

TRENDS IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Education is often cited as the groundwork for the future — the main way to prepare children to take on the problems of tomorrow. In order to prepare them well, though, we need to continually improve the youth development model to incorporate principles of Positive Youth Development, a philosophy which seeks to build skills, assets, and competencies; foster healthy relationships; strengthen the environment, and transform systems. By continuing to include the private and public sectors in the conversation, and build programs which address financial literacy, soft skills, and further integrating STEM, we ensure that school curricula keep pace with real-world employment necessities. While the youth unemployment gap is wide, integrating these areas — as exemplified by the work Chemonics is doing — allows youth to learn valuable skills that will prepare them for the ever growing and changing job market and future.



TECHNICAL BRIEF

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: INVESTING IN YOUTH

Recent estimates from the International Labour Organization (ILO) show that youth unemployment is expected to reach 13.1 percent in 2018, up from 12.9 percent in 2015. Alarming, there is a similar rise in the global youth population working but still in severe or moderate poverty. These figures have different roots, some are cultural, some are due to poor economic conditions, and some are due to geopolitical disasters like a refugee crisis. Concurrently, many developing countries are experiencing a youth bulge — a growing percentage of the population between the ages of 15 and 29 who have the ability and desire to enter the workforce. The numbers are astounding and countries across the globe are beginning to focus on how their economies will support the increased available workforce. Research shows us that across all countries, one major factor in determining workforce success for young people is addressing the skills gap between what students learn in school and what employers in the workforce seek. Youth development programs need to continue to bridge the gap between school and work. To do this, they should offer avenues to increase economic opportunities for young people, provide social and political stability, and arm the incoming workforce with 21st-century skills. By supporting and preparing young people for real-world work, youth workforce development programs can offer new paths to development.

EXPANDING THE BREADTH OF EDUCATION

Goal 8 of the United Nations (UN) 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) calls for “the promotion of inclusive and sustainable economic growth through meaningful work.” Progress toward achieving this goal is measured by a country’s ability to substantially reduce the proportion of unemployed youth and youth not actively participating in education or training. Through Goal 8, the UN seeks to address the 470 million new jobs necessary for youth entering the workforce between 2016 and 2030. In order to address the growing need for productive jobs, schools must continue to evolve and promote soft skills valued in the 21st century public and private sector workplaces — collaboration, resiliency, critical thinking, creativity, and communication. Teaming with employers to ensure their input in developing meaningful and sustainable skills programming is essential for the new workforce to keep pace with technological advances in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and the other technical areas employers seek to staff.

CHEMONICS IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Chemonics International works on a number of initiatives that encourage workforce development across the globe.

The **Feed the Future Uganda Youth Leadership for Agriculture Activity (YLA)** has taken innovative approaches to introducing workforce development in Uganda, leveraging partnerships with private and public-sector actors, workforce institutions, and other stakeholders. YLA puts youth in the lead by allowing them

ABOUT CHEMONICS

Founded in 1975, Chemonics is one of the world’s leading international development consulting firms. In 76 countries around the globe today, our network of approximately 4,500 specialists pursue a higher standard in development every day to help clients, partners, and beneficiaries achieve results.

to identify and drive forward sustainable, inclusive, and cost-effective approaches that enable youth, especially females, to participate in the agriculture sector as leaders, farmers, entrepreneurs, and employees. YLA has identified many unique entry points through which to engage youth and has developed a menu of creative strategies and programs. In collaboration with the Private Education Development Network (PEDN) and Aflatoun International, YLA launches a global curriculum on financial literacy and social education that targets children aged 6-14 in sixty schools. To engage older youth, YLA partnered with Equator Seeds Limited (ESL) – a leading seed-production company and Sing with Me Happily (SWMH) – a tractor training institution – to provide training opportunities to 6,500 youth farmers in the fundamentals of agribusiness and entrepreneurship. The Activity also provides direct production support, though the production cycle, from ESL agronomists and other experts. These activities provide youth with better technical skills in agriculture and enhance connections with traditional school curricula. These programs help youth in Uganda develop their technical, financial literacy and soft skills to become better assets to the global workforce.

In collaboration with Junior Achievement, the **Georgia PriEd** project is engaging the private sector in the country to convey basic economic concepts and is scaling the model across the country. From an economic perspective, the reason is simple: a business-savvy workforce is better for a twenty-first-century economy. Decades of research in economics, education, and early childhood development have shown that young children enter the primary grades with an experience-based knowledge of economics, and they are quite capable of learning basic economic concepts during the primary grades. Despite the benefits, it is uncommon for primary schools in Georgia to teach business skills. Therefore, the program is engaging local businesses in primary education with the goal of equipping children with basic business skills that will help them realize their full potential as adults. Through a collaboration with Junior Achievement (JA), it has adapted JA’s internationally tested business skills curricula to the Georgian context. Under G-PriEd, the business skills activity has reached more than 25,000 students in over 70 public schools across Georgia and aims to reach even more if the Ministry of Education and Science scales up the approach.

One of the many measures the **Moldova Competitiveness Project (MCP)** engages in to promote workforce effectiveness is increasing youth interest in STEM subjects. MCP has continued building on the successful Education Robotics initiative, expanding the program nationwide to 76 schools and 13 libraries across Moldova, benefiting more than 4,000 youths across the country. MCP worked closely with the Ministry of Education to make Robotics an extracurricular course, qualifying it for public funds.



Youth unemployment has increased to 13.1 percent globally since 2015. Slowing the rise of this figure, especially in developing countries, means increasing economic opportunity and providing the incoming workforce with marketable skills.

Photo credit: USAID Building Economic Sustainability through Tourism Project