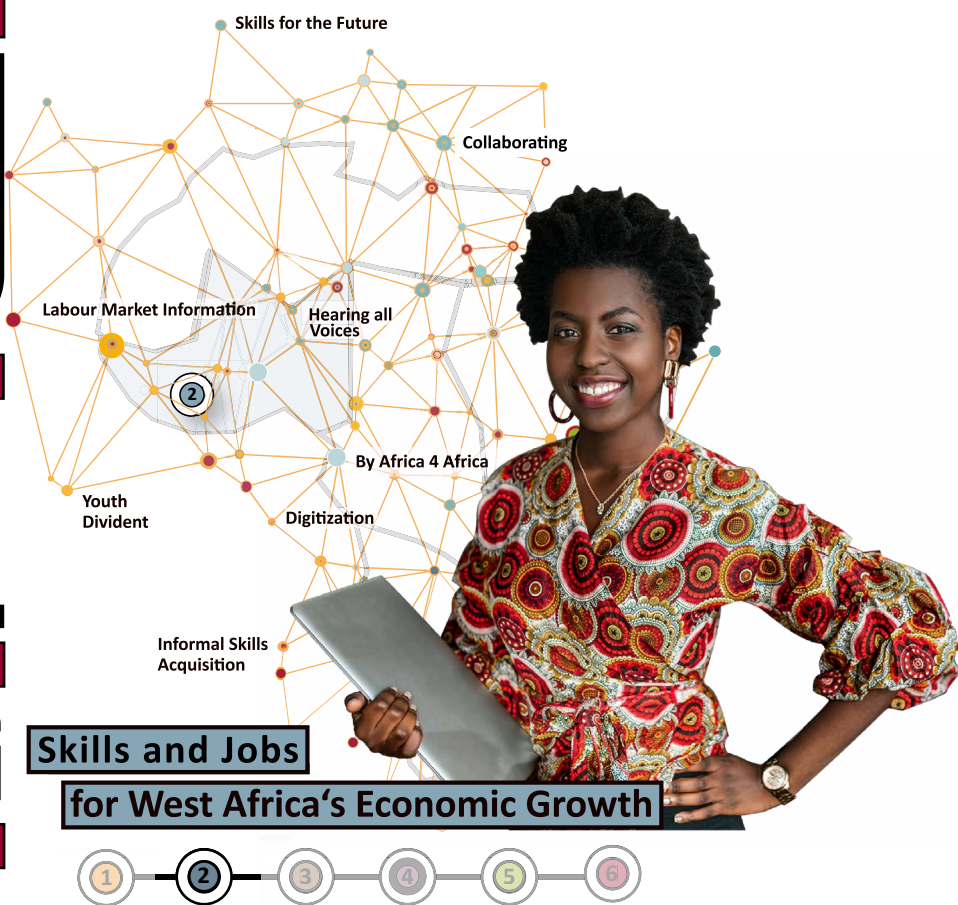


REGIONAL
ACJ
AFRICA CREATES JOBS
2021
VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS
26-27 AUG
WEST AFRICA



Skills and Jobs
for West Africa's Economic Growth

West Africa Regional ACJ

"Skills and Jobs for West Africa's Economic Growth".

August 26th & 27th 2021, 10:00 a.m. – 13:00 p.m. (WAT)

Full report

This programme is co-funded by the European Union and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development



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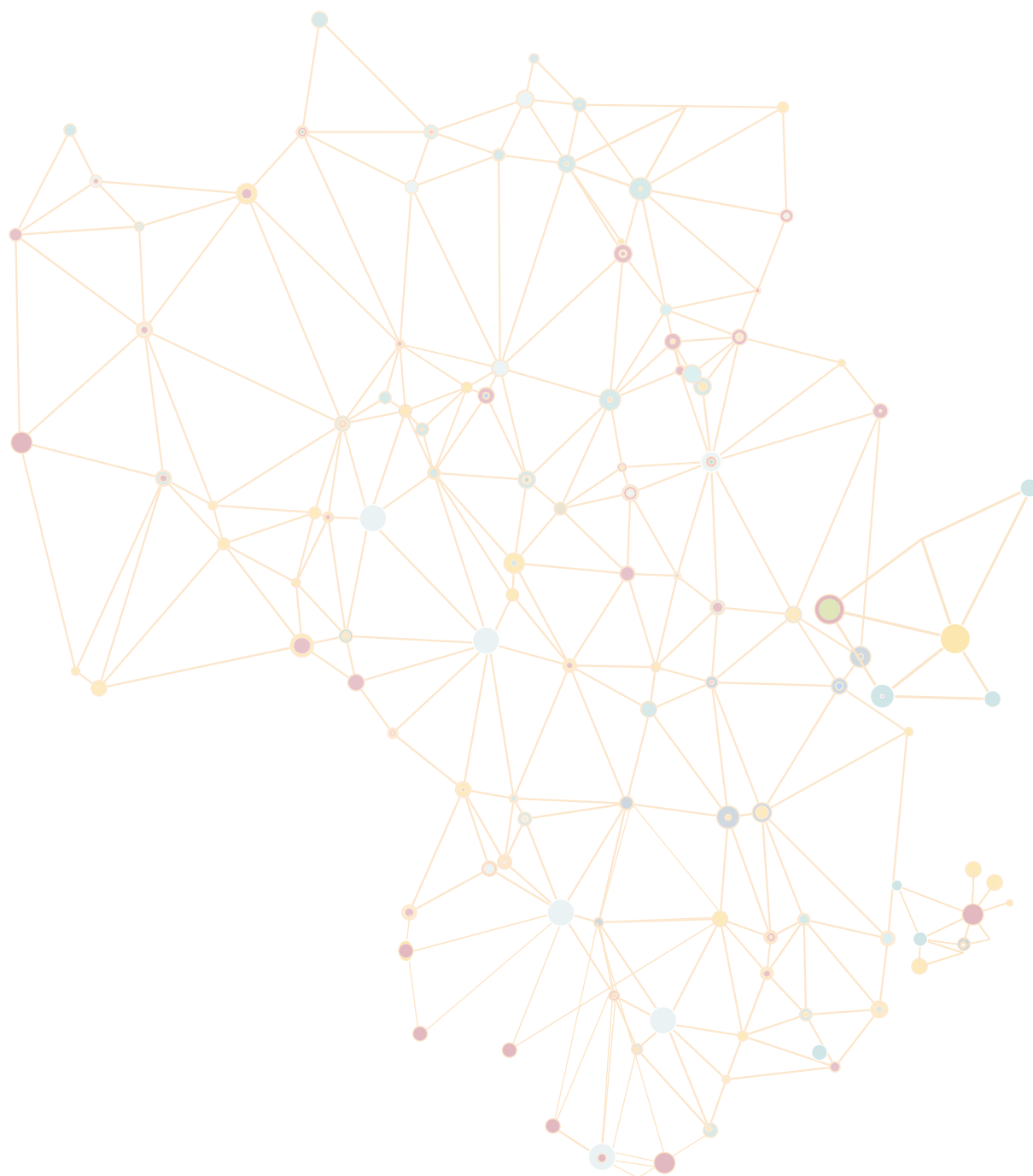


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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Skills Initiative for Africa (SIFA), together with its partners the African Union Commission (AUC) and the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), held the West-African Regional Africa Creates Jobs (R-ACJ) on the 26th & 27th of August 2021. Other key partners included Business Africa (BA) and Nigeria Employers Consecutive Association (NECA).

Five R-ACJ online workshops will be conducted and serve as a prelude to the Continental Africa Creates Jobs (ACJ) conference to be held in November 2021. The West Africa Regional ACJ was the second of the 5 regional workshops, the first being held in East Africa on the 16th & 17th July 2021.

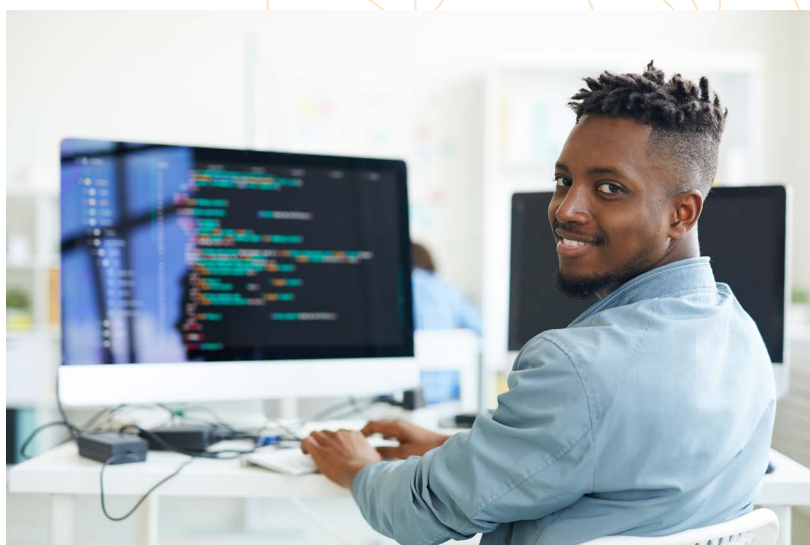
1.1. Workshop purpose

The five R-ACJs aimed to bring together key stakeholders from government, the private and public sectors and other social partners to contemplate data and information gathered through a series of studies. These included SIFA conducted Macro-Economic Studies done in five countries and Rapid Skills Assessments in eight countries. The workshop sessions furthermore aimed to create a dialogue platform at regional level where diverse stakeholders could engage on possible solutions and recommendations. The engagements spotlighted strengthening the skills development system and increasing prospects of (self) employment of young people for the region, within the context of the findings.

1.2. Continental ACJ

The Continental ACJ will be held in November 2021. The theme of this year's continental dialogue platform is ***“Driving a responsive and agile skills and jobs agenda for economic growth for African Youth”***. This theme will enable key stakeholders to explore how Africa's envisaged growth, as articulated in the African Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), in a COVID-19 environment, can meet the skills demand for the over 20 million jobs that the continent needs every year.

Information from the regional workshops is meant to guide investment decisions by Member States as they identify sub-sectors prone to boost employment. The regional lessons learned are in the process of being aggregated to feed into the continental ACJ in November 2021.



2. WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

About 80 stakeholders attended the West Africa online discussion from the business community, higher education, TVET and secondary schools, civil society, youth organizations and policy makers.

3. OVERVIEW OF THE WEST-AFRICA R-ACJ ONLINE WORKSHOP

The workshop was scheduled in two three-hour sessions over a two-day period.

3.1. Day 1 Proceedings

Opening session

The first day started with welcome remarks from officials and the description of the framework of the workshop. Below are a few quotes from their inputs:

- **Ms. Celine ONI**, Director Learning & Projects, Nigeria Employers Consecutive Association (NECA), *“Mobilizing public and private stakeholders is necessary to agree on how to create the conditions that upskill and reskill the youth in order to meet the job demand and stimulate the economic growth on the continent.”*
- **Mr. Hambani Masheleni**, Head of Education Division, African Union Commission, *“60% of the African population is under 35... The Africa Creates Job platform is to become a critical platform to define innovative solutions to upskill and reskill youth population in this fast-changing environment. [...] We will develop technological strategies to boost the skills of young people in Africa. The implementation of all these projects requires the participation of all stakeholders.”*

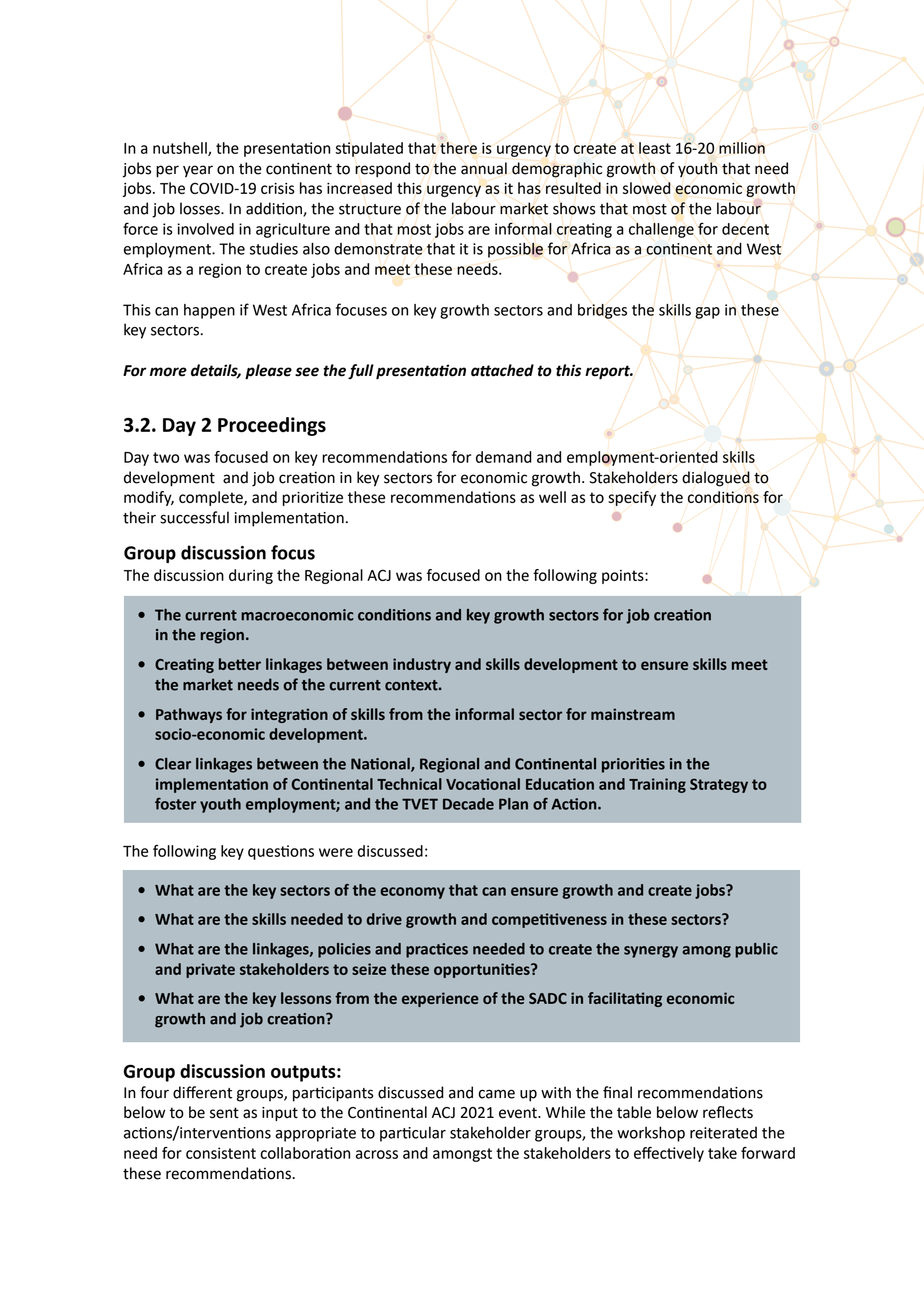
Context setting: Macroeconomic trends¹

The remainder of the session focused on the presentation of macroeconomic trends at both the continental and regional levels. The main input document presented was a summary of the Macro-economic analysis and Rapid Skills Assessment Reports which were undertaken by SIFA in 8 African Union Member States, with possible scenarios of job growth potential along national productive sectors on one hand; and trends² compiled from international organizations and institutions such as the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the International Labor Organization on the other. The aim was to get a concrete idea of the dynamics on the ground with clear facts and data, to support the decision-making process.

¹ The studies are accessible in the following link: <https://www.nepad.org/publications>

² The compiled trends are from some reports accessible below:

- https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_775883.pdf
- https://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/Publications/AfCFTA-youth_FINAL_PRINT_3.pdf
- https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/SROs/North-Africa/best-practices-in-job-creation-in-africa_uneca_202105.pdf
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- https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_771731.pdf
- <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/western-africa-population/>
- <https://www.oecd.org/publications/africa-s-development-dynamics-2018-9789264302501-en.htm>



In a nutshell, the presentation stipulated that there is urgency to create at least 16-20 million jobs per year on the continent to respond to the annual demographic growth of youth that need jobs. The COVID-19 crisis has increased this urgency as it has resulted in slowed economic growth and job losses. In addition, the structure of the labour market shows that most of the labour force is involved in agriculture and that most jobs are informal creating a challenge for decent employment. The studies also demonstrate that it is possible for Africa as a continent and West Africa as a region to create jobs and meet these needs.

This can happen if West Africa focuses on key growth sectors and bridges the skills gap in these key sectors.

For more details, please see the full presentation attached to this report.

3.2. Day 2 Proceedings

Day two was focused on key recommendations for demand and employment-oriented skills development and job creation in key sectors for economic growth. Stakeholders dialogued to modify, complete, and prioritize these recommendations as well as to specify the conditions for their successful implementation.

Group discussion focus

The discussion during the Regional ACJ was focused on the following points:

- **The current macroeconomic conditions and key growth sectors for job creation in the region.**
- **Creating better linkages between industry and skills development to ensure skills meet the market needs of the current context.**
- **Pathways for integration of skills from the informal sector for mainstream socio-economic development.**
- **Clear linkages between the National, Regional and Continental priorities in the implementation of Continental Technical Vocational Education and Training Strategy to foster youth employment; and the TVET Decade Plan of Action.**

The following key questions were discussed:

- **What are the key sectors of the economy that can ensure growth and create jobs?**
- **What are the skills needed to drive growth and competitiveness in these sectors?**
- **What are the linkages, policies and practices needed to create the synergy among public and private stakeholders to seize these opportunities?**
- **What are the key lessons from the experience of the SADC in facilitating economic growth and job creation?**

Group discussion outputs:

In four different groups, participants discussed and came up with the final recommendations below to be sent as input to the Continental ACJ 2021 event. While the table below reflects actions/interventions appropriate to particular stakeholder groups, the workshop reiterated the need for consistent collaboration across and amongst the stakeholders to effectively take forward these recommendations.

	TVET Authorities, TVET & Other training institutions	Private sector	Government
Enhance skills development			
National level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the level of awareness for TVET generally (schools, community, etc.), and its value in job creation opportunities, and access to skills development pathways. • Assess skills required in specific areas – for countries where this has not yet been done. • Improve access to apprenticeship opportunities through partnerships with private and public sector. • Design courses that provide for practical and theoretical training. Recommended to have at least 60% of class in industry, focused on practical, on-the-job exposure and 40% theory in class training. • Review and standardize TVET curriculum and certification for institutions. • Provide specialized facilities and structures in TVET institutions that meet the needs of vulnerable, especially girls and students with disabilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage local TVET institutes to forecast skills needs (current & future). • Define with other actors the real economic needs both at national and regional level in terms of skills. • Support TVET trainer development, through exposure to current industry trends. • Promotion of dual training (more practice than theory). Investment by the private sector and government in the development of training curricula according to APC. 	
Regional level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harmonize the qualification system. • Have a common standard for assessment and training required for future sectors in the regions to harmonize the curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The private sector should work with ECOWAS to have a standard framework to improve skills transfer. • Seek input from some professional bodies on training curricula. • Effective implementation of job and training observatories. • Adopt the competency-based training approach. • Define with other actors the real needs of the economy both at national and regional level in terms of skills. 	

	TVET Authorities, TVET & Other training institutions	Private sector	Government
Job creation			
National level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More collaboration between industry & TVET – Public Private Partnership with clear roles and responsibilities, including agreements for on-the-job training. • Recognize prior learning to the TVET sector – Certification. • TVET to operate some employment service centres both in urban and rural areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicate priority investment sectors and proposals for job creation. • Develop appropriate information systems for the labour market. • Improving the HR planning system. • Strengthen educational and vocational information and guidance services. • Create consultation frameworks to solve land problems and develop training programmes in rural areas, mobilize investment funds instead of giving cultivable land to multinationals that come to the country. • Create a reference framework for professions to better master activities. • Each country must have a national employment map. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countries should allocate significant budget to youth education/training / Put in place a lever where the private sector and governments could financially contribute to finance the youth education/training. • Implement effectively and efficiently decisions and recommendations taken at regional/continental level (domestication & implementation). • Involve Civil Society in the process to be watchdog of the implementation of recommendations. • PPP that speaks to skills, employability and entrepreneurship at continental and national level. • Engage with all key stakeholders to make sure they all contribute to the policy making. • Ensure coherence between these policies and other policies. • Have policies to incentive the employers.
Regional level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize prior learning to the TVET sector – Certification- This will facilitate job mobility for youth. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate private sector-led business incubators at regional and continental levels. • The private sector must be better involved at the regional level to get engaged in the AU and ECOWAS projects. • The regional private sector should again work with ECOWAS and the creative economy to see how they can have a market to sell these goods and services. 	

	TVET Authorities, TVET & Other training institutions	Private sector	Government
What the government could do regarding the informal sector			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impulse a mindset shift in order to consider the informal economy at its real value. • Capture the data on the informal sector in order to understand it and be able to deliver services to the informal sector. • Gradually formalize the informal sector taking into consideration issues such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Fiscal system – in many cases the system hinders formalization » Capacity building » Support to businesses to grow. Growth goes with formalization » Standardization and Certification • Ensure citizen participation in decision-making and the presence of young people in decision-making circles. 			

You can find the full outcomes in the document attached.



4. CONCLUSION

The West Africa Regional ACJ enjoyed a high-level of engagement from the diverse participants.

Results of macroeconomic studies and COVID-19 rapid skills assessment were presented to participants. They discussed employment in the informal sector as well as the key recommendations that were formulated for jobs creation and skills development in the region. The output of that discussion has been captured to be merged with the outputs of the other Regional ACJs and feed into the continental ACJ.

ANNEXURES

- Presentation on the Macro-economic and regional trends in the West Africa Region.
- The recording of the discussion in the plenary.
- The recordings of the groups' discussions.



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This report is published by SIFA - Skills Initiative for Africa, an initiative of the African Union Commission (AUC) and the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD).

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