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Attention :

**Presidents and Secretaries
General of all ITUC-Africa
affiliate organisations**

13 April 2026

ITUC-AFRICA ACTION GUIDE FOR AFFILIATES

International Workers' Memorial Day – 28 April 2026

Theme: Mental Health and Psychosocial Risks at Work : Impact of New Technologies and Heat Stress from Climate Change

Dear Comrades,

On 28 April 2026, workers, trade unions, and communities across Africa and the world will observe International Workers' Memorial Day – a day to remember those who have lost their lives to occupational disease and injury, and to recommit to fighting for the living. This year's ITUC-Africa theme unites two urgent and converging challenges facing African workers: the invisible epidemic of mental health and psychosocial risks at work, intensified by digital technologies and algorithmic management ; and the growing physical threat of extreme heat caused by climate change.

WHY THIS THEME MATTERS FOR AFRICAN WORKERS

African workers face a dual occupational health emergency. The first is largely invisible : the growing burden of mental ill-health, burnout, and psychosocial distress, worsened by precarious employment, algorithmic surveillance, and the always-on demands of the digital economy. The second is intensely physical: as climate change accelerates, millions of agricultural, construction, mining, and informal workers are exposed to dangerous and potentially fatal levels of heat with little or no protection in law or practice.

Together, these two crises claim lives, destroy livelihoods, and undermine the dignity of African workers every day. Both are preventable. Both demand urgent action from employers, governments, and unions.

The Scale of the Problem

- The World Health Organisation estimates that depression and anxiety cost the global economy US\$1 trillion per year in lost productivity, with African workers severely under-served by occupational health systems.
- The ILO projects that by 2030, 2.2% of global working hours will be lost to heat stress – with the heaviest burden falling on Africa and South Asia.
- Algorithmic management, digital tracking, and gig work platforms are spreading rapidly across the continent, often without legal protections, worker consultation, or right of appeal.

- Women workers, informal workers, agricultural workers, and migrants face the greatest exposure and the least protection.
- Most African countries have no specific legal provisions on psychosocial risks at work and no mandatory heat stress protocols for outdoor workers.

UNDERSTANDING THE THEME

1. Mental Health and Psychosocial Risks at Work

Psychosocial risks refer to aspects of work design, organisation, and management that can cause psychological, social, or physical harm. They include excessive workload, job insecurity, lack of control over one's work, harassment and bullying, poor workplace relationships, role ambiguity, and work-life imbalance. For African workers, these risks are compounded by stigma, under-reporting, and the near-total absence of workplace mental health support in most sectors.

Digital technologies are transforming African workplaces at speed, often without worker consent or union participation. Key risks include:

- **Algorithmic management** : workers in logistics, retail, and platform work are monitored, rated, and disciplined by automated systems with no right of appeal or explanation.
- **Digital surveillance** : GPS tracking, keystroke monitoring, and productivity-scoring software increase anxiety, reduce autonomy, and erode trust in the workplace.
- **Platform and gig work**: digital platforms deny workers standard employment protections, including OSH coverage, paid sick leave, and social security.
- **Automation anxiety**: fear of job loss through automation causes chronic stress, particularly in banking, telecommunications, and manufacturing.
- **The right to disconnect**: remote and hybrid workers face constant availability demands and digital intrusion into personal and family time.

2. Heat Stress from Climate Change

Sub-Saharan Africa is warming faster than the global average. Heat stress is now one of the most significant and fastest-growing occupational hazards facing African workers. Agricultural, construction, mining, fisheries, and informal urban workers are on the front lines. Heat stress ranges from heat cramps and exhaustion to heat stroke, which can be fatal. It is also a psychosocial risk: extreme heat worsens mental health, increases irritability and aggression, and generates eco-anxiety among workers whose livelihoods are threatened by climate disruption.

Workers most at risk include:

- Smallholder and plantation agricultural workers, especially women, exposed to prolonged outdoor heat.
- Construction workers exposed to extreme radiant heat with no cooling infrastructure.
- Artisanal and small-scale miners in underground or surface workings with poor ventilation.
- Street vendors, domestic workers, and market workers in the informal economy with no legal protection.
- Healthcare workers wearing PPE in hot facilities, combining physical heat burden with emotional stress.
- Transport workers driving or loading in non-air-conditioned vehicles during peak heat.

WHAT UNIONS MUST DEMAND

ITUC-Africa calls on all affiliates to advance the following demands to employers and governments on and around 28 April 2026.

Demands to Employers

- Conduct mandatory psychosocial risk assessments in all workplaces and share results with workers and their unions.
- Develop and implement a Mental Health at Work policy, co-designed with unions and workers.
- Provide confidential access to mental health support services, without fear of disciplinary action or stigma.
- Address workload, scheduling, and organisational factors – do not reduce mental health to individual coping strategies.
- Ensure zero tolerance for workplace harassment, bullying, and gender-based violence, with clear reporting procedures.
- Conduct heat risk assessments for all outdoor and physically demanding work.
- Provide paid sick leave for heat-related illness

Demands to Governments

- Enact or update OSH legislation to explicitly cover psychosocial risks, mental health, and heat stress.
- Extend OSH protections to informal, agricultural, domestic, and platform workers.
- Mandate climate risk assessments within national OSH frameworks, in line with ILO's 2024 guidance on safe work in a changing climate.
- Increase funding and training for labour inspectors to detect and act on psychosocial and heat-related hazards.
- Include workers' mental health in national health insurance and social protection systems.
- Integrate worker health into National Determined Contributions (NDCs) and national climate adaptation plans.
- Ratify and implement ILO Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment, and ILO Conventions No. 155 and 187 on OSH.

Demands Within Unions

- Train OSH representatives and shop stewards on psychosocial risks, digital surveillance, and heat stress.
- Create safe, confidential channels within unions for members to raise mental health concerns without stigma.
- Integrate mental health and climate justice into collective bargaining agendas and CBA clauses.
- Ensure women workers' voices are central – they are disproportionately exposed to many of these risks.
- Form or strengthen joint OSH committees with management in all unionised workplaces.

HOW YOUR UNION CAN PARTICIPATE ON 28 APRIL

ITUC-Africa urges all affiliated organisations to undertake visible solidarity and advocacy actions on and around 28 April 2026. Below are concrete ways to engage.

1. Public Demonstrations and Commemorations

- Organise peaceful marches, rallies, or candlelight vigils to commemorate workers lost to occupational disease and injury.
- Observe a one-minute silence in memory of workers who have died from preventable occupational health conditions.
- Invite occupational health professionals, mental health advocates, or climate experts to speak at your event.
- Coordinate with civil society, women's organisations, and environmental groups for broader impact.

2. Workplace Actions

- Hold short educational sessions with members on psychosocial risks, digital rights, and heat safety.
- Distribute this Action Guide and the member survey to all workplaces and branches.
- Display posters and solidarity materials at union offices and workplaces.
- Collect members' testimonies on mental health and heat experiences to use in advocacy.

3. Media and Communications

- Issue press statements setting out your union's demands on mental health, technology, and heat at work.
- Secure radio and television interviews for union leaders on the IWMD theme.
- Publish opinion articles or statements connecting occupational health to workers' rights, climate justice, and digital fairness.
- Hold press conferences with worker testimonies

4. Social Media Mobilisation

- Share images, videos, and updates of your solidarity actions throughout the week of 21–28 April.
- Post solidarity messages from workers and union leadership.
- Tag @ituc-africa on all your social media posts

5. Policy Engagement and Advocacy

Submit memoranda to your government calling for:

- Specific legislation on psychosocial risks and mental health at work.
- Mandatory heat stress standards and climate adaptation measures covering all workers.
- Regulation of algorithmic management and digital surveillance in the workplace.
- Extension of OSH coverage to all workers, including informal, agricultural, and platform workers.
- Engage with parliamentarians and other key stakeholders
- Present resolutions on workers' health, digital rights, and climate justice at union executive councils and congresses.

REPORTING YOUR ACTIONS

Please share your planned or completed activities with ITUC-Africa:

info@ituc-africa.org and communications@ituc-africa.org

Include:

- Photos and videos of your activities
- Press releases and media coverage
- Social media links and screenshots
- A short description of actions taken and demands submitted
- Any responses received from employers or governments

In solidarity,



Akhator Joel ODIGIE
General Secretary,