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▶ Guidelines on the setting-up of effective job centres in developing countries with reference to Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa regions

Eamonn Davern and Michael Mwasikakata



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Main title: Guidelines on the setting-up of effective job centres in developing countries with reference to Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa regions

ISBN: 9789220360880 (web PDF)

Also available in French: Directives portant sur la création d'agences pour l'emploi performantes dans les pays en développement, notamment d'Afrique subsaharienne et du Moyen-Orient et d'Afrique du Nord,

ISBN: 9789220361160 (pdf Web)

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Printed in Switzerland

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Preface

These Guidelines on how to establish job centres (employment service centres) were developed in response to calls from the International Labour Organization (ILO) constituents and the YouMatch Project partner countries in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) regions. YouMatch is a project that was implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The publication provides guidance for the respective countries in these regions and form part of a series of ILO guidelines developed for different regions around the world.

There is increasing awareness and recognition of the important role employment services play in the implementation of national employment and labour market policies. They support the creation of productive and decent jobs particularly for the youth, enhance matching efficiency (improved quality and pace) between labour supply and demand, promote inclusion and equality, and cushion vulnerable groups during economic and structural adjustments.

The Guidelines could not come at a better time than this when ILO Member States seek to implement the ILO Centenary Declaration with support of the ILO to “further develop its human-centred approach to the future of work through strengthening the capacities of all people to benefit from the opportunities of a changing world of work through effective measures to support people through the transitions they will face throughout their working lives”. Employment services, primarily delivered through Public Employment Services (PESs), in collaboration with private and third sector actors, form part of the key institutions that support life course transitions in the labour market.

The creation of gainful employment for the unemployed, underemployed, youth and the numerous labour force entrants is the major preoccupation of governments and stakeholders in SSA and MENA. This is particularly important for these regions given the potential ramifications on peace and social cohesion. The ILO is supporting many countries in these regions to address the employment challenge through the development and implementation of national employment policies, youth employment strategies and labour market policies. PES is being developed and strengthened, and in some countries, is being consolidated with youth employment institutions so that national employment policy objectives can be implemented more effectively.

The Guidelines provide an overview both of the context and state of employment services in the SSA and MENA regions and the steps to be undertaken when establishing and strengthening PESs. Although the focus is on PES, the target is the delivery of publicly funded employment services through public, private or third sector organizations. The main audience is policy-makers and technical officials at all levels in PES and in ministries responsible for labour, private employment agencies (PrEAs), business and third sector actors that implement employment services. The Guidelines are accompanied by the detailed ILO/YouMatch Toolkit which was published by GIZ.

The ILO and GIZ are confident that the SSA and MENA constituents, as well as those in other regions, will find them useful and a source of inspiration as they augment the important cause of creating gainful and decent employment.

Acknowledgements

These Guidelines were prepared by Eamonn Davern (Independent Employment Services Expert) and Michael Mwasikakata (ILO). The authors would like to thank the members of the YouMatch Communities of Practice on Setting up Job Centres and Public Private Partnerships for Employment Services who contributed information, provided inputs at different levels of the development of the Guidelines and reviewed an earlier version.

The valuable support provided by the YouMatch team in reviewing the manuscript and arranging for editing, layout and formatting is acknowledged. Special thanks go to Lyn Brown for editing the manuscript and new office GmbH for undertaking the layout and formatting of the document.

The Guidelines were developed as part of the ILO cooperation with the Global Initiative on Innovative Employment Services for Youth – YouMatch, implemented by GIZ on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Acronyms and abbreviations

AFD	French Development Agency (Agence Française de Développement)
BA	German Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit)
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GmbH)
ILO	International Labour Organization
IT	Information Technology
LMI	Labour Market Information
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PES	Public Employment Service
PrEA	Private Employment Agency
SamPES	Self-assessment method for Public Employment Services
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SMART	Specific, measurable, realistic, achievable and timebound
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TNA	Training needs analysis
TWA	Temporary Work Agency
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
WAPES	World Association of Public Employment Services

1. Introduction

Public Employment Services (PESs) have been one of the main instruments in the developed world for the implementation of government employment and labour market policies. Although some developing countries established PESs in the aftermath of World War II (for example, India), many of these became inactive either owing to changing labour market conditions/policy priorities or structural adjustment policies in developing countries following the oil crises. However, the situation is changing, and many developing countries are now resuscitating or developing new PES systems to address the escalating employment challenges – particularly for groups disadvantaged in the labour market such as the youth, women and people with disabilities. In the SSA and MENA regions, PESs are seen as part of a holistic policy and programmatic solution to address high unemployment among youth and women, as well as low quality of formal employment. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defined PES as government institutions that plan and execute many of the labour market policies that governments use to help workers enter the labour market, facilitate labour market adjustments, and cushion the impact of labour market transitions¹.

However, PESs in most countries in these regions are institutionally weak and under-resourced. They face significant challenges such as from growing populations, high unemployment, a large informal economy and low wages. The PES mandate in contributing to dealing with these challenges is to ensure the smooth functioning of the labour market. This requires the availability of good labour market information (LMI), provision of professional job search assistance, career advice and placement services, well-managed labour market programmes, facilities for the (re-)training and upskilling of citizens, appropriate administration of unemployment benefits, and inclusive and fair delivery of services.

In SSA and MENA there is a requirement to focus on job intermediation for both jobseekers and employers, assisting transitions from education into work, tackling low skills/skills mismatches, reducing high graduate unemployment, ensuring productive rural to urban migration and helping microenterprises develop. Job intermediation is also required to support the transition from an informal to a formal economy, and to tackle inequality through supporting vulnerable groups (such as people with disabilities).

Job centres, or employment service centres², are the main operational apparatus for PESs; there is a growing demand for knowledge on how to set up and efficiently run PESs to deliver client-focused services. They form part of a wider support service ecosystem involving a range of support agencies who should contribute to the provision of complementary services. Developing job centres requires coordination, a systematic approach and careful planning. These Guidelines are a response to this need. They draw on good practice from PES delivery models and related literature to address the issues involved in establishing effective job centres in SSA and MENA countries. PES staff at various levels can use the Guidelines as an information and training resource, and senior management can use them for strategic planning and ensuring that their PES addresses current and future needs of stakeholders. The Guidelines also have a crucial role in defining the PES strategy and can assist in providing a high-level framework for effective and efficient delivery of services that operationalize the employment policy. PES middle management with day-to-day responsibility for front line operations can use the Guidelines to help ensure that local delivery units meet their objectives promoting optimal returns from available resources. Front-line PES staff can access information contained in the Guidelines to support their role in interfacing between jobseekers and employers. The document can also support individual PES staff in enhancing

¹ ILO, 306th Session of the Governing Body, 2009.

² The term “job centre” is used throughout these Guidelines. Note that “job centre” is synonymous with “employment service centre”, and these names are used interchangeably in countries to describe local PES offices.



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the quality of service they provide – including registration services at initial contact, and more intensive support through casework with jobseeker clients who experience barriers to labour market integration.

Chapter 2 of the Guideline lays out an overview of the mandate for employment services. It also provides the legal and policy framework for these services, including the key ILO international labour conventions and recommendations, the organizational framework for PES and their role in the implementation of the respective national employment policy frameworks. The chapter also discusses the implications of, and potential PES responses to, the COVID 19 pandemic.

Chapter 3 briefly describes the state of employment services in the SSA and MENA regions and highlights the main labour market challenges these countries need to surmount in finding solutions.

Chapter 4 highlights a conceptual framework for the establishment of job centres and describes a service offer protocol. The chapter first presents key steps to be taken and issues to be considered when setting up the job centres under four key intervention areas: employment services design and client management; job centre structure and processes; performance management and stakeholder cooperation; and public-private partnerships. The second part of the chapter focuses on the centre structure and processes, including service delivery and performance management. The implementation procedures described under the four key intervention areas are further elaborated in the accompanying ILO/YouMatch Toolkit **Setting Up Effective Job Centres in Developing Countries with Reference to Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa Regions** (see Annex 1).

The concluding chapter (**Chapter 5**) provides a high-level synthesis of key strategic issues to be considered that will enable strengthened and modernized employment services and which maximize employment objectives within the two regions.

Chapter 6 provides a comprehensive list of references, as well as additional resources that include guidelines and toolkits.

2. Mandate and frameworks for public and private employment services

The mandate for employment services – and public services in particular – usually stems from international normative instruments, as well as national/local legal and policy frameworks. The international instruments relate mainly to the ILO conventions and recommendations. The conventions are open to ratification by ILO member states and become binding on the ratifying states while the recommendations provide guidelines for application and are not open for ratification; they are further not binding on member states³. National legislation

in the form of acts of parliament, decrees or proclamations and subsidiary legislation, such as regulations and directives, provide the necessary mandate for the operation of public and private employment services. These also regulate the cooperation and coordination of actors in the labour market. Countries that have not yet ratified the conventions can voluntarily apply their provisions. In addition, broad employment policies – and employment services policies in particular – provide operational guidance for PES and other employment service providers.

► 2.1 Normative framework for international labour standards

The main international labour standards that provide the normative framework for public and private employment services are the Employment Services Convention, 1948 (No. 88) and the Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181)⁴ and the accompanying Recommendations No. 83 and No. 188, respectively. Other relevant international instruments include the [Employment Policy Convention, 1964 \(No. 122\)](#) and the associated [Recommendation](#) No. 122. These provide the overall framework for

national policies to promote full and productive employment; the [Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy Recommendation, 2015 \(No. 204\)](#), and the [Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 \(No. 205\)](#) provide further guidance⁵.

We summarize below the key features of the two main conventions; the other conventions can be referred to directly on the ILO Nomlex database by clicking on the hyperlinks provided above. It

³ In practice, depending on the country context, countries may need to first domesticate the conventions after ratifying before they can be used as law domestically.

⁴ Three earlier conventions: Unemployment Convention 1919 (No. 2), [Fee-Charging Employment Agencies Convention, 1933 \(No. 34\)](#) and [Fee-Charging Employment Agencies Convention, 1949 \(No. 96\)](#) are considered outdated and are being considered for abrogation under the ILO's Tripartite Standard Review Mechanism (SRM).

⁵ Convention No. 122 provides a broad policy framework for employment promotion while its accompanying recommendation among other things emphasises the importance of employment services and active labour market policies as part of selective measures to address unemployment challenges arising from structural and cyclical unemployment. Recommendations Nos 204 and 205 provide a framework for the role of employment services and active labour market policies/programmes for facilitating transitions to formality and for promoting peace and resilience through employment and decent work.

is important to note the historical evolution of the acceptance of for-profit Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) as partners in the support of functional labour markets. There has been a gradual relaxation from the total prohibition of for-profit PrEAs (Convention No. 02 in 1919 and Convention No. 34 in 1933) to optional prohibition or regulation (Convention No. 96 in 1949) and finally to full acceptance (with the adoption of Convention No. 181 in 1997). The conventions provide for appropriate regulatory mechanisms that protect workers from abuse while levelling the playing field for providers.

2.1.1 Employment Services Convention 1948 (No. 88)

Article 1 of Convention No. 88 elaborates the essential duty of PES as “ensuring, in cooperation where necessary with other public and private bodies concerned, the best possible organization of the employment market as an integral part of the national programme for the achievement and maintenance of full employment and the development and use of productive resources”.

Acknowledging the need for PES to provide accessible services with adequate geographical coverage, Article 2 notes that the PES network should be sufficient to serve each geographical area of a country, conveniently located for employers and workers, and should be revised whenever a review shows this to be necessary.

Article 6 details the purpose of PES activity as:

- assisting workers to find suitable employment, and employers to find suitable workers, through registration, obtaining information on vacancies from employers, referring applicants to suitable jobs, and when appropriate referring applicants and vacancies between employment offices;
- taking measures to facilitate occupational mobility, geographical mobility, temporary mobility to adjust short-term disruption to labour market supply or demand, and movement of workers from one country to another if approved by governments concerned;

- collecting and analysing labour market information (LMI);
- co-operating in the administration of unemployment insurance and other measures for the relief of the unemployed;
- assisting as necessary other public and private bodies in social and economic planning to improve the employment situation.

At the operational level, the Convention calls for the possible specialization of PES staff according to sectors and occupations and special labour market groups like the youth and people with disabilities. Furthermore, the convention commits governments to ensuring the independence and professionalization of PES staff, free from political interference and change of administrations. It also promotes cooperation with not-for-profit PrEAs.

2.1.2 Private Employment Agencies Convention 1997 (No. 181)

The Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181) enhances public-private cooperation by building on ILO Conventions No. 34 and No. 96. It epitomizes the progressive recognition of the role of PrEAs can play in a functioning labour market and reinforces the basis for PES/PrEA cooperation. A necessary corollary to this is the need for adequate protection of workers against abuses. The purpose of Convention No. 181 is therefore to allow the operation of PrEAs, as well as the protection of workers using its services (Article 2).

PrEAs are defined in Article 1 as organizations falling into three distinct groups: (a) offering services for matching offers of, and applications for, employment without being a party to the resulting employment relationship (Temporary Work Agencies (TWAs⁶)); (b) employing workers to make them available to a third party (user enterprise); and (c) offering services related to job seeking determined by the competent authority (and which do not set out to match specific employment applications or offers).

⁶ There are many terms coined to refer to temporary agency work with the workers being referred by titles including temporary agency workers, temporary employment service (TES) workers and dispatch workers.

Article 2 defines the purpose of Convention No. 181 as allowing the operation of PrEAs and the protection of workers using its services. To protect workers in general (and particularly those employed in triangular relationships involving user enterprises – definition b), the convention puts in place various checks. Article 7 prohibits PrEAs directly or indirectly charging any fees to workers⁷. The article also prohibits discrimination of any kind except for positive discrimination. Freedom of association must be guaranteed, and temporary agency workers enjoy all the fundamental principles, rights, conditions and privileges in the working environment as the directly recruited workers. Furthermore, the state regulates the allocation of responsibilities for liability between PrEAs and user companies in respect of all the conditions and rights mentioned above.

Article 13 outlines a policy framework that promotes closer collaboration between PES and PrEAs and calls for countries to establish and periodically review conditions to promote PES–PrEA cooperation. However, the public authority retains responsibility for decisions on the formulation of labour market policy and implementation budgets. It also describes the important regulatory role of the PES (if the competent authority). This includes obtaining information for statistical purposes and ensuring that PrEAs operate in accordance with national conditions and practices.

► 2.2 Legal and policy framework in the SSA and MENA regions

A credible legal mandate is necessary for the PES to lawfully operate and have legitimacy and acceptance among the population and clients. Most countries in the SSA and MENA regions⁸ have national laws in the form of Acts of Parliament or Decrees that provide due mandate, and which are similar to those of more developed economies elsewhere. In some countries in the SSA and MENA regions, the mandate of PES organizations is much broader – including responsibility for the development and implementation of national or target group (such as youth) employment policy. The National Employment Fund⁹ in Cameroon and the National Employment Agency¹⁰ in Benin have mandates that are comparable to the German Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur

für Arbeit (BA)) and Russia’s Federal Service of Employment and Labour (Rostrud). Given the importance of the youth in the labour force, many countries in francophone Africa have converted their respective PESs into national youth agencies, such as Senegal’s National Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment¹¹.

The Palestinian Fund for Employment and Social Protection for Workers has a broad mandate that is targeted at youth. The National Employment Agency in Kenya comes close to the overall employment policy mandate model in English-speaking Africa, while South Africa, Tanzania, Morocco, Tunisia and Namibia are examples of PES mandates restricted to the implementation

⁷ Exceptions are allowed for certain categories of workers or types of services if this is in the interests of workers and after consultations with employers and workers. A country is obliged to give reasons to the ILO for such exceptions.

⁸ Malawi does not have a legal framework for PES in place, while in Rwanda the PES legal framework is very weak. PES in both countries emanated from the general mandate of public service laws and administrative procedures.

⁹ <https://www.fnecm.org/index.php/contacts>

¹⁰ https://anpe.bj/?option=com_content&view=article&id=9%3Astatuts-de-l-agence-nationale-pour-l-emploi-anpe&catid=35&Itemid=119

¹¹ <http://www.jo.gouv.sn/spip.php?article10193>

of national employment policies that relate to labour market intermediation, employability enhancement and facilitation of employment creation.

The choice made by countries on the target audience reflects their respective prevailing

labour market challenges such as sectoral employment challenges and the predominance of unemployment among groups including the youth, graduates and women. It may also reflect the prioritization of resources where government does not have adequate fiscal capacity.

► 2.3 Organizational framework and management structure

Job centres do not exist in a vacuum; rather, they are part of the overall employment service framework, with the ministry responsible for employment usually being the custodian of the policy, cascading down to an administrative body responsible for PES operations at national, regional and local (field office) levels. The conceptualization and development of such an organizational structure are important for ensuring coordination of activities, standardization of services across the country, timely and adequate flow of information between field offices and the head office. Such structure is also essential for establishing clear targets and a performance management framework. The organizational framework may also determine the feasibility, type and success of partnerships that deliver employment services and enhance employability in collaboration with public, private or third sector operators (see for example ILO 2017).

Broadly, there are three models of organizational structure for PES: (a) as part of the ministry responsible for employment and labour as a separate function (the most prevalent set-up) or within the labour administration framework; (b) as a semi-autonomous body with a legal personality and some financial independence but accountable to the ministry responsible for employment (the ministry may also influence staffing and operational decisions); (c) an independent and autonomous body managed by a board of directors with government providing policy objectives and oversight for their achievement. Examples of PES that is placed within the ministry responsible for labour and employment include the United Kingdom's Job

Centre Plus in the Department for Work and Pensions, Mexico's National Employment Service under the federal Secretary for Labour and Social Welfare, China's PES under the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, Ethiopia's PES under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and Uganda's PES under the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. Semi-autonomous PESs are becoming more prevalent, with associated PES reforms taking place in many countries. Examples include Kenya's National Employment Agency, Tanzania, Senegal's National Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment and Tunisia's National Agency for Employment and Independent Work. However, PESs with a fully autonomous status remain few and far between. Examples that closely resemble the model are Germany's BA and in Africa, Benin's National Employment Agency. Recent research on PES in the SSA and MENA regions (Davern 2020) shows that 40 per cent of the 15 countries that responded to the study's survey questionnaire had semi-autonomous status, while over half had a PES that forms part of their Ministry of Labour.

Another consideration when establishing the PES is the extent to which the system is locally decentralized. A centralized PES, where all major decisions on operational requirements, target setting and financial and performance management are determined from the central level may provide a more systematic implementation of standardized services. It may also enforce standardized performance across the country. Alternatively, decentralized systems may be more conducive to locally customized services appropriate to the needs of the population and labour market realities. Decentralization may

also improve ownership and staff motivation and hence efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery; such a PES may also provide field offices with decision-making autonomy on financial management (such as whether services are funded and delivered internally or through third parties) and operational issues (for example, deciding on the type of programmes to offer to the unemployed). South Africa, Namibia, Tanzania, Morocco, Malawi and Rwanda operate centralized systems. In contrast, China, Uganda and Kenya operate decentralized systems. However, in the absence of strong institutions and administrative capacity at the local level, devolution may create challenges for PES development. For example, in Kenya and Uganda, labour administration tends to be neglected at the county and district levels, and in China, unequal service delivery is a concern¹².

The involvement of social partners in PES operations is critical to ensuring the buy-in of employers and workers so that services are provided that respond to constituents' needs. It is also important that social partners collaborate in the implementation of applicable programmes. ILO Convention No. 88 requires ratifying member states to consult with representatives of employers and workers organizations in PES policy-making, operations, and in the development committees. The practice has been to create tripartite PES governing bodies where employers and workers can have equal rights of representation. Examples of countries with such bodies in the SSA and MENA regions include Tanzania, Namibia, South Africa and Morocco.

The choice of organizational and management model depends on national circumstances; there is no evidence that one model is a priori better than the other. However, recent evidence (Davern 2020) in the SSA and MENA regions showed that PES modernization (especially using information and communications technology), has often occurred in countries where the PES has a separate legal identity from its supervising ministry. This is often in the form of an agency operating under a tripartite governance structure with input from social partners. In this regard, the institutional setting of some PESs may have been a factor in their progress. A governance structure that formalizes stakeholder input, and has employment policy that is focused on operations and delivery could facilitate such positive developments.

Conversely, there has been a great reduction in resources for PES in anglophone African countries, particularly since the inception of Structural Adjustment Programmes in the 1980s. The challenges of PES in many of these countries reflect the "vicious circle" described by Schulz and Klemmer in their 1998 ILO report, as having a perpetually low capacity and ineffective services. The PESs were also noted to have a poor reputation among jobseekers and employers.

Many of the PESs struggle to secure resources when they are integrated but are not prioritized in labour ministries. In such cases, PESs can only provide the most basic services, and services may be downgraded even further when resources are redirected to other functions such as labour inspection.

► 2.4 PES role in national employment policy implementation

The ILO describes the mechanism for implementing, monitoring and evaluating employment policy as being supported by two inseparable systems: (a) Public Employment Services (PESs); and (b) Labour Market Information (LMI) systems.

As PES networks mature, they can make a vital contribution to assessing the impact of, and progress on, implementing employment policies as defined in national employment policies or plans.

¹² In 2018 the Chinese Government issued guidelines for all-round strengthening of PES in the country with special attention to inequalities across regions and between urban and rural areas.

The National Employment Policy in Namibia highlights the political commitment to reform and recognizes the important role of the PES as a coordinating body for policies and programmes for the active labour market. The policy is also an agent for improving labour market operation that enhances social and economic inclusion. However, despite strong commitment from government to improving services, this has not resulted in substantially increased investment.

With necessary government support, well-established job centres can be a tool for delivering essential components of effective employment systems such as efficient counselling, data collection, employment policy advice, job matching and placement. Along with LMI systems, job centres support the delivery of employment policy and they provide a tool for monitoring the impact of relevant policies.

The PESs in Cameroon, Benin and Senegal have explicit mandates to implement national employment policies, in most cases targeted at the youth. These PESs have a more secure and established position within their countries' administrative systems compared to those in many other African countries. This may contribute to the higher profile these organizations have when compared to other PESs, potentially placing them in a stronger position to make the case for resources to support an increase in their remit and capacity.

LMI systems are supported by microdata collected from job centre activities. The systems underpin the centre activities by providing essential information for staff, as well as for jobseekers and employers. Through the PES, LMI systems further provide a framework for service delivery planning and client support for the individual jobseeker.

► 2.5 Public Employment Service in the context of COVID-19

Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic has created significant disruptions for labour markets and even if a vaccine is found, these disruptions may persist in the medium and longer term. Many enterprises placed people on short-term contracts or made workers redundant with the outbreak of the pandemic; these measures were extended or reinstated in the context of the subsequent waves that have affected many regions.

The massive disruptions in the global economy and labour markets have compelled PESs to increase their agility and flexibility. They have had to adapt delivery and operations to maintain service and up-scale capacity to cope with the soaring demand for critical services.

At the operational level, effective service continuity plans have been instrumental in ensuring operational continuity, maintaining staff morale and safety, and coping with additional demand from essential services sectors. The plans have enabled timely adjustments in human

resource and systems capacities.

Furthermore, technology-based delivery channels have proven necessary for ensuring PES offices have been able to continue providing core (essential) services. PESs that had already embarked on digital transformation before the COVID-19 crisis were in a better position to ensure remote access to services despite the enforced physical distancing protocols. Investing in service digitalization should be considered a priority for PES, along with necessary measures to ensure inclusivity (ILO 2020c)¹³.

In the global context, certain countries' PESs have established specific portals for supporting rapid occupational and physical reallocation of workers, rapid recruitment in essential sectors and moving of various services online. Examples of countries where this has been done include China, India, Uruguay and Russia.

Both PESs and PrEAs are important labour market actors that need to perform vital

¹³ https://www.ilo.org/employment/Whatwedo/Publications/WCMS_753447/lang-en/index.htm

functions, including ensuring that the labour market continues to operate during the crisis, and contributing to recovery once emergency measures are eased. Employment services providers also need to continue to deliver essential services despite the lack of face-to-face contact and increased client demand. It is particularly important to ensure that unemployed people continue to look for work, even if the number of vacancies has reduced.

Labour market analysis (see Scarpetta et al. 2020) suggests that the short-term impact of COVID-19 has been to shift labour demand

across sectors and regions, and this could lead to permanent reallocations. PESs thus need to deal with increased demand for their services while assisting with the demands of reallocating jobseekers between occupations (and possibly regions).

PESs need to be agile in their operational response to these circumstances but must also obtain adequate LMI to assist their planning; they further need to have access to skills training that will equip their clients to adapt to labour market changes.

3. Public employment services and active labour market policies

This chapter provides details on PES and active labour market policies for the SSA and MENA regions.

► 3.1 Status of employment services

The key role of PES is as a labour market facilitator (Koeltz and Torres 2016); PES thus provides the context and conditions to improve the chances of jobseekers finding employment. However, the principal responsibility for finding work remains with the jobseeker, and finding a worker remains the responsibility of an enterprise (Koeltz and Torres 2016).

3.1.1 Labour market transparency

Labour market transparency is a key feature of functioning labour markets. Even though technological change is increasing labour market transparency (Leroy and Struyven 2014), in developing countries there is insufficient transparency on both the demand and supply side of the labour market (Mazza 2017; ILO 2014, 2016). This lack of transparency is an obstacle to economic growth, improved wages and more

secure employment. It therefore constitutes a major impediment to social inclusion. The limited extent of digitalization and weak labour market institutions (especially PESs) are significant factors that impede the functioning of labour markets. Amid such poor-quality information, employers rarely advertise vacancies; this is combined with inefficient – and frequently unfair – hiring practices. In some cases, the labour market is characterized by nepotism (and sometimes politicized hiring), as well as ineffective matching that acts as a drag on productivity and results in particularly slow transitions (Mazza 2017).

Mixing of formal and informal job search networks is an accepted, and generally positive feature of labour markets in developed countries. Such mixing is only perceived to be a problem if this serves to reinforce or institutionalize existing disadvantages. In developing countries, informal networks predominate and hiring data is extremely limited (and is frequently non-existent).

Angel-Urdinola et al. (2010) in a World Bank survey of active labour market policies in MENA countries found “[via] friends” to be the overwhelming response to a question about how people found a job. Similarly, the school-to-work survey undertaken by the ILO (ILO 2010, 2014) found that consulting friends and relatives was the predominant job search method for the MENA region. However, compared to other regions including SSA, employment services were better established in the MENA region. On average, 32 per cent of the respondents in the ILO survey were registered at a centre, with women being more likely (at 41 per cent of participating women) than men (at 24 per cent of participating men) to use the employment centres. There was also a variation between the countries sampled, with half of the respondents (and two thirds for women) in Tunisia using employment services compared to 23 per cent in Egypt (ILO 2016). In SSA, the sample in the 2016 ILO study contained countries with particularly weak employment service institutions at the time; only 9.5 per cent of the respondents were registered at centres. However, reforms and investment in Tanzania’s PES have helped in building trust among jobseekers. This was evident in that 44 per cent of the unemployed respondents were

registered at centres. Although friends, relatives and acquaintances remained the predominant job search method in Tanzania, this reliance was on average much lower than in the MENA region.

The Márquez and Ruiz-Tagle (2004) study on recruitment in Venezuela found workers in the informal sector more likely to use informal job-seeking networks and be locked into low-paid, informal and precarious work. Garcia and Nicodermo (2013) in a study in Colombia found informal recruitment networks to be particularly concentrated in poorer neighbourhoods, reinforcing a cycle of poor-quality jobs. Contreras et al. (2007), studying employment patterns among indigenous people in Bolivia, found an especially serious gender imbalance in informal job search networks. Women (especially those with greater domestic responsibilities) found it particularly difficult to access the type of formal recruitment networks which could provide them with access to relatively secure salaried employment.

3.1.2 Growing importance and capacity of public employment service¹⁴

Public employment services in SSA (especially in the francophone countries) and MENA have in recent decades gained in importance because they are increasingly seen in these nations as key institutions for supporting poverty reduction strategies and as vehicles for implementing pro-employment policies. The role of PESs has evolved beyond job matching, to include management of public employment and re-employment programmes. They also provide a means for promotion and creation of employment and are increasingly taking up the role of LMI coordination for enhanced labour market transparency. In some cases, their role has been expanded via cooperation with PrEAs regarding national employment policy implementation. In countries with established PESs, there is a trend towards improved client relations through better-quality services and delivery. Localized service offers are also increasing despite resource challenges. Many PESs are taking advantage of technological

¹⁴ This section draws heavily on Alix et al., 2016.

developments to overcome challenges and are offering services to potential clients (certain labour market groups and those in unserved geographical locations) without physical access to centres. The main channels used include mobile phone technology – especially SMSs and job portals (with 12 of the 16 countries reviewed having a job portal). However, most of the portals are still in the early stages of development and offer limited services; there is also a wide variation across countries, with some countries still grappling with reconciling their way of working with new online service offers.

An increasing number of PESs are also involved in strengthening LMI systems in response to increasing demand for national data on the implementation and monitoring of national employment policies. Labour market

observatories are therefore increasingly being developed, either within or independent of PES. Three trends have been observed: (a) countries that have observatories within PES as departments or divisions, for example, Benin, Ivory Coast and Central African Republic; (b) countries in which the observatories are in the process of being decentralized, such as Cameroon and Mali; and (c) countries where the observatories are independent, for example, Burkina Faso and Niger.

In anglophone SSA, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa have labour market observatories within their respective parent PES ministries, while in Rwanda the LMI function is located in the Rwanda Development Board.

► 3.2 Challenges and opportunities for development

3.2.1 Active labour market policies

Active labour market policies have been part of governments' policy packages in SSA and MENA for a long time. Most of the packages include direct (public) employment programmes, training and employability enhancement, and self-employment (Livingstone 1989; Kanyenze et al. 2000). In many countries employment services have gained considerable momentum and traction in the last two decades, particularly in francophone SSA and the MENA region.

In a study on discouraged workers, Kanyenze et al. (2000) stressed the vital role of PES in assisting the integration of unemployed youth in Africa through placement, vocational information and guidance, and LMI. Other studies (notably that of Schulz and Klemmer (1998)) point to particularly low levels of youth registration at employment centres in Africa. Modernized services have therefore been identified as essential for attracting youth, including vocational guidance and individual counselling services.

Recent trends show that active labour programmes are largely implemented as part of

the government national employment policies aimed at creating jobs for the growing labour force. Growth in unemployment is ascribed to low formal job creation in the economy, especially for the youth (see, for example, Alix et al. 2016). While the SSA and MENA regions are still characterized by a multiplicity of actors in the labour market providing overlapping services, there is a positive trend towards better-coordinated institutional frameworks and the provision of active labour market policies and programmes. In francophone SSA, governments have established public organizations for intermediation and promotion of youth employment. Many of these countries are moving towards merging the organizations or strengthening their coordination and collaboration.

PESs are now playing an increasingly key role in the implementation of labour market programmes (particularly training and placement). Alix et al. (2016) note that PESs in francophone SSA (in collaboration with other public and private organizations) are more involved than their advanced country counterparts in the implementation of self-employment programmes.

Studies in the MENA region show that active labour market policies and programmes are implemented by both public and private providers, although in Tunisia and Morocco there is a preponderance of public provision. Over 90 per cent of the active labour market policies and programmes involve training (mainly classroom-based and directed at university graduates), and intermediation services, entrepreneurship and self-employment together account for 9 per cent. The overreliance on classroom-based (rather than on-the-job) training, the focus on hard (rather than soft) skills, and the lack of intermediation services were identified as some of the major weaknesses in these policies (Angel-Urdinola et al. 2013). The focus on the educated workforce in the MENA region means that vulnerable groups are overlooked – including low-income groups, low-skilled people and women (being the focus of only 10 per cent of the privately delivered active labour market policies). For active labour market policies delivered by public organizations, training was still the most popular intervention (comprising a total of 30 per cent) followed by intermediation services. Of particular interest is that some programmes are delivered as a package involving training, intermediation, wage subsidies, start-up incentives and, in some cases, out-of-work income support. Evidence shows that active labour market programmes delivered as a package tend to be more effective than those that are stand-alone. Some active labour market programmes include self-employment, public employment programmes and special interventions targeted at persons with disabilities. Employment incentive interventions are still rare (and are only found in Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan). Their scarcity is likely to be based on high implementation costs; nevertheless, they are likely to grow in importance.

In anglophone SSA, active labour market programmes are scattered across various organisations and PES has played a relatively minor role in programmes other than intermediation, including for foreign employment. Training programmes, self-employment and public employment programmes are the most common, often delivered as stand-alone initiatives by different stakeholders and with little/no coordination. While exceptions can be found in some countries (such as Mauritius and Seychelles), the lack of coordination has led to

their ineffectiveness, duplication and double-dipping by beneficiaries. Nevertheless, there is now increasing realization of the importance of a coordinated approach. For example, in Rwanda, the government developed the National Employment Programme as a coordination framework for the implementation of active labour market policies and programmes. The programme is coordinated at the highest level and brings together seven ministries that hold joint accountability. The active labour market programmes include employment services, labour market training (vocational training, recognition of prior learning, rapid response training) work-based learning, and support for entrepreneurship and self-employment. The latter comprises a wide range of support programmes such as support to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises to develop bankable projects and access to finance, provision of toolkits and production equipment and upgrading of skills and technology in incubation and community centres (Mwasikakata 2017). Nevertheless, the lack of integrated implementation of active labour market policies and programmes is common in Anglophone SSA.

One of the main challenges of implementation of active labour market policies and programmes in SSA and MENA is the inadequate capacity for conducting impact evaluations that can inform programme effectiveness and design (Alix et al. 2016). Active labour market policies and programmes are unlikely to succeed if only focused on short-term negative cyclical employment trends or if they are implemented in isolation from other labour market trends. To succeed (that is, to promote growth, address rigidities and tackle structural labour market bottlenecks), active labour market policies/programmes must provide a bridge to medium- and longer-term employment policies (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) 2005).

The scarcity of resources in Africa means that it is especially useful for directing efforts to fund effective labour market programmes (including PES). Betcherman et al. (2004) identified seven categories of labour market programmes, namely: employment services; training for the unemployed; training for workers in mass redundancy situations; youth training; public works; wage/employment subsidies; and

assistance for self-employment in developing countries. Of these categories, only training programmes for youth were shown to have a positive impact. However, this evidence was based exclusively on studies from Latin America, and insufficient studies have been done to date for conclusions to be drawn on the effectiveness of self-employment.

3.2.2 Challenges faced by jobseekers

Persistently high levels of unemployment and underemployment, poor working conditions, wage gaps and discrimination are some of the challenges faced by jobseekers in developing countries (African Development Bank 2019). Consequently, finding employment does not guarantee decent living conditions in low-income countries.

Five primary employment challenges were identified in developing countries, namely: increasing decent employment; improving youth employment; achieving gender equality in the workplace; responding to the environmental crisis; and, ending child labour.

Difficulties arising from poor working conditions are recognized in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through United Nations SDG 8 which prioritizes decent work for everyone. A 2018 ILO study showed that two billion people, representing 61 per cent of the employed population, were working in the informal economy. Informal work is characterized by no employment protection, a lack of social protection, long working hours, non-compliance with safety standards, and low wages. Developing countries (where most employment is informal) face the challenge of improving conditions in the informal sector while seeking to introduce social protection mechanisms and enforce child labour regulations (ILO 2018).

In 2020, an ILO global study indicated that over 20 per cent of young people (aged 15–24) are unemployed. In addition, they are not receiving training or education and are classified as “not in employment, education or training”. Further, around 126 million young workers live in moderate or extreme poverty (ILO 2020a). The scarring effects of long-term unemployment (and

youth unemployment in particular) necessitates that governments address youth unemployment as a public policy priority. This is recognized by the United Nations Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth which calls for cooperation between public and private actors, the promotion of partnerships, and in particular, information exchange to facilitate effective labour market interventions.

World Economic Forum research undertaken in 2018 showed a 32 per cent global average pay gap between men and women (World Economic Forum 2018); a 2012 World Bank study similarly reported a 26 per cent gap in labour market participation between men (77.7 per cent) and women (51.8 per cent) (World Bank, 2012).

3.2.3 The informal economy

Informal employment continues to grow in SSA and MENA countries, and PESs must therefore adapt their services to meet the needs of workers in the informal sector. Thus PESs have a crucial role to play in supporting strategies to formalize enterprises and jobs.

A 2019 report on the informal economy noted the informal sector to be characterized by worker vulnerability, yet also making a particularly significant contribution to the gross domestic product of developing countries (The Conversation 2019). The sector is thus not necessarily disorganized, and in fact, often forms part of a wider (mostly formalized) supply chain.

It is exceedingly difficult to quantify the informal economy; nevertheless, it should not automatically, or necessarily be associated with shadow, hidden, or illegal markets. Furthermore, some work is classified as informal owing to legislative loopholes and administrative complexities.

While tackling the exploitation of poor informal workers (who often have limited education) is a priority, it is important to recognize that there are also affluent informal workers performing technology-assisted functions. Formalizing employment contributes to greater output and increased wages; however, policy tools that tackle informality need to be carefully developed with input from workers and employers.

The objective of ultimately formalizing the economy and labour market presents a complex

range of issues for policy-makers and challenges for PES. Reform must form part of a broader consideration of rights, social protection and decent work measures. Policy proposals must be considered in the context of local (including environmental and social) considerations; crucially, such proposals must focus on the needs and position of those currently engaged

in informal work, including many who move between formal and informal employment.

► 3.3 Status of groups with a labour market disadvantage

3.3.1 Young people

Young people in SSA and MENA countries suffer considerable labour market disadvantages. The MENA region is particularly affected, with the youth unemployment rate in 2020 in Northern Africa standing at around 30 per cent and in the Arab States at 23 per cent, compared to 9 per cent in SSA (ILO 2020a). Globally, youth unemployment levels are significantly higher than those for adults – more than 3 times the adult rate in 2019 (13.5 vs 4 per cent) (ILO 2020b). The youth population is expected to continue growing over the next decade. Failure to address youth employment issues in Africa will have profound socio-economic and political consequences for poverty, migration and social cohesion. In recognition of the urgency of the youth unemployment situation, the Sustainable Development Goal 8 for Decent Work and Economic Growth has a specific target (target 8.6).

Kolev and Sagel (2005) and the ILO (2006) identified a mixture of supply and demand-side issues that contribute to higher rates of youth unemployment.

► **Last in/first out** – companies often react to macroeconomic downturns by reducing their workforce. Young people generally have less work experience, and if they are the “last in” to companies, they are likely to be the “first out”. With shorter tenure, lower investment from their employers in their training, lower productivity and a higher likelihood of temporary contracts, it is usually cheaper for companies to release young people first,

so they fall into the category of “first out”; this is particularly the case where wages do not adjust (decrease) with increasing unemployment.

► **Lack of job search experience** – young people tend to lack access to LMI and often have insufficient job search experience. In developing countries, informal placements are especially important, typically from family and friends. Young people are less likely to obtain references from past employers but will also be unlikely to have well-developed networks.

► **Inability to shop around** – unemployed youth in developing countries are far less likely than those in more prosperous countries to have an economic support structure that can enable them to spend time finding a job commensurate with their education and skills. They are consequently more likely to take any available job, irrespective of working conditions or whether the job matches their qualifications and competencies. This can be attributed to the lack of comprehensive social assistance systems (especially unemployment insurance benefits and assistance).

3.3.2 Women

Studies show that participation by women in the labour force tends to increase with economic development; however, in a study of female labour force participation in developing countries, Verick (2014) found significant variations to this trend at

the country level, and greater variations between female than male labour force participation. This was attributed to a wide variety of macro and individual economic and social factors including economic growth, education levels and social norms. Female labour force participation was identified as an important driver (and outcome) of growth and development, with women joining the workforce in developing countries as a coping mechanism in response to shocks. However, in developing countries, high female labour force participation rates typically reflect poverty; women furthermore earn less than men and are more likely to be engaged in unprotected jobs, such as domestic work. Education raises both the reservation wage and expectations of women but needs to be matched by job creation.

Gender gaps in participation in the labour market are particularly high in the MENA region compared to SSA (although the precariousness is higher in the latter). According to the ILO Modelled Estimates of 2020 (ILO 2020b), the labour force participation rate for women in the Arab States is 59.3 percentage points lower than that for men (18.2 and 77.5 per cent respectively) while the corresponding figure for the youth is 37.6 per cent. North Africa has similar (although lower) gender gaps than the Arab States at 48.3 and 24.0 percentage points for the total population and youth, respectively. Cultural norms play a significant role in the low female participation rates. SSA displays the highest participation rates for women (62.2 vs 67.9 per cent for men) and the lowest gender gaps among the three subregions. The total gender gap is comparatively low at 11.1 per cent, with an even lower gap among the youth at 5.8 per cent.

Similarly, women face worse labour market conditions than men – time-related underemployment is double the male rates for total and the youth in North Africa, with a much higher incidence for the youth (49.5 per cent vs 35.4 per cent for all employed females). These rates are similar to those found in the Arab States. Underemployment is also prevalent in SSA, but with much lower gender gaps for both the total and youth employed populations. Unemployment rates show similar trends.

3.3.3 People with disabilities

Mitra et al. (2011) identified several possible policy implications of relevance to PES in developing countries. First, disabled persons are significantly worse off in several dimensions of economic well-being. Second, in most developing countries people with disabilities experience multiple deprivations. Third, action to alleviate poverty among disabled people (employment programmes to improve the socio-economic status of people with disabilities) must be country-specific owing to variations in the processes linking poverty and disability. Finally, policies to promote employment are particularly important for the well-being of persons with disabilities and the households in which they live. In the MENA region, Angel-Urdinola et al. (2013) found that only three per cent of labour market programmes were directed at people with disabilities.

3.3.4 Migrants

Both the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledge the positive contribution that migrants make to inclusive growth and sustainable development in countries of origin, transit and destination. A 2018 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)/ILO study (OECD 2018) concluded that the impact of immigration on developing countries was diverse and highly contextual. However, the study made several policy recommendations meriting further investigation by developing country PESs.

The 2018 OECD study concluded that immigration could benefit the labour market outcomes of native-born workers in regions with more economically active immigrants. This was attributed to geographical factors with most productive activity occurring in a single or a few large urban areas where native-born workers may have limited opportunity to relocate.

Time spent in a host country was found to affect the way immigrants integrate into the labour market, with earlier arrivals being better integrated because of improved language skills and other labour market competencies specific to the local context. In this regard, labour migration policies encouraging integration, especially for recently arrived immigrants, could be beneficial.

4. Employment services design framework and protocol¹⁵

This chapter presents key steps to consider when establishing job centres, focusing on the policy and strategic design, as well as practical institutional and human resource considerations. The discussion is structured under the following four thematic areas, namely: (a) employment services design and jobseeker/employer client management; (b) job centre structure and processes; (c) delivering through partnerships; and (d) performance management.

► 4.1 Client management

4.1.1 Understanding labour market challenges

Increasing the institutional capacity in PES improves a country's ability to respond to labour market challenges through the design and implementation of appropriate policies and programmes. Relevant labour market challenges include a growing population, high unemployment, a large informal economy, and many people earning low wages. Step one in establishing job centres is having a fair understanding of the labour market at local, regional and national levels. This is important if the established job centres are to respond to the needs of the labour market and its participants – that is, jobseekers, employers, training institutions and others. In the context of SSA and the MENA regions, for example, the contrast

between high rates of open unemployment (especially among the youth in the MENA region) and relatively low open unemployment, combined with high underemployment in the SSA region, should inform the design and delivery of services in each region. Significant variables to consider include the characteristics of the labour force including gender; types of labour market groups; labour force dynamics (such as growth, distribution, trends, education and skills); and employment (and particularly unemployment or underemployment by sector). The occupations of people in the labour force also need to be understood. Other variables to be considered include the growth or shrinking of sectors and economic growth.

Sources of information may include labour force surveys, enterprise surveys, household living and

¹⁵ This chapter relates to Chapters 4–7 of the “Toolkit: Setting Up Effective Job Centres in Developing Countries with Reference to Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa Regions” published by GIZ in 2021: https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/youth-employment/publications/WCMS_830655/lang--en/index.htm.

poverty surveys, education tracer surveys, and analytical reports at local, district and national levels. District development plans may be a good source of information on trends and challenges, as well as on planned policy and programme solutions. Analysis of development plans can reveal the challenges and gaps that need to be filled.

Many of the jobseeker clients registering at job centres have low levels of literacy and have not completed high school education. They are typically unskilled and have little (if any) work experience. There are few opportunities in the open labour market for people with disabilities and little (if any) information available on important subjects such as advice on start-ups and entrepreneurship.

Employment programmes are also rarely designed to meet the needs of people with significant barriers to obtaining LMI such as the long-term unemployed, older workers, ex-offenders and people with low skill levels. Changes in the world of work with technological advancements are increasing the gap between jobseekers' skills and employers' requirements. Rural jobseekers can face multiple barriers to accessing formal labour market opportunities due to poverty, lack of infrastructure, remote locations, costs and inability to access digital media.

4.1.2 Establishing policy objectives to meet target audience needs

As key agents for the delivery of employment policy, PESs should have objectives that reflect national employment and economic policies to improve labour market operation, assisting in the generation of growth and human capital development. Defined subordinate responsibilities can help focus PES activity on increasing the labour market participation of disadvantaged groups. To prioritize the needs of jobseekers, especially those farthest from the labour market, PESs frequently have placement targets for women, young people, people with disabilities, migrants and long-term unemployed people. To enhance their delivery of policy objectives in SSA and MENA countries, PESs may

include the following responsibilities among their functions: increasing access to job opportunities; encouraging transitions from informal to formal employment; promoting active labour market programmes to increase skills and employability; supporting employment growth in rural areas; and improving the quality and transparency of LMI.

4.1.3 Blended service offering for jobseekers

Jobseekers require services including job search assistance, career guidance, placement services and access to LMI to assist with their integration into the labour market. Labour market programmes can assist jobseekers to improve their employability via training, upskilling and reskilling. Labour market programmes can also improve access to unemployment benefits and social assistance. International experience shows that the range, quality and integration potential of the support offering depends on the capacity and sophistication of the respective centre from which a jobseeker is obtaining assistance. Job centres should generally start with a basic service offering comprising matching and placement, adding other services and increased levels of integration and sophistication as the centre gains experience. It is further advised that services for employers should be designed and implemented in a phased manner, starting with the registration of vacancies and matching, and later moving on to personalized services and advice on recruitment and human resources (particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises). In developing and emerging economies, the role of PESs in supporting workers and employers in the informal economy is particularly important. It is thus essential that centres develop a realistic understanding of their capacity to undertake services and a menu of services should be developed accordingly. Centres must also have a clear plan for reaching their ideal (desired) level of service.

(a) Mapping services and delivery actors

Some services can best be delivered by a PES and others can be provided most effectively through delivery partners. A PES thus needs to determine which services can be best delivered in-house,

and which ones should be outsourced to other organizations. PESs will first need to establish whether they have adequate resources to deliver their core functions, namely of registering jobseekers and collecting necessary LMI. PESs should then conduct an audit of training capacity, and other employment/advice services operating within their geographical area.

For newly established job centres, mapping of employment services and providers should be part of step one – understanding the labour market. The results from the mapping exercise will help the centre to determine the service offering to prioritize and will identify opportunities for collaboration with other service providers. Again, it should be noted that it is always advisable to start small, expanding the service offering and delivery channels as the centre builds experience and expertise.

(b) Job search assistance, matching and placement

Registration of jobseekers and vacancies, and employment matching and placement are the core services of any PES. It requires the availability of jobseekers with the necessary skills and attributes on the one hand, and vacancies on the other. However, the skill set required by employers to fill their vacancies may not necessarily match the skills of jobseekers because they may have low employability/limited skills and not have the capacity to address the barriers that are preventing them from successfully integrating into the labour market. For jobseeker clients facing such barriers, counselling should be given so that factors preventing the jobseeker from benefitting from an active labour market policy/programme are identified and understood. Contingencies should be put in place to deal with these barriers. Career counselling, including psychometric testing, can be very beneficial for jobseekers to identify career and training/retraining opportunities. This can assist them to cope with rapid technologically-driven changes in the labour market linked to the Fourth Industrial Revolution. More advanced services such as personalised action planning, job fairs and job clubs, geographical mobility support could be introduced as the PES matures.

(c) Referral to labour market programmes

To bridge the gap between supply and demand for labour, active labour market programmes are needed to improve the employability of jobseekers (supply), facilitate employment creation (demand), and enhance matching. After initial profiling, jobseekers should be referred by counsellors to appropriate active labour market programmes, depending on the jobseeker's particular barriers to employment. Those found with barriers to employment (for example, childcare, drug abuse, poverty) may be referred to passive labour market programmes such as social assistance and unemployment benefit programmes (where these are in place) or social welfare support. Labour market programmes may be offered either in-house or externally by specialist organizations in collaboration with the PES. Active labour market policies comprise job search assistance and intermediation, labour market training, entrepreneurship and self-employment support, public employment programmes and wage/hiring subsidies. In countries with unemployment benefits, active support may be combined with monitoring, and sanctions may be applied if beneficiaries do not actively participate in programmes to find jobs.

(d) Collection and use of information on labour markets

To deliver successful employment policies, PESs need to have access to reliable and up-to-date LMI systems. Such systems are needed to assess skill shortages, gather information on changing labour demand, and assist with strategic planning to meet future labour market demands. They are used by policy-makers, PESs, employers and workers.

PESs are both users and producers of LMI. The main sources of data produced by PESs are the administrative statistics generated by the implementation of PES activities, as well as any surveys and studies that are undertaken. However, the PES is also expected to analyse data from different sources for use by its jobseeker and employer clients, as well as by the general public. In some countries, PESs are the custodian of LMI, and they have overall responsibility for coordination (such as PESs in Germany and Kenya), while in other countries they simply form part of the LMI system. PESs face challenges in

developing effective LMI systems owing to limited capacity and instruments, inability to combine information from various sources, inadequate resources for statistical programmes, an inability of producers of information to coordinate efforts and users to specify needs. Weak institutional mechanisms make it difficult to link policies and this then hampers the development of LMI systems.

LMI can be obtained from sources that are quantitative (for example, population census data, PES statistics) and/or qualitative (such as consultation with companies). PESs need to work with a range of other actors, including statistical offices, education/training institutes and social partners to source relevant information.

Skills-related employment services are key to improving the matching between jobseekers and vacancies in the labour market. PESs have a crucial role to play in anticipating future skills. To carry out this function, they need to review LMI and use analysis to inform their matching strategies. To obtain information on labour market trends, PESs must work closely with employers, social partners, the education and training system and academic researchers.

Robust and up-to-date information on skills needs should be communicated to jobseekers to assist them in making decisions on future career choices and directions. This should also shape PES employer engagement strategies, identifying enterprises in growth sectors that can be a future source of vacancies.

(e) Administration of unemployment benefits

Mainly a feature of developed countries, PESs may administer unemployment benefits to the unemployed. This may be done either directly or in collaboration with social security institutions. In the SSA and MENA regions, there are still very few countries that have established unemployment protection schemes and hence the traditional activation strategy used in developed countries is not applicable¹⁶. Nevertheless, PESs in developing countries can refer jobseekers to various social

assistance programmes run by government and civil society to alleviate their non-labour market-related barriers to employment.

(f) Engaging with employers

PESs need to engage with and treat employers as core clients alongside jobseekers so that effective matching and placement can be delivered.

To develop effective links with employers, PESs must first convince the private sector that they can benefit from using such services. PESs should also assess the local employment market, and actively seek vacancies suited to the skills, and competencies of their registered jobseekers. Further, they should provide training that is orientated to the needs of employers. The PES should thereby aim to establish sufficient links with employers to create effective referral pathways for jobseekers. Establishing and maintaining good links with employers should be a top priority for job centres. In this respect, a strategy for engaging employers is recommended; this should link effectively with the overall communication strategy of the PES. Some PESs establish dedicated teams for employers. These teams are usually based at strategic national, regional or field centres that serve a catchment comprising a cluster of small rural Job Centres which serve a critical number of employers

Collaborations with employers, as partners, are essential for PESs so that active labour market programmes are focused on meeting employer needs. Employers can, where possible, offer opportunities through internships, work experience and subsidized employment programmes. Employers should also be involved in the design of vocational education and training to ensure that courses increase employability.

(g) Engaging with the informal economy

Although PESs traditionally match and place jobseekers in jobs in the formal sector, they have a critical role to play in developing countries in supporting strategies to formalize informal work. This is especially important given the large

¹⁶ The World Bank estimated that only five countries in the MENA region (Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran and Kuwait) and four countries in SSA (Mauritius, Seychelles, South Africa and Tanzania) had social protection schemes in 2011 (Angel-Urdinola et al., 2012). In 2016, Carbo Verde also introduced a new unemployment insurance scheme (Djankov & Georgieva, 2020)

size of informal economies in these countries. By engaging with the informal economy, PESs can provide relevant information and challenge exploitative employment practices.

PESs have a vital role to play in the transition from the informal to the formal economy that is a feature of the SSA and MENA regions. PESs need to assist in efforts to combat and remove exploitative employment practices. This role should be carried out in dialogue with relevant parties so that both employees and employers can benefit from formalizing activities. Social media/radio advertising of PES services, and hosting of information sessions for people involved in the informal sector are examples of initiatives that can be used to further this agenda.

4.1.4 Blended services protocol for jobseekers¹⁷

(a) Client registration

Registration with a PES by individuals from vulnerable groups can promote and facilitate social inclusion by helping them find stable employment. It is therefore important that jobseekers, especially from such groups, are encouraged to register. Community outreach programmes and shared success stories can encourage registration. Publicity, marketing and promotion events should be arranged to familiarise people from vulnerable groups with the services offered by a PES that can help them find jobs. Dedicated jobseeker client engagement strategies are needed for vulnerable groups so that their specific needs are fully considered.

It is necessary to understand an individual's strengths and barriers to employment so that a personalized journey can be created for them. Gathering essential information from a jobseeker includes obtaining residential and contact details, level of education/qualification, job skills and competencies, and past work experience. Such clients should be given a personalized registration number which will be used for the entry of their

personal information onto a PES database. Following profiling, a personalized integration plan should be developed. This is especially important for those clients with the greatest barriers to integration.

(b) Reviewing and adapting the jobseeker journey

The efficiency and effectiveness of jobseeker client journeys with PES can be enhanced by adopting client segmentation and profiling (see immediately below). Developing partnerships with stakeholders, including through memoranda of understanding, can also ensure that all necessary steps are in place to provide the support needed for a successful passage from registration to integration. Partnerships and contracts with other agencies should be focused on providing integration support that delivers improved employability; they should be designed in a way that enables assessment of their impact (see Section 4.4 for further information on partnerships). Gap analysis of the jobseeker journey versus service provision identifies how pathways and measures can be improved; it is recommended that and should be carried out periodically (see Section 4.3 for further information on performance management).

(c) Jobseeker segmentation and profiling

Segmenting jobseeker clients into specific categories makes it easier for staff to manage caseloads¹⁸. Client segments can be identified by characteristics including level and field of education, past work experience, gender and age. Examples of client segments are people with disabilities, young jobseekers, people who are long-term unemployed/low skilled/previously inactive in the job market, migrants, rural jobseekers, and people with no internet access.

Profiling jobseeker clients enables job centres to increase their understanding of an individual's position in the labour market. To introduce a profiling system, a PES requires a reliable database that can capture and maintain/update

¹⁷ While the focus is on jobseeker clients, some of the activities apply to employer clients as well, particularly registration of vacancies, client segmentation (based on size, number of jobs created/filled, etc.) and client feedback.

¹⁸ Customer Segments are categories of clients who can receive different levels of support based on their situations and distance from the labour market.

important characteristics of jobseekers. Effective profiling systems can provide a quick and reliable service for employers seeking workers. PESs need to be sufficiently resourced so that they can offer tailored service options and (re)integration pathways to clients depending on their individual circumstances. The variety of services offered should be aligned to trends revealed by jobseeker client profiling. There are several different profiling models used by PESs:

- ▶ Soft-profiling based on caseworker discretion, administrative data and qualitative assessments/psychological assessment tools;
- ▶ Caseworker profiling based on subjective caseworker assessment (based on experience) combined with various assessment tools;
- ▶ Statistical profiling based on hard administrative data and predictive variables.

The choice of the method depends on the capacity of the PES, the policy objectives and interests of PES management and staff.

Some PESs apply a broad 'traffic light' categorization and segmentation to jobseekers based on their assessed support needs: "green" (job-ready), "amber" (some assistance needed) and "red" (vulnerable jobseekers with greatest needs).

(d) Maintaining client records

Secure, user-friendly and flexible systems are needed in PESs to maintain jobseeker client records. These systems should be accessible to staff and they also need to interface with other delivery systems. The record system should also be user-friendly to ensure effective self-service, and further needs to have robust security features for client data.

PESs need to have protocols for staff access to client data that comply with legal frameworks for the protection of personal information. Thus procedural and human resources guidance needs to specify protocols for staff accessing client data. These should detail appropriate situations for accessing client details and clarify requirements for recording these. Personal identifiers are therefore necessary to enable client and/or PES staff access records.

Job centres should have risk-based security

checks whereby managers periodically review staff system access to ensure that procedures have been correctly applied. Security breaches should be investigated, procedures reviewed and where necessary, procedures should be amended to reduce the likelihood of further problems.

(e) Jobseeker and employer client feedback

Using the insight obtained from client feedback enables more effective service planning. Designing PESs to meet client needs makes the service more attractive to both jobseekers and employers. This also reduces inefficiency from non-value-added client contact. Jobseeker and employer client surveys should be undertaken using feedback forms; there should also be reporting to PES management on the survey results. Where possible, surveys should be done at least once a year to obtain client perspectives on the usefulness of the PES.

4.1.5 Channel strategy and client journey

(a) Client contact channels

Appropriate contact channels should be dedicated to specific jobseeker and employer client groups. A variety of channels are available to PESs and other employment service providers for delivering services to their respective clients. These channels include face-to-face contact at the job centre, and the use of mobile units or digital channels such as telephone, SMS, email, social media, television/radio and internet. Based on the needs and resources of their clients, many PESs are adopting digital means of communication while still maintaining the use of other channels for the delivery of specific services. When service channels are integrated in such a way that all services can be delivered through all channels, or if channels can be mixed to deliver services, they are said to be "integrated" or "blended" (Pieterse 2017). Blended channels should be targeted to meet the needs and challenges of different client groups and situations, and digital technology should be adopted in a way that does not leave vulnerable jobseeker clients behind. Group information sessions can be highly

effective in conveying information to jobseekers, while for clients with internet access, recent work experience, and in-demand skills will often be well-suited for using online services. It is important to signpost jobseekers to the contact delivery system most appropriate to their situation. Information collected during profiling should contain details of the jobseeker's access requirements (including whether they have internet access or digital skills). Service mapping also allows PESs to direct jobseekers to the pathway that best matches their needs. Categories of clients can be signposted/encouraged to use appropriate contact channels such as bulk cell phone messaging and email. PESs can make use of social media such as Facebook pages, SMS and WhatsApp groups.

Client contact channels can thus be developed to meet the needs of identified segments. Client journey/route maps can help to identify individual work steps, staff roles and responsibilities, as well as the associated costs.

Mobile resource centres can be used by PESs for delivering services in deep rural areas. Group sessions can enable important information and job search advice to be provided for jobseekers (for example, those who are newly registered) where there are insufficient resources for this to be provided on a one-to-one basis.

PESs should develop digital infrastructure so that relatively self-sufficient clients with internet access and relevant skills can conduct their PES business online as far as possible. This will free up capacity for PESs to dedicate the relatively costly face-to-face counsellor resources to clients who may need more intensive personalized support. To ensure PES facilities and services can be used by persons with disabilities, offices and resources must be adapted. Adjustments include braille-enabled computers, voice-activated systems and wheelchair-friendly access to buildings.

(b) Digitalisation strategy and inclusiveness

An integrated strategy for resource allocation is needed to develop and maintain digital employment services while also providing employment counsellors to signpost and accompany jobseeker clients throughout their respective journeys in ways that are both appropriate and flexible. This needs to include

developing and maintaining digital employment services, while also providing employment counsellors.

In determining the proportion of PES business that should be conducted online versus face-to-face methods, PESs should gather information on a client's access to, and ability to use, different contact methods. This activity should be an ongoing part of PES operation.

The use of digital contact methods should be encouraged; further, clients unable to use digital systems need to be encouraged to attend training courses to enable them to compete for jobs in a labour market where digital skills are increasingly essential.

Online information should be used to inform clients of new job opportunities; clients should also receive digital invitations to meetings (including group information sessions). A blended channel strategy should also be developed to ensure that those clients lacking digital access and/or skills (often those most in need of personalized integration support) are not disadvantaged.

Digital contact methods (and coordinating these with different actors) are the most cost-effective way of providing services. Group sessions, webinars and podcasts can also widen client access to PES services, while making them more cost-effective.

In deciding which channels are appropriate for client groups/situations, PESs should introduce processes at initial contact to get to know clients and enhance understanding of their respective backgrounds. When determining which services should be provided digitally, PESs should refer to information on the level of overall digital access among clients, individual requirements and extent of online capacity in specific areas/regions. This is to ensure that clients are not excluded from support, or receive a poorer level of service because they cannot engage with the PES online.

When considering delivering online services, PESs should ensure that the needs of the target population are met and that a specific service can be effectively delivered through digital media. In developing digital capability (including delivery of online seminars and podcasts) PESs should liaise with other stakeholders to source expert input as

required. To support clients without digital access, PESs should develop outreach services that ensure support can be provided close to citizens. Mobile centres (via appropriately equipped buses) and Wi-Fi connections established at specific contact centres can provide services in rural areas and remote regions.

(c) Identification and prioritization of the jobseeker/employer client base

Successful organizational design requires PESs to identify the people and processes needed to deliver defined services (for example, determining who “owns” different parts of the client journey and the respective costs). This information is necessary to determine staffing and other requirements enabling delivery of services from a job centre. Staffing requirements will depend on the range and scope of services delivered by a particular PES; these can include administrative/registration staff, employment and career counsellors, team leaders and office managers.

To prioritize resources and direct these to meet priority needs, it is necessary to identify the client base and the respective segments. Client segments (see Section 4.1.4) can receive different levels of support based upon their respective situations and distance from the labour market. These will vary for each PES, depending on context including the jobseeker/employer base.

It must be remembered that job centres can help people find work, but not find work for them. PESs therefore need to be effective enablers; this can be achieved through providing services including employment counselling, accessibility to the internet for job searches, interactive job platforms, jobs fairs and exhibitions.

Each persons’ journey to being integrated into the work environment is different. Successful integration requires steps that start from initial contact at registration. Following the gathering of information at initial contact, a jobseeker may require referral to a counsellor for more in-depth support to overcome barriers. This may involve referral to specialist support provided by other organizations that are working in partnership with the PES, and active labour market programmes such as training. Job-ready clients can be referred to potential employers, and if possible, some

assistance offered post-recruitment to resolve any initial problems.

The steps and time involved in a clients’ integration journey will vary from person to person, based on their individual needs and distance from the labour market. Essential information to support a client’s journey should include self-reflection and their interests and motivations for entering the job market.

4.1.6 Case management/ counselling services for jobseekers

Counsellors have the key function of providing advice and guidance to jobseekers. Although effective at assisting jobseekers, counsellors are an expensive resource.

They should therefore be used to provide personalized support and coordination of services for jobseekers who are particularly disadvantaged. This can cover information on the requirements of specific jobs and checking the suitability of an individual jobseeker for a particular vacancy based on the criteria for the post. Counsellors can liaise with experts (such as specialist training providers or disability experts) in other support services to coordinate support packages for clients.

Job centres will need to establish criteria for determining which jobseeker clients should have access to counselling services. The criteria can be based on a needs assessment following initial profiling. Clients who have some support needs (but who are not struggling with the most significant barriers to integration) might be referred to PES caseworkers. The most employment/job-ready clients may be able (and prefer) to self-serve, while those clients with the greatest support needs may benefit from referral to specialist services provided by other organizations. These needs-based categories could reflect client segments (see Section 4.1.4).

▶ 4.2 Job centre structure and process

4.2.1 Deciding on job centre location

Placing a job centre in an effective location includes considering how much footfall¹⁹ is expected, local labour market conditions and the composition of the population. Decisions on job centre location must further be based on client service and business needs, rather than political considerations (although the latter cannot be entirely ruled out).

Factors that should be considered in locating a centre include the respective sizes of the local population, working population and local labour force. Other factors include the number and nature of enterprises, unemployment/employment rates, number and type of related support service providers (for example, training organizations), potential client volumes/footfall, local employer base and poverty levels of the population. Availability or absence of infrastructure including internet access, transportation links (especially public transport) is especially important in rural areas and should be a key consideration in where a centre is located.

4.2.2 Determining the urban/rural mix of job centre sites

Job centres are needed in both urban and rural areas, and budget allocations must be sufficient to meet both capital investment and ongoing operational costs.

Whether planning new offices or modernizing existing sites, it is important to ensure that sufficient finance is available. This requires assurance that enough capital has been committed to completing a development project and delivering planned improvements; ongoing operational budgets must also be adequate to cover running costs following completion.

It is important that PES office networks have national coverage. Although this includes

both urban and rural locations, it is relatively expensive to provide office facilities in less densely populated rural areas. The nature of the labour market in rural areas will be a particularly significant consideration in decisions on office location. If the local employment base in a rural area is primarily agricultural, the availability of other potential employment opportunities will be a factor influencing the decision to open a job centre. If non-agricultural employment is concentrated in certain sectors such as tourism, discussions with business associations can explore the possibility of developing recruitment pathways by building links with local employers.

4.2.3 Planning budget allocations

(a) Infrastructure

Budget planning for job centres must consider infrastructure such as buildings and other infrastructure (including the need for meeting rooms), equipment and adequate information technology (IT) to support service delivery (including performance measurement tools). Costing must also account for such needs as office maintenance, ensuring workplace safety, and staffing (including salaries and staff training). Sufficient resources must also be allocated to cover marketing. Funding also needs to be available to enable jobseeker client referrals to partnerships.

(b) Staffing needs

Staffing needs should be identified based upon an assessment of client volumes and services to be provided.

When considering staffing needs it is particularly important to review demographic statistics, especially population distribution density, and the numbers of young people. LMI should also be studied to ascertain the number of employers,

¹⁹ The number of people expected to visit/use the service in a given time.

recruitment patterns, occupational sectors and numbers of workers in waged employment versus self-employment.

(c) Sources of funding

The range of sources available for funding job centres; is influenced by the extent of decentralization, the mandate accorded to the centres, and the types of services to be delivered. Funding sources include appropriations from the national, or regional/local government budgets, employment or training funds, unemployment/employment insurance funds at the national or sectoral level and donations from the corporate world. Funding may also come from sources including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or individuals. In some cases, job centres can earn an income from specialized services (not including core services) offered to the public and centre clients. It is important that the sources and use of funds are clearly stipulated in the national, regional or local legislation, as relevant.

4.2.4 Setting up office structure and functions

(a) Delivery teams

A job centre should have four distinct delivery units as follows:

- The **office management**, with the office manager being responsible and accountable for the delivery of services at the facility;
- A **registration team** providing an initial intake service;
- **Employer services** providing the link with enterprises to place and fill vacancies and develop recruitment partnerships via the job centre;
- **Counselling services** providing personalized support for jobseeker clients in need of comprehensive assistance to support their labour market integration.

Effective service delivery generally requires a minimum of two senior employment officers, one specializing in providing services for employers, and the other delivering counselling services for jobseeker clients. In small offices, it will be

necessary for staff to be multifunctional and so they should be trained to perform both roles to ensure service continuity. Further, where offices only have few staff members, the manager may need to also perform a counselling role (provided they have the requisite skills). This would involve dealing with the most sensitive and complicated cases, in addition to undertaking the core coordination function.

The proportion of time to be dedicated to each function (especially if staff are absent) should be determined by the manager, based on prevailing conditions and operational demands. The actual number of employment officers and the need for professional counselling officers will depend on the number of clients and resources available. Professional counsellors should normally be reserved for cases requiring intensive support and they could hence provide their services to more than one job centre.

Registration duties can be performed by a junior employment officer responsible for initial intake. This role can combine providing front-end services with assistance as required for senior employment officers, and deputizing for them as needed when sufficient experience and knowledge have been acquired.

(b) Job roles and scope

Each of the delivery units described above is key to the effective operation of the job centre. The job roles, links and shared responsibilities for the various functions should be clearly understood. Staff should have clear job descriptions that specify the core role and functions of the post; the individual training and development needs of the employee also need to be considered. The suggested basic roles are as follows.

(I) Manager

The manager is responsible for the efficient and effective delivery of labour market services by a job centre. Their role covers planning, coordination, organization, directing and control of the operation. They are accountable for the financial, human resources and administrative activities necessary to support clients (both jobseekers and employers).

(II) Employment officer

Employment officers have two core clients, namely jobseekers and employers. They provide basic counselling and information to jobseekers to assist them in their respective job searches. At times they also provide career guidance where there is sufficient capacity and to meet identified jobseeker needs. Employers are offered information and support on recruitment and under certain circumstances, information and assistance on other employment issues such as contracts and human resources questions. Employment officers are not professional counsellors and hence provide non-professional advice beyond the provision of information. In countries where the counselling profession is protected by law, it is important to find ways of distinguishing professional counselling from the work of employment officers. If this is not done, the work of the employment services could be negatively affected as the job centres may not have the capacity to recruit and retain professional counsellors.

(III) Registration officer

A junior employment/registration officer is responsible for initial contact with all clients visiting the job centre. Their role includes greeting clients (both jobseekers and employers), answering routine/general questions, providing information on request, and assisting jobseekers to register. This function includes verification, checking information provided by clients, entering this on the PES database, establishing client eligibility for support from the PES, and arranging counselling and other specialist interviews as required. The registration officer should also follow up on the outcomes of jobseekers being referred to job vacancies advertised by employers.

(IV) Service coordination

As part of a wider ecosystem of employment service delivery, PESs are continually making and revising their partnership working arrangements with other support organizations to add value, address gaps and remedy fragmentation in service delivery. To ensure that working arrangements with other agencies are efficient and that any day-to-day problems are resolved, it can be beneficial to appoint a staff member with responsibility for liaison with delivery partners and monitoring service coordination.

4.2.5 Recruitment of job centre staff

Before determining the range of services to be offered, the capacity to recruit and train appropriate employees and a realistic assessment of their productivity must be established.

It is important to apply a systematic methodology when establishing Job Centres. Services should be developed to support delivery of the vision and strategy of the PES, and staff job roles should be defined to match the needs of beneficiaries.

The range of skills and competencies required by employers in a specific area/and available amongst registered jobseekers at a particular job centre should be identified, and an assessment of the local recruitment market should be undertaken. This will be necessary to ascertain the availability of suitable candidates and set requirements for the productivity of newly recruited staff. The training needs of the staff members also need to be determined so that over time they can develop their potential.

Following this preparatory work, human resource requirements can be confirmed, and an organizational chart should be formulated. Finally, a set of job descriptions, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, competencies and qualifications needed for each position can be written.

4.2.6 Developing job centre staff capacity

Job centre staff must have appropriate skills and competencies to ensure necessary service capacity and quality.

Following an analysis of the staffing requirements for a job centre the PES needs to develop a programme to plan the provision of necessary technical and professional training for staff so that they can further develop their competencies and skills.

A training needs analysis (TNA) is the first step in developing a staff training programme; this will enable current staff competencies and areas for development to be identified. The staff training plan should be based on the TNA and the PES strategy with training modules customized to

address PES issues. Specific training leading to awards of employment officer and counsellor certificates could form part of the programme and assist in introducing a quality benchmark for PES service delivery. This would support the professionalization of the employment services profession as provided for in the ILO Employment Services Convention, 1949 (No. 88).

4.2.7 Job centre information technology systems

PESs need to ensure that IT systems are fit-for-purpose with the required functionality to support service delivery requirements; it is essential that security systems are in place to protect client data and public funds. Both “off-the-shelf” and “tailor-made systems” should be considered and the best option should then be identified. Staff from across the PES organization should be involved in

studies to determine IT business requirements. They should also participate in the testing and piloting of applications to ensure that systems meet organizational needs and that these are user-friendly, secure and reliable.

IT system functionality should enable digital employment service offers including self-service portals. For clients to obtain maximum benefit from using digital channels, these need to be “mobile-friendly”. An online portal where vacancies can be posted is an essential first step. This should be designed to allow clients to place their personal profiles, apply for vacancies, and if possible, receive updates and notifications from prospective employers. Mobile applications and IT portals that enable clients to complete a competency self-assessment can both encourage more client autonomy and contribute to more efficient information capture for the PES.

► 4.3 Performance management

Armstrong (2017) describes performance management as:

"The continuous process of improving performance by setting individual and team goals which are aligned to the strategic goals of the organisation, planning performance to achieve the goals, reviewing and assessing progress, and developing the skills and abilities of people. Quality performance management should, therefore, bring together several different, integrated activities to form an ongoing performance management cycle."

4.3.1 Workflow

Assessing the impact of PES activities requires performance management systems to be established that encourage appropriate staff behaviours so that the objectives are delivered. Performance indicators must be developed and should be based on job centre processes.

Effective performance management systems are needed to assess how interventions evolve over time. Such systems also evaluate the effectiveness

of service and programme interventions, identify gaps between expected and achieved results, and measure the contribution to national employment targets. To be effective, performance monitoring must address four core questions:

- Do jobseeker clients have fair and equitable access to services?
- Are desired outcomes being achieved?
- Are clients (both jobseekers and employers) satisfied with services?
- Are services delivered efficiently?

A key challenge in establishing performance management systems can be sufficient access to reliable data. While PESs often have a great deal of information that can be used to develop performance measurement systems, work outputs are often not systemized. This is especially the case where resources are limited and standardized data gathering does not occur; under these circumstances the performance management function is ineffective.

Performance management should be based on comprehensive and timely data that is considered robust and credible by management, staff and external stakeholders. The relative costs and benefits of performance measurement and data collection need to be carefully assessed. To provide useful information, the system must be focused on providing measures that assess processes and actions contributing to the desired outcome – known as Results-based Management.

Results-based Management requires several factors to be present in a PES including: broadly defined strategic objectives; constant objectives; systems that reflect the institutional setting of the PES; consideration of political sensitivities; and a consistent approach to labour market interventions.

4.3.2 Results framework

To measure performance, it is necessary that objectives, targets/outcomes, outputs and performance indicators are in place.

The key **objectives** of a PES are to contribute towards reducing unemployment, facilitating decent employment, promoting social integration and improved living standards for citizens. PESs have both intermediate (micro level) and final (macro level) **target/outcome** measures. Intermediate measures record the immediate results of PES activities, such as the referral to placement rate of jobseekers, and transitions into various types of employment. Final measures record the contribution the PES makes to overall improved labour market function. They are more strategic and may record unemployment levels in a certain area, or increased participation of specific target groups in the labour market.

To encourage appropriate staff behaviours to deliver objectives, performance indicators must be developed and be based on job centre processes. Performance indicators help to measure progress towards the achievement of outputs, outcomes and overall objectives or goals and several such indicators are needed. These should be reported monthly, with quarterly, half-yearly and annual summaries. PESs should record the numbers of, registrations, jobseekers on the register, jobseekers referred for jobs and active labour market policies/programmes (such as

training schemes), and vacancies placed and filled by employers.

4.3.3 Monitoring and evaluation of the process

Performance indicators that measure both inputs and outputs are used in PESs. Likewise, for job centres to operate effectively, they need performance management systems that measure inputs, outputs and processes.

Input measures enable a comparison of the relationship between resources and performance. These can include measurements of office and staff numbers as well as budgets for staff, programmes and other operational needs. Output measures may include labour market penetration rates, numbers of jobseekers registered, and the number of individual action plans completed for returns-to-work.

To deliver services effectively, PESs require sufficient input to their delivery processes such as staff budgets, financing to establish and deliver employment programmes, and resources to provide and maintain office infrastructure (for example, equipment). To develop systems to assess the impact of PES, an essential first step is to identify services and programmes. The scale and scope of support offered varies between PESs. A core offering will normally include: registration of jobseekers; information on vacancies and job matching; referral of jobseekers to employment opportunities; monitoring of outcomes of referrals; and active labour market programmes such as training schemes. Services may also include internet-based (self-service) registration, (pre-) selection of candidates for interviews, and support for other agencies providing services for jobseekers. Further (more comprehensive) services provided by PESs can include counselling, vocational guidance, individual employment planning and jobs fairs. PESs refer jobseeker clients to several programmes including labour market training, subsidized employment, support for self-employment and work in the public sector.

To evaluate services and programmes (that is, the activities of PESs), it is necessary to identify gaps between expected and achieved results.

PESs need to attain at least a minimum number of outputs to deliver desired policy outcomes.

Output measures record the number and types of activities undertaken, such as the number of vacancies registered, jobseeker interviews completed or the number of referrals to third parties, for example, training organizations. However, they do not necessarily measure the success of these activities in contributing to the achievement of outcome objectives such as the number of people moving into the working environment.

4.3.4 Measuring the outcomes

It should be remembered that performance outcome targets are merely a tool, and it is acceptable to not achieve some of the targets that have been set.

Thus performance measurement systems, and specifically targets and indicators, should be recognized not as an end in themselves but as enablers providing the means to assist individual PES staff, managers and the wider organization to support improved labour market operation.

This is achieved through attaining goals set for the PES that contribute to the desired improvement in policy outcomes. Performance data provides essential information on PES strengths and areas for improvement; the data is thus a driver that facilitates a learning culture demonstrated by continuous improvement.

At least a minimum number of essential/relevant targets need to be identified that provide a fit-for-purpose steering system for a PES. The chosen targets need to enable the user-friendly presentation of performance data to staff, managers, and other PES stakeholders. Targets are used to show if performance indicators have been achieved. The targets that are set must be disaggregated by client segment, service provided, category of labour market programme, type of employment obtained by clients, sector of the vacancy and different operational tiers such as whether the office is local or regional.

Management by Objectives systems are essential for PESs because these allow them to deliver services in the most efficient and effective way. Management by Objectives systems constitute the central pillar of PES performance management systems because they define objectives that are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic,

and timebound) (Weishaupt, 2016). SMART performance targets are thus essential for PESs to facilitate the achievement of the PES objectives. They need to specify what is to be delivered, to what standard, and within which timescale.

Information categories on individual jobseekers clients necessary for effective performance management include characteristics such as age, sex, level of education, prior work experience, disability and periods of unemployment. Additional information on factors that present barriers to the jobseeker's integration into the labour market is also collected as relevant.

Likewise, to enable performance management regarding employer clients, the characteristics of employment offers should be recorded, including type (waged versus self-employment), contract duration, average earnings, skill requirements/matching records, the link between training scheme attended and job placement.

Similarly, information on the vacancies placed with the PES should include occupation, type and size of the enterprise, economic sector, occupational group, type and level of qualifications required for the position.

4.3.5 Management culture and communication

A culture of ownership, trust and commitment is needed in an organization for performance measurement systems to improve outcomes.

To benefit from an effective performance management infrastructure, the PES must thus actively promote a transparent culture at all levels in the organization; the focus should be on delivering the best results for clients. The accountability of individual staff and teams should be clear and should be paired with a strong sense of ownership and responsibility. However, collaboration among both staff members and between teams should also be encouraged. Team mobilization practices, appropriate recognition and motivation, and involvement of staff at all levels in planning processes can all promote greater staff involvement and commitment. Empowerment, encouraging front line staff to innovate and propose improvements to systems and processes can contribute to high-quality outputs and improved services.

It is also important that the potential for generating perverse incentives and management statements should be limited. Thus performance measures should be designed to address these issues, and human resources policies should very strongly discourage the gaming of targets²⁰.

Communications for staff must both motivate them to deliver the PES public service mission while encouraging staff commitment to increasing effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity in modernized services.

A fundamental component of continuous performance improvement is an open dialogue between managers and staff, as well as learning from mistakes. Regular performance dialogues should thus be held to encourage feedback and a two-way flow of information between staff and managers. A variety of media should be used to disseminate information about performance at different levels of the organization. These can include electronic bulletins, quality circles, performance dashboards providing contextual analysis, and office meetings, with regular internal staff satisfaction surveys and opportunities for 360-degree feedback.

Internal benchmarking between clusters of offices can be used to promote learning and good practice exchange; this approach can also be used to identify previously unrecognized problems in need of attention. Continuous performance improvement is essential to ensure sustained achievement and improvement of results and processes. Many PESs have introduced continuous improvement programmes utilizing quality management approaches. These are based on developing PES systems informed by feedback on meeting client (jobseeker and employer) requirements. Performance metrics are frequently reviewed to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Priorities for organizational improvement can be developed from analysis of performance data and good practices shared through knowledge transfer. The impact of operational/process changes on performance at different locations can be compared through performance benchmarking exercises.

Various tools have been developed to assist PESs to continuously measure their performance and improve service delivery. The ILO is in the process of developing and testing a PES diagnostic tool that measures performance across five pillars (namely: policy and strategy; human resource and management capacity; resources including infrastructure; partnership working; and service offer²¹). Furthermore, the World Association of Public Employment Services (WAPES) has produced a draft model for the Self-assessment of PESs (SamPES). The SamPES tool is intended to provide a methodology for analysis of qualitative aspects of PES delivery; SamPES assesses the impact these qualitative aspects of PES have on quantitative PES outcomes. The tool was being piloted in eight countries, but the brief has extended to another twenty African countries. Further information is contained at Annex 1 and in the accompanying ILO/YouMatch Toolkit.

²⁰ Gaming is the artificial manipulation of outcome measures, while perverse incentives include creaming and parking which refer to conscious avoidance to enrol disadvantaged (jobseeker) clients (OECD, 2005).

²¹ Zulum Avila and Javier Omar Rodrigue. 2021. "Public employment services diagnostic tool and guide." ILO, Geneva. https://www.ilo.org/emppolicy/pubs/WCMS_829545/lang-en/index.htm

► 4.4 Delivery through partnerships

4.4.1 Identifying partners and areas for cooperation

Job centres are important actors in the employment service ecosystem; however, other service providers also need to be involved.

PESs need to ensure that they have arrangements to refer jobseeker clients to other organizations where necessary; this is needed so that clients receive all the support needed for a successful transition to employment. PESs will therefore need to collaborate with other public organizations, NGOs, training organizations, PrEAs (both office-based and online) and social partners. Mapping of services and their delivery institutions at local, regional and national levels is a key step in this regard.

To optimize capacity and use of budgets, PESs should combine and coordinate services with other actors providing employment support services. Through working with other stakeholders PESs can pool expertise and increase coverage of services, especially in rural areas.

PESs should have a partnership strategy to assist them in deciding which employment services could be considered for delivery by other actors working in partnership with PES. Several steps are necessary to identify appropriate partner organizations, areas for cooperation and objectives for partnerships. In following these steps, PESs will need to systematically review their capacity to deliver core services. PESs will need to establish where there are gaps and areas for potential expansion, and they will then need to determine the best partner organizations to address these. Key criteria to consider include the potential for achieving sustainability and outcomes, respectively, as well as the likelihood of being able to mainstream partnership working.

A balance between in-house and third-party provision via partnerships is needed to provide efficient employment services. Service mapping should be undertaken to identify service and resourcing silos, duplication and gaps so that partners can optimize their respective contributions to improving client service. To

optimize service capacity for a given resource, PESs must thus determine which services will be delivered by their staff based in Job Centres, and which services should be provided by other support agencies.

Delivery through partnerships should be encouraged because input from other organisations has the potential to improve efficiency, especially through enhanced access to information which in turn will provide better customer service. Partnerships also have the potential to bring in additional expertise such as training, as well as addressing special barriers in the labour market. Partnerships should thus be considered where existing provision offers an opportunity to source expertise for providing training services, and support for vulnerable groups with barriers to labour market integration such as disabled people and migrants.

Stakeholders should be encouraged to explore the advantages of cooperating and partnering with PESs. Mobilizing potential partners and initiating cooperation are therefore important steps to support partnerships.

To promote the benefits of partnerships with other stakeholders, PESs need to explain how their interests and those of potential partners are directly and implicitly aligned. In seeking to achieve this, PESs can highlight the value they can add, such as by referring jobseeker clients to stakeholders. This should follow the PES having first identified the needs of jobseekers for specialist support through conducting an initial identification of their labour market situation. Specifically, this should identify how well matched their skills and qualifications are to available jobs.

4.4.2 Setting up regulatory frameworks

Arrangements for the governance of partnerships can be formal, informal or contractual. No matter what agreements are in place, to operate effectively, partnerships must be results-orientated, and objectives and partner responsibilities must be clearly defined. In setting

up a partnership, PESs need to confirm both the preferred contractual (governance) basis for the partnership the respective responsibilities of the various partners. There is a specific requirement to effectively regulate the activities of PrEAs and TWAs to ensure the optimum outcome for employment service clients.

To secure buy-in, the interests of all partners must be aligned. Formal and contractual/legal governance arrangements can overlap. Although legal contracts are not needed for managing non-commercial²² linkages between PESs and other organizations, statements of intention and memoranda of understanding often add value.

The regulatory framework for partnership working should be part of the overall PrEA regulatory framework and should align to the procurement regulations for public services. Similarly, broader procurement regulations and policies for the delivery of governmental services at the national level can be applied to the framework for a PES.

4.4.3 Partnership coordination and communication

Successful partnerships require stakeholders' inputs to be coordinated and decisions to be clearly communicated to all participating organizations.

Effective coordination thus needs partners to agree on their respective contributions and reciprocal undertakings; these need to be recorded in a format appropriate to the specific agreement. For an informal arrangement, a general statement of intention to cooperate may be sufficient, with more detailed/formalized agreements introduced to record closer working relationships.

Any partnership governance arrangement should include the establishment of a steering committee. Structures/organizations that are represented on the steering committee could include employer representative bodies, and organizations from the education and training sectors. The functions of the committee should include communicating and monitoring and

(qualitative) evaluation of results of jointly managed employment programmes which should be disseminated within participating organizations and to external stakeholders (including PES clients).

4.4.4 Monitoring of partnerships

It is imperative that partnerships deliver value and that the outcomes of collaborations justify the investment of resources in stakeholder cooperation. Obtaining maximum benefit from partnership working needs ongoing performance measurement, recording of good practice and monitoring of progress.

Where arrangements involve operational links between PESs and other stakeholders, agreements should record the expected quantity and quality of "hand-offs" involvement with clients at the interface between PES and other support agencies. Where possible, SMART targets (see Section 4.3.4) should be used to measure involvement at these interfaces.

Appropriate measures such as SMART targets will also need to be applied to assess progress and harmonize feedback to organizations participating in partnerships. These measures can also be used to identify examples of particularly successful partnership working. The targets must reflect stakeholders' objectives based on participation in a partnership and therefore they need to be applicable to both individual partner organizations and to the monitoring of joint working relationships.

To determine whether a partnership continues to add value, its role, governance, and objectives must be periodically reviewed by the steering committees.

Partnership steering committees should meet regularly with a key remit to review results to assess the effectiveness and value added by partnership operations. Channels should be established for ongoing dialogue (as needed) to resolve any issues emerging in day-to-day business. Steering committee meetings should be conducted quarterly if possible, with formal

²² Commercial partnerships involve a PES buying services from third parties; a contractual governance arrangement is necessary for such partnerships. Non-commercial partnerships mean that there is no purchaser-provider relationship.

reviews of partnerships conducted at least once a year.

A formal partnership review should incorporate a full assessment of the value added by the joint working relationship. The review should also record successes, areas for improvement,

any need for significant changes, and should ultimately decide on the future operation of a specific stakeholder partnership.

5. Conclusions

PESs in SSA and MENA face significant challenges from growing populations, high unemployment, a large informal economy, low wages and insufficient resources. The PES mandate in contributing to their governments' policies for dealing with these challenges is to ensure smooth functioning of the labour market. This requires good LMI, provision of professional job search assistance, career advice and placement services, well-managed labour market programmes, facilities for the training and upskilling of citizens, administration of unemployment benefits (where appropriate), and inclusive and fair delivery of services.

In SSA and MENA, there is a requirement to focus on job brokerage for both jobseekers and employers, assisting with transitions from education into work, tackling low/ mismatched skills and reducing high graduate unemployment. There is also the need for ensuring productive rural to urban migration, helping microenterprises develop, supporting the transition from an informal to the formal economy, and tackling inequality through supporting vulnerable groups (such as people with disabilities).

Job centres need to be established as vital components in the delivery of employment services, or where they are already established, strengthened so that they deliver services effectively. The centres form part of a wider support service ecosystem involving a range of support agencies that need to contribute to the provision of complementary services. The development of job centres requires coordination, a systematic approach and careful planning.

Adequate resources must be identified and provided for investment in new services, as well as ongoing delivery. Services must be costed to ensure that sufficient infrastructure is in place to deliver service plans consistent with delivery commitments.

To generate the best possible return from scarce resources, PESs should consider whether the delivery of some services through other actors can improve the achievement of objectives. Where partnerships are appropriate, a PES should pool its resources with those of partner organizations through well-governed and systematic partnerships that allow all stakeholders to focus on aspects where their specialist expertise can add the most value. Services, and as much support as possible, should be dedicated to clients needing more in-depth face-to-face assistance. This can be facilitated by developing digital services that offer more self-service options for clients who are happy and able to use these; those willing and with the capacity should be assisted to gain the skills necessary to access digital services. Human resources can thus be freed up to assist clients most in need of intensive support.

Staff roles should be clearly defined, with transparent and fair objectives that are focused on enhancing client services. Staff input and feedback should be encouraged, with front line staff empowered to innovate and propose service improvements that they develop from their experiences of working directly with clients.

Effective engagement with employers by PESs is essential. Based on feedback from this engagement, PES systems should identify clients'



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skills, competencies and training needs that equip them to meet local labour market demands. PESs should liaise with training institutes to ensure that skills development is focused on meeting local employer requirements. Employers should be involved in the design of vocational education and training to ensure that modules enhance employability.

Where PESs can demonstrate to employers that they can supply suitably skilled candidates to fill vacancies, employers will be encouraged to work more closely with job centres (including by placing employment offers at centres). Jobseekers will also be encouraged to register with PESs when they see that job centres are a source of good jobs.

PESs should profile jobseeker clients to obtain the data necessary to orientate them towards the most suitable integration journey and provide input to LMI systems. The client base should be segmented to allow services to match the needs of prioritized client group cohorts.

Effective performance management systems

should be introduced to assess progress, identify strengths and areas for improvement in PESs and their associated job centres. SMART measures that flow from client-orientated strategies should be applied to form a Results-Based Chain that is used to monitor whether or not steps in jobseeker clients' individual journeys end in desired employment policy outcomes. Targets should record job outcomes rather than inputs. To further illustrate good use of public financing and increase the reputation and legitimacy of a PES, cost metrics should be applied where possible, to form part of the ongoing improvement in service provision aimed at enhancing labour market operation. Feedback and insight from both jobseeker and employer clients should form part of the suite of performance measures.

PESs have a vital role to play in supporting the transition from the informal to formal economy; they should encourage both employers and workers in the informal sector to formalize arrangements that promote mutual benefits, while actively combating exploitative working practices that affect vulnerable citizens.

6. References and additional resources

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► 6.2 Additional resources

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► 6.3 Normative framework – standards and policy documents

[ILO Employment Service Convention 1948 \(No. 88\)](#) – fully elaborated the role of PESs at the international level.

[ILO Private Employment Agency Convention 1997 \(No. 181\)](#) and its accompanying Recommendation (No 188) – recognise the positive contributions from the development of PrEAs in providing services to a rapidly expanding and flexible labour market.

[ILO 2009 Global Jobs Pact](#) – emphasises the important role employment services play in contributing to a sustained recovery.

[ILO International Standard Classification of Occupations \(ISCO-08\)](#) – presents the structure and definitions of all occupational groups in OSCO 08 and includes correspondence tables with previous versions.

Annexes

► Annex 1 – Cross-references to the Toolkit and other resources

The information detailing implementation procedures contained in Chapter 4 of these Guidelines relates directly to Chapters 4–7 of the accompanying ILO/YouMatch Toolkit: **Setting Up Effective Job Centres in Developing Countries with Particular Reference to Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa Regions**: https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/youth-employment/publications/WCMS_830655/lang--en/index.htm. These cover the four key sets of enabling activities, namely: employment services design and client management; job centre structure and processes; performance management; and stakeholder cooperation and public-private partnerships. These are all necessary for designing and implementing a PES operation to be delivered through a job centre.

WAPES has produced a model for SamPES. The methodology is designed to enable PESs to develop quality services progressing key themes that place the customer at the core of their delivery concept. The SamPES tool enables performance to be systematically monitored by considering progress in the delivery of several performance enablers for each of the key themes. The Toolkit provides more detail on the SamPES approach and explains how it relates directly to the four enabling activities and can therefore be used to review PES structures. The ILO has also developed and updated its PES Scan Tool: https://www.ilo.org/emppolicy/pubs/WCMS_829545/lang--en/index.htm

► Annex 2 – Glossary of terms

Active labour market policies – form part of the toolkit for policymakers. These policies combine transfer payments with either work or training activities (Auer et al., 2005).

Disability – defined by Article 1, paragraph 2, of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as a long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Employment – employed persons are defined by the ILO as those above a specified age who during a specified brief period (either one week or one day) were either in paid or self-employment

(ILO Resolutions Concerning Economically Active Population, Employment, Unemployment and Underemployment, Adopted by the 13th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, 1988).

The **employment rate** – defined by ILOSTAT as the proportion of a country's working age population that is employed.

The **labour force** (formerly known as the economically active population) – defined by ILOSTAT as the sum of the number of persons employed and the number of persons unemployed.

Long-term unemployment – defined by ILOSTAT as all unemployed persons with continuous periods of unemployment extending to one year or longer (52 weeks and over).

A **private employment agency** – defined in the ILO Private Employment Agencies (PrEAs) Convention, 1997 (Convention No. 181) encompasses an enterprise or person, independent of the public authorities, which provides one or more of the following labour market functions: (a) services for matching offers of, and applications for, employment; (b) services for employing workers with a view to making them available to a third party (“user enterprise”); and/or (c) other services relating to jobseeking.

Public employment services (PESs) – the primary government institutions responsible for implementing a variety of active labour market programmes, including the provision of career guidance and labour exchange services (ILO <https://www.ilo.org>).

Unemployment – unemployed people are defined by the ILO to be those without a job (having not worked for at least one hour during the reference week), having been actively seeking

work in the past four weeks and available to start work in the next two weeks, or having been out of work, have found a job and are willing to start it in the next three months.

The **unemployment rate** – defined by ILOSTAT as the number of unemployed persons as a percentage of the total number of persons in the labour force.

The **working-age population** – defined by ILOSTAT as persons aged 15 years and older (though the age limits can vary from country to country).

Youth unemployment – defined by the ILO as the share of the labour force aged 15–24 inclusive without work, but available and seeking employment.



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