

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT NETWORK newsletter

A joint initiative of UN, ILO and World Bank



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editorial

Dear Reader of the YEN Newsletter,

The New Year started well for YEN. Our key partner, the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) committed to renew its support for our work starting in 2010. But, our Swedish partner also challenged us by reducing its financial contribution and asking us to mobilize other supporters. The glass is certainly more half full than half empty and I am confident that YEN will cope with this new challenge. I am especially thankful for Sida's early decision as it will help us to guarantee much needed continuity.

One of the new products we came out with last year was the competitive grant scheme for youth-led organizations in the Mano River Union (West Africa). The scheme is a tool to identify and support innovative small scale projects on youth employment submitted and implemented by youth. The first call for proposal ended in mid February and we ourselves were surprised by the high demand. We received 280 project proposals from youth organizations based in Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. I would like to thank all applicants for their interest and effort and I am looking forward to presenting the award winners in the next issue of the YEN newsletter.

Best wishes,

Markus Pilgrim

YEN Manager

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YEN is a global platform of action dedicated to developing and implementing strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work. YEN's work is made possible thanks to support from the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida).

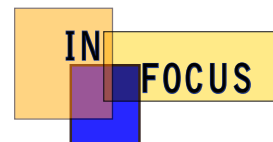
We welcome both feedback and contributions to this newsletter:

YENetwork@ilo.org

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YEN receives 280 proposals to its Competitive Grant Scheme

On February 14th 2009, YEN officially closed its call for application for the first round of its Competitive Grant Scheme in the Mano River Union (MRU). In total 280 application were received from 4 countries.

The scheme is part of an interagency (UNIDO, ILO, and UNDP) programme aiming at improving youth employment in the Mano River Union and is funded by the Government of Japan and the World Bank.

The scheme makes a concrete offer to youth led organizations providing them an opportunity to demonstrate the potential of youth as active participants in development.



Goodwill Ambassador and Ivoirian star singer Meiway, performs at the Youth Forum

Applications

The preliminary results of the application process were presented by YEN at a Youth Forum organized by UNIDO on March 10-11 in Freetown,

Sierra Leone, in which 180 youth participated. The Forum served to create awareness for the interagency program and to launch the youth communication platform, an innovative UNIDO tool for participation in decision making, peer support, networking and information sharing. For more information on the platform <http://mruyouthplatform.org>

The majority of proposals came from Sierra Leone who submitted 55 %, followed by Liberia 20 %, Côte d'Ivoire 13 %, and Guinea 12 %.

About 65 % of the proposals applied for funds above 20'000 USD and only 13 % below 10'000 USD.

Next steps

A technical committee has scored the proposals based on pre-set criteria and a short list of 15 proposals has been made. It is now up to the regional selection committee, composed of representatives from national governments and youth federations, to approve the selected proposals in early



May. Committee members will have to provide comments based on:

- Alignment with national development priorities
- Track record/reputation of applicants

Once the selection committee has approved the candidates, proposals, work plans, and budgets will be finalized with the support of YEN and the National Youth Officers. Agreement signing, disbursement of 1st tranche, and national orientation seminars are planned for June.

YEN collaboration with UNIDO and the national youth officers will continue throughout the implementation process as the officers will have a crucial role to play by undertaking regular monitoring visits (every three months) to project sites and co-organizing peer review meetings for the grantees.

For more information please contact: Sara Spant, Grant Scheme Task Leader spant@ilo.org

450 Youth Employment projects available on the web

Earlier this month the YEN launched its Databank for youth employment initiatives in West Africa. The databank provides detailed information on over 300 organizations and the 450 projects tackling youth employment in the sub-region. The Databank can be accessed by clicking [here](#).

The user-friendly databank is aimed at giving organizations an online presence that enhances their networking opportunities and facilitates information sharing. It also provides a useful starting point for stakeholders looking to design or support youth employment projects by providing information on activities already implemented in West Africa and the challenges faced by each organization. This databank therefore assists



YEN's efforts to bring together complementary stakeholders and create synergies.

The databank features the following functions:

- **search** for projects using the databank's advanced options
- **browse** the databank based on the geographic location,

area of intervention, target group, type of organization, approach to gender and main donors

- **download** excel sheets with information on organizations that interest you
- **contact** organizations that are of interest to you via the website

YEN would like to thank all the organizations that responded to our survey and submitted information for our databank. For other organizations working on youth employment in West Africa that would like to be included when we update the databank, please send an email to:

Tendai Pasipanodya at pasipanodyat@un.org requesting our survey form.

YEN and IYF study the private sector's demand for youth labour in Senegal and Ghana

The 'skills gap' refers to the difference between the supply of skilled recruits and the kind of skills demanded by employers. This is particularly an obstacle for young people looking to establish themselves in the job market. YEN and its project partner the International Youth Foundation (IYF) understand that the private sector itself can contribute directly to addressing this gap.

In March 2009, YEN and IYF launched a study to analyze the labour demands and recruitment practices of West African business in 2 focus countries, Senegal and Ghana. The Senegalese consultancy firm FocusAfrica was selected to carry out the study through interviews of 300

businesses of different sizes and from specific sectors.

The study will provide labour market information for youth employment actors (government, civil society, education and training, international partners) on existing and future labour demands. It will also identify existing intervention by business to promote employment of younger people. The data will be disseminated to youth employment actors to advise them on strategic intervention areas to promote access for young people to decent employment.

Over half the interviews have already been carried out in both countries. Early feedback suggests a significant

slow-down in recruitment by larger companies of the formal sector in reaction to the current economic crisis. This could pose an additional challenge to qualified young people to find an entry point into the formal job market. The study will thus pay increased attention to employment opportunities in the informal sectors where job opportunities may not be so directly affected by international factors.

The full findings of the study will be published by end on May 2009.

Contact: Maria McLaughlin at mclaughlinm@un.org

SPOTLIGHT:

Ciré Kane and the Synapse Center

CIRE KANE is the Executive Director of the Dakar based Synapse Center. Ciré believes that leadership potential exists within youth, their organizations and their communities. His commitment is to create a context in which youth can work with each other and with mentors to deliver results. His approach is anchored in the depth of human spirit and centered on the dynamic of progress.



Ciré Kane is a shining example of how one person's dedication, hard work and commitment to social

change can be inspiration to an entire generation of African youth. Ciré is the Executive Director of the Synapse Centre, a Senegalese organization working to provide employability skills to promising young people through entrepreneurship and business training.

Ciré conceived of the idea of the Synapse Centre after witnessing the failures of government and international donors alike to deal with the issue of youth unemployment. The outlook for young people in Senegal is bleak, the 16,000 new jobs created every year represent only 5% of the unemployed population. In response to this enormous challenge and failures of the past, the Government of Senegal introduced the National Youth Employment Agency (ANEJ)

under the Ministry of Youth in 2001. Subsequently, the National Assembly endorsed the National Action Plan on Youth Employment (NAP) in 2006. The government has asked Synapse, with their proven approaches to battle the youth employment challenge, to be at the front line of this policy response.

The trademark initiative of the Synapse Centre is its 14-month Promise Programme – a highly intensive, hands on youth entrepreneurship training programme combining the best of learning theory with the needs of contemporary entrepreneurs. The learning process features interactivity through case-based studies, practical entrepreneurial experience through on site business visits personal development retreats, professional business consulting and mentoring.

The objective of the Promise Programme is simple: to ensure that each youth that has gone through the Programme has established a successful, sustainable and growing business which looks to give back to society.

The results after 2 years of the Promise Programme are amazing, 35 young entrepreneurs have received business training, mentoring and business development services, 12 of these entrepreneurs have gone on to start their own business while another 10 have gone on to offer their talents in the business sector.

Ciré continues to act as an advocate for unemployed youth the world over. In addition to his role as founding member of the Senegalese YES Country Network and a member of Pioneers for Change, a global learning community of committed young change agents, Cire has recently been selected as an Ashoka Fellow. Ashoka Fellows are leading social entrepreneurs who demonstrate innovative solutions to social problems and the potential to change patterns across society.

YEN salutes Ciré's dedication to the youth employment issue and would like to recognize his incredible achievements!

World Bank's Youthink! website

[Youthink!](#) is the World Bank's Webby Award-winning website for young people. The site's goals are to inform young people about development issues, provide materials for teachers and engage young people to take action and get involved in making a difference.

The site has recently launched a [blog](#), with young people from around the world writing about how they see issues such as climate change or the financial crisis impacting their countries. The goal is to bring fresh voices, ideas and enthusiasm, to the site, and make

Youthink! a social platform for youth discussion around development topics. It's a great way to join in the conversation and jump in with your comments and ideas.



Africa Commission and YEN

YEN has established a close working relationship with the Africa Commission on Effective Development Cooperation under the chairmanship of the Danish Prime Minister Rasmussen. As a result of consultative meetings with the Commission, YEN and ILO were recently invited to present a project proposal on promoting young entrepreneurs in Africa. The Commission will decide on May 6th on this and other initiatives.

The Africa Commission was established in 2008 as a mechanism to present new ideas and strategies for the development cooperation with Africa. The Commission's goal is to develop specific policy recommendations and concrete project initiatives to allow for increased economic growth and job creation. A specific focus is given to youth employment and YEN is proud to report that it contributed to setting this particular focus.

The Commission consists of 18 international members drawn from heads

of states, business people, academicians and development experts. The majority of the Commissioners are from Africa among them such prominent figures as Mo Ibrahim, the founder of the African cell phone giant CELTEL and Tanzanian President Jackaya Kiwete. The work of the Commission was supported through thematic conferences and specialists' workshops.

Apart from its important policy work, the Commission agreed to launch five major initiatives which include access to finance, youth entrepreneurship, vocational training, sustainable energies, and benchmarking African competitiveness. The initiatives will be implemented in cooperation with international partners such as the African Development Bank, ILO, YEN, and the World Economic Forum.

YEN and the ILO were invited by the Commission to submit a proposal on unleashing African entrepreneurship. The initiative aims at providing entrepreneurship training and support to

80.000 out-of school youth in three East African countries. It is projected that this will lead to 40.000 new jobs and the establishment of 20.000 start up businesses. The initiative builds on developed and tested methodologies, products, and support services of the ILO and YEN. While the ILO will deliver the training of future entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship education in schools, and business plan competitions, YEN will focus on evidence based advocacy through impact assessments and youth business climate surveys as well as on a youth opportunities fund for youth organizations.

Depending on the decision of the Africa Commission the program documents are expected to be finalized in September of this year. The four year program should start in January of next year.

Contact: Markus Pilgrim at pilgrim@ilo.org

Sida extends its support

The New Year started well for YEN as its key donor Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) committed to renew its support to YEN starting in 2010.

There was a good and productive level of suspense in meeting rooms in Geneva, New York, Stockholm, and Washington DC when YEN's Steering Committee members consisting of senior managers from UN, ILO, and the World Bank and Sida's Department for Global Programs met in mid January for a video conference. Their agenda was to discuss the past performance of YEN and the possibilities of extending Sida's support to YEN.

Discussions centered around major achievements of YEN in 2008, the value added by YEN as inter agency partnership, the lifespan of the network, and priorities for the future.

Based on the recommendations of the external evaluation of last year and acknowledging the successful reorientation of YEN initiated last year, Sida committed to fund another three year phase starting in 2010. As Sida requests YEN to diversify its structure of donors, it will considerably reduce the amount of funding made available. The early decision will help YEN to guarantee continuity and give sufficient time to raise the

additional funding needed.

The next 3 year phase will serve to continue working on the new range of tangible products as defined last year. YEN's core deliverables include:

- bench marking the lead countries' performance on youth employment policies
- results measurement on selected youth employment programs
- up scaling of the competitive grant scheme for youth employment
- brokering partnerships through the new YEN marketplace.

Contact: Markus Pilgrim at pilgrim@ilo.org

Kenya Prime Minister Raila Odinga speaks out on youth employment

A two-day learning forum hosted by the International Youth Foundation (IYF) was held on April 16-17, 2009 in Nairobi, Kenya under the auspices of the World Bank's Global Partnership to Promote Youth Employment and Employability. The partnership is supported by the World Bank's Development Grant Facility and includes IYF, YEN, the Understanding Children's Work Project (UCW), and the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI).

Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga opened the conference stating "The unemployment challenge that we face in Kenya is nothing short of a ticking time bomb. It has been correctly stated that despondency played a big role in fuelling the violence that swept our land during the political crisis last year." The situation for youth in Kenya – where youth unemployment tripled between 1978 and 2006 to 19.9% -- mirrors that of many countries across Africa. Young people in Africa are 3 times more likely to be out of work than adults. Underscoring such challenges, the Prime Minister said: "The subject you have gathered to discuss here – youth employment and employability – is



Prime minister Odinga with the Minister of Youth Affairs and Sport, Hellen Sambili

of tremendous significance and importance to us here in Kenya and to the African continent as a whole."

Few proven, effective strategies to provide large numbers of youth in Africa with decent employment are available. The IYF conference, attended by over 130 participants from 15 countries, aimed to establish a dialogue on "what works" in skills training, job placement and enterprise development for African youth. YEN staff were invited to act as facilitators and contributors to this debate, providing specialist input on monitoring

and evaluation in youth employment, partnership creation and the promotion of entrepreneurship.

A recurring theme of the meeting was the need for more and better evaluations of youth employment and enterprise programs. There is a strong need for more impact evaluations which will provide solid evidence on what kinds of programs and approaches create impact and what types of programs are cost-effective. YEN was able to contribute its experiences from implementing evaluation systems in youth employment programmes in Mali, Burkina Faso and Togo. Participants concluded that while a lot of research has been conducted on youth employment and employability in recent years, little of this research has focused on sub-Saharan Africa. All stakeholders should concentrate more resources on data collection and research to provide the evidence base needed to make informed decisions regarding policy and programmes.

For more information on the conference please contact Marie Anne Sliwinski at IYF: m.sliwinski@iyfnet.org