

Specific trends youth, employment & education in Horn of Africa and Sahel

Overall trends:

- Many donor policies for youth employment are aimed at entrepreneurship, but not all youth can or want to become entrepreneurs. More attention for the creation of wage jobs is needed.
- Due to a lack of information, network and/or (starting) capital, many young entrepreneurs lack access to finance to start their own business. Also, for entrepreneurs in agri, youth often lacks the access to land.
- Innovations such as precision agriculture and new technologies can make the agrifood sector more appealing for youth, but in many cases youth lacks access to those technologies and the skills to work with them.
- There is a mismatch between the supply and demand of skills in the labour market. Youth has high aspirations and ambitions, which are not always met by the available jobs. On the other hand, in many cases, youth lack the skills required by the job. More attention for soft skills, and life skills and the application of up to date technical skills in education could ensure a better connection between education and the labour market.

Trends in Horn of Africa:

- In Uganda, there are not enough jobs to employ the growing young population. Therefore, many youths are self-employed but the lack of basic skills such as computer literacy, administration and planning causes starting businesses to fail. In agriculture, young farmers lack (vocational) skills to produce quality products and become demotivated. Government policies aimed at improving vocational and entrepreneurial skills are lacking. Some youth migrate to the middle east and other countries. There are no laws that protect the rights of migrating youth.
- In Ethiopia, the job market does not meet the high aspirations of youth. One of the reasons is that young people do not have (the right) skills. There are entrepreneurial opportunities in the agrifood sector, but like in Uganda, youth lacks basic skills. Innovations like platforms that match supply and demand are a welcome solution for entrepreneurial youth. In rural areas, gender disparities in education and work are high. A sizeable group that merits special attention is the youth with disabilities. They are unable to find a regular job and many of them end up self-employed.
- In rural Kenya, youth unemployment is high and productivity is lagging behind. At the same time, in urban Kenya we see a strong private sector, especially in the IT sector, that sets up skills hubs to train talented youth. Connecting rural areas and intermediate cities would potentially couple the flourishing IT sector to opportunities in the agrifood sector.

Trends in Sahel:

- Overall, most education in the Sahel is general education, while vocational education preparing youth for the labour market is lacking. The existing vocational education opportunities are barely subsidised by the government and have low prestige. There is limited collaboration between education institutions and the business world, except for some initiatives for apprenticeships. Gender disparities in education are high.
- Donors tend to support programmes that aim at preventing migration, and do not take into account sufficiently the needs and aspirations of the majority of youth, who will remain in their own country for their whole lives. There is only a small part of youth that have the resources and willingness to migrate internationally.
- In Mali, rural youth is mainly interested in jobs in food processing or sales. Government youth employment policies are not in place. Many youths are self-employed (out of necessity). With limited access to skills training, markets and new technology, these self-employed have a very low income. In this situation, young people are more open to joining one of the armed groups in the north. The instability created by the armed groups negatively affects school attendance of children, and with that also the long-term job market prospects.