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Agenda Item 1: The Potential of Technology in Addressing Labour Force Gaps

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Introduction

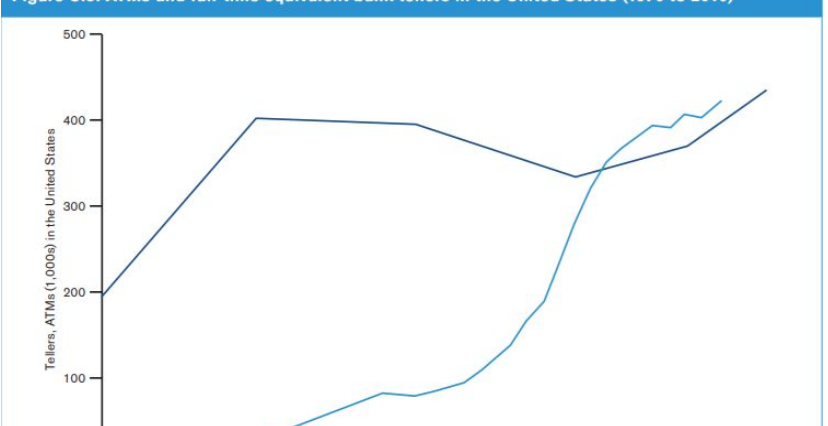
Technology is widely used in the labour market more and more every day. Its effects are controversial but they have been proven to be mostly positive. Many countries and companies are leaning towards the idea of using technology instead of employing people. While managing technology is cheaper and their performance is significantly higher than humans, many people are expressing their disappointment over losing their jobs and not having enough income to secure their living conditions. On the other hand, many people believe that the usage of technology is eliminating lower-income jobs which are considered as “inhumane” and believed to have conditions that are worse than the payment.

In this committee, we are not going to talk about the ethics of technological advancement in the labour market. We are going to try to induce it positively while also seeking to keep different parties of this issue content.

General Overview

Technology adapting to different labour markets is not a new phenomenon. For centuries, technological advancement has improved labour. For example, the printing press: it has increased the number of books and other medians written ink. Consecutively, it has reduced the cost and made books available to everyone; however; technology always brought controversy alongside it. Take the Luddites for example, they were 19th-century Englishmen who were working as craftsmen and were rebels against machinery. Often at night, they would go around destroying any textile machinery that was used as a substitute for their physical labour. Also many of the 19th-century economists such as Karl Marx, David Ricardo et. al. predicted that

Figure C.3: ATMs and full-time equivalent bank tellers in the United States (1970 to 2010)



mechanization of the economy could worsen conditions for workers. So far, these predictions have not materialized, as evidence, a graphic of the number of ATMs and bank tellers in the USA through mid 20th century through early 21st century has been provided.

“Nimal Lakmal is a 50-year-old man living in rural Sri Lanka. For the last 20 years, he has been working as a bank teller in one of the two banks within his village, which has now grown in population and infrastructure to resemble a small town. Throughout the years, Nimal has witnessed his old colleagues leaving the bank, being replaced by younger applicants. In addition to new faces, he has also seen the rise of new technologies within the banking system — from desktops with upgraded banking softwares to money-counting machines. Though they make his job easier, Nimal is concerned that the increasing level of automation might leave him without a job soon. He realizes the younger generation is more prepared to facilitate such technological transformation, whereas his learning curve is a bit steeper.” (“Future of Work in Sri Lanka” 12).

This hypothetical is from ILO’s article on how the fourth industrial revolution could affect Sri Lanka; it could give better comprehension on how technology being a part of the labour force is seen through the eyes of experienced workers.

And obviously technology has not always replaced people in the labour market but also helped the economy grow and allowed it to be easily analysed. Many science branches, economics etc. can now access data that have not been available to them, thanks to certain technological tools. Absence of these tools could result in unrealistic and low dimensional results, thanks to the new horizon could open up resulting in innovation.

Economists firmly accept that innovation is a key element of a country's economic growth. Technological progress allows for the more efficient production of more and better goods and services.

Technology also has a job creation effect which counterbalances the jobs it substitutes. There are several channels technology accomplishes this effect. One of these channels is the automation’s compliments on specific jobs. This makes workers who perform these tasks more productive and possibly increases demand in these fields. The other is innovation shaping new industries which create new human needs often resulting in new jobs. There are many other channels but these are the most powerful ones.

Technology's effects on employment for women is complex and alters from country to country. One of the effects which can be observed in more developed countries is the spread of household electrical appliances. Because of their labour-saving results, these appliances can increase attendance to school. Admittedly education affects women’s labour force participation greatly. It also reduces women’s reservation wage (i.e. the opportunity cost of entering the labour market). Many labour-saving technological advancements such as in



agriculture and were mostly complementary to male workers, in return women's share in the workforce has decreased in the early stages of structural conversion. However, work in light manufacturing such as electronics, which played a significant role in Asian countries' economics, often require tasks that are more manageable by women thus giving them an advantage and significantly increasing their employment share over this field of labour.

But in the end technology's effects on labour is a socio-political choice, workers and enterprises need to adjust to the constant and non-linear technological enhancements happening. In relation to these, new product lines etc. can commence, resulting in more labour need and many more professions suitable for different people. This is the second phase of the techno-economic paradigm, called the golden age. The Victorian Boom in Britain (after 1850), the Belle Époque in Europe at the turn to the 20th century, or the mass consumption phase following World War I are the examples of this. Good politics and preparations against this unpredictable system are proven to be the best ways of increasing labour that develops with technology.

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AGENDA ITEM: EMPLOYMENT INTENSIVE INVESTMENTS

1. Introduction to the Agenda Item

The International Labour Organization has taken many steps to hamper unemployment and therefore, poverty in many parts of the world. Employment Intensive Investments are a plan of the ILO intended to provide people with jobs as the infrastructure of the area improves. This initiative is usually run in the underdeveloped countries or those with a massive unemployment problem. As of now, the Employment Intensive Investment Programme (EIIP) has operated in over 70 countries, which are mostly low- and middle-income.

The ILO's way of decreasing unemployment mainly comes from improving infrastructure. Thus, people's access to basic services such as transportation and vital needs like sanitary drinking water and safe food are complete. As a result, these people residing in underdeveloped countries can have more opportunities to work for improving the community they live in.

According to the International Labour Organization, employment-intensive investments link infrastructure development with employment creation, poverty reduction and local economic and social development. In using local labour and resources they create much needed employment and income, reduce costs, save foreign currency, and support local industry while increasing the capacity of local institution. This means that the creation of better infrastructure is in and of itself, a temporary yet effective job opportunity for most of the local inhabitants.

The investments are done with the combination of available and appropriate technology, local workforce and materials, so the Member States are asked to bear the availability of those before coming up with solutions in mind and include the necessary details in their resolutions. It's worth mentioning that we need to ensure people are motivated to work after the initiative is carried out, so our efforts will not be only a short-term solution and go in vain.

2. Key Terms and Details

Investment: the act of spending money on something in order to make it better or more successful

Micro-meso-macro: In order; small, middle, large

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. The 17 SDGs are integrated very closely within each other, because development in one area mostly requires development in other areas as well.

The Green Jobs Programme: ILO regards green jobs as central to sustainable development. This program is based on environmental protection, economic development and social inclusion of the new employment of people. By engaging governments, workers and employers as active agents of change, the ILO promotes the greening of enterprises, workplace practices and the labour market as a whole. These efforts create decent

employment opportunities, enhance resource efficiency and build low-carbon sustainable societies.

The ASIST: Standing for Advisory Support Information Services and Training for Employment-Intensive Infrastructure, it is a technical bulletin featuring articles on employment-intensive approaches to infrastructure development and local level infrastructure investment planning. It is a minor detail in the study guide.

Andean Development Bank (also known as Andean Development Corporation): It is a development bank that has a mission of stimulating sustainable development and regional integration by financing projects in the public and private sectors in Latin America. Also a minor detail.

3. General Overview of the EIIP

The International Labour Organization has stated two major lines of action for the EIIP, those being;

1. “to contribute to mainstream development policy by placing key concerns of job creation, poverty reduction, enterprise promotion and improvement of working conditions in the broader framework of nationally defined macro-economic employment and investment policy,
2. to promote employment-intensive works and public employment programmes in times of social and economic hardship and crisis.”

The EIIP combines employment creation for economic development and social protection with environmental measures for natural resources restoration, management and climate change adaptation, in compliance with the aims of the Paris Agreement. The EIIP promotes the orientation of infrastructure investments in micro, meso and macro levels.

At the micro level, it improves communities’ capacities for organization and negotiation to make projects run easier. At the meso level, the programme works with the private sector and the civil society for the improvement of institutions and capacity development. At the macro level, it provides governments with advice on the design and assessments of the employment impact of infrastructure investments.

The EIIP has experience in many countries for forty years. The programme is delivered towards a special branch of the ILO named the Employment Intensive Investment Branch. The ILO field offices and the ASIST programmes in Asia and Africa are also used for the implementation of this scheme. Examples for some of the countries this mechanism has at some point operated in are Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Central African Republic, China, Egypt, India, Iraq, Sudan, Vietnam and Zimbabwe.

4. Examples of the EIIP in several countries

An example for a EIIP project is the one that was carried out in Bolivia. The promotion of employment intensive technologies in public investments was a project in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru and was carried out by the sub-regional Office of the ILO in Lima with funding under the ILO/DANIDA agreement.

In Bolivia, the ILO supported the Vice Ministry of Microenterprises and the Vice Ministry of Transports to provide technical assistance to the National Service of Roads. Three microenterprises were the basis of establishing a successful national system of roads maintenance with the financial support of the Andean Development Bank.

A different kind of example is the EIIP involvement after Brazil's "Brazil Without Poverty" plan was ratified. The ILO has expressed that the plan should allow Brazil to create new programs and expand existing initiatives in collaboration with states, municipalities, public and private companies and civil society to expand opportunities for the poor by including them in the benefits of economic growth.

To be precise, ILO's EIIP programme doesn't just work for a temporary solution or only on road projects, but also recommends countries to take actions for those solutions to be effective on decreasing poverty and unemployment. The solution may require direct action in the aforementioned countries, but solely recommendations to the relevant states can also be made on issues that can affect employment adversely in the long term.

An example for this is the recommendations made about the same plan in Brazil, on the adaptation to climate change and crises. They have mentioned that the issue of green jobs is still an aspirational one and is incorporated into long term strategies. They recommended all relevant public and private efforts to build a viable option for the development and expansion of the focus of green jobs in the country's plan. This is a recommendation made under the Green Jobs Programme which is closely related to EIIP.

In China, on request of the Ministry of Human Resources and Security, an ILO-led mission was conducted in February 2011 to explore the possibility to develop, in cooperation with the government, an employment impact assessment system focusing on infrastructure investment. The ILO also gave a comprehensive presentation on Employment Impact Assessment tools in a technical meeting with Employment Promotion Department of the ministry.

5. The Relation of the EIIP to Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals were released by the UN aimed to be achieved by 2030. The EIIP is aiming to handle poverty, hunger, economy and sustainability of resources, while promoting development and gender equality in employment. These aims are closely related to the 1st, 2nd, 5th, 8th, 10th and 11th goals of the Sustainable Development Goals. In respect of order, these are named No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Gender Equality, Decent Work and Economic Growth, Reduced Inequalities and Sustainable Cities and Communities. It is no doubt that the Employment Intensive Investment Programme is very important for fulfilling those goals.

The Timeline of Major Events

Over forty years ago- The EIIP begins as a programme linking employment with infrastructure development

From 1998 to 2002- Argentina faces an economic crisis

From 1998 to 2003- A project on promoting employment intensive technologies in public investments in public investments was carried out in Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador

December 2003- The creation of a market for small enterprises in the construction sector was proposed by EIIP after a mission in Argentina

2009- The Green Jobs Programme was established as a way to counter climate change caused by some sectors

June 2010- Brazil releases the “Brazil Without Poverty” plan

February 2011- An ILO-led mission was conducted in China to explore the possibility to develop an employment impact after infrastructure investment

Possible Solutions

Member States may come up with a collective resolution for another mission to assess the effects of infrastructure development on employment in their countries, prioritizing the ones facing economic recession or rampant unemployment. Infrastructure improvement has proven to be effective in decreasing unemployment, so Member States could specially request to run this programme in their low-income regions to boost their economy in the long term.

To ensure that the programme aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals e.g Reduced Inequalities and Gender Equality, a specific clause could be passed to hinder injustice during the employment of people during the programme.

Another important point is the adaptation to climate change and crises. That's why, in accordance with the Paris Agreement, the promotion of green jobs and environmentally-friendly infrastructure development may be emphasized. A specialized agency may be established under the EIIP programme to counter severe unemployment in times of economic hardship.

It is necessary to utilize or supply the available materials to Member States, so it could be specified how the effective supply and use of required material could be done. This also makes it a requirement to specify what kind of employment-intensive investment will be done e.g road projects or other kinds of community based projects.

Bibliography and Useful Links

General Overview of the Employment-Intensive Investment Programme

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-<https://www.ilo.org/employment/units/emp-invest/employment-intensive-investment/lang--en/index.htm>

The Sustainable Development Goals, as announced by the United Nations

-<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

-<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>

<https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/employment-intensive-investment/countries/lang--en/index.htm> - Delegates can check the projects on this webpage out to get a better grasp of the EIIP

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_158729.pdf - Information on the Green Jobs programme

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---gjp/documents/publication/wcms_614302.pdf - Relevance of the EIIP on addressing climate change whilst combating unemployment

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