

Improving employment prospects for youth



"The participation of youth organisations at all levels is essential to a successful implementation of the YEN partnerships mandate of supporting governments in the development of National Action Plans on youth employment."

**Statement of Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's
High-Level Panel on Youth Employment, 2004**



Youth all around the world face significant and specific challenges in accessing decent work opportunities (see box XI)²⁵. Rather than being passive recipients of assistance, youth, through organised youth structures, are increasingly exploring solutions, often taking the initiative to form partnerships (as highlighted in Section B of this report) with civil society institutions, businesses, government and the bilateral and multilateral community.

This section of the guide serves two aims. Firstly, it gives guidance to youth on how to set up youth employment-related projects and secondly, it highlights ways in which the YEN's Youth Consultative Group (YCG) can support youth organisations in setting up or scaling up these activities as well as helping them to better participate in policy-making processes.

Box XI. Why are youth specifically vulnerable to un(der)employment?

- Lack of work experience in first-time job seekers;
- Inability to compete with skilled and experienced workers;
- Mismatch between output from education/training systems and labour market demands;
- Mismatch between youth aspirations and work and life realities;
- Institutional barriers: employment protection regulations;
- Insecurity of employment: last-in, first-out problem (level of and fluctuation in, labour demand);
- Temporary and part-time work as safety net or cheap labour;
- Limited access of young self-employed people to credit and support networks;
- Weak organization and lack of voice.

Adapted from the 2005 International Labor Conference, "Pathways to decent work" report.

1. Setting up or scaling up projects for youth by youth

This section is intended to assist youth organisations to identify the potential need within their communities and amongst their membership (for youth employment-related interventions) and to encourage and motivate youth groups to create and deliver effective projects and services.

Over 30 examples of successful youth-led projects are listed here on pages 41-41 by way of illustration. These projects, detailed in Annex 1, have been drawn from a number of sources including the current activities of YCG member organisations at the international, regional and local levels, initiatives by grass roots youth organisations in the YEN Lead Countries and beyond, and from submissions

by youth to the World Bank's global inventory of youth employment interventions²⁶. The aim is to provide a broad range of good practice examples from around the world and across a number of intervention areas.

These examples demonstrate the value of involving young people in policy-making processes that facilitate the integration of young people into the labour market. Youth organisations can draw upon these good practices, adapt their methodology to their specific needs and contexts, and glean knowledge or information which will help in setting up or scaling up existing youth employment projects.

²⁵For more information why some youth are more disadvantaged than others in the labour market see Section 1.6 of the 2005 International Labor Conference, "Pathways to decent work" report. <http://www.ilo.org/youth>

²⁶For more information see <http://go.worldbank.org/48Z06GMD70>

C.1.1 Identifying needs: information gathering

Before any community level employment intervention can be developed, the identification of needs must be ascertained. An understanding of the specific situation of youth being targeted allows all actors involved to identify key challenges such as:

- What is the situation of young people in the local labour market?
- What specific challenges are they facing in entering and/or remaining in the labour market?
- Youth are not a homogenous group – are

these challenges different based on factors such as gender, ethnicity, religion, status, location (urban verses rural), etc

In order to get a better picture of the situation of youth in the labour market and to inform the best way to move forward to address the challenges identified, sound information gathering is vital. A good research base allows youth organisations to better define interventions and be better prepared when seeking funding for proposed projects and programmes.

Box XVI. ILO School-to-Work Transition Survey (SWTS)

The School-to-Work Transition Survey (SWTS) is a statistical tool designed by the ILO to assist countries in improving the design of youth employment policies and programmes.

Specifically, the survey allows for analysis of both quantitative and qualitative variables that define the relative ease or difficulty of young people's transition from school to work life. Among such variables are young people's education and training experience; their perceptions and aspirations in terms of employment; the job search process; barriers to and supports for entry into the labour market; the preference for wage employment or self-employment; attitudes of employers towards hiring young workers; working conditions and earnings; etc. The survey has been carried out or is underway in over 10 countries.

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/yett/tools.htm>

Gathering relevant information can be based on youths' own perceptions and complimented with existing research and studies by other civil society organisations, academia, the government and bilateral or multilateral development actors and workers' and employers' organisations. Information may include:

- Data of the youth labour market disaggregated by sex, age, socio-economic background, geographical location, etc.

- Analysis of the main causes of youth un(der)employment in a country or community, including through informal processes such as collecting youth statements and through interviews (see Egyptian example on page 23).
- National surveys of youth, including labour force surveys, household expenditure surveys, etc. One example is the ILO's School-

to-Work Transition Survey (SWTS). See Box XI for more information.

- Evaluations carried out by governments or donors of national level interventions on youth employment and/or specific focused initiatives, i.e. technical education, employment services, etc.
- Project reports submitted by implementing agencies to donors detailing progress on their specific youth employment projects.
- National and international media reports on the issue.

Based on the evidence available, organisations can pinpoint specific employment related needs of their membership or the communities in which they operate through a local "situation analysis". This can be carried out through a combination of surveys (of members and the community more widely) and lo-

cal consultations (which can be in the form of small group discussions or in a larger “town hall” style).

A detailed local situation analysis should seek to determine youth employment problems, challenges and potential solutions in the local community, enabling youth organisations to better understand the needs of the potential beneficiaries and construct targeted, community-specific interventions.

In order to save time and resources, partnerships should be formed to assist the situation analysis. Partners, such as local authorities, other civil society organisations, and bilateral

and multilateral partners may help bring increased credibility and legitimacy to the work. Partners should be approached and engaged on a case-by-case basis as relevant to local circumstances.

Methodologies developed for national level surveys may be adaptable to local contexts and permission could be sought to do so. Indeed, successful surveys carried out by youth organisations at the community level, based on robust methodologies, may be valuable for national policymakers and, as such, efforts should be made to make linkages to these national exercises.

Outsourcing opportunities (for the gathering of community level data) for youth organisations can be a logical outcome of such collaboration, providing short-term employment on a cyclical basis for their members.

C.1.2 Youth Employment Intervention areas

In determining possible areas of intervention for youth organisations, this guide uses the policy framework developed for the YEN by its former High Level Panel. The panel, drawing on the thinking behind the development of the European Employment Strategy (Lisbon Process) advised the UN Secretary-General in 2001 that national youth employment interventions should focus on four thematic priorities – employment creation, entrepreneurship, employability, and equal opportunities (known as the “four Es”)²⁸

Furthermore, it draws upon the resolution concerning youth employment adopted by the International Labour Conference at its 93rd Session (Geneva, June 2005)²⁸ where ILO Member States and workers’ and employers’ organisations agreed that the best strategy

for tackling youth employment required an integrated approach that combines supportive macro-economic policies and targeted measures, and addresses labour demand and supply, as well as the quantity and quality of employment.

The following four tables focus on each of the “Four Es”, highlighting the youth employment challenges associated with each, and offer generic examples of how these challenges impact on young people seeking to enter, or stay in, the labour market. The tables then explore potential solutions to the challenges outlined, before listing some examples of existing youth-led projects in each thematic area. Full profiles of these good practices are available in **Annex 1** of this guide.

Employment creation:

Explore opportunities to increase the number of quality jobs available through job creation in niche industries and growth sectors in the economy, complimenting entrepreneurship, employability, and equal opportunities strategies²⁸

²⁸

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc93/pdf/resolutions.pdf>

Challenges	<p>Given the significant demographic “youth bulge” many developing countries are now facing, efforts to improve the quality of education and training for youth, or increasing opportunities for youth to enter self-employment alone, will not be enough to absorb all the new entrants into the labour market. Insufficient economic growth in many countries is forcing increasing numbers of youth into the informal economy where they face poor working conditions and limited opportunities.</p>
Youth Voices	<p><i>“From the day I started my pharmacology degree I knew that I would never work as a chemist. There are so many students and so few opportunities.”</i></p> <p><i>“I dropped out of school and now I work as a street hawker...it’s not enough to live on.”</i></p>
Potential Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The informal economy is increasingly absorbing young workers. Efforts need to be made to improve working conditions and employment opportunities while helping employers and self-employed young people to make the transition from the informal to the formal economy. ● Significant employment opportunities can be found in growth or niche industries such as information and communications technologies (ICT), tourism, and renewable energy technologies. ● Temporary employment of young workers, through mechanisms such as labour-intensive public works, or the outsourcing of community contracts to youth can provide a platform for entry into the labour market. Youth groups can mobilise themselves to offer services in this regard. ● Youth can create employment opportunities by forming themselves into cooperatives through which they can facilitate the development of business such as student businesses, as well as add value to primary agricultural produce through the development of small scale agro-industries.
Examples	<p>Job creation / employment schemes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mercado Global trade cooperative, Guatemala ● The Agribusiness Association of Zambia (PAAZ) ● The Buyobe Youth Co-operative, Uganda ● ProJoven Paraguay, Employment-Based Alternatives for Youth ● YES Brazil – Municipal strategies for Youth Employment ● A Brighter Future - International Youth Design and Manufacturing Project <p>Utilising technical innovations (ICT, Environment)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Foresight Generation Club, ICT for youth employment and against HIV/AIDS, Ghana ● iEARN, Sierra Leone ● YES Perú - ICT Skills development Project ● YES Georgia - Youth Employment through Renewable Energy Technologies

* These project examples are detailed in full in Annex 1.

Entrepreneurship:

Make it easier for youth to start and run enterprises and support the development and/or strengthening of an enterprise culture in countries.

Challenges	<p>In today's tight job market many youth dream of being self-employed. Furthermore, youth-run businesses can make tremendous contributions to economic development.</p> <p>Young people who wish to set themselves up in business face significant regulatory, financial and cultural challenges in many parts of the world.</p> <p>Equally, the vast majority of those entering self-employment in developing countries do not do so out of choice but necessity. A lack of other viable employment options forces millions of youth into the informal economy, where they end up eking out a subsistence living, as a significant percentage of the world's "working poor", living below the US\$2/day poverty line, and not earning enough to save, buy new equipment, or pay for training or vital business development services which would help them escape the vicious cycle of poverty.</p>
Youth Voices	<p><i>"Every experience that I have had with bureaucracy has been negative. I needed 2 whole months to register my business, while it takes 2 days in neighbouring countries."</i></p> <p><i>"I have a great business idea but it's impossible to get a loan. Banks demand collateral or other guarantees which I do not have. Even then I would not be able to afford the very high interest rates they demand."</i></p>
Potential Solutions	<p>Youth organisations can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide both core and specific technical skills training to better equip youth who have an interest in creating their own businesses. ● Provide access to support funds, such as low-interest loans, often in partnership with governmental institutions. ● Offer business development services such as incubator facilities including the provision of office space, and mentoring and counselling. ● Provide marketing services to existing youth small-medium enterprises (SMEs) including assistance in linking business to new markets, clients and suppliers, both domestically and abroad. ● Provide assistance and support networks for youth interested in social entrepreneurship.
Examples	<p>Promoting enterprise training and an entrepreneurial culture/provision of business development services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● YMCA youth enterprise and capacity building projects (Vietnam, Senegal) ● Synapse Center, Senegal ● Nahdet El Mahrousa, Small & Medium Enterprise Project, Egypt ● AIESEC Kenya - Young African Entrepreneurs Project ● Ashoka - Youth Venture Initiative ● Centre for Student Business, University of Massachusetts, USA ● JEMEC Youth Business Development Services, Mexico

* These project examples are detailed in full in Annex 1.

Employability:

Improving the quality and accessibility of the education and training systems to increase their impact on youth employment outcomes.

Challenges	<p>Today's youth are the best-educated generation ever, yet they make up nearly half the world's jobless population. Many young people today are leaving the formal education system under qualified or with qualifications which do not match the needs of the labour market.</p> <p>Employers are increasingly requiring that job seekers have both strong academic backgrounds and practical labour market skills which will enable them to quickly adapt to a workplace environment. A lack of these "core skills" for employability such as problem-solving, decision-making, responsibility, interpersonal skills, teamwork, and self-confidence, often represent a significant barrier for youth trying to enter the labour market.</p> <p>Furthermore youth in many countries are unprepared for the world of work. They are unsure which careers match their skill sets, how to look for jobs and approach potential employers as well as how to prepare for interviews.</p>
Youth Voices	<p>"I have an education. But I can't find a job"</p> <p>"I got the interview, but I didn't have enough experience to get the job"</p>
Potential Solutions	<p>Youth organisations, through the provision of non-formal educational activities (such as community service projects), can address a lack of experience and skills, thereby serving to boost young people's employability. Furthermore, youth organisations can provide additional skills to those gained through the formal education system, such as leadership, teamwork, creative thinking and communications skills.</p> <p>Youth organisations can also play a significant role in helping youth to be better prepared for the labour market through the provision of career guidance and job matching and mediation services. These services can be provided in partnership with local authorities, educational institutions and public employment services to maximise impact and sharing of resources.</p>
Examples*	<p>Accessing vocational training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● YMCA Vocational training Centres (Palestine, The Gambia) ● Kenya Scouts Association - Extension Project ● Technical Vocational Center Yousaf Khan, Qilla, NWFP Pakistan <p>Leadership and core skills development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● YMCA Liberia - Youth Capacity Building Project ● Youth 2 Youth Skills Development for Employment, Australia ● Youth Social Enterprise Initiative (YSEI), Bangkok, Thailand <p>Matching and Mediation services / Labour Market Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Réseau des Jeunes pour le Plein Emploi (RJPE), Sénégal ● Center for Strategic Initiatives, Ukraine ● Cairo University Career Development Office, Nahdet El Mahrousa, Egypt

* These project examples are detailed in full in Annex 1.

Equal opportunities:

Ensuring that young women have the same opportunities as young men. Promoting the equal status of vulnerable groups (such as ethnic and religious minorities, tribal peoples, persons with disabilities, refugees and IDPs and those living with HIV/AIDs).

<p>Challenges</p>	<p>In many countries girls are not getting the same education and skills training opportunities as boys. Young women also have greater difficulties than young men in entering – and staying in – the world of work, because of discriminatory structures and cultural prejudices. Indeed, being both young and female, women can face a double discrimination.</p> <p>Similar challenges affect other vulnerable groups who, due to their precarious situation in society, face significant prejudices when attempting to enter the labour market.</p>
<p>Youth Voices</p>	<p><i>“I’m young and female; I didn’t stand a chance when I applied for that job”</i></p> <p><i>“I got the highest grade in my school year. When they found out I was from a slum district they refused me a place at university”</i></p>
<p>Potential Solutions</p>	<p>Efforts should be made to provide opportunities to young women and other vulnerable youth groups to access education and employment opportunities. This can be done through some of the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide non-traditional vocational training opportunities for women such as in the automotive industry, and in economic growth sectors, such as ICT. ● Reduce incentives for trafficking of women for work through community dialogue on the rights of women to work, combined with effective non-family job matching and mediation services. ● Identify labour gaps and demands for employment for vulnerable groups through labour market analysis. ● Provide targeted skills and training programmes for disadvantaged youth.
<p>Examples*</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Women’s Skill Development Project, NWFP, Pakistan ● Growing Young Maori Entrepreneurs (GYM-E), New Zealand ● Rural Youth Economic Empowerment Programme, Moldova ● Gastromotiva Social Incubator, Brazil

* These project examples are detailed in full in Annex 1.

C.2 What support can YEN’s Youth Consultative Group offer?

YEN’s Youth Consultative Group is well positioned to assist youth organisations in two specific ways:

- Firstly, in relation to the interest of youth organisations in developing employment-focussed interventions relevant to their

communities, the YCG through its members - operating from the international to the grassroots level – can offer a range of resources to support local youth groups. These resources range from providing support for research and the provision of advice on funding and project management to the

Joining Forces with Young People

identification of partners and the facilitation of relevant alliances. Furthermore, a significant number of the good practices highlighted in the tables above and profiled in full in Annex 1 have been drawn from existing YCG member activities.

- Secondly, the YCG can act as a catalyst and resource to support the participation of youth organisations in decision-making processes related to youth employment. They can support local youth groups through the provision of practical advice, tools and lobbying support to help assist effective and substantive participation in policy-making processes such as National Action Plans

(NAPs) on youth employment. Over 40 countries around the world are now developing or refining such NAPs.

The section below highlights the specific aims and tasks of the current YCG members as well as profiling their proposed future directions for scaling up of support in the field of youth capacity building.

For those youth organisations interested in learning more about the YCG and how it may be able to assist them practically, as well as involve themselves in policy-making related to employment, please contact:

YENetwork@ilo.org

2.1 Aims of the YCG

The Youth Consultative Group (YCG), with the support of the YEN Secretariat, is building linkages with youth groups in the YEN Lead Countries and beyond, and

through capacity-building and other support activities is assisting these groups to effectively and substantially participate in youth employment policy-making processes.

2.2 Tasks of the YCG

- To act as an advisory body to the YEN partnership with regard to monitoring the participation of youth organisations within the YEN processes and sufficiently integrating the youth perspective into its policies and programmes. To work for the full participation of youth organisations in youth employment policy and programme formulation and implementation at all levels - international, regional, national and local level.
- To represent and advocate for the issue of youth employment and the YEN partnership amongst other civil society organisations, platforms, and activities as well as in other linked multilateral forums and initiatives, such as the UN World Programme of Action on Youth and the World Bank's Youth, Development and Peace Network.
- To foster cooperation between governments, international institutions and youth organisations in relation to youth employment policies, programmes and activities.
- To mobilise their constituents to support the work of the YEN partnership at the international, regional and country level e.g. through helping in the development, implementation and review of youth employment policy-making processes.
- To assist in identifying other representative and active youth organisations at the national and local level to contribute to the youth perspective in NAP processes currently underway in YEN Lead Countries and beyond.
- To support both their constituents and other youth groups at the national level by providing practical advice, tools and lobbying support to help assist in the effective and substantive participation of youth in employment policy-making processes.
- To establish and maintain a comprehensive database of international, regional, national and local youth organisations working on the issue of youth employment.

2.3 Future Directions for the YCG

Based on the experiences of the YCG to date at the international and regional levels and in the Lead Countries, combined with the advice, information and practical knowledge contained within this guide, the YCG will seek to focus its future work through a smaller number of targeted interventions. The YCG will:

- Continue to act as an advisory body to the YEN partnership with regard to providing youth perspectives on the strategic directions and of the Network;
- Continue to represent and advocate for the issue of youth employment and the YEN partnership amongst other civil society organisations, platforms, and activities as well as in other forums and initiatives;
- Continue to operationalise and deepen its support to the development and implementation of NAPs in the YEN Lead countries through:

i. Supporting youth organisations to lobby for and obtain a role in NAP processes through encouraging them to form networks and facilitating their introduction to governments and UN Agency country offices.

ii. Supporting both youth organisations and other national stakeholders in the development of national youth consultative mechanisms to provide youth-specific inputs and expertise into the policy-making process.

iii. Supporting the effective participation of youth organisations through capacity building and training activities (see below).

iv. Identifying and profiling good practices from youth organisations in the delivery of youth employment projects to their membership and demonstrating the relevance of these projects.

Working with bilateral and multilateral institutions

Based on pilot activities in Indonesia and Uganda in 2005, the YCG, with the support of the YEN Secretariat, have developed a training methodology for capacity building workshops to assist youth organisations in scaling up their activities on youth employment and enabling them to partner effectively in the drafting and implementation of the NAPs.

This training methodology has been tested through two workshops in Egypt in 2006 (see earlier references in this guide) with the support of a wide range of development partners including the ILO, GTZ, UNICEF and the World Bank.

YCG member organisations, the Egyptian Scout Federation and YMCA Egypt were active participants in these workshops, bringing international and regional perspectives on youth participation and providing practical

advice and tools to support Egyptian youth groups effectively mobilise and lobby for a substantive role in the Egyptian NAP process.

For the first workshop, the Scouts also assisted a local youth group in carrying out an initial 'identification exercise' to determine a core grouping of 30 youth organisations in Egypt at the national and the grassroots level that have a strong track record on employment issues. Over the course of three preliminary meetings, the Scouts provided input into the content and format of this seminar.

The YCG, through the WOSM and the YMCA, is continuing to provide support and advice to the EYCG as it determines its mandate and activities with relation to other stakeholders in the NAP. Furthermore, this exercise has served to build the capacity of the YCG, in-

cluding strengthening their internal linkages between their international, regional and local structures, and has laid a solid foundation for further inputs into the work of the YEN in the future.

Based on the outputs of the Egypt work, the YCG is seeking to use this methodology, combined with the advice within this guide, to expand their support to youth organisations in other Lead Countries, resources permitting.