



International  
Labour  
Organization

# South African National Construction Health and Safety Conference

## The Future of Decent Work in Construction *“An ILO based Perspective and Approach”* 15 October 2024

By  
**Naomi Kanyemba Lintini**

Project Manager and Technical Adviser  
Decent Work in Southern Africa's Construction Sector  
International Labour Organization





# International Labour Organization

A specialized agency of the **UNITED NATIONS** with a mandate to advance social justice and promote **Decent Work**, built on **foundations** of tripartism and social dialogue.

The ILO brings together governments, employers' and workers' organizations globally to:-

- Address world of work challenges,
- Set and monitor international labour standards,
- Collaborate with partners on programmes to help realize the **Decent Work Agenda**



# The Foundation

## International Labour Standards

ILO Legal instruments which set out basic principles and rights at work. They are either

- a) **Conventions**, which are legally binding international treaties that may be ratified by member states, or
- b) **Commendations**, which serve as accompanying non-binding guidelines.

Members States in consultation with organized business and organized labour, ratify the conventions and formulate national laws and policies.

**C155, 2003: OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH CONVENTION**  
concerning Occupational Safety and Health and the Working Environment

**R164, 2006: OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH**  
**RECOMMENDATION**

Recommendation concerning Occupational Safety and Health and the Working Environment



## Ratification

- Formal registration
- Comes into force 1 year later
- Obligations to report:
  - 1<sup>st</sup> report one year after a Convention comes into force
  - Periodic report every 1 to 5 years

## The ILO supervisory system

- Systematic mechanisms for examining the implementation of ratified ILO Conventions
- Ongoing dialogue between Governments and the ILO
- Can be complemented by technical cooperation

# The “Decent Work” Agenda

**ILO Defines Decent Work as the opportunity for work that**

**Is productive and delivers a fair income,**

**Has security in the workplace and social protection for all,**

**Offers prospects for personal development**

**Allows for Social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in decisions that affect their lives**

**Offers equality and equity of opportunity and treatment for all women and men**



# The Foundation

## A Social Contract with a Human-Centred Agenda



A vision that seeks transformations towards **a future of work** that affords dignity, security and equal opportunity, whilst expanding human freedoms.

A vision that supports people through transitions, and leverages demographic opportunities to contribute to a lifelong active society

# The Foundation

## Responsible Business Conduct (RBC)

A set of principles addressed to multinational and national enterprises, governments of home and host countries, employers' and workers' organizations to provide guidance in areas of

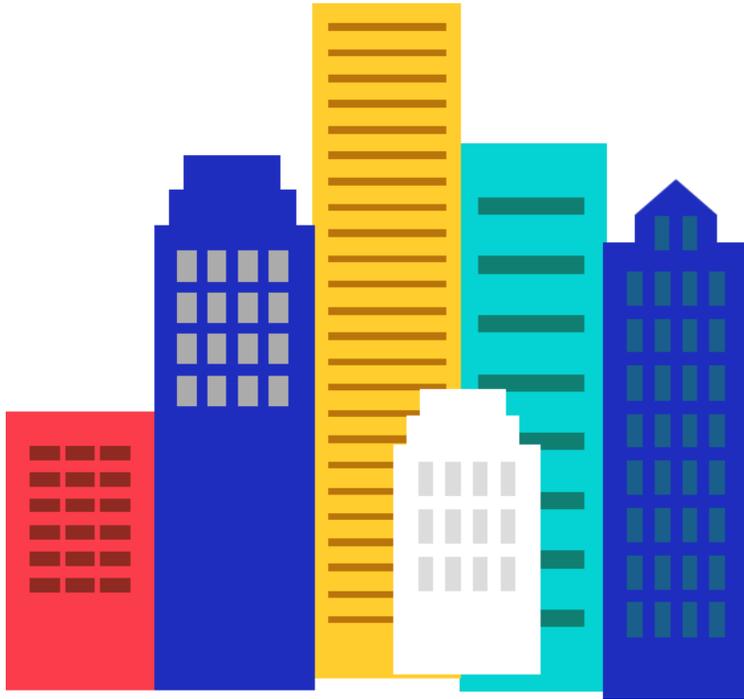
employment, training, conditions of work and life, industrial relations as well as general/business policies

This guidance is founded substantially on principles contained in international labour standards

The principles are contained in “**The MNE Declaration**”  
An ILO instrument that provides guidance on **social policy, inclusive, responsible, and sustainable workplace practices**

# The Foundations

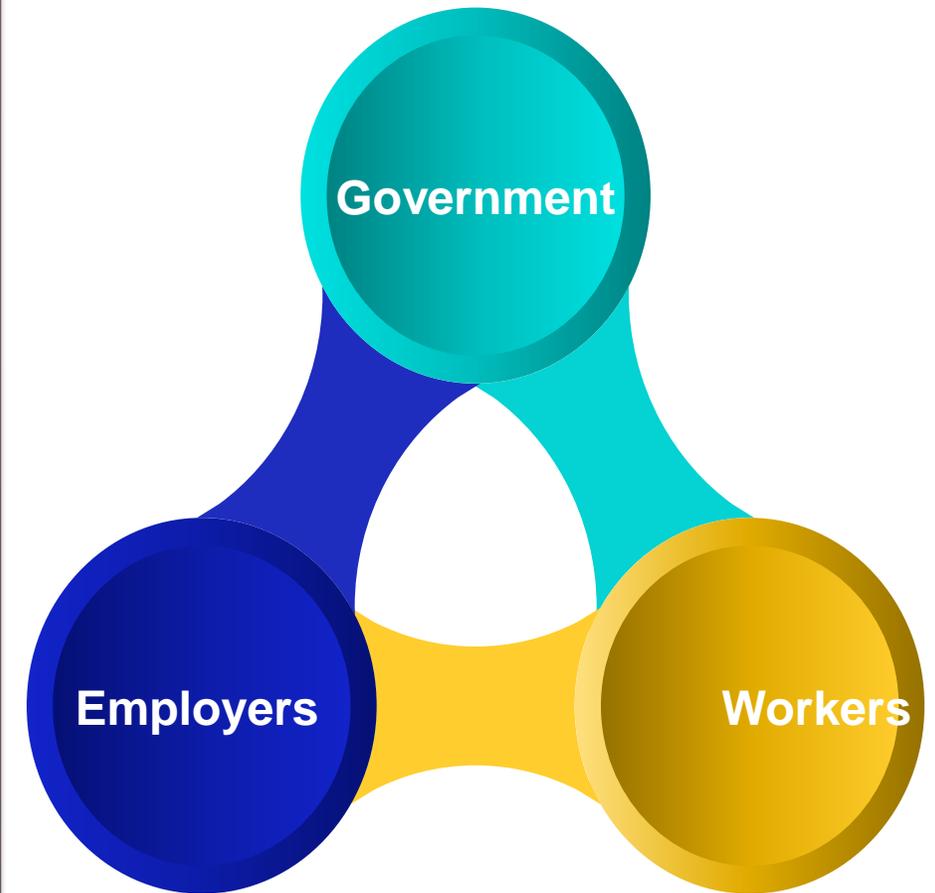
## “Responsible Business Conduct” (RBC)



- ❑ Enterprises typically contribute to economic and social development through job creation, development of skills and technology, and provision of goods and services
- ❑ However, sometimes business practices can have negative repercussions on people, the environment and society, and ultimately on the business itself
- ❑ Integrating RBC principles beyond CSR can significantly improve enterprise performance, increase contribution to a Country's economic and social progression and the realization of decent work for all

# Decent Work creates win–win and mutually beneficial outcomes for involved Players

- ❑ **For Workers**, that provide labour: An improved, rewarding and productive work experience
- ❑ **For Enterprises**, that provide capital: Increased productivity and enterprise competitiveness
- ❑ **For Government**, that regulates business practice and the main duty bearer: Expanding inclusiveness of economic growth and its benefits

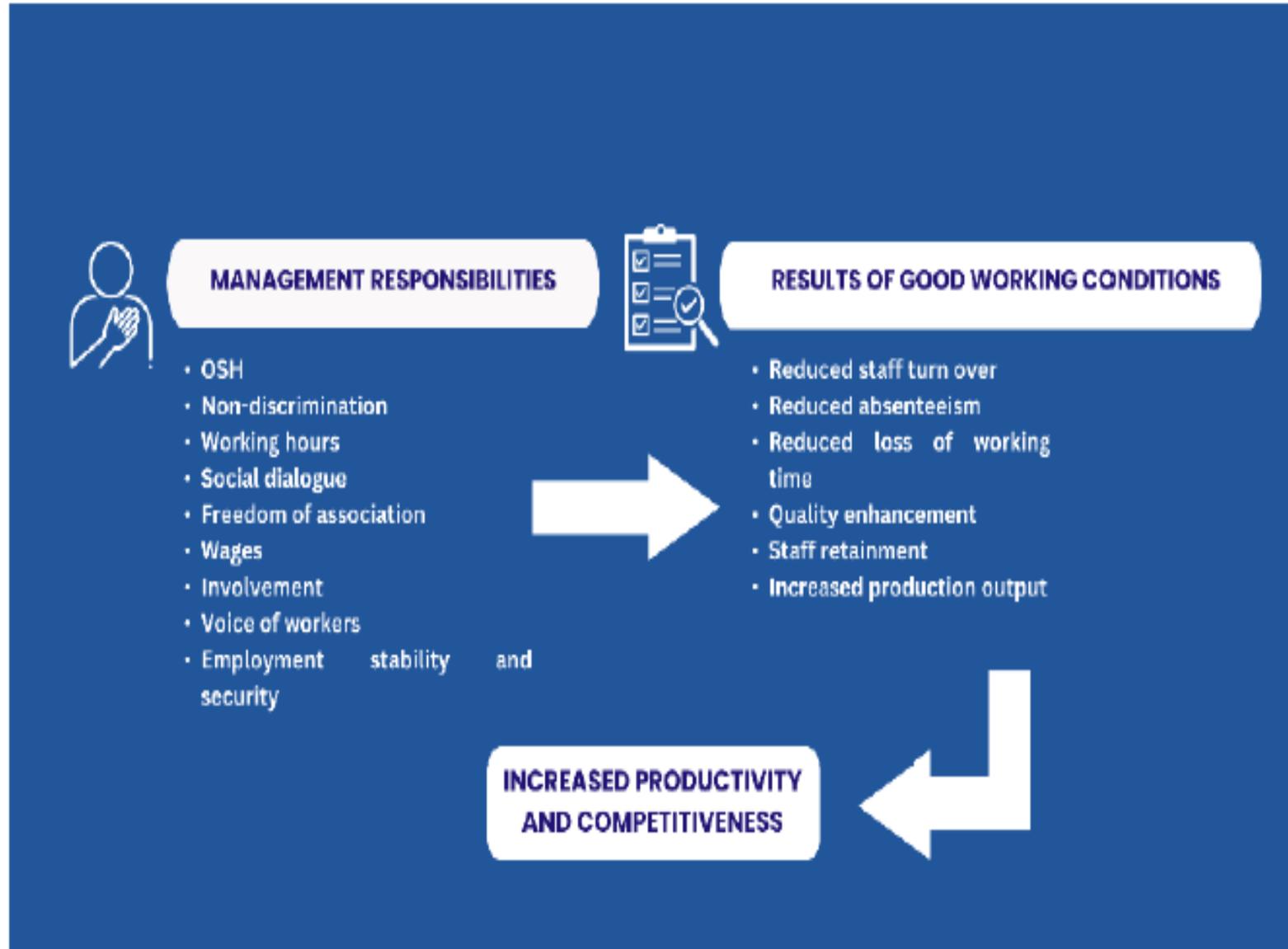


# Why application of Decent Work principles makes business sense.....

The way people are treated and managed, and the way they communicate and cooperate with each other

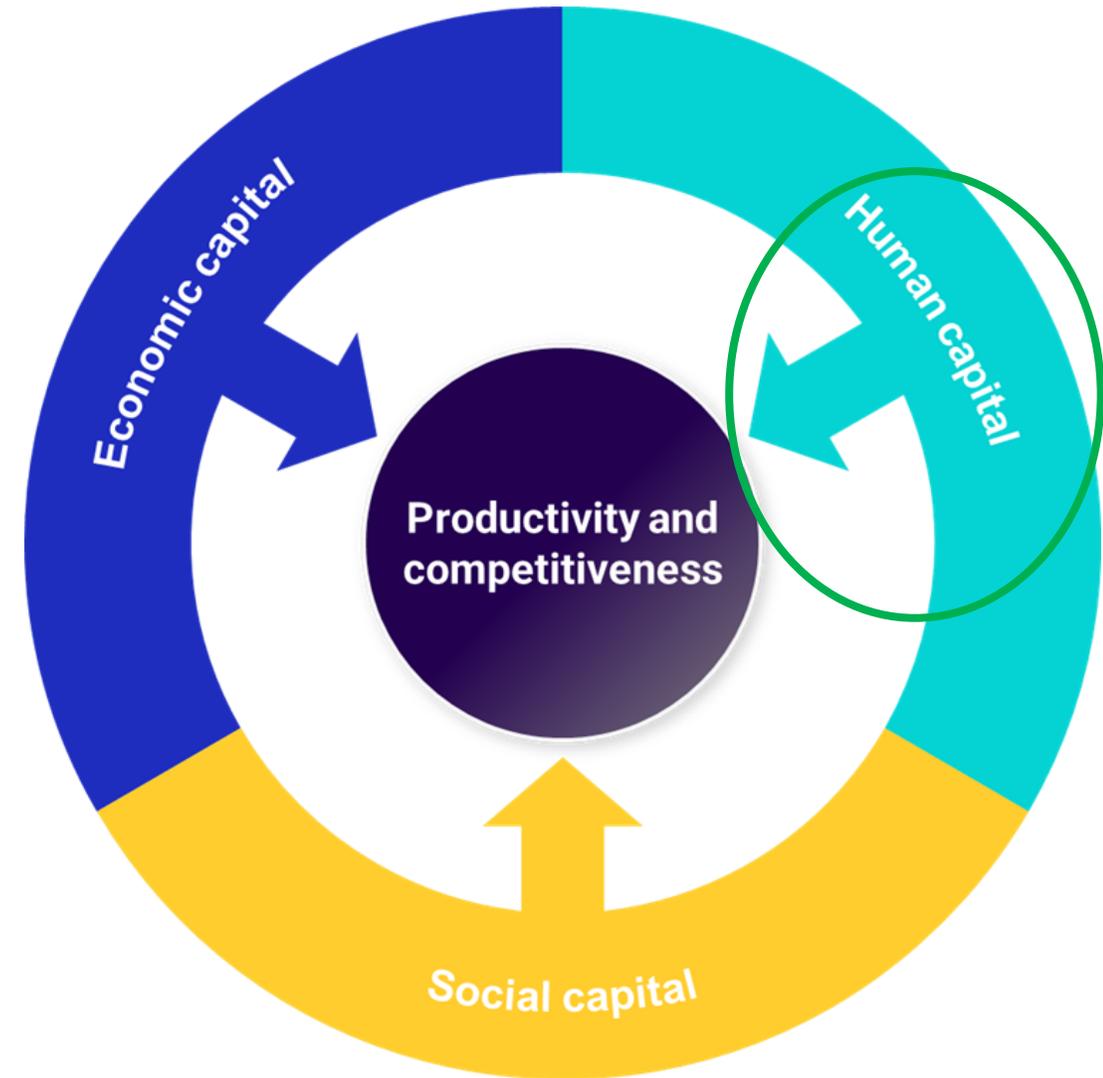
is central the productivity, competitiveness of the enterprise

and to maintaining good working relations



# The Human Factor in Business Success

The knowledge, creativity, and drive embodied in employees, is what enables enterprises to make the best use of **physical capital** and **technologies** to efficiently and effectively meet the needs of customers and therefore remain competitive and relevant in the market



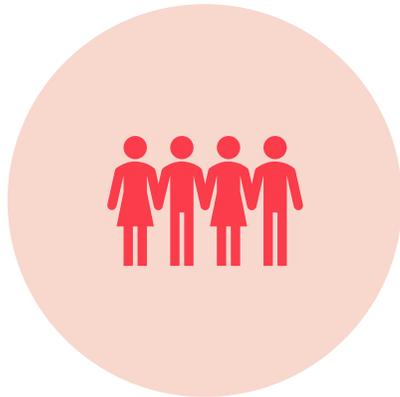
The background of the slide is a photograph of a construction site at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue. In the foreground, the silhouettes of several construction cranes and a complex network of scaffolding are visible. Several workers are seen working on the scaffolding, their figures dark against the bright sky. One crane is particularly prominent on the left side, extending its long jib across the upper part of the frame. Another crane is visible on the right, with its hook and cables hanging down. The overall scene conveys a sense of active construction and industrial activity.

# The future of Decent Work in Construction in Southern Africa

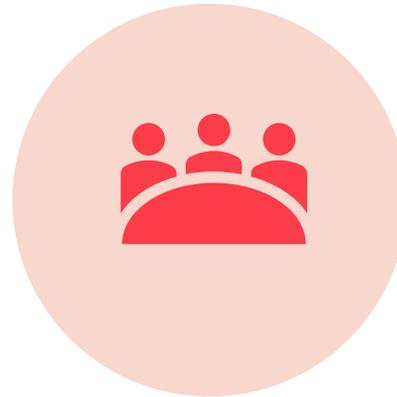
What is the ILO doing to help  
to explore lasting solutions

# A Partnership with SADC Secretariat and Member States to

*Explore opportunities that can drive lasting improvements in productivity of enterprises in construction sector and in management of its human capital*



Raising awareness among member states and sector players on factors limiting compliance with labour rights and that impact on workers productivity

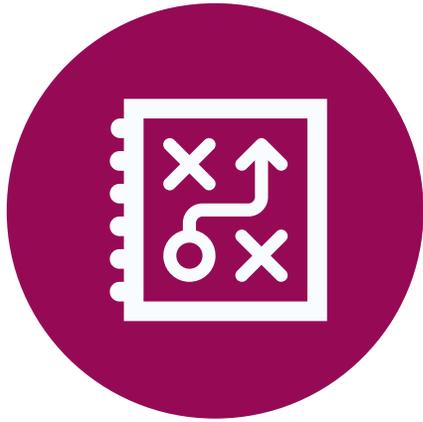


Document and share lessons and good practices to inform policy regulatory and strategy adjustments among member states



Through SADC structures facilitating debate and advocacy for corrective actions to compliance with labour rights and productivity in the construction sector

# Using a systemic approach and evidence-based interventions



**What are the main challenges to decent work and productivity, and what are their root causes?**

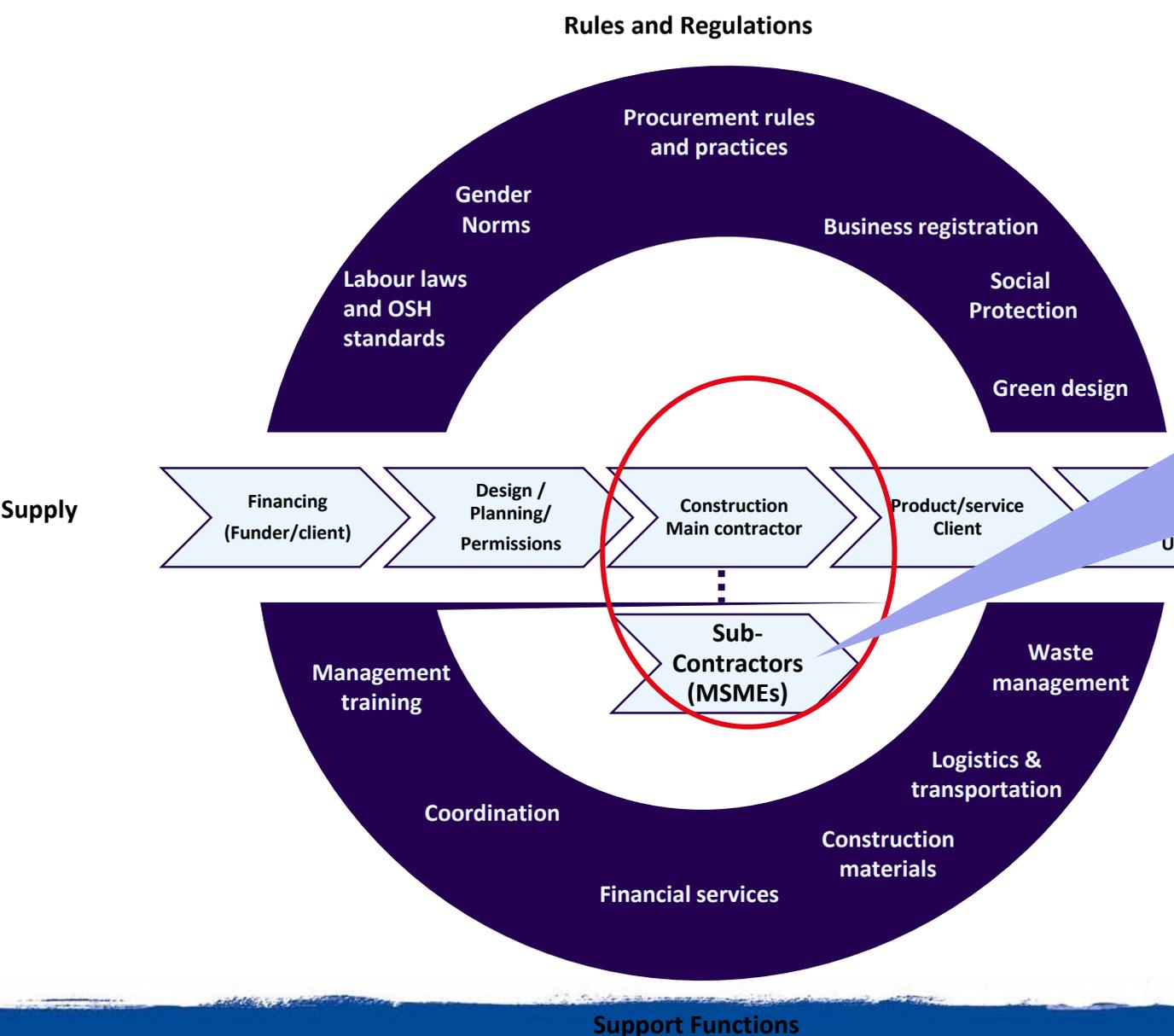


**Who are the actors in the value chain and what incentives and capacities do they need to help address the challenges?**



**Where are the opportunities for catalytic interventions that can address root causes of decent work and low productivity?**

# The Construction sector under the microscope



- ❑ *Where are the main decent work and productivity challenges??*
- ❑ *And who is affected & -involved*
- ❑ *Mostly vulnerable workers, and the SMMEs that employ them?*

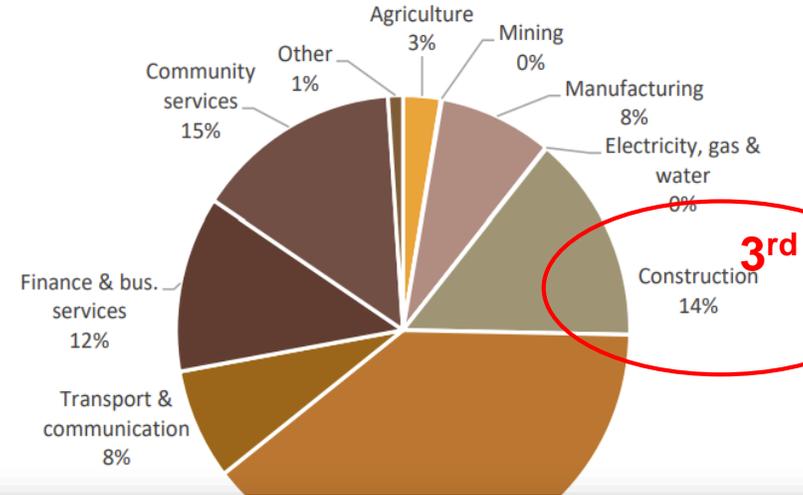


# The South Africa Construction Sector Statistical Context

Number of people employed in South Africa in Q2 2024, (in 1,000s)



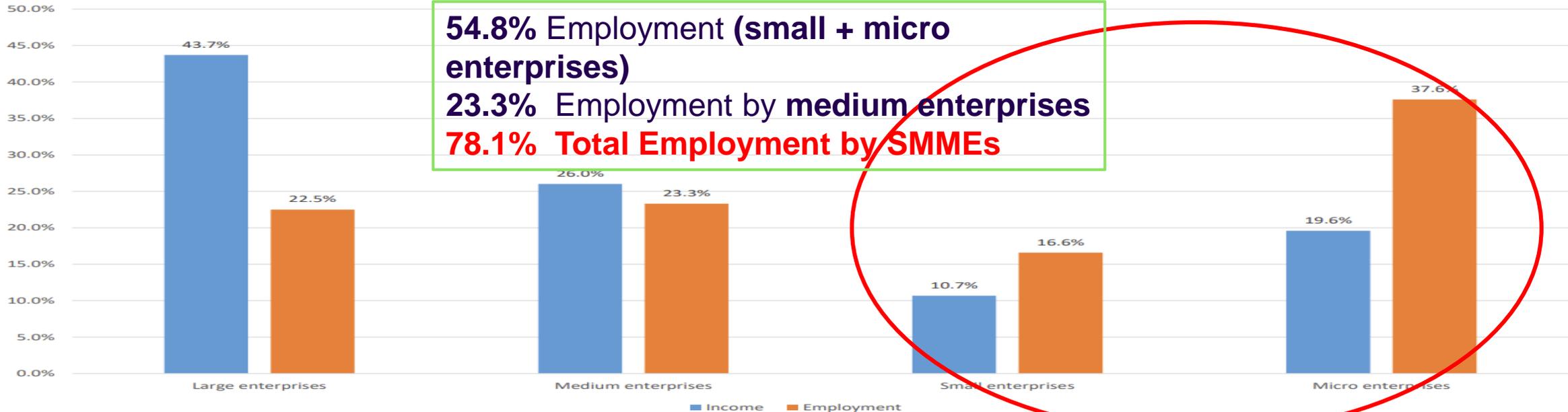
Figure 11: SMMEs by industry in 2022Q3



STATISTICS SOUTH AFRICA

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Figure 2 – Income and employment by enterprise size (% contribution) in the construction industry, 2020



# The Construction Sector Under the Microscope

## Applying A Systemic Development Approach

Which sub-set of the sector is an issue for majority of workers



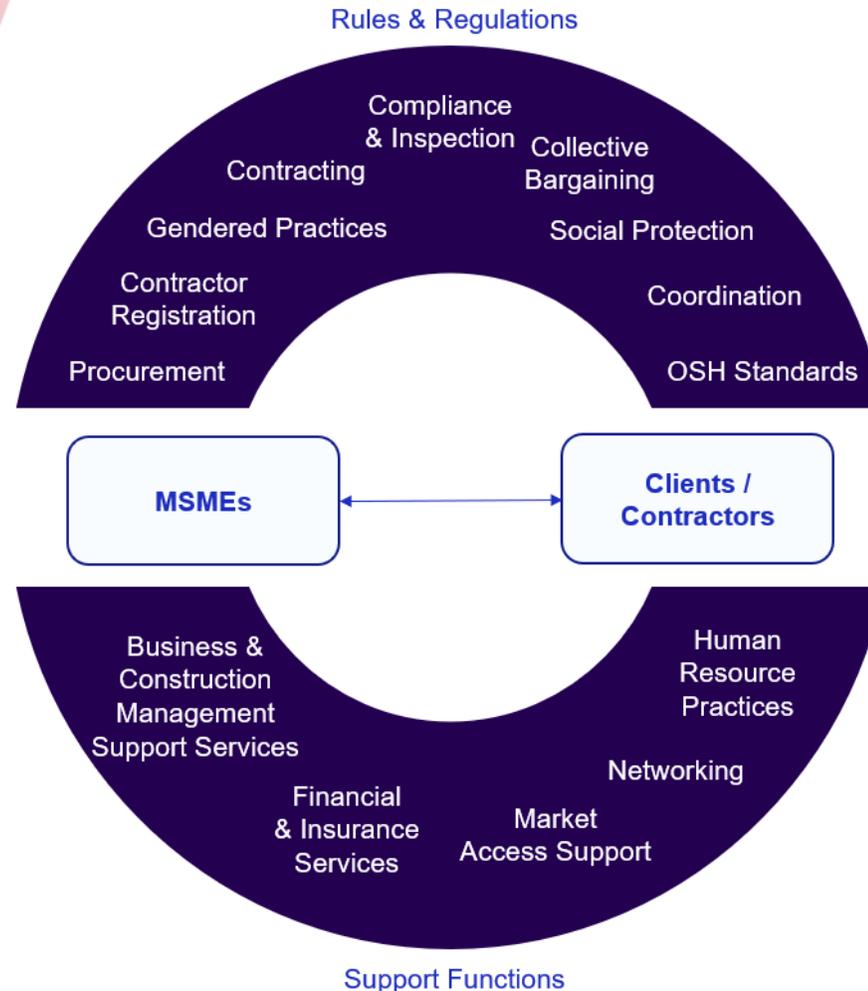
How is the system not working?



Why is the system not working?



Root causes



2. Rules and Regulations: What are the issues at **Macro level**, where guidelines that govern how market actors should operate and behave are made?

1. **Core Market:** What are the issues at **micro level** at the core market where the exchange of goods and/or services happens?

3. **Supporting functions:** What are the issues at **Meso level** where the sector is supposed to receive support to operate effectively and efficiently?

# The Findings

Low entry barriers  
Creating business and  
job opportunities for all  
(Competent and non competent)

Partly why Sector is  
characterised by  
decent work deficits and  
low labour productivity

Thus  
keeping

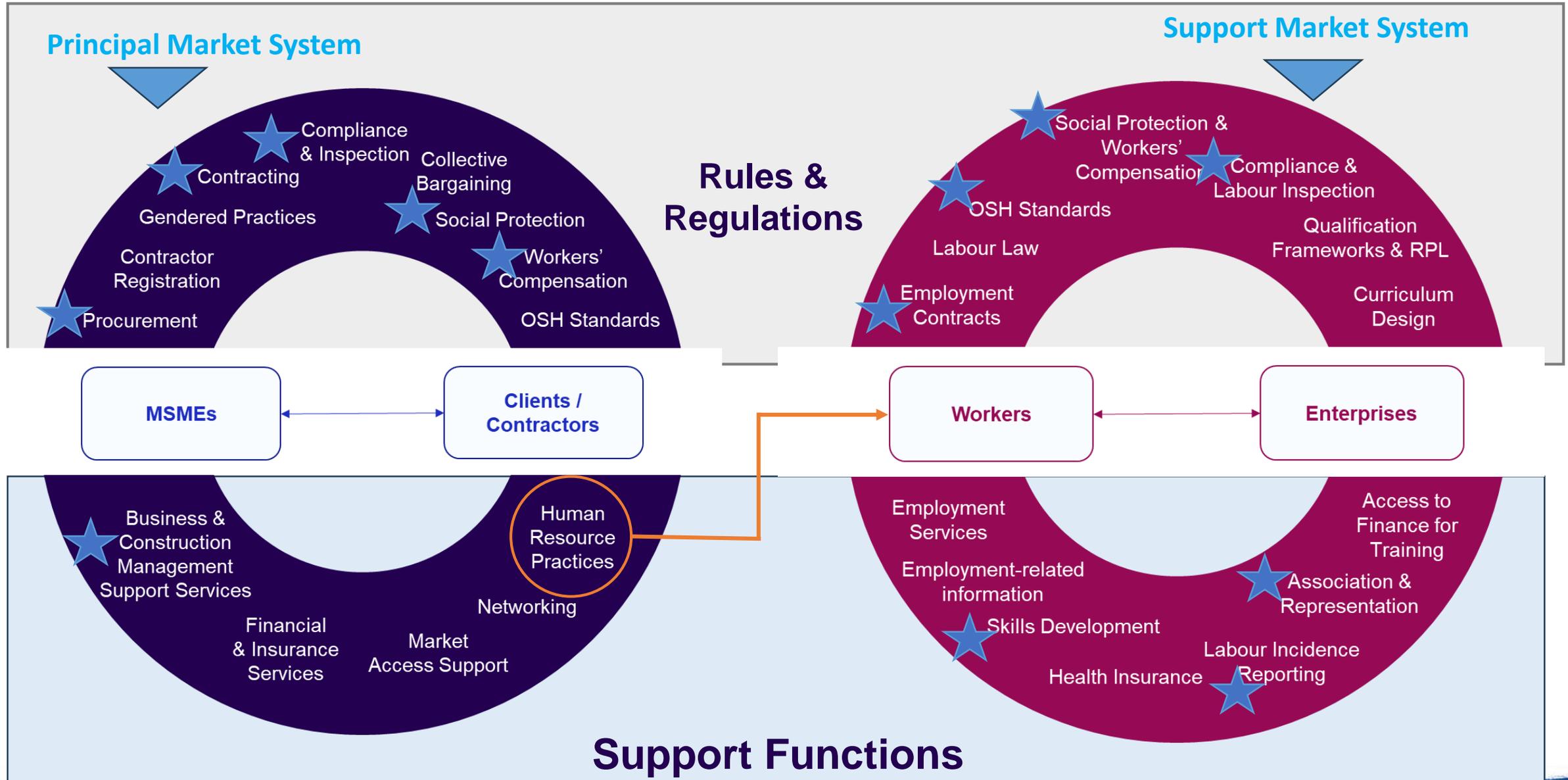


Many workers  
locked in unsafe,  
precarious work  
often in informal  
environments



Many SMMEs locked  
in low productivity  
business operations  
at the bottom of the  
sector's growth  
trajectory

# The Findings on the Core Market and the Support Employment Market



# Findings - Some Root Causes

## Why Small businesses have challenges with Productivity & Working Conditions



**Procurement:** Price based procurement with no clear incentives for providing decent working conditions – leading to inability by SMEs to meet decent work requirements



**Limited information and incentives:** on benefits of providing decent work



**Limited access to** relevant Business Development services (decent work and productivity focused)



**Informal business operations:** Informality of enterprises and limited access to resources

## Why Workers face Decent Work Deficits



**Procurement:** No provision for comprehensive costing for decent work elements in bids



**Limited knowledge and representation :** on labour right and worker obligations, Union membership and reporting channels



**Limited access: to skills development, recognition, and certification** of informally acquired competencies



**Informality of employment: leaves Workers** in informal and precarious working environments with not enough employment protections



**Limited access** to formal and regularized labour inspection and protection systems

**Gender and age-based barriers:** hindering effective participation of women and youth

# The Theory of Change

**Goal** : Improved adherence with labour rights, and productive workers with improved livelihoods and wellbeing

**Outcomes**: Enhanced enterprise productivity, competitiveness, and better working environment for workers

**Outputs** : Changed/improved business practice and enhanced business relationships among market players to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes for all

**Project Activities** targeting systemic constraints/failures by addressing **capacity & incentive gaps** of key players to develop new operating models & strengthened mutually beneficial relationships

**Target group/worker-level change**  
(e.g. income/employment status and more productive workers )

**Employer/Enterprise-level change**  
(e.g. changed business practices)

**Sector/System-level change**  
(e.g. sustained improvement to supporting functions/rules/norms )

INTERVENTION

## Improved wellbeing for workers and

## Outcomes

**Outcome 1:**  
Enterprises improve working conditions and enhanced labour productivity in the construction market systems

**Outcome 2:**  
SADC adopts strategies to improve labour rights for women and youth in a systemic way, based on evidence-based solutions

## Intermediate Outcomes

**Intermediate Outcome 1.1**  
Workers have access to decent working environments and adhering to related obligations

**Intermediate Outcome 1.2**  
Enterprises implement practices that improve compliance and labour productivity

**Intermediate Outcome 2.1**  
SADC Member States apply strategies to improve labour rights for women and youth in a systemic way, based on evidence-based solutions

## Outputs

1.1.1  
Unions represent vulnerable workers and orientate them on DW principles including OSH

1.1.2  
National social protection bodies provide social protection to vulnerable workers

1.2.1  
Contracting authorities integrate DW criteria into small works and basic employment contract

1.2.2  
Procurement Authorities integrate DW criteria into tendering processes

1.2.3  
BDS providers implement DW and labour productivity orientated services

1.2.4  
Workers' compensation and/or insurance providers adapt services to small construction sector enterprises

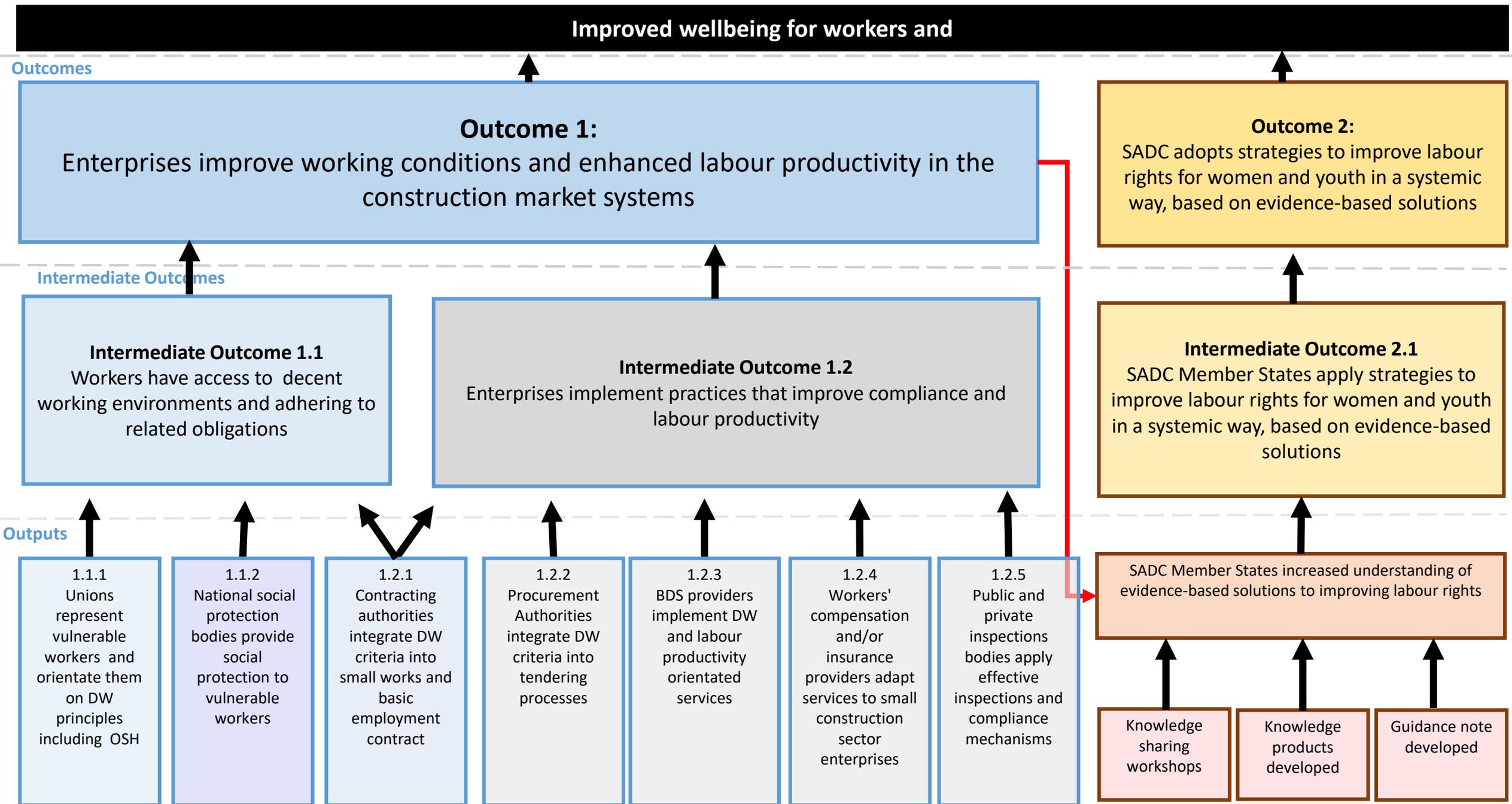
1.2.5  
Public and private inspections bodies apply effective inspections and compliance mechanisms

SADC Member States increased understanding of evidence-based solutions to improving labour rights

Knowledge sharing workshops

Knowledge products developed

Guidance note developed



# What Does Pilot Project aim to Achieve

- Understand the drivers (interests/ motivations), then build and communicate value for actors to take on **new mutually beneficial practices**



- Use **catalytic** funding to buy down risk and **motivate market actors** take on new practices



- Promote early penetration of innovations or behaviour change across the market system
- Promote **continued adapting and crowding-in** by other market actors

- Promote non-competing actors to or respond to the innovations and **changed behaviours** so that new practices become the market “norm”



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*Thank you*