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GLOBAL ACCELERATOR ON JOBS AND SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR JUST TRANSITIONS

Youth at the heart of the Global Accelerator

THE GLOBAL PICTURE

Why young people matter

Why focus on youth? Young people are a key driver of sustainable economic and social development, yet unemployment, inactivity, poor-quality jobs, and inadequate social protection can have lifelong consequences for their employment prospects, income security, health, and well-being. These challenges also impose significant economic costs through lost productivity, reduced human capital, and weaker economic growth. Investing in decent work opportunities and social protection for youth not only improves individual outcomes but also strengthens a country's future workforce, fosters innovation, and generates long-term social and economic returns.

1.28bn

Young people (15-24) worldwide in 2025 — about 15.6% of the global population

200m

15.6% of the world's youth (aged 15–24) live in the 20 Pathfinder countries

257m

Young people not in employment, education or training in 2025 (ILO estimate)

2×

Young women are twice as likely as young men to be NEET

THE CHALLENGE

Barriers young people face

38.1% vs 0.7%

Youth unemployment rates vary widely, from 38.1% to 0.7%. High rates reflect limited job opportunities, while very low rates may reflect the need to take up any available work, often through informal employment.

1 in 5

Young workers in low-income countries hold a regular paid job. In addition, young people are unlikely to be eligible to means-tested and categorical social assistance, leaving them with no or limited access to social protection

A persistent gender gap

Labour force participation among young men substantially exceeds that of young women, with the gender gap exceeding 40 percentage points in the largest disparity observed.

“Delayed entry, prolonged unemployment and precarious work can create long-term **‘scarring effects’** that hinder a young person’s path to economic stability.”

Digital divide

Only 36% of people in Africa had broadband in 2022—35% of young men but just 24% of young women in 2020.

Demographic surge

Africa’s youth labour force is set to grow by 76 million by 2050—a huge demand for quality jobs.

School-to-work friction

In Asia and the Pacific, youth unemployment is about 13.7% —over three times the adult rate.

THE RESPONSE

How the Global Accelerator puts young people first

Recognizing that young people are disproportionately affected by economic, demographic, digital and green transitions, the Global Accelerator identified youth as one of its priority groups. Its 2022 thematic roadmap on youth set out four guiding principles:

Meaningful youth participation

Young people help shape the policies that affect their working lives.

Universal social protection

Social protection systems ensure continuous protection across young people's transitions from school to work, between different forms of employment, and across different stages of life course.

Stronger transitions into decent work

Smoother pathways from education and training into productive employment and decent work.

Better data on youth employment

Evidence to inform policies and design programmes that better reach young people, particularly those most at risk.

20

Pathfinder countries have joined this journey, with a growing number of countries taking part.

14

Country roadmaps endorsed, with several identifying youth as a priority.

47

Joint programmes are ongoing with several featuring youth as a target population

The opportunity: The Global Accelerator can help countries connect the dots — aligning economic policy with education and training, active labour market programmes, social protection systems, and support for young entrepreneurs, while ensuring that social protection follows young people throughout their transitions.

ON THE GROUND

What countries are prioritizing for young people

From apprenticeships to skills for green jobs and first-job subsidies, pathfinder countries aim to turn roadmap commitments into concrete action for young people.

Albania

Supports the Youth Guarantee programme, wage and contribution subsidies for first-time jobseekers, and the 'Journey Towards Employment' curriculum in soft, digital and green skills.

Focus: **Skills · Social protection**

Bhutan

A '21st-Century Workforce Skilling' programme and entrepreneurship financing sit alongside an integrated social protection management information system.

Focus: **Skills · Enterprise**

Cabo Verde

Threads youth through education-to-work pathways — trade classes, VET credits, internships and a productive-inclusion springboard — with reserved places for NEET youth and prizes for young entrepreneurs.

Focus: **NEET · Enterprise**

Cambodia

Train young people across ten priority sectors, with free training, monthly social assistance benefits and recognition of prior learning (RPL) for young people, linked to the Graduation Based Social Protection programme.

Focus: **TVET · Social protection**

Colombia

Embeds youth in a just-transition agenda: green and digital skills, reskilling for energy transition and AI, and one-stop shops (Ventanilla Única) that widen access to services.

Focus: **Green · Digital**

DR Congo

Builds youth employment through skills and formalization — gender-responsive training with post-training support, cooperative development, and a unified social registry easing entry into work.

Focus: **Skills · Formalization**

Indonesia

Vocational and digital skills via sectoral councils, apprenticeships and reskilling, with protection informed by care-cost analysis.

Focus: **Skills · Digital**

Malawi

With 79% of people under 35, targets youth across agriculture, mining and tourism through Agri-TVET, apprenticeships and creative industries, and extends social protection to informal workers.

Focus: **Apprenticeships · Social protection**

ON THE GROUND

What countries are prioritizing for young people

Namibia

A new employment policy integrating a Youth Employment Strategy, Skills for green jobs and trade and economic diversification (STED), unified support for youth-led MSMEs, dedicated youth financing funds, and green biomass jobs targeting women- and youth-led enterprises.

Focus: **Green jobs · Finance**

Nepal

Sets a new employment policy, sector skills committees and a qualifications framework, with employer-led TVET and a Greater Lumbini tourism push targeting 45% youth for better jobs.

Focus: **TVET · Tourism**

Paraguay

Strengthens institutional capacity to support implementation of « Emplea PY Joven » programme improving young people's access to vocational training and subsidizing social-security contributions to facilitate their transition from school to their first formal job.

Focus: **First job · Formalization · Social protection**

Philippines

Prioritizes lifelong learning, micro-credentials and RPL for construction, transport and emerging sectors, with green and digital skills and industry–academe partnerships to close mismatches.

Focus: **Skills · Green · Digital**

Rwanda

Workplace learning, TVET, youth cooperatives, a Youth Investment Facility, supporting young entrepreneurs through incubation facilities and entrepreneurship training, RPL and a digital- and creative-economy pathway.

Focus: **TVET · Digital economy**

Senegal

Builds on a strong apprenticeship base — a renovated apprenticeship system, an Apprenticeship Fund, incubators and a graduation-to-formalization pathway with automatic social-protection registration.

Focus: **Apprenticeships · Formalization · Social protection**

Tunisia

Moving young beneficiaries from social assistance to decent work through employability profiling, ALMPs, individualized employment services and counsellor training.

Focus: **Activation · ALMPs · Social protection**

Uzbekistan

Promotes green-transition skills for youth and designs mechanisms to extend social insurance to informal and self-employed young workers, backed by youth studies and awareness campaigns.

Focus: **Green · Social protection**

RESULTS SO FAR

Real change in young people’s lives

ALBANIA

634 young people

At 129% of target, **634 at-risk youth trained in soft, digital and green skills across 15 municipalities**. 40 VET instructors and 85 professionals were upskilled; 1,041 people benefited overall — over half unemployed youth aged 16–29. The Youth Guarantee reached 128 youth, and the curriculum reached 500 more vulnerable students in VET schools.

NAMIBIA

292 young people

292 young people (130 women, 162 men) completed **accredited biomass harvesting and processing training**, and 295 were linked to green value-chain markets. The N$257 million National Youth Fund is being tapped for youth enterprises, and tailored financial products were co-developed with the Development Bank of Namibia.

MALAWI

200+ young people

Over 200 young people entered structured apprenticeships and internships with private-sector partners. 70 assessors were trained for Recognition of Prior Learning, formally recognizing informal skills. In Nkhata Bay, the Wamaka youth cooperative is training 50 young people in fish farming and enterprise.

RWANDA

60+ young people

62 NEET young women in Rubavu District completed integrated skills training, entrepreneurship support, and received start-up toolkits, opening pathways to self-employment and decent work, and generating scalable lessons for national employment systems.

PARAGUAY

-2.7%p

unemployment

Paraguay had a strong record of employment creation over the last years, which also benefitted youth: **The youth unemployment rate dropped from 13.6% in 2024 to 10.9%** in 2025. A study is being undertaken to examine the barriers young people, especially young women, face entering and staying in work.

LOOKING AHEAD

Pathways for cooperation

Link social protection to labour market policies

Integrate social protection with employment services, skills development, public employment programmes, wage subsidies, employment incentives, and entrepreneurship support to facilitate young people's transition into decent work.

Close the strategy gap

Most roadmaps focus on either young workers or young people outside the labour market, rather than addressing both. Support governments to design comprehensive youth strategies that connect employment, skills and social protection across young people's transitions.

Extend social insurance to young people

Include youth in contributory schemes for both short-term risks — sickness, maternity, work injury, unemployment — while enabling them to build entitlements for long-term protection including disability and old age pensions, ensuring continuity of social protection entitlements throughout the life course.

Let's build on this momentum

The Global Accelerator invites governments, UN partners, social partners, the private sector and young people themselves to expand what works — turning commitments into decent jobs and social protection for the next generation.

DONORS

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Development Cooperation

Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development

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