

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS CONSULTATION ON YOUTH STRATEGY

INPUT CARE NEDERLAND

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?

Many contexts show tendencies of political (military, economic) elites towards narrow-minded, inward-looking, nationalist and authoritarian rule. Such tendencies do not combine well with the Netherlands' strategy on youth which requires, as mentioned in the strategy outline, education that promotes critical and independent thinking, transformational skills, working in teams. This type of education is rather threatening for authoritarian regimes. Effective youth strategies would therefore require solid and specific analysis of power and actors. And specific diplomatic strategies to match, for a truly integrated approach.

As to youth skills: there is indeed a clear need to develop youth's socio-emotional skills (e.g. resilience, self-efficacy, professionalism and creativity), as well as an entrepreneurial and solution-oriented mindset. This can be achieved by creating internship and volunteer programmes to earn experience, but also by increasing opportunities for informal learning and education. The enormous amount of knowledge available on the web can offer opportunities in using YouTube videos, mobile learning apps and MOOCs in communities that lack formal learning resources. These digital tools can be integrated in hybrid learning programs.

With (mobile) technology becoming increasingly central in the job market, education policies and programmes should include curricula involving technology, and build a mindset among youth, their families and teachers to take technology seriously.

Particularly in the MENA region, targeted education and skills training around Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) also presents an opportunity to increase young women's labour force participation. In countries like Jordan, many young women are highly educated but training programmes to improve their employment tend to focus on low-skilled and stereotypical 'women's jobs' like tailoring and hairdressing. Offering training programmes and decent employment in the rapidly expanding ICT sector and other non-traditional sectors could increase women's employment opportunities while also challenging social gender norms that limit their participation in public and private life.

Apart from specific skills that are mentioned in the strategy outline, a fundamental shortcoming for youth (and women) is awareness of their rights. Education of women and youth should start with raising awareness of their rights, not only to employment, to a decent income, to education and other basic services, and to (human) security, but specifically their rights to raise and organise their voice and become a relevant power in society. There is a clear need to create and support youth leadership and enable young leaders to be catalysts for change in their communities.

In the Horn of Africa region, employment opportunities can be gained by establishing manufacturing industries. Most goods and services tend to be imported from other countries and at a cheaper price. This

already discourages local production and utilization of local skills. Whereas if these industries are established in these regions this will open up opportunities for employment in these industries as well as local production of raw materials which in itself is a source of employment.

Opportunities for youth entrepreneurship and self-employment can be furthered if access to capital is improved. Currently, young people have very limited access to capital, partly because Financial Institutions are hesitant to provide financial products to young people with limited assets and track record (even more so for women), and if they do offer them the costs are high. But also because young people do not always know what is available to them and how to access it through the tedious processes of acquiring a loan or funding from a bank or Microfinance Institution.

Moreover, more needs to be done to advocate for different fields and approaches to agricultural courses in schools, colleges and universities. Improved knowledge, technologies as well as an entrepreneurial mindset play a vital role in creating profitable agricultural business opportunities and value addition while also improving yields and food security. Currently, the perception of working in agriculture is often associated with dirt and poverty in comparison to other professions like medicine, law and engineering. Advocacy efforts can work on raising awareness of these new approaches and technologies to change negative perceptions of the sector. Based on CARE's [research carried out in partnership with Wageningen University in 2018 in Burundi and South Sudan](#), we gathered that the biggest challenges for young people in agriculture is the lack of capital for agricultural inputs, lack of access to land, soil degradation and the lack of markets. These challenges are even more profound for women, whose access to land is even more restricted.

Similarly in the Sahel region, it is key to support adaptation and innovation of the agricultural sector and other “declining” sectors to make them more attractive to the mindsets and ambitions of the younger generation. For example through integrating renewable energy, promote agroecology and climate-smart agriculture and using the growing use of mobile phones and social media to provide relevant market and climate information, as well as agricultural and financial services.

Secondly, as also [strategized by the IOM](#), a platform should be created bringing together diaspora, state partners and the private sector in order to promote exchanges on regional (labour) market trends, integration, challenges and solutions.

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?

Through the [Every Voice Counts programme](#) in Somalia, with Netherlands' MFA support under the strategic partnerships, CARE has worked on awareness of youth of their rights, voice for youth, and increasing their political participation. This programme is limited to the states of Puntland and South-West, and a limited number of localities. It includes work on change of social norms around youth and perceptions of youth among traditional leaders (clan leaders, religious leaders), to help shape a conducive context for voices of youth. An increased number of youth was elected into (local) administrations and parliament.

In terms of scaling up: the Somali context is now open for this type of programming and these efforts can be scaled up to reach more localities and states, and probably serve as an example for the federal level, and maybe beyond Somalia. What has been scaled up in Somalia itself was the successful lobby by youth umbrella organisations in Puntland for the revision and update of the youth policy in Puntland state, an exercise that is now being repeated in South West. This youth policy includes the creation of a Youth Fund, where communities, private sector, state governments and international donors can donate funds for promotion of youth employment and (vocational) training, as well as (inter-clan) youth activities. Although much will depend on a proper management system for the fund and an underlying strategy with a vision on education and youth employment, at least this is an example of approaches to provide youth with more (political) voice and with future perspectives, combatting processes of exclusion, and thereby possibly prevent youth from being uprooted or being open for recruitment by militias.

Another successful and scalable education approach was demonstrated through [CARE's PCTFI 'Education for Change' programme](#) in Mali and several other countries. The programme works through innovative integrated approaches that combine education and economic empowerment to promote a culture of enterprise for adolescent/youth within school and communities. These include:

- improving leadership skills and problem-solving,
- adaptable vocational skills that are informed by thorough market analysis
- use of technology to improve access to information, social networking and prevent social exclusion
- CARE's Village Savings and Loans model to increase savings, combined with financial literacy training, entrepreneurship skills and mentorship with older adolescents
- Inclusion in market value chains
- Advocacy partnerships with youth, CSOs, private sector, governmental and financial institutions

In Mali, the programme works with 92,500 adolescent girls and boys in the Mopti region, one of the poorest areas of the country, to increase resilience through access to information via mobile platforms, mobilization of adolescents to facilitate adolescent-led disaster risk reduction actions, development of leadership skills and financial literacy, and facilitation of linkages between youth savings groups and microfinance/ savings institutions. The curriculum developed through PCTFI is being adopted by the government in Mali.

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?

Before applying any education or youth inclusion strategy, the local culture of each area/region needs to be understood and taken into consideration, i.e. no 'one size fits all' solutions for the three regions. In the Middle East as well as the other regions, there are differences between the countries and within the countries. Make sure that policies are implemented bottom-up instead of top-down, incorporating initiatives from the communities themselves.

Look at context and make specific and in-depth actor and power analyses to assess where the limiting forces for youth participation may be found.

Focus strategies and programming on youth itself (raising awareness of youth rights / women's rights, training in organising and raising voice, vocational training that is context specific and demand driven) and at the same time, work on a conducive environment, which implies strategies for influencing powerholders on their perceptions of women and youth (social norms change), their behaviour towards and talk about women/youth, their policies for women & youth. This is about both formal and informal powerholders, i.e. both government officials, and religious and traditional (clan, ethnical group) leaders.

Ensuring and enabling environment should be a continuous process, with a regular review and adaptation of policies to make sure they still align with the everchanging reality on the ground. Decentralizing (governmental) agencies and services to different rural areas will facilitate a conducive environment with policies responsive to the local needs. Decentralization also enables youth to stay in the rural areas instead of migrating to urban areas in search of employment or support.

Regardless of the strategy, policy or programme, ensure proper and adequate assessment of how it may affect (young) women and men differently and use this information to create gender-transformative approaches.

Finally, we want to stress that engaging with duty bearers is equally important to reduce stigmatization of youth and start to address youth employment as an issue of public responsibility.

4. Anything else you feel is worth mentioning?

Youth unemployment in the Sahel region and Mali in particular can only be combatted [if bad governance and corruption are addressed](#). Young people have unrealistic expectations of getting a formal job in the saturated public services, causing frustration that is further fueled by widespread corruption and favoritism. This counts in particular for young people from less privileged ethnic groups that have been increasingly discriminated in recent years. If bad governance is not addressed, it will lead to more illegal trade, crime and terrorists, as well as more and more youth trying to find a way to Europe.

As a trend at donor level: please guarantee a long-term strategy and sustained, innovative implementation. Remember that the Netherlands just recently restarted prioritising the education sector, after having phased it out years ago.

From a conflict sensitivity and 'Do no harm' perspective it is imperative that economic opportunity interventions are properly followed-up to avoid dissipation of efforts and to produce more lasting effects.