



7

YOUTH IN FRAGILE SITUATIONS

PROMOTING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT FOR PEACE
AND RESILIENCE

THEMATIC PRIORITY OF THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE ON DECENT JOBS FOR YOUTH



1 Decent Jobs for Youth – the global initiative for action

1.1 Objective

Decent Jobs for Youth is the global initiative to scale up action and impact on youth employment under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Launched in 2016 with the endorsement of the executive heads of the United Nations, Decent Jobs for Youth is a unique platform for partners to address fragmentation and catalyse effective, innovative and evidence-based action at country and regional levels.

1.2 Partners

Decent Jobs for Youth brings together the resources and expertise of multiple partners to create linkages that maximize the effectiveness of youth employment investments. The initiative recognizes the important roles of governments, social partners, the UN System, youth and civil society, the private sector, regional institutions, parliamentarians, foundations, academia and the media in promoting decent jobs for youth. The partners of Decent Jobs for Youth subscribe to 15 guiding principles, which steer their actions and investments on youth employment.

1.3 Strategy



Building a strategic alliance to advocate, ensure policy convergence, stimulate innovative thinking and mobilize resources



Scaling up evidence-based action and impact across eight thematic priorities in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development



Sharing and applying knowledge by capturing, analysing and sharing best practices, highlighting innovative approaches and facilitating learning



Mobilizing resources by securing high-level commitments from national, regional and international actors

1.4 Priorities for action

Eight thematic priorities to make a difference in the lives of young women and men – and in our world. Thematic plans identify areas for enhanced action and impact on decent jobs.



Green jobs for youth



Digital skills for youth



Quality apprenticeships



Youth in fragile situations



Youth transitioning to the formal economy



Youth in the rural economy



Youth entrepreneurship and self-employment



Young workers in hazardous occupations

3 Youth in Fragile Situations

2 Why action is needed

More than 1.6 billion people currently live in fragile and conflict-affected States, 50 per cent of whom are under the age of 20.¹ In these areas, protracted conflicts and complex emergencies extend over many years, halt and reverse economic growth and erode development gains. As a result, poverty is increasingly concentrated in fragile settings: the share of extreme poor living in conflict-affected situations is expected to rise from 17 per cent of the global total today to almost 50 per cent by 2030.²

Fragility exacerbates the severity of the challenge of youth employment, in terms both of availability and quality of jobs. For young people, who are already disproportionately affected by unemployment globally,³ fragility often means that it is even harder for them to gain access to employment opportunities, with lower quality jobs for those who do find work. In this scenario, various groups of young people experience growing labour market inequalities, their transitions from school to work are longer and more uncertain and they become increasingly detached from the labour market.⁴ Under these circumstances, young people may be pushed to engage in jobs that are informal, unstable, underpaid or even high-risk and harmful – just for the daily survival. Young people in fragile and conflict-affected environments are much more at risk of dropping out of school or college, in order to find work, driven by a sense of hopelessness, or anxiety about their own well-being. In fragile situations, young women in particular are more likely to be withdrawn from education and prevented from working outside of the home, through a combination of the family's fear for their safety and the pressure of conservative social norms.

Youth unemployment, decent work deficits, fragility and migration are closely interlinked. While fragility – in particular low security – exacerbates unemployment, joblessness and low quality jobs can also intensify fragility.⁵ Where economic livelihoods and employment opportunities are lacking, young people living in fragile contexts can be targeted by the recruitment strategies of extremist groups, organized crime, gang associations, or piracy.⁶ Fragility and conflict may also encourage migration, sometimes turning young people into refugees in search of safety and a better life elsewhere. While employment is not always a primary driving force, it usually features in the migration process at some point. For countries of origin, the youth exodus can further exacerbate economic stagnation and fragility through the loss of human capital. The incidence of irregular migration is higher among young people escaping fragility, putting them at risk of trafficking or exploitation. In receiving countries, where local labour markets have to absorb large influxes of job-seekers, both young refugees and migrants may face exclusion from the labour market and from decent work, lacking a political voice and rights.⁷

Employment – in particular among young people – has the potential to build peace, foster the self-reliance of refugees in hosting communities and support the reintegration of formerly displaced persons upon return. In fragile settings, employment can contribute to peace by, first, creating constructive *contact* between groups, thus overturning common stereotypes and improving inter-group knowledge and perceptions; second, addressing *grievances* and

¹ OECD: *States of fragility 2016: Understanding Violence* (Paris, 2016).

² World Bank: *Fragility, conflict and violence* (Washington, DC, 2017).

³ ILO: *Global employment trends for youth 2017: Paths to a better working future* (Geneva, 2017).

⁴ ILO: *Employment and decent work in situations of fragility, conflict and disaster* (Geneva, 2016).

⁵ P. Collier, A. Hoeffler and D. Rohner: *Beyond greed and grievance: feasibility and civil war*. CSAE Working Paper Series, Centre for the Study of African Economies (Oxford, 2006).

⁶ ILO: *Employment and decent work in situations of fragility, conflict and disaster*.

⁷ ILO: *The Access of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons to the labour market* (Geneva, 2016).

4 Youth in Fragile Situations

perceptions of unfair treatment and inequality; and, third, fostering skills and economic *opportunities*, which in turn reduces incentives for engaging in adverse behaviour and provides reasons to refrain from embarking on irregular migration.⁸

Figure 1: Peace and security effect of youth employment investments



Source: Based on T. Brück et al. (2016). “Jobs aid peace: a review of the theory and practice of the impact of employment programmes on peace in fragile and conflict-affected countries.”

The international community has given strong attention to facilitating peace and resilience and Decent Jobs for Youth will make a meaningful contribution to those efforts by fostering youth employment in fragile situations. Recent global efforts to this end include the Security Council resolution 2250 (2015) on youth, peace and security, which emphasized the importance of creating policies for youth to positively contribute to peacebuilding; the ongoing work on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security; and the Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience Recommendation, 2017 (No. 205), adopted by the International Labour Conference. In the context of economic migration and refugee movements, the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants⁹ addressed the challenges faced by refugees and migrants and emphasized the role of decent work in sending and receiving countries. Through the Declaration, the General Assembly committed itself to creating two global compacts: for safe, orderly and regular migration; and on refugees.¹⁰

⁸ ILO, UNDP, UN PBSO and World Bank: *Employment programmes and peace* (2016); T. Brück et al.: *Jobs aid peace. A Review of the Theory and Practice of the Impact of Employment Programmes on Peace in Fragile and Conflict-affected Countries*, ISDC Working Paper (Berlin, 2016).

⁹ As set out in UN General Assembly Resolution 71/1.

¹⁰ UN: *Making migration work for all*. Report of the Secretary-General, General Assembly Document No. A/72/643 (New York, 2017).

Investing in youth employment in fragile situations will boost the labour market outcomes of some of the most vulnerable young people, including young women and disabled young people, who are most at risk of being excluded from development gains. With the motto of “leaving no one behind” and “reaching the furthest behind first”, Decent Jobs for Youth will capitalize on the interconnected nature of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to speed up progress towards decent work opportunities for young women and men and economic growth. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a transformational agenda, universal in scope and ambitious in its aspiration to leave no one behind. Fragility, vulnerability, inequality and a lack of decent work opportunities remain the greatest impediment to the achievement of the SDGs. Young people are active and creative agents of change. Furnished with the appropriate skills, employment opportunities and support mechanisms, they will most certainly accelerate progress towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

3 Evidence and innovations

3.1 What works in promoting youth employment in fragile situations?

3.1.1 Vocational and entrepreneurship skills training

Skills development can improve young peoples’ employability and self-employment and facilitate their transition into the labour market. This is necessary, as countries in fragile situations often have weak education systems. However, investments in skills development will not automatically translate into better jobs for young people unless mismatches between education and training providers, on the one hand, and employers, on the other, are remedied.¹¹ Experience has shown that successful interventions that lead to youth employment should follow a market-based, demand-driven approach, that is built on a comprehensive labour market analysis and that benefits from the participation of employers, workers and other local stakeholders.¹² Close cooperation and involvement of workers’ and employers’ organizations based on social dialogue and tripartism is a key success factor in promoting youth employment for peace and resilience. Complementary measures, such as start-up grants, subsidized wage employment in an employment-intensive investment programme and job-matching services will enhance the gains from skills development interventions.

In fragile settings, the combination of technical and non-technical skills is crucial to the improvement of attitudes and behaviours. Soft skills training for at-risk young people has helped to lower the incidence of crime and violence.¹³ Elements such as conflict resolution, problem-solving and teamwork have the potential to maximize the positive impact of employment on peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

3.1.2 Access to capital

Cash transfers, in-kind capital and subsidized credit have helped young people in fragile situations, and in particular those in rural areas, to sustain and start their businesses and improve

¹¹ C. Blattman and L. Ralston: *Generating employment in poor and fragile states: evidence from labor market and entrepreneurship programs*. Available at SSRN (2015); R. Mallett and R. Slater: “Livelihoods, conflict and aid programming: Is the evidence base good enough?” in *Disasters* (Vol. 40, Issue 2) pp. 226–245, April 2016.

¹² GIZ: *Employment promotion in contexts of conflict, fragility and violence: Opportunities and Challenges for Peacebuilding* (Bonn, 2015).

¹³ C. Blattman, J. Jamison and M. Sheridan: *Reducing crime and violence: experimental evidence on adult noncognitive investments in Liberia*. Policy Research Working Paper 7648 (World Bank Group, Washington, DC, 2015).

6 Youth in Fragile Situations

their long-term earning potential.¹⁴ Cash transfers can be conditional, for instance on participation in technical or soft skills training, or unconditional, in the light of recent evidence which challenges the assumption that beneficiaries will misuse cash or that capital-based programmes are conducive to dependency.¹⁵

Capital-based components can maximize the impact of technical and entrepreneurship skills. Start-up grants can enable those who have received training in entrepreneurship and technical skills to put those skills immediately to use. Moreover, by making capital transfer conditional on participation in soft skills programmes or continued presence in low risk areas, it is possible to link business development support directly with peacebuilding objectives.¹⁶

While self-employment does create jobs for youth, these are not always decent jobs. Self-employment is frequently less a choice than a necessity for young people in fragile situations, rendering them vulnerable to hazardous working conditions and low productivity. Interventions promoting self-employment among young people must stress the importance of quality of work, rights at work and the sustainability of youth-led businesses.

3.1.3 Labour-based programmes after conflicts and disasters

Labour-based initiatives such as employment-intensive investment programmes (EIIP) and cash-for-work schemes can offer young people immediate work and income opportunities, while at the same time enabling them to take part in the sustained improvement of their local community infrastructure. EIIPs and cash-for-work programmes generate both immediate and medium-term employment and income by maximizing the use of available skilled and unskilled local labour in public investments. The tangible benefits of these ventures include immediate peace dividends in fragile situations, a crucial outcome, given that most youth employment interventions take some time to show results.¹⁷

Labour-intensive investments are particularly useful in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of areas hit by conflicts and disasters, in the rebuilding of physical and social infrastructure, such as roads, schools, drainage and drinking water systems.¹⁸ Recent research on the employment impacts of investments in road infrastructure indicates that these investments not only bring direct and indirect employment benefits in the short term, they also support long-term economic growth and employment creation, by lowering private sector costs and increasing productivity.¹⁹ At the same time, labour-related programmes are not limited to the rehabilitation of hard infrastructure, but also involve the channelling of employment-intensive investments into the social sectors and environmental services. Measures of this kind facilitate the social cohesion and climate resilience of communities, and militate against the common tendency of infrastructure projects to favour the employment of men without disabilities.

3.1.4 Integrated strategies to combine multiple programme components

Employment programmes which combine multiple instruments can maximize their impact on labour market outcomes of youth. On their own, vocational and entrepreneurial skills training

¹⁴ Blattman and Ralston, op. cit.

¹⁵ D. K. Evans and A. Popova: *Cash transfers and temptation goods: a review of global evidence*. Policy Research Working Paper 6886 (World Bank Group, Washington, DC, 2014).

¹⁶ C. Blattman and J. Annan: "Can employment reduce lawlessness and rebellion? A field experiment with high-risk men in a fragile state" in *American Political Science Review* (2016, Vol. 110, Issue 1) pp. 1–17.

¹⁷ J. Kluve et al.: *Interventions to improve the labour market outcomes of youth: A systematic review of training, entrepreneurship promotion, employment services and subsidized employment interventions* (Campbell Systematic Reviews, 2017).

¹⁸ ILO: *Employment-intensive investment: providing infrastructure, jobs and income* (Geneva, 2013).

¹⁹ ILO: *Review of impacts of road sector investments on employment* (Geneva, 2017).

courses are often insufficient to enable young people to transition into sustained wage employment or self-employment. When complemented by capital transfers, employment-intensive investment programmes and employment services, however, these measures are much more likely to result in positive labour market outcomes. Employment services, in particular, can act as catalysts, matching young people with training opportunities, financial services, labour-based programmes and actual jobs. The Programme on Jobs for Peace and Resilience, an ILO flagship programme, relies on such an integrated approach to strengthen action at the country level.²⁰

3.2 What innovative approaches can be taken to fostering youth employment in fragile settings?

Fragile settings pose particular challenges to the design and implementation of effective youth employment programmes, including those in volatile political and security environments and with limited infrastructure. Building on past experiences, and making use of new project designs and technologies, innovative approaches to creating decent jobs for young people respond creatively to the specific problems of these fragile contexts.

3.2.1 New technologies as a means to extend skills training to hard-to-reach youth

Digital resources and mobile training facilities may be particularly useful for reaching young people in fragile environments (in particular those with restricted mobility, who need to move frequently or who are repeatedly displaced) – both to provide educational opportunities but also as a potential source of employment.

E-learning resources can help to reach young populations who are willing to enhance their skills even in times of conflict. In the Syrian Arab Republic, technical and vocational training (TVET) centres work around unsafe learning situations by using alternative training methods. A TVET portal has been set up to provide a range of online learning facilities, including lessons, chat rooms, and the testing and provision of multimedia and interactive learning materials. The portal offers an effective substitute to the traditional training facilities at the Damascus Training Centre, given that many students are unable to reach the centre. The Centre also communicates with staff and students through bulk mobile messaging, via its website and over social media. In addition, an electronic placement and career guidance system (E-PCGS) has been put in place to support staff in linking refugees with employment opportunities. The system facilitates the follow-up and tracking of the employment status of the Centre's graduates, supports the identification of employment opportunities, and helps to link these opportunities to graduates.²¹

Mobile skills-building facilities can offer skills training opportunities to young people who are not only barred from education through social and economic factors, but whose access is equally compounded by unreliable transport and infrastructure. In Haiti, for example, where urban areas account for as many as 57 per cent of unemployed young people, young women and men often lack access to traineeships and business services. In response to these challenges characteristic of fragile settings, the Laboratoire d'Innovation et de Développement Economique (LIDÉ) bus has been set up, as a roving skills-building facility offering business management programmes for young women and men in particularly vulnerable

²⁰ See details of the programme on the ILO website, at http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/how-the-ilo-works/WCMS_495276/lang--en/index.htm.

²¹ Details of the TVET programme of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) are available online at <https://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/201208024264.pdf>.

neighbourhoods to enable them to launch their own start-ups. Eighteen months after the launch of LIDÉ in the Fort National district of Port-au-Prince, 300 young entrepreneurs were reached, 40 start-ups have been incubated and a voice has been given to people who normally remain unheard.²²

3.2.2 Multi-stakeholder approaches to connect youth with the private sector

Projects which engage a wide range of local stakeholders, including students, employers and educational institutions, can help to increase graduates' employability and facilitate school-to-work transitions in fragile settings. A project in Gaza, where young people face high unemployment, has been mounted to link graduates with the private sector, while at the same time improving the productivity of five local industries. The engineering departments at the Islamic University of Gaza have been connected with the private sector through the University's Industry and Community Liaison Centre, which was established in 2014. The Liaison Centre connected the engineering faculty with the private sector by such means as providing technical assistance to the private sector with experts from IUG; ensuring the participation of the private sector in the process of upgrading and validating curricula and their implementation with structured apprenticeships; and facilitating the transition of graduates to the world of work through counselling and job-matching. Overall, through its multi-stakeholder engagement, the project has provided smart solutions for the rebuilding of Gaza, with benefits for both the private sector and recent university graduates.²³

3.2.3 Graduation Approach: comprehensive strategy for youth employment

The Graduation Approach highlights the potential of combining several intervention components for more effective and sustainable youth employment opportunities in the context of fragility and forced displacement. The approach was first developed in Bangladesh to help address the needs and promote the livelihood opportunities of those who were too poor for microfinance services. The Graduation Approach specifically targets the most vulnerable households, with a special emphasis on youth, and assists them through a range of interventions: supporting them with consumables, educating them in ways of making efficient savings, and providing skills training focused on founding and sustaining businesses and transfers of cash and livestock to help jump-start a sustainable economic activity. Since 2013, pilot projects have aimed to extend the approach to support refugees and their host communities in urban settings. One pilot project targeted members of the African and Syrian refugee populations in Cairo and Alexandria. Preliminary results indicate that 754 participants have found wage employment and 797 have successfully started their own businesses. Moreover, according to initial estimates, the average income per person per month has increased by around 18 per cent in Cairo and 27 per cent in Alexandria.²⁴

²² UNDP: *Innovation for 2030 – UNDP Innovation Facility: 2015 year in review* (New York, 2015).

²³ ILO, UNDP and UNHCR: *Case studies on youth employment in fragile situations* (Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, 2017).

²⁴ Details of the UNHCR Graduation Approach may be found online on the UNHCR website at <http://www.unhcr.org/uk/graduation-approach-56e9752a4.html>.

4 Action on decent jobs for youth in fragile settings

4.1 Enhance the evidence base on what works and how to facilitate decent jobs for young people in fragile situations

Decent Jobs for Youth will work with numerous partners at global, regional and country levels to strengthen the evidence base and support the development of effective tools to foster the creation of jobs for young people while contributing to sustained peace and resilience. Decent Jobs for Youth will:

1. **Synthesize the lessons learned** from promising and tested approaches to assist young people in fragile situations in gaining decent work, including through effective targeting and the use of social dialogue;
2. **Outline a learning agenda** to identify learning needs and priorities to improve the effectiveness of interventions in situations of fragility. In doing so, the initiative will liaise with existing local and international efforts to enhance the evidence base on the links between youth employment, peace, resilience, irregular migration and forced displacement;
3. **Invite and work with partners to produce evidence in emerging areas**, such as the use of science and technology to stimulate innovation in fragile settings (in such areas as new technologies in cash transfer programming, hackathons, apps and virtual reality); opportunities for job creation in the provision of services in fragile situations; and effective interventions for enterprise creation in fragile settings (including through youth cooperatives and the social economy);
4. **Create a knowledge resource directory** with technical and guidance notes on youth in fragile settings, linking and capitalizing on the resources on the promotion of decent work in situations of fragility in the multimedia library of the International Training Centre of the ILO.²⁵
5. **Facilitate evidence take-up and improved programming and monitoring** through thematic workshops with policymakers, practitioners and academics at country and global levels.

4.2 Promote effective and promising interventions leading to more and better jobs for youth

Country level work will rely on the identification of youth needs and will encourage youth voices: Decent Jobs for Youth will raise awareness among all stakeholders of the particular needs of youth in fragile situations and encourage young people to speak out and become engaged in crisis responses.

Building on national priorities and the capacities on the ground, Decent Jobs for Youth will promote interventions aiming at:

1. **Strengthening the employability of young people** through demand-driven, market-based vocational skills, job-search assistance and coaching;

²⁵ See the ITC-ILO platform “From fragility to resilience through decent work”, available online at <https://fragilestates.itcilo.org/promotion-of-decent-work-in-situations-of-fragility/>.

2. **Facilitating enterprise creation and growth** through entrepreneurial skills and access to capital;
3. **Fostering job creation** through employment-intensive investments and cash-for-work programmes that are well suited for reconstruction and other public works.

Decent Jobs for Youth will place a strong focus on young women. Young women are particularly affected by unemployment and lack of decent work in fragile environments. Their meaningful participation in the labour market is essential to support recovery and resilience building and is therefore a crucial target of Decent Jobs for Youth. In addition, the initiative will foster respect for the rights of children and young people, combat discrimination, as well as child and forced labour, and stress the importance of complementary services for young people in fragile situations, including psychological support and access to social protection.

4.3 Stimulate youth-targeted employment and enterprise development policies in fragile settings

Decent Jobs for Youth will work with partners to assist policymakers, workers' and employers' organizations, and other national stakeholders as they identify, design and implement solutions to the youth employment challenge in fragile contexts. In particular, the initiative will aim at strengthening institutional capacity:

1. To identify processes or policies that could hinder decent work for young people, together with policy solutions to facilitate more inclusive economic growth with direct job benefits for young people;
2. To integrate youth employment policies into national efforts for prevention, recovery and resilience.



SCALING UP ACTION & IMPACT ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

CONTACT

DECENTJOBSFORYOUTH@ILO.ORG

ENGAGE

WWW.DECENTJOBSFORYOUTH.ORG

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