



Good practice from West Africa

Building the case for business collaboration on youth employment

A product of the YEN Office
for West Africa



YEN - WA

Youth Employment Network
Office for West Africa

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Work and Pensions

The Youth Employment Network for West Africa (YEN-WA)

The Youth Employment Network (YEN), a partnership among the United Nations, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Bank, brings together policy-makers, employers' and workers' organizations, young people and other stakeholders to pool skills, experience and knowledge so as to propose policies and programmes addressing the youth employment challenge.

In 2006 YEN's coordinating secretariat (based at the ILO) expanded its focus on youth employment issues in West Africa through the establishment of a sub-unit - YEN-WA. This sub-unit is hosted by the United Nations Office of West Africa (UNOWA) in Dakar, Senegal. YEN-WA's goal is to raise awareness and to mainstream youth employment as a political and a security issue, to facilitate capacity-building at both the national and the regional level and to engage with the private sector in finding ways to increase its involvement in initiatives to create jobs for young people in West Africa.

The Private Sector Initiative

This review of good practices is the first publication of YEN-WA's Private Sector Initiative (PSI), a multi-stakeholder platform for business action on youth employment in the subregion which was developed out of meetings between YEN's secretariat, the United Kingdom Government and Business Action for Africa, an international network of businesses and business organizations with operations in Africa. The PSI aims to strengthen the role that business in West Africa can play in enhancing employment opportunities for youth. To achieve this task, YEN-WA has divided its work into three areas of engagement.

1. Knowledge management

This initiative seeks to identify and communicate with private sector representatives and their civil society partners already engaged in developing youth employment projects and programmes in West Africa.

2. Network building

The PSI is building a network of private sector representatives and civil society organizations who are contributing to youth employment. The Network will seek to engage YEN partner organizations such as Youth Business International (YBI), the International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF), national employers' associations, government agencies for youth employment, multilateral business institutions such as the Global Compact and Business Action for Africa (BAA), drawing on their expertise and business networks in order to build consensus and support for practical action on the issue of youth employment.

3. Brokering partnerships

Once the evidence has been gathered and the network created, YEN-WA will work closely with the network partners to match business interests in the field of youth employment with existing or possible intersectoral partnerships on youth employment in the subregion that they could support, scale up or replicate.

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Preface: Business Action for Africa

Africa's youth constitutes one of the biggest untapped resources to build solutions for the continent's development challenges. The opportunity to get a job, grow your own business and trade in a fair market offers by far the most sustainable prospect for the young to elevate themselves out of poverty. According to a recent ILO estimate, halving Sub-Saharan Africa's unemployment rate could increase Africa's GDP by up to 19%. Tapping into this underutilised potential of roughly one fifth of the region's population could, therefore, prove a crucial asset for more inclusive economic growth.

It is the private sector that drives economic development and associated employment opportunities. Yet, companies operating in West Africa often rate poor education and work skills among their workforce as a major obstacle to growth. In fact, they often state labour issues as one of the competitive disadvantages of West Africa relative to other developing regions. The question is therefore how to unleash West Africa's potential of a young and dynamic workforce and thereby create viable business opportunities.

Business recognizes the importance of enterprise and youth employment to Africa's future growth. The following case studies, involving BAA member companies such as Cisco's Networking Academy and Technoserve's Business Plan competition, show that these companies have acknowledged the importance of finding solutions to the youth employment challenge to both their business success and Africa's development challenges.

What this report illustrates is the importance of collective action to build partnerships between public and private institutions, harnessing each of their core capabilities and recognising that they are critical to each other's capacity. Companies, like those that are members of Business Action for Africa, recognise that working collectively offers one of the most effective ways of delivering successful business and development outcomes. Collective action also amplifies efforts to get young people into meaningful, productive jobs.

We are delighted that this report brings together insights of a wide number of practitioners who have pioneered new approaches to youth employment in West Africa. It will provide a practical point of reference for those looking to build innovative partnerships for youth employment in West Africa and beyond.

Zahid Torres-Rahman

Director

Business Action for Africa

"Delivering Positive Change for Africa and its People"

www.businessactionforafrica.org

I. Introduction

Obtaining meaningful employment has been identified as the central aspiration of the world's poor in their efforts to break out of the vicious cycle of poverty¹. West Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape

“Young people should be seen as engines of growth rather than a problems to be addressed”

Dr. Mamphela Ramphela,
Managing Director,
The World Bank

Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo) is one of the poorest areas in the world, where youth make up the largest age cohort of the population and the highest number of unemployed. There is a vital need for more youth to attain the education, competencies and work experience required to facilitate their transition to the world of work. This, however, cannot be achieved without concerted action by all stakeholders, including the private sector.

Through its Private Sector Initiative (PSI) the Youth Employment Network for West Africa (YEN-WA) is dedicated to promoting the involvement of business in programmes for youth employment. This paper, which examines eight case studies, demonstrates how business can effectively partner with civil society, multilateral institutions and government in harnessing the potential of West African youth to improve their own business operations, while at the same time contributing to wider development objectives. By working with public actors on issues of education, skills training and business development, companies are not only forming their next generation of employees and customers but are also enhancing their corporate image, marketing their brand and improving the environment in which they do business. The partnering governments, institutions and organizations also benefit from this arrangement, as business brings the financial resources, technical skills and management expertise needed to enhance the impact of youth employment programmes.

The time for business action on youth employment has never been riper. In the past decade corporate responsibility has been mainstreamed into the business strategy of the world's largest multinational companies, yet it was not until recently that the international community recognized business as an essential contributor to global development challenges. In 2000 the United Nations launched the Global Compact, which today counts more than 4,000 member companies that have committed to responsible business and to supporting the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

MDG No. 8, “Develop a global partnership for development”, sets a basis for collaboration on youth employment, calling on business, governments, civil society and multilateral organizations to join hands in finding solutions to this challenge. This inter-organizational or cross-sector approach recognizes the fact that solutions to youth employment can be achieved more readily by working together rather than by working alone. It ensures that activities are not developed in isolation, and thus duplication and wastage of resources is avoided.

The eight case studies on youth employment featured in this publication present us with practical examples of how intersectoral collaboration is working in West Africa, with a particular focus on the contribution of the private sector. While intersectoral cooperation on youth employment is a relatively unexplored area in the subregion, making quantitative data on its impact on development difficult to measure, the findings illustrated here provide evidence of the immense contribution the private sector can make in addressing the youth employment challenge.

- In Sierra Leone technical assistance from the World Bank and from Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) has led to the start-up of the Klin Salone Waste Management Association, resulting in the employment of 750 youth.
- In Mali, the National Youth Employment Agency has provided over 3000 youth with professional internships in local businesses, thereby facilitating their transition from school to work.
- In 12 West African countries, the completion of the Cisco Systems Networking Academy Programme has led to the employment of 65 per cent of programme graduates. Currently, more than 9000 students are enrolled.
- Training and financing from Shell Nigeria's LiveWIRE programme has meant 263 youth have been able to start or expand their own business.
- The Guinea Alumina Corporation has invested \$US 1 million in SMEs in the region, which will lead to the creation of 700 jobs.

These achievements offer a roadmap for similar business-sponsored youth employment projects to be initiated, duplicated and/or scaled up in the subregion. They also reinforce the notion that Africa's youth constitute the biggest untapped resource for finding solutions for the continent's development challenges. While youth make up 40 per cent of West Africa's population, they represent 100 per cent of its future.

Business and Youth in the Arab World

"Building the case for business collaboration on youth employment" builds on a publication from the International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) showing how businesses across the Middle East are developing initiatives to create new employment and enterprise opportunities for young people. Based on interviews with more than 100 business and organisations in the region, "Business and Youth in the Arab World" identifies 18 instances where businesses are making a difference and urges other companies to work together to spark more action. The highlighted initiatives include: a microfinance programme in Saudi Arabia, supported by the ALJ Group, technology access and education in Jordan through a partnership with Cisco Systems and the Government; and training nurses in Egypt thanks to work by the Sawiris Foundation. [Http://www.iblf.org/docs/BizYouthArab.pdf](http://www.iblf.org/docs/BizYouthArab.pdf)

II. About Building the Case for Business Collaboration on Youth Employment

This publication aims to fulfil five key objectives:

1. by way of practical case study, document good practices and lessons learned in business collaboration for youth employment;
2. introducing the business sector to the main areas of intervention where they can contribute to overcoming the challenges of youth employment;
3. informing business to the challenges that exist for West African youth in attaining meaningful employment;

4. serving as a tool for brokering new partnerships for youth employment, as well as reinforcing existing partnerships wishing to scale up their operations and impact;
5. demonstrating the potential contribution of youth to the development of West Africa as an increasingly viable part of the world in which to invest and do business.

The paper begins by providing a brief overview of the youth employment challenge in West Africa. This section points to aspects of demographics, education and training and the economic environment to explain why West African youth face enormous barriers to entry into the labour market. Understanding these challenges and how they relate to business growth will allow the private sector to target their intervention more effectively.

“We must not allow for there to be a ‘hope gap’, where youth fall into a cycle of unemployment and start to believe they will not emerge from it. Young people’s involvement in finding solutions to unemployment is essential, and for that involvement to exist, the hope for a decent job must be kept alive.”

Juan Somavia ILO
Director General

“Building the Case for Business Collaboration on Youth Employment” focuses essentially on eight case studies of intersectoral partnership that reveal good practice in the area of business collaboration in youth employment. The intersectoral partnership projects profiled here are by no means an exhaustive list of such good practice but are intended to illustrate the breadth and depth of partnership models and intervention areas in this domain.

The eight case studies of good practice were selected on the basis of three criteria:

1. projects that show evidence of proven collaboration with business in the promotion of youth employment;
2. projects with a wide geographical distribution (covering 12 of the 16 West African countries);
3. projects that show potential for replication or upscaling based on capacity, demonstrated results and benefits to project beneficiaries.

The presentation of each case study follows a similar format. First, the groundwork for the collaboration is set by a description of the origin, objectives and activities of each project. The study then goes on to identify the results, lessons learned and challenges ahead in each intervention.

The case studies are organized into four key areas of business intervention:

1. Supporting young entrepreneurs
2. Supporting vocational training and skills development programmes
3. Facilitating the transition from school to work
4. Developing business for job creation

The final section of this review of good practices analyzes the lessons learned from the case studies by identifying a number of common

features in terms of advantages and challenges in business collaboration for youth employment in West Africa. This section is intended to deepen our understanding of business-sponsored partnerships for youth employment, while acting as a catalyst and learning tool for the development of similar approaches. The final section of the paper looks to the future of youth employment partnerships by setting out the next steps for YEN-WA's Private Sector Initiative, as it seeks to raise awareness in the subregion of the private sector's potential contribution to youth employment and to serve as a partnership broker between business partners and organizations implementing youth employment projects.

III. The youth employment challenge in West Africa

Collecting accurate statistics on youth employment in West Africa is difficult, given that indicators such as the unemployment rate do not take into account those who are in the informal economy,² underemployed or working in poor conditions. That being said, it is clear that youth unemployment levels in West Africa are among the world's highest, standing at 18.1 per cent in 2005 – the rate being higher for young men (23.1 per cent) than for young women (18.4 per cent).³ Youth unemployment rates in some post-conflict countries such as Sierra Leone (60 per cent) and Liberia (88 per cent) remain significantly higher.⁴ Across the subregion youth are four times more likely to be out of work than older workers.⁵

Youth in the labour market:

- high level of economic inactivity, especially for male and urban youth;
- high unemployment rate, up to four times higher than for older workers, and higher amongst urban youth and young women;
- high and growing level of employment in the informal economy, where employment is often low paid and precarious;
- lack of high quality skills;
- lack of business experience or knowledge of self-employment as an option;
- limited access to information on employment opportunities;
- limited access to credit and business support networks.

The factors that account for these difficulties include the following:

- an overall lack of aggregate demand for labour due to minimal or nonexistent economic growth and a stunted formal employment sector, in which the supply of youth seeking work in the subregion is far outstripping the ability of economies to create new jobs;⁶
- a lack of strategies for developing businesses in the national private sector and informal economy;
- poor linkage between the general education system and the labour market;
- poorly functioning vocational training systems, which are for the main part unconnected to the labour market;
- poor or non-functional job matching and mediation facilities and limited career advisory services;
- an inadequate labour market information system, which makes it difficult to link employer or sectoral demand with educational output.

The role of the economy

Foreign direct investment

Increases in foreign direct investment (FDI) have a large role to play in job creation for youth. In developing economies FDI typically makes up only 2-5 per cent of a country's GDP.⁷ However, it can serve as an important stimulus for national economic growth through the provision of direct employment and supply-chain opportunities for local businesses. In the context of West Africa, though, foreign firms have traditionally been reluctant to “set up shop”, owing to long and onerous start-up regulations, corruption, unstable economic and political conditions and the lack of a “talent pool” for recruiting employees.

Recent foreign investment growth in the subregion and in Sub-saharan Africa more generally, has been offset by stagnant and declining growth in the subregion since the 1960s. Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria are perhaps the exceptions, maintaining economic growth throughout this period by relying on a strong resource base and solid export competition. Other economies in the subregion have been stifled by poor policy-making, unattractive terms of trade, unjustified costs, excessive risks and barriers to competition.

Nevertheless, foreign investors are finding it increasingly easy to do business in the subregion. Thanks to growing political stability, improvements in physical and technological infrastructure, stable exchange rates and declining inflation, FDI in developing countries reached the highest level ever recorded in 2005, at \$334 billion (concentrated in certain sectors such as resource extraction and telecommunications).⁸ Also encouraging was the distinction given to Ghana and Burkina Faso in the World Bank's latest “Doing Business” report as two of the top five countries making it easier for entrepreneurs and businesses to operate and contribute to development in sub-Saharan Africa.

These results are encouraging for West African youth, but more needs to be done.

The national private sector

The national private sector includes all formal and informal businesses, ranging from micro-entrepreneurs operating survival-type businesses, such as street vendors and market traders, to large domestic companies involved in communications or energy. It is generally recognized across the subregion as the largest employer of youth but the least targeted by support schemes.

The potential for the national private sector (10-12 per cent of the economy in developing countries)⁹ to have a lasting impact on employment creation for youth cannot be overestimated.

The ability of businesses to grow and take on new young employees, however, continues to be constrained by macro-economic challenges in many countries, including security issues, an absence of a strong rule of law, corruption, and complicated business legislation and regulations. These issues will continue to have an impact on the ability of the private sector to grow.

The informal economy – micro-enterprises

The fact that a majority of businesses in West Africa operate in the informal economy limits the ability of national

economies to generate a higher level of employment. The World Bank contends that, in Senegal alone, the informal economy created 95 per cent of new jobs between 1995 and 2004.¹⁰ Employment in the informal economy offers few prospects for advancement or growth.

If these businesses could be helped to shift from the informal into the formal economy, many of them could go on to become income-generating, employment-creating SMEs and thus contribute to reducing unemployment. In addition, a support scheme for national private sector players could be developed by governments and donors in order to address the urgent structural, financial and organizational problems of the national private sector and thereby create more jobs.

There are of course real barriers that inhibit private sector actors from moving into the formal sector. Unreasonable registration fees, high collateral demands for bank loans and time-consuming start-up procedures leave small businesses no choice but to remain in the informal economy. This limits their expansion as they are unable to access benefits such as social security and legal protection which allow companies to grow. Urgent reforms are needed to reduce red tape and excessive tax burdens. Without these reforms the prospect for business growth and the consequent effect on youth employment will continue to be limited.

Constraints and opportunities of hiring young people

Skills and employability

Despite the arrival of thousands of new entrants on the job market every year, many West African countries face a significant shortage of skilled, market-ready labour.

The skill set, education and experience of many young jobseekers are not sufficient even for the limited numbers of jobs available in the formal economy. As a result, firms in West Africa today have considerable difficulty finding employees with specialized skills (qualified engineers for example), and often have to look to the international labour market for their needs. Evidence of this is clearly seen in the rationale behind the GISDC project profiled in this paper.

A recent global survey of 1,006 business executives found that the lack of local talent will be the single greatest barrier to growth for firms that operate within emerging markets over the next three years.¹¹ This is particularly problematic in Africa, where AfricaRecruit¹² has identified the shortage of skills among young people entering the labour market as a critical constraint on investment, job creation and improved public services for Africa.

Education

Improvements to education systems in West Africa have largely focused on trying to achieve universal access to education and are only now starting to pay attention to the relevance of education to the needs of the labour market.

This is playing out in some parts of West Africa such as Nigeria, where there is evidence that higher levels of education are not leading to lower levels of unemployment for youth.¹³ This suggests that

secondary schools are not creating an effective mix of academic and practical qualifications and place little focus on the imparting of core skills that enhance the employability of youth (leadership, teamwork, problem solving, etc).

The situation for university education is just as bleak, and enrolment rates in the subregion are the lowest in the world at 5 per cent.¹⁴ Even the few students who do complete university often do not have the skills needed to find employment. Given the limited number of jobs available in the subregion's labour markets, large companies tend only to "cherry pick" elite students for recruitment, while the majority of graduates receive little guidance on employment pathways and end up being unemployed, migrating or being forced to seek work in the informal economy.

Improvements in education would not only help the private sector reduce internal training costs but would also increase the availability of human capital.

The involvement of the private sector in education remains low. Yet the evidence on private sector participation in the provision of tertiary education demonstrates that there are benefits to be had in terms of ensuring that young women and men are better prepared for the world of work. The benefits derived from private sector involvement would increase the likelihood of such disciplines as business skills, information and communication technology and entrepreneurship training being included in the educational curriculum, which in turn would increase the employability and self-employment prospects of graduates.

Vocational training and skills development

In West Africa the provision of vocational and skills development training is for the most part limited, under-funded, institutionally fragmented and of poor quality: as a result, students are entering the labour market with skill that are of a poor standard and of little relevance to available employment. A number of the training institutes are poorly regulated and lack standardisation, which makes the integration of young trainees into the formal sector very difficult. Young workers therefore remain vulnerable, eking out a precarious existence in the informal economy.¹⁵

For the situation to improve there must be more cooperation between the public sector (as the main provider of vocational and skills development training) and the private sector, so that the needs of employers in terms of quality and relevance of skills can be more satisfactorily met. This could take place through business support to curriculum development and implementation or to the inclusion in the curriculum of on-the-job training components such as industrial apprenticeships.

An increase in the effectiveness of vocational and skills development programmes in West Africa would not only mean an increase in productivity for the business sector but would also give young people the skills they need to obtain more stable employment and a higher income.

Self-employment and entrepreneurship

There are few avenues for helping young micro-entrepreneurs and small business men and women to develop and expand their enterprises. Self-employment, though it is the primary economic activity of most West Africans, remains a marginal and neglected part of the economy. Workers in the informal economy receive little or no social protection against sickness, abuse or injury and are not recognized, registered, regulated or protected under labour legislation. Moreover, there are few opportunities for

national businesses to flourish as they have limited access to skills development and either cannot qualify for or do not have access to credit facilities. While it is the responsibility of governments and donors to develop support schemes for these marginalized business people, it is also the private sector's responsibility to form trade unions, micro-producers associations and co-operatives so that they can make their voices heard.

Shell LiveWIRE Nigeria

In 2003 LiveWIRE Nigeria began as a project to empower youth in enterprise development and management in the seven Niger Delta States. The project, funded by Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria, provides skills training as well as grants and mentoring assistance to enable beneficiaries to set up micro-enterprises. Over 2000 young people have received training to date, while 260 have gone on to start their own business. Sixty percent (US\$250,000) of LiveWIRE's yearly budget goes to providing start-up funds for youth-led businesses.

IV. Why the private sector should engage in youth employment

For the business sector, entering into partnerships with government, civil society and multilateral institutions makes economic sense; entrepreneurs benefit from local know-how and connections to the population, they build brand reputation, they gain access to local markets and they share risk and resources.

The case studies profiled here demonstrate that businesses often engage in projects that have some relation to their core activity. We will draw on examples from the case of GISDC where, faced with a verifiable threat to their competitiveness and productivity, the Ghanaian manufacturing company Vlisco took the initiative to train employees and qualified youth in core engineering and manufacturing skills. In Guinea, the Guinea Alumina Corporation (GAC) is investing millions in the development of the local consumer economy, thereby bolstering their supply chain and training youngsters to become future employees of GAC's aluminium refinery. These examples point to an emerging trend of corporate civic responsibility that takes into consideration holistic community development and proves that corporate social responsibility is not only about philanthropy or visibility but concerns core business strategy. These trends are nowhere more evident than in the IT industry where investment in education and the training of youth in computers and technology has become a prerequisite for future business success.

"Not only can corporate and social needs be integrated, but the success of the developing world in improving its prosperity is of fundamental strategic importance to almost every company."

Prof. Michael Porter,
Harvard Business
School in
Tomorrow's
Markets.

Community Multimedia Centres

In November 2004, Koïchiro Matsuura, Director General of UNESCO, and Bill Gates, Former CEO of Microsoft, signed a global cooperation agreement. Through this agreement, Microsoft is actively supporting UNESCO's Community MultiMedia Centres (CMCs). The initiative involves promoting equitable and expanded access to ICTs in a variety of ways, such as through subsidised training for those with special requirements and/or marginalized groups, through close work with schools, small businesses and the independent sector and through the provision of information to more remote communities by radio. UNESCO and Microsoft have also worked on providing networking opportunities and support tools for management, multimedia training, offline access to internet content, action research and evaluation. In West Africa a total of 23 CMCs have been set up in Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali and Senegal, with 50 more centres being planned for Mali and Senegal.

More generally, even companies that lack capacity or experience to engage in corporate responsibility “projects” can still make a valuable contribution to development goals, thereby improving the situation of marginalized youth. BAA tells us that “The biggest impact that larger businesses can have is through doing good business - principally through their core business operations: doing business responsibly; paying taxes; involving and supporting small enterprises in value chains; generating employment opportunities; producing goods and services that meet the needs of low-income consumers; training and capacity building; and taking action to tackle HIV/AIDS - a central issue for business and economic growth.”¹⁶

Indeed, investment in improving the employability of young people could provide massive economic returns for business and society. It has been estimated that halving the rate of youth unemployment in sub-Saharan Africa could add up to 19 per cent to the region's gross domestic product (GDP).¹⁷ Furthermore, a focus on youth employment provides business benefits in terms of corporate image and visibility. Making a company's brand name better known has become so important in today's world that it's estimated that one quarter of the world's wealth is tied up in “brand value”. In West Africa, Cisco's brand has become synonymous with its Networking Academy, which has been established in 12 of the 16 West African countries. This exposure has ensured that West Africa's burgeoning communications infrastructure will depend in large part on Cisco-trained networking professionals. A second example comes from Shell, which had come under intense scrutiny over the social and environmental implications of their drilling practices in the Niger Delta. In response, Shell has invested heavily into social responsibility, spending US \$53 million on community development projects in Nigeria in 2006 and focusing on youth and entrepreneurship through their LiveWIRE Programme. Shell's efforts have earned it global recognition from sustainability indices that assess the economic, social and environmental performance of potential investing companies. Shell was ranked in both Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) and the FTSE4Good Index in 2007 for its commitment to social objectives.

Contributing to youth employment in West Africa generates a number of benefits for the business sector:

Enhancing the employability and skills base of the local population

By investing in training and education, companies can ensure their human resource needs are met by increasing the size of the local

hiring pool. This is more and more important in today's global "war for talent", where the ability of a company to attract and retain talented employees is an essential ingredient in business success. Additionally, business support for employability and skills development can entice talented West African youth to remain in their country of origin instead of migrating to developed countries. According to the Economic Commission for Africa, 26.7% of West African's with a post-secondary education have chosen to migrate to OECD countries. This brain drain represents a major development challenge for business in the sub-region.¹⁸

There are a number of ways that business can support skills development for youth. This includes input into training curricula and investment in training materials. Companies should place particular emphasis on supporting training schemes which have been shown to enhance the kind of skills that are in demand in the West African labour market, such as in the IT, manufacturing, agriculture and business industries.

Improving the supply chain

In today's transnational and competitive business environment, companies are increasingly reaching across borders to source products and services. The most current statistics from ECOWAS in 2001 indicate that over 30 per cent of the member States' GDP is oriented towards exports, compared to 9.25 per cent towards intraregional exports.¹⁹ The attractiveness of West African products in international markets will be essential to economic and social development.

Multinational firms are increasingly looking to West African firms in an effort to cut production and procurement costs. The challenge for large firms is finding well functioning local affiliates who can optimize their supply chain. A lack of skills and logistical infrastructure (transport, communication, regulation) means West African companies have difficulty bringing products to market.

Promoting and supporting West Africa's young entrepreneurs involved in small and medium sized businesses will not only contribute directly to improving a company's value chain but can also strengthen the enabling environment for such businesses.²⁰ One of the case studies examined in this paper looks at the GAC-USADF SME Linkages Programme in Guinea, where the training and development of young people is key to developing the capacity of local SMEs to meet the outsourcing and human resources needs of GAC.

"More then ever, companies realize that it is good business to share benefits with the communities in developing countries in which they operate. Enabling small, local firms to supply goods and services to larger enterprises creates more efficient supply chains. At the same time it maximizes development benefits by helping local companies to grow and create jobs."

Lars H. Thunell
IFC Head

Establishing reputations

Community investment is good business. Companies that disregard their role in community development risk alienation by their consumers, investors and the communities in which they operate.

Effective community engagement can help to establish corporate reputation,
r e i n f o r c i n g

company value systems and fostering a sense of brand loyalty among potential and existing employees and customers, many of whom are young people themselves. Strategic community initiatives can also help companies to gain acceptance within local communities and thus facilitate the granting of a license to operate.

Accessing local markets

By contributing to youth employment, companies can demonstrate a commitment to youth development to a potentially large untapped young consumer base. Additionally, projects aimed at youth employment can create increased product recognition for products targeted at youth. This approach has been part of Microsoft's community engagement projects in Mali and Senegal, which have created brand recognition among youth by providing Microsoft hardware and software to the youth employment projects they support.

V. How the private sector contributes to youth employment

Enhancing youth employment opportunities is complex, demanding action from stakeholders in all sectors – government, international organizations, civil society and business. Confronting the challenge of youth employment is not a primary motivator for business, making partnering with the social sector to secure more wide-reaching, sustainable development results that much more important.

Action on youth employment is critical, as the business sector has at its disposal the resources, expertise and capacity needed to support the creation of employment opportunities. Additionally, the private sector makes an invaluable investment in areas that lay the groundwork for development, such as technology, communications and infrastructure. Business also generates the knowledge necessary for progression and learning; and brings to the community the goods and services which support development.

Business investment in local communities makes a strong contribution to poverty reduction and youth employment as it spurs job creation, thereby allowing young workers to save, buy property, feed their families, send their children to school and afford social security. In this way, the youth can at last break out of generations of poverty. Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in 1999, the then Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, highlighted this contribution: “Creating wealth, which is business expertise, and promoting human security in the broadest sense, the UN's main concern, are mutually reinforcing goals. Thriving markets and human security go hand in hand. A world of hunger, poverty and injustices is one in which markets, peace and freedom will never take root.”

The following section will look at the four key areas of intervention where the private sector can contribute towards increasing employment opportunities for youth. Under each intervention area, two case studies will offer practical examples of business collaboration for youth employment in West Africa.

Business intervention areas

Breakdown of Case Studies by Business Intervention Area

Intervention area	Project name	Location	Private partner	Social partner
Supporting young entrepreneurs	1. Believe Begin Become	Ghana	Google	Technoserve
	2. Senegal Promise Programme	Senegal	Dakar Business Community	Synapse Centre
Supporting vocational training and skills development programmes	3. Ghana Industrial Skills Development Centre (GISDC)	Ghana	Vlisco Helmond B.V. and Ghanaian employers' associations	Governments of Ghana and Netherlands
	4. Cisco Systems Networking Academy	12 West African Countries	Cisco Systems	USAID, UNDP, ITU and JICA
Facilitating the transition from school to work	5. Child Labour Alternatives through Sustainable Systems in Education (CLASSE)	Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana	World Cocoa Foundation, Mars Incorporated, Norwegian Association of Chocolate Manufacturers, Cloetta Fazer AB	Winrock International
	6. Internship and Apprenticeship Programme	Mali	Local Malian companies	Malian Youth Employment Promotion Agency (APEJ)
Developing business for job creation	7. GAC – USADF SME Linkages Programme	Guinea	Guinea Alumina Corporation	USADF, Centre d'Appui au Développement
	8. Freetown Waste Management System	Sierra Leone	Klin Salone Waste Management Company, Freetown Waste Management Company	GTZ, World Bank and Sierra Leone federal and local governments

Youth are the most creative, energetic and passionate age cohort - all necessary attributes of successful entrepreneurs. In West Africa entrepreneurship is increasingly being accepted as an important means of creating jobs and a valuable strategy for improving the livelihood and economic independence of young people. It is an innovative approach to integrating youth into today's changing labour markets. For business, successful young entrepreneurs means a reinforcement of supply chains, a more skilled and ambitious talent pool, and an acceleration of economic growth.

Businesses can support young entrepreneurs by promoting an entrepreneurial culture that values the principles of market economies and competition, where youth can be empowered to use their energy to create self-employment. Businesses can also use their experience and resources to provide advice, mentoring or financing for disadvantaged youth entrepreneurs.

Mentoring and support

Mentoring can be a powerful resource for nourishing the entrepreneurial spirit of young people. Accomplished mentors are often experienced business people dedicated to the advancement of young people and willing to provide advice and encouragement; to introduce young people to their business network; and to act as a source of feedback and reassurance. Whether it is a matter of giving a few useful tips on how to ensure success in business or providing in-depth consulting on business planning or strategy, every successful entrepreneur can benefit from the support of a mentor.



Businesses can set up formal mentoring programmes within their company to link up their employees with young or disadvantaged entrepreneurs. They can also enter into arrangements with youth organizations to provide pro bono mentoring services for their young members.

The Synapse Centre in Dakar, Senegal (Case study No. 1), is an illustration of how to engage business people effectively in the mentoring of young entrepreneurs.

Promoting an entrepreneurial culture

Business operates on the principals of free markets, fresh ideas, innovation and efficiency, qualities which set the scene for entrepreneurial success. Promoting an entrepreneurial culture in West Africa, an area of the world where such experience is relatively new, can not only help to sensitize the population to what it means to be an young entrepreneur but can also help to foster an environment where entrepreneurship is respected and valued. This contribution is important in the West African context, where markets for industry and services have traditionally been dominated by the public sector.

In creating this environment, business can participate in public relations campaigns, media coverage, youth business events, road shows and the promotion of role models, all of which serve to promote an entrepreneurial culture among young people. The private sector can also sponsor business plans, innovation or entrepreneurship competitions that not only give entrepreneurs the publicity they need to build up their business but also provide the business sponsor with advertising opportunities and a talent pool of accomplished entrepreneurs. Business can offer recognition to successful young entrepreneurs in the form of start-up grants, prizes, certificates or business services. Through these competitions business can also help with access to capital – directly as part of the award or indirectly by serving as a loan guarantor for youth in their dealings with commercial finance institutions.

The second case study below shows how, in Ghana, Google has entered into a partnership with Technoserve to offer a business planning competition for Ghanaian youth. The winner of the competition is offered start-up financing, while the other finalists receive business consulting and mentoring support.

“Entrepreneurship and business creation are also a growing alternative for young people whose age group often faces a labour market with double digit unemployment rates. Traditional career paths and opportunities are disappearing rapidly. A growing number of young people are taking up the challenge of starting their own business and much is being learned about how the odds for success can be improved through various types of assistance and through the creation of a supportive environment.”

Juan Somavia, Director-General of the ILO

“Becoming a Promise mentor has been a wonderful experience. It was important for me to be able to work with a young entrepreneur in helping him to develop his business ideas. What I wasn’t expecting to gain from this experience was the immense satisfaction that working with youth gave me. I hope many business executives will be encouraged to join the Synapse mentoring programme and will help in forming Senegal’s business leaders of tomorrow.”

-Patrick de Souza, Director-General of Group Marla, speaking about mentoring the young entrepreneur, Seydil Abidine Ndiaye

Origins and objectives of the partnership

In 2003, with a modest two-year grant of US\$20,000 from the Artimesia Foundation, the Synapse Centre, a Dakar-based NGO, began a bold experiment in identifying, developing and networking future leaders of the business venture industry by educating and supporting them in the process and art of entrepreneurship.

The Executive Director of the Synapse Centre, Ciré Kane, originally conceived the idea of the Synapse Centre as a means of creating a platform for the innovation and creativity of Africa’s youth. Ciré had become frustrated with the failing education and youth development policies of governments and the development community and had seen many of his friends graduate from college and yet still be unable to find decent employment. He also recognized that self employment creates over 90 per cent of new jobs in Senegal and that action was needed to provide training and guidance for this growing group of new entrepreneurs. Synapse was designed to allow young people with potential to use their energy and skills to create successful businesses that would not only contribute to overall economic growth and job creation in the country but would also provide social benefits to the communities in which the businesses operate.

The trademark initiative of the Synapse Centre is its 14-month Promise Programme – a highly intensive, hands-on youth entrepreneurship training programme that combines traditional entrepreneurship theory with interactive case-based studies, practical entrepreneurial experience, personal development retreats and professional business consulting and mentoring.

The **objective** of the Promise Programme is simple: to ensure that each young person who participates in it establishes a successful, sustainable and growing business which seeks to give something back to society.

Though Promise’s objective seems straightforward enough, achieving it is no simple task. Entrepreneurs in Senegal face huge barriers to establishing a business. The minimum cost of setting up a formalized business is 255 per cent of the annual average per capita income of US\$750.

To overcome such barriers, a close partnership with the Senegalese business community is essential to providing young entrepreneurs with the experience, support and advice they need to establish and run a successful business.

Synapse’s activities

To be eligible for the Promise Programme applicants must be less than 35 years of age and possess an innovative business idea and the energy to make it a reality. Calls for applications to join the Promise Programme are launched once a year.



The Promise Programme is designed to give participants the technical and personal skills they need to overcome market obstacles. To achieve this, Synapse structures its learning curriculum around three forms of intervention:

1. Observation and inquiry

Field visits: six times a year participants in the Promise Programme visit established entrepreneurs and learn first-hand what it takes to succeed in business in Senegal.

Leadership talks: once a month Synapse organizes interactive leadership talks with well established Senegalese business people.

2. Retreats

Three times a year Promise entrepreneurs embark on personal development and team-building retreats. This platform for reflection helps the future entrepreneurs to make sense of their learning and to step back and refocus on their objectives.

3. Practice

Business incubation: each Promise entrepreneur is given office space, supplies, a telephone and internet services with which to conduct his or her business activities.

Training: the aspiring entrepreneurs receive training in the core business areas of marketing, business planning, accounting, finance and human resources.

Mentoring: each entrepreneur is linked up with two mentors who act as a gateway to the target market and as a source of moral and technical support.

Corporate contribution

Much of the success of the Promise Programme resides in the strength of its mentoring relationship with influential members of

Senegal's business community.

Each entrepreneur is required to have two mentors with at least five years of business experience. One mentor is selected by Synapse according to the particular needs, strengths, experience, business domain and investment focus of each future entrepreneur. The second mentor is selected personally by the entrepreneur and acts as a "role model" or personal coach.

Once a businessman or woman has accepted to become a mentor, he or she takes part in a half-day induction workshop where, together with the young entrepreneur, they learn practical methods and approaches to coaching, communicating and mentoring. Each mentor is then asked to dedicate 2-5 hours a month of virtual or actual contact with the entrepreneur.

Once the groundwork for a successful relationship has been laid, the structure of mentoring can take different forms. Synapse has learned that the mentoring relationship needs to stay flexible, as the availability and dedication of each mentor can vary greatly. No formal agreement is signed with the entrepreneur; instead, Synapse relies on the community spirit, commitment and personal satisfaction of working with an energetic and creative young entrepreneur to ensure that the mentors remain committed to the process.

Mentors work with the young entrepreneurs on two levels:

Personal level: development of confidence and self-esteem, supporting the entrepreneur's efforts and defending his/her interests, reminding the entrepreneur of his/her potential and objectives and helping him/her to identify future obstacles

Technical level:

business planning or consulting, opening up of personal or professional networks, business or industrial research, identification of business opportunities.

Companies that have participated in the mentoring component include Nouvelle Frontière, a travel agency that was linked up with an aspiring ecotourism entrepreneur and Forever Living Products, a cosmetic company that assisted a Promise entrepreneur to develop his own beauty product line.

Benefits to business

Mentoring provides a valuable opportunity for business to give something back to youth and society, enhances a company's social profile and

makes a contribution to business development. It also allows the mentors to enhance their coaching or teaching skills while feeling personal fulfilment from working with energetic young people. In some cases, as was seen with Groupe Marla, mentoring can also open up business opportunities by helping to build the capacity of potential business partners or suppliers.

Outcome and impact so far

- Seventeen promising entrepreneurs have graduated through the first Programme class.
- 35 business community leaders have been recruited to mentor young entrepreneurs.
- Nine young participants have become entrepreneurs themselves as founders and CEOs of new venture companies. Among them, three have an international exposure - LQT Consulting (Laboratory for Total Quality Management), Goumel (Cleaning services) and Tropica Green (Fresh produce exports)



and have had the opportunity to showcase their work before a global audience.

- The nine successful entrepreneurs have created 137 jobs within their businesses.
- Synapse's annual budget of US\$80,000 means that one job has been created for every US\$584 spent.
- Five entrepreneurs have gone on to offer their talent as "intrapreneurs" in the business sector and are still working with their initial employers.
- Two aspiring entrepreneurs are pursuing their studies with a grant offered by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

Lessons learned

- Originally Synapse set out to recruit mentors in business leadership roles, such as CEOs and company directors, but it quickly realized that such people had too busy a schedule to be able to spend enough time with the entrepreneurs. In future Synapse will change its strategy and ask the CEOs and Director to nominate more junior staff with a more flexible schedule to act as the focal point for the mentoring process.
- Since their busy schedule obliged some mentors to pull out of the Promise Programme, Synapse has started to develop virtual classrooms whereby entrepreneur and mentor are able meet in a common online workspace. Mentors can now provide support to the Programme without it placing a great demand on their time.
- Synapse needs to do more to convince mentors that it values their assistance and support, as well as create more incentives for their participation. These could include certificates of achievement, appreciation galas and exposure of mentors' work in the local media.
- Synapse must also make more of an effort to follow up the activities and obtain feedback from the mentors, so as to establish a more permanent relationship and thus improve the Programme.

- The increased self-confidence resulting from the mentoring initiative enables entrepreneurs to expand their personal vision as well as to explore a leadership experience which they otherwise might not have acquired.

Challenges ahead

- In 2008 ten entrepreneurs will be accepted into the Promise Programme, which means that Synapse faces the difficult task of recruiting 20 mentors.
- Since mentors do not receive any financial compensation, Synapse must find ways to motivate mentors through non-financial rewards.
- Access to finance and capital is very difficult for young entrepreneurs, who often have no collateral to offer potential creditors in return for a loan. The challenge is to try to involve mentors in the financing, either as guarantors or as direct providers of loans.
- Synapse plans to set up partnerships with national and multinational businesses not only as a source of mentors but also with an eye to employment creation and ICT training for young people.

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“As a Google volunteer, I had an opportunity to interact with this year’s participants by teaching a class on presentation skills, judging the final round of the competition and conducting one-on-one consulting sessions. I also visited the growing operations of three winners from last year and saw first hand how the Believe Begin Become programme has contributed to the success of their business. I was both impressed and humbled by every entrepreneur I met. They all exhibited a level of energy, passion and enthusiasm that was overwhelmingly contagious. Operating in an environment where sound infrastructure is not a given, poverty is a reality and health issues abound, they are seeking to create and build sustainable businesses that will change their community and their country for the better.”

*- Ms. Stacy Brown-Philpot,
Director, Consumer Operations, Google*

Origins and objectives of the partnership

Over the past five years TechnoServe, an international NGO providing business solutions for the rural poor, has run 12 national business plan competitions throughout Central America and Africa. Since 2002 TechnoServe’s business plan competitions have helped launch or expand 205 businesses that have generated over US\$10 million in additional revenues and created more than 1,200 new jobs.

In 2005, Google.org joined forces with TechnoServe with a grant to launch business

plan competitions in Ghana in 2006, 2007 and 2008 and in the United Republic of Tanzania in 2007 and 2008, with financial support of about US\$2 million across both programs and in-kind support, which included Google employee volunteers, Google products and marketing support. In Ghana, the Believe Begin Become programme has quickly become one of the country’s leading development initiatives aimed at helping businesses grow. Believe Begin Become aims to identify, mentor and improve the environment for entrepreneurs who will grow new businesses and create jobs, revenue and wealth. Though the programme does not



specifically target youth (participants are in the 20-50 year age range), young entrepreneurs have been particularly successful, with many graduating through to the core training phase of the programme.

The Believe Begin Become programme collaborates with national, regional and international corporate partners at every stage of the competition: sponsorship, strategy, professional mentoring, consulting and judging.

Project activities

The programme runs on an annual basis over a seven-month period and is in three phases. At the end of each stage there is a round of judging where only selected applicants qualify for the following stage. At the end of the competition one winner is selected, while ten other entrepreneurs receive runner-up prizes and benefits.

Phase 1

Individuals submit applications which are then screened for eligibility. To be eligible to participate in the programme, one must be a Ghanaian citizen of at least 20 years of age and propose a business concept, the expansion of an existing business or the launching of a new business that will create no fewer than ten new jobs and have a minimum investment base of US\$75,000 and annual sales of US\$100,000 by the end of the second year of business operations.

Qualified applicants attend a two-day entrepreneurship seminar and industry conference.

Benefits

- Clarification of business ideas by putting business concepts in writing, as part of the application process
- Increased awareness of the importance of a proper business plan
- Sensitization to the entrepreneurial mind-set through exposure to a competitive process, deadlines and personal financial investment.

Phase II

Business industry judges review applications and select the 60 most promising businesses. Intensive seven-week business training (including coursework, business plan development seminars, an industry conference, weekly one-on-one consultant sessions and networking events) helps the entrepreneurs to refine their business plans. The second phase culminates with the submission of a 15-20 page draft business plan, and a graduation ceremony at which the Phase II winners are announced.

Benefits

- In-depth understanding of business plan components, knowledge and skill in a range of business topics and presentation delivery
- Industry and market knowledge and contacts
- Draft business plan to refine and use in pursuit of investment capital, detailed feedback on business concept and draft business plan
- Membership of the Believe Begin Become Alumni Association

Phase III

Judges review draft business plans and select ten finalists. Finalists continue to work with consultants to refine their business plans and prepare oral presentations. The competition ends with a grand finale bringing together all partners involved in the competition. Judges select winners based on their scores for the final business plans and oral presentations.

Benefits

- Business support services from pre-qualified service providers
- Final business plan and presentation to use in pursuit of investment capital
- Opportunity to network with potential investors
- Publicity and prestige
- Enhanced understanding of the entrepreneurial process: from idea to business

Access to capital

The top entrepreneurs win seed capital awards (totalling \$100,000 in 2007). All winners and finalists win vouchers for professional Business Development Services spanning a broad range of technical assistance. The Believe Begin Become management team helps to secure individual loans and investment commitments for each of the top entrepreneurs.

Corporate contribution

- Believe Begin Become is funded by Google.org with support from Ghana's private sector.
- Google also sent a team of over fifteen volunteers from their headquarters in California to serve as judges, business consultants and trainers during the final round of the competition.
- The Organizing Committee serves as an advisory board to the TechnoServe implementing team and is made up of

successful Ghanaian entrepreneurs and leading figures in the private sector. Mr. Yamson, a dedicated member of the committee, is the non-executive Chairman of Unilever Ghana Limited and Standard Chartered Bank.

- Over 40 private sector institutions offer in-kind support through the provision of judges and consultants for the various phases of the competition. Contributing companies include Lenovo, Ecobank, Alisa Hotels and KPMG.
- Additional companies offer discounted goods and services such as venues and logistics.
- TYPE Company Limited fully sponsors all printed material for the project.
- Media enterprises offer discounted rates to promote the project
- In addition to providing judges, the financial sector (Ecobank and Barclays Bank in 2007) offers cash support. Barclays has also offered free one-year membership of Barclays business club to all finalists.

Benefits to business

For partnering companies, sponsoring Believe Begin Become provides considerable visibility and brand recognition among consumers.



Companies also have the advantage of working with a reputable, proven organization like Technoserve, which prioritizes business participation in its delivery strategy. In addition, some companies, such as banks or investment firms, are able to source new investment opportunities from among the pool of talented and high-potential entrepreneurs in the program. For instance, one of the major sponsors of the program in Ghana, Databank, even proposed to set up a Believe, Begin, Become equity fund with the goal of investing in BBB winners.

Outcome and impact so far

- Intensive training of 120 entrepreneurs drawn from all over the country in a wide array of business skills, business plan writing and presentation delivery
- The 120 entrepreneurs have written business plans as an end result of the training programme, and this is the tool that enables them to communicate effectively with the financial bodies.
- Bridging the gap and facilitating linkages between entrepreneurs and financial service providers and investors. Some of the entrepreneurs have successfully secured equity investment and many others are in talks with investors.
- US\$720,000 in seed capital and BDS awards disbursed to 40 entrepreneurs.
- The launch and expansion of over 50 start-ups and existing businesses in the sectors of Agri-business and Processing, Services, Technology, Tourism and Light Manufacturing.
- The programme has successfully reached all regions of Ghana. Several businesses have been launched outside the municipal areas, including two IT businesses in Northern Ghana.
- Creation of over 92 jobs in the various sectors
- Partnership with relevant stakeholders
- to create an enabling business environment that promotes the growth of SME's.

Lessons learned

- Entrepreneurs need access to adequate capital to be able to set up businesses successfully. Skills development and training are essential, but without financial investment businesses cannot grow. Mentoring and technical assistance are key to preventing bottlenecks and enabling entrepreneurs be more effective and prudent in their decision-making and use of capital.
- The translation from concept to reality on the ground requires significant time and assistance in this challenging business environment.

Challenges ahead

- *Fund raising*
It is very challenging to raise funds locally. The contributing private sector institutions are spread thin from the constant pressure to donate to worthy causes.
- *Partner fatigue*
Partners such as judges, consultants and trainers are unable to offer pro bono services year after year even though they believe in the concept and importance of the initiative. In future, one option might be to offer at least a discounted rate for their valuable services.

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Common constraints that reduce the employability of youth include a lack of market relevant skills due to outdated or inappropriate vocational training curriculum. The private sector, by integrating on-the-job training and partnering with public actors as part of their human resources strategies, can assist in providing youth with the skills, experience and information necessary for attaining meaningful employment in both the informal and formal economies.

The areas where business can intervene in training include:

Quality and relevancy of skills training

Improving the quality and relevance of skills training is costly and complex and demands an input from both business and national training establishments. By entering into partnerships with government or national training or education institutions, the private sector can turn its business needs into effective programmes and policies that are relevant to the labour market. Business can also partner with universities or individual schools and training institutions in order to influence the content of their courses and to be better able to assess which graduates to employ.

Improving the quality of training can also be achieved by providing direct assistance to training establishments. This may include offering trainer training courses or lending employees directly as trainers, donating equipment or machinery, sponsoring marketing events or specific functions, establishing scholarship funds or providing access to company facilities.



Private sector collaboration can have the biggest impact on the development of skills in such areas as job search, business management and ICT. The labour market for ICT skills is growing at a remarkable pace in West Africa, and businesses possess the necessary expertise to prepare young people for entry into the modern economy.

Our case study is drawn from Cisco's Networking Academy, which trains students for the internet economy. Cisco's model of "training of trainers" demonstrates the breadth of skills diffusion that can be achieved when experts from business are engaged in passing on their knowledge.

Modern and targeted vocational education

By partnering with vocational training centres or offering tailored on-the-job training to their young employees, enterprises can play a role in ensuring that the relevant skills and competencies of the private sector are included in vocational training curricula. Providing opportunities for youth to acquire specialized manual skills will also allow them to pursue careers as much needed tradesmen.

The area of vocational training where the private sector can add the most value is in their core business operations, such as manufacturing, agriculture, construction, telecommunications or craftsmanship.

The example from GISDC (Case study No. 4) shows how vocational training has been developed with business interest in mind. The Centre's training facilities feature the state of the art equipment required for the modern economy while giving students the chance to acquire internationally recognized certification.

Support for curriculum development

By participating in school boards, lobbying governments or providing feedback on the employability level of jobseekers, the private sector can make the necessary contribution to education and curriculum development that is required to ensure graduates are ready for the world of work. Vocational skills, literacy, numeracy, language, problem solving ability and computer skills are some of the essential competencies needed for youth to compete in the labour market.²²

The Technical Education and Vocational Training Development Fund (FONDEF), created in 2004 by the Senegalese Government in conjunction with social and private partners, is aimed at promoting continuing vocational education in line with the needs of Senegalese companies. FONDEF is jointly financed by the Government, which remits to FONDEF part of the company payroll taxes. When requesting support from FONDEF for vocational training for their own employees, companies are required to assume 25 per cent of the operating costs and remit this amount to FONDEF in a blocked account. In general, FONDEF intervenes in all sectors of economic activity, particularly through the financing of public and private companies' training plans, as well as through training programmes for sectors, branches and groups of companies developed in collaboration with professional organizations.

“Thanks to the partnership among Cisco, UN and my employer, NAS Inter-Global Networks Ltd., I have had the opportunity to gain in demand skills that have lead me towards meaningful employment. The hope is that by early next year, we will be able to return to our homes in Liberia and be the young pioneers of an IT revolution that will lead our country towards prosperity.”

-Mr. Elijah M. Kyne

Cisco Certified Network Associate from Buduburam Refugee camp in Ghana

Origins and objectives of the partnership

As one of the first intersectoral partnerships of its kind, the Cisco Networking Academy was the brainchild of Georg Ward, a Senior Cisco Engineer who originally developed training for teachers and staff for maintenance of school internet networks in 1997. In ten years of operation the Network has grown from 67 academies to more than 9,500 in 160 countries, with over 2 million students graduating from its

programmes. A central strategy in the Academy's expansion has been its focus on partnerships with the public sector.

In July 2000, following the Okinawa G-8 summit which called for more private sector organizations to address global development, Cisco launched its Least Developed Countries (LDC) Initiative, creating the same academies in LDCs. In partnership with key international development organizations, including the United



Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) and local governments, Cisco set out to provide internet-based learning and IT skills training in half of the world's 50 least developed countries. The expertise, local relationships and support of its partners has led to the establishment of Networking Academies in 35 LDCs.

Cisco Networking Academy activities

The Networking Academy Programme is a comprehensive 560-hour course designed to provide students with the skills that will enable them to design, build and maintain computer networks. It comprises Web-based educational content, online testing, student performance tracking, hands-on laboratories and instructor training and support, and is offered at high schools, technical schools, universities and other community-based organizations. At the end of the curriculum, students can choose to pass the Cisco Certified Networking Associate (CCNA) examination or to launch their career directly in the IT industry.

Cisco Academy West Africa

125 Networking Academies have been established in 11 West African countries (Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Togo, Niger, Senegal). Currently, over 9200 students are enrolled throughout West Africa; since 2007 the number of new students has grown by 5000.

Senegal joined the Cisco Systems Networking Academy Programme in 2001 with the expansion of the programme under the LDC Initiative. The academy network in Senegal has been particularly successful, with 15 Academies being set up in four locations across the country (Dakar, St. Louis, Thies and Bambey). At the *Ecole Supérieure Multinationale des Télécommunications* in Dakar, courses are offered in six modules ranging from "Routing

basics", an introduction to networking, to such advanced areas as "WAN technologies". The Senegalese institutions have trained nearly 1500 students.

Corporate contribution

Cisco's main contribution to the academies is the training-of-trainers methodology that is behind the programme's global expansion and under which local instructors deliver Cisco's networking expertise in close to where they are located.

Using this methodology, experts from Cisco Systems train African instructors at the Cisco Academy Training Centre (CATC) in South Africa (there are plans to open a CACT in West Africa in the near future). The CATC instructors then train regional Academy instructors. Finally, the regional Academy instructors train the local Academy instructors who then pass on their learning to the students. Educational institutions may play a role at one or more of these training levels.

Cisco has provided \$200M in funding towards the LDC Initiative and in many cases has provided the computer hardware and software to set up the academies.

Cisco also provides the curriculum for the e-learning platform by which all learning components are delivered to the Academies. The curriculum was initially created to prepare students for the Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA) and Cisco Certified Network Professional (CCNP) diplomas, but it has been modified recently to provide students with the skills they need to pursue IT careers in businesses and industries ranging from technology and finance to medicine and entertainment. The findings of a recent survey of the LDC Initiative show that the switch to a

curriculum focusing more on employability skills has helped a greater number of Academy graduates to find jobs.

Benefits to business

Cisco has been the initiator and driver of the Networking Academies, which are central to its business model. By partnering with local and international institutions in delivering the programme globally, Cisco creates value for its shareholders and gains loyalty from its employees. It also generates a young talent pool from which to develop its workforce, while the Cisco brand receives worldwide recognition stemming from its close ties to government leaders. Most importantly, as a leading model for internet learning, the programme is rapidly expanding and being exported, and it is rapidly becoming the model for online learning techniques.

Outcome and impact so far

A survey of the LDC Initiative by GRC Custom Research, a technology market research company, was conducted in six countries (Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda, Zambia) to determine the impact of the programme on students, instructors, employers and communities leaders. Online, telephone and personal interviews were conducted with each of the four target groups. The survey has shown that the Academies have had a strong impact on individuals, communities and economies in all the countries surveyed.

Employment

- Cisco Networking Academies provide students with hands-on networking experience that gives them an edge in the working world. Nearly two-thirds of respondents said they found jobs after completing the programme, and nearly three-quarters of those that found employment have positions that include networking functions.

- Over 10 per cent of those who complete Cisco Networking Academy classes start their own business.
- Compared to other staff, 54 percent of employers said graduates from the programme have much better skills (specifically, networking and configuration planning) than their peers.

Demographics

- The survey showed that Cisco programming was targeting youth between 25 and 34 years of age; 58 per cent of former students who participated in the survey were in this category.

Education

- The academies are a stepping-stone for graduates in pursuit of higher education goals. About 80 per cent of Networking Academy students polled at the secondary education level stated that they planned to pursue an associate, bachelors, masters or doctoral degree after completing the programme.
- The initiative also facilitates the school-to-work transition by supplying a pool of certified IT technicians for local businesses to recruit.
- Prominent among the success stories is the case of 24 Liberian refugees who completed the CCNA course in the AITI academy in Accra, Ghana. These certified network experts are now working in Accra and some have even gone back to Liberia to restart their lives.

Gender

- The Networking Academy opens new doors for African women in a field traditionally dominated by men. Currently 31 per cent of students graduating from the Cisco Certified Network Associate courses are women, exceeding the target of 30 per cent.

Lessons learned

- The initiative has achieved unparalleled results in terms of e-learning and technology which “exemplifies the powerful links that exist between a company’s philanthropic strategy, its competitive context and social benefits”.²⁴ The success of the project proves that business motivation can mix with development goals.
- Providing online courses, laboratory supplies and quality teaching material free of charge to non-profit educational organizations allows low-income and underprivileged individuals to participate in the programme. Students are not required to buy textbooks and can obtain the curriculum online.
- Partnerships with the United Nations and bilateral development organizations have enabled local educational establishments to finance the building of their infrastructural and management capacity so as to be able to host the Networking Academies. In 2003 USAID and UNDP announced “Africa 100”, Phase II of the LDC Initiative. USAID financed the establishment of 75 new institutions and UNDP financed another 25.
- The sustainability of the Academy has suffered in West Africa from the lack of financial investment, and thus programme ownership, by local educational institutions. Most of the curriculum, trainer training and regional academy of the new Academies was funded by sponsor organizations.
- The first local instructors to be trained were not selected with due care, and this resulted in a low pass rate. In future a screening process should be introduced to review the experience, education and skills of each applicant.

Challenges ahead

- Increasing the availability of the programme in rural areas as almost all of the 35 existing programmes in West Africa are located in urban areas.
- Reducing the cost of the programme (the cost of attaining CCNA qualification can range from 500 to 800 US\$) inhibits access for the average African youth.
- The programme needs to be closer linked to the labour market in order to encourage partnerships between industry/companies and the Academies.
- Some Academies, especially those in secondary schools, cannot afford training of trainers. In addition to the training fees, the cost includes transportation of the instructors to the site of the training, accommodation and a living allowance. Such deficiencies are hindering the growth of the Academies.
- The cost of internet connectivity for the Initiative’s extension to some communities is prohibitive
- Limited access to electricity is a hindrance to the Initiative’s expansion.

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"We have a responsibility to the communities in which we do business. We do this by providing opportunities for people's growth and development. This responsibility expresses itself in the employment and development opportunities we offer. In order to create a sustainable development in the future, for us and our (future) employees, it is necessary to create an environment that makes that possible. At this moment the challenge in West Africa is among other things characterized by training systems which are poorly linked to the demands of the labour market and lack of access to finance. Therefore Vlisco took the initiative, in a consortium with other companies and public partners, to set up a skills development centre where companies can send their employees for skills development."

-Mr. Joop van der Meij, CEO Exotic Fabrics (holding company of Vlisco Helmond B.V., Texstyles Ghana Ltd, Uniwax and Woodin)

Origins and objectives of the partnership

The GISDC is a public-private initiative aimed at supplying demand-driven, industry-responsive training to employees of sponsor companies and disadvantaged youth.

Vlisco Helmond BV and their Ghanaian subsidiary TexStyles Ghana Ltd. (TSG), a large Dutch textiles manufacturer with 500 Ghana-based employees, were the initiators of the project, which was established in 2005 under a memorandum of understanding signed by Vlisco and the Netherlands and Ghanaian Governments,



in collaboration with industries in Ghana and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports. The Netherlands Government has so far provided 1.1 million towards the project.

Vlisco initiated the project because current vocational training institutions in Ghana were failing to provide their students with relevant skills. Vlisco felt that an industry-responsive training mechanism would provide skills which would benefit not only the participating company and current employees but would also serve the greater public good by preparing unemployed and disadvantaged youth for careers in industry.

While the start-up period has experienced significant delays due to sourcing expensive plant machinery, the Centre is ready to accept its first students in July 2008.

GISDC activities

GISDC gives companies the opportunity to train existing and prospective sponsor company employees in hands-on skills relevant to mechanical, electrical, process engineering and core employability skills. Companies pay 250 per employee per course.

The skills shortages that need to be addressed most urgently by the project are in maintaining modern automated process plant and machinery. Equally urgent is to impart basic engineering skills which the education sector has so far been unable to provide. Certain soft skills (problem-solving, teamwork, work ethic) are also needed.

The programme is geared to trainees' level of education:

- Stage 1 for graduates of senior secondary schools;
- Stage 2 for graduates of technical institutes (with a possibility of supplemental courses from Stage 1);
- Stage 3 for existing employees, as well as for trainees having successfully completed stage 2.

Successful trainees are awarded the SQA²⁵ Certificate of Engineering Practice, an internationally recognized qualification.

GISDC Social Support Programme (SSP)

Financially burdened, disadvantaged youth will receive training free or at discounted rates as well as support services to ensure their transition to the world of work.

The GISDC/SSP will be administered by YES Ghana Country Network, a nationwide coalition of youth-serving organizations working in the area of youth empowerment. In cooperation with GISDC, YES Ghana will select qualified applicants with career aspirations in their chosen sector who have demonstrated a strong need for financial support and a capability and availability to undertake the training. Once accepted into the programme, YES Ghana will provide career counselling and work with interested companies to ensure the youth are placed in jobs upon completion of the training.

The GISDC/SSP has been allocated 30,000 euros for its first year of operation and is expected to retain 5 per cent of the Centre's annual turnover.

Corporate contributions

Project design and input

Besides conducting an initial feasibility study which worked with 20 local processing companies in establishing a need for the Centre, Vlisco has undertaken to provide 250 euros for each one-week training module (a total of 3250 euros for 2008), as well as instructors to deliver training.

Financing

Companies sponsor current and prospective employees to receive training at GISDC. Companies that have undertaken a commitment to employee training include: Accra Brewery Ltd., Ballast Nedam, Barry Callebaut, Cocoa Processing Company, Fan Milk Ltd, Gafco, Ghacem, Guinness Ghana Breweries Ltd., Interbeton, Unilever, Wienco, Tropical Cable and Conductors, Nestle Ghana Ltd., Nexans Kabelmetal (Ghana) Ltd., Sterling Steel (Intrinsic Resource Ltd), TCCL, Tex Styles Ghana Ltd., Vlisco B.V. and Logistics Direct.

In-kind contributions

Some sponsor companies have provided the Centre with office equipment, vehicles and curricula.

Professional expertise

Sponsoring companies have agreed to provide experienced employees to deliver training modules throughout the course.

Benefits to the company

Vlisco and other companies in the area have been experiencing serious difficulties in maintaining their plants due to lack of suitably skilled staff. In many cases these difficulties have, resulted in excessive downtime and loss of production; in others they have been unable to expand their business because of a lack of skilled maintenance personnel to modernize their equipment. The creation of GISDC is essential to the maintenance of sponsor companies' core business activities.



Outcome and impact so far

- The response to initial trainee commitment forms sent out to industries to assess the number of potential trainees has been overwhelming. Feedback suggests that 1300 trainee students will be enrolled by the close of the 2008 academic year.
- Thirteen training units have been developed and will be launched in 2008.
- Six facilitator trainers and two administrators have been hired

Lessons learned

The project was initiated to meet key business requirements:

- Because of the lack of coordination between government policy, the education system and business partners, school curricula are not sufficiently responsive to the job market.
- A large technological gap exists between the demands of industry and the level of skills of people graduating from Ghana's educational institutions, thereby impeding industry's ability to be competitive and grow.
- Private institutions need to be engaged in the early planning stages of any technical and vocational training project.
- The education sector requires material support and advice from relevant industries.
- Systematic evaluation, monitoring and coordination are required to ensure that the output of the educational system corresponds to the demands of industry in terms of skills.

Challenges ahead

Commitment from business sponsors

While all the companies consulted undertook to support the new training Centre and use it as a source of training for their personnel, most were reluctant at an early stage to give precise details as to how many trainees they would sponsor, until they were provided with more information about the final training programme. Funding towards

the setting up of the project that was promised by some industry sponsors never materialized.

Cost of training

The demand for basic engineering skills presents a problem for the new Centre. In order to facilitate this type of training it is necessary to equip the Centre with a number of lathes, milling machines, drills and welding equipment. This would have significant implications in terms of overall space requirements, building services and total capital costs. On the other hand, this part of the curriculum accounts for a relatively small proportion of the overall training programme, and it may be more cost effective in the short term to outsource these activities to an organization which has the necessary resources and expertise.

Provision of equipment

Sourcing and obtaining the engineering equipment has been a major obstacle to starting the project. Owing to some unforeseen constraints in the Ghanaian economy (energy disruption as a result of the low water level in the Akosombo dam), most of the commitments received from industry have been discouraging. The Centre has had to rely on sponsorship from donor governments to provide for the necessary equipment and tools required to begin the training. These delays have resulted in the planned inauguration of the Centre being postponed three times.

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Targeted private sector support of educational establishments at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels can help students gain the skills needed by business to enter the labour market, thereby bridging the gap between traditional education systems and the private sector. Interventions can include employee volunteer teaching or guest lecturing, support to curriculum development, mentoring and/or the provision of equipment or facilities.

Volunteer teaching

Volunteer teaching or mentoring, especially in the areas of business skills such as entrepreneurship, finance or leadership can provide a valuable input into classroom skills development. Companies can encourage their employees to become volunteer teachers by creating community employee engagement programmes within their business or by offering incentives to employees.

An example of a volunteer teaching initiative comes from the youth entrepreneurship organization Junior Achievement Nigeria (JAN). JAN provides high-quality supplementary economic education programmes for young people. With the help of volunteer teachers from Accenture, JAN has been able to scale up their programmes to reach more Nigerian youth. Accenture is also involved in supporting JAN's Venture in Management Programme (ViPM), which features courses taught by professors from the Lagos Business School. The programme is designed along the lines of the Harvard Business School's summer programme as a one-week intensive mini-MBA.²⁶



Support to curriculum development

In addition to providing input to technical and skills training curricula, business can contribute to the traditional education curriculum. This is especially valuable in the final years of compulsory schooling when students are preparing themselves for the world of work.

Considerable attention is being devoted to the private sector's support for job specific, relevant agricultural training. In Côte d'Ivoire, the world's largest chocolate companies are working with Winrock International to ensure that the next generation of cocoa farmers are adequately educated and prepared to enter to world of work.

Job placement, internship and apprenticeship

The involvement of the business sector in internship and apprenticeship programmes is crucial for students to gain the practical work experience they need to succeed in the job market, in addition to playing an important part in its human resources strategies.

A successful internship programme is characterized by companies making a verifiable investment in their young recruits. This would include adequate supervision and guidance, a clear work plan, opportunities for networking and training and opportunities for career advancement.

A successful apprenticeship programme provides apprentices with a skilled professional mentor and has strong links with academic or vocational training institutes. Apprentices should be carefully evaluated to ensure their suitability for the company. Clear training objectives should be reviewed with the mentor prior to starting.

A number of government youth employment agencies in West Africa (Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment in Mali, National Agency for the Promotion of Youth Employment in Mauritania, National Agency for Youth Employment in Senegal) are seeking business support in the training and skills development of youth. These programmes provide incentives to companies to take on young interns and apprentices through the provision of tax breaks or wage subsidies. Progressive companies can maximize the benefits of these schemes by linking them effectively to their own on-the-job training schemes and establishing a strategy for taking on the best young trainees as permanent employees.

Attah MANZAN is a 16 year-old student and CLASSE agriculture club member at Adzopé high school. Until recently, Attah would travel to a distant town to work on his uncle's plantation during summer vacation and receive little or no pay for his effort. Today, Attah is applying what he learned during his agriculture club meetings and using the land at his school and the new labour-saving tools and technologies CLASSE provided. He uses the supplementary US\$15 a month to pay for his schooling and is already planning to start a second nursery upon completion of the school year."

Origins and objectives of the partnership

In 2003 the United States Department of Labour (USDOL) provided funding for the non-profit development organization Winrock International to establish the Child Labour Alternatives through Sustainable Systems in Education (CLASSE) project. In 2004 Winrock received additional funding from the World Cocoa Foundation (US\$115,000), Mars Inc. (\$260,000) and the Norwegian Association of Chocolate Manufacturers (\$225,000) to support an

extension of the CLASSE programme to the end of 2007.

The chocolate company's involvement in the CLASSE project came on the heels of a 2001 agreement signed by the global cocoa industry committing it to work with host governments and development partners to eliminate the worst forms of child labour in growing cocoa beans and cocoa bean products in West Africa.

The CLASSE programme's mandate is to create educated future farmer leaders and employers by



increasing the relevance of agricultural vocational education for both in-school and out-of-school children and youth. The goal of the CLASSE programme is to reduce the extensive use of inefficient agricultural practices in Côte d'Ivoire, which increases the incidence of child labour on farms.

CLASSE activities

Agriculture extension agents (one extension agent is assigned for every four schools) are trained by Winrock staff to teach formal agriculture classes to primary and secondary school students at least once a week, as part of their regular school calendar. The curriculum includes quality farming practices, agro-marketing and functional literacy components. The students can also participate in weekly farmers clubs where they practice their skills on school demonstration garden and cocoa plots. Winrock's goal is to transfer the role and responsibilities of the extension workers to local teachers after three years so as to ensure the sustainability of the project.

The agents also teach more practical classes to local out-of-school youth who are interested in pursuing cocoa growing as a sustainable livelihood option. These youth assist in creating the demonstration plots and take that knowledge and apply it on their own family garden and cocoa plots.

Under the expansion of the project in 2004, Winrock and the Ivorian Ministry of Education developed new modules of curriculum for grades 7 to 9 (middle school) that address agricultural education, child labour, health and HIV/AIDS. The expansion will enhance the current CLASSE community school in Ehouégué, Côte d'Ivoire, and will expand CLASSE components in three additional schools.

The expansion included the establishment of a micro-credit scheme whereby 30 students have received loans to pay school fees. Part of these loans has also been used for income-generation activities. In addition, through the CLASSE programme, Winrock has been providing micro-credit loans to students' mothers to improve existing small businesses.

Corporate contribution

The private sector is not only a donor to the CLASSE project but participates in networking with private sector members, government officials and other stakeholders, including NGOs, which provide donations in kind (computers, hand-cranked radios, etc.). The private sector also plays a role in monitoring the projects through twice-yearly field visits, providing feedback and reporting and communicating regularly and openly with Winrock.

Benefits to the company

The cocoa industry has been working hard to combat international pressure and criticism that surfaced in 2000 over allegations of child labour in their supply chain in West Africa. Faced with a serious risk not only of losing their consumer base but of facing legislative action, the industry as a whole mounted a campaign to educate and sensitize the West African population to the dangers of child labour and to encourage and train young people to adopt cocoa production as viable post-study employment.

Outcome and impact so far

- 3,724 children and youth have completed agricultural training. As of the end of the 2006-2007 school year, 3,693 in-school and 31 out-of-school youth completed agricultural leadership training.
- 12,609 young people have been sensitized to child labour. Youth are receiving training through the ILO's SCREAM methodology, which uses the arts to teach them about child labour issues.
- 394 students participated in agriculture clubs. Agriculture clubs engage in a variety of activities geared to members' interests, including maintaining school cocoa and vegetable plots, participating in agribusiness training, taking field trips, organizing events and learning to use computers.
- 10 cocoa plots, 10 school gardens, and one tree-replication nursery have been established, and nine schools have been renovated. The cocoa demonstration plots are used to provide hands-on experience to complement agricultural training. The profits from the plots are used to support the school. Renovation work has included school buildings, latrines, classrooms, security measures and a computer laboratory.
- Expansion of the CLASSE project through ECHOES (Empowering Cocoa Households with Opportunities and Education Solutions). Winrock and the International Foundation for Education and Self Help, in partnership with the World Cocoa Foundation (WCF), are expanding into Ghanaian cocoa growing communities under USAID's African Education Initiative. The project will be



Rough Sustainable Systems in Education (CLASSE)

financed through a two-year, US\$6.12 million donation from USAID and WCF. Project activities will focus on three key areas: basic education, youth livelihoods and innovative activities. The new project differs from CLASSE in that WCF will be leading the initiative and it will focus more on teacher training and traditional education.

Lessons learned

- At the pilot stage of the project, it was seen as very important to study the gaps and shortcomings of existing agricultural education and to develop curricula that reinforce current teaching.
- The main lessons learned led to the adjustments that CLASSE undertook upon shifting from USDOL to WCF funding in 2004. The project began to focus primarily on agricultural vocational education instead of on the broad range of vocational training, such as mechanics and carpentry, which had originally been envisaged. This was a market-driven shift, as other vocational training activities were not providing employment for youth.
- The CLASSE programme is highly replicable because of its attractiveness for the private sector. The methodology could be adopted in other areas, such as information technology, industry or construction.

Challenges ahead

- Agriculture is not a source of quick profits, as it takes several years for cocoa plants to yield an income. A key challenge for the CLASSE project is therefore convincing youth that agriculture is a viable option for the future,

- Another challenge at the current stage is sustainability. CLASSE has been able to build sustainable strategies into the project by training government-sponsored teachers to teach the agriculture curriculum, mainstreaming the curriculum in the formal school system and teaching out-of-school youth to become master trainers to continue training other young people.
- CLASSE is successfully established in ten communities and most are continuing to operate with minimal support from Winrock, but there are many more communities in Côte d'Ivoire that need viable employment options for their youth.
- The longstanding political crisis in Côte d'Ivoire has caused disruptions to the programme and irregularities in school attendance.

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Madjou Bailo KAREMBE, a 21 year old aspiring machinist and welder, took part in an APEJ sponsored internship at the agricultural firm of Mopti in 2005. During his internship, Karembé was given the responsibility of managing a milling workshop and worked closely with Mopti staff in not only managing client orders but also in developing his manual skills in welding and machinery. With the support of his host company, Karembé was able to open his own milling workshop in his home village of Scio upon completion of his internship and owes his initial success to the clients, equipment and advice given to him by Mopti

Origin and objectives of the partnership

In 2004 the Malian government created the National Youth Employment Agency (APEJ) to develop and implement youth employment strategies as part of the country's wider poverty reduction campaign. Youth unemployment in Mali was as high as 57 per cent in 2004; such jobs as are available are found mostly in the informal sector where 78 per cent of working youth are employed. Furthermore, despite their skills and credentials a large number of unemployed graduates have difficulty finding meaningful employment.

APEJ is organized into four departments, targeting specific areas of youth employment: skills and employability, entrepreneurship development, high-intensity work programmes, and access to credit. In 2005 the Youth Skills and Employability Department developed the Internship Programme to increase the employability of young graduates by partnering with Mali's private sector.

Activities

The Internship Programme places unemployed youth with a university diploma in a professional environment for 12 months. By co-financing the intern's salary and providing assistance and technical support for each internship, APEJ makes it possible for Malian firms, which often have difficulty recruiting youth with relevant skills and sometimes lack the necessary financial resources, to employ and integrate young people into their firms.



The participating Malian businesses help the young people to develop practical skills related to their profession, as well as exposing them to a professional environment and a network of contacts. It is hoped that the contacts and experience acquired during the internship will lead to permanent work within the host business or other businesses. The internship period provides a valuable testing period during which the firm can evaluate the intern's ability and decide if he or she is right for the company.

APEJ recommends that internships comprise four key components:

- Interns should receive suitable orientation and be provided with a job description that clearly defines the work involved.
- The interns' duties should be directly related to their area of education.
- The interns' jobs should entail duties that are meaningful to the firm's success and performance.
- Interns should be assigned to supervisors who monitor, review and evaluate their performance.

Structure

The role of APEJ is to act as a link between youth and the private sector and to provide guidance to the two parties as to the components of a successful internship.

APEJ relies on the young people themselves to seek out firms in the private sector that are willing to accept them as interns, as a means of proving their initiative and suitability for the programme. This is a very important step that requires job search skills, such as the drafting of attractive CVs and covering letters which will interest potential employers. APEJ can help youth find internships by providing career counselling, informing companies of the benefits of the programme and expressing its willingness to enter into a partnership with the company so that the internship can take place. Alternatively, candidates can complete the internship inscription form provided at APEJ offices in order to be matched with a private sector offer. This option has been much less successful in providing internship opportunities for young people as APEJ has yet to develop a sustainable network of private sector opportunities.

Once a suitable match has been made, APEJ provides the intern and the participating firm with the necessary contractual documents for the programme.

APEJ finances the first six months of the internship programme (in the form of monthly stipends ranging from US\$50 to US\$100 per month to cover basic transportation costs) and the participating firm finances the second six months. In addition, APEJ pays for the cost of providing the intern or apprentice with social security coverage for the full programme period.

Corporate contribution

In addition to paying the monthly stipend for the second half of the internship, companies have to provide interns with a supervisor, as well as terms of reference for the position. The company should also evaluate the intern's performance at

the mid and end point of the internship.

In future APEJ will expect the private sector to play a more active role in keeping it abreast of human resource needs and providing it with feedback on the interns' performance.

Benefits to business

- Interns should make a meaningful contribution to the employer's objectives.
- The programme provides a year-round source of highly motivated pre-professionals.
- Young people bring new perspectives to old problems.
- The image of the participating company is enhanced as they contribute to the development of the community's youth.
- The flexible, cost-effective internships do not require a long-term commitment by the employer.
- Internships offer a practical solution to the frequent mismatch between graduate knowledge and private sector needs.

Outcome and impact so far

- Over 3000 youth have participated in the internship programme since 2004.
- It is estimated that 50 per cent of interns find employment at the end of their internship.
- Internships include placements in banks, travel companies, architecture firms, pharmacies, law firms, telecommunication enterprises and engineering companies.
- One of the most successful examples of business engagement in the programme is the participation of ICOTED, an international engineering consulting firm which in the first two years of the programme has hosted 15 APEJ interns.

- Business interest in the programme has been picking up as larger numbers of businesses have started to learn about this new programme. APEJ has launched a marketing campaign and plans to speak to employers' organizations and local businesses all over the country about the benefits of the programme in order to increase the number of participating businesses. The Malian Rotary Club has already provided strong support for this process by communicating APEJ's activities to all their members.
- Participating firms have given some positive feedback on their involvement in the programme, citing increases in productivity and human capital. The energy, motivation and innovative spirit of the interns have helped to build a more positive working environment.

Lessons learned

- Enterprises can be sceptical about taking on an intern, thus making it important to stress the potential benefits to the firm of doing so. It is also important that APEJ ensures that interns have the necessary competency to contribute to the host firm's business, by setting quality standards for participation in the programme in terms of academic background, relevant skills and experience.
- Traditionally, business has been apprehensive about partnering with government. The new internship programme presents a valuable opportunity for APEJ to redefine the government/business relationship while creating an example for other public-private partnership endeavours.
- Meeting with firms directly to explain the programme has been a much more effective method of gaining their support than through written correspondence. In late 2007 APEJ organized two information seminars for the business sector in Bamako. The large turnout (over 50 business representatives) at the

seminars signalled strong business interest in the programme.

- The seminars also offered an opportunity for business partners to provide feedback for the improvement of the programme. Suggestions were made for the development of an evaluation mechanism to assess how many interns are employed at the end of their internships. It was also suggested that APEJ speed up their payment of interns, who were often not paid until after the first six months of the internship.
- The supervisors are a critical factor in the success of the internships. They provide the intern with guidance, involvement, direction and feedback.

Challenges ahead

- Women make up only 28 per cent of interns. Part of the problem is that a higher number of males obtain university diplomas and are in a position to participate in the programme. Determining how to encourage women who do hold diplomas to apply is currently being examined.
- Gaining the support of more firms to take on interns is an ongoing challenge, as the demand for positions is approximately twice that of the positions being offered. APEJ will endeavour to find both the human and the financial resources to recruit more firms into the programme.
- The programme has not so far carried out tracer studies on youth who have completed the internship programme to measure the extent to which the scheme facilitates participants' transition from school to work. Feedback from both interns and firms is important to determine how the programme can be improved.

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Business development for job creation

West Africa's private sector is in a strong position of being able to support the development of youth-led businesses and organizations in order for them to become profitable and effective suppliers and contributors to the economy. This support can play a major role in creating employment, income and value added, and in providing the seedbed for developing and testing entrepreneurial talent. Youth do not have the experience or business know-how to establish their business. They need significant amounts of training, coaching and financial input to turn their ideas and energy into action.

Business can create partnerships with youth-led associations or businesses by offering development services with an eye to developing sustainable business practices and transferring and disseminating new technologies, supply chains, management techniques, information systems or networks. Partnerships with youth associations can involve training and education, financing and mentoring activities.

Linkage programmes

As already indicated, a number of multinational companies have recognized that developing and reinforcing supply chains is paramount not only to reducing costs and enhancing competitiveness but also to managing relationships and reputation within the local community where they operate.

Business intervention in the supply chain can include training youth-led SMEs or entrepreneurs in business basics such as accounting and marketing, engaging consultants to provide business development services or offering financing mechanisms to allow SMEs to grow. The recently inaugurated SME Linkages programme in Guinea is an example of a combination of these three approaches.

Business development – Direct action

In the absence of properly functioning markets, business support schemes and the necessary infrastructure to support business development, as is the case in some post-conflict countries in West Africa, direct input into the creation or revitalization of enterprises may be necessary. This input would include providing the necessary support to get businesses on their feet, in the form of start-up grants, loans, capital investment, equipment, small business or management training, human resources support and infrastructure upgrades.

Rebuilding a defunct economy is a difficult process that demands input by all actors, especially the business sector. As will be seen from the case study of Klin Salone in Sierra Leone, youth can be financed, trained and mobilized to create functioning businesses that will lead to jobs. In this case, a partnership was developed between the cooperation agency GTZ, the Sierra Leone Government and a youth association-turned-business to provide jobs for Sierra Leone's largely inactive young population. In an area of the world where over 80 per cent of youth are unemployed, they must be engaged in either making a living or gaining the skills and knowledge to do so. Failure to consult, engage and train young people can generate frustration, marginalization and even violence.

“An approach such as this partnership that links local business development to large extractive industry projects can serve as a model for economic and social growth in African communities.”

*-Mr. Mamady Traore,
Minister of Industry, Commerce, Tourism and Artisans, Guinea*

Origins and objectives of the partnership

The Guinea Alumina Corporation (GAC) is a joint venture between the multinational mining giant BHP Billiton Ltd. and Global Alumina Corporation, Dubai Aluminum Company Limited and Mubadala Development Company PJSC. The joint venture is constructing an alumina refinery near Sangarédi in north-western Guinea to transform bauxite resources into alumina for use in the production of aluminium. The refinery is one of the largest capital investments ever made in sub-Saharan Africa.

The United States African Development Foundation (USADF) is a US government agency dedicated to expanding access to economic opportunities on the African continent. In 2006 GAC and USADF entered into a five-year strategic partnership to stimulate local economic growth, job creation and higher incomes through an SME linkages and community development project. Both parties have committed to a US\$5 million contribution to the project.

The partnership has two components, an SME linkages programme and a participatory community development programme. The GAC – USADF Linkages Programme is focused on screening, developing, and linking promising SMEs to market opportunities created by the growing bauxite industry, in order to maximize local economic participation in the growth of Guinea’s mining sector. The focus of the SME programme ranges from construction to operations to building up the local consumer economy.

One of the primary goals of the project is to provide jobs in an economy that suffers from high rates of unemployment and underemployment. Given the lack of skills and experience of the workforce, the project aims to invest in SMEs that provide significant training opportunities for young people entering the business sector. Once they have undergone training and acquired on-the-job experience, they would provide a source of human capital for the refinery, which expects to create 2,100 positions for the youth-dominated labour pool.

SME Linkages Programme activities

The primary goal of the SME Linkages Programme is to provide local businesses with the volume of investment needed to expand and grow. A US\$10 million fund was established for this purpose and will be used in two ways:

1. Enterprise expansion investment

Recipient companies receive loans to expand their working capital and improve their infrastructure and processes. The loans range in size from US\$100,000 to US\$250,000 for a period of five years. Loans are paid back into a Fund according to an agreed schedule and are then recycled.

2. Operational assistance grants

USADF provides grants to improve the capabilities of enterprises not yet ready for an enterprise expansion investment. The grants are used to provide companies with business development services, with the focus on strategic business planning, financial management and accounting, product development, managerial training and performance management. Operational assistance grants up to US\$100,000 are generally non-reimbursable and may be followed by an application for an expansion investment.

USADF works in partnerships with a local NGO, Centre d'Appui au Développement (CAD), to provide the technical support and business consulting for Guinean SMEs. CAD acts as the general contractor coordinating the development and implementation of the small business plans.

At the pilot stage of the project, USADF and GAC worked together to identify the market segments that were most in need of investment, selecting those that would reinforce GAC's local supply chain. These sectors included construction, operations and the local consumer economy.

In 2007 the six SMEs chosen to receive investments were: Guinea Confection, expanding the production capacity of a uniform manufacturer; Keba Farms, increasing the egg production of a poultry farm; Diallo et Fils, building a new bakery for a bakery chain; ENCODI, deepening the technical capability of a construction firm; SAF, strengthening the management capability of a Sangarédi refrigeration equipment services firm; and Kyok Soul, expanding the capabilities of a security services firm.

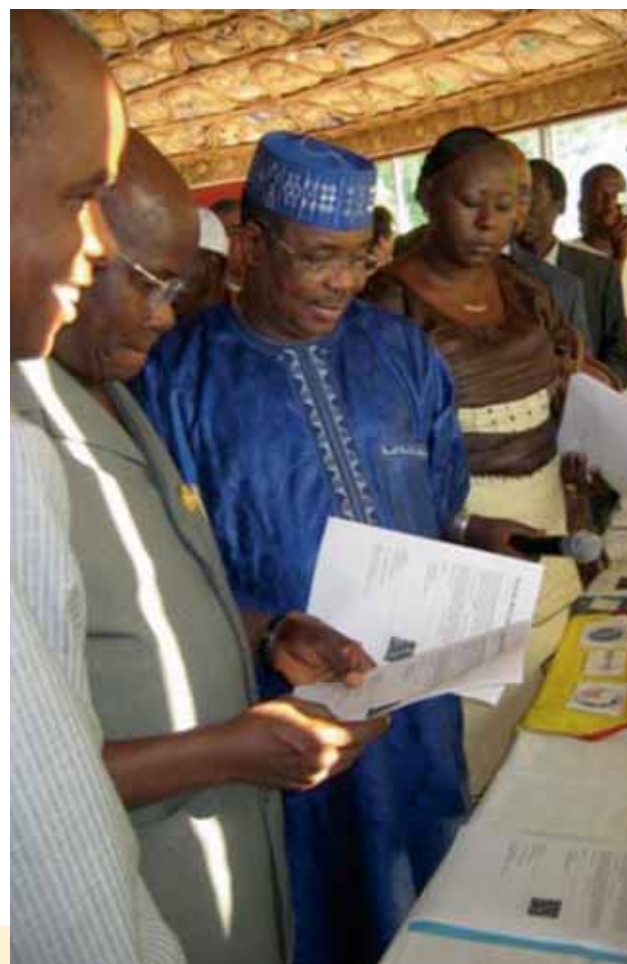
In 2008 investments will concentrate on building the capacity of training institutions with the goal of teaching young people skills and trades related to the mining industry. This includes expanding the capabilities of a local driving school, scaling up a woodworking company and reinforcing its mentoring programme, and providing capacity building to a rice production and marketing cooperative. By combining skill building with the creation of local jobs, the program should create strong opportunities for youth within the local communities.

Corporate contribution

GAC's contribution to the programme is at several levels. In addition to financial support, GAC shares information about their supply requirements to allow USADF to select SMEs and to strengthen their capabilities as suppliers. Lastly, GAC assists the SMEs by including them in relevant tenders.

In addition to the GAC's US\$5 million investment in the USADF project, development of the alumina refinery is expected to bring major economic benefits and opportunities to the local community.

The total project cost of setting up and constructing the mine will amount to US\$4.78 billion while the projected life of the project is 50 years. In addition to construction of the mine site, other facilities and infrastructure planned for development include a steam and power plant, two railway spurs, a materials handling jetty and container quay, a new bridge, water reservoirs, drainage and electricity supply. A massive housing development project is also planned for the refinery's workers.



Benefits to business

For GAC developing business linkages and improving the local economic environment will reduce input costs by allowing it to source services locally and increase specialization and flexibility. The investment will also enhance the company's image in the community, foster knowledge development and have a social impact in terms of poverty reduction and employment creation. GAC's partnership with USADF is thus a question both of competitiveness and of social responsibility.

Projected outcome and impact over the five- year cycle of each SME project

- US\$1 million were invested in six SMEs in 2007.
- 700 jobs are expected to be created in the five years of the project.
- The project is expected to stimulate an incremental revenue growth of US\$13 million.
- The project is expected to increase workers' compensation by US\$2 million.
- In 2008 GAC and USADF will continue their strategic partnership with an investment target of US\$2 million.

Lessons learned

- One of the most important best practices when working with SMEs has been for them to develop their own business plans rather than have USADF develop them for the SMEs. There is a delicate balance here, but ensuring genuine SME commitment to the investment priorities and plans is critical to achieve the expected results.



- It has been important to work not only with SMEs that relate to GAC's core business activity and value chain but also with local consumer-based businesses. This contributes to the diversification and sustainability of the local economy while avoiding reliance on a single client.
- Linkage projects should begin well before the start-up of operations. In this example, GAC expects to extract its first bauxite resources for market entry in 2010, which gives ample time for local economic development.
- Receiving support from the Guinean Ministry of Industry, Commerce, Tourism and Artisans at the beginning of the process was key to ensuring that the programme matched Guinea's goals for development while ensuring direct local involvement.
- While profitability, potential for growth and market segment are valuable criteria when selecting the SMEs that qualify for funding, it is also important to examine the broader macro-economic contribution that SMEs can make to the community. This is why an emphasis on employability and skill development is scheduled for future loan periods. SMEs will be selected that have built-in mechanisms for recruiting and training new employees, thereby developing the community's human capital. Young people are expected to be the biggest beneficiaries in this concentration.

Challenges ahead

- USADF will be engaging in implementation, including monitoring and managing supplier performance, as SMEs begin to provide GAC with goods and services.
- Developing the 2008 cycle of investments.
- Cultivating local service providers capable of providing services to SMEs. This may range from financial management to quality control. Finding and cultivating these resources locally is critical to strengthening the SMEs.
- At the early stages of this project, it will be essential to demonstrate to GAC the benefits that the added value from investment in SMEs can bring to their value chain. This will include documenting successes and best practices and communicating them to a global audience.

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“I left school in September 2005 in hopes of pursuing higher education. I soon realized that my parents, after having been displaced by the war, could not afford to pay for me to continue my studies. After some months on the street, I joined Klin Salone’s Central Waste Unit and was assigned to several transit locations and as a door-to-door sales agent. For the past 14 months the city has remained clean and I have been able to rent an apartment and have gone off of life on the streets. I hope Klin Salone will continue to provide the same opportunities for other youth as they did for me.”

-Abdulai F. Sesay, 21 year old Klin Salone employee in Freetown

Origins and objectives of the partnership

The Freetown Waste Management System (FWMS) is a public-private partnership model set up to address the acute issue of youth unemployment in the post-conflict economy of Sierra Leone. Just five years after a brutal civil war, Sierra Leone is experiencing a 7 per cent national economic growth. However, this growth has had a limited effect on youth unemployment; 500,000 youth out of a total population of 5.6 million are without jobs.

Germany’s technical cooperation enterprise GTZ started the promotion of youth groups engaged in waste collection in Freetown in 2006, as a means of implementing its programme “Promotion of Youth Employment through Private Sector Development”. In this programme the private sector is defined as all companies acting on the basis of an economic rationale (rural and micro-urban initiatives of the informal or traditional type, small and medium-sized enterprises in the formal and informal sectors,





large more or less defunct enterprises) which can create self-employment or jobs for others if their input needs are satisfied. Under its “Private sector development – Direct action” strategy, GTZ has developed a method of intervention in favour of these companies, which ensure the survival of the great majority of the population. One of GTZ direct actions has been to realize the huge youth employment potential in the failing waste management sector.

The FWMS began functioning in December 2006 when Freetown was going through a waste management crisis. Waste collection services in the city are unorganized and unreliable. Only 150 of the 700 tons of waste produced daily in Freetown are disposed of in the two public dumpsites, while the rest collects in prohibited or public areas. The Government of Sierra Leone, in cooperation with GTZ, the World Bank and Freetown’s municipal council, developed a two-part solution to this problem.

1. It built up the capacity of a local youth membership group, the Klin Salone Waste Management Association, to operate as an umbrella organization coordinating the activities of the various private and voluntary groups engaged in door-to-door waste collection.
2. It created an autonomous enterprise, the Freetown Waste Management Company (FWMC), to oversee and coordinate all public cleaning operations in Freetown, including the management of waste transit sites, the maintenance of equipment and the services of Klin Salone.

Currently FWMC is a semi-private unit funded by the Sierra Leone Government and GTZ, but it is hoped that in 2008 FWMS will be transformed into an autonomous, income-generating company. The World Bank has been asked to provide technical support in the form of business development services and loan facilities for the privatization of the company.

FWMS activities

There are three parts to the Freetown Waste Management System.

1. Door-to-door waste collection and dumping on municipal transit dumpsites, organized by Klin Salone Waste Management Association, which sets guidelines and provides transportation and marketing support for member groups. Customers pay Klin Salone member groups a monthly set fee for waste collection services. Member groups in turn pay a monthly membership fee to the Association for services rendered.
2. Transport of waste from the transit sites to the dumpsites. In close cooperation with the Freetown city council, 31 transit sites were identified for dumping throughout the city. This stage also involved the development and implementation of a management scheme for the 11 new trucks provided by the Libyan Government to the sanitation authority.
3. Management of the final dumpsites. Currently Freetown’s waste is absorbed by two municipal dumpsites at Kingtom and Kissy. The dumpsites have the capacity to take in current levels of Freetown’s waste production by means of the deployment of a Klin Salone working force of 68 youths who flatten the incoming waste manually. Major rehabilitation of both dumpsites is needed to provide for office infrastructure, bulldozing equipment, a sewage system, fencing and roads. The newly created FWMC will manage the site upon completion of the rehabilitation project.

Cooperation between

GTZ and Klin Salone

GTZ has acted as a business development consultant to Klin Salone during their start-up phase. GTZ has also funded equipment, salaries, marketing and office costs for member groups and Klin Salone during this period.

Training

GTZ has sponsored the training of 60 out of 112 member youth groups in waste management, client services, financial management and youth participation. GTZ has also worked closely with Klin Salone in formulating a business plan and strategy and setting up a qualified management team and board of directors.

Corporate contribution

- In an innovative youth enterprise approach to private sector waste management, the Klin

Salone Waste Management Association offers paid services on a contractual basis to households and businesses (240 young people organized in 39 door-to-door groups) as well as to public authorities. The service rendered to public authorities consists of managing 30 transit sites, two dumpsites, 12 night cleaning sites and 20 security posts (a total of 520 young people).

- Where public institutions managing Freetown's waste in the past have proved unsustainable, the FWMS operates as a successful public (sanitation authority) and private (Klin Salone) partnership which has managed to keep the municipality of Freetown in a stable, clean state for 14 months.
- The services of Klin Salone and FWMC contribute to establishing basic infrastructure services in Sierra Leone, while acting as a job resource for a largely frustrated and unemployed young population.
- The creation of these private entities means that public service can be rendered without having to rely entirely on the overburdened State machinery.



Benefits to business

The benefits to business are yet to be determined. In this particular case there is no cooperation with an existing private company. GTZ is establishing a new youth-led company which cooperates with the youth associations, covering a niche which has not been served by any private or public company

Outcome and impact so far

- Over 9,000 tons of household and street waste are evacuated every month (up from 4,650 tons in 2005).
- Waste is collected from over 3,000 households and businesses.
- 43 out of 102 youth group members of the Klin Salone Youth Association have received training in waste management.
- 760 sustainable jobs have been created in this sector.
- US\$1.3 million have been invested by GTZ in the development of the waste management system.
- The World Bank has signed a loan agreement of US\$3 million with the Government of Sierra Leone for setting up the FWMC and building its capacity to function as a private enterprise.

Lessons learned

- There exists a large market opportunity for waste collection and disposal services that are efficient and reliable. The recipe for a successful business model exists: customers are prepared to pay for services while youth have the energy to deliver the service.
- Creating a business model for profitability and competitiveness in a country with an inexperienced market environment can be a slow process and must involve consultation and input at all levels: private sector, government, civil society and development partners.

- Government leadership and commitment to this model of public-private partnership was essential. This meant turning over the exclusive right to waste management to private interests.
- The acceptance by public authorities and development partners of Klin Salone's stature as a capable and respected youth-led association was a necessary step in the process. This development was thanks to GTZ's expertise and technical assistance in building the capacity of Klin Salone as a well functioning business.
- Major investment and commitment by development partners (in this case the World Bank) were necessary to make up for the lack of public funds from public authorities to privatize the FWMC, which will take over responsibility for waste management in Freetown.

Challenges ahead

- As this is Klin Salone first experience as a business, managing its members and creating profits is likely to be difficult.
- Building up FWMC capability to generate sufficient income to maintain its partnership with Klin Salone.
- A tendency for government support to break down because of bureaucratic deficiencies or bad governance.
- Sustainability of the process when cooperation with GTZ and the World Bank comes to an end.

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VI. Summary of lessons learned

The eight private sector partnership case studies profiled in this paper are unique in the manner in which they bring together actors from the private sector and government, civil society and multilateral institutions to fight the challenge of youth unemployment. Each project presents a different approach, with a different level of commitment from each of the actors. That said, it is still possible to identify a number of common trends and lessons learned which will help guide future private sector interventions in youth employment.

The challenges of private sector partnerships

- **Lack of business capacity in West Africa.** As the Believe Begin Become case study indicates, many private sector partners both nationally and internationally are stretched to the limit of their community responsibility agenda or do not have the financial or human capacity to contribute to youth employment.
- **Clash of cultures.** Youth employment organizations and businesses often operate on different value systems which can cause clashes between the partners.
 - Speed of action. Companies expect quick returns and implementation at a pace that civil society, government and multilateral institutions find difficult to adhere to.
 - Flexibility. Corporate responsibility strategies are often rigid and funds often come with restrictions. Implementing organizations need flexibility and empowerment in order to operate effectively.
 - Profit versus social impact. The fundamental objectives of business are at odds with those of the social actors. Partners must find a way to use the profit motive to the advantage of the project.
- **Mistrust.** As the APEJ case study demonstrates, business and government are often sceptical about working with one another. In West Africa governments have sometimes accused business of exploiting local people, damaging the environment and investing too little in the local economy, while businesses cite corruption, anti-business policies and high taxes as reason for not working with government. Redefining public-private relationships will be a challenging task.
- **Reputation.** When businesses choose the partners they want to work with, they tend to favour large institutions or well-known organizations with a good reputation. This limits the growth of start-up operations and small youth employment organizations.
- **Business environment.** Businesses tend to concentrate their community investment in regions where they have significant economic interests. West Africa's struggling business climate is not attracting new investment fast enough.

The advantages of private sector partnerships

- **Intellectual capital.** The business sector offers intellectual capital in the form of technology, sound business procedures, market information and cost-saving techniques.
- **Marketing.** Corporations can offer their youth partners visibility, exposure and advertising.
- **Added value.** The private sector offers an alternative to traditional bilateral and multilateral donor practices, in the form of innovative services such as business development, mentoring, volunteers and in-kind donations that traditional donors have trouble providing.
- **Power brokers.** Business can provide youth employment organizations with the economic muscle to open up avenues for additional partners, resources, loans and networks.
- **Job market.** The private sector is a source of career guidance and training, as well as avenues or opportunities for employment.

Biggest areas of business input:

- Funding and start-up funds for young entrepreneurs
- Support for youth: mentoring, business development
- Business development – direct action
- Technical support – expertise in business

How to strengthen private sector partnerships for youth employment?

- **Involve core business!** The private sector should engage in projects that involve core business (see case studies on Cisco, WCF and GISDC). This strategy encourages knowledge and skills transfer and ensures that business is capitalizing on existing competencies.
- **Be committed and involved!** Companies need to commit themselves to building and sustaining relationships, beginning by carefully selecting implementing partners so as to ensure a good match for attaining development objectives. Some useful advice for business:
 - Carry out careful research into possible partners! What are the strengths and weaknesses of each partner, and are they complementary? Does the partner organization have a proven track record?
 - There will never be a perfect match. Be open and patient!
 - Monitor success and results carefully, set benchmarks, and respond to needs!
- **Be flexible!** It should be the responsibility of the youth employment organization to develop its own programme of action, even if the business partner has the project idea on which the collaboration is based. Trust partners by giving them enough flexibility! Though it is rare for corporations to provide funds without restrictions, they need to trust their local partners and build on their strengths.
- **Time is more valuable than money.** Non-monetary contributions (mentoring, volunteer teaching and training, contributing to community and business development services) are just as valuable as money.
- **Small is big.** Even the smallest corporate contribution to a youth employment initiative can have a major impact. For some youth employment organizations, just being able to associate with the business sector can add weight and reputation to their cause.

VII. Next steps for private sector partnerships for youth employment

Awareness raising

YEN-WA is planning a number of activities under its Private Sector Initiative to promote further the role of business in youth employment in West Africa.

Under the impetus of the Millenium Development Goals, which call on business to become a global partner in development, and the principles of the United Nations Global Compact, YEN hopes to make youth employment a priority on the social responsibility agenda of international business groups, multinational companies and national private sectors. To achieve this, YEN-WA plans to sponsor a series of West African country-level round tables which will discuss the role of the private sector in youth employment. Round tables are planned for Ghana, Mali and Senegal.

Knowledge development: Mapping youth employment initiatives

In the second half of 2008 YEN-WA will be finalizing its mapping of youth employment organizations in the 16 countries of West Africa. The mapping exercise will gather information, project details and contact data on existing and planned youth employment initiatives undertaken by government agencies, United Nations agencies, youth organizations, the private sector and cross-sectoral partnerships.

The database, which will be available on YEN's website, will serve as a resource to:

- help YEN-WA find synergies between programmes and ways to connect initiatives, based on complementary aspects of youth employment across West Africa;
- facilitate partnerships for fund raising, technical assistance, in-kind donations, mentoring and other services between the private sector, international and bilateral actors and youth employment organizations;
- identify further needs and challenges as well as successes and failures of organizations working to help young people gain meaningful employment.

Brokering partnerships

- **Introducing a youth employment marketplace** – YEN-WA plans to sponsor a marketplace event whose goal will be to initiate linkages between the private sector and youth employment organizations operating in West Africa. The event will allow companies and other organizations to share experiences, exchange ideas and understand good practice in youth employment. The event will also provide an opportunity to match funding partners with projects and to create a platform for intersectoral partnerships.

- **Replicating and upscaling** – Building on the results of its awareness-raising campaign and knowledge development activities (mapping), YEN-WA plans to initiate or support the replication or upscaling of two business-sponsored youth employment projects in the subregion. As partnership broker, YEN-WA will present seed youth employment projects to potential partners, policy makers or donors, build active multisectoral collaboration between partners and play an intermediary role between partners in monitoring, coordinating and facilitating projects.

Youth employment competitive grant scheme for West Africa

The YEN secretariat, in partnership with its donors, will be launching a youth employment competitive grant scheme in West Africa which is designed to provide grassroots NGOs with support in implementing and upscaling innovative projects in youth employment.

Applications will be chosen on the basis of innovation, growth potential, measurability (M&E framework) and sustainability. The grants will be distributed in four youth employment intervention areas:

- school-to-work transition
- youth entrepreneurship
- skills training
- business linkages

Business partners will be actively recruited to provide matching contributions to the grant scheme so as to maximize the available resources for distribution.



Annex 1. Comparative Characteristics of sectors involved in youth employment

Sector	Responsibilities	Competencies	Deficiencies
Private	1. Creating value for shareholders 2. Providing goods and services to clients 3. Abiding by national legislation and corporate regulations	1. Management, technical, financial skills 2. Provides access to financial and human capital 3. Generates employment opportunities and income 4. Provides opportunities for economic growth through investment	1. The community benefits only in the area of core business 2. Business has no connection with the community in which it operates 3. Initiative driven by profit
Government	1. Maintaining macro-economic stability 2. Upholding legal and regulatory framework 3. Providing public services and infrastructure to ensure respect for basic needs and rights 4. Adhering to international commitments and agreements	1. Representative of the “public good” 2. Ability to create political will behind an initiative 3. Adopts national policy agenda 4. Access to extensive financial and human resources 5. Expertise, knowledge creation	1. Rapidly changing political environment 2. Red tape, slow bureaucratic processes 3. Lack of innovation and creativity 4. Initiative driven by politics 5. Unwillingness to limit involvement to setting policy framework
Multilateral institutions	1. Upholding multilateral commitments 2. Setting global norms and standards 3. Contributing to global security and human development 4. Assisting and supporting member country's development challenges	1. Wide ranging political, economic and social legitimacy 2. Access to global networks 3. Development expertise 4. Political and financial muscle	1. Differing institutional priorities makes consensus difficult 2. Available resources too thinly spread 3. Lack of management structure/competencies 4. Slow bureaucratic processes
Civil society	1. Providing support and services for the poor and disadvantaged 2. Acting as guardians of the public good	1. Knowledge of local communities 2. Legitimacy given by local population 3. Experience in development issues 4. Generation of independent and unbiased information 5. Commitment to mission	1. Lack of resources 2. Unstructured, minimal management skills 3. Tendency to act outside central mission

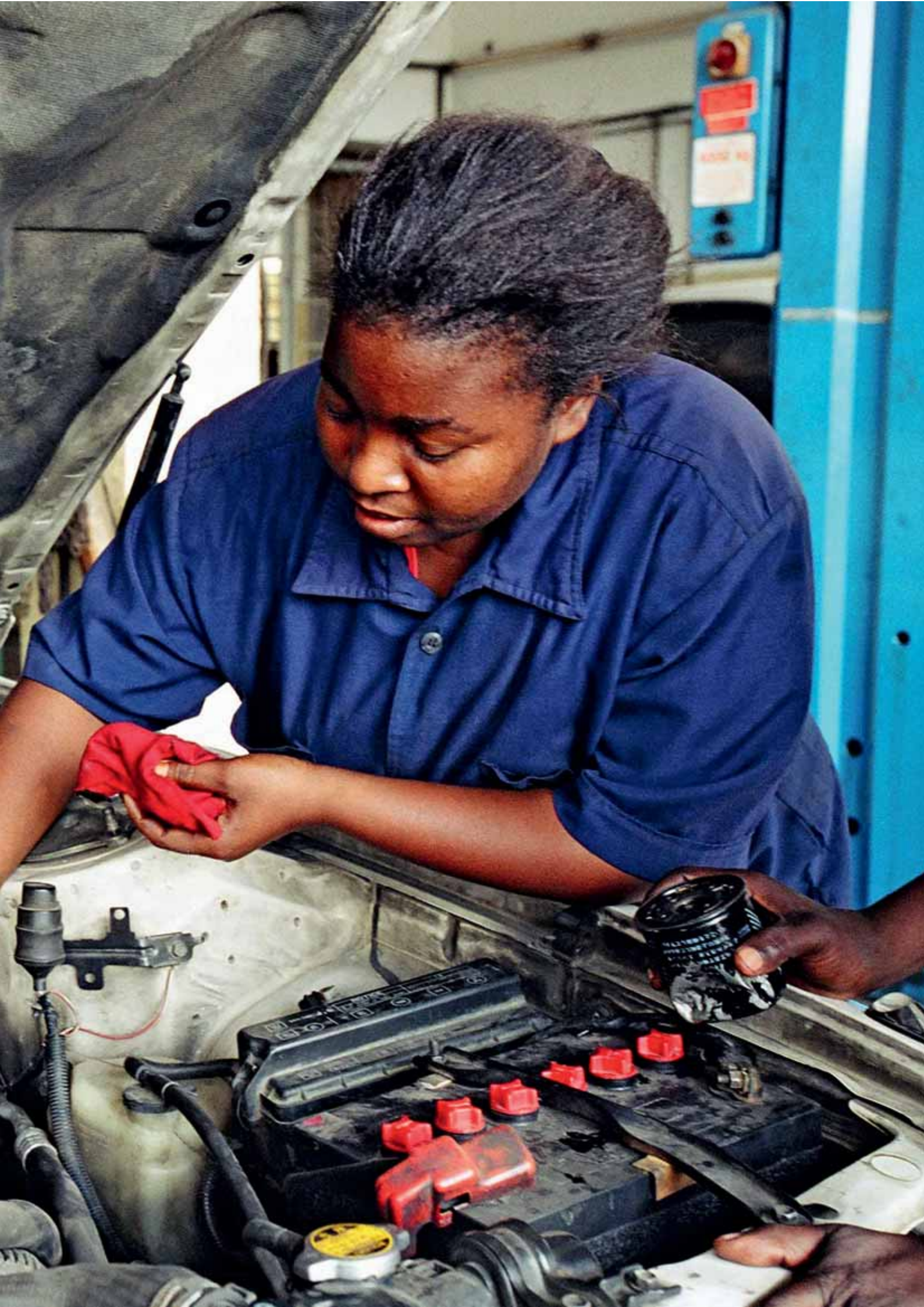
Footnotes

- ¹ Naryan, D. 2000. Voices of the poor. A World Bank research initiative chronicling the struggles and aspirations of 60,000 of the world's poor.
- ² Statistics suggest that 93 per cent of new jobs created in Africa during the 1990s were in the informal sector. Chen, M.A., Jhabvala, R. and F. Lund. 2002. "Supporting workers in the informal economy: A policy framework", ILO Employment Sector Working Paper on the Informal Economy, No. 2002/2.
- ³ Unless otherwise indicated, all statistical evidence in this report uses the United Nations definition of youth (15-24). This may not reflect national or subregional definitions in some countries, where the upper limit may be as high as 35 years of age.
- ⁴ UNIDO, YEN, UNOWA. Productive and decent work for youth in the Mano River Union: Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and in Côte d'Ivoire.
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- ⁸ UNCTAD. 2006. World Investment Report 2006. FDI from developing and transition economies: Implications for development, p. xviii. United Nations (New York and Geneva), p. xviii.
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- ¹⁰ World Bank Country Economic Memorandum. 2007. Senegal. Looking for work – The road to prosperity. [Http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTSENEGAL/Resources/CEM_English.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTSENEGAL/Resources/CEM_English.pdf)
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- ¹² AfricaRecruit is a joint initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the Commonwealth Business Council which has been promoting human resource development in Africa continent and mobilizing skills and human resource capacity in and outside the continent since 2002.

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- ²¹ ILO. 2006. Stimulating youth entrepreneurship: Barriers and incentives to enterprise start-ups by young people. SEED Working Paper No. 76.
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- ²⁶ UNIDO, YEN-WA, YEN. Op cit.
- ²⁷ The Harkin-Engel Protocol introduced by Senator Tom Harkin and Representative Eilott Engel brings together the European, United States and United Kingdom cocoa industries, West African governments, organized labour, non-governmental organizations, farmer groups and experts in a concerted effort to eliminate the worst forms of child labour and adult forced labour from the growing, processing and supply chain of cocoa production in West Africa.
- ²⁸ APEJ defines youth as people between 15 and 24 years of age.









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