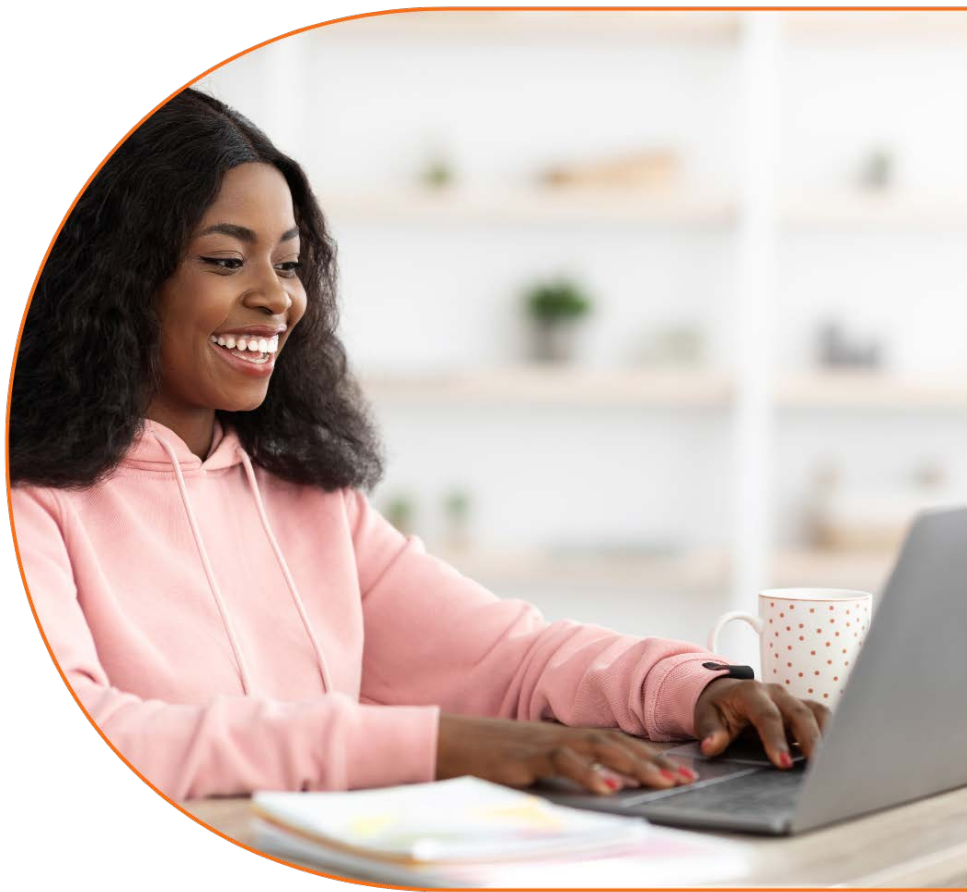


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# What works for the Youth in Africa: Empirical Review of Youth Employment Policies and their Impact in Rwanda.

## Policy Paper



**PEP Policy Paper series**

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**Policy Paper**

# PEP Policy Paper

## Empirical review of youth employment policies and their impact in Rwanda

This paper was produced in the context of the “What Works for Youth Employment in Africa” initiative implemented by the Partnership for Economic Policy (PEP) in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation. “What Works for Youth Employment in Africa” was a three-year research initiative that ran between 2021 and 2024, to provide evidence that can drive policy reform to increase youth employment in ten African countries. The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the Foundation, its staff, or its Board of Directors. For more information about this initiative, please visit: [www.pep-net.org/programs/youth-employment](http://www.pep-net.org/programs/youth-employment)

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## Disclaimer

This paper was produced in the context of the What Works for Youth Employment in Africa: A review of existing policies and empirical analysis in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation. It was a three-year initiative that ran between 2021 and 2024 to create a knowledge base of youth employment and related social development policies to inform policy and practices. The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the Foundation, its staff, or its Board of Directors. For more information about this initiative, please visit: [www.pep-net.org/programs/youth-employment](http://www.pep-net.org/programs/youth-employment)

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## **I. Introduction**

This policy paper sought to explore experiences of youth's aspirations including job opportunities, best practices, training, education and constraints they face in starting businesses and how they can be supported to respond to labor market challenges. Overall, an empirical review of employment policies and their impact in Rwanda has resulted in the evidence that informs our evaluation of policy context and analysis of the labour market in Rwanda, existing interventions to address youth employment challenges, evaluation of policy options for considerations as well as key recommendations for the next step.

## **II. Policy context analysis of the Labour market in Rwanda**

The proportion of the young people who are below 30 years old are 65.3 per cent (NISR, 2022). This signifies the large size of youth labor force, who need greater attention from public and private sector organizations dealing with education and employment as well as coordinated policies regarding youth.

However, findings from the labour force surveys carried out by the National Institute of Statistics between 2017 and 2020 show that youth employment to population ratio has been relatively lower than employment to population ratio among adults' population over time: the youth employment to population ratio increased by 1.9 percentage points from 40.8% to 42.6% while adults' employment increased by 2.3 percentage points from 47.2% to 49.5% over the same period.

One of the key challenges that youth face in the labor market is lack of adequate employment opportunities because many young people are still in school to work transition. According to the school to work transition survey by IPAR in 2015, 20% of young people had transitioned from school- to-work. Further study by IPAR indicated that 23 % of the youth are not

in education, employment and in training (NEET) citing poor quality of the job as a key constraint. The unsuitable education combined with skills mismatches comprised of 15.2% of the youth NEET.

Cognizant of the fact that youth unemployment challenges consist of both educated and uneducated, there is need to put emphasis on creating many more youth employment programs that would provide undedicated young girls, men and other marginalized people such as people with disabilities with skills in order to be able to meet labour market needs.

The 2017 Labor Force Survey indicated that lack of required skills and competencies among the youth are as the major factor contributing to the high rate of youth unemployment. Youth recognize that formal sector jobs are rare and out of reach yet they are desirable. Moreover, as a result of skills mismatches among youths, they are exposed to vulnerability jobs which alludes them to face income insecurity, lack of employment benefits, continued poverty and exposed to legal and social protection risks.

The risk associated with youth unemployment is that of social instability, which includes crimes such as theft, murder and social ills related to consumption of drugs, prostitution and violence which would in turn threaten stability of the country.

The government of Rwanda has endeavored to formulate policies and programs aimed at supporting and promoting young women and men in pursuit of finding solutions to their multifaceted challenges.

### **III. Policy / Interventions to Address Youth Employment Challenges**

Although the unemployment issues among youths persists, the following are existing policy or interventions that have been put in place to address them:

### **3.1 Promoting Employable skills for Youths through TVET and Workplace learning**

The government of Rwanda through Rwanda Development Board introduced workplace learning to deepen the linkage between the education sector and the world of work; to increase the relevance of skills development through strong partnership with the enterprises (WPL, 2018).

### **3.2 Internship Program and Industrial Based Training**

Rwanda Development Board (RDB) introduced Internship Program in 2018 to support graduates to acquire practical work-related skills.

### **3.3 Employment Service Centers**

The employment services provide information to job seekers through internship and placement opportunities. These include: Kigali Employment Service Centre, Musanze Employment Service Centre and Huye Employment Service.

### **3.4 Innovative approaches for Youth (Hanga-Umurimo)**

This is a government program introduced in 2012 and managed by the Ministry of Trade and Industry(MINICOM) in partnership with the Rwanda Development Board (RDB), the Private Sector Federation (PSF) and Business Development Fund (BDF) to support young women and men with innovative ideas in the areas of: construction, information and communication technology and tourism.

### **3.5 Entrepreneurship and Businesses Development**

According to MINICOM report (2020), the entrepreneurship program has 3 components (output) mainly: (1) The Proximity Business Advisors (BDA), (2) Tool kit loan facility and (3) Loan Guarantee Fund.

## **IV. Description of policy options and initiatives**

The government of Rwanda put in place ambitious strategies and initiatives aimed at eradicating poverty among citizens and the youth in particular by creating employment opportunities for all. The following are developmental programs:

### **4.1 Vision 2020 Umurenge Program (VUP)**

The VUP is an Integrated Local Development Program aimed at accelerating Poverty Eradication, Rural Growth, and Social Protection.

It envisions building a productive and efficient workforce, mainly by promoting education and health of the population. By adopting the “universal education for all principle, the Vision emphasizes the quality of education that matches the skills required on the labor market and promoting entrepreneurial mindset shift. The ultimate target of the Vision 2020 was to create 3.2 million jobs cumulatively by 2020.

### **4.2 Creation of decent and productive jobs**

The first priority area under the economic transformation pillar addresses the NST1’s specific objective of creating 1,500,000 decent and productive jobs (over 214, 300 jobs annually) for economic development”.

### 4.3 Inkomoko and its Vision

Inkomoko vision is to set the scene towards thriving communities, where young people and refugees in their settled communities are engaged and sensitized on resilience for work for now and in future.

## V. Other policy options for consideration

- i. Strengthening technical and vocational Education training (TVET) programs to bridge the skills gap among youth
- ii. Improving job creation and fostering youth entrepreneurship skills for youth to be able to become job makers rather than job seekers
- iii. Coordination of the different public and private youth employment programs and follow-ups on beneficiaries
- iv. Designing an inclusive youth employment program including youth with disabilities, historically marginalized people, refugees and internally displaced people in the program design

## VI. Evaluation of Policy Options

### 5.1 General overview based on focus groups and key informant interviews

The implementation of the employment promotion programs across all districts are believed by policy makers and implementers to be coordinated and monitored by the Business development and employment Unit at the Districts. However, from key informant's interviews and focus group discussion held, there is a weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place.

As far as the perceptions on the implementation of youth employment policies and programs in Rwanda are concerned, there is still a gap in information sharing especially to those living in rural remote areas and failure to identify actual beneficiaries of the program. Additionally, some programs have limited financial capacity to tackle or address unemployment issues among youth, especially in rural settlements.

The programs are well-designed, but the implementation tools are weak which results into leaving some issues unsolved even though Rapid response informal programs have some training facilities, they fail to attract participation of many TVET (technical and vocational education and training) schools and higher learning institutions because they are less demanded by trainees. There are 2000 vocational training centres and 147 TVET schools across all districts, but they are concentrated in cities, towns, and commercial centres. In addition, challenges of communicating available skills to potential employers are acute for informal training because most trainings for youth is done through apprenticeship training and integrating them in the informal sector than through separate formal training institutions. However, informal training typically provides no standardized certification.

Ministries and districts do not have enough budgets for the implementation of employment policies and programs. This creates a huge gap in addressing employment challenges. There should be a sustainable funding- mechanism to solve budget constraints.

Coupled with limitations in funding, the youth employment strategy is mostly lending itself to the supply side of the labor leading to more focus on skills and entrepreneurship development as opposed to the demand aspects of increasing the number of quality jobs that youths can take up on the demand side of the labor market. The identification of the need to integrate education and training into youth employment promotion has served to focus attention on the former. Little emphasis has been placed on promoting macro-economic and/or sectoral strategies to create wage employment opportunities for young people. Most of the provisions for youth employment are concerned with increasing the quantity and quality of education and training to match the (perceived) needs of the labor market. This is also reflected in the Private Sector Development and Youth Employment Strategy 2018 – 2024.

Another programmatic challenge is the allocation of inadequate funding spread over a very varied range of youth projects in Rwanda. Although, there are quite many funders with interest in supporting youth employment initiatives especially the marginalized youth and other groups, they are often manifested in the lack of strong coordination mechanisms, which result in ineffective duplication of certain policies and neglecting focus on high potential impact areas. Coordination mechanisms is still a challenge during the implementation of youth employment programs. There are also limitations in sustainability of YEP due to short implementation periods and youth Participation and ownership during program design.

## 5.2 Evaluation of some specific policy options using selected criteria.

Evaluation criteria for decision-making	Policy options			
	Inkomoko	VUP	Creation of decent and productive jobs	Other policy options for consideration
Effectiveness	More than 28,000 new jobs created.	449,244 households Benefited from classic public works. 84,962 households Benefited from extended public works (Scheme until 2020)	<b>Target:</b> 1,500,000 jobs (over 214,300 jobs annually) <b>Average achievement rate</b> (2017/18 to 2019/20): 75.3%.	Effectiveness improved
Gender equity effects	More than half of clients are women; youth and refugees are engaged.	More focused on female-headed households caring for young children (expanded works); Gender equity (classic works)	Skills development interventions with a gender mainstreaming lens.	Achievement improved
Cost implications	Budget issues	Budget issues	Budget issues	Better cost/benefit ratio
Governance	Coordination and awareness issues	Coordination and awareness issues	Coordination and awareness issues	Efficiency improved
Feasibility	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Acceptability	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

## VII. Key Policy Recommendations and next steps

- ❖ Strengthen the coordination mechanisms during the implementation of Youth employment policies and programs. To realize this, synergies between program implementers and stakeholders should be created to strengthen the culture of informed evidence decision-making.
- ❖ Ministries and districts do not have enough budgets for the implementation of employment policies and programs. This creates a huge gap in addressing employment challenges. There should be a sustainable funding-mechanism to solve budget constraints
- ❖ Improving job creation and fostering youth entrepreneurship skills for youth to be able to become job makers rather than job seekers
- ❖ Strengthening technical and vocational Education training (TVET) programs to bridge the skills gap between education and unemployment and making available internships and apprenticeships for youths.
- ❖ Bridge the gaps between education and employment through Public private partnership and other skills development, making available internships and apprenticeships to enhance employment
- ❖ Designing an inclusive youth employment programs including youth with disabilities, historically marginalized people, refugees and internally displaced people in the program design
- ❖ Promoting a communication policy that is closer to the main targets about youth employment programs, through for instance the use of community structures and authorities could be beneficial in improving awareness and Inclusion of some marginalized groups of young people into those programs.
- ❖ Strengthening the coordination of the actions of the different employment programs would allow the government to improve the effectiveness of its youth employment programs.
- ❖ Coordination of the different public and private youth employment programs and follow-ups on beneficiaries

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