



## **PSI Report on PRECARIOUS WORK IN AFRICA**

*Prepared in cooperation with Moradeke Abiodun-Badru, Nigerian National Union of Midwives and Nurses*

### **Introduction**

Globally, studies have shown that initial impact of the global economic crisis on employment, left over 27 million people without work. Where jobs are available, precarious employments have replaced standardized employments. Women are disproportionately affected by these precarious employments. On daily basis, women are faced with the “triple burden”. Women’s roles as mothers, as workers and as community advocates continue to exert untold hardship on them. While it is not only the women who suffer the consequences of precarious work, their families and communities also have their share. As governments around the world, including in Africa decreased social spending, services such as health care, child care and elderly care have become unavailable or unaffordable, increasing the burden for women. Further to this, trade policies do not traditionally include a gender analysis that could shed more light into their potential negative impacts on women, families and communities before agreements are negotiated. The reality is that globalization, and the various policies and structures that support it, have contributed to the feminization of poverty. Under global economics, women have an increased work burden, a decrease in compensation for their labour, and growing health risks associated with poor working conditions and stress, which have all had a negative impact on women globally.

### **Who are precarious workers?**

Precarious workers are those who fill permanent job needs but are denied permanent employee rights. Globally, these workers are subject to unstable employment, lower wages and more dangerous working conditions. They rarely receive social benefits and are often denied the right to join a union. Even when they have the right to unionize, workers often are discouraged to do so, being they are easily replaceable. Women, minorities and migrant workers are more likely to fill these kinds of jobs. Permanent employment across a number of sectors has shifted to precarious jobs through outsourcing, use of employment agencies, and inappropriate classification of workers as “short-term” or “independent contractors.”

### **General Characteristics of precarious work**

1. Temporary/part time
2. No social security/protection
3. No union
4. No living wages
5. No consultation
6. Greater risk of injury and ill health
7. Not decent work/wages
8. Measures of Precariousness and Vulnerability
9. level of earnings
10. level of employer-provided benefits
11. degree of regulatory protection
12. degree of control or influence within the labour process

13. the sector in which workers are employed
14. the size of the enterprise in which they work
15. the non-standard nature of their employment contract
16. their demographic circumstances

Precarious work is an increasing problem on every continent, undermining wages and conditions of work and threatening to divide working people. It flourishes wherever there is a labour surplus and workers are driven to accept work at any cost conditions that exist in many, if not most, parts of the world today. Precarity is more and more becoming a living situation that is not only characterized by material deficits, insecurity, adverse working conditions and lack of recognition, but above all by dwindling possibilities for people to make long-term plans. Precarisation is not a phenomenon occurring only on the fringes of society. Alongside the permanent exclusion from gainful employment and the increase in insecure working conditions there is a third focal point – the fear of falling down the social ladder and losing status among those groups of people who still have "normal" regular jobs.

The younger and better qualified the employees are, the greater the hope of them managing to find permanent employment. This dream only comes true for about 12% to 18% of these workers.

However, precarious work conditions do not exist equally across the world. The statistics below produced by the International Labour Organization shows large differences in the occurrence of vulnerable in different areas of the world. Vulnerable work as a concept is a more holistic idea about work forms.

Vulnerable Employment as a share of total Employment (%) 2007

1.	Developed economies and EU	9.2%
2.	Central SE Europe	19.3%
3.	East Asia	55.7%
4.	SE Asia and Pacific	59.4%
5.	South Asia	77.2%
6.	Latin America and the Caribbean	33.2%
7.	Middle East	32.2%
8.	North Africa	30.7%
<b>9.</b>	<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>	<b>72.9%</b>

(Source ILO 2008).

The experience of trade unions around the world points to the fact that national labour laws do not effectively protect against precarious work. Precariousness can be the result of total or partial exclusion of specific categories of workers from the labour code. Such is the case for instance for domestic workers, agricultural workers, workers in export processing zones, public sector workers.

### **African Regions with high propensity for Precarious work environments**

Precarious work conditions are not the same the world over. Therefore, there is need to identify peculiar issues on precarious work that are most critical to Africa region and how these issues should be addressed. In Africa, precarious work is the 'norm' and has been for a long time, No part of the African continent is free from the persistent threat of precarious work conditions. With globalization and effects of the economic meltdown that hit developed countries in the past decade, workers in Africa and Asia have taken the brunt of the effects as jobs that were hitherto permanent have become temporal with low certainty over the continuity of employment. Trade unions have equally been weakened as a result; a situation that has rendered most workers organization weak and in total lack of collective control over working conditions of their members.

According to a report by African Development bank in 2014 on Labour market reforms in Post transition North Africa, the labour market situation in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia was already in dire

situation in 2010 and has deteriorated since that time as high unemployment, high disengagement from the labour market, a large but inadequately skilled supply of workers with unrealistic employment expectations, insufficient job creation with an inadequate supply of skilled jobs for educated workers and a weak regulatory framework have all contributed to high unemployment and widespread informality that gives limited voice to workers in the region.

### **Workers and Sectors most vulnerable to precarious work conditions**

Some classes of workers are more affected by precarious work conditions than others as a result of the fact that they are more likely to be employed in precarious work or non-standard contracts. Young, female and migrant workers are overrepresented amongst temporary workers; which means that they are more exposed to the psychosocial risks associated with temporary work. Women work slightly more often under temporary contract than men do. Precarious work is equally more prevalent in sectors such as service sector (Hotels and Hospitality Industry, Education and Health), construction, Agriculture and wholesale/retail trade.

In West and Central Africa, the majority of workers live and work under precarious job conditions. Working poverty, vulnerable employment and underemployment abound among Africa's youth and across all occupations. The ILO estimates that across a sample of 24 African countries 49% of working young people live on less than USD 1.25 a day and 73% live on less than USD 2 per day. Vulnerable employment is the most prevalent form of youth employment in most African countries. Only upper middle-income countries have more wage employment. According to Gallup World Poll data, in 2010 75% of the working young is in vulnerable employment in low income countries, and 57% in lower middle-income countries. In upper middle-income countries, 26% of working youth are in vulnerable employment. Among the countries in the LFS analysis, Mali has the highest share of vulnerable youth employment with 95%, South Africa the lowest with 12%.

In Sub-Saharan Africa employment by sector is quite different to most developed and middle income countries. Industry makes up only 9.6% of employment in Sub-Saharan Africa whilst agriculture makes up the bulk of employment. Trade and subsidy practices of countries in the North that prevent African agricultural produce entering these markets are very harmful to Africa because such a large proportion of people work in this sector.

Precarious work in an African context goes beyond how the contractual relationship between employer and employee is defined. There are four dimensions in which employment relations in precarious work can be determined:

1. The degree of certainty of continuing employment;
2. Control over the labour process, which is linked to the presence or absence of trade unions and relates to control over working conditions, wages, and the pace of work;
3. The degree of regulatory protection; and
4. Income level.

Another important issue to be factored in when discussing precarious work in the region is the fact that precarious work in Africa is commonly associated with the notion of the "working poor". i.e. labour is rendered but wages are insufficient to move workers above the poverty line. Out of the 53% of people who are working in sub Saharan Africa and surviving on less than \$1 a day, over 80% are women. Further to this, out of the 85.4% of people existing on less than \$2 a over 70% are women. The conclusion drawn from this is that in the region, precarious work is generally experienced as poverty work regardless of the types of contractual relationships sector and types of employment that may exist.

In Africa, precarious work is not isolated from other socio economic issues and struggles in the sub region. To tackle precarious work as though it exists in contractual isolation is to ask to fail. For the working class, poverty and fear are the cement of precarious work along with a host of other social ills including racism, gender discrimination and HIV prevalence.

A major step to tackle and address these issues should be the eradication of precarious work by building decent work for meeting human needs. Whilst creating employment and decent wages are important, **equitable and quality public services should be viewed as an essential form of wealth redistribution**. Thus alliances are important especially those with an emphasis on public sector delivery.

### **Employment relations in the public sector**

The public sector refers to the part of the economy concerned with providing various government services. The composition of the public sector varies by country, but in most countries the public sector includes such services as the military, police, public transit and public roads maintenance, Power and water resources management and control, public education, and healthcare. At its most basic level, public economics provides a framework for thinking about whether or not the government should participate in economic markets and what the extent of its role should be. However, as a result of neoliberal economic policies adopted by nations in the global south, there has been severe downsizing of public sector workers and the rush to privatize public services thus, the attendant public service reforms and changes in human resource management in public administrations.

In Sub-Sahara Africa, a growing number of tasks have been performed by workers in non-standard employment arrangements. In recent times, Governments have employed temporary public servants, agency workers, or regular workers on a non-permanent recurrent basis or working part-time; and use civil or administrative contracts to provide services specific to public administration. Women are predominantly found in municipal services as junior cadres of public servants except in healthcare and education services where they maintain the lead. However, most of these cadres of public services are daily depleted and their duties outsourced making the work precarious e.g. waste pickers, cleaners, gardeners etc.

The nature of precarious work in the public service threatens trade union membership and could cause division among workers. Workers in unstable job situations are exploited on a daily basis by the outsourcing agency that employs them and few feel confident enough to organize and bargain collectively at the risk of losing their jobs. As such, the precarisation of the workforce has implied not only the removal of an important form of civic participation, but also can be seen as a strategic way of weakening the labour movement. In sum, precarious work has significantly weakened the platform on which society currently stands. A feeling of powerlessness and fear of demanding change discourage people from participating in trade unions and community organizations and institutions.

### **The impact in the public sector**

1. Constraints on public budgets
2. Reductions in public sector employment
3. Cuts in pay and pensions
4. Cuts in social protection
5. increases in direct and indirect taxation
6. increases in pension age
7. Ongoing cuts are affecting employees working for the general interest, in health, social security, education, culture and arts, environment, energy etc.
8. Threats to the autonomy of collective bargaining and democratic accountability.

Quality public services are inevitable for sustained productivity growth and can make a major contribution to reducing precarity for women as they provide universal access to education, health and care facilities as well as long-term employment opportunities. Well regulated and sufficiently resourced care services must be a priority of public service development, as on the one hand many jobs in the care economy are currently

precarious, and on the other hand because a lack of care facilities acts as a barrier for many women to take up regular employment as they are the main provider of the unpaid family care work. Governments need to design simple and transparent criteria to define the employment relationship.

## **NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF PRECARIOUS WORK ON WOMEN**

1. Burden of Unpaid care work
2. Strain on family and community relationships
3. Reduces chances of further education
4. Physical and Mental health
5. Risk of injury and Illness
6. Stress
7. Barriers to access medical treatment.

## **Recent campaigns and other References for Precarious Work Campaigns.**

Campaigns around precarious work have been initiated by organizations worldwide with some of such campaigns focused on the African Region. Some of such campaigns include:

1. Successful Thunderclap campaign to STOP Precarious Work  
<http://www.industrialunion.org/support-industrialworkers-stop-precarious-work-campaign-with-thunderclap>.
2. Negotiating Security Trade union bargaining strategies against precarious work  
[http://www.industrialunion.org/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/STOP-PrecariousW-august2012/Bargaining\\_strategies/a4\\_precarious\\_work\\_en\\_web.pdf](http://www.industrialunion.org/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/STOP-PrecariousW-august2012/Bargaining_strategies/a4_precarious_work_en_web.pdf).
3. Companies worldwide are shirking their legal obligations to workers by replacing permanent jobs with contract and temporary work. <http://www.laborrights.org/issues/precarious-work>.
4. Precarious Work: How temporary jobs and subcontracting undermine women, migrants and all workers' rights to decent work worldwide <http://www.laborrights.org/sites/default/files/publications-and-resources/Precarious%20Work%20Worldwide%20women%2C%20migrants%2C%20etc..pdf>.
5. A Lipton Worker Speaks out About Disposable Jobs!  
<http://www.laborrights.org/publications/lipton-worker-speaks-out-about-disposable-jobs>.
6. Union solidarity international <https://usilive.org/precarious-work/>
7. The campaign for a living wage in Ireland <https://usilive.org/the-campaign-for-a-living-wage-in-ireland/>
8. #ISS14 - we must question everything in order to organize precarious workers  
<https://usilive.org/iss14-organise-precarious-workers/>
9. <https://usilive.org/zero-hours-job-threat-sums-up-government/>
10. How well does Australia protect casual workers? <https://usilive.org/campaign-for-secure-jobs-in-australia/>
11. Precarious work affects us all <http://www.global-unions.org/+-precarious-work-affects-us-all-+.html?lang=en> (International Metal workers Federation). <http://www.global-unions.org/precarious-work-affects-us-all,240.html?lang=en>.
12. IMF global campaign against precarious work  
[http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed\\_dialogue/@actrav/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_166161.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_dialogue/@actrav/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_166161.pdf)
13. Precarious work – building PSI's Campaign Sandra Vermuyten – WOC 2014 [http://www.world-psi.org/sites/default/files/en\\_psi\\_woc2014\\_sandravermuyten\\_introduction\\_precarious\\_work.pdf](http://www.world-psi.org/sites/default/files/en_psi_woc2014_sandravermuyten_introduction_precarious_work.pdf)
14. Addressing Competition: Strategies for Organizing Precarious Workers—Cases from Canada Maya Bhullar, Service Employees International Union, Local 2 Canad
15. Bargaining for Social Rights (BARSORI) Trade union responses to precarious work  
[http://www.uva-aias.net/uploaded\\_files/regular/BARSORIOverviewReport-1.pdf](http://www.uva-aias.net/uploaded_files/regular/BARSORIOverviewReport-1.pdf)

16. Trade union responses to precarious work in seven European countries Maarten Keune  
(Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies, University of Amsterdam)  
[http://www.iza.org/conference\\_files/EmpCompPersp2013/keune\\_m7578.pdf](http://www.iza.org/conference_files/EmpCompPersp2013/keune_m7578.pdf)

17. Jobs, but decent jobs please. Statement: Global Union Principles on Temporary Work Agencies  
<http://www.global-unions.org/statement-global-union-principles.html>.

## **Conclusion**

Combating precarious work especially in the public services in Africa remains a major issue that Trade unions must champion. Precarious work was borne out of neoliberal economic and social policies, bad employment practices, and inadequate labour legislations. The resultant effect is the loss of membership and weakening of the labour movement. Public service trade union advocacy and campaign around Precarious employment in the region should focus on:

1. More and better jobs:
2. Stronger welfare systems
3. Stronger workers' rights
4. Priority to social rights and collective action
5. Better pay: stronger collective bargaining.

Further to this, advocacy should address issues such as interventions in economic and social policy, a living wage, tax justice and public investment for inclusive, productive and environmentally sustainable societies, keeping wage growth in line with productivity growth, and preventing unfair competition in the labour market.

Every worker must benefit from the right to establish and join unions, bargain collectively and the right to strike.

## **Key Messages**

1. Women deserve better; Stop Precarious work!
2. Enough! Women deserve decent work!
3. Stop precarious work
4. Full-time jobs and decent wages Women's rights now!

## References

1. 7th Regional Congress for Africa ILERA 15 – 16 September, 2014 Botswana (call for papers). Botswana. [www.ilo.org/public/english/iira/pdf/7thcallpapers.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/iira/pdf/7thcallpapers.pdf)
2. Subrahmanyam G., Castel V. (2014) Labour market reforms in post-transition North Africa. Africa development Bank Chief Economist Complex. [http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/Economic\\_Brief -  
\\_Labour\\_market\\_reforms\\_in\\_post-transition\\_North\\_Africa.pdf](http://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/Economic_Brief_-_Labour_market_reforms_in_post-transition_North_Africa.pdf)
3. Koger R.G., Hayter S (2011) Comparative study of labour relations in African countries working paper 116, University of Amsterdam. [http://www.uva-aias.net/uploaded\\_files/publications/WP116-Kocer,Hayter.pdf](http://www.uva-aias.net/uploaded_files/publications/WP116-Kocer,Hayter.pdf)
4. Oxfam Canada (2005) Women and precarious work: A framework for policy recommendations. [http://www.twca.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2013/02/Women\\_and\\_Precarious\\_Work -  
\\_A\\_Framework\\_for\\_Policy\\_Recommendations\\_Oxfam.pdf](http://www.twca.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2013/02/Women_and_Precarious_Work_-_A_Framework_for_Policy_Recommendations_Oxfam.pdf)
5. Okafor E. E. (2012) Emerging nonstandard employment relations and implications for human resource management functions in Nigeria. African journal of business management Vol 6 (26), pp 7621. <http://www.academicjournals.org/journal/AJBM/article-abstract/2F0E5EA15604>
6. Understanding Precarious Work in Africa (2009) <http://www.industrial-union.org/archive/imf/understanding-precarious-work-in-africa>
7. EU-OSHA – European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (2007) Expert forecast on emerging psychosocial risks related to occupational safety and health', Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg,
8. Eurofund - European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, '5th European Working Conditions Survey: Overview Report', Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg, 2012. pg9.
9. Africa Economic Outlook (2012), who are the working youth in Africa? [http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/theme/youth\\_employment/youth-in-african-labour-markets/who-are-the-working-youth-in-africa/](http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/theme/youth_employment/youth-in-african-labour-markets/who-are-the-working-youth-in-africa/)
9. Staff Reporter (2013). Government steps up fight against precarious work. [http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/28037/government-steps-up-fight-against-precarious-work-20130702#.VT1uuf9\\_IYf.](http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/28037/government-steps-up-fight-against-precarious-work-20130702#.VT1uuf9_IYf)