

Intro

Young people are the biggest stakeholders for a better, sustainable future and, if they are given the opportunity, the biggest game changers. In order to optimally stimulate and exploit the potential of young people, it is necessary that young men and women can shape their own lives, make well-informed choices about their future and have sufficient opportunities to participate in society in an equal manner.

A lack of future prospects, among other things due to the enormous unemployment and insufficient education, are huge challenges for a large group of young people, especially but not only for those young people who were forced to leave their country of origin. There is a gap between (the quality and relevance of) education and what young people learn and the demands of the labor market. As a result, young people often do not have the right skills to find decent work. The Netherlands invests in young people through an integrated approach: in addition to increasing relevant skills of young people (supply) and stimulating work for young people (demand), we focus on matching supply and demand.

Trends and developments worldwide

The strategy for young people takes into account the trends and challenges in the three focus regions of Dutch policy:

Worrying trends and challenges

- Increasing number of young people have access to education but the quality of education and learning outcomes are lagging behind;
- Growing youth unemployment, large share of underemployment, especially in the informal sector;
- Young people's skills do not match demand and opportunities in the labor market and are not aimed at meeting future needs in the labor market;
- There are obviously also other factors that are preventing young people from fulfilling their potential; lack of political space, corruption, favoritism, cultural norms preventing young people, especially women, from participation.

At the same time, there are also *positive developments* that offer opportunities for a better perspective for young people:

- Increasing political and social participation of young people;
- Increasing activities aimed at young entrepreneurship (many donors are focusing on entrepreneurship: trend).

Skills of young people do not match the demand on the labor market

The labor market is not static and requires a flexible deployment of the labor force. Digitalization and further globalization have a far-reaching impact on the labor market, worldwide. Socio-emotional skills (cooperation, initiative, independent decision making) are at least as important as specialized knowledge and technical skills.

The World Bank also emphasizes in the World Development Report that the work of the future will require more than now that young men and women can solve complex problems, think critically and independently, or work in a team. This concerns the so-called soft skills / transformational skills, which are important in the work of the future. In addition, employers worldwide expect an increasing degree of skills instability in existing jobs. Workers will therefore have to be more capable to adapt and learn new skills throughout their lives.

The focus regions

Sahel

- Has the largest and fastest demographic growth in the world. Official unemployment rates are 15%, but amount to 50% when underemployment is included. The formal sector generates only 10% of all jobs.
- In Mali, 570,000 girls and 468,000 boys cannot go to school (Unesco, 2017). Of those who can go to school, 33% of boys and 24% girls have completed lower secondary education (World Bank, 2017). Every year 300,000 young people start working, only 5% in the formal sector (ICCO, 2019). 27.1% girls and 16.7% boys are unemployed (World Bank, 2017).
- Mali has many young entrepreneurs, but 95% of companies disappear after three years due to little supervision, poor access to the market and heavy valuations (Sahelien, 2017).

Horn of Africa

- Young people make up 70% of the population in the Hoorn and there is high unemployment, insufficient prospects and there are also major challenges in the field of education. In Ethiopia, for example, only 30% of boys and 29% girls complete secondary education (World Bank, 2015).

MENa region

- About 60% of the population is younger than 30. The region has the highest youth unemployment rate only 48% of young people currently in work.
- Also the largest gender gap in labor participation with an average participation of 13.5% women in the labor market compared to 46.5% young men.
- Reverse correlation between education and work where unemployment is higher among young people with a high school diploma or higher.

Worldwide

- We also see that this generation has a strong desire to become politically active and is increasingly demonstrating for its rights.
- The Netherlands is therefore committed to increasing opportunities, for example by focusing on the intersection of skills development and employment.

Nexus work & education, new programs

Based on the above analysis of trends and challenges, the objectives of the BHOS policy for perspective for young people are as follows:

- Invest in (vocational) education to enhance relevant skills of young people and to improve the transition from school to work.
- Improving the match between what is learned in school and the demand on the labor market through an integrated approach, and by stimulating cooperation between the private sector and education / training institutions.
- Stimulating employment for young people by stimulating entrepreneurship (climate), investing in startups, coaching, internships, mentoring, making existing markets attractive (accessible to women, tourism, ICT), with extra focus on women.
- Increasing the structural and meaningful participation of young people and strengthening the voice of young people in decision-making and policy-making.
- Creating an enabling environment by removing barriers and creating opportunities for young people. This means contributing to an improved social climate, including integration of refugees into host communities, legislation and better regulated labor markets. This is of course very context specific, and the analysis of the enabling environment must be made per country and region.

How?

Diplomatic commitment

Through its diplomatic efforts, the Netherlands will raise issues affecting young people, including through the Special Ambassador for Youth Employment and Education. This ambassador and other Dutch ministers will demand attention and action internationally and at country level for the

aforementioned policy goals during trade missions, multi-stakeholder consultations and donor dialogues.

The Netherlands is also intensifying its diplomatic efforts in the field of meaningful youth participation in decision-making processes, with an emphasis on young women, among other things by strengthening the voice of young people (lobby and advocacy) to enable them to stand up for their own interests and rights.

Scaling up and connecting with existing partnerships

Progress on the above goals requires cooperation with partners worldwide. Since 2015, different partners in the United Nations (UN) have given more attention to young people through various initiatives created for and by young people. The Netherlands will join some of these existing partnerships with the focus on increasing the ability of young men and women to give direction to their own lives.

Implementation of programs

The Netherlands will intensify existing employment and education programs, and where possible will pay more attention to increasing the perspective of young people in existing programmes. In addition, the possibilities of joining existing partnerships will be examined and the Netherlands will also implement new programs itself.