

# Abstract Volume 5 (1996): Regional Perspectives on Labour and Employment

When the Research Group on African Development Perspectives decided to publish the two volumes on *Active Labour and Employment Policies* and *Regional Perspectives on Labour and Employment* it was primarily for the reason that the employment problem became the key issue in the 1990s in African countries and will remain a core problem for the policymakers in Africa over the years to come. However, the Research Group was well aware of the fact that employment policies have to be looked at in a wider frame – considering also the role of labour in African economies. This required a careful review of the role of labour institutions, of the labour policies, labour conditions and also the labour rights.

This fifth volume of the *African Development Perspectives Yearbook* gives together with volume 4 a comprehensive account of the employment and labour situation in Africa and presents a coherent strategy of employment creation and poverty alleviation. The contributions present not only analyses of trends, but most of all policy proposals and assessments of the situation of various countries. It is obvious that labour and employment policies were shaped tremendously since the 1980s by structural adjustment policies, and by the economic crisis affecting African countries.

A broad concept of active labour and employment for countries in sub-Saharan Africa is followed throughout both volumes, emphasising not only the importance of employment-friendly macro-economic and sectoral policies, but also the necessity of appropriate labour policies with regard to labour institutions, labour relations and labour conditions. In this context the new regional and international demands to redesign structural adjustment policies and development cooperation in order to lay greater emphasis on the employment issue are considered as well. Finally, the potential conflict between employment generation and environmental protection is examined and options for sustainable development policies are discussed.

New approaches towards employment creation and poverty alleviation emerged in Africa and are discussed in the two volumes. Of particular relevance are the analyses of country experiences and of successful policy adaptations. The members of the Research Group and the other contributors emphasise in all units and contributions a concept of active labour and employment policies that is broad enough to deal also with the changing international framework for action.

This volume 5 is an outstanding contribution to the debate on Africa's development perspectives. In volume 5 two of the units deal with employment policies in South Africa and Nigeria. Two other units deal with employment perspectives in the informal sector and with the employment effects of development co-operation between Africa and the European Union. Three other very informative units cover aspects of labour and development in the context of the political environment of the Africa region, give information on important African and international institutions and reviews of new publications. In the seven units regional issues are presented (South Africa, Nigeria) as well as issues that cover the whole Africa region and the cooperation between Africa and the European Union. Reviews of important books analysing labour and employment trends in Africa are presented. Valuable is the unit with news and information as it shows that many institutions work now on Africa's labour and employment problems.

Volume 4 and 5 taken together are the first available contribution dealing in a comprehensive way with the repercussions of the economic crisis and of structural adjustment policies on employment and labour in Africa. This is also the first contribution that outlines a coherent strategy for employment creation, poverty alleviation and sustainable development. Strategic areas (South Africa, Nigeria) are considered in more detail.

These two volumes *Active Labour and Employment Policies* and *Regional Perspectives on Labour and Employment* do not only present facts, trends and analyses, but also lay the foundation for a comprehensive strategy of employment creation and poverty alleviation in Africa. Therefore, the two books may be of use for all those working for Africa's development – at the country, the sectoral and the project level. Development practitioners, government officials, business executives, and development researchers will experience the two volumes as indispensable works of reference. Up to now, there is no comparable work on Africa's labour and employment situation on the market.