Youth and trade

100% YOUTH
Let’s unleash the potential of youth in global trade

CAMILO GIRALDO and DEVIKA RAJEEV, ITC Intern Presidents

There are 1.3 billion youth in the world today and 1 billion of them live in the developing world. Worryingly, more than half of young people in developing countries are unemployed. With growing global economic unrest, providing jobs and training for youth is one of the major challenges of our times.

Not only is youth unemployment a roadblock for current and future economic growth and international trade, it also prevents societies from harnessing their future knowledge and skills. Let’s not forget that today’s youth is tomorrow’s workforce.

Several studies have indicated that, compared to other demographic groups, youth are often more creative than their parents’ generation and as such can hold the key to their societies economic success.

It is therefore crucial to empower youth with the needed financial and other tools – including the right technologies – as well as instilling in them entrepreneurial attitudes, skills and knowledge.

What is needed for many youth today are opportunities to participate in global trade. Businesses, governments and trade support institutions must step up their efforts to ensure greater inclusion of youth in international markets and global value chains. A good starting point would be to strengthen and bolster support for youth-led micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). Starting a business today can be expensive and entrepreneurs often face numerous obstacles.

These include power dynamics; social networking constraints; discrimination based on age, gender or race; lack of access to assets and capital; low levels of education, skill and experience; and unfavourable administrative and regulatory frameworks.

Helping young entrepreneurs navigate the maze of challenges facing them should be a matter of public interest that needs to be taken more seriously. Creating a more favourable policy and business environment, setting up of efficient and resourceful trade and investment support institutions, and providing adequate skills and resources to work directly with young people are essential to their success.

Additionally, the ongoing backlash against globalization is not only a threat to the multilateral trading system and global economic growth, but also to the dreams and aspirations of young people across the world.

A greater share of trade and economic growth ought to be shared with the 99% rather than ending up with the 1%. For this to happen, better mechanisms need to be put in place across societies to reduce inequalities and bridge the gap to better benefit vulnerable groups, especially young people.

To empower and unleash the full potential of youth – in developing and developed countries – we have to make sure that the majority moves from being job seekers to becoming job creators. This will help bring down unemployment and allow countries to expand their economies.

Ensuring the economic well-being of young people by creating opportunities in trade and business is right thing to do, not only for the youths themselves but for societies as well. Making trade more inclusive for youth will raise social standards, boost economic growth and bring us closer to attaining the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
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EMPOWERING YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS
Across the world, young people are vying to build a future in trade.

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The Gambia invests in jobs for youth through national trade roadmap

A Youth and Trade Roadmap was launched by the Government of the Gambia with the support and guidance of the International Trade Centre (ITC). The Roadmap sets out to help tackle the root causes of youth unemployment and competitive market constraints at the heart of irregular migration. ITC is also supporting the implementation of the Roadmap through the Youth Empowerment Project, which focuses on building market-oriented skills while fostering value addition in a variety of sectors. The Roadmap directly supports the Gambia’s National Development Plan to empower youth and restore growth and stability in the country.

ITC, GIZ, GTTI partner to empower young Gambians

Through a new partnership between the Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI), the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) and ITC, young Gambians will have a better chance of finding quality jobs and earning higher incomes. The organizations will exchange knowledge, experiences and tools on technical and vocational education and training to enable youths to be equipped for higher-value positions. The partnership will endeavour to create new opportunities for Gambian youths and help the GTTI to take its education to the next level.

ITC launches Netherlands Trust Fund IV project in Uganda

ITC launched the Netherlands Trust Fund (NTV) IV project to address challenges facing Uganda’s nascent tech industry by strengthening the competitiveness of information technology (IT) and IT-enabled services (ITES) companies. The project is a continuation of a partnership with the Dutch Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI) and will run until June 2021, working with more than 100 MSMEs in Uganda. The project will also place a significant focus on gender and actively promote the participation of Ugandan women in tech.
Talk business, do business at the World Export Development Forum

This year’s World Export Development Forum (WEDF) will be held in Lusaka, Zambia, on 11-12 September under the theme of ‘Scaling up through trade: skill, innovate, connect.’ The gathering is expected to mobilize businesses, young professionals and government officials looking to develop through trade.

The event offers opportunities for businesses and trade experts from all over the world to come together, connect, innovate and invest. WEDF topics will cover business and trade affairs at the cutting edge of development, including green finance, sustainable packaging, women in trade and youth empowerment. ITC is bringing together business leaders, policymakers, trade organizations and international agencies not only to talk business, but to do business.

For further information, visit: www.intracen.org/WEDF

Trillions lost as a result of gender gap

A new World Bank Group report, ‘Unrealized Potential: The High Cost of Gender Inequality in Earnings,’ examines the economic cost of gender inequality in lost human capital. The study documents losses of $160 trillion because of differences in lifetime earnings between women and men. In nearly every country today, women face barriers to fully participate in the workforce and earning an equal wage.

The report urges world leaders to invest in policies that promote more and better jobs for women. The policies and programs should include ways to make it easier for women to get to work; gain greater access to basic infrastructure and financial services; and control land. Such policies could help promote more and better jobs for women and equal pay at work.

Social dialogue key to decent work: Global Deal Report

A report by the Global Deal partnership, co-authored by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) found that social dialogue plays a key role in creating decent jobs and improved performance for business. ‘Building trust in a changing world of work’ further highlights that new efforts are instrumental in ensuring the recognition and realization of the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining.

The report suggests that through social dialogue, more inclusive labour markets, better socio-economic outcomes and greater well-being for workers, improved performance for businesses and restored trust for governments could be obtained. The aim of the Global Deal partnership is to encourage governments, businesses, unions and other organizations to make commitments to enhance social dialogue.
Empowering youth across the world

MARIE MAASBOL, Intern, International Trade Centre

Meet some of the young people building a future in trade

Youth empowerment and entrepreneurial capabilities are critical to ensuring economic growth and eliminating extreme poverty in developing countries. Globally some 200 million youths work for less than $2 a day, the majority of which live in developing countries. With elevated youth unemployment rates – almost 30% in North Africa – along with increased susceptibility to working poverty and a growing youth population, there is a need to boost job creation and higher quality job opportunities.

Launched in 2017, the Gambia Youth Empowerment Project is the flagship International Trade Centre (ITC) project to empower youth. It seeks to strengthen existing youth and entrepreneurial support structures in the Gambia and works closely with private-sector partners to develop the local economy and create self-employment opportunities. So far, more than 700 youths have been trained on entrepreneurship and more than 250 on technical and vocational capabilities in sectors including information and communication technology (ICT), solar and satellite technologies and agribusiness.

ITC also supports the Geneva Impact Hub’s Accelerate2030 partnership, which promotes social entrepreneurship, as well as the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, a multi-agency response aimed at creating a more enabling business environment for young people.

These photos show some of the young people ITC has worked with who are now empowering other youth and improving the economic fabric of their societies.

1. A young clothes designer in the Gambia.
2. A Tanzanian farmer checks his bell peppers.
3. In Tajikistan young people are building a future in the textile industry.
4. Young Ugandans are boosting their IT skills.
5. A young woman harvests tea in Nepal.
Creating conditions to economically empower women in Africa

GERALD CHIRINDA, Executive Director, Tapwa Capital

Policy shifts, cultural awareness are key to overcoming barriers

Women have long suffered stigmatization and marginalization globally. The number of women who still face challenges in reaching their full potential due to an uneven playing field is too high. Even still, I am encouraged by the women who have remained resilient in the face of adversity and committed to achieving their calling and purpose in life.

I have previously argued that it would be disingenuous to continue along this path without celebrating women and the extremely important role that they play on our continent. In December 2017 I had the privilege of participating in a meeting at Wilton Park, the international forum for strategic discussion. The subject was Taking Forward the Women’s Economic Empowerment Agenda, which brought together a diverse group of approximately 60 participants from 26 countries representing government, civil society and the private sector. This gathering gave me an opportunity to not only learn, but also un-learn some adverse norms and perceptions.

Having been fortunate to grow up in Zimbabwe in an era where women have been to a certain extent empowered, I have seen the positive results that empowerment brings.

I ask myself what the world would look like if more women were empowered. In my research I was encouraged to learn that the highest share of women in the workforce globally are found in Africa, Zimbabwe being the highest with 52.8% and a Sub-Saharan average of 40%. However, women...
African women hold 23% of positions at executive committee level compared to a global average of 20%. At CEO level that number drops to 5% compared to a global average of 4%.

across the continent are more likely to be in informal employment relative to men. In the private sector, African women hold 23% of positions at executive committee level compared to a global average of 20%. At CEO level that number drops to 5% compared to a global average of 4%. Based on these statistics, it’s clear the world has a long way to go when it comes to unlocking the gender dividend through the economic empowerment of women.

OBSTACLES FACING WOMEN

Regardless of the nature of employment (formal or informal), this issue needs to be addressed. An enabling environment has to be created at every level of society, starting within households. The home is where attitudes, ideas, values and beliefs are shaped and it is important that parents and guardians instil the right values and beliefs - they work as enablers and catalysts for their children’s success. A child’s formative years are when cultures and norms are moulded. It is important for parents to invest their time and be intentional in positively influencing and encouraging their daughters. It is equally important to teach boys the importance of respecting, honouring and empowering women.

A study conducted by Legatum Institute showed while parenting courses are useful for embedding skills and values, their impact is not being seen at scale due to two reasons – take-up is limited and courses are limited in duration.

Limited take-up is due to:
- **Stigma:** the politicization of parenting courses has often led the public to associate them with ‘troubled families’ and ‘poor parenting.’
- **Accessibility:** courses should be delivered locally, with childcare provision, in the evening after work.
- **Familiarity:** parents needed to feel comfortable with the venue of the courses (schools, children’s centre, local church) and with the trainer or facilitators.

Limited duration is due to:
- **Cost:** budget cuts have meant many local authorities are cutting back on even low-cost courses. Training is expensive for small charities or private enterprises.
- **Priority:** while some local authorities prioritize parenting, some do not.
- **Format:** due to the format of some of the courses, they become expensive to deliver.

GOOD PARENTING

There is a saying I’ve often heard elders in my community express: that what parents do in moderation their children will do in excess. I think it is time parents re-think what investing in their children means by investing firstly in themselves, so as to better invest in their children.

One could posit that some women fail to reach their full potential due to the negative impact their upbringing may have had on their chances to succeed. I believe it is important for parents and guardians, as well as education institutions, to review how they can play a catalytic role in the economic empowerment of women.

In addition to upbringing, institutions should have policies in place that promote the empowerment of women. This can be done with assistance from gender experts who are able to design and tailor frameworks that are specific to organizations.

Some of the immediate and basic policies governments or organizations may consider implementing are the following:
- Create and encourage platforms that allow parents to access parent classes and groups within communities
- Come up with gender responsive government policies that have clear gender action plans which are monitored for implementation
- Set aside financial and human resources for implementation of these policies
- Set up accountability measures to monitor progress and implementation
- Come up with gender responsive work policies at an operational level within the organization, such as policies on equal representation of women and men in key decision making positions e.g. Equal opportunities for employment and promotion and commitment from senior leadership within organizations

Furthermore, with the advent of the fourth industrial revolution, there is an increased need for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. It would be beneficial for governments to invest in reforms which will result in STEM being promoted and to make options available for young women who wish to pursue this route. An example is an incubator program – WomEng – co-founded by Naadia Moosajee to develop women engineers. The latest campaign is to support a million girls through its GirlEng STEM education program.

Given the above statistics, we have a long way to go as that likelihood doesn’t reflect an equal or fair representation of women in society. There is risk of further marginalizing and disempowering women if policies are not adapted and implemented to promote their success. 

This article first appeared on the World Economic Forum’s Agenda blog.

1. Africa needs to empower women to fulfil its economic potential.
2. Through the SheTrades initiative, ITC is connecting women entrepreneurs to markets.
The goal is to create a single continental market with free movement of business people and investments. The agreement has the potential to deliver a great deal for countries on the continent. The hope is that the trade deal will trigger a virtuous cycle of more intra-African trade. This in turn will drive the structural transformation of economies – the transition from low-productivity and labour-intensive activities to higher productivity industrial and service activities – which will produce better paid-jobs and make an impact on poverty.

African leaders earlier this year signed a framework establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, the largest free trade agreement since the creation of the World Trade Organization. The free trade area aims to create a single market for goods and services in Africa. By 2030 the market size is expected to include 1.7 billion people with over $6.7 trillion of cumulative consumer and business spending – if all African countries have joined the free trade area by then. Ten countries including Nigeria, the continent’s largest economy by GDP, have yet to sign up.

A young person in Africa is twice as likely to be unemployed when he or she becomes an adult. This is a particularly stressful situation given that over 70% of sub-Saharan Africa’s population is below the age of 30.

However, signing the agreement is only the beginning. For it to come into force, 22 countries must ratify it. Their national legislative bodies must approve and sanction the framework formally, showing full commitment to its implementation.
Niger President Issoufou Mahamadou, who has been championing the process, aims to have the ratification process completed by January 2019.

CAUSE AND EFFECT
Some studies have shown that by creating a pan-African market, intra-Africa trade could increase by about 52% by 2022. Better market access creates economies of scale. Combined with appropriate industrial policies, this contributes to a diversified industrial sector and growth in manufacturing value added.

Manufacturing represents only about 10% of total GDP in Africa on average. This falls well below other developing regions. A successful continental free trade area could reduce this gap. A bigger manufacturing sector will mean more well-paid jobs, especially for young people. This in turn will help poverty alleviation.

Industrial development, and with it more jobs, is desperately needed in Africa. Industry represents one-quarter to one-third of total job creation in other regions of the world. A young person in Africa is twice as likely to be unemployed when he or she becomes an adult. This is a particularly stressful situation given that over 70% of sub-Saharan Africa's population is below the age of 30.

In addition, 70% of Africa’s youth live on less than $2 per day.

The continental free trade area is expected to offer substantial opportunities for industrialization, diversification and high-skilled employment in Africa.

The single continental market will offer the opportunity to accelerate the manufacture and intra-African trade of value-added products, moving from commodity-based economies and exports to economic diversification and high-value exports.

Still, to increase the impact of the trade deal, industrial policies must be put in place. These must focus on productivity, competition, diversification and economic complexity.

In other words, governments must create enabling conditions to ensure that productivity is raised to international competitiveness standards. The goals must be to make certain products manufactured in African countries are competitively traded on the continent and abroad and to diversify the range and sophistication of products and services.

DRIVERS OF MANUFACTURING
Data shows that the most economically diverse countries are also the most successful.

In fact, diversification is critical as countries that are able to sustain a diverse range of productive know-how – including sophisticated, unique know-how – are able to produce a wide diversity of goods. These include complex products that few other countries can make.

Diverse African economies such as South Africa and Egypt are likely to be the drivers of the free trade area and are likely to benefit from it the most. These countries will find a large continental market for their manufactured products. They will also use their know-how and dense industrial landscape to develop innovative products and respond to market demand.

The ratified agreement on its own won’t deliver results. Governments must put in place policies that drive industrial development, particularly manufacturing.

Five key ones stand out:

Human capital: A strong manufacturing sector needs capable, healthy and skilled workers. Policymakers should adjust curriculums to ensure that skills are adapted to the market. There must be a special focus on young people. Curriculums must focus on skills and building capacity for entrepreneurship and self-employment. This should involve business training at an early age and skills upgrading later on. This should go hand in hand with promoting science, technology, engineering, entrepreneurship and mathematics as well as vocational and on-the-job training.

Policymakers should also favour the migration of highly skilled workers across the continent.

Cost: Policymakers must bring down the cost of doing business. The barriers include energy; access to roads and ports; security; financing; bureaucratic restrictions; corruption; dispute settlement; and property rights.

Supply network: Industries are more likely to evolve if competitive networks exist. Policymakers should ease trade restrictions and integrate regional trade networks. In particular, barriers for small and medium-sized businesses should be lifted.

Domestic demand: Policymakers should offer tax incentives to firms to unlock job creation and to increase individual and household incomes. Higher purchasing power for households will increase the size of the domestic market.

Resources: Manufacturing requires heavy investment. This should be driven by the private sector. Policymakers should facilitate access to finance, especially for small and medium enterprises. To attract foreign direct investment, policymakers should address poor-risk perception. This invariably scares off potential investors or sets excessive returns expectations.

INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY
The continental free trade area facilitates industrialisation by creating a continental market, unlocking manufacturing potential and bolstering an international negotiation bloc.

Finally, the continental free trade area will provide African leaders with greater negotiating power to eliminate barriers to exporting. This will help prevent agreements with other countries and trading blocs likely to hurt exports and industrial development.

This article first appeared on The Conversation.com.

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1. Open for business.
Finding a good job these days can be an uphill struggle, especially for young people. Youth are particularly exposed to higher unemployment, poor job conditions and a mismatch between their skills and labour-market needs. In addition, the gap between the aspirations of young people and adequate employment opportunities is widening.

More than 66 million young people aged between 15 and 24 across the world are unemployed today, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO). Another 145 million youth, while working, live in poverty. With a youth population expected to double by 2050 to over 830 million on the African continent alone, pursuing effective solutions to youth employment is critical.

The lack of employment opportunities can have devastating consequences for youth’s long-term employment prospects and rising inequalities and social unrest across societies.

JOBS AND ECONOMIC PROSPECTS

There are many reasons people choose to migrate, from armed conflicts to natural disasters. However, an increasingly important motivation is elevated unemployment rates, particularly for youth. Skills mismatches, low wages and limited access to land or financial services can prompt youth to migrate from rural areas and, increasingly, across borders. As such, it comes as no surprise that youth make up the bulk of the international migrant flow, with the willingness to move abroad highest in sub-Saharan Africa (44.3%), followed closely by North Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and then Eastern Europe, at around 40%.

From agriculture to digital tools, ITC is scaling up its offering to young people in trade

MADHUBASHINI FERNANDO, Associate Project Adviser, International Trade Centre

Creating opportunities for and with youth
But many people also return home after having lived abroad or having aborted their attempt to migrate. Saikou Jammeh is among them. He came back to the Gambia in April 2017 after a spell in Tripoli, Libya. After coming home he was enrolled in a technical training programme as part of ITC’s Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) and has since started working.

‘I am now a freelance technician at home after having tested my luck abroad. I have never been more proud of myself,’ he said.

Funded by the European Union, the YEP aims to address the economic root causes of irregular migration by supporting skills development and entrepreneurship among young returnees and potential migrants. A key focus of the project is to create and strengthen linkages between training and employment and self-employment for youth. Through industry placements, a mix of off-the-job and on-the-job training and start-up support, the project eases the transition from training to the labour market.

**YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS**

For many young people, entrepreneurship can be a pathway to decent work and income opportunities. However, many young entrepreneurs struggle to sustain and expand their businesses faced with challenges at the policy and institutional levels, as well as limited skills, networks and financial resources. To enable more young entrepreneurs to succeed, a greater effort is needed by governments, trade and investment support institutions (TISIs) and development agencies to equip them with the knowledge and skills they actually need.

Take Michael Ocansey for example, the co-founder of AgroCenta, a start-up based in Ghana. As a young agri-tech entrepreneur, he is following his dream to shape the future of farming in Africa. Ocansey is using the power of technology to help small-scale Ghanaian farmers to access markets, capital and resources.

Crucial to his success has been the support he received from the national and global start-up ecosystem actors like the Accelerate 2030 initiative and the Impact Hub network. His participation in and winning ITC’s Pitching Competition during the 2017 World Export Development Forum, and later winning the 2018 Seedstars World echoes when young entrepreneurs like Michael are given the right opportunities and support, they can thrive.

**SOCIAL AND DIGITAL ENTREPRENEURS**

Finding business solutions to social challenges and leveraging new technologies is increasingly associated with young entrepreneurs. There is a greater representation of nascent social entrepreneurs than nascent commercial entrepreneurs among those between 18 and 34 in the Middle East and North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa and Western Europe regions, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor has said. This is what motivates and will continue to motivate the Ocanseys of the world.

In addition, young people are digital natives and are enthusiastic to pursue opportunities in the digital economy, whether to develop their start-up or become self-employed. That’s why ITC supports digital skills-building for youth in Kenya’s Dadaab refugee camp and in Jordan for Syrian refugees.

**PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS**

In response to such challenges, reaching scale and ensuring sustainability is at the heart of ITC’s efforts on youth employment and entrepreneurship. To achieve this, a strong focus is being placed on working in partnership with trade and investment support institutions, technical and vocational training institutions, incubators and accelerators as they act as multipliers of ITC’s work.

One such partnership is the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, the first-ever multi-stakeholder alliance on action on youth employment of which ITC is an active partner.

Key to the success of ITC’s Youth and Trade Programme has been to streamline a market-led approach to improve employment and entrepreneurship opportunities among 15 to 35-year-olds in developing and least developed countries.

Through the Youth and Trade Programme, ITC provides a wide range of support measures ensuring that more young people are equipped with the skills needed to compete in today’s job market in response to the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 on quality education and lifelong learning. The Youth and Trade Programme is also one of ITC’s many efforts to ensure we move closer to achieving SDG 8 on promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
Start-up success in Senegal

BABACAR BIRANE, Co-founder, CONCREE

Lessons learned the hard way inspired CONCREE’s drive to create a relationship management software for entrepreneurs

I decided to start up an e-commerce business in Senegal back in 2011. At the time I was still a student at the University of Grenoble in France. However, I initially abandoned my entrepreneurship dream because I lacked critical elements, including co-founders with complementary skills, access to experienced people for advice, and a lack of access to information.

Still, a year later together with six friends I formed a working group to design a solution to help young entrepreneurs find the resources they need to start their own businesses. We ended up building a digital platform to connect co-founders with mentors, which would also provide vital information to entrepreneurs. We called it CONCREE.

Three of us, now co-founders of CONCREE, left our jobs in France at the end of 2013 to go back to Senegal.

To be able start our activities we decided to run two crowdfunding campaigns, which led us to raise 10,000 ($11,800) in startup capital. We also learned a lot from our target beneficiaries: they were looking for better ways of connecting co-founders and mentors to be connected, and better access to start-up information. They also wanted help in transforming their ideas into successful start-ups.

PILOT PHASE
As we didn’t have enough experience to run a business incubation service, we set up a prototype and tested it through a pilot phase. The prototype included business models, value propositions, information on how to set up a lean startup and customer development methodologies. The service was run both virtually and physically.

The pilot phase has already had an impact: the three most successful startups participating in the pilot phase now have an annual revenue of about $3 million.
We started with a cohort of 15 diverse start-ups with different levels of progress and in several sectors. These included agriculture; digital; fishing; fashion design; logistics; e-commerce; electronics; and education. This helped us test our incubation model in different situations.

At the end of the pilot phase we introduced minor changes and refined our business incubation service to help entrepreneurs make progress through three steps: idea validation; developing an operational business model; and developing a scalable business model.

The pilot phase had already had an impact: the three most successful startups participating in the pilot phase now have an annual revenue of about $3 million.

With our incubation model validated, we continued our work with both virtual and physical incubation models. However, we quickly faced difficulties when it came to generating revenue. On the one hand, entrepreneurs were not inclined to pay for virtual incubation and, for the most part, they were unable to fully pay for the service. Since we are a private enterprise, it was almost impossible to apply for grants.

We operated our first business model pivot by changing our paying customers to business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-government (B2G) models and building a strong partnership strategy.

Over a nine-month period we set out to build a partnership with ADEPME, the Senegalese agency of small and medium-sized enterprises. It helped subsidize the fees for entrepreneurs to benefit from our start-up training and provided 12-hour start-up coaching programmes.

Although we were now generating revenue, there was no follow-up. The partnership with the SME agency wasn’t renewed after it ended so we knew we had to think again.

THE BREAKTHROUGH
An opening came with the Mandela Washington Fellowship who gave us the opportunity to visit Nevada in the United States of America in 2016. There we met, interacted with and learned from experienced entrepreneurs and different entrepreneur-support programmes. We presented our virtual incubation platform to get feedback on the right scalable business model to adopt. Something magical happened.

We were approached by Matt Westfield, a serial entrepreneur and founder of Entrepreneur Assembly (EA) Nevada, a start-up mentoring organization based in Reno, Nevada. Matt was looking for a digital platform to upscale the organization to the whole state. He offered to use, on a subscription-based model, our digital platform to manage the mentoring programme in a state level EA. We accepted his proposal straightaway, knowing it could be a way to increase our profile.

Many entrepreneur-support organizations were using customer relationship management (CRM) and communication software such as Hubspot, Salesforces or Slack. They were using these tools because there were none specifically designed to manage relationships with entrepreneurs.

We assessed EAs needs and designed the first version of our entrepreneur relationship management (ERM) system, which we named LezGo. After EA Nevada, we acquired two more customers in Nevada and Westfield became our business partner.

After more than a year, we started to see some progress. LezGo is now being used in nine countries on three continents: Brazil, Cote d’Ivoire, Cameroon, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Switzerland, Uganda, and the United States.

Support from EA Nevada was crucial to CONCREE’s success.
2. Connecting the entrepreneurs.
3. Getting to grips with management tool.
Let’s take trade and youth seriously

JULIA SEIERMANN, Economist, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

Making trade work for young jobseekers requires identifying and removing barriers

Today’s youth are more educated than any previous generation. However, for many of them this does not translate into economic opportunities. Some 13.5% of young people aged between 15 and 24 were unemployed in 2017 compared to only 5.5% of the working-age population, according to the International Labour Organization.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) explicitly recognize the need to ‘achieve full and productive employment and decent work’ for young people (SDG target 8.5) and ‘substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training’ (target 8.6). International trade is a means of implementation of the SDGs and is widely recognized for its potential to create jobs if accompanied by appropriate policies. Here’s how we make trade work for young people too.
1. UNDERSTAND TRADE’S YOUTH Impact
We know that international trade creates winners and losers and that its impact varies for different groups of the population. For example, we know that trade might not have the same impact on men and on women, or on skilled and unskilled workers. However, we know surprisingly little about how trade affects young people. To design trade policies that help youth, we must first understand the mechanisms through which globalization changes opportunities for young workers and entrepreneurs. We therefore need to substantially increase both theoretical and empirical research on this topic.

2. MAINSTREAM YOUTH IN TRADE POLICY
In trade policymaking, gender mainstreaming is becoming increasingly common. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) developed a Trade and Gender Toolbox to support countries in the assessment of the gender impact of trade policy, while a new generation of free trade agreements includes chapters on trade and gender. If trade can help women, it can help young people, too. We should learn from the gender mainstreaming experience and, whenever appropriate, adapt these tools for youth mainstreaming. The good news for both research and policy mainstreaming is that we often already have the necessary data to focus on youth as many data sources are disaggregated by age.

3. EMBRACE YOUNG PEOPLE
One of the main reasons globalization (and, for that matter, technological progress) creates winners and losers is that many people have difficulty adapting to changing skills requirements. An industrial mechanic who loses her job today will usually not be able to start as a financial analyst tomorrow. Specific skills may determine whether people win or lose through globalization, which gives younger people a distinct advantage. Young people learn more easily and many are still in the process of getting an education, which can be adapted to meet the current and future need for specific skills. At the national level, this implies that countries with a larger share of young people may be able to better adapt to fast-paced change — provided their youth get the learning opportunities they need.

4. EMPOWER YOUTH
To allow young people to harness the opportunities globalization and technological change have to offer, we must prepare them for the jobs of the future. While education alone is not enough, it remains an essential ingredient for youth to benefit from trade.

5. REMOVE BARRIERS FOR YOUTH
Young people face multiple barriers preventing them from benefiting from the opportunities of international trade through finding a job or starting a business. Many are of financial nature. Higher education can be prohibitively expensive; low-paid or unpaid entry-level jobs make it difficult for poor youth to acquire the sector-specific experience for the career of their dreams; and becoming an entrepreneur often requires funds that go beyond most young people’s savings or credit lines.

Other barriers are non-financial, for example social constraints that prevent girls and young women, minorities or children of less educated parents to get higher education. Tackling such barriers is crucial to ensure that trade not only benefits youth but also reduces inequalities between young people of different gender or socio-economic background.

1. The right skills are needed for tomorrow’s jobs.
Creating locally made products with international appeal


Despite barriers, a woman-owned start-up in the Gambia is aiming to go global

Africa is a continent bursting with brilliant minds and innovative ideas. Still, young people face a barrage of challenges when starting and running their businesses. As a young entrepreneur, my brand, TiGA, has faced some of these challenges and we’ve also had some success in dealing with them.

As a frequent swimmer, I realized there was a gap in the market for locally handmade swimwear that fit comfortably while using beautiful African fabrics. I started making swimwear samples to test the market: the response was overwhelmingly positive. Recognizing the interest and potential in my products, I then launched TiGA in January 2016.

Today, TiGA products are available from 10 locations in the Gambia and also in the United States of America. We now employ 21 people, mostly women.

DIVERSIFYING Central to TiGA’s philosophy is to celebrate the beautiful vibrancy of African wax fabric, the creativity of regional fashion and the importance of locally produced art. I also leveraged the demand for our swimwear to diversify TiGA’s product line. It now includes leisurewear; accessories; household goods and even upcycled furniture, such as recycling car tires into chairs. This initiative was made possible through our partnership with Women’s Initiative.
Our primary market is Gambia’s tourism industry. Most tourists come to enjoy the beautiful beaches, the Atlantic Ocean and almost year-round warm weather. Thus, the demand for indigenous products such as TiGAs has great potential to increase.

However, there’s a major export problem in the Gambia and across Africa in general: the high cost of logistics has an inhibitive impact on the ability of Gambian businesses to compete internationally. TiGA has started exporting products outside its home market but expensive shipping costs remain a stumbling block. For example, we were recently asked to produce some of the gifts for the Gambia international donor conference in Brussels and the cost of shipping had a huge impact on the unit cost. The cost of sending 450 A5 notebooks to Brussels was almost $1,000.

One of the ways we have tried to overcome this challenge is to keep international stock. For example, our US partners based in Ohio have an e-commerce website, carries some of our stock and ships worldwide. However, this does not completely address the logistics problem. Some of our products, such as the upcycled furniture, are frequently requested by customers overseas, but we have no way of providing them with the products they want.

ACHIEVING SUCCESS
To achieve results in both the private and public sector, the first thing you should look at is identifying your stakeholders and determining how they can be influenced to help you achieve results. You typically will not have enough time and resources and so will have to prioritize your communications with them and allocate your resources accordingly. TiGA approaches this by understanding the resources we have available to support us in any engagement processes and what assets, such as skills and talents, can be contributed. This not only applies to the stakeholders but to our network as well.

One of our biggest assets is the network of people we have with a vast wealth of experience and knowledge. To achieve the results you want it is also important to have a communication plan. What I mean by this is to figure out what questions to ask, whom to ask, what approach you’re going to use and what will you do with the answers.

To achieve positive results you must know how to assess and handle resistance. Furthermore, you must continually monitor the outcomes of your communication with stakeholders and reassess your plans when necessary. Take time to sit back and look at the big picture. You have to keep an eye out for potential stakeholders and determine how you can engage with them.

If you don’t have the right partners and team you will not succeed. To make your partnerships stronger and more effective, having the right partners who share your vision and enthusiasm in solving the same problem is critical. This includes being direct in your communications and being able to jointly anticipate challenges and opportunities. I think that you and your partners must be able to inspire and influence each other positively.

Likewise, a healthy surrounding ecosystem is vital. Building a community of individuals around you who will bring fresh ideas to the table can take some of the strain off your shoulders. Your partners must also feel like you have an interest in long-term goals rather than just short-term gains.

Our partnership with the Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) connects us to a huge network of people in the Gambia and abroad that is helpful in providing training opportunities, grants, or networking and trade-fair participation. Thanks to the YEP trainings we’ve attended, the quality and standard of our products have improved immensely. YEP has also helped to expose young entrepreneurs in rural areas in the Gambia.

Public partners such as the Government of the Gambia, the Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency and ITC’s YEP want to curb irregular migration, reduce youth unemployment and create youth entrepreneurs while developing the Gambian economy.

This approach fits very well with TiGAs public-private partnership model, in which all interested parties are brought together and transparently aligned to ensure all partners’ objectives are accomplished. That is, all stakeholders bring value, be it cash or in-kind, with all looking for a suitable return that will help build a better and more prosperous Gambia.

1. Celebrating the vibrancy of African wax fabrics.
2. Made in the Gambia, for the world.
3. Ndeye Fatou Njie, founder of TiGA.

Thanks to the Youth Empowerment Project trainings we’ve attended, the quality and standard of our products have improved immensely.
How digital skills can help tackle youth unemployment

Youth have to be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed for a digital future

Some 66.6 million young women and men are unemployed and 144.9 million young workers are employed but living in poverty, according to the International Labour Organization (ILO). On the other hand, research by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) points out that there will be tens of millions of jobs available for people with advanced digital skills in the coming years.

Equipping young women and men with job-ready, transferable digital skills can enhance their employment opportunities and trigger a virtuous circle of improved labour market outcomes, increased productivity, innovation and economic growth for economies around the world.

GLOBAL INITIATIVES
Addressing a global challenge such as youth employment requires global action. While it is generally agreed that young people are natives of the digital realm, relatively few possess the skills needed in the digital economy and employers around the world are struggling to find skilled professionals equipped with the technical and soft skills they desire. In light of the youth employment crisis and the job opportunities available for people equipped with digital skills, the question of skills training therefore becomes central.

Governments, the private sector, civic organizations and academia each have a responsibility in equipping young people and young entrepreneurs with the digital skills necessary to be active members of the digital economy.

The Digital Skills for Decent Jobs for Youth campaign, led by ITU and the ILO, aims to incentivize stakeholders to train and equip 5 million young people by 2030 with job-ready, transferable digital skills; foster digital jobs for youth; and promote an enabling environment for youth employment and entrepreneurship in the digital economy.

Such global initiatives also align with the suggestions made by the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development in its report ‘Building digital competencies to benefit from existing and emerging technologies, with a special focus on gender and youth dimensions’. It recommends closer collaboration among different international organizations and the civil society to enhance digital skills.

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ADDRESSING GENDER IMBALANCE
Of course we cannot talk about youth unemployment and digital skills without addressing the issue of gender imbalance. Not only are women more likely to work in more precarious and low-paying jobs, they also have fewer opportunities in regard to
School curriculums should be adapted to make sure young people are equipped with the skills and learning attitudes needed to thrive in a constantly and rapidly changing job market. Therefore, school curriculums should be adapted to make sure young people are equipped with the skills and learning attitudes needed to thrive in a constantly and rapidly changing job market. These skills include basic digital skills and computational thinking as well as the ability to become adaptable lifelong learners.

In light of the fast pace of technological change and the generally slow pace of formal educational institutions to adapt to such changes, non-formal education can play a critical role in providing young people with further opportunities to hone their digital skills and adapt their skills set to job-market needs. These include programmes offered by public libraries, community centres and after-school or tech clubs as well as coding bootcamps and other non-formal training providers focused on advanced digital skills.

GUIDANCE FOR POLICYMAKERS

Digital skills touch every aspect of work and life; a comprehensive approach is therefore essential when designing skills-development programmes. There is no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to developing a national digital skills strategy. Differences in priorities, resources and stakeholders heavily impact the ability to plan a comprehensive policy.

In this context, in 2018 ITU published the Digital Skills Toolkit to support ITU members and a wide range of stakeholders in building their national strategies. The toolkit is aimed at policymakers and partners in the private sector; non-governmental organizations; and academia. It provides a roadmap, best practices, links to existing training resources and concrete tools and examples on how to develop effective and comprehensive digital skills strategies.

MOVING FORWARD

Considering the pervasive role digital technologies play across sectors and geographic regions, and the uncertain future employment landscape, it is crucial to address the skills-development issue through multi-stakeholder partnerships and to leverage the knowledge and resources that public, private and civil-society actors can provide to ensure long-lasting and impactful actions.

Joining initiatives such as the Digital Skills for Decent Jobs for Youth Campaign and making commitments to help train 5 million young people with the necessary skills are some of the steps that can be taken to address the youth employment challenge by improving labour market outcomes for youth through digital skills.  

For more on the Digital Skills for Decent Jobs for Youth Campaign, see www.decentjobsforyouth.org and www.itu.int/digitalskills.

2. A workshop at the IT Step Academy, a digital skills training provider that has made a commitment to train young people with job-ready digital skills.
3. A hands-on workshops in Guatemala on Girls in ICT Day.
Closing the mismatch between skills and demand is crucial as we enter a new, digital era

An influx of new technologies and digitalization has transformed the way in which we work, socialize and lead our lives. This phenomenon is often referred to as the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Information and communication technology (ICT) has made significant change possible with respect to methods of production, consumption and global employment. ICT has also become a development imperative without which countries are unable to compete in world market and make significant economic progress.

European Union (EU) policymakers have made bridging the digital divide a priority. That is a positive and necessary development because the expected skills shortage in the European IT sector is estimated at 500,000 workers by 2020, according to a 2015 Empirica study (Talent for Europe: Towards and Agenda for 2020 and Beyond).

The digital gap clearly highlights a global skills mismatch between the abilities young people are leaving higher education with and the skills the market is demanding. In an attempt to galvanize policymakers and other stakeholders towards addressing this issue, ThinkYoung conducted a pan-European study on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills mismatches and

Building talent for the future
DELILA KIDANU, External Relations Manager, ThinkYoung

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As we enter into the new digital economy, major industries continue to automate processes and ICT skills are becoming an essential tool in the toolbox of the future workforce. This situation resulted in net job losses in many traditional industries, particularly in the manufacturing sector. On the other hand the digital economy is creating significant jobs opportunities in ICT-related industries. However, there exists a shortage of labour with the relevant skills that can take advantage of a plethora of opportunities brought about by the new technologies, especially those more suited to young digital natives.

As most STEM education interventions take place once young people have already completed higher education, ThinkYoung believes in increasing the opportunities for young people starting at an early age. It has taken action and inspired teenagers to understand that coding and STEM skills are as important as writing and calculus. Those 21st century skills and new challenges in education are the key words characterizing ThinkYoung’s vision regarding its coding summer school. It provides students with a unique experience in innovative approaches in a non-formal educational settings, addressing the real needs of the youth of today and the skills required by the industry.

GIRLS IN STEM
In addition to introducing the next generation to ICT skills, the Coding Summer School aims to promote an increase in the number of young girls who study STEM subjects. The School has a target of 70% girls to take part in each program. Aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 4 (quality education) and Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth), Boeing, the US aircraft maker, and ThinkYoung, are jointly encouraging regulators to put STEM at the centre of the educational agenda.

A lot is yet to be done to ease the digital skills divide. However, with an ever-changing market and demand for workforce skills, ThinkYoung believes non-formal education is a key solution to address skills gaps as non-formal education can be mobile and be customized to the need of the market. It is a solution for today.

1. Happy winners of the Entrepreneurship School awards.
2. A STEM workshop for girls.
3. Youth v artificial skills.
4. Exploring solutions.
5. Participants at the Coding Summer School.
Scaling up action on youth employment with the Global Goals

FELIX WEIDENKAFF, Youth Employment Officer, International Labour Organization

The Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth is securing a better future for young people

Starting a business has made me feel successful, because I help to train others who will soon create their own businesses,” says Nuru Nassor, a 24-year-old Tanzanian woman. She recently made the transition from part-time tailor to young entrepreneur with six other young women training as tailors in her business. She started her own enterprise following a nine-month apprenticeship in the Kazi Nje Nje Business Development Services programme. “Kazi Nje Nje’ literally means ‘Jobs out there ready to grab.’

More than 50% of the programme’s participants went on to start their own business within a year, which in turn has created 28,834 new jobs in retail, services, manufacturing and agriculture in the United Republic of Tanzania (Young entrepreneurs in Tanzania: Where are they now? ILO, 2017). This is just one of many such programmes that helps young people like Nuru carve their own path in a rapidly changing labour market. However, despite the clear positive impacts of interventions like Kazi Nje Nje, youth unemployment and underemployment remain a stubborn challenge – and not just in Tanzania.

The youth employment challenge is not just a problem for the 66 million young people currently out of work, or the 145 million who live in poverty despite holding a job. It’s also a major concern for our global, regional and national economies as well as society as a whole.

The Global Goals

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GLOBAL CHALLENGE
The global youth unemployment rate remained consistently high since the 2008 financial crisis. In practice, this means that over 66 million young people are currently out of work and another 145 million are living in working poverty, according to the most recent Trends Econometric Models of the International Labour Organization (ILO). Evidence from country-level surveys shows more than three-quarters of young workers are engaged in informal employment, often characterized by low pay, erratic hours, hazardous conditions and lack of social security.

These figures indicate the extent of the challenge and, in response, there has been increased policy attention and investments in youth employment in the last decade. By and large, these efforts have been fragmented and have not yet made a significant dent in the situation of young people. It has become increasingly clear that a global challenge requires a global response. That’s where the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth comes in.

COMMITTING TO ACTION
The initiative (‘Decent Jobs for Youth’) was launched in 2016 with the endorsement of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. It was conceived as the overarching and inclusive effort to scale up country-level action on youth employment in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular Goal 8 on decent work and economic growth.

The goal of the Global Initiative is simple: using the considerable convening power of the United Nations, it brings together a diverse array of partners – including governments, social partners, youth and civil society, the private sector and more – and gets them working from the same playbook to create more and better jobs for young people around the world.

All partners subscribe to the same set of guiding principles to ensure that action, for example, engages directly with young people; focuses on both the supply and demand side of the labour market; and takes a right-based and gender-responsive approach to decent work.

The initiative also encourages partners to focus on key priority areas. Some – such digital skills and green jobs – equip young people for work in the industries of the future, while others – youth in fragile situations and in rural economies – ensure vulnerable or disadvantaged groups are the focus of tailored interventions.

At the heart of Decent Jobs for Youth are commitments made by partners. To become a partner, an organization must commit to taking concrete action on youth employment, outlining clear measurable goals linked to specific targets of the SDGs and a realistic timeframe for delivery as part of the process.

To date, the initiative has secured commitments aimed at increasing the quantity and quality of jobs available to over 16 million young women and men. Nestlé has committed to reach 10 million young people with employability and entrepreneurship by 2030. The International Telecommunication Union and the ILO have joined forces to launch Digital Skills for Decent Jobs for Youth, a global campaign to equip 5 million young people with job-ready transferable digital skills by 2030. The Digital Skills Toolkit provides very concrete ideas on how to achieve this goal. The Citi Foundation has committed $100 million to prepare 500,000 young people in cities around the world for today’s competitive job market through entrepreneurship training, targeted mentorship, leadership development and first job opportunities.

Decent Jobs for Youth goes beyond simply securing commitments from partners. As a central facilitator, it identifies linkages and synergies between commitments and ensures cohesion between efforts. Partners who may never have encountered each other in different circumstances can pool their resources and expertise and ultimately form new partnerships that can achieve more than any one organization working alone.

EVIDENCE-DRIVEN INNOVATION
We generally know what works in youth employment. What’s lacking is the scale and depth needed to improve labour market outcomes for young people in a sustainable way. Decent Jobs for Youth focuses on gathering evidence, based on the collective experiences of its partners and replicating and scaling the solutions that really work. The recently launched Guide on Measuring Decent Jobs for Youth provides practical and accessible guidance for measuring impact at country-level, generating data that can be added to a growing knowledge bank of best practices and effective interventions.

However, the Global Initiative does not only focus on existing solutions. It also seeks out and amplifies innovation. Events such as this year’s Innovations for Decent Jobs for Youth conference provide a platform for partners to meet face to face, to share ideas and innovative approaches and, crucially, to find opportunities for collaboration. This event featured several youth leaders and young entrepreneurs in key roles as speakers and moderators in line with the Initiative’s focus on youth-led solutions. After all, the best way to solve any problem is to listen to and empower those most affected by it.

UNIQUE ALLIANCE
The youth employment challenge is not just a problem for the 66 million young people currently out of work, or the 145 million who live in poverty despite holding a job. It’s also a major concern for our global, regional and national economies as well as society as a whole. Long periods of unemployment and underemployment can have permanent negative effects on a person’s long-term career prospects and the current crisis could include an entire generation of talent, education and aspirations going to waste.

A commitment to Decent Jobs for Youth is recognized as a direct and official contribution towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. But this is only one of the concrete benefits that the Initiative offers its partners. By becoming a partner an organization gains access to expertise, resources, networking opportunities and cutting-edge knowledge. They also gain partners from many different spheres of influence – think tanks, foundations, government agencies, youth organizations and corporations – working towards the same goals and eager to collaborate. They gain recognition as leaders and influencers in creating fair and stable employment for young people across the globe.

Most importantly, they gain the opportunity to make a real difference to young people; bright, driven young people like Nuru Nassor, who want nothing more or less than to reach their full potential and gain recognition as leaders and influencers in creating fair and stable employment for young people across the globe.

Visit www.decentjobsforyouth.org to learn more.
Three ways to get small businesses to employ opportunity youth

NOELLA MOSHI, Programs Lead, Wave Academies

Changing the hiring process can change the future for young workers

Small business growth is the secret to solving youth unemployment in Africa. Small and growing businesses (SGBs) create around 80% of employment on the continent. If business owners can grow their companies they can hire more people, who in turn gain valuable experience they could use to start their own companies one day.

The most important tool for growth is a strong team. Over 90% of our employer partners at Wave Academies are micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) with fewer than 20 employees. In a relatively volatile economic environment, employers want to hire people who can work across a range of roles. By hiring for competencies, employers select for transferable skills such as communication, problem-solving and teamwork, instead of the less-relevant credentialed knowledge that a CV would advertise. Opportunity youth in sub-Saharan Africa acquire work-relevant competencies through the school of life; we just don’t know how to measure them. As a result, hiring funnels systematically exclude youth without post-secondary credentials.

By hiring for competencies, employers select for transferable skills such as communication, problem-solving and teamwork, instead of the less-relevant credentialed knowledge that a CV would advertise.

Not all employers realize it’s beneficial to hire for competencies over credentials; among those who do, many don’t know how. This is bad for both parties. Without a
Once an employer knows that they want to hire for competencies, they have to get explicit about the competencies required for their particular vacancy and then find a way to measure them.

foot in the door to their first job, youth don’t accumulate the work experience to earn a higher income (either at a second job, or because they now have the skills to start a successful business). Meanwhile, employers find themselves paying more for skills they don’t need. Employers therefore miss out on star performers and businesses don’t grow.

Linking employers with opportunity youth involves communicating the why and how of competency-based hiring to employers.

1. SHOW, DON’T TELL
Sure, it’s important to have the data when making a case to employers. It’s even more important to show employers concrete, relatable examples of how competency-based hiring can transform a business.

Only one in four entry-level employee terminations by our employer partners in 2017 was because the person lacked the technical competencies. Additionally, when online jobs site LinkedIn surveyed 2,000 business leaders, 57% identified soft skills as most important for them.

An example of a success story in this regard is Hans and Rene, a gelateria in Nigeria, which went from a home shop with a couple of employees to four stores with more than 60 employees. They publicly attribute their success to hiring for competencies and training for technical skills on the job. We have invited them to speak in radio video interviews and mentioned them in blog posts so other entrepreneurs can see and believe.

2. PROVIDE THE RIGHT TOOLS
Once an employer knows that they want to hire for competencies, they have to get explicit about the competencies required for their particular vacancy and then find a way to measure them. This takes time, which is an extremely expensive resource when running a small business.

It is much cheaper to stick to the status quo: skimming through hundreds of CVs for the first two bullet points on whether someone went to university and their number of years of work experience. If by luck someone with no experience or higher education makes it to the interview process, they may be rejected because of their grammar or accent.

To link employers with opportunity youth, we have to come up with a simple, cheap way to hire for competencies. There are a few different tools to do this. Here are some of the more interesting ones we’ve been experimenting with:

- Co-designing the interview process with employers. If you want a housekeeper, why should you care how good the candidate’s grammar is? Instead of having a 10-minute conversation, ask them to clean a room.
- Substitute the CV with a recorded elevator pitch. Employers can then make decisions based on the unique story a candidate communicates, as opposed to more regulated formal sector experiences that one would find in a CV.
- Use micro-credentials to communicate relevant sub-skills such as problem-solving, digital literacy and communication. Link verified employer and teacher testimonials as validation of these skills – think LinkedIn for blue-collar jobs.
- Work with governments to add work-relevant skills into school credentials so that soft skills can eventually become bullet-points on a CV.

3. BUILD A MOVEMENT
Referrals are everything in the recruiting business. It is much more powerful for a business owner to hear from a peer that a process works than to hear it from us. If we want inclusive hiring to be the norm, the competencies-over-credentials movement has to spread faster than any one nonprofit can grow. Get employers on YouTube videos, in conferences and on the radio talking about their success stories. By giving our employers the platform to do so it becomes a double win because they also publicize the hiring practices we want to see disseminated.

In order to solve the messy problem of youth unemployment we need a solution that scales beyond any one organization. Success looks like empowering employers to screen and hire for what they really want regardless of whether an intermediary facilitates the process or not.

When visiting an employer partner recently a colleague noticed a new staff member we hadn’t placed there. She asked about him. ‘Oh yes, we hired him directly.’ said the partner. ‘He’s not from Wave but he has similar characteristics to our Wave staff and no degree. He’s doing really well.’ That’s the kind of success story we want to inspire.

1. Participants at a Wave Academies workshop.
2. and 3. Wave Academies graduates.
Today’s trade policies, tomorrow’s prosperity

JESSICA HERMOSA, Information Officer, World Trade Organization

What are the prospects for today’s youth a decade from now?

Those under the age of 25 – which today make up half of the world’s population – will by 2030 have grown up to become breadwinners for themselves and their families. They will have to make their living amid the technological advances, environmental strains and prevailing economic conditions of their time. In many ways, the future they will inherit tomorrow depends on the policies put in motion today, including those focused on trade.

Much of the current discussions on trade touch on the impact that technology and connectivity will have on the global landscape. The internet, for example, is opening up more opportunities for small businesses. Three-dimensional printing is introducing novel ways of delivering physical goods across borders. Innovative products increasingly blend software services with the accompanying merchandise. All of these developments pose interesting policy questions for trade.

Technology and its implications on trade are thus featuring much more in WTO debates, the outcomes of which will certainly be important to tomorrow’s traders.

World Trade Organization (WTO) members have forged the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), which contains provisions aimed at easing and speeding the movement of goods across borders. WTO economists
With the help of trade, consumers, workers and ordinary citizens have already gained higher living standards, lower costs and increased earnings. With the help of the multilateral trading system the world economy is provided the stability it needs to thrive.

have cited the TFA’s importance for smaller entrepreneurs with limited resources, which stand to gain from improved trading procedures including internet-enabled payments for customs fees and web access to export and import information.

Furthermore, the WTO extended the practice of not imposing customs duties on electronics transmissions for another two years during the 11th Ministerial Conference (MC11) last December. Groups of WTO members also announced they would initiate exploratory work on trade-related aspects of electronic commerce as well as on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), with discussions open to the wider membership. Technology and its implications on trade are thus featuring much more in WTO debates, the outcomes of which will certainly be important to tomorrow’s traders.

GREEN CHALLENGES

Today’s youth will also have to grapple with environmental issues in the future, many of which will be passed on from the generations before them. Here, trade can have an important role as well. An open and transparent global trading system can make it easier and cheaper to assemble and access green technologies. It can facilitate the dismantling of subsidies harmful to the environment. It is thus an important catalyst for sustainable development.

WTO members, taking up the mantle, are hard at work negotiating an agreement to limit government subsidies harmful to the world’s fisheries. They wrapped up MC11 with a commitment to seal a deal on fisheries subsidies, which delivers on United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14.6 by the end of 2019. United Nations Environment Executive Director Erik Solheim and WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo launched last January a new dialogue to strengthen the partnership between the trade and environment communities. The first initiative under this joint effort will be a high-level forum on trade and environment to be held in October.

Finally, there is the issue of the world economic outlook. In the short term, trade is expected to remain strong in 2018 and 2019 as long as robust global economic growth continues and governments pursue appropriate policies. This forecast, however, could be undermined by restrictive trade policies. History has already borne out the ensuing damage of trade wars and protectionism as experienced in the Great Depression of the 1930s.

INCLUSIVE TRADE

The resilience of the rules-based multilateral trading system will play an important role in determining the future well-being of people around the world. With the help of trade, consumers, workers and ordinary citizens have already gained higher living standards, lower costs and increased earnings. With the help of the multilateral trading system the world economy is providing the stability it needs to thrive. ‘The system is not perfect,’ DG Azevêdo has said. ‘But it is the best we have. And we are all going to regret very deeply should it ever cease to function.’

These same issues will feature at the WTO Public Forum to be held 2-4 October, where sessions will focus on considering what trade will look like in 2030 and beyond. The Public Forum’s sub-themes will be sustainable trade; technology-enabled trade; and a more inclusive trading system.

It is hoped these discussions will continue to feed into the trade agenda and help chart the way for safeguarding the welfare of people in the years to come. The prospects for young people tomorrow are in our hands today.  

1. Youth play an active role at the WTO Public Forum.
2. Young people engaged in a discussion with WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo.
Engaging youth through virtual learning spaces

GUILLAUME LAMOTHE, e-Learning Content Editor, International Trade Centre

The SME Trade Academy is allowing ITC to extend its reach in developing and least developed countries

The International Trade Centre’s (ITC) SME Trade Academy has developed 55 online courses since its creation in 2014 in a range of topics tailored to the needs of developing countries. Offered free of charge on the Academy’s platform, these courses have enabled ITC to dramatically extend its reach to traditionally underserved areas.

In fact, for nearly half of the SME Trade Academy’s course participants, interaction with ITC is their first online learning experience. What’s more, almost a quarter of them have taken more than one course on the platform, demonstrating the current appetite for online learning in least developed countries (LDCs) and other developing countries. With over 21,000 new enrolments expected for 2018, over 85% of which are expected to come from developing countries and LDCs, ITC has been successful in using the online medium to extend both the reach and the scale of its training activities.

ENGAGING YOUTH

Perhaps unsurprisingly given its online nature, young people have been among the most enthusiastic adopters of the SME Trade Academy. Indeed, 53% of participants on the Academy are below 35 years of age.

With a number of courses specifically targeting typical youth profiles, such as students, graduates and early career professionals, the platform has enabled ITC to provide young
Another important aspect to community building involves promoting links between the VLS and various offline activities. Particularly successful or dynamic online learners could, for example, be rewarded for their efforts by an invitation to an offline workshop, conference, or training session. In this way VLS can broaden their communities beyond the online environment.

Finally, VLS will also promote the creation of user-made content. While the SME Trade Academy will continue to provide technical support, monitor quality and develop new courses, successful learners will be granted the ability to upload resources and create new discussion topics on the platform. This will enable VLS to evolve with their users over time, thus ensuring the creation of a long-term online community that will be reflective of the needs and interests of the people from which it is made.

VIRTUAL LEARNING SPACES

As part of its drive to continue empowering youth in LDCs and other developing countries, the SME Trade Academy is currently introducing a new approach to online training: Virtual Learning Spaces (VLS).

Incorporating the latest innovation in online training, including micro-learning, comprehensive mobile access and xAPIs, VLSs are online platforms designed to provide a space for learners to form communities of practice around a particular topic or geographical area. They aim to increase the impact of ITC online learning activities by moving from time-bound courses, with defined start and end dates, to a continuous learning model. In practice this means learners will have permanent access not just to formal online training, but also to on-demand resources. These include short videos, audio clips, documents, quizzes and surveys, as well as a series of discussion groups overseen by moderators and organized around particular themes. This will make ITC’s online training offering more modular, flexible, responsive and, importantly, sensitive to local needs.

CREATING COMMUNITIES

The concept of ‘community, in context’ is central to the success of the VLS model. Because a VLS relies on participant interactions to promote dynamic learning, the first step to ensuring its success is to focus the scope of its content, whether geographic, thematic or otherwise. Within this context youth has emerged as one of the cornerstones of the SME Trade Academy’s efforts and the first VLS created by ITC will be focused specifically on that group. The SME Trade Academy team is currently preparing to release a VLS tailored for young Libyan entrepreneurs in the final quarter of 2018, with another aimed at professional training for young people in Guinea to follow shortly after.

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VITAL NUMBERS

47% of participants report the SME Trade Academy as their first online learning experience
86% of participants come from developing and least developed countries
46% of participants are female
53% of participants are under 35 years of age.

1. The SME Trade Academy has so far provide 55 online courses.
2. Explaining the virtues of the SME Trade Academy to a prospective student.
3. ITC staff preparing audiovisual content for the SME Trade Academy.
Young and motivated: Making it in the Gambia

SUSANNA PAK, Communications Officer, International Trade Centre

Tukki wala tekki fii? Tekki fii! Go abroad or make it here? Make it here! If you ask Gambian youth, they opt to sharpen skills and become entrepreneurs at home rather than migrate

Young people in the Gambia are choosing to ‘make it’ at home rather than go abroad, whether it’s in the arts or agriculture, tech or tourism. In fact, youth in the Gambia – one of Africa’s smallest countries – have big dreams and are willing to work for them.

‘The youth are eager and hungry to be successful, to be job creators and to help develop our country,’ says self-proclaimed rebel fashion designer Awa Conateh of Yaws Creations.

Modou Lamin Fatty, a poultry farmer and third-year student at the University of the Gambia, says agribusiness is the future: ‘Not many young people are interested, but if you want to become a millionaire, agriculture is the fastest way.’

Software architect Hassan Jallow of Assutech, who programmed his computer to react to voice commands, says: ‘You cannot be jobless if you have a skill in this area and you’re talented.’

Betty Madeline Tebbs, a student at the Gambia Tourism and Hospitality Institute, says she gained skills that she can use in her daily life: ‘I’m trained on how to communicate, how to talk and how to approach people nicely.’

Thousands of people – especially youth – who fled the country in hopes of finding jobs and opportunities elsewhere now have a reason to return home

REBUILDING BRIDGES

After more than two decades of dictatorship, this West African country celebrated a new democratically elected government a year and a half ago. The peaceful transition under President Adama Barrow opened the way for political and economic
reforms as well as the rebuilding of bridges to the rest of the world.

Thousands of people – especially youth – who fled the country in hopes of finding jobs and opportunities elsewhere now have a reason to return home.

Across all age groups, unemployment is highest among Gambians aged 15 to 24 – more than 44% – according to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

The World Bank says Africa will need to create 450 million new jobs by 2035, while it is on track to generate only 100 million. The time for action is now.

UNITED ACTION
Creating and maintaining positive change requires a united vision by youth, government, business and civil society. In May, they partnered to launch the national Youth and Trade Roadmap.

The roadmap is designed to help tackle the root causes of youth unemployment and competitive market constraints, which are at the heart of irregular migration. It aims to sharpen the skills of – and create jobs for – young Gambians and directly supports the National Development Plan, which targets economic reforms to restore growth and stability in the country.

‘My government is fully committed to leading and implementing the Youth and Trade Roadmap to turn the tide of youth migration,’ said Vice President Fatoumata Tambajang at the launch event.

Through its Youth Empowerment Project (YEP), the International Trade Centre (ITC) is supporting implementation of the roadmap, focusing on sharpening the job-ready skills of youth while fostering value addition in the priority sectors of nuts and agro-processing; information and communications technologies; and tourism.

SKILLS MISMATCH
Arguably one of the biggest challenges to addressing youth unemployment is the gap between what job seekers offer and what employers need. In other words, there is a skills mismatch – young people need training on workforce-ready skills.

About 35% of companies report poor levels of skills among young graduates, according to a recent ITC survey on competitiveness in the Gambia. The skills gap is particularly marked with youth trained in technical and vocational education and training institutes, so building up the capacities of these institutes, including those in rural areas, is a key priority.

The European Union, through its Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, has been working with ITC through YEP to provide youth with practical training as well as entrepreneurial and mentoring programmes.

Working with YEP, 1,250 Gambian youth have gained skills in industries including agribusiness; tourism; information and communications technology; fashion; and construction. Youth with bankable entrepreneurial dreams have received capital and equipment to launch their start-ups.

In the Gambia, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises employ 60% of the workforce. Investing in these businesses can help them become more competitive, create jobs, increase incomes and fuel economic growth.

Through YEP, 250 enterprises in the key sectors of agribusiness, information and communications technology, and tourism have received training and support to improve their productive capacities, increase market linkages and boost the quality of their goods and services.

This is the way forward for Gambian youth to not only survive, but thrive.

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1. Fashion designer Awa Conateh showcases her handmade accessories.
2. The Gambia’s Vice President Fatoumata Tambajang, ITC Executive Director Arancha González and others launch the national Youth and Trade Roadmap in May 2018.
3. A glimpse into authentic, community-based tourism in Ndemban, in which tourists eat lunch with a host family.

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World Export Development Forum 2018
Scaling up through trade: Skill - Innovate - Connect

It’s time to scale up and speed up

The World Export Development Forum is where policy meets practice, and buyers and sellers meet to get business done. To scale up trade, we’ll focus on:

**skill**
Equip people – especially women and youth – with the right skills for good, long-term jobs.

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**connect**
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Join us in Lusaka!

[www.intracen.org/wedf](http://www.intracen.org/wedf)  wedf@intracen.org
Agenda

from 26 June 2018

Upcoming events

26-28 June  SheTrades Global, Liverpool, United Kingdom
27 June     World Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Day
27 June     EU Cities for Fair and Ethical Trade award ceremony, Brussels
10 July     ITC Joint Advisory Group 52nd Meeting, Geneva
9-18 July   High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, New York
19 July     World Youth Skills Day
12 August   International Youth Day
10 September Launch of SheTrades Zambia
11-12 September 18th World Export Development Forum (WEDF), Lusaka, Zambia
14-15 September Trade and Investment Ministerial Meeting, Buenos Aires
18-30 September United Nations General Assembly, New York
20 September Launch of ITC’s SME Competitiveness Outlook 2018, Geneva
21 September United Nations International Day of Peace
1 October    International Coffee Day
2-4 October  World Trade Organization’s Public Forum, Geneva
14 October   World Standards Day
12-14 October Annual Meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Group, Bali, Indonesia
16 October   International Food Day
24 October   United Nations Day
22-26 October World Investment Forum, Geneva
25-28 October 12th World Trade Promotion Organization (WTPO) Conference, Paris
5-7 November Global SME Finance Forum, Madrid
5-9 November Geneva Peace Week, Geneva
5-10 November China International Import Expo, Shanghai
30 November-1 December G20 summit, Buenos Aires
3-14 December 24th Conference of Parties to the to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Katowice, Poland
11-17 December African Export-Import Bank’s inaugural Intra-African Trade Fair, Cairo, Egypt

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MEDIATION AND ARBITRATION IN UEMOA COUNTRIES

This guide provides an overview of mediation and arbitration options to settle disputes available to companies in western Africa which are part of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) economic region. The overview is also useful to trade promotion bodies and centres of mediation and arbitration.

Language: French.

EXPLORING MALAWI’S EXPORT POTENTIAL

Regional integration is the key to Malawi’s trade success, according to a new International Trade Centre report that uncovers the country’s untapped export potential in agro-processing. This report is a roadmap for Malawian exporters and policymakers to identify higher value-added products and markets with growth potential, as well as giving guidance to realizing those opportunities and overcoming production challenges.

www.intracen.org/publication/Exploring-Malawis-export-potential-02

WHAT SELLS IN E-COMMERCE:
NEW EVIDENCE FROM ASIAN LDCS

Cross-border e-commerce can help least developed countries (LDCs) become more competitive and diversify their exports. This is especially true for the Asia-Pacific, the most dynamic region in global e-commerce. To capture that potential, small businesses in these countries need more market intelligence. This paper fills that gap, using market data from retailer Alibaba.com to identify which products from five Asian LDCs – Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Nepal – can generate the most demand abroad.


UGANDA: COMPANY PERSPECTIVES – AN ITC SERIES ON NON-TARIFF MEASURES

Nearly half of Ugandan companies face challenges with non-tariff measures (NTMs), an ITC business survey shows. Certification, labelling, packaging and rules of origin are their biggest challenges. Stronger quality infrastructure within the country will boost the competitiveness of small businesses, including laboratories for testing and certification. NTMs often create procedural obstacles such as delays, insufficient facilities and administrative hurdles, either in destination markets or in Uganda itself. Automated border clearance will help streamlining the export procedures and increase transparency.

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