



## microNOTE #52

# Understanding the Impact of Employment, Entrepreneurship and Training Programs on Youth in Jordan and Rwanda

### Introduction

Youth issues have received much attention in the last decade by governments worldwide particularly in developing nations where there is a surge in the youth population. States are aware of the implications of inaction on the 'youth question' or inattention to employment issues of young people. Around the world, unemployment rates are much higher for youth than for adults. According to the 2007 World Development Report, "youth make up 25% of the working population worldwide, but 47% of the unemployed." It is salient to note that, as diverse as this market is, so too are the needs of this group even within countries. Yet, across these countries it is apparent that youth grapple with similar challenges such as joblessness and limited training opportunities. Despite the best practices and lessons disseminated, far too many programs focus exclusively on the supply side. As a result many youth spend a lot of time training in irrelevant programs and end up back where they started – jobless.

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A total of 142 youth alumni<sup>1</sup> of three nationalities (Jordanian, Rwandan and Congolese) of which 71% were young women were interviewed in two countries and 19 villages or districts. In total, there were 49 individual in-depth inter-

“Practitioners should not view youth as a problem to be solved, but as assets and partners in the development process, and honor their potential to make impacts on the economy, society and other youth.”

Making Cents International (2008)

views conducted; and 93 people participated in eight focus groups (FG). Across the board, youth alumni want to do different things with their lives in terms of employment, school or entrepreneurship. Jordanian young people are split between having a salaried job and owning a business. Rwandan youth want to be self-employed as do Congolese youth, but a significant number of the latter want to return to school.

This report highlights how service providers can be more effective in delivering market-led programs to young people. Youth appreciate the personal self confidence that

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<sup>1</sup> This report will refer to youth as youth alumni. Youth alumni are individuals who exited a program either by graduating, close to graduation or those who left the program early.

trainings bring to their lives. The report is written to prioritize the voices of the youth. However, the team would like to note that this was a rapid study, and that a fuller evaluation of each program has the potential to yield a bigger picture. Issues that appear as weaknesses are ‘fixable’ and practitioners should look for ways to improve programming and implementation based on what youth are saying. The voices of young people in Jordan and Rwanda offer much to consider for the development community. If programs are to start working effectively for youth, then listening to what they want, what they want to change, what they like and dislike will ensure that trainings are more effective and better prepare them for the marketplace.

## Why YOUTH?

It was recently estimated that developing countries are home to 1.3 billion of the world’s 1.5 billion youth aged 15-24.<sup>2</sup> By 2010 it is expected that the youth population will increase by 30%.<sup>3</sup> Nearly half of the world’s population is under 25 years of age.<sup>4</sup> While the numbers of youth continue to grow rapidly, economic opportunities in the form of access to education, employment, or entrepreneurship<sup>5</sup> are

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations defines youth between the ages of 15 to 24 years. See: [www.un.org/youth](http://www.un.org/youth)

<sup>3</sup> *State of the World Report 2003*. UNFPA. Also see ILO’s *Youth and Work: Global Trends*. Geneva, 2004

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> See Making Cents International’s report (2008) page 4 for an excellent definition.

not growing at a proportional rate (Kabbani and Kothari 2005, 51). Kabbani and Kothari (2005, 52) posit that in Jordan, and other countries in the MENA region, there are weak linkages to the private sector and no market information systems to ensure youth are trained in market-led trainings. The Ministry of Public Service and Labor (MIFOTRA) confirms that there are no labor market information systems (LMIS) in Rwanda. Despite educational gains, there are many more young people forming the underclass and working in low-paying, unstable jobs in the informal sector. Many states are looking at a number of education, enterprise, employment and training programs to assist in job creation or self-employment to give youth entrepreneurs tools and skills to start their own businesses.

In this study, many youth say that the biggest constraints for them are getting the right training to get a job either in the public or private sectors or accessing capital to start a business. What we do know about this highly mobile and diverse group is that there are many challenges that inhibit youth from having productive livelihoods. In Jordan and Rwanda, youth are having a hard time finding programs that prepare them with the skills to be competitive in the labor market.

## Significance of report

The study intends to fill a research gap by compiling information and insights about employment, enterprise and training programs from the perspective of the youth alumni. Very few studies focus on the

youth alumni themselves to learn how the program experience was for them. Far too often, studies that analyze programs homogenize their findings. As a result there are many questions left unanswered about the sustainability of such efforts. What is not widely available, is data and research on the impact of these programs on the lives of youth.

Conferences often share key lessons aimed at helping practitioners in their youth development programs, but seldom are the voices of youth front and center. Unfortunately, the reality is that there is little or no follow up on the impact of these programs on youth. What Jordanian and Rwandan youth are saying will hopefully provide an opportunity for introspection.

## Background and Purpose of the study

USAID's Microenterprise Development office (MD) had identified youth and microfinance as a topic of interest as early as 2005.

Through its Accelerated Microenterprise Advancement Program – Financial Services (AMAP-FS) Knowledge Generation task order, MD allotted specific funding to investigate issues related to youth and microfinance. AMAP-FS KG is a five-year, \$3.2 million global microfinance research project that documents innovations and best practices in microfinance.

The purpose of this study is to learn what youth have to say about programs in which they have participated. This study highlights

feedback from youth in Jordan in the Middle East and from Rwanda in Sub-Saharan Africa. The study's central questions are: What happens one to three years after a youth has graduated or left a program? Where are the youth alumni today? What do they have to say about the training and services given to them? This report aims to explore additional subsidiary questions: Are youth alumni using the skills they acquire in a formal sector job or to start their own enterprises? What programs do youth want so that they can lead productive lives? In recognition of the challenge to provide trainings that help youth become employable, many development actors have been experimenting with new types of programs. What Jordanian and Rwandan youth are saying will hopefully provide an opportunity for introspection and inform a new generation of programming responsive to the needs of youth and demands of the marketplace.

## Programs Studied

Fieldwork was conducted in two countries, Jordan and Rwanda, from 20 July to 10 September 2008. A key feature of the methodology was a research team composed of both an international consultant and national consultant.<sup>6</sup> The sam-

<sup>6</sup> The Jordanian consultant translated the youth interviews from Arabic to English for the international consultant. In several cases, subjects did not require English to Arabic translations. The Rwandan consultant translated the youth interviews from Kinyarwanda to English for the international consultant.



ple includes 142 youth alumni of three nationalities (Jordanian, Rwandan and Congolese) from two countries.<sup>7</sup> This study looks at three youth development programs in Jordan and Rwanda: Save the Children/Jordan (STC/J), World Relief/Rwanda (WR/R) and the American Refugee Committee (ARC/R). The first two cases are USAID-funded projects; and the ARC/R projects are funded by private foundations for the last three years. All three cases present different youth livelihood programs: the first case is a soft skills<sup>8</sup> program, the second case is an apprenticeship program (trainees learn a technical skill), and the third case is an entre-

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All stakeholders were fluent in English or French so no translation was needed for the consultants. Both consultants were instrumental in defining local context, explaining concepts such as “employment” or “unemployment” and other issues to ensure an understanding by the subjects. As a result, approaches and tools were modified to fit with the local context.

<sup>7</sup> See fuller report for more details.

<sup>8</sup> See Donahue, James-Wilson, and Stark 2006 for a good definition.

preneurship/self-employment program. See the fuller report for more details on the methodology and description of the programs studied.

In Jordan, the STC/J's soft skills training program, *Najah*, is a six-month course about "inner-me" and "outer-me." This USAID-funded program is currently operational and an important aspect of the program includes hands-on practical experience either in an internship or working in groups on a funded community project.<sup>9</sup> A total of 49 youth alumni or 12% of the STC/J program were met: 16 individuals were interviewed and 33 people participated in four FG across three regions; but the sample draws heavily on people from the central region (53%). Three of the "best cases" featured in a marketing brochure about 'success stories' participated in this study. All of the youth interviewed had living parents, and all lived in family owned housing and 59% of youth interviewed were receiving an allowance from a male relative such as a father or an elder brother. No one in the southern region reported ever receiving an allowance; rather, they claimed they would do casual work to earn a modest daily wage or rely on camel's milk for support and nourishment.

In Rwanda, there are two cases. A total of 93 Rwandan and Congolese youth were interviewed in the two

<sup>9</sup> Preliminary questionnaire (July 2008). Follow up emails and meetings with staff in Jordan, July 2008. Also additional marketing materials and internal documents were reviewed.



programs in Rwanda. Youth alumni exit years from the program varied across the cases. The World Relief/Rwanda (WR/R) youth exited the program after two years or more. Of all the youth interviewed 72% exited the program in the last three years. In the American Refugee Committee/Rwanda (ARC/R) programs, most youth exited the program in one year or less. Very few African youth had family or legal guardians to take care of them. None of the Congolese refugees had bilingual capacity. Of the people sampled, households ranged in size from two to 11 and were slightly bigger in the Nyabiheke camp located in the eastern region. Most people (77%) were child-headed households (CHH). Only 23% of the 47 youth interviewed had a parent and six people were married with children of their own. See full report for more information on the participants.

In the WR/R case, a total of 47 Rwandan youth alumni or 23% of the WR/R program were met during 17 individual interviews and 30 people participated in two FG in the western and northern regions. Almost all (43) of the participants

interview were young women.<sup>10</sup> WR/R's project is supported with USAID's Economic Support Funds and it is consequently referred to as the "ESF project." This ESF project which ended in 2006 had several components to the project but this study

looks at the intervention where vocational or hands-on technical training (such as sewing or mechanics) was given to Rwandan OVC.<sup>11</sup> Youth were also organized into "associations" and given some business training to assist in the start-up of new businesses.<sup>12</sup> At the end of the training, groups received in-kind materials to start-up a group-owned business.

The ARC/R projects in the Gihembe and the Nyabiheke refugee camps are short-term entrepreneurship programs aimed at developing self-employment opportunities for Congolese entrepreneurs. In the ARC case, a total of 46 Congolese youth alumni, or 38% of the IGP and AVEP programs participated: 16 individual interviews were conducted and 30

<sup>10</sup> The consultants met mostly with young women alumni because WR/R explained it was hard to locate the male alumni (answers to in-country questionnaire, August 2008). WR/R also clarified that the overall ESF project had 62% females (preliminary questionnaire).

<sup>11</sup> Preliminary questionnaire (June 2008). Follow up emails and meetings with staff in Rwanda, August 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

people participated in FG in the North-East and Eastern regions of Rwanda. Youth are supported to start-up an activity in the income generating program (IGP) and/or group credit in the Association Volontaire d'Épargne et des Prêts (AVEP) program. These programs are designed to give unemployed Congolese youth livelihood alternatives within the refugee camps.

### What are youth saying?

African and Arab youth alumni were forthcoming about their experiences in the respective programs. Youth want it known that not all training programs offer translate into productive livelihoods – or at least very few of them do. The National Youth Council in Rwanda agreed with youth on this assertion. The Council said that few skills audits were carried out in the country so it is quite possible that training programs may be bad quality and supplier-led. In a recent survey (TakingITGlobal 2004, 3), youth felt they were not equipped with the right skills to land a job. Youth in this study said that “training programs are excellent at marketing their programs to attract youth to join but fail to deliver on what they promise.” Stakeholders in both countries, such as the national Council for Youth in Rwanda and the Higher Council for Youth in Jordan, feel that international NGOs should leverage their position to create networks in the private sector and link youth with jobs after training.

All youth interviewed want to work. One youth candidly put it, “who wants to walk around with

empty pockets?” Joblessness, low pay and poor trainings were the main issues confronting the youth across the countries. A minority of the people interviewed cited “was-ta” or “pouvoir” (power and networks) as obstacles preventing them from getting jobs except in the refugee camps where power/networks were major obstacles for people.<sup>13</sup> In Jordan, the culture of shame was not as prevalent as anticipated and the topic was highly contested by youth.<sup>14</sup> In Jordan, many stakeholders including the Higher Council for Youth asserted that the culture of shame does not have the same effect as it did twenty years ago. The concept was not relevant for the African youth who reported that they would work labor-intensive jobs if it meant they could buy food.

African and Arab youth stated that they lacked experience and usually employers wanted to see some sort of work experience. For youth entrepreneurs, getting the practical experience was equally important. How do newly trained youth get the practical hands-on experience? Youth want training programs whether on the employment or entrepreneurial track to offer experience-based livelihood trainings where they get on-the-job training to better prepare them for the labor force.

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<sup>13</sup> Except in the refugee camps.

<sup>14</sup> World Bank report (2007)

### What are youth doing today?

All youth alumni interviewed were asked about their work status. Donors want to know: What are youth doing after they exit a program? How many are unemployed, have jobs, own a business or returned for more schooling? The results varied substantially between the countries, and there were few regional variances within each country.

Most Jordanian youth said they want to work, but 39% are unemployed. The most entrepreneurial youth in Jordan seem to be in the southern region. Rwandan and Congolese youth are self-employed and work out of survival mode, as many are the main providers in the household. No Rwandan youth had a salaried job and most people tend to combine agricultural activities and sewing to earn enough income. Congolese refugee youth face camp restrictions with regards to work, hence they try to make a living through self-employment.

Arab youth in this study were more likely to be jobless or a student. In this sample, at least 39% of the youth interviewed were unemployed and 35% were at school. About 26% of the youth interviewed were working either as an employee or self employed. Of this percentage, 16% were employees and 10% had their own business. In Jordan, the most entrepreneurial youth were based in the southern region, at 17% of the interview participants. This finding correlates with Kabbani and Kothari's (2005) study where they posit that “unemployment is highest with individuals



with intermediate levels of education and lowest among individuals with lowest level of education.” Bedouins had the lowest level of education of all the youth alumni interviewed.

Jordanian youth in the central and northern region are more inclined to find certified courses and universities degrees very important for securing good jobs, whereas Bedouin youth differ on this point. More than half of the youth interviewed in the northern and central regions had post-secondary education at a university, college or vocational training center (See Figure 1). In a few cases, youth in the vocational training center already had a university degree. The exception towards education is in the south where youth were more interested in jobs or self-employment opportunities and see informal education as a vehicle to training programs. At the time of the interview, none of the youth in the south were in a training or educational program of any sort. The highest number of youth pursuing post secondary education was found in the central region.

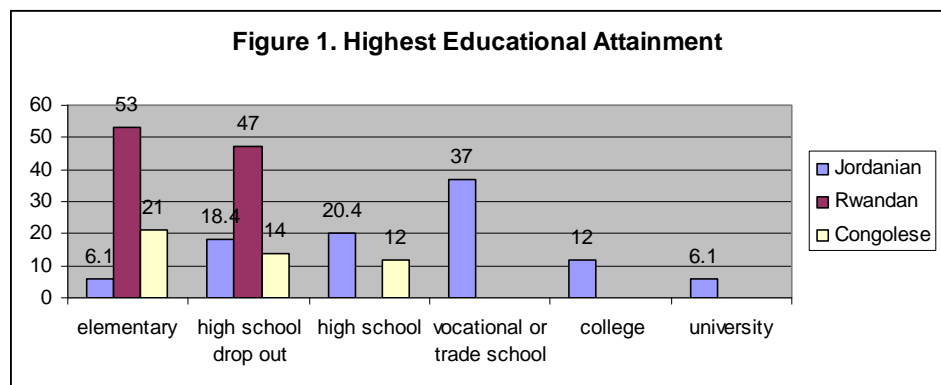
A different story emerges with youth in Rwanda. In Africa, many youth work in the informal sector and this was no exception in Rwanda. Rwandans interviewed were not as educated as youth in Jordan. On the whole, Jordanian youth particularly in the central and northern regions are relatively more educated than Rwandan youth. In Jordan, youth have an average of 11 years of schooling per person (Assaad and Amer 2007, 24-

27). Almost half of the Rwandan youth are high school drop outs and the other half left elementary school early.

Rwandan youth on the whole are interested in professional and vocational training programs and self-employment. Congolese youth wish they had more educational opportunities at the camps. Rwandan youth from the western region were mostly high school drop-outs (40%) and youth in the northern region were mostly elementary school drop-outs (43%). At least seventy-four percent of Congolese youth were either elementary or high school drop-outs. See Figure 1.

The unemployment status of youth in Rwanda was quite low because many are in charge of households

farm work or petty trading. Some of the entrepreneurs wished they could be an employee but knew that their community had no jobs for them. Youth entrepreneurs said that a lack of access to microfinance and courses in financial literacy<sup>15</sup> were major obstacles in launching their business.<sup>16</sup> Given their legal restrictions to mobility and work permits in Rwanda, only 11% of the Congolese youth said they were unemployed or not earning any income whatsoever. About 71% are working in some capacity to earn money to survive in the camps because rations are insufficient. Sixty percent of Congolese youth are self-employed and only 11% have a job. Some youth are able to get permission to work as day laborers, but many more compete for temporary jobs inside of



or have to contribute to the family’s earnings, and thus need to work to support their families. In contrast to the Jordan case, only 4% of Rwandan youth were unemployed and 11% of the Congolese youth (all in the Eastern region) were unemployed. Rwandan youth carry out low-paid farm work to make sure they meet basic needs of their family. In this sample, 94% of the youth were self employed and combining sewing activities with

the camp. Many said they do rely on food subsidies and camp rations. In the ARC/R program, about 50% of the youth reported that they were self-employed with the highest number (66%) being in the Gihembe camp (North-East region).

<sup>15</sup> See Making Cents International’s report (2008) page 4 for a very good definition.

<sup>16</sup> Prior studies show this to be true (Barnes 2001).

In both programs, self-employment was most valued by the youth because it was a means to survival.

### **What do youth want?**

Youth want to do a variety of things with their lives in terms of employment, school or entrepreneurship. About 14% of the Arab youth did not know what they wanted to do with their lives in the future. Of those Jordanians who did know, there is an almost an even split between whether they want to be employees or whether to become an entrepreneur. Difficulties with access to finance and finding good business training were constraints to owning their own business. In Africa, youth want to be self-employed. But Congolese youth also want to return to school. What was more certain is that almost all youth interviewed were candid about what they want in terms of training. Across the three nationalities, youth unanimously stated that they wanted market led technical trainings that contribute to their professional development and that would kick-start a productive livelihood. For example, a youth in Jordan wants training in a field to get him a job or a Congolese youth wants management skills to better prepare her better for running her business.

**What do youth want?** Self-employment emerges as an important career option for many of the youth that were interviewed. Entrepreneurship had a clear lead with Rwandan youth and a slight lead with Jordanian and Congolese youth. Jordanian youth were split between whether they want a salaried job or to own a business, ex-

cept in the southern region where there appears to be an entrepreneurial spirit. In contrast, most Rwandan youth want to own a business and a third of the youth would like a salaried job if that were possible in their communities. About 46% of Congolese youth would like to own their own business and 21% would like a salaried job if that was possible but are aware of the camp restrictions. A significant number (33%) of Congolese youth wish they could continue with primary and secondary education.

**What changes would youth make to trainings?** Youth have needs unique to their country and regional contexts, and the changes youth suggest depended on whether they were on the employment or entrepreneurship track. What is evident is that stand-alone programs will not work for them. Per the local stakeholders that were interviewed, there are too many life skills programs and not enough market-led technical training. They felt that subsidies and grants need to be treated as investments focused on results, and show evidence that programs 'deliver on the promises they make to young people.' They stated that costly programs do not mean better results, more appreciation, or more impact on peoples' lives. The third case is a good example of a low-cost entrepreneurship project offering market-led business training and financial services to youth.

### **What Arab Youth Want**

Many youth stated that they joined the program initially because they were hoping to start working. In

the southern region, where hazardous and at-risk work is prevalent, youth reported quitting or refusing to work at a local factory because of the reportedly dangerous work environment.<sup>17</sup> Jordanian youth are relatively split on whether to have a salaried job (35%) or own a business (41%), with marked variations across the regions (67% of southern youth preferred to own their own business). Youth felt that managing their own business would give them more flexibility and potentially the capacity to earn more money. Many of the youth who favored self-employment had first-hand experience with a family business. No evidence suggested that there was any stigma towards self-employment.

Those who wanted a salaried job appreciated that they would be sure to receive a monthly income and benefits, and this was particularly important to the northern and central regions at 36% and 38% respectively. Young women who were veiled also said that veiling was not an issue in the government jobs, whereas this was not the case in the private sector.<sup>18</sup> A number of them felt that private-sector jobs offered interesting opportunities particularly in the telecommunications sector. In the north, 9% reported that they would be interested in going back to school for higher education and usually

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<sup>17</sup> Despite their best efforts, the consultants were unable to independently confirm these work conditions.

<sup>18</sup> This remark was contested by other alumni each time it was raised.

cited having a university degree would improve job prospects.

**Certified and market-led programs:** To ensure the training programs offer a technical skill and that all trainings were certified or government-approved. Youth looking for jobs stated this was important to have so that they can show employers. Many cited the International Computer Driving License (ICDL) a certified program of Microsoft as an example of a training course that would bring value to them. Others cited certification in English at an accredited institution is valued by the job market.

**Professionalize programs.** Youth want trainers who are competent and qualified. In addition, all youth regardless of the employee or entrepreneurship route felt that having business training to compliment technical training is important. Almost all alumni of the six-month program stated they would hire professional staff and trainers who are qualified in what they teach. The exceptions were the trainees at the VTC who were generally appreciative of the course but wished they received training materials.

**Getting Experience.** All youth cited that getting hands-on and practical experience is key to landing a job. However, there are some specific differences between youth who want to be entrepreneurs or employees and depending on their path affected what they wanted from training programs.

**Individual Enterprise Projects.** Youth want individual enterprise projects – projects with a profit-making motive. Several stakehold-

ers and partners with the program felt that for-profit enterprises were very important and the program should consider this activity than community projects. One stakeholder cautioned that business planning and having employees with business experience is essential for making enterprise projects work. Of the youth who were granted a community enterprise project, they did not like the way the groups were organized and wanted groups to be self-selected.

**Standardize policies.** In all focus group sessions, carried out by region, it was evident that even within the same training classes, not all youth were given the same opportunities. Some youth alumni said they were given support to continue schooling while other cohorts received nothing. To give additional training to certain trainees was viewed as bias and unfair. Policies should be clear and transparent. For example, enterprise projects should be well-defined in terms of purpose and financial size.

**Microfinance.** Youth who are interested in self-employment want business training and more importantly, 41% want capital to get their business started.

### **What African youth want**

All youth interviewed in Rwanda, whether they are Rwandan or Congolese refugees living in Rwanda, were candid about what they want in terms of training and what they wanted to do with their lives. Given the traumatic experiences and burdens carried for many years by such young people, either as OVC or refugees, they had very

clear ideas about what they wanted to do with their lives. As mentioned earlier, at least 36% of Rwandan youth were head of household with the responsibility of caring for three to five younger siblings on their own.



Youth are interested in developing technical training skills in the areas of agribusiness, tailoring services, carpentry, mechanics, and cooking.

For African youth in this study, they wanted training programs that build technical skills and increase household incomes. Congolese youth were most interested in self-employment, business training and formal schooling. We asked youth: What would you do if given the choice? Many youth were aware of their locality whether it was a refugee camp or rural village and were quick to point to activities that may increase incomes. For example, young women who trained in tailoring were explicit that in a rural village such as Bugarama the demand for tailoring services was limited. However, they suggested that agribusiness would be more lucrative given the rising food costs. Many youth carry out agricultural



activities alongside the tailoring, but few admit that tailoring is their only income activity.

Most youth said they would want to become an entrepreneur. Self-employment is highly valued by Rwandan and Congolese youth. The majority (64%) of Rwandan youth across the regions wanted to be self-employed, and this was particularly true in the western region. Youth entrepreneurs said that they became self-employed as a survival strategy because they needed to earn an income to support their families. A few young women reported that difficult periods meant that they might have to engage in prostitution to be able to buy food for their family. At least 30% of Congolese youth wanted to be self-employed with the highest number in the eastern region (Nyabiheke camp). Youth talked in great deal about poverty struggles, crime, local conflicts and restrictions as refugees which are particular to the Congolese youth in this sample. Many of the people interviewed in the camp remarked that the refugee life was “full of despair,” “low moral” and “dependency.” Many youth said that most people depended on hand-outs from organizations for food, shelter and basic essentials. Many Congolese youth believed that entrepreneurship programs that help them create a business restored their “hope for the future.”

Jobs simply do not exist and only 23% of the Rwandan youth reported that they preferred a salaried job. In the northern region, 30% the number of youth who wanted a salaried job was nearly

double the western region (17%). The Congolese youth were aware that formal employment was not realistic given their situation and restrictions to work permits. Only 21% of Congolese youth said they would want a salaried job. Of those who wanted a salaried job, they cited regular income as important for them.

Congolese youth also want educational opportunities. In the Gihembe camp, 86% of youth wanted to return to school and 33% in Nyabiheke said they would like to go back to school. All youth who wanted more schooling believed this was a way to get out of poverty and to improve their situations.

#### **Market-led technical training.**

Rwandan youth alumni stated that they wanted market-led trainings that would fit in the local economy where they live. It was no use being trained in something that had no demand and they could not sell. They expect programs to know the growth sectors and encourage youth to participate in these trainings. Many youth interviewed said they do not know exactly what the growth areas are but want the experts to let them know. Rwandan stakeholders suggested that construction, transport, hospitality/tourism, ICT, coffee and farming as high-growth potential sectors for Rwanda.

#### **Relevant technical training.**

Technical training is very important and most youth said they wanted skills in business and financial literacy. Technical training they wanted: enhanced farm production techniques (e.g. rice, vegetables, and coffee), marketing and selling foods-

### **GIVE US QUALIFIED TRAINERS**

*There is a need to recruit competent and qualified trainers. They should be able to teach us something useful in six months rather than wasting my time.*

Rwandan Youth

tuffs (agribusiness) and selling prepared food. Congolese youth want skills training in animal husbandry (such as goat-rearing), ICT, hair-dressing, sewing, mechanics, carpentry and cooking.

#### **Competent technical trainers.**

Youth want trainers who are competent and qualified in the training module. In addition, all youth regardless of the employee or entrepreneurship route felt that having business training by people who have the experience is important. Everyone cited that getting hands-on and practical experience was also key to landing a job.

#### **Toolkits and technical assistance.**

All trainees said they should get a toolkit to get their business started. Coaching and mentoring is very crucial in the early stages of setting up a business and youth want experienced trainers who can advise them. Youth want individually allocated toolkits – and said that training with no inputs results in a wasted training. One alumnus said he trained in mechanics and after the course, neither he or any of his colleagues used the training because no inputs were given and all

workshops required them to have the basic tools. Congolese youth said a business incubator would be good to support start-up businesses.

**Individual enterprises.** Almost all Rwandan youth in the WR/R program wanted to have their own business. But Congolese youth were happy to work in cooperatives as long as they received training in cooperative development.

**Youth and Microfinance.** All youth entrepreneurs interviewed identified access to capital as the major constraint to launching a successful business. At least 94% of Rwandan youth said they want a loan. Even though microfinance is well known in Rwanda, many youth, especially the OVC, say it is hard for them to get a loan without a guarantor.

## Conclusions

Although this study presents a relatively dismal view for service providers about youth training programs, it provides valuable insight and feedback from the youth participants. Given generous donor funds, two of the three programs in the study did not have market studies, independent evaluations, due diligence, or effective monitoring systems to track the results. Programs were also not able to easily provide cost per person information. Smith and Thurman (2007) caution donors and discuss the drawbacks to programs that fail to measure their results. The less well-funded entrepreneurship program in the refugee camps seems to be having greater impact on the Congolese youth. Despite the ge-

nerous subsidies and high costs per trainee, the self-reported outcomes on youth have been negligible at best and follow up has been poor. Below are some of the main lessons learned:

### Link youth training to markets and jobs.

Well-known lessons for service providers were highlighted once again in these cases. Practitioners should know that “integrated programming is likely to be more effective than delivering life skills and technical trainings as separate components” (Making Cents 2008, 17). In other words, soft skills programs should be tied to a technical training and mindful of the employment or entrepreneurial tracks. As a stand-alone program, the life-skills training with no technical or certified programs, were not found useful by an overwhelming majority of Jordanian youth.

One stakeholder bluntly stated: “Soft skills are merely cosmetic and what youth need are technical skills – especially youth with little education.” Practitioners should also know that for apprenticeships to be effective incentives are required (Making Cents 2008, 19). An apprenticeship program that fails to provide enough materials and does not link youth to markets will not result in sustainable livelihoods. In Rwanda, an out-dated skills training program where girls learn to be seamstresses does not respond to demand in most rural communities.

### Provide qualified trainers with business experience.

Programs that fail to take on a business approach to youth livelihood efforts, such as hiring trainers with private-sector experience risk offering low-

quality services to youth. One youth said, “How can we take advice on having a business from someone who never ran a business?” Youth value trainers who have qualifications. Congolese youth were satisfied with the experience of the trainers in business planning and financial management. Most telling was an observation by a Congolese youth who said repeatedly: “Give-away goods and free services feed into a culture of dependency.” Practitioners should know that market-led programs for sustainable youth livelihood development is needed in this globalized world (Marking Cents 2008). Two of these programs were poorly conceived because both lacked a market study.<sup>19</sup>

**Programs have room for improvement.** Whether service providers received a passing or failing grade, youth agreed across country contexts that programs needed improvement to have a positive impact on their lives. This study confirms that service providers should not take market studies for granted. Donors may want programs to have a market study especially when programs offer employment, entrepreneurship and skills trainings. In the self-employment program, Congolese youth were satisfied (88%) with the training services and believed that their self-confidence had improved but had ideas on how the program can be improved. Jordanians criticized the efficacy of the program, and 44% were mostly dissatisfied with the services. Even Rwandan

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<sup>19</sup> Exception was the ARC/R program.

youth who have a greater appreciation for the programs gave carefully crafted critiques to the quality and types of training provided. In fact, there is a minority of at least 18% of the youth who feel that their self-confidence about the future has 'somewhat worsened to definitely worsened' after the training program – even in Rwanda.

In 2008, youth understand that there is a larger world out there. They know that to be competitive in today's workforce they require skills and education that respond to the market. Donors can do some serious introspection based on what youth are saying. A lot of what youth say goes back to results – what are the results? Stakeholders stated that donors should view subsidies as investments and expect a return on the money spent on each youth. If programs continue to fail and waste finite resources, especially on costly programs, the young clients (not to be seen as beneficiaries) may no longer want to participate in such programs. On the upside, youth are full of ideas about how programs can assist them to build sustainable livelihoods. In the TakingITGlobal survey (2004, 9), it was suggested that institutions are starting to recognize the importance of bringing the voices of youth to the forefront, particularly those youth who are skeptical of such programs.

Given that the youth market is a complex group due to its highly mobile and diverse composition, the employment and technical training programs need to be carefully crafted to meet the needs of youth. If it is agreed that working

with the youth segment of the market is not easy, then this requires service providers to be diligent, well-qualified and prepared to test, re-test and redesign products and services for this market. One major learning in this study, was that youth are savvy buyers. Many of the youth are fully aware that money received from “big shot” donors is intended to make a difference in their lives. Traditional approaches to youth development are a thing of the past – offering market-led products and services are non-negotiable in a more globalized economy. Trainings for youth should teach them skills they need, to be effectively inserted into the labor force either as employees or as entrepreneurs.

#### **DISCLAIMER**

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Government.