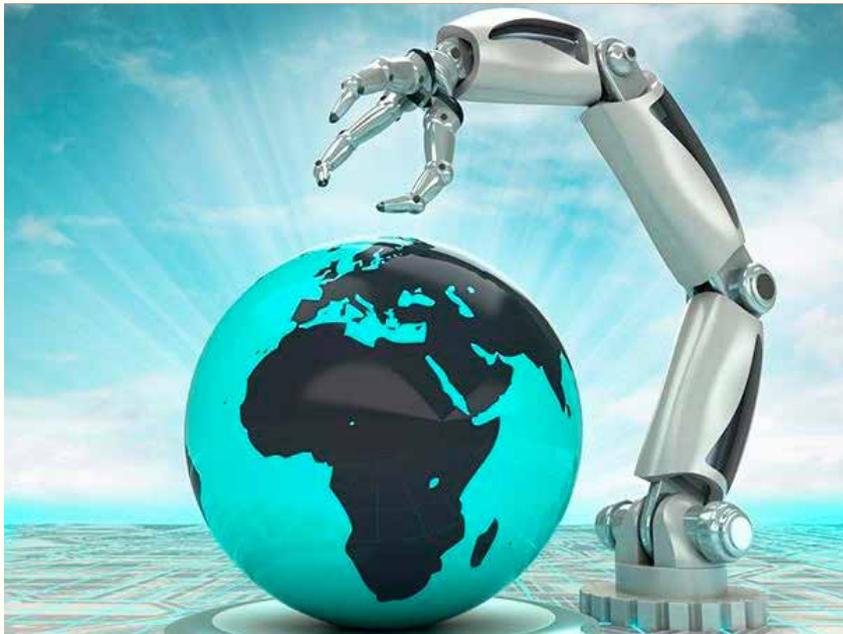
As companies search for new ways in which to support and enhance their workforce through machine learning and data analysis, AI provides incredibly powerful possibilities. Whether it be in the fields of business analysis, predictive algorithms and metrics, or networking with end-users, AI really is the future of business across all industries. Individuals who are capable of developing more intuitive AI systems and harnessing the power of machine learning will continue to be in high demand.

5. User experience (UX) design

Although most users might not always take notice of an app's user experience (UX), they are likely to detect when it is bad, slow or awkward. Considering the amount of commerce and business that is conducted via online platforms, individuals who are able to design and enhance first-class user experience are highly desirable.

The key to supporting the development of the required soft and hard skills in the workforce of the future is the provision of access to information and building a culture of continuous learning.

By: Lyndy Van Den Barselaar
Managing Director at Manpower Group South Africa



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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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