

## IV. Best practices in linking education to employment in Africa



This chapter highlights policies and strategies adopted to link education to employment in Africa. Case studies and best practices from some African countries selected from the subregions are cited to demonstrate how policies and strategies on youth, employment and education are implemented. The objective is to show how challenges and opportunities have been dealt with under a variety of scenarios in these selected countries, to enable stakeholders to emulate best practices as much as possible.

Several programmes and initiatives on youth education and employment are being or have been implemented by various stakeholders in Africa. Countries must naturally find their own paths for building and reforming their education and training systems or promoting youth employment. Yet the experience of other countries which have achieved some measure of success in this regard yields some useful lessons for consideration.

The best practices presented below represent interventions from different subregions of the continent and are grouped under four broad thematic areas: education systems, youth employment policies, youth entrepreneurship and ICT-based education and training. The majority of these interventions focused on promoting youth participation in the workforce, innovation, capacity enhancement, knowledge and human rights, community engagement and commitment, and strategic partnership as critical elements in addressing the challenges of youth underemployment and unemployment in Africa. Knowledge-based youth development programmes are also included among the best practices presented below.

## **A. Best practices in education systems**

In ensuring that the potential of young people is cultivated and nurtured, education is a clear priority for African policymakers. Not only does investment in relevant and high-quality education have long-term implications for human capital accumulation and hence economic growth, but formal education also occurs in the key phase of the lives of young people when they are most receptive to developing their intellect and skills. For young Africans, however, the issue is not only that of employment per se, or even the purely economic benefits that come with it for that matter, but importantly also the type of employment, and how far it can support social mobility and raise social status. In a continent where rigid and inflexible social hierarchies make it difficult for marginalized and underprivileged young people and others to achieve social mobility, education is traditionally seen as the most important means of overcoming these limitations of class and achieving upward mobility.

As discussed in the previous chapters, African countries are making commendable progress towards achieving universal primary education and raising their youth and adult literacy rates. However, there is still much to be done in improving the quality of education as well as facilitating the transition from the primary to the secondary and tertiary levels and later to productive and decent employment. Even though primary education is an essential starting point, young people in Africa need more advanced and specific skills to provide them with the capacity to work in an increasingly globalized world. In almost all

African countries, wide gender gaps exist in secondary schools and in formal labour markets, and therefore the need for gender-sensitive education and employment policies, strategies and programmes for young persons cannot be overemphasized.

The best practices presented below cover both the education and employment components of the education-employment nexus.

### **Case 1. Education and training policy in the United Republic of Tanzania**

In 1989, the Ministry of Education and Culture of the United Republic of Tanzania established a task force to map out an education strategy for the twenty-first century. The task force presented its report in November 1992, upon which the Ministry embarked on the formulation of a national education policy, which was eventually issued in February 1995. Falling within the broad macroeconomic policy environment, the policy was initiated with liberalization, privatization and facilitation in mind, and puts emphasis on:

- The creation of a true partnership between the State and other providers, including private persons, encouraging them to establish and manage schools and other institutions.
- Cooperation with the private sector in the provision of education, including such proactive initiatives as the training of more and better-qualified teachers, tax rebates, priority land allocation and duty-free import of school materials.
- Widening of financial support for education to include the efficient utilization of resources, cost-sharing and liberalization of the system.
- Streamlining of the management of education and decentralization to schools, districts, regions and communities.
- Quality control and assurance measures, including curriculum review, examination reforms, teacher management and inspection.
- A holistic and integrative approach to facilitate mobility between formal and non-formal education.
- Broadening access and ensuring equity in terms of gender, disability, geographical location and class.
- Improving the relevance of education so that it is effective in self-employment and vocational training.

During the implementation of this policy, there were gaps and the Ministry realized that it had to:

- Improve gender parity in schools
- Involve the private sector in providing educational services
- Promote the importance and relevance of education and how it will translate to increased effective employment.

## **Case 2. The Universal Post-Primary Education and Training programme in Uganda**

The Government of Uganda articulated its strategy in the comprehensive Education Sector Strategic Plan for 2004-2015, revised for 2008-2018. The plan aims to improve access to education and the quality, equity and efficiency of education. In line with these objectives, the Government launched the Universal Post-Primary Education and Training programme in 2007.<sup>3</sup> It provides eligible primary school leavers with an opportunity to enrol in secondary and vocational training institutions where tuition is free of charge. Tuition fees for secondary schools are waived thanks to capitation grants. The Government also sponsors students in private schools located in areas where there are no government-aided secondary schools. These measures are targeted at disadvantaged students who do not have the opportunity to enrol or who drop out of school owing to their inability to pay school fees. Implementation of the programme started in 2007 with an initial cohort of first-year students and with the expectation that, by 2010, it would cover all four lower secondary grades and two vocational training grades. It led to a 33 per cent increase in enrolment in post-primary education in 2007

Following the implementation of the programme, more students from poor families are able to advance their education, and literacy rates rose.

## **Case 3. Narrowing the skills gap by reforming higher education policy in Ethiopia**

In 2008, the Ethiopian Government issued a policy designed to shift the balance of subjects in all public universities away from the humanities and towards the sciences. Following a study of education systems that have promot-

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<sup>3</sup> Post-primary education is used to describe four years of secondary education or two years of technical education/vocational training following primary education.

ed economic development, as well as the current needs of the Ethiopian labour market, the curriculum was split 70:30 in favour of science and technology. The policy reform is expected not only to produce professionals in industry and technology who will be able to help create a transformational emerging economy, but also to narrow the current skills gaps between graduates of higher education and labour market demand nationally and globally.

The 70:30 strategy is based on an assessment that graduates of medicine, engineering and technology have generally better employment opportunities within and outside the country, while graduates in the social sciences and to some extent the natural sciences have limited employment opportunities in Ethiopia and abroad. Besides the labour demand argument, the strategy is also based on the belief that there is a current drive towards knowledge-based economies. Specifically, the policy reform introduces six bands in the higher education system: engineering and technology (40 per cent of the total annual intake of 110,000 students), business and economics (20 per cent), medicine and health sciences (20 per cent), natural and computational sciences (20 per cent), social sciences and humanities (10 per cent) and agriculture and natural resources (5 per cent).

#### **Case 4. Ghana Industrial Skills Development Centre - a public-private initiative**

In the light of fiscal constraints hampering the ability of African governments to invest in relevant and high-quality education, public-private partnerships offer a viable approach to overcoming shortfalls in the education sector. In addition, they enhance the linkages between the formal education sector and the private sector. This can in turn ensure that curricula are demand-driven, helping to improve the skill match between school leavers and the demands of employers.

The Ghana Industrial Skills Development Centre is a public-private initiative aimed at supplying demand-driven, industry-responsive training to employees of sponsoring companies and disadvantaged young people. Visco Helmond B.V., a large Dutch textile manufacturer with 500 Ghana-based employees, and its Ghanaian subsidiary, TexStyles Ghana Ltd., were the initiators of the project, which was established in 2005 under a memorandum of understanding signed by Visco and the Netherlands and Ghanaian Governments.

Visco felt that an industry-responsive training mechanism would provide skills which would not only benefit the participating company and current employees but would also serve the greater public good by preparing unemployed and disadvantaged young people for careers in industry. Located on the prem-

ises of Tema Technical Institute (an existing government facility), the Centre is now operational with a governance arrangement that includes industry representatives on its decision-making board and an impressive list of firms among its partners.

Experience with this initiative shows that training institutions which develop close ties with prospective employers and regularly seek employers' input to develop the curriculum enjoy the best results. In addition, systematic evaluation, monitoring and coordination are required to ensure that the output of the educational system corresponds to the demands of industry

### **Case 5. Learnerships - Integrating theoretical learning with workplace experience in South Africa**

Since 1994, the South African Government has embarked on several large-scale initiatives aimed at increasing the economy's labour absorption capacity for young people. One such initiative is a nationwide programme known as Learnership. Learnerships are structured programmes integrating theoretical learning with workplace experience. The Skills Development Act, aimed at developing the overall skills base in the country, guides the implementation of the programme, targeting young people as key beneficiaries. They receive theoretical training in an identified area through an accredited training service provider. In addition, they are placed in a structured workplace in order to experience what it really means, and what is required, to work in a company or organization. A crucial element of Learnerships is the partnership between government, training service providers and the private sector. Completion of a Learnership leads to a qualification registered by the South African Qualifications Authority related to an occupation.

### **Case 6. Accelerated learning programmes in post-conflict areas: the Complementary Rapid Education Programme for Primary Schools in Sierra Leone**

As a result of 11 years of civil war that ended in 2002, a high number of Sierra Leonean adolescents lag behind educationally, as the war denied them access to any educational opportunities. It is estimated that more than 400,000 children aged 10-15 have missed part of their schooling or have never been to school. The current youth unemployment rate stands at 70 per cent.

One impressive programme that works to remedy this lag is the Ibis Complementary Rapid Education Programme for Primary Schools, which was developed by UNICEF and the Sierra Leonean Ministry of Education. The pro-

gramme offers six years of primary education in three years to children and adolescents who missed their education due to the war. More than 3,000 young people have benefited from this programme. It also works rigorously to enhance the professional development of teachers and stakeholders in education at both central and district levels to improve governance and accountability in education delivery in Sierra Leone. The programme trains teachers while at the same time putting them to work in classrooms.

## **B. Best practices in youth employment policies and strategies**

### **Case 7. Public works programmes to generate youth employment in Senegal**

One active labour market policy that has been implemented in a number of African countries to generate employment for youth is the introduction of public works programmes. Although the main objective of these programmes is usually to provide some sort of safety net, they can also assist unemployed young people to gain experience and help them remain attached to the labour market. They usually involve labour-intensive projects such as road construction, maintenance, irrigation infrastructure, reforestation and soil conservation.

In Senegal, with the assistance of the World Bank and the African Development Bank, the Government set up a US\$ 33 million public works programme in 1989 which targeted the growing number of unemployed young people. The main objectives of the programme were to provide short-term employment to these young people through labour-intensive public works projects such as construction, the rehabilitation and maintenance of public services and the provision of essential services. The work was subcontracted to small and medium-sized enterprises. During the first phase of the programme, around 80,000 jobs were created for young people in 416 projects in small-scale enterprises. Overall, 3,226 projects have been implemented, resulting in the creation of 350,000 temporary jobs annually. More importantly, the projects also led to the establishment of 6,000 permanent jobs, an outcome that is not usually the overriding aim of a public works programme.

### **Case 8. Job search assistance: effective school-to-work transitions through career information and guidance for young people in Egypt**

As a consequence of unmet aspirations, skill mismatch and the barriers in the labour market, many young people stop actively searching for a job. In this situation, job search assistance can help encourage them by raising their motivation and improving the match between the skills of young unemployed people and the vacancies available. Job search assistance is the least costly of all active labour market policies, and evaluations of this programme suggest that it generates consistently positive results (Martin 2000).

In Egypt, ILO, the Ministry of Manpower and Migration and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, with financing from the Italian cooperation agency, have been running an effective school-to-work transition programme since 2008. The programme is designed to address the high youth unemployment rate in Egypt as well as the difficulty experienced by the private sector in recruiting workers with the right skills.

The programme is implemented by Youth Employment Units that work together with existing Public Employment Services offices. In close consultation and cooperation with employers and other key stakeholders, the offices provide a one-stop opportunity for young people to get information on skill requirements in particular occupations, career guidance and assistance in job search and job preparation techniques.

The programme, which is a component of the Egyptian National Action Plan for Youth Employment, aims to provide assistance to 2,500 young people annually. It aims to achieve a more effective and quicker school-to-work transition, leading to more and better jobs for young people through a package of integrated initiatives mobilizing employment offices, education institutions and the media.

### **Case 9. Internship programme to increase the employability of young graduates in Mali**

One of the constraints young people face when looking or competing for jobs is lack of experience. Enhancing the hands-on experience of young people in their prospective employment sectors increases their employability. Internship and apprenticeship programmes provide such experience.

In 2004, the Government of Mali created the National Youth Employment Agency to develop and implement youth employment strategies. In 2005, the Agency's Youth Skills and Employability Department developed the Internship Programme to increase the employability of young graduates by partnering with Mali's private sector.

The Internship Programme places unemployed young people with university diplomas in a professional environment for 12 months. By co-financing the intern's salary and providing assistance and technical support for each internship, the Agency makes it possible for Malian firms to overcome their difficulties in recruiting young people with relevant skills, when they sometimes lack the necessary financial resources. Internships include placements in banks, travel companies, architecture firms, pharmacies, law firms, telecommunication enterprises and engineering companies. The participating businesses help the young people to develop practical skills related to their profession, while also exposing them to a professional environment and a network of contacts. It is hoped that the contacts and experience acquired during the internships will lead to permanent work within the host business or other businesses.

Between 2004 and 2008, over 3,000 young people participated in the internship programme, and around 50 per cent of interns found employment shortly after their internship.

## **C. Best practices in youth entrepreneurship**

A number of young people are taking up the challenges of starting their own business, and much is being learned about how the odds for success can be improved through various types of assistance and the creation of a supportive environment. To succeed in self-employment and become productive entrepreneurs, young people require assistance with training, mentor support, access to credit and office facilities, as well as support when expanding a business and developing networks.

In this context, youth entrepreneurship programmes are being promoted in schools and communities across the world. Programmes have also evolved within the informal economy targeting potential young entrepreneurs, the unemployed and young people who are not in school or are at risk.

### **Case 10. Promoting youth entrepreneurship in Algeria**

In 1996, the Government of Algeria created the National Agency for the Support of Youth Employment. The Agency provides counselling and other forms

of support for young entrepreneurs and assists them in project implementation. It mainly targets unemployed individuals between the ages of 19 and 35 who possess the necessary professional qualifications and/or practical experience and can contribute 5 to 10 per cent of the investment required. It helps young entrepreneurs financially by providing lines of credit at 0 per cent interest and interest subsidies on bank loans. Its decentralized network extends across the country. In 2007, around 750 agents arranged for young entrepreneurs to receive funding totalling 4.5 billion Algerian dinars (US\$ 64 million). The network has been electronically linked since 2002, and a database has been set up with information on young entrepreneurs and their businesses. The Agency published directories on microenterprises in 2002 and 2004 and organized three national exhibitions (in 1998, 2000 and 2003), as well as several regional salons. These events were intended to promote the products and services of microenterprises, to facilitate the establishment of direct links (and the creation of business networks) between them, and to encourage the development of a culture of entrepreneurship among unemployed young people by showing them what other young people had been able to achieve. By the middle of 2005, more than 65,000 microenterprises had been created, and by 2007, the investment total had reached around 114 billion dinars (US\$ 6 billion). These small businesses are believed to have generated more than 186,000 direct employment opportunities.

### **Case 11. Mentoring of young entrepreneurs by private firms in Senegal**

Self-employment creates over 90 per cent of new jobs in Senegal; however, many young people face considerable barriers in starting their own businesses. The minimum cost of setting up a formalized business is 255 per cent of the annual average per capita income of US\$ 750. To overcome such barriers, a close partnership with the Senegalese business community has proved to be essential to providing young entrepreneurs with the experience, support and advice they need to establish and run successful businesses. The Synapse Centre, a Dakar-based non-governmental organization, started off in 2003 with this in mind.

Synapse was designed to allow young people with potential to use their energy and skills to create successful businesses that would not only contribute to overall economic growth and job creation, but also provide social benefits to their communities. The trademark initiative of the Synapse Centre is its 14-month Promise Programme – a highly intensive, hands-on youth entrepreneurship training programme that combines traditional entrepreneurship theory with interactive case-based studies, practical entrepreneurial experi-

ence, personal development retreats and professional business consulting and mentoring.

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

By 2008, 17 promising entrepreneurs had graduated from the first class; 9 young participants had become entrepreneurs themselves as founders and heads of new venture companies; and 35 business community leaders had been recruited to mentor young entrepreneurs. The nine successful entrepreneurs have also created 137 jobs within their businesses. Synapse's annual budget of US\$ 80,000 means that one job has been created for every US\$ 584 spent.

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

## **Case 12. Kenya Youth Business Trust**

The Kenya Youth Business Trust is the local chapter of Youth Business International, a programme set up by the International Business Leaders Forum. Youth Business International has adopted a model pioneered by the Prince's Trust in the United Kingdom, and is now active in 40 countries. The overall aim is to fight youth unemployment by supporting new business start-ups and providing young people with personal development opportunities.

The Kenya Youth Business Trust supports disadvantaged young people aged 18 to 30 who are unemployed or underemployed and who have a passionate idea for starting a business, but have no access to the seed funding required to fulfil their ambition. It provides simple start-up training to make possible the planning required to develop the idea into a business capable of succeeding. If the idea proves viable, the Trust provides a small loan and at the same time matches the young entrepreneur with a mentor who will be his or her guide, coach and friend for the first two or three years. It also provides ongoing business skill development training for young entrepreneurs.

One of the successful beneficiaries of this programme, who was also named Youth Business International Entrepreneur of the Year in 2006, is Zablon Karingi Muthaka. In response to Nairobi's desperate waste problem in its residential areas, 26-year-old Zablon Karingi Muthaka created Beta Bins Waste

Management and Environmental Conservation in 2004. Even though Zablon had a sound business idea that was demand-driven, he lacked the necessary start-up capital. Lacking collateral and in the face of the stiff lending conditions of local financial institutions, his request for a loan was turned down repeatedly. He then presented his business plan to the Trust, which granted him a loan. The loan has enabled Zablon's business to flourish, with annual turnover at roughly US\$ 4,700 per year. He now employs five young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, and has immediate investment and expansion plans geared toward the purchase of a lorry.

## **D. Best practices in ICT**

### **Case 13. Transforming higher education through ICT – the case of Adama University in Ethiopia**

Adama University is a noteworthy case of a public institution of higher education that is buttressed by ICT infrastructure. Formerly a technical college and established in 1993, it has been making commendable efforts to help students reap the benefit of a twenty-first-century education through ICT use. In the University, ICT infrastructure is viewed as a core element in supporting mainstream education.

Currently, 1,407 PCs and laptops are networked and connected to the Internet with an aggregate speed of 16.5 megabits per second - a significant improvement from five connected PCs for 6,500 students and 1,500 staff in March 2008. The university has transformed its Internet service from virtually no-ICT to full-campus-network service with both wireless and wired network access.

Adama University's ICT Centre has demonstrated itself to be a pioneer by introducing ICT technologies that are new to Ethiopia, with fast and cheap data network deployment and least-cost workplace provision. This includes the setting up of an eOasis demo laboratory, where primary and secondary schools, technical and vocational colleges and other universities can learn how to provide cheap services, even in regions without fast Internet availability.

More than 20,000 free electronic books and journals are now accessible on the campus to the Adama University community from any networked PC through the Internet. Thanks to better ICT facilities, the eTeaching environment at Adama University has become fully established and is awaiting certification. The University also conducted its first online examinations in Decem-

ber 2009, becoming the first university to conduct such examinations in the history of higher education in the country.

### **Case 14. The National Open University of Nigeria**

Established in 2002, the National Open University of Nigeria has created 27 study centres across the country. Operating from its administrative headquarters in Lagos, its vision is to make tertiary education available to all citizens through the establishment of study centres throughout Nigeria. It is the country's largest tertiary institution in terms of student enrolment. Each study centre consists of a computer laboratory/cybercafé equipped with a minimum of 25 computers in a local area network configuration. The university uses a wireless network to deliver distance learning courses to all the study centres. Each study centre has facilitators and student counsellors drawn from within the community or nearby communities, who are responsible for providing guidance and counselling services to the learners. ICT applications currently cover: management of student records (online applications, admissions, registration and exam procedures); the learner management system (e-learning and the virtual library); communication (e-mail, SMSes, videoconferencing and Internet); and delivery of human resources and finance courses.

## **E. Summary and lessons learnt**

The cases presented above show that initiatives being undertaken by African governments and stakeholders in harnessing the education and employment potential of young people are diverse in their modes of implementation, scope and intended outcomes. An assessment of these best practices shows that they combine aspects of participation, innovation, capacity enhancement, strategic partnership and evidence-based planning in their work programmes. Such elements are deemed to be critical in addressing the challenges of underemployment and unemployment of young people in Africa in the twenty-first century.

The best practices reflect the fact that strategies and policies should be founded on the reality on ground. This naturally requires *improved knowledge and data collection* that leads to evidence-based and knowledge-based policies and strategies. The experiences selected for review underscore the need to invest time and resources to obtain relevant and accurate information about the primary beneficiaries, young people and their families and communities. Indeed, the effort has to go beyond conducting a baseline survey, but the information should be used to ensure that activities are in line with intended objectives, with sufficient flexibility built in to accommodate modifications in

the design of such programmes as necessary. Information-gathering on youth has to change radically if the knowledge base is to be of practical use in policy formulation and programming. In this respect, evidence-based policies such as the reform of higher education in Ethiopia, which was based on a careful assessment of the current and future requirements of the labour markets as well as lessons learnt from experiences of other countries, are exemplary.

*Innovation* is a key feature in the development, empowerment and leadership programmes that have responded effectively to youth concerns and needs. The accelerated learning programme in Sierra Leone, which condenses six years of primary education into three years for war-affected young people, is a prime example of using innovative ways to respond to the education and training needs of young people who have been out of school. In addition, some countries are tapping into the potential which progress in ICT offers to respond to the needs of young people in an innovative and effective manner.

As different stakeholders and groups engage with youth development issues, *strategic partnerships and cooperation* are crucial in order to implement effective programmes, avoid duplication and utilize the comparative advantage of different stakeholders. In this aspect, public-private partnerships offer extensive opportunities to improve education and employment prospects for young people in Africa, either by involving the private sector in the development of training and education curricula, as in the Ghana Industrial Skills Training Centre, or through partnering with private companies to facilitate internships and work with training programmes, as in the national internship program in Mali. In addition, a strategic partnership can ease both the financial and absorptive burden on government institutions. Under the post-primary training programme in Uganda, the government works with private schools in sponsoring the education of students who live in areas where there are no public educational facilities.

*Community engagement and youth ownership* are crucial for all the youth development and empowerment programmes presented in this report. Where the involvement of key constituencies is lacking or inadequate, youth projects will inevitably fail. In Kenya, the Youth Business Trust engages with local business leaders and entrepreneurs to provide mentorship for young people who wish to start their own businesses. The same is being done in Senegal, where in addition to hands-on training in entrepreneurship and the provision of start-up capital, the Synapse programme arranges for business community leaders to mentor the young participants.

*Strategic capacity-building* is a component that should be integral to all youth development programmes. To date, youth development, empowerment and

leadership programmes in some African countries have fallen far short of their goals, because of weaknesses in the design and implementation of their capacity-building activities. The Job Search Assistance initiative in Egypt is implemented by enhancing existing employment services to make them more accessible and receptive to the employment needs of young people. Such capacity enhancement of existing institutions and facilities is deemed to have a longer and more sustainable impact.