

# Input for consultation ministry of foreign affairs on youth strategy

## ABOUT HIVOS

Based on a track record of 50 years of partnering with frontrunners in daring, innovative and impactful development programs, Hivos seeks new and creative solutions to persistent global problems; solutions created by people taking their lives into their own hands. We offer a positive counterbalancing force against discrimination, inequality, abuse of power and the unsustainable use of our planet's resources. Our mission is to innovate for social change. With smart projects in the right places, we work towards more open and green societies.

### *Introduction*

60% of the African continent is aged below 25 years old. In the Middle East this percentage is 28%. Asia counts 60% of the world's youth population. Latin America currently has its largest proportion of young people ever in its history (20%). They face huge challenges on migration, poverty and (un)employment, but at the same time young people across all the continents create lively and energetic spaces of informal learning that practice freedom, tolerance and inclusivity. We appreciate the development of a specific strategy on youth.

Without oversimplifying we can say that young people value activism and inclusivity and adhere less to binaries or rules. They embrace creativity and imagination, hybridity and multiplicity, fragmentation and deceleration. Young people may have limited access to formal politics, economics, law and media, yet they invent new channels to make their cases resonate, bypassing existing systems. In doing so, they create

alternative models of learning and practice that convey and amplify their voices, increase their role in social decision making processes, and contribute to their own - future - realities. Becoming acquainted with the energy, mindset and tools of the younger generations can lead the way to more open and green societies. Below you will find our suggestions and ideas on different topics and sectors: Skills & Education; Enhancing the economic opportunities for marginalized youth; Renewable energy; Governance & Economic Development; Alternative learning models.

*1. If you look at the 3 regions that we focus on (MENA, Horn of Africa, Sahel) - can you mention specific trends per region which are relevant for the strategy. Are there, for example, specific sectors where there is much to be gained? Or specific skills that young people lack in a certain region or sector?*

#### Trends

Important trends we see evolve around migration and the ability to travel, urbanization, discrimination and access to education, learning and skills development (whether formal or informal).

Strict immigration policies in high-income countries make it more difficult for youth to find migration pathways. There is a growing imbalance in demand for higher education among youth population in emerging economies and the large supply of institutions in high-income economies. Though beneficial for international recruitment and transnational education, this situation doesn't answer the demands expressed by the emerging economies to access renewed learning platforms in their own regions. At the same time more people move towards cities and this rapid urbanization will drive the demand for accessible and flexible learning models. The increasing pace of automation and a skills mismatch will create new expectations for market-relevant skills and retraining of talent. With regard to digital education, experts globally foresee a significant demand for education at the intersection of science and ethics. This will be critical, not only economically, but also to ensure a fair and rights-based digital transitions.

Beyond youth, institutions will be pushed to find new ways to educating the aging population throughout their career and beyond.

This list of growing discrepancies between the aspirations of the youth, the academic offers, the global market demands and the ever-changing realities, should be taken into account in a new strategy. Appropriate learning platforms in the emerging economies should be designed, keeping a close eye on the people who are able to offer alternative models.

Discrimination continues to limit access to the labor market, loans, education et cetera. This, of course, is particularly true for marginalized youth, such as young people with disabilities, ethnic, religious or cultural minorities, LGBTI youth, young people living in poverty or who are homeless, girls and young women. People affected by marginalization in intersecting ways are affected even more. Their ability to finish school is often diminished due to bullying or violence by other children or teachers, leaving them with fewer skills than their peers. Marginalized young people need specific and targeted attention in their efforts to gain employment or start a business and this should be a key aspect of the strategy.

### ***Skills & Education***

The MENA region faces significant challenges and opportunities with regard to human capital development, in particular with a view to what is called the 4th industrial revolution. It is estimated that 41-50% of jobs in key countries in the region will be subject to automation. Priorities for skills development and education: the future relevance of education curricula, early workplace exposure and investment into digital fluency and ICT literacy.

The strategy should include:

- Supporting regional and national academic and civil society initiatives to strengthen training, research and youth activism on digital development.

### ***Enhancing the economic opportunities for marginalized youth***

This requires action in a number of ways:

- increased employability of marginalized youth through specific, culturally sensitive, community-informed training programs to build (especially entrepreneurial) skills and knowledge (as alternative to the formal job market, where discrimination often hampers their access, but of course ending that discrimination at the same time)
- providing opportunities to marginalized young entrepreneurs through mentorship programs, (micro)loans, preferential treatment in public procurement, inclusion in trade missions and through providing access to markets
- opening up the Dutch market to young entrepreneurs from focus countries
- decreasing discrimination through targeted campaigns
- work together with the private sector to develop and implement policies and practices that support inclusivity and embrace diversity, like in our Colourful Workplaces programme.

### ***Renewable energy***

There is much to gain in the Renewable Energy sector, especially the growing off-grid sector in all the regions. Investing in Decentralised Renewable Energy increases access to energy. This availability of energy means economic activities can grow. The sector is an important employer in emerging economies, offering potential for young entrepreneurs and a wide variety of sustainable jobs for young people. Investing in youth and renewable energy ensures the energy transition will be a just transition, acknowledging values, talents and skills of young people and their communities. Young people become part of that transition, but they will also help to accelerate it. It is, however, important to not only invest in technical skills of young people, but to support learning and development of young people in becoming energy leaders with outspoken views and the ability to guide and interact with other stakeholders.

### ***Governance & Economic Development***

Corruption remains a major challenge to political and economic development in the Middle East and North Africa. In Africa (including Northern African countries) young people aged 18-34 are more exposed to bribery and corruption than older age groups. This is backed by research in other regions (e.g. Asia): around a third of young people regularly experience corruption. Concerns about the economic situation and corruption are the top pre-occupation of young people in the MENA region.

This hampers life opportunities directly, for example access to and delivery of education, or upon entering the job market (a serious problem in MENA where 53-77% of people report bribing for jobs). Corruption is considered a major reason for the failure of employment & entrepreneurship training initiatives to deliver sustainable impact. Even more, it undermines young people's ethical beliefs and damages their commitment to integrity. Unless this is confronted, young people normalize experiences of corruption with long-term negative consequences for social and economic development. The perspective of young people on corruption and how to fight it is therefore critical.

Engaging young people in governance programming can include:

- Supporting youth led research on experiences, attitudes and ways to resist corruption
- Supporting engagement of young people in relevant open governance initiatives (such as the Open Government Partnership process)
- Providing funding for youth-led campaigns
- Upgrade of ethics curricula and delivery of integrity education within formal and informal (and in particular youth-led) education initiatives

- Programs focused on changing narratives and profiling leadership of young people with integrity, pop-cultural initiatives.

Improving openness of public procurement plays a major role in increasing business opportunities for young entrepreneurs. Governments spend trillions annually on procurement, representing 10-15% of GDP globally (15-20% in MENA) and often more in middle and low income countries. For young entrepreneurs, the public sector represents an opportunity for business growth, but public procurement is vulnerable to corruption and often intransparent, making it hard for young businesses to access the market. Increasing transparency and accessibility of public procurement markets is therefore critical. This would also impact effectiveness, efficiency and value for money of government spending in areas key to young people's opportunities (the education and health sectors).

The strategy could include various approaches to procurement reform, for example on open contracting, sustainable and social procurement. This increases the ability of young entrepreneurs to access public procurement and incentivizes youth-led business development. There is clear evidence that opening public procurement processes leads to increased numbers of successful bidders and significant public savings (Ukraine, Colombia) and to positive impact on youth-led business growth (Kenya).

Young people's engagement in these areas could include:

- Support for procurement-related training of young entrepreneurs, as part of wider procurement reform efforts (on open contracting)
- Support for procurement reform in areas that particularly affect young people
- Preferential treatment in public procurement for businesses owned by entrepreneurs who experience marginalization. New York City, for example, significantly increased public procurement from Minority and Women-owned Businesses through a successful outreach and preferential treatment program.

### ***Alternative learning models***

#### **Hubs as spaces of knowledge**

In information age students need specific 21st century abilities, like critical thinking, creativity, flexibility, collaboration, communication, information, technology and media literacy. In open societies with formal educational systems it is already difficult to address these abilities, let alone in restrictive and conservative environments. That is why young people, particularly those who finished high school or university, are looking for alternative spaces to learn skills. These include tech-, maker-, co-working-, and cultural spaces, studios, as well

as neighbourhood community spaces with a minimum of means and equipment.

Priorities:

- invest in knowledge spaces in rural areas and the non-capital cities
- roll out existing training and toolkits

### Playful learning

Imagine a classroom where learning is dictated by students' interests, exploration, curiosity and experimentation. Where learners work together to answer questions that are relevant and fascinating to them. Where they don't expect to get everything right the first time, but can learn from failures, and delight in their discoveries. Where learning is based on skills and values, beyond the limitations of testable knowledge, and evaluated by application rather than tests. Isn't this, by definition, play?

This type of learning can be slowly introduced in hubs as well as schools and universities, involving the design and game sector. As part of the creative economy - in itself a crucial sector when talking about youth employment - the gaming industry is an innovative strategic sector to team up with. For its economic potential as well as the potential it has to contribute to 21st century education and learning.

*2. Do you have examples of successful "scaled up" initiatives / programs in the field of education and work to increase youth employment, and if so, which ones? Or do you know of certain successful initiatives that are worth scaling up in the 3 regions mentioned?*

One of the successful examples we want to mention is Boosting Bottom-Up Societal Transformation (BOOST), with hubs as the pivot point for social, cultural and economical development. BOOST works through local partner organizations and collaborative spaces communities, mainly in medium-sized towns in North Africa. It identifies and supports young local social entrepreneurs who create employment for other young people, in particular women. The local partners offer technical assistance along with funding from Hivos to either start or scale these enterprises. BOOST's main activities:

- digital media campaign to solve challenges of women entrepreneurs in the regions
- support program for co-working & collaborative spaces to help them become Business Development Support Organizations
- accelerator program trajectory for start-ups and SMEs with high potentials for job creation in Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya
- capacity building and knowledge enhancement program for angel investors in North Africa

*3. Do you have specific ideas or additions about how we can make young people part of this policy? How do we ensure that they participate in the implementation of this strategy?*

Girls and (young) women have already been identified as a target group, which is important. But specific attention needs to be paid to marginalized youth, including LGBTI, migrants, ethnic, cultural and religious minorities and people with disabilities. To ensure meaningful participation of young marginalized people, and their involvement in the implementation of this strategy, they have to be consulted and be part of the decision making process. There are many ways to do this, but a crucial element is decision power over budgets. You may reach out to the existing networks and partners, who have good contacts across the world and have all kinds of toolkits and methodologies for involving young people.

Examples include: advocacy & policy influencing by capacitating youth to make their own voices heard. The Right Here Right Now programme, for example, strengthens capacity of young people to lobby for SRHR. This could be expanded to other areas such as youth unemployment.

Another example is African Crossroads, “where Africans crossed paths in Marrakech to synchronise their very own ideas, plans and actions towards creating a future that can be said to be designed by Africans for Africans”. Combining the networks of its creative and social entrepreneurship programmes for youth, Hivos co-created this pan African youth platform to positively shape the future of African societies. African Crossroads is a community of future-oriented African thinkers and doers meeting annually to exchange and critically reflect on the most cutting-edge entrepreneurial, philosophical, scientific, artistic, and technological developments anchored in African intellectual and technological traditions. As a warming-up to the event, we hosted an online tweet chat to kick-start conversations in Kenya on issues that were also debated at African Crossroads. Over 1.5 million unique online users saw the chat, and #ContentForAfrika was viewed almost 6.5 million times. In the following days these numbers rose to almost 6.5 million and more than 29 million respectively, while in Kenya the hashtag was a top trending topic. This is a good way to involve young people in setting the agenda.

*4. Anything else you feel is worth mentioning?*

Massive open online courses (MOOCs) are an opportunity for training, because they are relatively low-cost educational tool (though not suited for everyone). We want to stress the importance to give specific and targeted attention to intersectionality and marginalized youth.