



PLATFORM FOR LABOUR ACTION

"Advocates for vulnerable and marginalized workers"

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PLA- PUBLIC STATEMENT

WE JOIN THE UGANDAN WORKFORCE TO COMMEMORATE THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR DAY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Dear Workers, Employers, Countrymen and women, the media, the wider Civil Society and the Government of Uganda, as we join the world to commemorate the International Labour Day on 1st May, Platform for Labour Action- a national civil society organisation that advocates for the promotion and protection of rights of vulnerable and marginalised workers in Uganda; reflects and recognises the strides made by the workers, employers and government plus the wide civil society. This in public statement, we focus on what remains to be done in line with the theme for the year.

Each year, Labour Day gives us an opportunity to recognize the invaluable contributions that working men and women make to our nation, our economy and our collective prosperity. It gives us a chance to show gratitude for workers grit, dedication and ingenuity and strength, which define our national character.

The 2023 theme for commemoration is: ***Promoting positive work culture and ethics; A prerequisite for increased investment, employment opportunities and household incomes.***

Work culture is the general attitudes, norms, beliefs, values and traditions, which are particular to organizations or country's workforce. Work ethics means the inherent attitudes that allow workers to perform duties with positive moral values, integrity, responsibility and high-level discipline.

The National Labour force survey of 2022, indicates that a total of 20.5 million persons aged 14-64 years were working in 2021; majority (51%) of which were Own-use production workers, followed by (49%) in Employment. Uganda's labour market is faced is a number of challenges that affect positive work culture and ethics in the world



of work.

The large informal sector is a bar to promoting positive work culture and ethics: Statistics on informality are key to assessing the quality of employment in an economy. The proportion of the employed population in informal employment excluding agriculture was at 88% in 2019/20 and 2021; an increase from 85% registered in 2016/17. The informal sector is characterized by non-registration (only 3% of self-employed were found to have registered their businesses) limited legal regulation and adherence to existing laws and policies. It is also characterized by casualization of employment whether skilled, semi- skilled and unskilled labour as well as low productivity.

Low levels of compliance within the labour market. Upon employment, by the provisions of the Employment Act 2006 section 59, one entitle to written particulars of their employment or contract of employment specifying his or her terms and conditions of work including pay and time of work among others. Currently, majority 67%, of employed persons were employed on the basis of an oral agreement. 73% of employees do not receive any workplace benefit. This is attributable to informal employment and working in private establishments that may not adhere to existing laws on workplace benefits. Only 23 percent of the working population is provided with protective gear at the work place and 22% exposed to multiple workplace hazards while only a quarter of persons in paid employment pay for NSSF.

The rampant Work place violence remains a bar to positive culture and work ethics: Violence at workplace is any acts or threats at the work site and may take a number of different forms such as physical violence, harassment, intimidation, or other threatening disruptive behavior. According to the 2022 NLFS report 24.8% face nonpayment of wages/salaries and benefits, 13.8 are constantly shouted at, 8.2% repeatedly insulted, 1.5 physically assaulted and 1.8% face sexual abuse.

The poor, little pay and exploitation of persons in paid employment: The national report indicated that persons in paid employment earned a median monthly cash wage of Uganda shillings 200,000 in 2021. Males earned Uganda shillings 250,000 compared to Uganda shillings 140,000 earned by females. The highest paying sector was services that paid median monthly cash wage of Uganda shillings 300,000. The median monthly wage for works in the public sector (UGX 532,000) was almost triple the wage earned by workers in the private sector (UGX 170,000) notwithstanding the fact that 82% of the employed population works in the private sector.



Educational mismatch in the labour market a bar to creating positive work culture and ethics. Educational mismatch has been defined as the discrepancy between the worker's level of education and the level of education which is required for the job in the Labour market. The recent UBOS report NLFS 2022 indicated that 43% of the persons in employment were under-educated for the jobs they were holding.

Creating a positive work culture and ethics for the country requires functional labour administration systems. In Uganda's case however, key systems such as labour officers, labour inspectors with mandate to ensure harmonious working relationships in the work places, safety of work places and compliance are limited in numbers. The staffing structure of the Department of Occupational Safety and Health provides for a total of 47 staff (38 Technical staff and 9 support staff). The Department has two divisions namely; Safety Division and Health Division. During the financial year 15/16, the department had 22 staff, 18 of whom were qualified inspectors in the fields of Health, Engineering, Environment, Chemistry, Hygiene, Food science, and 4 were administrative or support staff. Currently, the OSH Department at the Ministry of labor has only 26 gazetted inspectors who have the mandate and power to inspect all work places in the entire country. Of the gazetted 26 inspectors, one retired and since then he has never been replaced and therefore they have since remained 25 gazetted inspectors. Uganda has more than 130 districts and approximately over one million workplaces all over the country. According to the ILO standard of inspector to worker ratio is 1:500, in Uganda, the population employed is estimated at 10 million as compared to the 26 inspectors, which implies an inspector to worker ratio is 1:384,615. This inadequate staff has affected the effective administration and enforcement of the Act in as far as registration and certification of work places as being safe and healthy for workers. For instance Out of approximately over one million workplaces all over the country, only 3000 have been inspected, registered and certified by the Ministry as safe and health working environment. This leaves the Majority 99.7% work places uninspected, unregistered and uncertified workplaces for workers which risks such workers of getting occupational injuries, diseases which result into deaths and permanent incapacitation. It is no wonder over 54% of workers in Uganda work in harmful environment.

On the other hand, not all districts in Uganda have appointed substantive labour officers. As of 2022, there were 146 districts in Uganda. According to section 9 (4) of the Employment Act 2006 mandates every district service commission to appoint a district labour officer to administrate the Act in that district. However, there are about 77 substantial district labour officers countrywide. Other districts are being supported by acting officers in that role. In addition, the labour sector/ program has over the



years been the least funded sector, the sector receives 5% of the conditioned grant to the community development department at the district level. Compared to other departments, the OSH is the least budgeted for department under the ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. For example in the Financial Year 2019/2020 when the OSH Department was allocated UGX 145, 121, 000/=, the Industrial Court was allocated UGX 1,141,200,000/= in wages and UGX 1,263,351,000/= in non-wages. The Promotion of Greener Jobs and Fair Labor Market in Uganda (PROGREL) was allocated UGX 1,580,200,000/= in wages and UGX 2,180,200,000/= in non-wages while the department of Youth and Children Affairs was allocated UGX 404,043,000/= in wages and 868,991,000/= in non-wages.

To maximize the aspirations of this years' theme for the commemoration, we enjoin the government, employers and workers to;

- Government should design a deliberate and subsidized program aimed at supporting the Jua-Kali Enterprises to transition into the formal economy so as to expand adoption of standard business practices and enhanced accountability as well as regulation.
- Systematically operationalize key labour administration structures including the labour advisory board, Occupational Safety and Health Board, medical arbitration board, labour officers and labour inspectors that will facilitate the nurturing of work cultures and ethics.
- Expedite the finalisation and national roll out of the National Counseling and Guidance Framework to Promote School to Work Transition.
- The private sector to adopt the business and human rights framework as stipulated in the national action plan on business and human rights. This will cultivate a positive work culture and ethics
- Increase the percentage of the conditioned grant to labour offices, labour inspection given their mandate in the enforcement of labour laws and policies.