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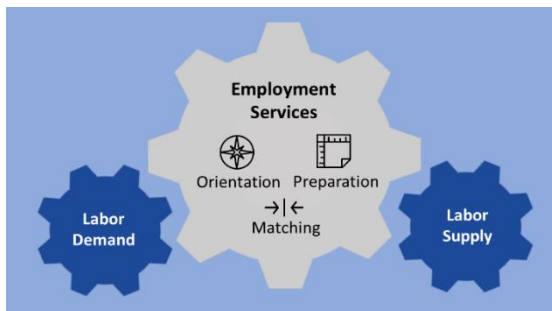
Promoting Coordination to Advance Employment Services for Youth

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Introduction: Why employment services matter for youth employment

In much of the world, today's young people are failing to realize their aspirations. Youth unemployment rates hover around historical highs and hundreds of millions of youth are stuck in low paying, insecure, or low quality jobs that undermine future economic opportunities and earning potential. Several factors contribute to the employment challenge, including bottlenecks on the supply side, such as inadequate or irrelevant education and training and resulting skills gaps, as well as on the demand side, such as insufficient economic growth and quality job creation (as many as 5 million jobs a month need to be created worldwide to absorb new entrants to the labor force). In addition, youth labor markets fail to clear because of a range of intermediation or "bridging" gaps, which hinder eager young job-seekers from successfully connecting to employers and available vacancies. Employment and matching services that offer job search, counseling, and placement assistance have become an important and effective tool of youth employment solutions.

Employment Services for youth can be clustered into:



Orientation: Delivery of information on different career options and learning about personal strengths and weaknesses.

Preparation: Getting ready for the job search and application process.

Matching: Helping companies find suitable candidates and jobseekers find a job through information, placement, and connection services.

This brief will inform, inspire, and guide employment service providers, government, businesses, and civil society agencies seeking to strengthen youth employment outcomes through impactful employment services to better design and coordinate their activities.

Multi-Stakeholder Engagement in Employment Service Activities in Developing Countries

Designing employment services solutions that help bring young people into employment is a complex challenge that concerns many different stakeholders. Key players include representatives from ministries, the private sector, the civil society, young job seekers, academia, and trade unions. If all are effectively engaged in dialogue

¹ This brief is part of S4YE's Knowledge Work Program, in which the S4YE Secretariat, in partnership with a development partner, co-authors a short knowledge "brief" to share insights on a specific theme with the broader youth employment development community. This brief was authored by and contains the opinions of Nicole Goldin (S4YE), Jens Adam, and Heike Hoess (GIZ). It does not necessarily reflect the views of individual partners or institutions.

and implementation, each stakeholder then has the chance to be actively and systematically involved in the development of innovative demand-driven solutions for employment services.

At the same time, meaningful coordination can be difficult because the parties involved may have differing models, approaches, or interests. For example, **public sector** actors have a particular interest in seeing youth productively employed such that they can pay taxes, earn and spend, and contribute to the national growth. In many lower and middle-income countries, governments also see social and security benefits from youth economic participation. Yet different ministries that are involved in employment services - such as the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Labor – often have diverging perspectives on the target groups or the institutional set-up of employment services.

The **private sector** has a keen interest in functioning youth labor markets and efficient matching to ensure their workforce performs at an optimal level and that talent pipelines guarantee continuity and sustainable efficiency and success. Employers need well-prepared candidates for job openings via recruitment processes that are as quick and cost-effective as possible, yet also minimize the risk associated with hiring youth and maximize retention of young employees.

When it comes to employment and employment services, **civil society** organizations (CSOs) and trade unions often have a focus on advocating for favorable and safe working and living conditions, especially for more vulnerable workers such as youth. While CSOs can be important information sources, in many economies in developing countries, the (formal) private sector and civil society are organized quite weakly and to coordinate representative dialogues concerning employment services can be challenging.

Importantly, young **job seekers** are arguably the most important stakeholder in employment services, as they have the most to lose or gain from. When these are provided efficiently, youth will be better able to navigate to a good job, increase their own incomes, and support themselves and their families. For young people, the impact can be both immediate and highly consequential, but too frequently they are not consulted in the design or implementation of employment services and, thus, such programs may not best serve their needs.

S4YE and YouMatch – Coordinating Stakeholders to Advance Youth Employment and Matching Services

At the macro level, S4YE itself is a model of coordination between governments, public international organizations, the private sector, and civil society. The coalition was founded on the premise that no single actor can address the youth employment challenge alone and that only informed, deliberate, and well-managed collaboration between stakeholders will bring results. S4YE partners are also elevating employment services and coordination at the country or project level, bringing government, industry, education and training institutions, youth, and service providers together. Another global initiative is YouMatch, commissioned to the GIZ by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Development and Cooperation (BMZ).

YouMatch is targeting the link between labor demand and supply, aiming to improve intermediation activities for youth. In this way, the initiative encourages and facilitates an ongoing regional and global dialogue on employment services based on peer exchange. This dialogue includes public, private, and civil society institutions in order to identify promising solutions that improve employment services for youth, focusing on Africa and the Middle East.

YouMatch: Promoting Coordination in Employment Services

YouMatch launched an Open Innovation Fund for Employment Services (OIFES) in December 2016, which complements its regional networks by providing the means for implementing, testing, and showcasing innovative approaches and solutions developed in the networks. One of the criteria of participation requires that at least two of the three stakeholder groups (public/private/civil society) are represented in the innovative ideas. One pilot project being implemented in Jordan and Morocco, “Career Essentials for Youth at Educational Institutions,” aims to empower youth to plan their future career effectively. Career counselors at two secondary schools in Morocco and two secondary schools in Jordan help youth assess their self-abilities and interests, introduce career opportunities on the local labor market, and familiarize them with the process of finding a suitable job. As another example, two Rwandan technical secondary schools are collaborating with private sector companies to enhance intermediation services of the schools’ two career centers. The career centers will inform the students about opportunities in the local labor market, provide peer-to-peer coaching on job-search strategies, and offer employment readiness training, including personal development skills and entrepreneurship training. The lessons learned will be taken up and disseminated by the YouMatch network. Members from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania have already expressed interest to adopt successful practice from the pilot and adapt it for their own youth.

Success factors in coordination of employment services for youth

From their work, S4YE and YouMatch have gleaned several shared lessons and essential practices to improve coordination in employment services to best serve young people. While these elements may not necessarily be unique to success in youth employment, we have found them to be critically important to effective coordination in employment services and labor market intermediation and, thus, are worth reiterating in this context:

1. Establish shared goals and objectives, define clear roles and responsibilities

As all involved actors have different motivations for their participation in the set-up and implementation or simply improvement of employment services, stakeholders should discuss agendas and make them transparent at the outset of the project. While public and private sector actors may seemingly have natural roles in bridging labor market supply and demand and providing employment services to youth, emerging approaches and technological tools may challenge these norms or encourage non-traditional engagement in the provision of

S4YE: Advancing learning and best practices in youth employment services and coordination

S4YE partners are addressing intermediation and market-clearing constraints, thus, active coordination is foundational to project design and implementation. The International Labor Organization's FORSATI project in Tunisia, for example, is strengthening Tunisian Public Employment Services (PES) and better connecting service providers with employers. In Panama, the New Employment Opportunities (NEO) alliance, implemented by the International Youth Foundation and the Multilateral Investment Fund, convenes 17 partners. Their aim is to create a better ecosystem of employment related services for disadvantaged youth by identifying current weaknesses, developing strategies to upgrade the services provided, and improving coordination among providers and between providers and employers. Both of these projects are also members of S4YE's flagship operational and real-time collaborative learning initiative, the S4YE Impact Portfolio (IP). The IP is a curated group of 19 high-impact potential projects in fifteen low and middle-income countries around the world. Together, they are working to understand and advance best practices to loosen the supply, demand, and intermediation bottlenecks that keep young people from securing quality jobs.

employment services. Effective coordination requires that the parties involved define distinct responsibilities and clear commitments across all phases of the project – including monitoring and evaluation. The ILO FORSATI project, implemented together with the Tunisian Public Employment Services (PES), facilitates a labor market intermediation service program where participating employers make a contractual agreement with the government committing to providing internships, traineeships, and jobs to job seekers. In exchange for their commitment, their vacancies and job announcements are shared and posted through local PES offices that offer their services and counseling free of charge to job seekers.

Similarly, all YouMatch pilot projects are set-up such that actors from at least two stakeholder groups are involved and their specific role is clarified from the beginning. In the case of the Morocco and Jordan examples, two toolkits for career essentials help clarify expectations between counselors and youth. By engaging the private sector in the development of these resources, an accurate depiction of employer demand and their needs regarding skills and competencies can be ensured. Teachers are engaged in the process to assure that suitable pedagogical and didactical methods are included. Civil society will play a role in making sure that parents have reliable information and a voice. There is mutual understanding among stakeholders that if the division of tasks is jointly implemented, the project can be successful.

2. Communicate and convene regularly and engage an external facilitator

Labor market conditions and employment opportunities for youth can shift. Implementing parties should establish seamless communication protocols among and within the group, as well as adhere to a calendar of regularly scheduled meetings as a radar function to respond to changing environments and to identify and adopt good practices. To create trust, it is important to promote accountability and ensure a necessary balance of input between and among implementing parties and participants. We recommend involving an external facilitator that can moderate the process and pool different interests. The facilitator should understand the dynamics and potentially varying language of public and private actors and should also have experience engaging with young people. In the case of Rwanda, as described above, a national NGO is acting as a facilitator to support the career centers and moderate the discussion between the private companies and the center management, with the long-term objective that the career center engages students in exploring the local labor market. Once a month, all involved stakeholders come together to discuss progress of activities and to steer the implementation process.

3. Set outcome indicators, project and process benchmarks and monitor progress of coordination

Effective coordination as a project outcome should be evaluated alongside clear outcome indicators and regular feedback loops should be used to generate new learnings and tactics for impact. In addition, as coordination requires an investment of time and resources, its returns should be measured as process or program metrics, using both qualitative or relevant quantitative assessments. In Tunisia, for example, FORSATI is conducting assessments and strengthening the ability of public employment services (PES) to measure skills gaps and better anticipate labor market needs to improve the structure of employment services that PES, local NGOs, and other government programs offer. It is also recommended to set and measure process indicators related to the partnerships in the project. This is particularly important if actors at different locations are involved. The YouMatch implementation partners in Morocco and Jordan have setup indicators that measure results of the dialogue processes between public and private actors in their locations, such as execution of joint activities in the elaboration of the tool kit. These measures give an indication of how the coordination process can be organized more effectively and which mechanisms are most suited to differing contexts.

4. Prioritize sub-national and local labor markets

Labor markets can be complex and hard to navigate, especially for youth. At the same time, the needs and opportunities with respect to available jobs for youth may vary within countries. Centralized bureaucracies can be slow to reform or adapt new procedures and large companies alone are not sufficient for the impact needed, specifically in rural areas. By working with sub-national, municipal, or village level actors, business organizations, or small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the coordinating and implementing organizations can speed up the process and meet youth where they are. At the same time, national-level governments should pursue supportive policies, and evidence and advocacy are needed from both private sector and civil society parties to enable employment services for youth to operate efficiently. In Rwanda, the YouMatch project is working at the school and community level. Selected schools' career centers will inform the students about opportunities in the local labor market. The cooperation with the companies will be set up in a way that also the local employers can use the center as recruitment units. At the outset of its project in Panama, NEO conducted diagnostic studies of various economic regions of the country showing that logistics, tourism, and construction industries had been growing rapidly, were drivers of job creation across the Panamanian economy, and were among the sectors with the greatest need for trained personnel. As a result, NEO Panama is working in four cities in the country across three economic sectors: construction, logistics, and tourism.

Solutions for Youth Employment (S4YE) is a multi-stakeholder global coalition established to improve youth access to work opportunities. This coalition was jointly launched by the World Bank Group, Plan International, the International Youth Foundation, Youth Business International, RAND, Accenture, and the International Labor Organization. The partnership now also includes multi-national companies, public sector donors, foundations, and international and national civil society actors.



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