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# THE G20 INITIATIVE FOR RURAL YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

A BETTER FUTURE FOR RURAL YOUTH

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# The G20 Initiative for Rural Youth Employment

A better future for rural youth

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# Abstract

This paper is an attempt to assess outcomes and experiences of projects and programmes financed or implemented by G20 countries and a select number of international organisations (IOs) following the G20 collective Initiative for Rural Youth Employment (RYE), launched in 2017. This initiative, aimed at addressing the need for creating employment for rural youth, was the first time the G20 committed to specific quantitative and time-bound targets. The assessment finds that G20 members made considerable investments towards RYE. Over USD 20 billion was spent on and committed to 671 projects in Africa between 2017 and 2022. The most common types of interventions were those focused on agriculture value chain development, skills training, and the promotion of entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized businesses.

The targets set in the G20 Initiative for RYE of providing employment-related skills to 5 million youth and creating 1.1 million jobs by 2022 were overachieved. The findings are based on responses from some G20 members and IOs to an OECD questionnaire, an analysis of selected flagship programmes and a literature review of programme evaluations, complemented by OECD official development assistance statistics. From the comprehensive analysis, a range of conclusions can be drawn on conceptual issues, future G20 initiatives, the co-ordination and collaboration among donors and IO as well as recommendations for more impactful programming to tackle the very relevant and urgent rural youth employment challenge.

# Résumé

Ce papier tente d'évaluer les résultats et les expériences de projets et de programmes financés ou mis en œuvre par les pays du G20 et une sélection d'organisations internationales (OI) à la suite de l'initiative collective du G20 pour l'emploi des jeunes en milieu rural (EMJR) lancée en 2017. Cette initiative avait pour but de répondre au besoin de création d'emplois pour les jeunes en milieu rural, appelant pour la première fois le G20 à s'engager sur des objectifs quantitatifs et limités dans le temps. L'évaluation révèle que les membres du G20 ont réalisé des investissements considérables pour l'EMJR. Plus de 20 milliards de dollars ont financé 671 projets en Afrique entre 2017 et 2022. Les interventions les plus courantes portaient sur le développement de la chaîne de valeur agricole, le développement de compétences et la promotion de l'entrepreneuriat et des petites et moyennes entreprises.

L'initiative du G20 pour l'EMJR avait comme objectif de fournir des compétences liées à l'emploi à 5 millions de jeunes et de créer 1.1 million d'emplois à l'horizon 2022, objectif qui a été dépassé. Les résultats sont basés sur les réponses de certains membres du G20 et des OI à un questionnaire de l'OCDE, sur l'analyse de certains programmes phares, sur la revue d'évaluations de programmes ainsi que sur les statistiques de l'aide publique au développement de l'OCDE. Cet exercice a permis de tirer une série de conclusions sur des questions conceptuelles, les futures initiatives du G20, la coordination et la collaboration entre les donateurs et les OI, ainsi que des recommandations pour des programmes plus efficaces pour relever le défi très pertinent et urgent de l'emploi des jeunes en milieu rural.

# Foreword

Recognising that rural youth employment in developing countries is a key issue, the Group of Twenty (G20) launched an Initiative for Rural Youth Employment (RYE) in 2017 under Germany's G20 Presidency. The initiative aims to intensify efforts to promote rural youth employment. It supports the next generation in rural development, agriculture and food security in developing countries, particularly in Africa. The initiative is described in an annex document to the G20 Leaders' Hamburg Declaration and is a key element of the G20 Africa Partnership to renew efforts for sustainable economic development in the continent.

This paper was prepared by the OECD at the request of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) as a contribution to the G20 Development Working Group (DWG) accountability exercise. The paper presents an assessment of progress on the 2017 G20 Initiative for RYE. It reviews outcomes and experiences of G20-financed or -implemented projects and programmes in order to draw lessons for current and future G20 initiatives on RYE. The projects and programmes of selected key international organisations working on RYE are also included.

The paper attempts to take stock of and, where possible, to measure the G20's contributions towards RYE since the launch of the initiative, with a particular focus on Africa. It looks specifically at progress made towards two of the initiative's six action areas: "Promoting a skills revolution" and "Increasing responsible investment and financing for rural youth employment". These action areas mention specific targets, respectively:

- to increase support to providing innovative, employment-oriented skills development projects for at least 5 million young people over the next five years, with particular attention to rural young women and men in Africa
- to contribute to creating approximately 1.1 million new jobs benefiting young people, including in rural Africa by 2022, through an array of actions, such as supporting the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) and stimulating job creation by other means and mechanisms.

The analysis shows that the G20 Initiative on RYE's goals were overachieved; however, even more can and should be done. Africa is the continent with the youngest population in the world. By 2030, 440 million African youth will have entered the labour market. Youth employment and particularly rural youth employment will remain a key challenge in the years to come. Innovative solutions will be needed to create wage jobs in rural areas, upskill and re-skill young people to better satisfy their aspirations and stimulate local economies to unleash entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises. The findings from this review will hopefully help guide future G20 initiatives, channel further resources towards RYE issues and improve RYE programme designs to ensure impact and sustainability.

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# Abbreviations and acronyms

<b>AfDB</b>	African Development Bank
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>BMZ</b>	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany
<b>CDSS</b>	Community day secondary school
<b>CRS</b>	Creditor Reporting System (OECD)
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
<b>DWG</b>	Development Working Group
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>G20</b>	Group of Twenty
<b>GAFFSP</b>	Global Agriculture and Food Security Program
<b>GIZ</b>	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH (German Agency for International Cooperation)
<b>ICA</b>	Integrated Country Approach
<b>IFAD</b>	International Fund for Agricultural Development
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IO</b>	International organisation
<b>MSMEs</b>	Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises
<b>NEET</b>	Not in employment, education or training
<b>ODA</b>	Official development assistance
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PEP</b>	Public employment programme
<b>PWP</b>	Public works programme
<b>RYE</b>	Rural youth employment
<b>SIGI</b>	Social Institutions and Gender Index
<b>SME</b>	Small and medium-sized enterprise
<b>TVET</b>	Technical and vocational education and training
<b>UN</b>	United Nations

# Executive summary

Rural youth currently face limited decent employment opportunities. This impacts socio-economic stability and resilience, contributing to food insecurity, malnutrition, rural underdevelopment, inequalities, poverty, rapid urbanisation and migration. In 2022, youth aged 15-24 accounted for 1.2 billion people, or 15.5% of the global population (UN DESA, 2022<sup>[1]</sup>). Many of these young people, especially those in low- and middle-income countries, live in rural areas. Between 2015 and 2030, 440 million youth in Africa will enter the labour market (Pesche, Losch and Imbernon, 2016<sup>[2]</sup>), and many of them will live in rural areas or intermediary cities.

This paper focuses on the Group of Twenty (G20)<sup>1</sup> initiative launched in 2017 to intensify efforts to promote employment for rural youth, notably in Africa. With the G20 Initiative for Rural Youth Employment (RYE), the G20 aims to chart a path forward in creating decent work and income-generating opportunities for the current and coming generations of young rural people, with an emphasis on women (G20, 2017<sup>[3]</sup>).

The initiative aims to promote rural employment for the next generation within six areas of action: i) aligning with international and developing countries' strategies and policies; ii) closing data and knowledge gaps; iii) promoting a skills revolution; iv) promoting rural youth employment in contexts of conflict, disaster, fragility and violence; v) improving equitable and sustainable access to land; and vi) increasing responsible investment and financing for rural youth employment.

The G20 Initiative for RYE sets quantitative and time-bound targets within two of the action areas:

- to increase support to providing innovative, employment-oriented skills development projects for at least 5 million young people over the next five years, with particular attention to rural young women and men in Africa (area iii)
- to contribute to creating approximately 1.1 million new jobs benefiting young people, including in rural Africa by 2022, through an array of actions, such as supporting the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program and stimulating job creation by other means and mechanisms (area vi).

This paper assesses the progress made from 2017 to 2022 on programmes targeting RYE, mainly in Africa, financed and/or implemented by G20 members and a select number of international organisations (IOs). These programmes seek to improve employability, promote job creation, facilitate opportunities for youth and support an enabling environment. The report also examines financing for employment programmes for rural youth in Africa. It presents key findings and recommendations.

The findings of this paper are largely based on programme information and data on G20 country spending and programme implementation collected by the OECD through a questionnaire and data on official development assistance (ODA) reported to the OECD Creditor Reporting System (CRS). Nine G20

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<sup>1</sup> G20 countries are: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, the People's Republic of China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Türkiye, United Kingdom, United States. The European Union is also a G20 member.

member countries and six international organisations responded to the questionnaire, and information was collected on 715 rural youth employment-related projects, of which 671 (94%) were specifically in Africa.

This report was prepared by the OECD at the request of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) as a contribution towards accountability for the G20 Initiative for RYE, which was launched under the German G20 Presidency. The report focuses mainly on assessing progress on the initiative's quantified targets and draws lessons for future G20 initiatives and RYE programming.

## Key findings

- G20 members and IOs overachieved their targets of supporting 5 million youth in developing employment-oriented skills and creating 1.1 million new jobs for youth. Between 2017 and 2022, over 6.38 million youth were trained on employability-related skills, and over 2.86 million jobs were created, i.e. targets were overachieved by 128% and 261%, respectively. Not all G20 member countries and IOs responded to the OECD questionnaire, and information on results was limited because many of the projects were still ongoing. The results on targets might have been even better with more replies and more complete information on programmes.
- The most common interventions in terms of number of RYE-related projects in Africa were on skills development, including technical and vocational education and training (TVET) (24%), agriculture value chain development (14%), and entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) promotion (11%). The distribution is similar for G20-financed projects, but for IO projects, agriculture and agriculture value chain development take up the lion's share (46%) of their RYE portfolio.
- Overall, funding topped USD 20.2 billion for RYE projects in Africa (USD 26.1 billion for all regions combined) over 2017-22, according to figures reported by the G20 members and IOs. Agriculture value chain development, skills development, and entrepreneurship and SME promotion made up about 45% (USD 9 billion) of the total budget on RYE for Africa. The budget committed by G20 members (USD 10.4 billion), on the one hand, and IOs (USD 9.6 billion), on the other, were comparable in size, but their spending priorities varied. G20 members made significant investments in TVET and skills development, while IOs focused on agriculture value chains. A small but significant portion of the expenditures went towards programmes promoting digital skills development and climate-smart agriculture/green jobs.

## Key recommendations

### *For future G20 initiatives*

- **Reach for more ambitious, measurable targets.** Considering that, on average, every year about 30 million African youth will enter the labour market and that the G20 Initiative for RYE targets were overachieved, future multilateral initiatives could set more ambitious objectives, both quantitative and qualitative.
- **Develop a common monitoring and evaluation framework for G20 commitments and initiatives.** For future initiatives, a common framework could be put in place to promote alignment in the efforts of G20 members and IOs working towards initiative goals. This overarching framework could include basic definitions of key concepts, types of employment to promote or create, and indicators to measure employment creation and employability.
- **Provide clear guidelines to G20 members on how programmes can be attributed to a G20 initiative.** A standardised reporting mechanism for an initiative would help monitor contributions

by respective members and facilitate inputs to the G20 Development Working Group (DWG) Accountability Reports. In the absence of a monitoring framework, financial commitment targets might be more appropriate and easier to trace within a G20 initiative context.

### ***For development agencies and multilateral organisations***

- **Ensure coherence between ongoing large-scale initiatives.** Synergies could be developed between G20 initiatives like the RYE and new or ongoing regional and international organisations' campaigns and programmes for youth employment. This would help channel resources and support donor co-ordination towards a common goal. The inclusion of relevant multilateral institutions in DWG discussions would help in the design of future G20 initiatives in line with existing efforts.
- **Support G20 in setting common indicators to monitor progress on RYE.** Youth employment and employability can be measured in many ways. The age bracket of what is considered youth is also wide-ranging between international and national definitions. Proposing a set of basic definitions and indicators to allow rapid monitoring of large-scale initiatives such as those launched by the G20 would facilitate reporting on progress and ensuring a common understanding of expected youth employment outcomes.
- **Design multi-sectoral programmes by considering both the labour demand and supply sides.** RYE programmes which focus on skills development or entrepreneurship should be based on more market research or dialogue with the private sector to understand labour market trends and skill needs. Engaging private sector actors in the design of projects and programmes will likely have greater impact in terms of wage job creation and skills matching. As agreed and promoted by the G20 initiatives on territorial development, a place-based approach that links relevant policy domains and actors, including across levels of government, and strengthens rural-urban linkages is likely to be more impactful.

### ***For governments and the private sector***

- **Offer on-the-job training and wage subsidy programmes.** Despite the large qualification mismatch and the need for skilled labour, only a small number of enterprises offer training opportunities to young workers. On-the-job skills training can be very useful in improving the employability and productivity of young people experiencing difficulties in finding a job. Governments can support these initiatives by providing wage subsidies to encourage new hires and reduce the cost and risks to employers.
- **Facilitate multi-stakeholder national policy dialogues to smooth school-to-work transitions.** National strategies should make efforts to direct investments towards sectors with a high job creation potential. This requires regular dialogue with the educators and private sector actors, both large and small firms. While the private sector should inform labour and skills needs, the education system and TVET must ensure up-to-date training for these positions to facilitate their emergence.
- **Set up national qualification frameworks and certification schemes.** Transitioning between education levels and the labour market can be facilitated by well-functioning qualification frameworks. Qualification frameworks increase transparency across education systems and make the value of different qualifications clear to students, employers and other stakeholders.
- **Implement a national youth policy.** Despite nearly two out of three countries in the world having a national youth policy, the gap between youth aspirations and the reality of the labour market continues to widen. Greater policy coherence, adequate funding and stronger institutional capacity are needed for dedicated ministries to turn national youth policies or strategies into an effective driver of youth well-being and decent employment across all areas of governmental action.

Strengthening implementation capacities at the local level, notably in small and medium-sized agglomerations, is critical.

### ***For RYE programming***

- **Ensure better donor co-ordination and organisation of resources to meet common RYE targets.** RYE projects require a multi-sectoral approach (promoting job creation, improving employability, facilitating employment, enabling the environment) to be effective and sustainable. RYE projects will be limited in their impact if national governments are not deliberately co-ordinating ODA and other donor-funded programmes around a coherent rural youth employment strategy. Strategic donor co-ordination at the national level will help the extensive network of development practitioners move in alignment with one another.
- **Inform youth about pathways to formalisation.** Wage employment opportunities can remain limited in many countries, despite the best programme interventions. Rural African youth are very likely to venture into self-employment, with a high probability that they will be operating informally. While formalisation will take time, especially in the agriculture sector, RYE programmes should provide information about social protection for informal workers as well as pathways to formalisation. This could already help change the negative perception, among youth, associated with farming and jobs in agriculture.
- **Endeavour to narrow the gender gap in rural employment.** Progress on gender equality is needed to change the employment environment for young rural women. While many programmes have placed gender equality at the core of their approach, more should be done to tackle the societal norms that limit women to certain occupations or that relegate them to unpaid care work outside the recognised labour force.
- **Invest in rural development at large.** Rural development is fundamental to improving the employment situation of young people in rural areas. Growing populations, urbanisation and rising working-class incomes are driving demand for more diverse and higher value-added agricultural and food products in Africa. Investment to adapt agriculture and agri-food value chains to this demand, therefore, may yield job creation in rural areas. If local food systems are adapted to meet the challenge of supporting a higher and changing domestic demand for food, they could not only boost job creation in rural areas but also promote greater prosperity.
- **Include young people in the transformation of food systems.** To achieve food and nutrition security, fairness, the eradication of poverty and ecological sustainability, food systems must be transformed. The transformation must involve young people, particularly in emerging nations where agricultural food systems are the major source of employment, as called for during the 2021 United Nations (UN) Food Systems Summit.
- **Diversify job opportunities for youth in rural areas.** Rural areas can vary enormously, and there can be just as much potential for rural areas outside of agriculture. Unlocking the growth potential of rural areas will require developing the physical, social and economic infrastructure linking rural areas to higher-density areas. A place-based and people-centred rural development approach will enhance communities' competitive advantages through integrated investments and appropriate local services and will encourage local participation and bottom-up development.
- **Collect evidence and build upon existing international policy dialogue and processes.** A plethora of multi-stakeholder groups have formed to align areas of action and to share experiences and best practices in tackling RYE and decent work. The Decent Work for Equitable Food Systems Coalition, the UN's Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions, and the Thematic Working Group on RYE of the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development are just some examples of platforms that can provide an open space for dialogue and align donors, international organisations, youth organisations and civil society on RYE actions.

# 1. The G20 Initiative for Rural Youth Employment (2017)

In 2017, the Group of Twenty (G20) launched an [Initiative for Rural Youth Employment](#) (RYE) to intensify efforts to promote rural employment for youth in developing countries (G20, 2017<sup>[3]</sup>). The initiative supports the next generation in rural development, agriculture and food security in developing countries, focusing on Africa. It attempts to chart a path forward in creating decent work and income-generating opportunities for the current and coming generations of young rural people, with an emphasis on women and other marginalised groups.

Rural youth currently face limited decent employment opportunities. This impacts socio-economic stability and resilience, contributing to food insecurity, malnutrition, rural underdevelopment, inequalities, poverty, rapid urbanisation and migration. In 2022, youth (15-24 years old) accounted for 1.2 billion people, or 15.5% of the global population (UN DESA, 2022<sup>[1]</sup>). Many of these youths live in rural areas, especially in low- and middle-income countries. Between 2015 and 2030, 440 million African youth will enter the labour market (Pesche, Losch and Imbernon, 2016<sup>[2]</sup>). Many African youth will continue to live outside large urban areas. Although 50% of Africans are expected to become urban dwellers by the mid-2030s, the rural population will continue to grow at a rate of more than 1% per annum beyond 2045 (AfDB/OECD/UNDP, 2014<sup>[4]</sup>).

The G20 Initiative for RYE places great emphasis on women. Young women and other marginalised groups in rural areas face intersectional forms of discrimination that continue to disadvantage them socially and economically (G20, 2017<sup>[3]</sup>). They face obstacles in exercising their voice and agency and in participating in planning and decision-making. Women in rural areas generally face more challenges than urban women, as rural areas typically dispose of comparatively disadvantaged living conditions. This results in unequal opportunities for women to participate in social, economic and political life. The G20 Initiative emphasises the need for gender-sensitive rural youth employment measures.

A major challenge moving forward is the prevalence of informal employment in agriculture. Informal employment represents 70% of total employment in developing countries and is largely the norm in the agriculture sector. In Africa, informal employment is the prevailing form of work, making up 85.8% of African workers and 88% of African youth (aged 15-24), according to the OECD Key Indicators of Informality based on Individuals and their Household (KIbIH) database (OECD, 2021<sup>[5]</sup>). Rural economies depend heavily on the activities of smallholder farmers, family farmers and rural wage workers. Yet most of these farmers and agricultural workers work under informal conditions, without access to social protection and health insurance. They face arduous work conditions and an irregular income schedule due to the seasonal nature of the sector and have little overall job security, leaving them extremely vulnerable to economic and health shocks. Securing access to markets, services, skills development for employment, social protection and decent employment will be necessary to help formalise the rural agriculture sector and provide decent work opportunities to rural youth.

Additionally, an unpredictable investment climate and deficits in quality infrastructure in rural areas constrain the potential growth of the farm and rural non-farm economies. Political and macroeconomic stability, as well as local and cross-border trade facilitation, are essential points of focus (G20, 2017<sup>[3]</sup>).



When combined with investments in public goods and services, a predictable investment climate can create an enabling environment for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to grow. Infrastructure, transport, storage, access to affordable energy and water, and Internet connectivity are necessary to bridge the rural-urban divide and contribute towards this enabling environment.

Developing agriculture value chains and shifting to the production of higher-value agricultural products can provide important opportunities for value addition and job creation (G20, 2017<sup>[3]</sup>). In this, the needs and demands of smallholders, family farmers and rural wage workers must be taken into account. Improving access to markets, education and technology along inclusive value chains is key to developing the agriculture value chain in rural areas and will hopefully lead to more decent work opportunities for youth. Considering that rural youth often migrate to urban centres to find work outside of agriculture, creating more of these non-farm job opportunities along the agriculture value chain in secondary cities and towns can also have greater effects on the reduction of inequality and poverty.

Young women are worse off than young men, exhibiting a much lower employment-to-population ratio. In 2022, 27.4% of young women globally are projected to be in employment, compared to 40.3% of young men. This means that young women are almost 1.5 times less likely than young men to be employed. The gender gap, which has shown little sign of closing over the past two decades, is largest in lower-middle-income countries, at 17.3 percentage points, and smallest in high-income countries, at 2.3 percentage points.

In view of these challenges, the G20 Initiative for RYE aims to promote rural employment for the next generation within six areas of action:

- i) aligning with international and developing countries' strategies and policies
- ii) closing data and knowledge gaps
- iii) promoting a skills revolution
- iv) promoting rural youth employment in contexts of conflict, disaster, fragility and violence
- v) improving equitable and sustainable access to land
- vi) increasing responsible investment and financing for rural youth employment.

This initiative is the first by the G20 to set quantitative and time-bound targets. The two main quantified targets fall within action areas iii and vi, respectively:

- to increase support to providing innovative, employment-oriented skills development projects for at least **5 million young people** over the next five years, with particular attention to rural young women and men in Africa
- to contribute to creating approximately **1.1 million new jobs** benefiting young people, including in rural Africa, by 2022, through an array of possible actions, such as supporting the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP) and stimulating job creation by other means and mechanisms.

The G20 Initiative for RYE remains today as relevant as it was five years ago when it was launched. The International Labour Organization (ILO)'s *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022* report finds that COVID-19 has exacerbated the numerous labour market challenges facing youth, who have experienced a much higher percentage loss in employment than adults since early 2020. While there was a slight improvement globally in 2022 compared to 2021, with 2 million fewer unemployed youth, it is still 6 million above the pre-pandemic level of 2019 (ILO, 2022<sup>[6]</sup>). The share of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) has also increased by 23.3% during the pandemic, from 2019 to 2020 (ILO, 2022<sup>[6]</sup>). This group of youth are particularly at risk of becoming discouraged and completely losing labour market opportunities in the long run.

This paper aims to assess the progress made over 2017-22 on the G20 Initiative for RYE. The paper has three main sections. Chapter 2 will discuss pressing issues for rural youth and highlight the G20 flagship programmes that have been implemented to overcome such challenges. Chapter 3 will detail the financial



commitments made by the G20 and international organisations on financing rural youth employment initiatives. Chapter 4 will present lessons learned and recommendations on the initiative.

## Methodology

To assess the financial flows provided through different programmes and projects for RYE in developing countries, the OECD carried out two analyses. The first one looks at the official development assistance (ODA) flows from G20 countries towards agriculture and rural development projects likely to have strong relevance for RYE in Africa. The data are from the OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS) Aid Activity database, to which 12 G20 countries report. It is therefore important to highlight that this does not portray the full spectrum of financial or technical support that G20 countries provided in the area of RYE in Africa. On the other hand, the information gives an idea of the magnitude and trends of ODA towards RYE-relevant projects and complements the information from the OECD questionnaire.

The second assessment is done using responses to a questionnaire that was sent to G20 members and a select number of international organisations (IOs) working on RYE. Nine G20 members – Canada, European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Korea, Türkiye, United Kingdom and United States – responded to the questionnaire, as did six international organisations – the African Development Bank (AfDB), the African Union (AU), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), GAFSP, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

The respondents were asked to provide a list of projects and programmes with an impact on rural youth employment in developing countries, directly or indirectly, for the 2017-22 period. Information on budget, funding source, regional scope, targeted population and results (in terms of employment created or employability) was requested. Of the nine G20 members that responded to the questionnaire, all but Türkiye provided data on programme budgets. As for project results, however, the questionnaire gathered very little comparable data, due to the ongoing status of many projects and a lack of reporting and evaluation of other projects.

In the absence of internationally agreed indicators on youth employment, the questionnaire was designed to allow the respondents to specify the notions of youth, rural areas, employability and employment used in their respective projects and programmes. This approach allowed for capturing a wide number of projects whose overall aim is to improve the well-being of rural youth in developing countries, the objective of the G20 Initiative for RYE.

The list of African countries covered by these programmes and projects is: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The data from all questionnaires were merged into a database and cleaned by: filtering projects to avoid double entries; converting the budget currency to US dollars; and sorting by regional scope. Most G20 projects reported in the questionnaire were focused on Africa, while international organisations included some projects from other regions.

The projects implemented by international organisations (IOs) are often conducted as a joint effort with G20 members and funded by them. The percentage of G20 funding for these projects could not be measured due to incomplete responses to the questionnaire. Incomplete data also made it impossible to report on the total financing effort of the G20. However, we were able to deduce the scale of financing and the project area trends.

At the end of the data collection phase, 715 projects were analysed – 557 funded directly by the G20 and 158 funded by IOs. Out of these, 671 projects were dedicated to Africa. The total budget for these 715 projects is estimated at USD 26.1 billion, including USD 10.6 billion funded directly by G20 members and USD 15.5 billion funded by IOs. Of the total USD 26.1 billion, USD 20.2 billion was spent on projects and programmes in Africa (see Chapter 3 for a complete analysis of results).

The analysis presented in this paper uses the programme results collected by the OECD questionnaire data, coupled with a manual search for the projects with the most significant budgets. It should be stressed, as noted above, that many projects covered in this paper were still in the implementation stage and that, therefore, no (complete) data had yet been collected on their results (job creation or employability).

## 2. Programmes targeting rural youth employment in Africa (2017-22)

Youth in Africa, especially rural youth, face limited decent employment opportunities. This situation impacts socio-economic stability and resilience. Rural labour markets in Africa do not currently offer enough decent jobs for youth, especially given a major increase in the working-age population due to the continent's demographic transition. It has been estimated that only 28% of Africa's labour force is in wage employment, with those jobs primarily concentrated in urban areas. Wage work constitutes a relatively minor share of youth employment. The majority of youth in developing countries are in informal self-employed work, without any social protection or capital and with high exposure to risk and vulnerability.

Enhancing youth employability is crucial to addressing rural youth employment challenges. Many education systems struggle to equip young people with the skills required by employers. Additionally, many of the advances made in recent years to increase chances for young people have been set back by the measures implemented to contain the COVID-19 pandemic and the worldwide recession that followed (ILO, 2020<sup>[7]</sup>). Employability can be developed through schooling, apprenticeship, retraining, and access to information on job opportunities and mentorship. Preparing youth for employment begins long before the school-to-work transition. While fostering relevant job skills may begin in classrooms, it can be bolstered through training programmes that supplement or complement formal education.

Job creation is essential to ensuring that employable youth can engage in productive work and bring their talents to the market. Job creation can be initiated by youth themselves, as entrepreneurs or own-account workers, or by enterprises and government action to expand the number of available roles. Entrepreneurship can be a difficult road for youth. Some challenges are the same as those faced by youth seeking wage employment (lack of relevant skills, experience or socio-professional support), while others are unique to entrepreneurship (lack of access to credit, lack of business networks, etc.).

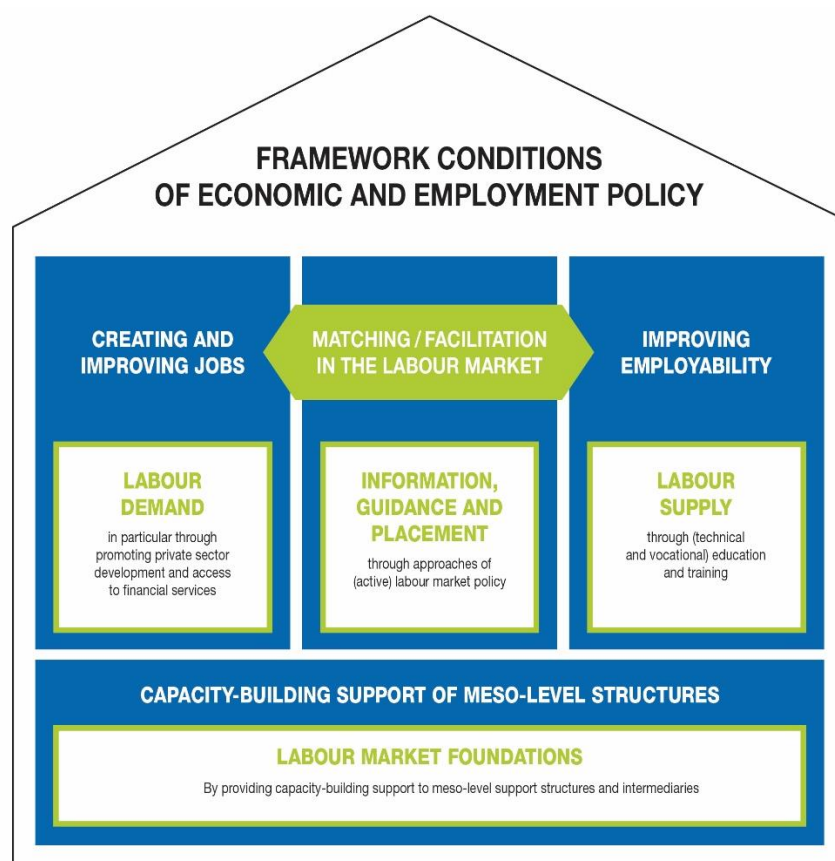
Facilitating opportunities for youth to be matched to prospective jobs is key. This part of solving the rural youth employment puzzle is sometimes overlooked. Job opportunities for youth can be facilitated by setting active labour-market policies that can affect the hiring environment or by dedicating resources to job placement services, information systems and career advice for youth.

Youth employment programmes cannot succeed without an enabling environment. Legal frameworks, policies and programmes to support active youth participation in political and social life are prerequisites for youth empowerment, sense of agency and self-development. These characteristics have an impact on youth aspirations and their employability in the labour market.

This chapter discusses the types of programmes that have been financed by the Group of Twenty (G20) members to help rural youth overcome employment barriers. It borrows from the integrated approach by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) for employment promotion as an umbrella framework and discusses the programmes implemented by the G20 and partner agencies within four fundamental groups of interventions: i) improving employability; ii) promoting job creation; iii) facilitating job opportunities for youth; and iv) creating an enabling environment for youth employment (Figure 1). The chapter describes the diverse challenges for rural youth employment by reviewing both major obstacles for youth and programmes that have been launched to respond to these challenges. It

highlights examples of projects and programmes implemented and/or financed by the G20 and international organisations that may serve as practice models. Such programmes are aimed at supporting rural youth employment directly; some may also have larger rural development goals. Programmes implemented by international organisations with a mandate for rural development and youth employment are included here. These organisations include the African Development Bank (AfDB), the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

**Figure 1. Dimensions of the integrated approach to employment promotion**



*Note:* Within the integrated approach to employment promotion, meso-level structures are structures and intermediaries that support and empower rural youth, e.g. membership-based organisations, youth associations, incubators, vocational training centres, etc.

*Source:* Adapted from GIZ (2020<sup>[8]</sup>), *What Works in Rural Youth Employment Promotion? Good Practices and Lessons from GIZ Programmes on Rural Youth Employment*.

### Improving employability (labour supply)

Preparing people for employment begins long before the school-to-work transition phase and is a lifelong endeavour. Employability mainly concerns the acquisition of the skills and abilities that allow one to be employed (preparation for the labour market). While fostering relevant job skills begins early in life in classrooms, it can be bolstered through training programmes that supplement or complement formal education (OECD, 2022<sup>[9]</sup>). Employability can be enhanced through schooling, apprenticeships, retraining, and access to information on job opportunities and mentorship (OECD, 2022<sup>[9]</sup>).

Schooling provides a foundation of basic knowledge and skills that are useful to youth as they develop and also to their employers later in life. School enrolment and retention programmes are of paramount importance in building this foundation for youth. Literacy and numeracy are examples of skills that can be picked up in schools, boosting employability for youth and contributing to their survival skills (Lane and Conlon, 2016<sup>[10]</sup>). Great strides have been made in terms of primary and secondary school completion globally, with improvement on average for all major groups as defined by sex, location and wealth (UNESCO, 2020<sup>[11]</sup>). However, the improvement has been marginally faster relative to the average for children living in rural areas as well as the poorest (UNESCO, 2020<sup>[11]</sup>).

The G20 Initiative for Rural Youth Employment (RYE) acknowledges the importance of business, technical and life skills for personal development in driving a skills revolution for rural youth employability. Once youth are ready to enter the labour market, apprenticeships and other work-based learning schemes are an important avenue for gaining skills while integrating a work environment (Kuczera and Field, 2018<sup>[12]</sup>), as well as continuing skills development, including soft skills, after youth enter the labour market. Soft skills are essential to allow them to easily adapt to the workforce as well as succeed in all domains of life (Ignatowski, 2018<sup>[13]</sup>). Most programmes that provide employability training once schooling is completed and outside of the job are technical and vocational education and training (TVET) or formal public technical vocational education. Youth can also benefit from reskilling and upskilling programmes as new types of jobs emerge (AUC/OECD, 2021<sup>[14]</sup>). For example, it is increasingly necessary for youth to develop digital literacy and skills, especially in rural parts of Africa, where it has been difficult to enhance basic employability (OECD, 2020<sup>[15]</sup>).

The challenges young women face in improving their employability require special attention. Depending on the region, traditional gender roles may limit the opportunities for young women to access education, skills training and jobs. Some young women undergo forced child marriage and are relegated to the domestic sphere, limiting their options for job market entry and employment (OECD, 2021<sup>[16]</sup>). The adolescent birth rate is estimated globally at 44 births per 1 000 girls aged 15 to 19 in 2015-20, an improvement from 53 in 2000-05. However, the rate is high at 115 in western and central Africa and can reach 229 in the Central African Republic. These girls' chance of completing their education is compromised, and many governments do not make many efforts to have them return to school (UNESCO, 2020<sup>[11]</sup>). Furthermore, often jobs available to these women do not pay well, making it particularly difficult to make a decent living. According to FAO, women working in agriculture and food systems gain 18.4% less than men (FAO, 2023<sup>[17]</sup>). This section of the report will include initiatives undertaken to improve women's employability.

Mentoring and other programmes designed to support youth in their pursuit of employment can also make a crucial difference, particularly in gaining the soft skills needed to become successful entrepreneurs or self-employed. Social capital and expertise transmitted to youth from mentors can boost their chances of successfully finding and keeping gainful employment.

## **Schooling**

Building youth employability starts with basic schooling. Elementary through secondary schooling provides an important foundation for skills acquisition and for independent and critical thinking later in life. Literacy, numeracy, problem-solving, and social and emotional tools are among the necessary skills honed in a classroom setting. These are also the building blocks of every worker's employability. Without the ability to read or write, youth entering the labour market will be relegated to jobs that are low in productivity and will experience difficulty in advancing in their chosen career paths. Research shows that such skills are built progressively, with the first foundations acquired in early education. In this context, school enrolment and retention initiatives are important for the foundation of youth skills acquisition and employability.

Rural youth, in particular young girls, are less likely than urban children to be in school. According to the World Bank, rural youth are more likely than urban youth to have never attended school or to have dropped

out (Inoue et al., 2015<sup>[18]</sup>). Expenses related to schooling can be high, and in rural parts of Africa, where families typically subsist on agricultural income, rural children are also more likely to work than urban children (Inoue et al., 2015<sup>[18]</sup>). A general lack of school facilities, roads and public transportation in rural areas creates additional barriers to school accessibility. Female students face further challenges, such as a lack of bathroom facilities separated by gender or access to menstruation products (OECD, 2019<sup>[19]</sup>). Some 335 million girls still attend primary and secondary schools that lack facilities essential for menstrual hygiene (UNESCO, 2020<sup>[11]</sup>). Programmes that work to render schools accessible to rural youth, and to girls in particular, include the SEED Malawi programme of the United States International Development Agency (USAID, n.d.<sup>[20]</sup>). The programme aims to build and finance community day secondary schools (CDSS) in Malawi to increase access for girls. The CDSS expansion is meant to increase the number of schools in urban and rural areas to address a critical shortage of teachers, seats and facilities needed to accommodate female students, such as latrines for women, and more.

Second-chance education programmes for youth and adults can help to bridge schooling gaps. People who never attended school or left without completing their compulsory schooling requirements can be helped by such programmes to acquire missing skills and knowledge that can make the difference in finding and keeping gainful work. School re-entry policies can create a facilitating environment for second-chance programmes to gain legitimacy and exposure. They can attract diverse groups of youth that may fall into “not in education, employment or training” (NEET) category or other unproductive sectors of the economy. In South Africa, for example, the Second Chance Programme aims to help youth and adults attain a secondary school certificate and thus facilitate (re-)entry into the labour market. In Malawi and Zambia, UN Women implemented a one-year pilot programme that aimed in part to help young women benefit from school re-entry policies and second-chance programmes (Makoka and Chilembo, 2021<sup>[21]</sup>). By bridging a crucial skills gap, such programmes can allow for greater labour-force participation by women and girls. Especially given the scale of estimated learning loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic, second-chance programmes could play an important role in complementing youth learning and skills building. Such programmes already enhance the employability of African youth by offering a lifeline to those who are struggling with labour-market integration.

The quality of skills conferred by schooling is limited by the quality of teachers and the curriculum. In many countries, school curricula have not been redesigned to equip youth with the tools they need to succeed. There is a mismatch between the skills conferred by educational and TVET programmes and the skills demanded by employers. Certain programmes work to improve the responsiveness of the skills system to the needs of the private sector, to strengthen institutional capacity and to deploy training programmes to reach beneficiaries. The ILO’s SKILL-UP Programme is one example (see below).

TVET allows youth who have not completed their education to develop employable skills. TVET programmes can provide an environment to develop the same essential skills that would be acquired in traditional classroom settings. However, there can be challenges in getting students enrolled. Some shun vocational education due to perceptions that TVET programmes are inferior to traditional schooling. Linkages will need to be created in education systems to allow students to receive the same quality of education along both tracks and to allow for student mobility as needed. As noted in the G20’s declaration on its RYE initiative, higher employability among TVET graduates can contribute to the attractiveness of TVET as a steppingstone to a viable career. Germany’s Agricultural Technical Vocational Education and Training for Women (ATVET4W) is an example of a programme that works not only to increase the quality of TVET on offer but also to increase women’s participation in TVET programmes (Box 1).

### Box 1. Germany's Agricultural TVET Programme for Women

The Agricultural Technical Vocational Education and Training for Women (ATVET4W) project is carried out by GIZ on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). It aims to improve employment prospects for women in agriculture through gender-transformative skills development. It does so by:

- increasing women's access to quality agricultural TVET offers
- advising training providers on the inclusion and development of gender-sensitive training and guidelines
- facilitating private-sector involvement in agricultural TVET delivery (e.g. partnerships for on-the-job training and internships)
- supporting women's entrepreneurship in agriculture through gender-transformative approaches (e.g. "Gender makes Business Sense" agribusiness training).

ATVET4W operates in six African countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi and Togo. As a component of the Skills Initiative for Africa, ATVET4W aims to increase women's access to quality TVET offers, including competency-based training along agriculture value chains. ATVET4W also addresses gender norms and stereotypes with the aim of dismantling structural inequalities for women in entrepreneurship and employment. Training offers like ATVET4W's "Gender makes Business Sense" equip entrepreneurs with practical business management skills, financial know-how and an understanding of the impact of gender dynamics in business. To date, more than 13 900 people have benefited from quality agricultural TVET offers under the programme; 22 partner institutions have introduced gender guidelines; and 17 of the institutions offer gender-sensitive training, laying the foundations for women's empowerment.

#### **Lessons learned**

In order to improve employment prospects for women, it is important to:

- integrate private enterprises into agricultural TVET delivery for better on-the-job training (e.g. through internship schemes)
- embed new skills development offers into national qualification frameworks for sustainability and ownership
- incorporate soft skills and entrepreneurship into agricultural TVET offers
- address gender norms and stereotypes (socio-cultural quadrant) and engage men and boys in gender activities (e.g. through advocacy and sensitisation)
- develop and invest in gender competence
- design activities with gender in mind from the start, instead of treating it as an add-on
- focus on high-quality gender analyses and baseline studies, ideally with a dedicated focus on gender-transformative approaches in the terms of reference
- develop both new activities with the beneficiaries and the necessary local expertise (e.g. through co-creation and design thinking)
- develop a clear gender strategy for projects with a focus on employment outcomes.

*Note:* More programme-specific information is available in Annex A.

*Source:* Adapted from BMZ (German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development) questionnaire response.

## ***Apprenticeship and TVET programmes***

Well-designed apprenticeships and TVET programmes can improve employability for youth with little to no work experience. Many countries do not have dual systems that mix theory and practice for TVET. This is apparent in the transition from education to employment, where a lack of practical experience presents a barrier. Apprenticeships and TVET programmes can facilitate the transition from school to work by providing an environment where skills can be acquired and carried along to subsequent employment opportunities (OECD/ILO, 2014<sup>[22]</sup>). The OECD has previously reported that quality apprenticeships are a key tool for easing the school-to-work transition for youth and a key policy tool for promoting better school-to-work transitions.

Apprenticeships and TVET programmes attract distinct groups of young learners. The World Bank and the French Development Agency (AFD) have found that apprenticeships in Africa are typically filled by youth with lower levels of education, while TVET programmes tend to be completed by those with higher levels of education. The findings were true of six African countries – Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Uganda; typically, apprentices only had primary school education or less, while TVET graduates had at least some secondary schooling (Filmer and Fox, 2014<sup>[23]</sup>). This may be due in part to the fact that TVET programmes can be prohibitively expensive. The entry costs for formal TVET programmes can be three to four times the cost of secondary education (in Ghana and Mozambique, respectively), creating higher barriers to entry for poor youth (Filmer and Fox, 2014<sup>[23]</sup>). Apprenticeships, especially informal apprenticeships, are relatively more available and affordable and are therefore more accessible. It has been estimated that 20% of African youth have completed a traditional apprenticeship, while fewer than 5% have attended a TVET programme (Filmer and Fox, 2014<sup>[23]</sup>).

Youth may have trouble valorising TVET and apprenticeships in their job search. Some low-skilled or low-wage jobs and poor-quality training programmes are falsely marketed as apprenticeships, creating quality concerns. The reputation and success rates of apprenticeships can be enhanced if they incorporate some elements of technical training. Quality apprenticeships are also dependent on the participation of the private sector. Nurturing public-private partnerships can improve the quality of the apprenticeships on offer, while the financing of training opportunities can help to improve access to training. For example, USAID's K-YES programme attempts to provide disenfranchised Kenyan youth (ages 18-35) with the skills, assets and support they need to compete and succeed in the workplace (Box 2).

Throughout Africa, TVET requires major structural reforms to address concerns over the cost-effectiveness of TVET. Africa needs to maintain its emphasis on a dual-approach, competence-based TVET system; to improve collaboration between the public and private sectors; and to establish training standards. Due to the poor quality of instruction and the disconnect between curricula and the demands of the labour market, African economies lack competent specialists graduating from TVET. Programmes are often costly compared to general secondary or even tertiary education, and they can become quickly outdated (USAID, 2019<sup>[24]</sup>). There should thus be closer collaboration between the public and commercial sectors. When new curricula are being created, the private sector should be actively consulted. For instance, the South African Department of Higher Education and Training aims to give South African vocational education and training greater practical relevance by adopting the German dual system. Its primary activities centre on: conceptual support for the establishment of a South African Institute for Vocational and Continuing Education and Training; initial and ongoing training of teachers at vocational schools and by in-company trainers; the creation of competency-based and need-based training standards; and increased collaboration with private-sector businesses and organisations.



## Box 2. USAID's Kenya Youth Employment and Skills programme

USAID's Kenya Youth Employment and Skills (K-YES) programme gives motivated but disenfranchised youth the skills and support they need to compete and succeed in gaining employment. The programme connects young Kenyans to youth-friendly services (e.g. labour-market information, financial institutions and 21<sup>st</sup>-century employability skills), allowing them to make informed and empowered decisions about their careers. With skills and vocational training designed in co-ordination with local industry, K-YES focuses on workforce training, emphasising job skills, financial services and employment outcomes.

The programme has three strategic objectives and one cross-cutting objective:

- accelerated vocational training transformation systems (strategic)
- increased enterprise development and access to finance (strategic)
- increased employment opportunities for youth in agribusiness (strategic)
- partnership and sustainability (cross-cutting).

### Results

Since 2015, the programme has:

- supported more than 50 000 youth in gaining new or better employment
- offered more than 300 000 youth access to financial services, market-relevant business skills, up-to-date labour-market information, and youth mentorship networks.
- established 122 new public-private partnerships in key sectors, increasing value for both youth employment outcomes and businesses
- established Youth Employment Compacts between the public and private sectors in nine counties to align skills training and workforce development with county-level economic growth strategies as part of Kenya's journey to self-reliance.

### Lessons learned

- K-YES's support model ensures that youth can access employment and financial services in their own villages. Business skills and work-readiness training and financial services are delivered through a cadre of community resource persons at the village level.
- To increase the options for youth who have growing businesses and greater needs for loans, the programme has connected youth to a network including banks, microfinance institutions, government and mobile operators. These partners have been sensitised to the needs and viability of youth as clients.

*Note:* More programme-specific information is available in Annex A.

*Source:* Adapted from USAID response to the questionnaire.

## Upskilling and reskilling

Maintaining youth employability requires efforts to stay on top of new and emerging skill sets. Young Africans often have skill sets that do not match their local labour markets. Surveys across 11 African countries highlight that nearly one in two young people feels that his or her skills are inappropriate for the local labour market, with 28% of youth feeling underqualified and 17% feeling overqualified (AUC/OECD, 2021<sup>[14]</sup>). On a broader scale, the World Economic Forum (WEF) found in 2018 that 54% of current employees would require at least some reskilling or upskilling by 2022 (WEF, 2018<sup>[25]</sup>). And with a Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) transforming the present and future of the workplace, digital literacy and related

skills are likely to be prerequisites for a range of jobs in the years to come. The International Finance Corporation (IFC) estimates, for example, that nearly 230 million jobs in Africa will require digital skills by 2030 (IFC, 2019<sup>[26]</sup>). Yet, in 2012, only 28% of Africans were able to access and use the Internet (Duarte, 2021<sup>[27]</sup>). Furthermore, due to the structure of the labour market in many African countries, most rural youth are obliged to take up low-skilled and low-productivity informal employment. Despite these challenges, African youth of today and tomorrow will have to upskill in order to navigate digitally based and connected workplaces.

Some programmes are focused on digital skills gaps. For example, Global Affairs Canada's Digital Livelihoods programme aimed to help 200 000 young women and men to build entrepreneurial and job skills and use technology to increase their incomes and employment opportunities. The programme worked to increase rates of digital adoption and inclusion both by equipping youth with the knowledge, skills and support to deliver economic empowerment and digital skills programming in their communities and by engaging youth and local communities in digital platforms and digital engagement groups (Government of Canada, 2022<sup>[28]</sup>). The programme ran from 2015 through 2019 in Ghana, Jordan, Kenya, Malawi, Morocco, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania and Zambia.

Another important skills gap involves the transition to a greener economy. Green skills<sup>2</sup> and jobs<sup>3</sup> will be needed to facilitate the transition to a low-carbon economy, yet they are in short supply across OECD and developing economies (OECD, 2023<sup>[29]</sup>). Examples can include: setting up sustainable business activities; identifying opportunities to reduce carbon footprints; research and development to create new technologies that reduce carbon emissions; and many other measures. Youth employment programmes can play an important role in ensuring a successful green transition by raising awareness and developing the capacity of youth to acquire green skills and perform green jobs. For example, FAO's Green Jobs for Rural Youth Employment project provides youth with the skills necessary to integrate into the green agriculture, green energy and green waste management sectors. Once training is completed, youth are invited to identify a local issue and propose a green job solution to address it. Eventually, these experiences will be used to inform national (and sub-national) strategies for youth employment, agricultural and rural development, and the green transition. It remains important that employment opportunities be promoted to accompany skills provision. Green skills and green jobs should aim beyond emissions reduction goals, towards ensuring biodiversity conservation, cultural heritage, decent work and a just transition.

Retraining can be accomplished through apprenticeships or TVET. Some youth will retrain to shift into other professions or sectors of work; others will upskill to progress in their fields. Apprenticeships and TVET programmes provide a point of entry to certain trades but also can be leveraged as an avenue for young people to enhance their knowledge of broader sets of skills that contribute to their employability. Canada's Youth Employability Project in Mali (PEJM), for example, aimed to increase the employability of young Malians, especially women and gold washers, by improving technical and vocational training in promising fields of employment (Government of Canada, 2021<sup>[30]</sup>). PEJM sought to build the capacity of five vocational training centres to provide quality training in the agri-food sector and mining-related trades

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<sup>2</sup> Green skills can be broadly defined as the skills needed to adapt goods, services and processes to reduce climate change; the related environmental requirements and regulations; and also soft skills involving awareness, management and responsibility for the environment (OECD/Cedefop, 2014<sup>[85]</sup>; Kwauk and Casey, 2022<sup>[86]</sup>).

<sup>3</sup> While there is no universally accepted definition of green jobs, they have been broadly defined in these ways: i) jobs that adapt systems and processes to mitigate climate change; ii) occupations and industries related to renewable energy; energy efficiency, less carbon-intensive products, and other environmental services or traditional environmental sectors; iii) jobs that focus on goods and services producing environmentally desirable outputs; and iv) sectors and jobs in which waste creation and pollution are minimised (OECD (forthcoming); OECD/Cedefop (2014<sup>[85]</sup>)).

(automotive mechanics, metal processing and electrical trades). The programme also notably deployed mobile training units to upgrade the qualifications of gold washers or to steer them towards related trades.

The COVID-19 crisis accelerated the need for a lifelong learning paradigm. Youth lost jobs following measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. A recent UNESCO study found that one in six African youth who were employed before the crisis had stopped working altogether (UNESCO, 2022<sup>[31]</sup>). Skills development programmes were also brought to a halt during the initial stages of the crisis (ILO, 2021<sup>[32]</sup>). Youth will likely turn to complementary sources of education to compensate for lost educational experiences. Many have been forced to reskill and/or upskill to find paid work, as detailed by the ILO's SKILL-UP Programme response to COVID-19 (Box 3). Making reskilling and upskilling programmes widely available can open alternative career avenues to youth and prepare a future-ready youth workforce.

### Box 3. ILO's SKILL-UP Programme

The International Labour Organization's SKILL-UP Programme was implemented in Ethiopia, Ghana, Lebanon, Malawi, Senegal and Tanzania. Its priorities were to improve the responsiveness of the skills system to the needs of the private sector, to strengthen institutional capacity and to deploy training programmes to reach the final beneficiaries.

#### Results

In Malawi, the programme achieved:

- the expansion of Work-integrated Learning (WiL), a pilot project for youth in the horticulture sector that was developed and implemented in 2016. The initial iteration of WiL was taken forward via two channels: i) integration into an existing official informal-sector programme; and ii) the establishment of formal national curricula in horticultural production, delivered through a national TVET system. This result was significant because Malawi did not previously have a nationally owned certification system for education in horticulture. WiL allowed the curriculum to be rolled out through the formal TVET system, which did not previously focus on skills in agriculture. The initiative has improved the employability of young beneficiaries and moved them into productive work. The pilot phase allowed WiL to build the capacity of 100 farmers, including women, in the horticulture sector.
- the development and validation of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) guidelines and the training of 90 RPL assessors, half of them women. The skills of 100 informal young workers were assessed and recognised.
- the provision of training to 500 vulnerable rural people, including young women and youth, on open-space vegetable cultivation and disease control.
- the provision of employability skills to 45 women, including young, out-of-school women, in protected vegetable farming, and the training of 137 beneficiaries on horticulture post-harvest quality management and value addition.

#### Lessons learned

The biggest challenge was the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the measures put in place by governments to contain the spread of the virus. SKILL-UP interventions had to be reviewed in light of these unforeseen circumstances and, where feasible, new modalities were developed. The SKILL-UP Programme redirected its interventions in several countries. This entailed:

- reskilling for job retention/transition, support for job creation through production centres, and linking skills and enterprise development
- providing e-recognition of prior learning for returning migrants

- providing e-learning courses
- conducting rapid assessments of skills needs
- digitalising employment services
- disseminating safety and health instructions online.

The major action taken to address the COVID-19 challenge was to revise the work plan without necessarily changing its objectives. This entailed: i) facilitating and supporting implementing agreements with the government and social partners to address all project areas that were delayed; ii) engaging consultants and agencies to implement the components of the projects that were heavily affected; iii) empowering the government and social partners with skills through online courses; and iv) supporting the Employers' Consultative Association of Malawi and the Malawi Congress of Trade Unions to carry out impact assessments of COVID-19 in the project's main areas of work.

*Note:* More programme-specific information is available in Annex A.

*Source:* Adapted from ILO response to the questionnaire.

## Promoting job creation (labour demand)

Although there has been substantial investment to increase youth employability, young people often find upon completing their studies that there are not enough stable jobs on offer. Weak job creation is among the most pressing issues preventing youth from successfully transitioning to the workforce. In many parts of the world, there are few formal jobs available, and youth with little to no experience are not always prioritised for such positions. As a result, nearly 18% of young people are thought to be unemployed worldwide nowadays (World Bank, 2022<sup>[33]</sup>). Young people are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults (ILO, 2020<sup>[7]</sup>). Youth are also vulnerable to falling into informal employment, which can be precarious and provides few or no employment protections. Transiting out of informal jobs may be difficult for youth, as productivity and skills are known to be low in the informal sector. This could impede obtaining positions with decent working conditions and stable employment.

Job creation is important to ensuring that employable youth can engage in productive work and bring their talents to the market. Job creation can be initiated either by youth themselves, as entrepreneurs or own-account workers, or by enterprises and government actions to expand the number of roles available to fill.

Creating more jobs will require a multipronged approach. On the one hand, policy makers will need to both invest in youth who are looking to start their own businesses and support them through the business development cycle. Policies that work to establish a healthy environment for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to thrive will help African youth to create their own jobs and jobs for others. Similarly, policies that work to help or encourage firms to expand hiring practices and hiring capabilities will be just as necessary to boost the number of jobs available to African youth.

The G20 has regularly emphasised the need to design and implement a place-based or territorial approach to rural development. The G20 Initiative for RYE recognises the need to take into account territorial dimensions of development and to support policies and approaches making intermediary cities more attractive for businesses and for young people, notably by supporting relevant infrastructure and social services and promoting positive rural-urban linkages. Such an approach has been further developed in the [G20 High Level Principles on Sustainable Habitat](#) through regional planning adopted in Buenos Aires (2018) and in the Development Working Group ([DWG](#)) [outcome document on territorial development](#) that led to the launch of the G20 Platform on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Localisation and Intermediary Cities launched in Rome (2021).

### **Business incubation and development assistance/services**

Incubators help businesses to grow. They provide a space where entrepreneurs can access resources and support to help maintain and grow their businesses (OECD, 1999<sup>[34]</sup>). In rural areas, incubators are typically focused on supporting agribusinesses (S4YE, 2022<sup>[35]</sup>). In such spaces, youth can find the information and resources they need to start, maintain or grow smallholder farms or food processing facilities, to provide veterinary services, and more. Given that Africa has the potential to produce two to three times more than its current agricultural output, agribusiness incubators could be the key to solving the problem of rural youth unemployment (Goedde, Ooko-Ombaka and Pais, 2019<sup>[36]</sup>).

Business incubators often provide business development assistance or services. Business development services demanded by entrepreneurs who engage in agribusinesses – “agripreneurs” – can include guidance on registering their firms, help in understanding and acquiring food-based licenses and permits, and case studies of low-cost and in-demand starting ideas for an agricultural business. Accounting, legal and marketing services are additional bonuses but can be difficult to provide in rural areas. Providing youth with the right business development tools can be instrumental in making agribusiness an appealing and viable option, especially in rural areas where a career in agriculture does not necessarily correspond to youth aspirations (Yami et al., 2019<sup>[37]</sup>).

Incubators can provide the specialised support needed by young rural agripreneurs. Young and rural-based entrepreneurs with lower levels of skills and education are often encouraged to capitalise on opportunities in agriculture. Incubators in rural areas thus need to incorporate skills and capacity building alongside financial and business management tools (S4YE, 2022<sup>[35]</sup>). Incubators focusing on rural agribusiness start-ups can best benefit youth when they provide a “sandbox” learning environment focused on the needs of agribusiness, as well as physical spaces for youth to connect and work. This may include demonstrations and workshops on low-cost and scalable agricultural techniques (planting, harvesting, etc.); training spaces to practice hard and soft skill building; and physical space to innovate and workshop new ideas. The AfDB’s Enable Youth Program acts as such an incubator for young agripreneurs (Box 4).

#### **Box 4. The African Development Bank’s Enable Youth Programme**

The Enable Youth Programme, launched in 2017, is one of the AfDB’s key initiatives to address youth unemployment challenges in Africa. A pan-African programme, it is designed to empower youth as agripreneurs at each stage of the agribusiness value chain through new skills, technologies and financing approaches so that youth can establish viable and profitable agribusinesses.

The programme, which is ongoing, has three components: i) improving the enabling environment for decent youth employment; ii) developing agribusiness incubation through agronomic and business training, entrepreneurship, mentorship and internships; and iii) facilitating access to finance for youth agripreneurs. Its target is to assist in the establishment of 300 000 youth-led enterprises by 2025.

There are currently 16 Enable Youth projects, with total investment of more than USD 500 million.

#### **Results**

- Under Enable Youth Sudan, 887 agripreneurs have graduated from the incubation programme, and 291 of them (48% women) have established agribusinesses. A preliminary assessment indicated that each agripreneur agribusiness on average could employ 2 permanent staff and 4 casual labourers.
- Under Enable Youth Uganda, 175 agripreneurs have completed incubation, and 103 of them have established agribusinesses and received financing. These agribusinesses funded by the project have created more than 146 jobs for women and 296 jobs for men, for a total of 442 direct jobs, with additional temporary jobs during peak agricultural seasons.

- An annual activity of the Enable Youth Programme is the African Youth Agripreneur Forum and AgriPitch Competition. Its goal is to instil a culture of innovation and to nurture technology-led agribusiness innovations to create jobs and improve livelihoods among youth. To date, the AgriPitch has supported more than 90 youth agripreneurs, who received training, mentoring, seed capital and matching with impact investors to grow their small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

*Note:* More programme-specific information is available in Annex A.

*Source:* AfDB response to the questionnaire.

Incubators and rural business development services could also focus on management capacity building and leadership development courses. If newly developed agribusinesses manage to succeed and eventually scale up, entrepreneurs will need to be equipped with the soft skills necessary to hire, manage and lead teams of other workers. Incubators may want to consider strongly promoting mentoring and skills-building services in their incubation programmes. blueMoon is an example of an Ethiopian agribusiness incubator that provides coaching and mentoring, skills training and more in its programmes. As of 2019, 33 start-ups had emerged from blueMoon's incubation programme, most of them run by youth entrepreneurs (Awosanya, 2019<sup>[38]</sup>).

### **Access to capital, land and finance**

Youth entrepreneurs typically struggle with a lack of capital and access to finance (OECD/European Commission, 2022<sup>[39]</sup>). Access to finance can entail business loans, cash grants, microcredit and others. A 2014 survey conducted by IFAD found that 70% of young farmers had difficulty accessing finance and financial services (Kwame et al., 2019<sup>[40]</sup>). Youth in rural areas typically have little experience with the process of requesting such financial services or even with holding a savings account. Lenders can be reticent to extend credit without proof that an agribusiness has financial management experience. Finance can be particularly hard to secure or pay back in rural areas, including for agricultural ventures due to the inherent risk of the sector. Commercial banks may offer loans with exorbitant interest rates and frequently fail to consider adjustments based on the unique characteristics of the agricultural industry.

Rural youth also struggle with a lack of access to land. Access to arable land is an important prerequisite for many trying to start farms or other agricultural activities. Arable land in Africa is increasingly scarce: 91% of Africa's arable land is concentrated in nine countries, while arable land in the remaining countries is completely allocated (Jayne, Chamberlin and Headey, 2014<sup>[41]</sup>). Youth and women tend to face higher barriers than adult men, as securing financing to buy or rent land is difficult and inheritance remains the principal mechanism for the transfer of land rights (FAO/CTA/IFAD, 2014<sup>[42]</sup>). Of the youth farmers surveyed by IFAD, 52% reported that access to land was their greatest difficulty (Kwame et al., 2019<sup>[40]</sup>). Youth land rights are often poorly addressed by legal frameworks, though some government programmes now exist to open land markets or lotteries to youth.

Digital solutions can address limited access to cash and other issues, including resources, market prospects and the scalability of an operation. Digital solutions include mobile banking, alternative credit scoring, crowdfunding, real-time pricing, e-agri extension, precision agriculture and tailored services. For youth to benefit fully from these solutions, they need relevant digital and financial skills training (S4YE, 2021<sup>[43]</sup>). Unfortunately, the financial sector in many African countries is still considerably underdeveloped, with generally low levels of financial services and regulations. Matching youth with financial solutions should go hand-in-hand with a general expansion of financial services to unbanked and underbanked populations, along with financial literacy campaigns, better development of financial institutions and increased competition among financial services providers.

Access to finance could be integrated into a more comprehensive environment that builds agripreneurial skills in parallel. For example, Ethiopia's blueMoon incubator provides seed funding of USD 10 000 for agripreneurs who complete its programme: a four-month training project involving hard and soft skills,



coaching and mentoring, business development assistance, and networking opportunities (Awosanya, 2019<sup>[38]</sup>). This programme is a model that could be piloted elsewhere to help increase access to finance for youth. Similarly, USAID's Kenya Youth Employment and Skills (K-YES) programme boosts young entrepreneurs by providing the skills, assets and support they need to thrive, such as access to financial services (Box 2, above), while Global Affairs Canada's Empowering Women through Sustainable Entrepreneurship in Morocco programme attempts to increase women's access to finance in entrepreneurial ventures (Box 5).

### Box 5. Canada's Empowering Women through Sustainable Entrepreneurship in Morocco

The purpose of the project is to empower rural women economically in Morocco's Marrakesh-Safi region. The expected results include: i) an increase in women's decision-making power over their businesses; ii) more responsive business development support services on gender equality issues; and iii) engaging communities in public and private spheres to support women's rights and break down gender stereotypes related to women's entrepreneurship. The project seeks to ensure that women have genuine, full control over the assets, technologies, finances and benefits of their economic activities and that gender stereotypes are significantly reduced or eliminated in the region's rural communities.

Project activities include: i) implementing perennial and inclusive groups of Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) for marginalised women, and providing these women with training to foster their personal development and promote more efficient financial management; ii) guiding women-led co-operatives in developing ties with financial institutions and credit sources so that they can implement their business plans; iii) training business support institutions and civil society organisations to support women-led businesses and use dialogue instruments to reduce the gender-related barriers facing women's entrepreneurship; and iv) training targeted households so that tasks are divided fairly and there is greater acceptance of women's involvement in economic matters.

#### Results

Results as of March 2021 include:

- 16 Village Savings and Loans Associations were established (22% of the planned total), among which there were 348 women (26.85% of the total targeted) but no men (out of the targeted 144 men).
- 15 co-operatives led by women in the olive-growing and textile sectors (94% of those targeted) had received all of the training provided through the project as well as support to develop their business plans.
- 160 beneficiaries were supported in creating new businesses (149 women and 11 men).
- 1 181 people, 70% of them women, were reached through information and support provided to rights holders in order to form gathering co-operatives, which are mostly female.

#### Lessons learned

- The effective participation of women at all levels of decision-making is essential for job creation and the economic empowerment of young girls.
- Gender-responsive programming and actions that target behavioural change are key to the success of youth employment creation programmes.
- Initiatives that specifically target income generation and wealth creation for women and girls are the most effective way to empower them and make their voices count.

Source: Adapted from Global Affairs Canada's response to the questionnaire.

## Supporting SMEs

Supporting SMEs can yield important benefits for job creation and the economy at large. According to a 2013 ILO and GIZ study, 50% of total employment creation comes from enterprises with fewer than 100 employees (de Kok, Deijl and Veldhuis-Van-Essen, 2013<sup>[44]</sup>). SMEs run by young entrepreneurs can help to expand job possibilities for other youth, given their propensity to recruit their peers.

Yet, high-potential SMEs in underdeveloped and emerging countries often struggle to thrive. This is despite recognition of their role in job creation and socio-economic growth. Barriers include difficult legislative and institutional frameworks, as well as restricted access to resources including money, networks, markets, skills and information (OECD and European Commission, 2020<sup>[45]</sup>).

Improved connections to value chains and markets can be advantageous for SMEs (OECD, 2017<sup>[46]</sup>). Encouraging large leading companies to expand their supply-chain connections with SMEs to promote youth employment is one effective intervention strategy. For instance, leading companies might incorporate requirements into their procurement or bidding agreements that SMEs hire a certain number of young people for a specific amount of time (ILO, 2020<sup>[47]</sup>).

Young SME employees and owners could benefit from assistance in completing bid requirements, for example through the unbundling of contracts in public procurement procedures. This might entail procurement practices with a relevant performance component for youth-owned businesses. Youth-owned businesses can also benefit from facilitated access to finance through non-financial collateral or insurance programmes that give young entrepreneurs operating capital. Tax reductions and financial assistance tied to improvements in processes and products appear to be especially successful for SMEs in other regions (ILO, 2020<sup>[47]</sup>). Programmes such as Germany's Global Project on Rural Employment with a Focus on Youth aim to support MSMEs and start-ups in developing their businesses and business models (Box 6).

### Box 6. Germany's Global Project on Rural Employment with a Focus on Youth

GIZ's Global Project on Rural Employment with a Focus on Youth, carried out on behalf of BMZ, aims to promote employment of young people in rural areas using an integrated approach. The project, which runs from 2018-24, is active in Burkina Faso, Kenya, Malawi and Mozambique. The integrated approach has three facets:

- *Labour supply*: Young people improve their employment prospects by obtaining access to modern, market-oriented agricultural qualifications.
- *Labour demand*: MSMEs and start-ups continue to develop their businesses and business models, thus creating employment prospects for themselves and others.
- *Matching*: A supportive business environment and needs-based placement services bring potential employers and employees together.

The project involves working with ministries; implementing partners from the private sector; training institutions; service providers; and youth organisations and networks. It fosters the potential of women, especially young women, and takes their needs and different roles in society into account. Important actors include incubation centres; agricultural TVET centres; (digital) matching platforms; business associations (e.g. for internships), agro-dealer/extension workers with outreach to producers; (local) governments with relevant support programmes; and financial institutions with accessible products for savings, transactions, credit and/or insurance. The exchange of good practices and learning experiences plays an important role in implementation in the individual countries.



### Results

The project has reached out to 2 500 (young) persons, creating new and additional employment for 1 500 persons (90% youth and 70% women).

Key success factors are: selection and support of value chains and viable business models that are accessible for youth (low risk and investment); integrated services for skills development; the creation of (self)employment; matching of labour and business opportunities; integrated development partnerships with the private sector to allow for scale; and specific start-up and incubation services for innovative business models.

### Lessons learned

- Be broad and open towards opportunities and develop a local “employment ecosystem”, while staying focused on synchronising and integrating the necessary skills, jobs and business models.
- Strengthen youth and youth organisations as key actors of local development. Help to address specific challenges like access to land, finance, etc. Make the voices of youth represented and heard in dialogues, planning and decision-making. Employment opportunities for (young) women always need a specific focus and solutions and always require an extra effort to be successful.
- It takes time to build up an integrated approach (one to two years), but once it is up and running, it is a good platform for scaling and further collaboration. Make use of synergies with other projects/donors (e.g. Team Europe initiatives) and partners to mobilise resources and maintain focus.
- Keep in mind the linkages of the different pillars (skills development, matching and job creation, etc.) to ensure that youth actually become employed. Closely work with the private sector in all relevant aspects.
- Reflect on adequate levels of support for youth and partners to avoid crowding out and dependencies. Try to connect the dots in local ecosystems, especially for access to finance and investment for job creation.

Source: Adapted from BMZ’s questionnaire response.

To increase available decent jobs for youth, informal youth-owned SMEs need to be formalised. Many SMEs cannot benefit from SME assistance schemes because they are unable to furnish the required enterprise identification and/or registration information. Easing business registration procedures or opening other formalisation avenues can help youth-led SMEs, or SMEs at large, to take advantage of sustainable development policies (ILO, 2015<sup>[48]</sup>).

### Developing agriculture value chains

Strengthening value chains can help countries improve employment prospects, notably for youth (AUC/OECD, 2022<sup>[49]</sup>). This is particularly the case in low- and middle-income countries. In addition to supporting value chains with strong growth and employment potential, it is also important to identify major obstacles to the creation of decent work. Interventions can range from supporting the development of export and trade channels to bolstering business organisations and easing access to training and support services (OECD, 2018<sup>[50]</sup>).

Investing in promising value chains can help both to promote job creation and to alleviate food insecurity. In 2018, the Italian Agency for Cooperation and Development launched the Milk and Honey Initiative, a programme designed to create employment for youth and women in Niger by cultivating local and sustainable milk and honey products (OpenAID, 2023<sup>[51]</sup>). The project focused on the urban Niamey and rural Say and Tillabéri areas. Its budget of EUR 1.7 million was used to support a distribution and trade system promoted by local institutions and structured for the procurement of healthy, fair and quality products between urban and rural areas.

Supporting the development of agriculture-related value chains is particularly significant because agriculture is and will continue to be the main source of rural employment in many African countries (OECD, 2016<sup>[52]</sup>). However, some youth have difficulty embracing the sector due to differing skills and career aspirations (OECD, 2018<sup>[50]</sup>). Small-scale agriculture could benefit from modernisation, tying up with downstream operations (agribusiness) and enhancing the quality of employment. FAO's Integrated Country Approach (ICA) for decent rural employment is an example of a programme that attempts to build agri-food systems development but with a heavy emphasis on youth-led initiatives (Box 7).

The unique needs of each industry along the value chain should be taken into account in initiatives to increase rural youth employment. A sophisticated, integrated intervention across the agriculture value chain could take account, for example, of contract farming, warehouse receipts, financial leasing and factoring, social impact investing, challenge funds, and crowdfunding supported by Agricultural Value Chain Finance organisations in Africa. The AfDB's ENABLE Youth Programme in Kenya is an example of an integrated value chain approach. Through skills development and the creation of an enabling environment, the initiative strives to turn young people into prosperous agribusiness owners. The programme's objective is to improve quality of life for youth in both urban and rural areas by generating revenue, enhancing food security and nutrition, and creating jobs. The vocational training curricula should be designed to foster community, education and business partnerships based on co-operative assessments of the needs of the local community, highlighting the entry points that appeal to youth the most, such as agroecological production, nutrition and dietetics, food value chains, marketing, and food systems education.

### Box 7. FAO's Integrated Country Approach for boosting jobs for youth in the agri-food system

The ICA programme assists countries in developing more youth-inclusive and employment-centred agri-food system development policies, strategies and programmes, while increasing the employability and entrepreneurship capacity of rural young women and men. Strong emphasis is placed on job creation and entrepreneurship development and on the quality of jobs in the agri-food sector. Innovative approaches have been piloted for skills development; mentoring and incubation; financial and digital inclusion; and youth-centred public-private partnerships along the value chain. The programme adopts a youth-sensitive value chain lens and puts strong emphasis on empowering youth and their organisations as agents of change in agri-food systems development. The ICA programme is currently running in Guatemala, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal and Uganda.

The overall programme objective is to help youth access more and better employment opportunities in rural areas and agri-food systems. At the country level, the programme supports governments in developing strategies, policies and programmes to improve the quantity and quality of on-farm and off-farm job opportunities for rural youth. At the global and regional levels, the programme contributes to integrating employment issues in the global discourse on agricultural and rural development.

#### Results

At the country level, the ICA programme helps to: i) generate knowledge on decent rural youth employment, youth access to finance, youth-inclusive value chain development, and youth communication ecosystem and ICT use; ii) enhance the skills of rural young women and men through training packages development for youth agripreneurs, technical training, entrepreneurship support, youth-to-youth peer support, incubation, value chain specific training camps and business formalisation; iii) improve youth access to finance by piloting innovative models for youth-friendly financial provision and collaborating with national development banks or foundations to improve the bankability of youth business proposals; iv) strengthen youth engagement in agri-food systems by fostering youth-inclusive policy-making processes and by strengthening national youth organisations and

engaging them as partners; and v) enhance digital engagement of rural youth through the launch of dedicated platforms such as [ChispaRural.GT](#) and the [African Youth Agripreneurs](#) online community.

At the global level, ICA contributes to corporate mainstreaming efforts on youth, using the lessons learned and experience gained through ICA implementation to inform the global debate on youth engagement and employment in agri-food systems. In particular, it contributes to FAO key corporate processes on youth employment; the mainstreaming of youth as a crosscutting theme in the FAO Strategic Framework 2022-31; and the co-ordination of corporate reporting on FAO's Rural Youth Action Plan and the UN Youth 2030 Strategy. At the regional level, focus is placed on establishing regional partnerships that can contribute to knowledge sharing and replication of successful approaches.

### **Lessons learned**

COVID-19 and related restrictions delayed project implementation at the country level. To this effect, the programme adapted its work plan in terms of: i) stronger uptake of distance learning, webinars and online dialogue (while carefully anticipating the potential access limitations faced by more vulnerable groups of youth); ii) an increase in (online) meetings with the national co-ordinators; and iii) assessing case by case whether face-to-face training should be preferred to facilitate the engagement of more vulnerable youth groups. Actions taken in view of the significant turnover in national ministries and administrations, which affected the adoption of strategic documents, prioritised the empowerment of youth organisations to monitor accountability and the establishment of technical working groups to institutionalise collaboration.

Overall, the adoption of a youth-inclusive participatory approach, along with the piloting of successful and innovative approaches, has contributed to the effectiveness and sustainability of project results. In particular, it is worth highlighting: i) the effectiveness and sustainability of youth-inclusive programmatic co-ordination mechanisms and policy formulation processes, such as the process that led to the National Strategy for Youth Employment in Agriculture in Uganda; ii) the cascade effect of youth-to-youth mentorship models, such as the Youth Inspiring Youth Initiative rolled out in Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda; iii) the replication and upscaling of the *Modèle d'Insertion des Jeunes Agripreneurs*, an innovative approach piloted in Senegal involving rural incubation hubs delivering training in the agri-food sector; and iv) the importance of engaging youth organisations as partners to guarantee the sustainability of proposed approaches.

*Note:* More programme-specific information is available in Annex A.

*Source:* Adapted from FAO response to the questionnaire.

## **Facilitating opportunities for youth (matching labour supply and demand)**

Facilitating opportunities for youth to be matched to job prospects is a key and sometimes overlooked part of solving the rural youth employment puzzle. Initiatives that can reconcile supply and demand on the labour market include improving job placement services, information systems and career advice (GIZ, 2020<sup>[8]</sup>). Yet many developing countries lack the proper data infrastructure and enough information to render job placement services and labour-market information systems most effective. Other ways to facilitate job opportunities for youth are to set labour-market policies that can affect the hiring environment, such as wage subsidies, or to create temporary work through schemes like public works programmes.

### **Mentorship and social support resources**

Mentorship can help combat youth unemployment and underemployment. Mentors can help youth to develop an understanding of the world of work and to identify their strengths and weaknesses, strategies for their professional development and more. The presence of a more experienced counsellor can help youth break into the labour market by connecting them to job opportunities or can keep them in their jobs by offering social support for navigating the challenges they face as new entrants (OECD/European Union,

2015<sup>[53]</sup>; Kuczera and Field, 2018<sup>[12]</sup>). Mentorship can also be instrumental in helping youth to start and grow their own businesses (AfDB/OECD/UNDP, 2017<sup>[54]</sup>).

Social support, access to information and mentoring for young African graduates can make all the difference, especially in contexts where youth unemployment and NEET are high. Mentoring is an important component of initiatives to help youth navigate successful school-to-work transitions. Studies have found that mentorship programmes help youth to find or create their own employment (Shittu, 2017<sup>[55]</sup>). Mentoring can also make a difference for young women and girls in fields where they are underrepresented, such as in the STEM subjects – science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Mentorship services for agripreneurs are extremely important. The agriculture sector is currently evolving, with the climate crisis complicating existing challenges. Rural agripreneurs face barriers like a lack of connectivity to peers or to experienced professionals who can help them navigate the hardships. As women can face unique social barriers and stigmas, they stand to benefit from such mentorship support. FAO and the International Agri-Food Network (IAFN) are piloting such a mentoring programme, the Accelerator Mentorship Programme for Women-led SMEs in Africa. It aims both to foster women agrifood entrepreneurs in Africa by connecting them to a mentor and to provide the knowledge and tools necessary to grow their enterprises and adapt to changing market conditions. Specifically, the programme aims to provide women entrepreneurs with a one-to-one mentorship, tailored training to enhance their hard skills, opportunities to network and learn from peers, and access/links to relevant tools developed by FAO, IAFN and other institutions (International Agri-Food Network, 2022<sup>[56]</sup>).

Certain programmes provide mentorship services alongside skills training for youth. TechnoServe, an international non-profit development organisation, ran an innovative youth employment programme in which mentorship was a key component and helped to improve incomes (TechnoServe, 2020<sup>[57]</sup>). The programme, Strengthening Rural Youth Development through Enterprise (STRYDE), aimed to make agriculture more attractive to rural youth by training them for emerging opportunities. A key feature of the approach was nine months of aftercare, which included mentoring, peer-to-peer support and other services for youth following a three-month training period in various skill sets (agribusiness, personal finance, gender, entrepreneurship, etc.). Business counsellors provided mentoring services to youth participants and worked to help them overcome challenges and find solutions. Alongside the other aftercare services, this helped account for a 65% difference in the income of participants post-programme (as compared to their programme peers who opted out of the mentorship phase and related activities). The programme was implemented in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda from 2011 to 2019. The ILO's TREE Programme is another example of a flagship programme that includes post-training support in the form of mentorship and personal development training alongside skills training initiatives (Box 8).

#### Box 8. ILO's TREE Programme in Mozambique

The TREE Programme is an ILO community-based training programme implemented in more than 20 countries in Africa and Asia. TREE, or Training for Rural Economic Empowerment, promotes income generation opportunities for disadvantaged women and men by ensuring that they gain skills and knowledge that they can use in their communities.

The TREE strategy differs from conventional vocational training programmes in that it:

- identifies potential income-generating activities and related training needs before designing the content and structure of specific training programmes
- involves the local community and social partners in each phase of the identification, design and delivery processes

- provides post-training support such as business development services to help participants gain access to waged work or self-employment
- includes stakeholder capacity building at the national and local levels to institutionalise the approach.

The TREE methodology's value-added, compared to conventional TVET programmes, includes: engagement with local communities and social partners; identification of economic opportunities before the implementation of training; and post-training support, such as mentoring and personal development training along with other forms of guidance that help beneficiaries face the realities of running a business or working in an enterprise for the first time. TREE also emphasises harmonising microfinance schemes with training activities and creating a clear understanding of how microfinance works. TREE's post-training phase can contribute to successful employment and income generation via mapping of financial services, financial education and creating links with financial institutions to provide affordable loans.

### **Lessons learned**

- In contexts where there are limited opportunities for wage employment, skills projects should help to position youth for success in self-employment.
- Curricula and teaching strategies should be designed to be accessible to low-literacy learners. They should be participatory and activity based, rely on pictures and use simple vocabulary. Trainers themselves may have limited literacy skills in some contexts, and teaching guides should therefore also use simple language.
- Monitoring is necessary at every stage of project implementation: during outreach activities, the application and shortlisting processes, skills training and, importantly, when graduates are in jobs/businesses after the training ends. Skills training projects often pay attention to what happens during the classroom phase while failing to monitor what happens before the classroom training starts or after the training ends.
- Monitoring and evaluation plans should be developed and implemented in a participatory manner. Skills training providers may be unaccustomed to rigorous monitoring and may need to be encouraged to comply and buy into the process. Monitoring and evaluation plans should be built on principles of mutual respect and trust, and they need transparency and equity. Both monitors and service providers should be involved in the definition of indicators and the development of monitoring tools, while service providers should be involved in the training for monitors.
- Projects should identify market opportunities and high-value-added activities for young women. Skills training interventions present an opportunity to break occupational sex-segregation, but they often fail to do so. The assessment of opportunities should not be limited to traditionally female sectors. In Mozambique, for example, the project trained young women in fields such as motorcycle repair, masonry, civil painting and electricity.
- A requirement that the project management unit and staff of the main implementing partner at the provincial level be located within the counterpart agency in projects of this type is frequently advocated but not often implemented. In Mozambique, the strong working relationships and clear understanding and commitment of the staff of the Institute of Professional Training and Labour Studies contributed to the results achieved.
- The implementing partners received access to considerable training and workshop activities as well as post-training monitoring. The manuals and guidebooks used were widely acknowledged as major resources and reference tools. The benefits of these training aids and the importance of keeping them up to date should always be important considerations in projects of this type.
- The project experience shows that having a gender expert in the team throughout the project duration is very helpful in facilitating the integration of gender concerns in skills development activities.

Source: Adapted from the ILO questionnaire response and (ILO, 2017<sup>[58]</sup>).

### ***Wage subsidies for youth***

Wage subsidies for youth are a policy tool that can incentivise the hiring of young workers (OECD, 2012<sup>[59]</sup>). However, the outcomes of such programmes can be highly dependent on the country context and programme-specific factors, such as the delivery mechanism and targeted groups. Evidence points to wage subsidies in the form of payroll tax deductions as having a potentially positive effect on youth unemployment rates (Bordos, Csillag and Scharle, 2015<sup>[60]</sup>). In rural areas, wage subsidies have been reported to have similar positive effects (Hatayama, 2018<sup>[61]</sup>).

Still, wage subsidies are only as effective as their design and delivery mechanisms. In Türkiye, for example, it was found that when wage subsidies were provided as vouchers, there was no effect on employment rates, whereas direct wage subsidies yielded a positive effect on employment (Grimm and Paffhausen, 2015<sup>[62]</sup>). Wage subsidies, when improperly targeted and misused, can distort labour market outcomes. Additionally, there is not enough conclusive evidence for the positive effects of wage subsidies in low- and middle-income countries. Most evidence of the positive effects of wage subsidies comes from high-income countries with a better-developed formal sector.

### ***Public employment programmes/public works programmes***

Another policy tool to encourage youth employment comes in the form of public employment programmes (PEPs) and public works programmes (PWPs). They can be used to temporarily boost employment while also delivering public goods and services. Areas of interest may range from the creation and upkeep of public works or infrastructure (PWPs) to the promotion of green initiatives through resource management and environmental restoration. Public employment programmes can have broader effects in targeted communities, enhancing long-term economic prospects because of new assets and facilities in addition to opportunities for paid work and skills learning (OECD, 2022<sup>[63]</sup>). PWPs can take many different forms but typically entail public spending for projects like: disaster relief and reconstruction; climate change mitigation and adaptation; and the upkeep, building and repair of rural and urban facilities (Lieuw-Kie-Song, Puerto and Tsukamoto, 2016<sup>[64]</sup>).

In the rural context, employment schemes are a complement to rural development methods (such as improving infrastructure and agricultural production) or tackling different environmental and security challenges (such as food security). For a scheme to develop into a more broadly applicable employment guarantee in rural areas, it must provide sufficient employment opportunities that have an impact. For example, it can guarantee a bottom limit to the wage rates of unskilled and informal workers in order to help stabilise wages and labour demand. In the African context, employment schemes have direct and indirect side effects, such as raising awareness of occupational health and safety issues; promoting labour standards and fundamental rights at work; facilitating the creation of decent jobs; and improving economic efficiency and productivity. For instance, Germany's Employment and Skills for Development in Africa (E4D) programme seeks to enhance the employment and economic circumstances of job seekers, employees and businesses through public-private partnerships. The initiative intends to increase labour demand in a variety of industries, including construction, renewable energy, tourism, agriculture, food processing and transportation. It also aims to bridge the gap for marginalised workers, connecting them into value chains as buyers, sellers or workers (GIZ, 2023<sup>[65]</sup>).

Public works programmes are by nature temporary and not sustainable solutions for significantly alleviating youth unemployment, but they can provide a means for youth to start acquiring work experience. Still, due to the complexity of PWPs/PEPs and lack of the evidence needed to assess them, their use remains controversial. In situations where markets are unable to provide productive employment at the appropriate scale, PEPs can supplement job creation in the private sector (Lieuw-Kie-Song, Puerto and Tsukamoto, 2016<sup>[64]</sup>). Targets for youth involvement are frequently included in PEPs to guarantee youth access to possibilities for paid jobs. Despite a paucity of data on how these programmes affect young people's job results, certain studies have shown several improvements to be made (ILO, 2015<sup>[66]</sup>). These include



enhanced targeting techniques and the incorporation of elements for skills development to increase the competitiveness of young workers. While many programmes aim for the participation of the poorest people and local communities, this can prove to be challenging in practice, and participation of target populations is frequently limited (ILO, 2012<sup>[67]</sup>). Nevertheless, because PEPs only produce short-term jobs, they must co-exist in a network of implemented solutions to achieve permanent and durable job creation.

## Supporting an enabling environment for RYE (labour market foundations)

Even the best-designed youth employment programmes cannot succeed without an enabling environment. Legal frameworks, policies and programmes to support active youth citizenship and youth participation in political and social life are prerequisites for youth empowerment, sense of agency and self-development. These characteristics have an impact on youth aspirations and youth employability in the labour market. In many countries, and particularly in developing countries, these basic youth “rights” are often enjoyed only by upper-class and educated urban youth, while rural youth with little education are usually left out of the process. Programmes aimed at empowering young people range from promoting sports, culture and youth-led organisations to leadership skills development and political education. Programmes aimed at ensuring peace and security are also gaining ground in an increasing number of post-conflict and fragile states.

Youth participation can benefit the development of young people's abilities and perceptions of themselves as citizens, as well as the creation and execution of policies. Civic engagement helps young people to grow as individuals and gives them in-depth information and useful skills. Young individuals can develop social capital by active involvement with peers. This is crucial for group activities that enable reaching goals that are often beyond a single person's reach. Participation helps young people develop the ability to make decisions and comprehend information, while civic engagement improves public accountability by increasing openness and helps young people learn how government agencies operate. Once acquired, such skills and abilities may help youth in other areas, such as determining their labour-market aspirations, prospecting job opportunities and understanding labour-market trends given the ongoing policy measures.

### ***Youth participation***

Young people are paradoxically often left out of the design stage of projects dedicated to youth. One of the main lessons learned from projects aimed at rural youth empowerment is the need to enhance the inclusiveness and efficiency of policy processes, particularly by encouraging and strengthening the participation of youth in co-ordination mechanisms (FAO, 2019<sup>[68]</sup>). This would require allocating adequate budget and staff within responsible ministries; raising awareness among youth regarding youth policies, laws and incentives; and supporting youth-led organisations. An example of a programme working to improve youth participation is IFAD's "youth grassroots approach", which also aims to gather diverse youth voices across various levels of agglomeration (Box 9).

Policy, legal and regulatory frameworks need to be enhanced to empower youth. Existing policies and laws on agricultural investment may need the inclusion of financial, fiscal and service-related incentives that empower young entrepreneurs operating along agricultural supply chains. In addition, existing policies and laws to support youth may not always be fully implemented (FAO, 2019<sup>[68]</sup>).

Rural youth employment programmes need a youth lens. To contribute to improved policies and programmes, it is necessary for the implementing party to apply an age perspective, or youth lens, to all analyses. Taking account of the fact that young people see the world differently than older generations is crucial in determining the effectiveness of any given intervention. Youth inclusion should be considered when creating and implementing RYE programmes (United Nations and Folke Bernadotte Academy,

2021<sup>[69]</sup>). The implementing party should enable, facilitate and support youth participation by creating participation mechanisms that will ensure young people's engagement throughout the project cycle.

### Box 9. IFAD's grassroots approach to connecting youth voices to action

The goal of the International Fund for Agricultural Development's youth grassroots approach (YGA) is to diversify rural enterprises and employment opportunities. The objectives are to strengthen local and national ownership of pathways for rural youth development and empowerment. This is to be done by supporting grassroots engagement approaches with dynamic frameworks for dialogue to ensure that youth voices are heard in decision-making processes and country programming activities.

The most intense interactions take place at the grassroots and country levels, where youth from different backgrounds – including hard-to-reach youth and young people from semi-rural and peri-urban areas – share ideas, resources and experiences on a systematic yet flexible basis. This informs IFAD country programming work, particularly in relation to employment creation (entrepreneurship and decent jobs), and helps to shape the approach to match the context in each case.

The YGA initiative is being piloted in four countries: Colombia, Morocco, Rwanda and Senegal. Results achieved so far apply only to the output level (3 countries with an operational grassroots mechanism; 45 youth organisations actively engaged in grassroots mechanisms).

The YGA has four expected outcomes:

- strengthened rural youth leadership in rural development
- relevant plans and strategies to guide country operations
- design and implementation of effective youth-sensitive lending and non-lending activities
- enhanced uptake of good practices and tools for youth empowerment and engagement in IFAD operations and among partners.

#### **Lessons learned**

- As a heterogeneous group, youth require dynamic and differentiated approaches tailored to each specific operational context, especially at the local level, where youth have very specific needs and there is a greater chance that they will be excluded.
- Youth want to be partners in development and not passive participants. They want ownership of any frameworks developed to engage with them at the local to global levels, particularly with regard to employment opportunities in agribusiness. Dimensions of participation that are paramount to youth, such as facilitation and mentoring techniques, may not be captured by the existing participatory models.
- Youth want to play a substantial role at the operational field level and urgently wish to see concrete actions on the ground that will translate into improvements in their lives. They want certain issues to take a global dimension, such as intercontinental business opportunities and knowledge exchange related to business innovation. Youth favour a working engagement mechanism informed by a more operational approach and are less inclined to have overly rigid blueprints and stiff structural engagement structures.
- A good balance is needed between flexible and structured forms of engagement, i.e. between the different degrees of formality characteristic of traditional youth councils and the more fluid and loose forms of organisation that are typical of networks and peer relationship models.
- There is a huge demand among youth for innovative organisational models that enable collective action to maximise business opportunities. Better organisation can enable youth to benefit from economies of scale in the agribusiness, political, policy and governance spaces. Aggregation in their endeavours will augment their participation and enable their voices to be heard. This specific issue underpins IFAD's



goal: a youth-specific approach for young people's voices to be heard and for their knowledge and experience to be exchanged among peers.

- Because youth engagement is a critical mechanism through which youth-sensitive programming can expand and deepen development outcomes, and because specific approaches to rural youth engagement are rarely documented by the literature and relevant international experiences, IFAD is in the process of documenting the YGA implementation. The documentation is focusing on the “how” of the implementation process, allowing those involved to learn from the experience and giving a voice to key stakeholders. Through participatory action research methods and the resulting experiential learning, this insider knowledge helps to ensure the relevance of the findings and, ultimately, the relevance of YGA to the youth it aims to serve. The documentation process will draw lessons and identify factors of success and risk.

*Note:* More programme-specific information is available in Annex A.

*Source:* Adapted from IFAD response to the questionnaire.

### ***Peace and security***

Youth unemployment and underemployment may affect domestic and regional peace and security. It has been theorised that violence is correlated with rapid youth population growth, high unemployment rates and rapid and unchecked urbanisation in some countries (Mutto, 2007<sub>[70]</sub>). The likelihood of violence is seen to be especially high in situations where a sizable number of young people are reaching adulthood while dealing with unstable governments, insecurity and developmental obstacles. For example, a dearth of decent employment opportunities for youth contributed to the intensity of the Arab Spring uprising of 2011-12 (ILO, 2011<sub>[71]</sub>).

Education, employment, empowerment and positive political engagement are major intervention areas, along with peacebuilding, conflict resolution and community discussion. There are no universally applicable prevention and control strategies for young people; instead, each circumstance must be handled individually. One intervention thought to be closely related to the prevention of armed violence is the promotion of youth employment, which combines actions targeted at enhancing adolescent employability with actual job creation. Most employment programmes use a two-pronged approach: they first offer quick employment possibilities and income-generating activities to reduce the danger of violence, and they then create medium- to long-term plans for long-term adolescent employment and development (Mutto, 2007<sub>[70]</sub>). An example is the European Union’s Conflict Prevention, Peace, and Economic Opportunities for the Youth programme, which aims to improve prospects for peace and regional stability by creating employment opportunities for youth in disaffected areas, specifically in Kenya (Box 10).

Other prevention initiatives have been carried out through household and educational initiatives. These can range from understanding the harmful effects of armed conflict to empowering young people with alternative conflict resolution techniques, including the creation of effective defence mechanisms, and addressing the trauma caused by violent conflict.

### Box 10. The EU's conflict prevention project for youth

The overall objective of the European Union (EU) [Conflict Prevention, Peace, and Economic Opportunities for the Youth project](#) is to contribute to increased peace, stability and inclusive economic opportunities for youth in marginalised areas in Kenya. The project focuses on high-risk areas, in particular Garissa, Isiolo, Mandera and Wajir counties in the North Eastern Province; Kilifi, Kwale, Lamu and Tana River counties in the Coast Province; Western Kenya; and urban areas, in particular Mombasa and Nairobi.

The specific objectives of the project are:

- to enhance understanding of sources of conflict and exclusion, leading to informed policy and interventions that identify means of addressing development needs and grievances
- to provide youth with skills that can be used to improve employment and livelihood prospects
- to strengthen the capacity to manage and prevent conflict and to improve trust between the state and communities
- to empower smallholder farmers by enhancing access to better market opportunities and resilience of farming practices in selected value chains.

The EU's initial contribution to the project of EUR 15 million was topped up by EUR 2 million in December 2016 to increase stability in at-risk communities, focusing on the provision of sustainable agricultural employment opportunities for vulnerable youth and women. An additional EUR 1 million was contributed in May 2018 to the Strengthening Resilience to Violent Extremism (STRIVE) project.

#### Results

- 6 500 young people from disadvantaged backgrounds will get the chance to pursue vocational education that will make it easier for them to take advantage of job prospects.
- 4 000 underprivileged adolescents will get the chance to develop conflict management skills, helping them to address and resolve their concerns and grievances. Eight of the 13 governments will receive assistance for the exploration of opportunities for civic involvement by youth.
- Women in areas where there is a danger of violence and conflict will be educated and given the tools necessary to identify the major indicators of family member discontent and to serve as potential engagement facilitators. This will be accomplished by holding awareness-raising events for female community members under the direction of female mentors.
- It is anticipated that 15 000 farmers will receive certification as organic cashew growers after receiving training and using new tools and techniques.

Source: Adapted from European Commission (n.d.[72]).

### 3. Financing for rural youth employment programmes in Africa (2017-22)

This chapter looks into official development assistance (ODA) benefiting rural youth in Africa. It first presents an overview of the Group of Twenty (G20) members' development aid for Africa related to rural youth employment (RYE), using the OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS) Aid Activity database. It is important to note that not all G20 members report the CRS; therefore, the analysis does not portray the full spectrum of financial or technical support that G20 countries provided in the area of RYE in Africa between 2017 and 2022. It then reports on G20 and international organisation (IO) responses to the OECD questionnaire on financing for RYE projects.

ODA information using the CRS database is included in this paper to provide an idea of the magnitude and trends of ODA and G20 financing towards RYE-relevant projects. The ODA figures are not intended to check or compare with the financial reporting done by G20 members in the OECD questionnaire. Nonetheless, the CRS offers insightful information on financing trends towards RYE-relevant projects.

#### General ODA trends in rural development and agriculture for Africa

This section provides information on ODA destined for projects on rural development and agriculture with likely high effects on RYE in Africa. The analysis is carried out using data from the CRS database (Box 11).

##### Box 11. The OECD's Creditor Reporting System

The OECD's Creditor Reporting System (CRS) Aid Activity database aims to provide a set of readily available basic data that enables analysis of where aid goes, what purposes it serves and what policies it aims to implement, on a comparable basis for all Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members. Data are collected on individual projects and programmes. The focus is on financial data, but some descriptive information is also made available. The CRS database contains data collected from 12 G20 members: Australia, Canada, the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and the United States. The data includes only gross disbursements in constant United States dollars. It refers to all types of aid (projects, interventions, scholarships, expert and technical assistance, etc.).

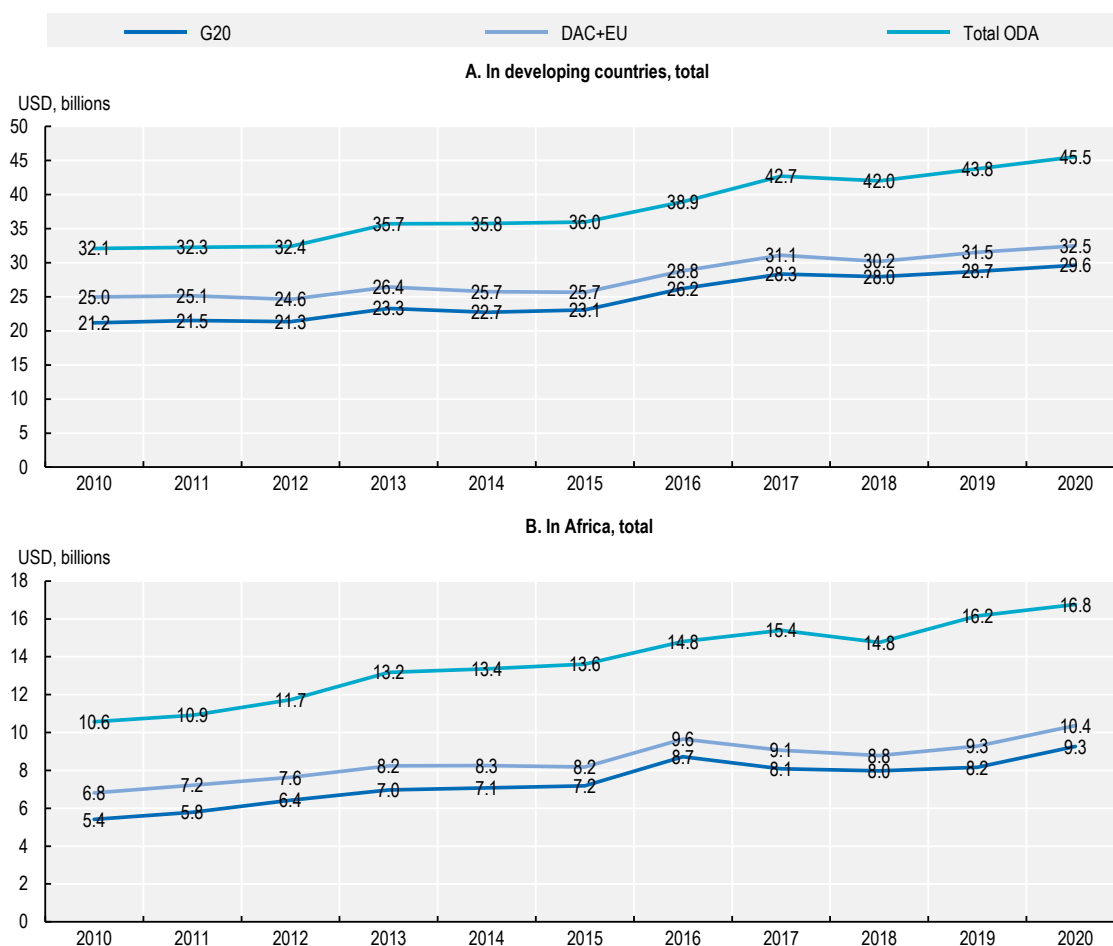
The CRS database does not have detailed project information on the age of the target population or the area of residence (rural/urban). Therefore, information on the ODA flows specific to RYE was not possible to extract, however, an approximation was obtained by selecting sectors thought to have a direct or strong indirect impact on RYE (see Annex B for a detailed list). The selection was based on previous OECD work on youth employment. As the latest year available in the CRS database is 2020, the numbers presented from the CRS in this section cover the period 2010-20 to show trends over the past decade.

G20 members' financing for development projects in Africa has increased steadily over the past decade. Based on available information in the CRS database, between 2010 and 2020, total annual ODA flow to developing countries by all official donors – DAC and non-DAC donors – (referred to as total ODA in this paper) for RYE-relevant projects increased from USD 32.1 billion to USD 45.5 billion (Figure 2, Panel A). Despite new donors emerging, the contribution of G20 members included in the CRS remained at around 65% of total ODA to developing countries throughout the reporting period.

In 2020, G20 members included in the CRS collectively spent USD 16.8 billion on African development and RYE-relevant projects, compared to USD 10.6 billion in 2010 (Figure 2, Panel B). This G20 member contribution increased to 62% of total ODA to Africa in 2020, compared to 51% in 2010. Africa has remained an important priority for G20 member countries, with 32% of total ODA earmarked for developing countries going to Africa in 2020.

According to the CRS data, the cumulative spending in Africa on RYE-related projects between 2017 and 2020 – the period of interest for the G20 Initiative for RYE – totalled USD 63.1 billion for all ODA, out of which USD 41.4 billion was from the G20 members included in the CRS.

**Figure 2. ODA flows to RYE-relevant sectors by contributor (2010-20) (in USD billion)**



Note: ODA stands for official development assistance. DAC stands for the OECD Development Assistance Committee. G20 members included in the CRS are Australia, Canada, the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, United Kingdom, United States. International organisations (FAO, World Bank, etc.) are excluded from this data.

Source: Authors' calculation using OECD CRS database, <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=crs1#>.

## G20 and IO financing trends for RYE projects – results from the OECD questionnaire

This section provides statistical information on projects on rural youth employment, as reported to the OECD by G20 focal points and IOs. It is important to note that the CRS data are not comparable to the financial information provided in the questionnaire. G20 countries included in the CRS overlap with some of the questionnaire respondents but are not the same. The questionnaire asked respondents to cover the period 2017 to 2022, while the latest CRS data are from 2020. The CRS database does not have information on international organisations, whereas the questionnaire collected information from the African Development Bank (AfDB), African Union, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Global Agriculture and Food Security Program (GAFSP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and International Labour Organization (ILO). The two results are presented in order to show the magnitude and trends over the years of financing towards RYE-relevant projects and programmes. In this respect, the results are coherent with each other.

Over the period of the G20 Initiative for RYE, G20 and IO funding for RYE projects in Africa topped USD 20.2 billion (Table 1). This is the finding from the information provided by nine G20 members and six IOs to the OECD questionnaire. This was calculated for a total of 715 projects, out of which 671 were specifically for Africa (Table 2). Between 2017 and 2022, total reported financing for RYE-relevant projects was estimated at USD 26.1 billion, of which USD 20.2 billion was for projects specifically dedicated to Africa. The total RYE-relevant financing from these nine G20 members is estimated at USD 10.6 billion, with all reported projects dedicated to Africa. For the same period, according to the self-reported financial information provided by the selected six IOs, the total budget towards RYE-relevant projects and programmes is estimated at USD 15.5 billion, of which USD 9.6 billion is dedicated to Africa.

**Table 1. Total budget towards RYE projects and programmes (in USD billion)**

	G20-financed (557 projects)	IO-implemented (158 projects global of which 114 for Africa)	Total G20 + IOs (715 reported projects)
Total reported	10.6	15.5	26.1
of which in Africa	10.6	9.6	20.2

*Note:* All G20 responses concerned projects financed or implemented in Africa, while IOs reported those in Africa but also included some projects outside the continent. Data are taken from questionnaire responses by Canada, EU, France, Germany, Italy, Korea, Türkiye, United Kingdom, United States, AfDB, African Union, FAO, GAFSP, IFAD and ILO.

*Source:* Authors' calculations based on responses to the OECD questionnaire

**Table 2. Number of projects and programmes implemented on RYE**

	G20-financed	IO-implemented	Total G20 + IOs
Total reported	557	158	715 projects
of which in Africa	557	114	671 projects

*Note:* All G20 responses concerned projects financed or implemented in Africa, while IOs reported those in Africa but also included some projects outside the continent. Data are taken from questionnaire responses by Canada, EU, France, Germany, Italy, Korea, Türkiye, United Kingdom, United States, AfDB, African Union, FAO, GAFSP, IFAD and ILO.

*Source:* Authors' calculations based on responses to the OECD questionnaire.

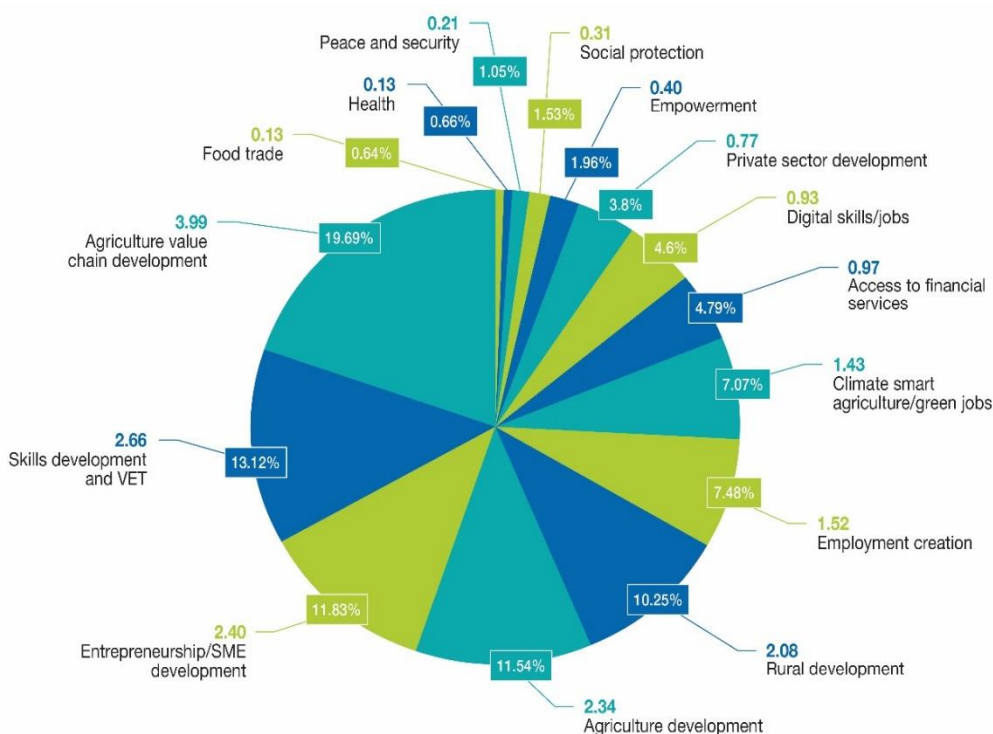
### Analysis of RYE programmes by sector of intervention

Out of the 671 projects dedicated to direct and indirect rural youth employment in Africa, the most frequent types of interventions were projects aimed at agriculture value chain development; skills development; and entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) promotion. Around 50% of all Africa-based RYE project funding were for these categories. Based on the questionnaire responses, the G20 budgeted USD 10.64 billion for RYE-relevant projects in Africa, compared to USD 9.63 billion from IOs. While the total budgets reported by G20 and IOs were comparable in sum, spending priorities were different (Figure 3). The thematic area with the highest budget allocations among G20-financed projects was skills development and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) (24%), and among IO-implemented projects, it was agriculture value chain development (32%).

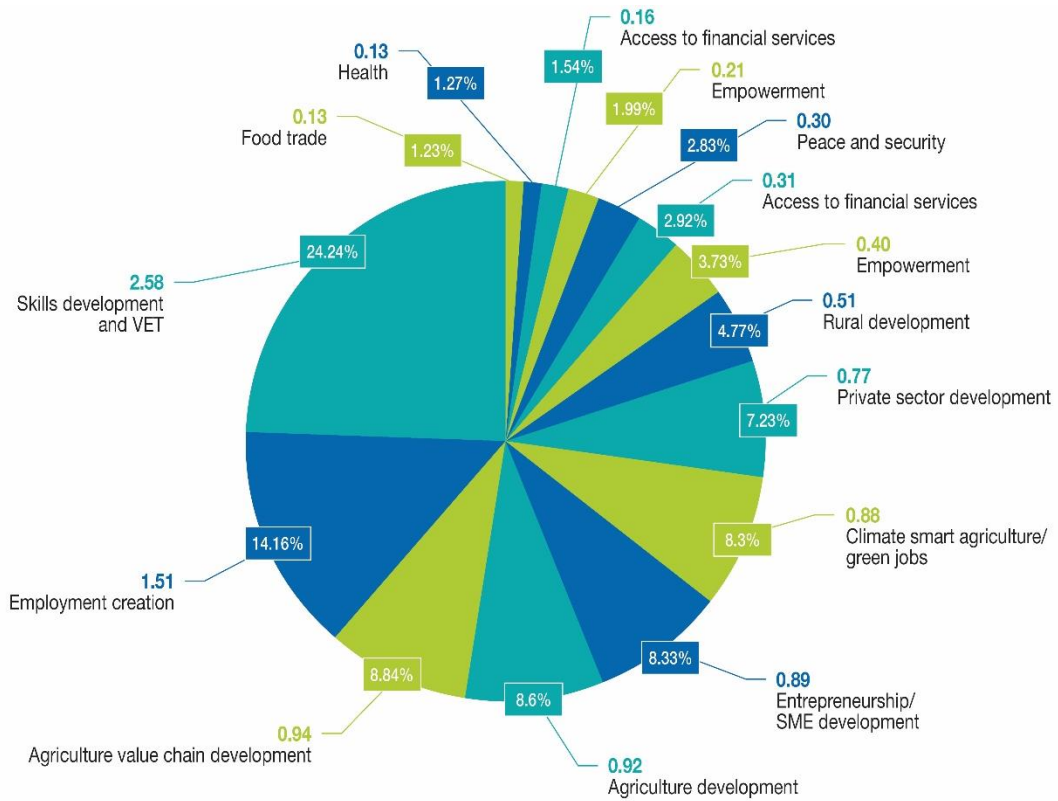
Spending on skills development and TVET programmes differed greatly between G20 and IOs. Some 24% of overall G20 member country programme spending was focused on skills development and TVET, compared to 0.82% of IO spending. IOs instead focused on developing agriculture value chains (31.7% of RYE-focused IO budget), followed by rural and agricultural development in general and entrepreneurship and SME promotion. Digital skills development and climate-smart agriculture/green jobs projects constituted a minor but non-negligible share of the budgets in both G20 and IO portfolios (Figure 3). Given the complex nature of the rural youth unemployment crisis, diversified spending can be a holistic way to build an enabling environment for rural youth employment.

**Figure 3. Typology of projects by thematic areas of interventions in Africa, by budget (in USD billion)**

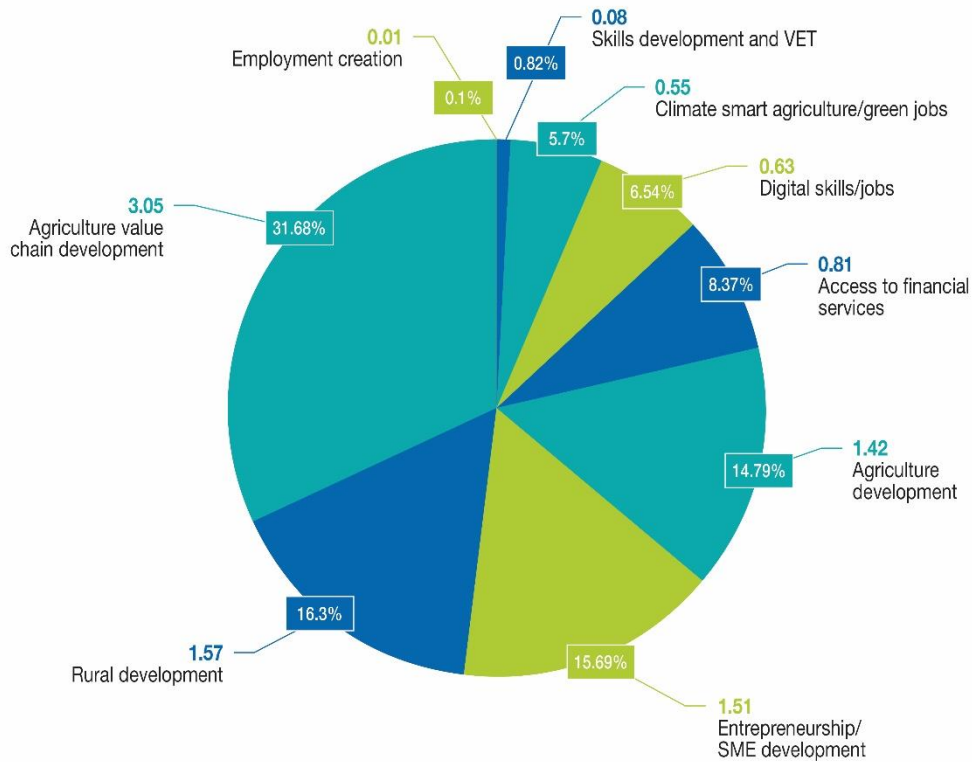
A. Total RYE-relevant projects (total budget: USD 20.2 billion)



B. RYE-relevant projects funded by G20 (budget: USD 10.6 billion)



C. RYE-relevant projects implemented by IOs (Total budget: USD 9.6 billion)





*Note:* Data from questionnaire responses by Canada, EU, France, Germany, Italy, Korea, Türkiye, United Kingdom, United States, AfDB, African Union, FAO, GAFSP, IFAD and ILO. Analysis based on 715 projects. VET is Vocational Education and Training, or also referred to as Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). SME is Small and Medium-sized Enterprise.

*Source:* Authors' calculations.

In terms of the number of projects, skills development and TVET projects accounted for 159 out of 671 RYE-relevant projects dedicated to Africa, about 23%, followed by agriculture value chain development projects and entrepreneurship and SME promotion projects. G20-financed projects followed a similar typology, while agriculture value chain development projects constituted the majority of projects implemented by international organisations.

## Findings on results of RYE

In terms of impact, few questionnaire responses included detailed information on the number of targeted beneficiaries and results achieved. Out of the 715 projects reported in the 15 responses from G20 members and IOs, only 59 projects included information on job creation and just 82 projects reported on employability results. Germany reported a lump sum result on a group of 216 projects. This lack of information was due in part to the fact that a number of projects were still ongoing, but more often the information was simply missing or unavailable, signalling weak monitoring and evaluation of projects. Some projects were also delayed due to the COVID-19 situation. A manual search of project progress reports was used to complement the questionnaire dataset when necessary and available.

Despite the dearth of information, the sum of reported results shows that the G20 Initiative for RYE's objectives were overachieved. The G20 Initiative for RYE's target of 1.1 million jobs was overachieved by 261% (more than twice the target), while the employability target of 5 million was overachieved by 128% (almost 30% above the target) (Table 3). These results, based on about 300 projects, might have been even higher had more responses been received with complete data on results and project spending.

**Table 3. Reported results on job creation and employability**

	Employability	Job creation
G20 RYE objectives	5 000 000	1 100 000
G20-financed projects results	4 202 504	2 118 465
IO-implemented projects results	2 179 268	749 566
Total of G20 and IO projects	6 381 772	2 868 031
<b>% achievement against RYE targets</b>	<b>128%</b>	<b>261%</b>

*Note:* In the questionnaire responses, 8% of projects had information on the number of jobs created and 11% of projects had information on employability results. Data are taken from questionnaire responses by Canada, EU, France, Germany, Italy, Korea, Türkiye, United Kingdom, United States, AfDB, African Union, FAO, GAFSP, IFAD and ILO.

*Source:* Authors' calculations based on responses to the OECD questionnaire.

In conclusion, the questionnaire responses show that:

- G20 and IO's funding between 2017 and 2022 for RYE projects in Africa reached USD 20.2 billion.
- A total of 671 RYE projects in Africa were implemented or ongoing during the reporting period.
- The G20 Initiative for RYE's target of 1.1 million jobs was overachieved, with 2 868 031 jobs created thanks to G20 and IO projects.
- The Initiative's employability target of 5 million was overachieved, with 6 381 772 youth trained thanks to G20 and IO projects during the Initiative's period.



## 4. Recommendations

Finding gainful and decent employment is the major challenge facing rural youth, especially those in Africa. Their employment prospects are limited by low job creation, missing skillsets, high informality and other barriers.

Over the past decade, we have witnessed a notable increase in youth-specific employment programmes and financing in Africa. We have also witnessed diverse innovations in the implementation of youth employment programmes at every level. These changes have aimed to reduce gaps and incorporate lessons learned in order to improve the impact of the initiatives, in areas from programme design and targeted populations to increased involvement of governmental and non-governmental actors, methodology and governance.

The Group of Twenty (G20) Initiative for Rural Youth Employment (RYE) has helped to further discussion on the importance of taking action to improve livelihoods of rural youth and secure employment through a comprehensive approach. The G20 Initiative for RYE is a key component of the G20 Africa Partnership, which aims to facilitate alignment, coherence and ownership of regional and international efforts to meet commitments such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063, among others. Determining quantitative targets for the first time was a huge step towards establishing greater accountability of a G20 initiative. Defining action areas and targets was an important first step to allow measuring against targets and moving the G20 towards greater transparency and accountability of declarations and commitments.

This chapter details the lessons learned from the assessment of the initiative. It provides some recommendations for future G20 initiatives and RYE programming by international organisations (ios), governments and the private sector as well as points out remaining challenges that RYE programmes need to take into consideration.

### Recommendations

#### ***For future G20 initiatives***

**Future initiatives could set more ambitious goals.** Considering that every year between 2015 and 2030 close to 30 million youth are expected to reach working age in Africa, the G20 Initiative for RYE's target of creating 1.1 million jobs in five years appears rather modest. Rural African economies will need many more jobs to absorb enough youth into the workforce and shift the current tides of youth unemployment and under-employment. These targets could be calculated based on empirical situation analysis, accounting for projected population growth and income changes within a set timeline. A global or regional quantitative target on job creation, for example, could be determined using available data, such as labour force surveys or household surveys. Such an analysis may provide insight at the subnational level into potential target populations and promising value chains. This could be a starting point for understanding the magnitude of new jobs needed or youth to be trained, i.e. a breakdown of the rural youth population by region, gender, level of educational attainment and so on.

**A common framework would promote the alignment of efforts.** For future initiatives, a common framework could be put in place to promote alignment in the efforts of individual G20 members and IOs working towards initiative goals. This overarching framework would ideally include a standardised methodology and definitions of key concepts, such as the upper bound of the age range for youth (24, 29 or 35), types of employment to promote or create, and how to measure employment creation and employability. Given that the effectiveness of a project is also dependent on its structure and design, an overarching framework with well-articulated and pre-defined goals would also help to improve the alignment of practitioners in meeting the goals set by the G20, from practitioners designing programmes in donor offices to those acting on the ground. It is also important to stress how G20 bilateral and multilateral programmes and projects align and contribute to leaders-level initiatives such as the RYE. That would help the G20 better assess the influence and impact of its collective actions on the sustainable development agenda-setting and on the implementation at the operational level of relevant initiatives by G20 members and relevant IOs.

**Provide clear guidelines to G20 members to monitor and report on the progress of a G20 initiative.**

The responses collected from the questionnaire on the G20 RYE initiative lacked consistency across the board. Some reported on rural development in large projects which had indirect implications on RYE and others reported on youth employment-specific projects. This made interpretation and comparison difficult. No bilateral agency collected G20 initiative-specific projects. Future G20 initiatives should be designed with an accompanying monitoring and evaluation framework and a standardised reporting mechanism. A standardised attribution and reporting mechanism could help measure progress towards an Initiative's goals. For example, tagging new projects with the label "G20 Initiative" could help with traceability. A simple reporting mechanism for an initiative, in co-ordination with respective development agencies, would help monitor contributions by G20 members and facilitate inputs to the Development Working Group (DWG) Accountability Reports. In the absence of a monitoring framework, a financial commitment target might be more appropriate and easier to trace within a G20 Initiative context.

***For development agencies and multilateral organisations***

**Ensure coherence between ongoing large-scale initiatives.** Synergies could be developed between G20 initiatives like the RYE and new or ongoing regional and international organisations' campaigns and programmes for youth employment. This would help channel resources and support donor co-ordination towards a common goal. The inclusion of relevant multilateral institutions in DWG discussions would help design future G20 initiatives in line with existing efforts.

**Support G20 in setting common indicators to monitor progress on RYE.** Youth employment and employability can be measured in many ways. The age bracket of what is considered youth is also wide-ranging, between United Nations (UN) and national definitions. Proposing a set of basic definitions and indicators to allow rapid monitoring of large-scale initiatives such as those launched by the G20 would facilitate reporting on progress and ensuring common objectives towards youth employment. Within the youth employment category, for example, three main indicators could be agreed on: rates of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET), employment status and informal employment rates (OECD, 2017<sup>[73]</sup>). Further secondary indicators that would provide information on the quality of jobs could then be selected, such as time-related or wage-related underemployment (OECD, 2017<sup>[73]</sup>). Employability will require education-related data such as enrolment rates in secondary education or technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and carrying out skills mismatch analysis.

**Design multi-sectoral programmes by considering both the labour demand and supply sides.** RYE programmes often focus on skills development or entrepreneurship, without adequate market research or dialogue with the private sector to understand labour market needs. Engaging private sector actors in the design of projects and programmes will likely have greater impact in terms of wage job creation. As agreed and promoted by the G20 initiatives on territorial development, such as the High Level Principles on

Sustainable Habitat through Regional Planning and the G20 Platform on SDG Localisation and Intermediary Cities, a place-based approach that links relevant policy domains and actors – including across levels of government – and strengthens rural-urban linkages is likely to be more impactful.

### ***For governments and the private sector***

**Offer on-the-job training and wage subsidy programmes.** Despite the large qualification mismatch and the need for skilled labour, only a small number of enterprises offer training opportunities to young workers. On-the-job skills training can be very useful in improving the employability and productivity of young people experiencing difficulties in finding a job. Training can vary from developing basic job readiness to more comprehensive packages that include technical and soft skills training. Governments can support these initiatives by providing wage subsidies to encourage new hires and reduce the cost and risks to employers.

**Facilitate multi-stakeholder national policy dialogues to smooth school-to-work transitions.** National strategies should make efforts to direct investments towards sectors with a high job creation potential. This requires regular dialogue with the educators and private sector actors, both large and small firms. While the private sector should indicate labour and skills needs, the education system and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) must ensure up-to-date training for these positions to facilitate their emergence. TVET by itself cannot solve the skills mismatch problem, but if well-designed in collaboration with the private sector, it can contribute to bringing young people closer to job requirements.

**Set up national qualification frameworks and certification schemes.** Transitioning between education levels and the labour market can be facilitated by well-functioning qualification frameworks. Qualification frameworks increase transparency across education systems and make the value of different qualifications clear to students, employers and other stakeholders. Rural youth are often informally trained by older members of the community, whether it is in farming techniques or craftsmanship. These informal learnings should also be recognised in order to facilitate eventual job mobility and additional training. Qualification frameworks require a high level of collaboration and co-ordination between institutions and employers.

**Implement a national youth policy.** Despite nearly two out of three countries in the world having a national youth policy, employment opportunities fall short of promises and the gap between youth aspirations and the reality of the labour market continues to widen. Greater policy coherence, adequate funding and stronger institutional capacity are needed for dedicated ministries to turn national youth policies or strategies into an effective driver of youth well-being and decent employment across all areas of governmental action. A rural youth-specific policy or strategy would be even more appropriate. In fact, in countries that already have a comprehensive strategy for youth as demonstrated by the existence of a national youth policy framework, such youth support programmes can contribute to a more efficient allocation of the available or needed resources to implement the youth strategy. Cross-sectoral co-operation should also be developed with local and regional actors (OECD Development Centre, 2018<sup>[74]</sup>). Strengthening implementation capacities at the local level, notably in small and medium-sized agglomerations, is critical.

## **Going forward**

Rural youth employment in Africa is a complex issue, spanning many different areas for potential intervention. Challenges that require multi-stakeholder and Some lessons can be drawn for the design of future RYE programmes and to ensure their sustainability.

**Better co-ordination and organisation of resources to meet the established targets is fundamental.** While many development projects have started incorporating a holistic approach into their design (promoting job creation, improving employability and facilitating employment), these projects will be limited in their impact if national governments are not deliberately co-ordinating official development assistance

(ODA) and other donor-funded programmes around a coherent rural youth employment strategy. Strategic donor co-ordination at the national level will help the extensive network of development practitioners move in alignment with one another. Most of the development projects listed here simultaneously contain components of improving labour supply, labour demand and/or labour facilitation. If they are not designed to work towards an articulated and strategic goal, the gains made by these programmes are not likely to be sustained over the long run. Governments may consider drafting such a national strategy by looking towards recent frameworks and self-commitments, such as those by the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and the African Agribusiness Youth Strategy (AAYS) of the African Union (The Committee on World Food Security (CFS), 2022<sup>[75]</sup>; AU, 2022<sup>[76]</sup>).

**Future programmes should incorporate efforts to inform youth about pathways to formalisation.**

Wage employment opportunities can remain limited in many countries, despite the best programme interventions. Rural African youth are very likely to venture into self-employment, with a high probability that they will be operating informally: 79% of youth employers work in the informal sector, and 66% of youth own-account workers work in the informal sector (OECD, 2021<sup>[5]</sup>) (Box 12). For example, incorporating awareness and assistance services into business incubation and business development programmes could be a way to reduce informal work among youth. As business incubation and development services are an important point of first contact for aspiring young entrepreneurs, formalisation assistance services can help young entrepreneurs set up their businesses in the formal sector. Potential examples of awareness and formalisation assistance services could be: information sessions on bookkeeping; registering economic activity with the proper tax and regulatory authorities; and informational sessions on options for accessing contributory social protection. However, if registration and regulatory structures are not put in place or not operating effectively, the impact of such campaigns will remain limited. While formalisation will take time, especially in the agriculture sector, RYE programmes should provide information about social protection for informal workers as well as pathways to formalisation. This could already help change the negative perception among youth associated with farming and jobs in agriculture.

### Box 12. Measuring the impact of informality on households with the OECD KIbIH database

Informal employment refers to working arrangements that are *de facto* or *de jure* not subject to national labour legislation, income taxation, or entitlement to social protection or certain other employment benefits, such as advance notice of dismissal, severance pay, and paid annual or sick leave.

The OECD has created a new database, Key Indicators of Informality based on Individuals and their Household (KIbIH), that builds upon household surveys to provide comparable indicators and harmonised data on informal employment, well-being of informal workers and their dependents. It currently covers 42 countries across North and sub-Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean and spans 2000 to 2021.

According to the KIbIH, at least 62% of Africans live in households where all workers are informally employed. According to the same data, about 78% of the workers in Africa work informally. Given the risks posed by informal employment, individuals living in households with those working informally are potentially vulnerable to the risks borne by informal workers, whether living in an informal or mixed household.

The KIbIH database allows a deeper look into the vulnerabilities of workers in the informal economy. It portrays informality at both the individual and household levels and takes into account not only the employment status of workers but also the socio-demographic and economic status of their households. For most KIbIH countries, data are available for at least two points in time.

The KIbIH can allow policy makers in low- and middle-income countries better monitoring of workers' vulnerabilities in the informal economy. It can help them to assess how such vulnerabilities may be passed on to their dependents, or mitigated by other household members, and to identify social protection interventions that fit their needs.

Source: OECD (2021<sup>[5]</sup>), *Key Indicators of Informality based on Individuals and their Household* (database).

**Pushing forward on gender equality is also critical.** Progress on gender equality is needed to change the employment environment for young rural women. While many programmes have placed gender equality at the core of their approach, more should be done to tackle the societal norms that limit women to certain occupations or that relegate them to unpaid care work outside the recognised labour force. Without a shift in social norms, women will continue to be limited in their capacity to participate across the economy (Box 13). Tackling rural youth employment will also require figuring out a path forward with respect to the intersection of gender inequality and informality. Most working women in Africa are engaged in informal work: 81% of African women work informally, while among younger African women, 79% aged 15-24 and 82% aged 25-29 work informally (OECD, 2021<sup>[5]</sup>). Many of these young women in rural areas are engaged as contributing family workers in household enterprises and are impacted both by restrictive societal norms and by barriers to accessing formal and decent work.

### Box 13. Discriminatory social institutions stalling women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship

The OECD Development Centre's Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) is a unique cross-country measure of discriminatory social institutions, encompassing formal and informal laws, social norms and practices that restrict women's and girls' rights, access to empowerment opportunities and resources.

African women face the highest level of discrimination in social institutions compared with their peers in the rest of the world. The region overall scored 40 on the SIGI, indicating a high level of discrimination in social institutions as well as a need for political engagement and investments to strengthen progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment. Africa is closely followed by Asia with a score of 36, while Latin America and the Caribbean achieve a score of 27 and North America and Europe respectively attain a score of 18 and 17.

There are several contributing factors. In 2020, the labour force participation rate across African countries was 20 percentage points lower for women than for men. Discriminatory social norms that confine women to reproductive and care roles are among the leading causes of this difference. In 2018, women spent, on average, four times more time than men on unpaid care and domestic work, including raising children, caring for sick or elderly family members and managing household tasks. In addition, biased perceptions of women's abilities and discriminatory educational norms tend to prevent women from accessing decent work and confine them to specific sectors of the economy.

At the same time, biases related to boys' and girls' abilities shape educational choices when accessing secondary and tertiary education – regarding science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields – and thus accentuate gender-based segregation in the labour force. For instance, men account for more than 80% of workers in sectors such as construction, mining and quarrying, or transport, storage and communication. Moreover, men's traditional status and roles, household decision-making practices, and discriminatory inheritance laws and practices limit women's ownership of agricultural land and constrain their economic independence. In some African countries, the husband is legally deemed the head of the family and the manager, administrator and owner of any assets and properties, including agricultural plots and land. Discriminatory social norms and biases related to women's access to markets, finance, training and networks also hamper women's entrepreneurship in Africa. Strong social norms that view men as better business managers than women – and the internalisation of these norms by women themselves – also constrain women's entrepreneurship.

*Source: Adapted from OECD (2021<sup>[16]</sup>), SIGI 2021 Regional Report for Africa.*

**Advancing on rural youth employment requires advancing on rural development at large.** Rural development is fundamental to improving the employment situation of young people in rural areas. Investment to adapt agriculture and agri-food value chains, for example, may yield job creation in rural areas. Growing populations, urbanisation and rising working-class incomes are driving demand for more diverse and higher value-added agricultural and food products in Africa (OECD, 2021<sup>[77]</sup>). Off-farm labour will be needed to meet this demand, especially in agribusinesses. These opportunities, which tend to be in rural areas and secondary towns, are better paid and have the potential to result in greater reductions in poverty and inequality (G20, 2017<sup>[3]</sup>). If local food systems are adapted to meet the challenge of supporting a higher and changing domestic demand for food, they could not only boost job creation in rural areas but also promote greater prosperity.

**Young people must be involved in the transformation of food systems.** To achieve food and nutrition security, fairness, the eradication of poverty and ecological sustainability, food systems must be transformed. The transformation must involve young people, particularly in emerging nations where

agricultural food systems are the major source of employment (HLPE, 2021<sup>[78]</sup>). The 2021 UN Food Systems Summit called to attention the importance of youth involvement in reshaping and transforming food systems.

**Other rural development strategies may yield diversified job opportunities for youth.** Rural areas can vary enormously, and there can be just as much potential for rural areas outside of agriculture (OECD, 2016<sup>[52]</sup>). For example, developing tradeable non-farm industries and services can help boost the productivity of low-density areas, with knock-on effects for rural economies and eventually for youth employment (OECD, 2016<sup>[52]</sup>). Unlocking the growth potential of rural areas will also require developing the physical, social and economic infrastructure linking rural areas to higher-density areas. This is emphasised in the OECD's people-centred and place-based rural development approach, "Rural Policy 3.0", whose goal is to enhance communities' competitive advantages both through integrated investments and appropriate local services and by encouraging local participation and bottom-up development (OECD, 2016<sup>[79]</sup>).

**Collecting evidence and building upon existing international policy dialogue and processes will help further align RYE objectives from various actors.** A plethora of multi-stakeholder groups have formed to align areas of action and to share experiences and best practices in tackling RYE and decent work. The Coalition on Decent Work, Living Incomes and Wages for all Food System Workers (DWLIW) aims to improve the quality of livelihoods of agriculture and food systems workers through promoting labour and human rights and increasing opportunities for decent and productive employment within the agri-food sector (Fair Trade Advocacy Office, 2022<sup>[80]</sup>). The Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions prominently includes youth in its implementation strategy for acceleration to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The Thematic Working Group on RYE, created by the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development as a follow-up to the G20 Initiative, provides an open space for dialogue and discussion among donors and international organisations on the subject of rural youth employment.

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# Annex A. G20 flagship programmes supporting rural youth

## Agricultural Technical Vocational Education and Training for Women (ATVET4W) (2017-22)

*Beneficiary profile:* Rural women, rural youth

*Countries:* Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Togo

*Budget:* EUR 19 million

*Implementing agencies:* Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD)

*Donors:* Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany (BMZ), Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

*Number of youth beneficiaries:* 13 900 trainees

### Description

The ATVET4W programme aims to offer women access to technical and vocational education and training and to empower them through gender-transformative pilot initiatives. It has two main channels: i) a finance facility that offers resources for projects on employment; and ii) a technical component that gathers knowledge from the participatory countries and also involves the private sector and training institutions in a common platform. The programme's larger aim is to match the competences of youth participants to labour-market demand, with ameliorated access for women, marginalised populations, refugees and migrants. This initiative is part of a larger programme, the Skills Initiative for Africa (SIFA), which is financed by the African Union Commission (AUC) with the support of the German government.

### Results

- 13 900 people benefited from quality agricultural technical and vocational education and training (TVET).
  - 97% of employers surveyed confirmed that those who underwent training in the workplace could be employed immediately.
- 22 partner institutions introduced gender guidelines.
  - 17 offer gender-sensitive training, laying the foundations for women's empowerment.
- 1 comprehensive capacity development programme on entrepreneurship and gender was developed – Gender makes Business Sense (GmBS).
- 1 self-paced GmBS online learning offer was developed.

### Success factors

- Involvement of the private sector and potential employers.
- Correspondence with national qualification framework.



- Soft skills entrepreneurship: Adapted soft skills can allow the youth to harness better potential opportunities through entrepreneurship.
- Involvement of local expertise and beneficiaries.
- Addressing of restrictive gender norms.

## Green Jobs for Rural Youth Employment (2019-24)

*Beneficiary profile:* Rural and urban youth

*Countries:* Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste, Zimbabwe

*Budget:* USD 6 million

*Implementing agency:* Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

*Donor:* Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA)

### Description

This programme provides selected rural and urban youth with capacity development opportunities and employment opportunities across the green agriculture, green energy and green waste management sectors.

Youth participants are first trained in transferable soft skills: problem-solving, communication, teamwork, gender leadership, green business development and financial literacy.

The participants are then asked to identify a local issue and propose green job solutions for addressing the problem. Those whose proposals are selected by the public or private sector are offered a two-year public employment or business start-up opportunity. Prior to engaging in the employment initiative, youth are provided with sector-specific training as well as entrepreneurship training. At the end of the project, challenges and best practices will be widely disseminated among stakeholders. Project results will be also used for developing national (and possibly regional) strategies for youth employment, promoting agricultural and rural development, and transitioning to the green economy.

### Results

- 700 young individuals will benefit from training.
- 223 youth will be supported in developing their green businesses (including grant support and technical and business-related mentorship).
- 225 will be engaged in a green wage employment programme (for a minimum of two years).
- 15 partnerships will be created with academic, private and public institutions and with civil society organisations to support the transition to the green economy.
- 100 government officials will have access to capacity development and policy support.
- 9 000 indirect beneficiaries will receive training from partnering organisations.

### Success factors

- Local partnerships: Public/private, involvement of the private sector in project selection
- Skills training and employment provided jointly
- Scalability: The most efficient practices transposed at the national strategy of development
- Positive returns from linking graduate and non-graduate youth

- Additional employment creation: most green businesses and wage employment programmes have hired additional youth or community members to expand production activities.

### **Challenges**

- Structural issues: Constrained/lacking infrastructure in rural areas and related investment, low productivity in the agriculture sector, environmental-related issues, and natural resources
- Lack of social protection infrastructure
- Limited access to financial products for rural youth.

## **Building resilience in the Sahel region through job creation for youth: Mauritania pilot (2020-23)**

*Beneficiary profile:* Rural youth and their networks

*Countries:* Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger

*Budget:* USD 1.6 million

*Implementing agency:* FAO

*Donor:* Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture of Germany (BMEL)

### **The approach**

The project aims to build resilience and social cohesion among youth while improving their livelihoods. It involves innovative approaches to increase their access to sustainable employment opportunities, including via piloting employment schemes (both rapid temporary schemes and medium- to long-term ones).

A pilot project was conducted in Mauritania, with an action plan for the national, regional and global levels. Employment schemes were developed with the intention of targeting 500 young men and women and providing them with job opportunities, ideally green jobs. At the national level, this is supported through capacity-enhancing activities. At the regional level, policies and planning for youth employment are discussed in forums/learning routes. Dialogue at the policy level involves consultations with youth.

### **Results**

- One event fostering intergenerational dialogue was organised with key representatives and youth.
  - The event highlighted the difficulties encountered by youth in rural Mauritania and their expectations for the future.
  - It covered access to opportunities in the agri-food sector; information systems (through employment offices); youth-inclusive emergency plans; youth-inclusive policy making for green jobs; and preventing youth radicalisation. There was a technical advisory group for consultations on supporting youth enterprises in accessing timely information and funds.
- Studies were undertaken at the regional level with the Overseas Development Institute (ODI).
  - FAO-ODI study published in 2022: “The intersection between socio-economic conditions and youth radicalisation – Implication for programming in the G5 Sahel countries”.
  - Learning route developed in partnership with PROCASUR (Burkina Faso, Mauritania) and the G5.



- In the Mauritanian pilot project, an employment scheme entitled “Ferme Mpourie” provided training for beneficiaries in key areas and offered them specific tasks/jobs.
  - This serves as a preventive measure against negative coping mechanisms.
  - The short-term scheme is accompanied by a longer-term one for training youth on sustainable agricultural practices while reinforcing skills in sustainable/smart techniques.

### Challenges

- Activities had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 crisis.
  - New initiatives were required, such as keeping excluded populations on track on the programme’s timeline by supporting them with access to an Internet connection.

## Youth Entrepreneurship and Innovation Multi-Donor Trust Fund (2017-25)

*Beneficiary profile:* Youth, rural youth

*Countries:* Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zimbabwe

*Budget:* nearly USD 40 million

*Implementing agencies:* African Development Bank

*Donors:* Governments of Denmark, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden

This initiative, managed by the African Development Bank (AfDB), supports Africa’s entrepreneurship ecosystems. The fund promotes the creation of sustainable jobs for young Africans by equipping youth- and women-led start-ups with the skills, financial support and enabling environments needed to run bankable businesses. It also supports micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).

The fund is helping the AfDB’s Jobs for Youth in Africa Strategy to achieve its goals of generating 25 million jobs and equipping 50 million youths with skills to enhance their employability and entrepreneurial success by 2025. It brings together donors and partners. Denmark and Norway made initial contributions in 2017, and Sweden, the Netherlands and Italy became donors in 2018.

The fund, which now has nearly USD 40 million, supports three types of activities: i) business development services such as incubators and accelerators; ii) funding for research and project preparation; and iii) technical assistance and capacity building for African governments, public agencies and intergovernmental organisations.

### Results

- About 21 000 youths have seen their employment prospects increase.
- Access to finance is reported to have increased for about 5 500 youths; business survival has increased for youth-led small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); and access to grants is reported to have improved.

### Challenges

- The absence of an established ecosystem of entrepreneurs may undermine the application of projects and programmes financed by the fund in fragile contexts.
- It has been found that training is more efficient when it targets an adequate public and is led by key stakeholders from the government and the donor.

- Specific attention should be accorded to what is taught in terms of skills, youth and gender. For youth, training should consider the type of employment and characteristics of the worker, with lessons learned from other countries based on empirical evidence.

Future projects with similar objectives may be improved by: i) linking theoretical and empirical evidence; ii) making knowledge products that respond to market demand and the needs of the targeted audience; iii) instituting synergies between client representatives; and iv) standardising estimates for jobs and results.

## Youth grassroots approach to connecting youth voices to action (2021-23)

*Beneficiary profile:* Youth, rural youth

*Countries:* Colombia, Morocco, Rwanda, Senegal

*Budget:* USD 100 000

*Implementing agencies:* PROCASUR International

*Donors:* International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

### **The approach**

The purpose of this programme is to empower youth and achieve inclusivity by connecting youth voices to the design and implementation of projects, interventions and strategies. Rural youth face barriers at the global, regional and local levels due to isolation and lack of connectivity and cohesion. Youth participation in dialogue of any kind is a tremendous catalyst for contributing to their inclusion and, ultimately, to rural youth employment. In the long run, this may nourish rural transformation.

### **Results**

The programme, which is still ongoing, promotes the establishment of Rural Youth Alliances to facilitate the establishment of a mechanism that connects young women and men at the grassroots level. So far, three African countries and 45 youth organisations have engaged in the grassroots mechanism (AfDB, 2019<sup>[81]</sup>).

### **Success factors and challenges**

- Decentralisation: Integrating this innovative approach at a decentralised level requires investment in terms of listening and sensitisation towards youth issues.
- Tailored interventions: Because youth differ in terms of needs and expectations, adaptation to local circumstances is essential. Organisations should optimise collective actions so that beneficiaries can better profit from governance and outcome development in the agriculture sector.
- Aggregating the voice of the youth: There can be interference between the voices of leaders and youth clubs, on the one hand, and the voices of youth at the grassroots level, on the other. Organising youth at the grassroots level will enhance cohesion while offering opportunities for marginalised populations such as rural youth, indigenous peoples, disabled individuals, etc.
- Ownership: Youth want to be actively involved in the development process and are keen to perceive the contribution of their actions on the ground through improved livelihoods. Participatory models should be revised to include activities such as mentoring and facilitation. In terms of engagement, youth prefer flexibility to overly formalised engagement, which may undermine the initial objective.
- Equilibrium: Youth councils/networks and peer relationship models can provide equilibrium between structured and flexible engagement.

## SKILL-UP Programme (2018-20)

*Beneficiary profile:* Youth, rural youth

*Countries:* Ethiopia, Ghana, Lebanon, Malawi, Senegal, Tanzania

*Budget:* USD 1.48 million

*Implementing agency:* International Labour Organization (ILO)

*Donor:* Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

### ***The approach***

The programme aims to enhance skills systems to take advantage of new opportunities offered by emerging global drivers of change: digitalisation, international trade integration, technological change, large international migration flows, climate change and changing demographics, among others. It focuses on skills that will be demanded by the labour market and on the inclusion of marginal populations.

The approach has global and country components. SKILL-UP Global focuses on generating knowledge and innovative and practical tools for changing skills systems. It also contributes to strengthening partnerships, capacity development and advocacy. SKILL-UP Country Projects provide direct support for skills systems in the following areas: skills anticipation, skills policies and systems, and skills for social inclusion.

### ***Results***

- 2 530 people learned new skills, reskilled or upskilled over the past two years.
- 362 075 people in total benefited from the programme's activities.
- 40 TVET institutions built their capacity.
- 265 tripartite national stakeholders received technical support and capacity building.

By the end of the programme, SKILL-UP had reached 2 000 additional direct beneficiaries.

### ***Lessons learned (all countries)***

Experiences and lessons learned differed according to circumstances of each country. As an example, SKILL-UP Senegal aimed to support skills systems for the digital sector. It encountered the following challenges: i) socio-economic needs were not met in training sessions; ii) the TVET funding system was insufficient for helping youth to enter the labour market and for aiding the self-employed, and it depended on external financing; iii) TVET has a poor reputation, with low employability levels of people completing the programme; and iv) the institutional and governance framework for TVET was inadequate.

To respond to such challenges, it is advised to facilitate access to high-quality training with a broad range of content for people aged 15-59, and especially for people working in rural areas. Content on topics that are relevant to the needs of enterprises – such as technical skills in areas like agriculture, mining or management – should be reinforced to meet the labour needs of industries. For this to happen, the same should be carried out for the training of trainers, both pedagogically and technically.

## Skills for Employment and Productivity in Low Income Countries: Mozambique (2014-17)

*Beneficiary profile:* Youth, rural youth  
*Country:* Mozambique (Cabo Delgado province)  
*Budget:* USD 800 000  
*Implementing agency:* ILO  
*Donor:* Korea

### **The approach**

[The Skills for Employment and Productivity in Low Income Countries project](#) implemented in Mozambique sought to reach a broader base of job creation along the value chains in the extractive industry, focusing on the most vulnerable groups, especially youth and women. Emphasis was on acquisition of skills for employability and supporting services for the development of SMEs.

The programme used the ILO's [Training for Rural Economic Empowerment](#) (TREE) methodology, which aims to develop the livelihoods of youth and their communities through income-generating activities. This is enabled through training and the identification of opportunities. Demand-orientated training is complemented with a post-training component. Special attention is paid to the context of rurality and informality.

### **Results**

- Identification of rural opportunities of 6 communities through studies
- Creation of an open-source Moodle platform in collaboration with the United Nations and the ILO, with 280 users registered and 310 resources
- 60 000 page views registered on the TREE platform; 6 500 sessions and 3 800 visitors
- 4 material guides on how to identify economic opportunities; preparation of 145 TREE trainers
- Pilot training for 323 individuals; 1 478 trained youth; 60 individuals trained in solar energies
- 259 toolkits for 1 238 beneficiaries (60% youth) in sectors such as construction, mechanics and agro-processing; 100 toolkits given to 490 young men and women in the fishing sector
- Formalisation of youth associations in fishery, influencing 140 beneficiaries
- Construction of a database on all the beneficiaries
- Production of a video on women's entrepreneurship in collaboration with the government television channel.

### **Lessons learned**

- Scarcity of wage employment: Since wage employment is scarce in the labour market, failures can stem from not considering a self-employment outcome after the project.
- Incorporating the literacy level: This is relevant for the trainees and the trainers. Teaching guides should be suitable and favour activity-based teaching.
- Monitoring and evaluation: Monitoring should take place at each stage of the project. Monitoring and evaluation should take place in a participatory manner – methods that are too rigorous might prevent compliance from the trainers.
- Identification of job opportunities for women: This should take place to capture broader potential employment – and not only in the traditional sector.

## Inclusion of Rural Youth in Poultry and Aquaculture Value Chains in Mali (2017-2022)

*Beneficiary profile:* Youth, rural youth

*Country:* Mali (Sikasso and Yanfolila in the Sikasso region, Kati and Dioïla)

*Budget:* USD 3.6 million

*Implementing agency:* IFAD

*Donor:* IFAD

### **The approach**

This [pilot project](#) is part of the Global Agriculture and Food Security Program's Missing Middle Initiative. Its objective is to strengthen the income and food security of rural youth in Mali by including them in poultry and aquaculture value chains to create sustainable economic activities. Beneficiaries have access to training in technical skills, agroecological farming practices, organisation and finance.

The project is conducted with the Association of Professional Farmers' Organisations (AOPP) and the National Co-ordination Agency for Farmers' Organisations (CNOP). Its targets include: i) 1 000 rural youth trained in management and techniques in poultry and fish farming value chains; ii) 1 000 rural youth trained in nutritional practices; iii) production models in poultry and fish farming tested and a platform created; iv) 1 000 income-generating activities (IGAs) set up; v) loan recipients and their producers' organisations (POs) providing marketing and supply for farming production units financed by the project; vi) the AOPP being strengthened; and vii) dissemination of lessons learned from project activities.

Additional funds were allocated to SMEs after the start of the COVID-19 crisis for the creation of processing units in high-demand areas (within the sector of poultry and fishing). These units are meant to favour public/private partnerships. Workshops were organised on access to finance and entrepreneurship for rural youth working in agriculture. In this context, data on products, marketing and income generation were gathered to understand more accurately what is in demand.

### **Results**

- 1 135 people (70% young people) have participated in training across 49 producer-based organisations, with 1 050 able to access direct employment.
- 1 135 farmers have received access to funds and services.
- Infrastructure improvements include rehabilitation of 20 post-harvest facilities, while improvement of production of lands (about 240 hectares) has benefited 1 025 smallholders.
- 1 155 people have received access to products and services related to nutrition; agreements were made with health centres for purposes such as training support and nutrition-related services.

### **Success factors**

- Producer organisation-focused strategies in a context of fragility, conflict and violent conditions
- Empowerment of producers' organisations
- Empowerment of the youth and their organisations.

## Kenya Youth Employment Skills (K-YES) (2015-20)

*Beneficiary profile:* Youth, rural youth

*Country:* Kenya (Bungoma, Garissa, Kericho, Kisii, Kwale, Migori, Nairobi, Nyeri and West Pokot counties)

*Budget:* USD 21.9 million

*Implementing agencies:* RTI International, Land O' Lakes, International Rescue Committee, McKinsey & Company and SSG Advisor

*Donor:* US Agency for International Development (USAID)

### **The approach**

The K-YES project gives motivated Kenyan youths the opportunity to acquire the skills they need to compete and succeed at work, with services tailored to their needs and the local context. The project offers training co-ordinated with the local private sector. The sessions cover vocational training, entrepreneurial and business skills, career counselling, financial inclusion and “youth-friendly” services.

The approach is based on co-operation and partnerships among government, youth and industries. The programme works with more than 50 companies, including Coca-Cola and Kenya Commercial Bank. It aims to improve perceptions of TVET and also to prevent extremism at the grassroots level, using a cross-sector approach that involves key community actors such as religious leaders and employers (USAID, 2020<sup>[82]</sup>).

### **Results**

- 45 540 youth found employment.
- 291 790 youth received access to financial/market/employment-related services.
- 122 public-private partnerships were formed.
- A lion's share of trainees found jobs in specific sectors (poultry farming, retail, financial services, masonry); others gained perspective on how to start their own businesses.
- 2 000 youth received training on leadership and life through discussions on youth and extremism.
- 32 000 were able to register for and acquire national identification cards.

### **Success factors**

- Youth benefit from access to services at the local level – in their own village – and to services provided by key actors from the community.
- Sensitisation of banks, monetary financial institutions, mobile operators and government to youth needs can decrease entry costs associated with securing financing.

### **Lessons learned**

- Employer engagement meetings require assuming the cost of transportation for the Vocational Training Centre (VTC), which is not sustainable.
- Youth empowerment requires recognition of the specific needs of everyone. Training should therefore include mentorship/counselling within VTCs.
- Mentoring is also needed on access to finance for both youth and VTC staff/managers.
- Training modules should be dedicated to digital financing.
- A stronger communication strategy is needed to improve perceptions of vocational training.

## Opportunities for Youth in Africa (OYA): Accelerating job creation in agriculture and agribusiness (2020-24)

*Beneficiary profile:* Youth, rural youth

*Countries:* Cabo Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Tunisia

*Budget:* USD 50 million

*Implementing agencies:* African Union Commission, FAO and UNIDO

*Donors:* UNIDO, FAO and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

### ***The approach***

The programme proposes an integrated approach for the creation of quality on- and off-farm employment and self-employment opportunities for African youth in agriculture and agribusiness. It highlights the central role of agriculture in Africa's development, while emphasising the need for continuous empowerment of African youth to be the engine of this growth.

The programme's multilevel approach (continental, subregional, national) reflects the need for a concerted effort between public institutions and the private sector on capacity development, access to resources, improved co-ordination and linkages, and knowledge generation and dissemination (FAO and UNIDO, 2021<sup>[83]</sup>).

### ***Results***

- 271 agribusinesses incubated, 151 entrepreneurs mentored
- Access to the market facilitated for 26 agribusinesses
- Market research tour (233 organisations)
- OYA Business Club Platform, with access to more than 6 000 businesses worldwide
- 400 youth trained on value chains in the agriculture sector and financial literacy.

### ***Success factors***

- Partner engagement and commitment was consistent throughout the project implementation.
- Youth involvement made the choice of value chains and interventions relevant and sustainable.

### ***Lessons learned***

- Collaboration between agencies is critical for success.
- Involving the youth as partners is necessary for innovative development.



## Annex B. Creditor Reporting System categories

**Table B.1. Creditor Reporting System (CRS) sectors considered to have indirect and direct links to rural youth employment**

CRS sector	Broad sector
11231: Basic life skills for youth	Skills development and vocational training
11320: Upper secondary education (modified and includes data from 11322)	Skills development and vocational training
11330: Vocational training	Skills development and vocational training
11420: Higher education	Skills development and vocational training
11430: Advanced technical and managerial training	Skills development and vocational training
12320: Tobacco use control	Health
12330: Control of harmful use of alcohol and drugs	Health
12340: Promotion of mental health and well-being	Health
15220: Civilian peacebuilding, conflict prevention and resolution	Peace and security
15230: Participation in international peacekeeping operations	Peace and security
16010: Social protection	Social protection
16020: Employment creation	Employment creation
16070: Labour rights	Empowerment
16080: Social dialogue	Empowerment
21020: Road transport	Infrastructure development
21030: Rail transport	Infrastructure development
21040: Water transport	Infrastructure development
21050: Air transport	Infrastructure development
21061: Storage	Infrastructure development
21081: Education and training in transport and storage	Infrastructure development
22020: Telecommunications	Infrastructure development
22040: Information and communication technology (ICT)	Infrastructure development
23181: Energy education/training	Infrastructure development
23210: Energy generation, renewable sources – multiple technologies	Infrastructure development
23220: Hydro-electric power plants	Infrastructure development
23230: Solar energy for centralised grids	Infrastructure development
23240: Wind energy	Infrastructure development
23260: Geothermal energy	Infrastructure development
23310: Energy generation, non-renewable sources, unspecified	Infrastructure development
23340: Natural gas-fired electric power plants	Infrastructure development
23620: District heating and cooling	Infrastructure development
23630: Electric power transmission and distribution (centralised grids)	Infrastructure development
24040: Informal/semi-formal financial intermediaries	Access to financial services
24081: Education/training in banking and financial services	Access to financial services
25020: Privatisation	Private sector development
25030: Business development services	Private sector development
25040: Responsible business conduct	Private sector development
31120: Agricultural development	Agricultural development
31150: Agricultural inputs	Agriculture value chain development
31161: Food crop production	Agriculture value chain development

31162: Industrial crops/export crops	Agriculture value chain development
31182: Agricultural research	Agriculture value chain development
31191: Agricultural services	Agriculture value chain development
31192: Plant and post-harvest protection and pest control	Agriculture value chain development
31195: Livestock/veterinary services	Agriculture value chain development
32130: Small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) development	Entrepreneurship/SME development
32161: Agro-industries	Agriculture value chain development
41081: Environmental education/training	Climate smart agriculture/green jobs
41082: Environmental research	Climate smart agriculture/green jobs
43040: Rural development	Rural development