International Alert.

REAL JOBS IN FRAGILE CONTEXTS
Reframing youth employment programming in Liberia and Sierra Leone

REAL JOBS IN FRAGILE CONTEXTS

Reframing youth employment programming in Liberia and Sierra Leone

Sara Batmanglich and Luisa Enria

July 2014

Acknowledgements

Contents

Abbreviations

DDR	Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration
DFID	Department for International Development
FCS	Fragile and conflict-affected situations
ILO	International Labour Organization
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
MRU	Mano River Union (Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone)
PSRU	Public Sector Reform Unit
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WDR	World Development Report

Executive summary

Youth unemployment in fragile contexts is increasingly highlighted as a security concern and therefore as a priority policy area. The purpose of this report is to contribute to the hotly debated topic of youth unemployment from a peacebuilding perspective. There has been extensive policy engagement with employment, and the conversation has generated many useful diagnoses of the problem itself and suggestions for responses, from the theoretical to the technical. However, programming for youth in fragile settings remains characterised by inertia and is failing to consistently respond to contextual needs. Our objective is to understand why this might be the case.

Through field research in Liberia and Sierra Leone, we looked at how the youth employment issue is being framed, how it interacts with other dynamics in these countries, and what practical constraints exist to advancing the employment-as-peacebuilding agenda in an effective way. We argue that, despite the wealth of accrued knowledge, programming is not changing quickly or significantly enough because there has been a reluctance to talk about some of the more difficult challenges inherent in the youth unemployment question. This lack of progress is also related to the incentives (and disincentives) inherent in programming and the ways in which contextual factors interact with these issues – many of which can be politically sensitive and difficult to acknowledge. Therefore, the current basis of programming is one premised on misplaced expectations and unrealistic 'hope for the best' scenarios.

The report analyses several themes central to understanding the peace-related dynamics of employment programming: the framing of the (un)employment question in relation to the economy; the definition and role of youth; the politics and institutional dynamics surrounding the issue; and the nature of relationships between key stakeholders. Reflecting on these areas, three key findings emerged as follows.

Firstly, there is a need for more **realistic analysis and problem framing**. Insufficient attention has been paid to what peace-supporting economies in Liberia and Sierra Leone can and should feasibly look like, and the degree to which they are likely to grow as well as the nature of this growth. Therefore, decision-making about youth employment programming is not being informed by the real possibility that short-term absorption capacity of these economies will not be what is currently hoped for, by how and where limited resources can best be targeted in the interim, and by how alternative opportunities, such as those in the informal sector, can be supported and strengthened. Furthermore, the paucity of forward-looking labour market analyses has hindered these countries' ability to complement short-term realism with accurate planning for the future – for example, by training young people in nascent industries.

Secondly, there is a need for more **honest discussions with all stakeholders**. Youth unemployment has become entangled with broader issues of youth discontent and instability, and this has not helped to create the conditions for a positive relationship between the actors involved. This perceived volatility of the issue and its political importance has led to the glossing over of some capacity constraints as well as over-promising about what can be realistically delivered in the short to medium term, which may further exacerbate tensions.

Thirdly, there is a need for more **innovation in the way the challenge is approached**. This means increasing the appetite to take on greater risk in what are known to be difficult implementing environments such as Liberia and Sierra Leone. It also means being more creative in working with the opportunities that already exist, and learning new ways to find and capitalise on synergies and linkages between projects and those opportunities.

Introduction

Youth employment in a time of crisis

Africa's demographics are an increasing source of concern: the majority of the continent's population is currently under 30 years of age[1] and the number of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 is set to double by 2045.[2] As the labour force grows, concerns are rising over the challenge of providing decent employment for all new entrants. The onset of the global financial crisis has significantly exacerbated this challenge. In addition, in Sub-Saharan Africa, unemployment figures are likely to considerably underestimate the incidence of worklessness among the continent's young. As noted in the 2012 *African Economic Outlook:*

> *"Among the poor, few can afford not to be employed. Instead, underemployment, vulnerable employment and working poverty are widespread."*

This means that "focusing on the unemployment rate fails to take account of this reality". The *Outlook* further highlights that, while those with lower education levels may have lower rates of unemployment, by standard definitions, than their more educated contemporaries, they are more likely than them to remain trapped in cycles of poverty.

Young people are expected to be the continent's "next generation of entrepreneurs and workers"; they are deemed the key drivers of economic growth and social development as well as the next generation of leaders. However, the asset of a growing youth cohort may not be fully realised if labour markets are unable to absorb them, leaving them potentially economically and socially marginalised. Unemployment and poor working conditions disproportionately affect the young for a number of reasons. As already noted, Africa's demographic trajectory means that the continent's labour force is increasingly youthful. Young people tend to face particular difficulties – for example, relating to lack of previous job experience or first-in-last-out practices. Having unemployment or underemployment as one's first labour market experience has significant scarring effects on future job prospects and earnings. Perhaps even more importantly, however, these experiences have significant social consequences, both for the individual and their community.

A decent job, and the economic independence and personal empowerment that come with it, is often a key marker in young people's transition to adulthood. Indeed, a key building block of this report is the acknowledgement that youth itself is socially defined and that the ability to be socially recognised as an adult is largely dependent on economic markers of self-sufficiency. Policy-makers and theorists alike have linked interrupted transitions to the potential for engagement in violence. A report on youth exclusion commissioned by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), for example, notes that: "structural exclusion and lack of opportunities faced by young people effectively block or prolong their transition to adulthood and can lead to frustration, disillusionment and in some cases their involvement in violence".[3]

1   UN Economic Commission for Africa (2011). *African Youth Report 2011: Addressing the Youth Education and Employment Nexus in the New Global Economy*. Addis Ababa: UNECA. Available at http://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/publications/african_youth_report_2011_final.pdf

2   African Development Bank (AfDB), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UN Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) (2012). *African Economic Outlook 2012 – Promoting Youth Employment*. Paris: OECD. Available at http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/fileadmin/uploads/PAGES-%20Pocket%20Edition%20AEO2012-EN.pdf

3   L. Hilker and E. Fraser (2009). *Youth Exclusion, Violence, Conflict and Fragile States*, Report for DFID's Equity and Rights Team. London: Social Development Direct.

The frustrations of youth over lack of employment opportunities featured prominently in the many youth-led political and social protest movements that erupted around the world in 2011. Grievances over high youth unemployment and authoritarian rule in Tunisia were a major spark that ignited the Arab Spring. Even before these protests caught the world's attention, uprisings by marginalised youth have characterised several civil wars across Africa over the past two decades, as youthful armies destabilised areas such as the Mano River region, which is the focus of this report.

These events have reinforced the widely held view that labour market dynamics that marginalise young people are directly related to social unrest. In the conflict-affected settings of West Africa, which are at the heart of this report, jobs have consequently been identified as a key component of recovery and prevention of relapse into conflict. Jobs can have development payoffs for social cohesion by involving people in productive activities that strengthen self-esteem and give them a sense of identity and status, by rebuilding networks, and by giving people a sense that opportunities are fairly distributed.[4] This relationship has therefore made youth employment a peacebuilding issue and, as such, one that is increasingly taken into account by practitioners interested in building peace-conducive economies. However, the dynamics of the relationship between unemployment and violence remain little understood. This report will argue that, while this relationship may have added urgency to the employment issue, it also may have led to over-confidence in employment creation as the panacea for peaceful intergenerational relations. This is especially problematic in countries where the devastation of war makes the road to recovery a complex one, with full employment a long way from being achieved.

Nevertheless, the security concerns attached to the youth employment problem have prompted significant international attention and policy engagement. The place of young people in labour markets has become a more important feature of the agendas of African governments and their development partners. Indeed, various summits and declarations have focused on the issue (such as the 17th African Union Summit, the Malabo Declaration and the 12th African Regional Meeting). In a report on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict, the United Nations Secretary-General noted the centrality of employment and economic revitalisation as a peacebuilding priority.[5] This has in turn encouraged the establishment of a considerable number of youth employment programmes as an integral part of peacebuilding interventions in conflict-affected settings.

Purpose of the report

This report aims to weigh in on the debate on employment as a peacebuilding issue, and in particular on practitioners' approaches, through case studies of two Mano River countries. Based on extensive field research in Liberia and Sierra Leone, the report focuses on the UN's and World Bank's youth employment programming in these fragile settings. Rather than evaluate programmes, we look at how they are tackling the employment issue in the first place. In particular, we analyse how they interact with the contextual dynamics of the (un)employment problem in both countries. We argue that, while policy engagement with youth programming has been prolific, programming on the ground has remained characterised by inertia and is failing to respond consistently to contextual needs. A key objective of this report therefore was to understand *why* this might be the case.

---

4   World Bank (2012). *World Development Report 2013: Jobs.* Washington DC: World Bank.
5   UN General Assembly Security Council (2009). *Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict.* A/63/881–S/2009/304.

Following discussions with actors from across the complex spectrum of donors, governments, implementers, beneficiaries and non-beneficiary youth, we point to issues of institutional bottlenecks, inertia and risk aversion, as well as issues of problem framing and the interactions between different sets of players (e.g. youth–government or donors–recipient). We aim to offer a practical and multi-faceted perspective – looking at the interface between the internal dynamics of programming and those factors that are external to the specific projects, such as the economy or intergenerational relations of power. The report is organised along the thematic areas that emerged as relevant from the field research. As a result, we divided observations into recurring themes of employment, youth, politics and relationships.

Youth employment in the Mano River region

The rationale behind choosing two of the four Mano River countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone) as the context of this work was based on the region's history and current policy priorities. These countries are often defined as fragile due to histories of violent conflict and various forms of instability, with young people having played a leading role in social unrest.[6] In addition, in all the countries, youth unemployment has been identified as a concern for future stability.

Although labour statistics have been difficult to gather with precision in the region, as much as 60% of Sierra Leone's youth is believed to be unemployed or underemployed.[7] The roots of the country's brutal 10-year civil war are complex, yet the economic marginalisation of young people is recognised as having played a fundamental role in rebels' motivations as well as creating a large pool of young men and women available for recruitment. Indeed, the war has been characterised as a 'crisis of youth', where economic exclusion compounded social marginality, political grievances and intergenerational strife. Today, limited job opportunities continue to be identified as a risk factor making youth more susceptible to violence and in particular to recruitment for electoral disruption.

Similarly, Liberia experienced war for most of the 1990s and early 2000s. The conflict saw many different factions vying for control of an increasingly weak state that had long marginalised the country's rural areas. Young men and women were at the forefront of the war. While the process of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) was completed in 2004, by the end of 2005 approximately 26,000 ex-fighters were still waiting to undergo reintegration and rehabilitation.[8] Limited livelihood opportunities continue to be a concern for security. As stated by President Sirleaf: "without jobs for our very young population, we run the risk of them once again being recruited into conflict, undermining all the progress we have made".[9]

A regional perspective is important in West Africa both because of the interconnectedness of peace and war trends in the sub-region and due to the commonalities in the challenges faced by all four countries. Our fieldwork took place in Liberia and Sierra Leone; however, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire have similarly complex histories and their neighbours' lessons can be important ones. Guinea was added to the agenda of the UN's Peacebuilding Commission in 2011, with

---

6   All four Mano River Union (MRU) countries are on the World Bank's harmonised list of 2013 Fragile States and have been for many
     years – although for 2014, notably, Guinea will not be included.
7   Government of Sierra Leone (2012). *Sierra Leone Status of the Youth Report 2012*. Freetown: GoSL. p. 13.
8   T. Jaye and A. Tarway-Twalla (2009). *Youth Vulnerability and Exclusion (YOVEX) in West Africa: Liberia Country Report*. London: King's College
     London. p. 10.
9   C. Cramer (2010). *Unemployment and Participation in Violence*. WDR 2011 Background Paper. Washington DC: World Bank.

job opportunities being a key focus. Although it did not experience open warfare, the country underwent a military coup in 2008 after 24 years of authoritarian rule as well as experiencing incursions from Liberia and Sierra Leone. These two countries' current attempts to create work as they transition from their post-conflict state can offer important insights for their Guinean neighbours. Côte d'Ivoire, on the other hand, descended into violence in 2010, despite a promising recovery after a previous bout of war ending in 2004, as clashes between youth party militants occurred in several places leading up to the polling. As the country embarks on an extensive DDR project and other measures to engage its four million unemployed youth, Liberia's and Sierra Leone's trajectories from war towards development can be illuminating.

A note on the programmes

This report is based on discussions with practitioners involved at every level of youth employment programming in Liberia and Sierra Leone, as well as policy-makers in Washington DC and New York, where these programmes often originate. We carried out site visits, focus groups and interviews with field staff, implementing partners, governments, civil society and young people themselves. In Sierra Leone, these discussions were also contextualised through a doctoral research project by one of the authors, for which over 160 semi-structured interviews were carried out with underemployed young men and women in Freetown.[10] The projects at the centre of this study were funded by the World Bank and the UN. These projects were usually implemented through a recipient agency in country in partnership with an implementing agency. Employment programmes included skills training in a variety of different trades, cash-for-work schemes (e.g. public works) and the establishment of enterprise development centres. A list of projects and interviewees can be found in the annexes of this report.

---

10   Part of Luisa Enria's ESRC-funded PhD thesis, entitled 'An Idle Mind is the Devil's Workshop? The Politics of Work amongst Freetown's Informal Youth', Department of International Development, Oxford University.

1. The economy and the (un)employment question

The issue of youth unemployment in conflict-affected settings has become highly charged not only because of the strain it puts on the countries' attempts to reduce poverty but also because of the socio-political consequences often attributed to job crises in fragile countries. Young people out of work are often considered a threat to stability as they are seen to be more likely to engage in violence.[11] Despite the evocative nature of this narrative, the employment problem is rarely well defined. To begin with, the term 'unemployment' itself is inadequate for reflecting the complexity of the situation faced by most young people in fragile settings. In fact, a focus on unemployment as labour market inactivity may lead us to misunderstand or underestimate the challenge. This is undoubtedly the case in low-income countries such as Liberia and Sierra Leone, where the idleness implied by official definitions and public perceptions is in reality rendered impossible for most due to the lack of social security. As noted by a report for the Brookings Institution,[12] "for the great majority of African young people, the 'youth employment problem' is more about the quality of the job than the absence of a job". For those lacking the networks to support themselves in periods of inactivity, the problem is often better characterised as being one of *under*employment, poor working conditions and low pay.[13] Beyond semantics, the way in which we define the employment problem is at the core of how the challenge is perceived and acted upon by all actors involved.

A second crucial aspect of framing youth employment as a fundamental challenge for fragile countries is the nexus drawn between labour market exclusion and the potential for violence. Interpretations of past and current instability in Liberia and Sierra Leone are linked quite directly to the issue of unemployment, with pools of unemployed youth being portrayed as a significant security risk. Young people were at the forefront of both wars, and they continue to constitute the bulk of participants in electoral violence and other disturbances. Despite extensive evidence of women's participation in the war and other forms of violence, the language of young people as a potential threat is heavily gendered in that it tends to be associated only with young men. This is not only inaccurate but also means that the lens of the employment problem tends to be placed primarily on young men and their needs. Furthermore, at their root, these narratives are reductive, with significant practical consequences.[14] To begin with, policy-makers' tendency to draw a direct link between unemployment and instability obscures the important transmission mechanisms that connect labour market experiences to chosen patterns of political engagement. Without engaging with *how* unemployment is linked to violence, there is a risk of depicting *all* of the unemployed as a potential threat.

The blanket portrayal of unemployed young people as "ticking bombs"[15] is doubly problematic because the term 'unemployment' is in fact inadequate for understanding the situation faced by young people who are often not idle but engaged in marginal economic activities, often in the informal economy. This means that the term 'unemployed' often refers rather to those who are

11   P. Collier, V.L. Elliott, H. Hegre et al (2003). *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy.* Washington DC: World Bank and Oxford University Press; H. Urdal (2004). 'The Devil in the Demographics: The Effect of Youth Bulges on Domestic Armed Conflict, 1950–2000', World Bank Social Development Papers, Paper No. 14, July 2004.

12   J. Page (2013). 'For Africa's Youth, Jobs are Job One', in *Foresight Africa: Top Priorities for the Continent in 2013.* Washington DC: Brookings Institution.

13   R. Mallett and R. Slater (2012). 'Growth and Livelihoods in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations', Working Paper. London: ODI Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium; L. Hilker and E. Fraser (2009). Op. cit.

14   L. Enria (2013a). 'Controlling the Ticking Bombs: Power and Resistance in State-Youth Relations in Freetown', Paper presented at the International Association for Peace and Conflict Studies Conference, Manchester, 12–13 September 2013.

15   L. Enria (2013b). 'Controlling the Ticking Bombs: Motorbikes and Social Order in Freetown', *Democracy in Africa*. Available at http://democracyinafrica.org/controlling-the-ticking-timebombs-motorbikes-and-social-order-in-freetown/

underemployed within the informal economy. Within the broad space of informality, the line between what counts as employment and what falls under the problem group of the 'unemployed' is not easily determined. In other words, certain forms of informal activity (rather than idleness per se) come to be associated with threats to stability, while others within the same informal space can be seen as contributing to the growth of a peace-supporting economy. Discussions with young people in Freetown (Sierra Leone) and Monrovia (Liberia) starkly reflected how these discourses that frame youth as a threat were internalised and strongly influenced interpretations of their current situation and whether it was viable or 'good enough'. Several livelihood strategies in the informal economy, some of which we might call 'self-employment', were not viewed as work in the sense that *jobs* are because of the negative connotations attached to them. This is critical because in both countries it has led to the devaluation of a large range of informal strategies, many of which constitute the reality of what young people will be able to realistically aspire to.

This problematisation has significant consequences for programming. For example, the assumption that employment by definition builds peace because it will prevent angry young men from choosing to support conflict prevents constructive and creative thinking on how the instruments of youth programmes can be harnessed for broader peacebuilding purposes. To achieve the latter would require identifying the specific transmission mechanisms from economic marginality to violent behaviour and then moving beyond merely including add-on modules in, for example, conflict management. Instead, it would require truly mainstreaming peacebuilding throughout youth programmes, ensuring that they are explicitly designed to achieve these goals as well as their other objectives.

Furthermore, young people's perceptions of what constitutes a *job* as well as policy-makers' definitions of the employment challenge must be placed within the broader macroeconomic trends that shape the contours of possibilities for tackling the job crisis. Countries that have experienced conflict often face devastated economies, where damaged infrastructure and dilapidated human capital have to contend with low domestic demand and investors' concerns with high levels of risk. The economic context of Liberia and Sierra Leone is fast changing as they proceed in their path to reconstruction. Indeed, prospects are improving as the business climate across the continent becomes more favourable.[16] However, the Mano River region faces the added challenge of attracting investment into what are perceived to be politically volatile contexts. Visible efforts to improve security and governance in these contexts have been accompanied by the development of political risk mechanisms, and increased attention to innovative political risk insurance will likely play a significant role in enhancing the attractiveness of these countries for some time to come.[17]

Post-conflict labour markets

As the UN Development Programme (UNDP) has noted, the growth challenge facing fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCS) is not simply a case of economies in distress: these countries are facing structural distortions and pursuing a normal development path that requires more than economic growth.[18] More specifically, labour markets are significantly impacted and altered by war, giving rise to unique dynamics that need to be both understood and addressed.[19] A focus on labour markets in fragile settings gives rise to various important issues. The first is the importance

16   McKinsey Global Institute (2010). *Lions on the Move: The Progress and Potential of African Economies*. New York: MGI; Ernst & Young (2012). *Building Bridges: Ernst & Young's 2012 Attractiveness Survey, Africa*. London: Ernst & Young.

17   For example, the World Bank Group's Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) recently launched a (donor-funded) Conflict-Affected and Fragile Economies Facility (CAFEF), which will provide political risk insurance for investments in FCS.

18   UNDP (2005). 'Sustaining Post-Conflict Economic Recovery: Lessons and Challenges', Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery Occasional Papers, No. 1. New York: BCPR.

19   R. Mallett and R. Slater (2012). Op. cit.

of taking labour market structures into consideration when programming on employment issues. For example, there are particular difficulties related to labour markets that are specific to young people – such as last-in-first-out practices and young people's lack of experience. Significantly, labour markets also tend to be gendered, and young women face different barriers to entry than young men. As Diane Elson has noted, labour markets are not neutral entities that simply facilitate the interaction between buyers and sellers.[20] For example, she argues that, as institutions, labour markets are constructed in such a way that unpaid caring work is treated as a liability, thus disadvantaging women in societies where they are expected to be primary carers. Much donor programming on youth employment in Liberia and Sierra Leone focused primarily on labour supply, with little analysis of demand and its structural underpinnings. Fieldwork interviews revealed that it was rare for programmers to engage deeply enough with these issues. Another issue is the importance of shaping the economic recovery as far as possible to overcome some of the economic factors that contributed to the war, such as economic exclusion and intergenerational rivalry. This requires a detailed analysis of the interlocking of political and economic issues shaping the development of labour markets in the period leading up to the war. There is thus a need not only for a good analysis of the current job market, with a particular focus on demand, but also for the development of policies designed specifically to shape a more peace-conducive economy.

Additionally, our research in Liberia and Sierra Leone revealed that labour market policies such as employment protection legislation, collective representation, active labour market policies and social insurance have received little attention – to the extent that working conditions and market effectiveness have not been addressed since the end of the war.[21] The importance of labour market analysis as a precursor to any employment interventions has been repeatedly highlighted in principle but rarely fully recognised in practice. A recurrent preoccupation expressed by respondents was that of a persistent mismatch between the types of skills being offered by various employment trainings and educational institutions and market needs. This mismatch is largely related to the current inability by programmers and governments to produce comprehensive and forward-looking analyses of labour market demand in both countries. For example, an official in Sierra Leone's Ministry of Labour argued that no analysis of labour market needs had been carried out before the design of projects aimed at training young people for employment, suggesting that this problem first emerged when DDR projects were put in place. The trainings offered as part of DDR (such as hairdressing and gara tie-dying) continue to form blueprints for current trainings offered, when market demand is either no longer there or is saturated.

Discussions with programmers confirmed the concerns over mismatch and the paucity of information on current and forward-looking labour market needs. There was widespread uncertainty among respondents regarding whether, and to what extent, needs assessments were taking place or whether they actually influenced subsequent programming decisions. In the absence of solid, national-level and user-friendly labour market analyses, needs assessment for the employment programmes analysed tended in practice to become a perfunctory box-ticking exercise and not a real source of guidance on decision-making or programme design.

However, asking questions about the logic of choosing certain interventions over others shed some light on the constraints that exist in adapting employment programming to fast-changing

20   D. Elson (1999). 'Labour Markets as Gendered Institutions: Equality, Efficiency and Empowerment Issues', *World Development*, Vol. 27, No. 3.
21   In Sierra Leone, for example, minimum wage regulations had not been adjusted for inflation and cost of living since 1996; as a result, the monthly minimum wage remained at SLL 21,000 (Leones), which, at the current exchange rate (May 2014), is approximately US$5.

labour market realities. Programmers suggested that particular projects were chosen either under the assumption that national partners must know the context, or that they were based on what had been done previously in country or elsewhere. Despite widespread agreement that DDR-style training may simply transfer graduates into saturated markets (such as hairdressing, tailoring and mechanics), a sense that tried and tested methods carried lower risks than innovative approaches prevailed. Programmers' short-term bias further exacerbated the need to rely on pre-packaged projects that would enable quick disbursement and implementation. This short-term bias is often inherent in programmers' problem framing. Indeed, the 'unemployment as threat' angle on the employment challenge undoubtedly adds urgency to the issue, enhancing momentum within the donor community, yet it has also led to an emphasis on the short term over sustainability.

A good example of this is the operation of cash-for-work schemes by the World Bank in both countries. These schemes were repeatedly criticised on the ground for having little potential for sustainability as young people are typically only employed over a short term and once they exit the programme tend to be left with very few transferable skills. However, these schemes offer ideal quick-fixes and were justified as stop-gaps necessary to 'avert social crisis'. The urgency added by the 'unemployment as threat' angle therefore has led to short-term approaches that fail to ensure sustainable solutions, also distracting attention away from the long-term needs of Liberia's and Sierra Leone's economies. As discussed in more depth below, the short-term focus of cash-for-work schemes is also a product of institutional dynamics and relationships between donors and governments that favour quantity over quality, especially during election cycles. This in turn privileges programming that has high beneficiary counts regardless of beneficiaries' future prospects.

A related problem that emerged from discussions with programmers and beneficiaries is the failure to include adequate follow-up mechanisms linking beneficiaries to real labour market opportunities. A significant number of projects we looked at did not include job placement or links with employment opportunities as part of their cycle of activities. Speaking to beneficiaries close to completion revealed that many of them did not have jobs lined up, and both the beneficiaries and their project coordinators admitted that the most likely scenario was that they would return to what they had previously been doing. One multilateral official conceded that linking beneficiaries with post-programming placement might be even more valuable than the actual trainings. This assessment also reveals deeper questions about the kinds of skills being imparted. Numerous respondents pointed to the importance of long-term and transferable skills that ought to be further incorporated into employment programming. This requires placing greater emphasis on *employability*, which necessitates skills beyond those relating to a particular trade – such as ICT literacy, marketing, management, customer service and a range of other transferable skills. Beneficiaries repeatedly emphasised the value of life-skills components, which programmatically were secondary objectives.

Basing programming on current labour market realities and a comprehensive analysis of economies' future growth opportunities is extremely important not only for project effectiveness. It is also crucial for redressing the gap between young people's expectations and the realities facing their economies, as discussed in the next section. A deeper understanding of labour market dynamics would allow for greater realism regarding existing opportunities and constraints, while also encouraging analyses of future prospects in nascent industries. Different sectors of the economy face different challenges as well as offering different entry points for addressing the employment challenge.

The private sector

A dynamic private sector has long been a focus of donors and governments as the key contributor to job creation.[22] The ability of business to act as a catalyst for job creation is largely dependent on investment climates and patterns of growth. Despite global investors' increased confidence in sub-Saharan Africa, significant challenges remain to the development of a private sector that can underpin equitable job creation. The risk component is undoubtedly a significant barrier. In any case, the impact of increased investment on equitable job creation is not a given, and it depends on the *nature* of such investment. For instance, much emphasis has been placed on the role of mining in both countries' growth trajectories; moreover, the arrival of multinational mining companies has significantly raised expectations among local communities regarding the ability of the private sector to provide jobs to young people and to solve the youth livelihood problem. In Sierra Leone, however, interviewees expressed concerns that, despite young people's high expectations from the inflow of foreign investments in the natural resources sector, these investments were not contributing to trickle-down growth.[23]

Indeed, a few years down the line, concerns are emerging over the relatively limited number of jobs that directly accrue from these investments. Representatives of mining companies explained that a local lack of qualified middle managers often led them to hire foreign staff instead. Furthermore, the mining sector is dependent on fluctuating global market prices and has long exploration phases with no guarantee of permanence. This uncertainty tends to act as a disincentive for building the necessary capacity among local staff and businesses. Consequently, such short-term views work in favour of foreign imports and employment. There have nevertheless been attempts to address these concerns. Liberia, for example, has had some experience in leveraging natural resource concessions, insisting on local content provisions, including local employment clauses, in all of its seven mining contracts.[24] More generally, however, there are risks attached to over-reliance on what is ultimately a volatile sector dependent on fluctuating global markets.[25] Indeed, the deep economic crisis in the 1970s and 1980s that pushed Sierra Leone towards conflict was connected to extreme commodity price fluctuations while the country's economy was dominated by the mining sector.[26] Today, such volatility combines with the low labour intensity of modern mining and the short-term incentives of hiring foreign staff. This therefore suggests the need to increase countries' ability to forecast growth in other nascent industries.

Discussions with programmers and with private sector representatives reveal that there is insufficient systematic engagement with the private sector by programmers and governments. The private sector seems to have been too often treated as an alien 'other' rather than being effectively brought into the project design phase. Partnerships with the private sector underpin the development of thorough and youth-focused analyses of current and emergent market needs, thus ensuring better quality of skills training.[27] An example of such an attempt is the 'From Minds to

22   B. Leo, V. Ramachandran and R. Thuotte (2012). *Supporting Private Business Growth in African Fragile States: A Guiding Framework for the World Bank Group in South Sudan and Other Nations*. Washington DC: Center for Global Development; AfDB, OECD, UNDP and UNECA (2012). Op. cit.; R. Ranganathan and A. Denisova (2011). *Assessing Private Sector Contributions to Job Creation and Poverty Reduction: Preliminary Literature Review*. Washington DC: International Finance Corporation; O. Walton (2012). *Helpdesk Research Report: Incentives to the Private Sector and Early Recovery*. London: Governance and Social Development Resource Centre.

23   Over-reliance on mining is shown, for example, in the significant gap between gross domestic product (GDP) growth before and after mining is accounted for – amounting to as much as 10% in relation to iron ore in Sierra Leone (Interview with Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, Sierra Leone).

24   Z.A. Kaplan, P. Kyle, C. Shugart and A. Moody (2012). *Developing Public-Private Partnerships in Liberia*. Washington DC: World Bank.

25   Africa Progress Panel (2012). *Jobs, Justice and Equity: Seizing Opportunities in Times of Global Change*. Geneva, Switzerland: Africa Progress Panel.

26   J. Weeks (1992). *Development Strategy and the Economy of Sierra Leone*. New York: St Martin's Press; P. Richards (1996). *Fighting for the Rainforest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone*. Oxford: James Currey.

27   A notable example of where this is starting to shift can be found in Sierra Leone. Here, UNDP is currently chairing a group that includes companies that meet to discuss what can be offered in terms of skills training, within current capacities and resources, and what the private sector needs to be able to hire more national staff.

Mines' project by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) in Sierra Leone. This project supports a public–private partnership between London Mining and a local vocational training centre to promote a labour force skilled in the needs of the sector.

Commercial agriculture also has the potential to provide some opportunities for employment. Rapid urbanisation has meant that decreasing numbers of youth are engaging in agriculture in both countries. Among respondents engaged in programming, it was repeatedly suggested that rural–urban migration was likely a reflection of young people's unwillingness to stay in their villages and in particular to engage in agricultural work. However, this belief may be misleading for two main reasons. Firstly, it often ignores that motivations to migrate extend beyond employment preference. Krijn Peters' analysis of the Sierra Leone war and its roots in what he terms a "crisis of youth", for example, points to significant grievances emerging from the exploitation of youthful manpower by local chiefs through the practice of communal labour.[28] The fact that there are socio-political forces at play in young people's rejection of the village reflects that it need not be seen as a rejection of agriculture per se. Similarly, young people's unwillingness to engage in agriculture may be more realistically captured as dissatisfaction with the way farming *currently* operates. For instance, discussions with young people in both countries pointed to the undesirable 'hand-to-mouth' nature of current agricultural livelihoods and the fact that, despite the potential of innovations such as mechanisation, it still remains back-breaking work for the vast majority of people.

Needs assessments for youth employment programmes should therefore be based on youth-friendly labour market analyses that not only take into account current opportunities in agriculture, but that also situate programming in potential pathways of transformation that provide opportunities for marginal young people in rural areas. One example of such efforts was the Centre Songhai Initiative in Liberia. The communities were very supportive of the training under this initiative, and one of the indirect benefits built into the process was that the beneficiaries returned to their counties to train members of the community in better agricultural techniques, thus capturing a valuable multiplier effect. Understanding how agriculture could provide long-term livelihood opportunities for youth is an important piece of this puzzle.[29]

The public sector

Donors' emphasis on the private sector as a panacea for youth employment is a corollary of the gradual de-emphasis on the public sector as a potential employer since the 1980s. Indeed, the public sector is rarely cited by youth employment analysts as a potential sector for job creation. The World Development Report (WDR) 2013 notes that: "as the fiscal space for continued expansion in public sector employment shrank, 'queuing' for public sector jobs became more prevalent, leading to informality, a devaluation of educational credentials and forms of social exclusion." The WDR analysis largely ignores the significant role played by multilateral donors in shrinking public sector employment in sub-Saharan Africa, starting with Structural Adjustment Programmes. Although international views on the role of the state in developing economies has since become less dogmatic, the received wisdom remains that "it is not the role of the government to create jobs".[30] In reality, the public sector continues to be an important employer and, significantly, one that is much aspired to by young people themselves.

28   K. Peters (2011). *War and the Crisis of Youth in Sierra Leone*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

29   A large body of literature has pointed to the ways in which agriculture could be transformed into being profitable and globally competitive across the continent. However, deep engagement with these complex issues is beyond the scope of this paper. We have therefore chosen to highlight agriculture as a key sector whose functioning and future potential need to be addressed by programmers engaged in employment (see, for example: World Bank (2013). *Growing Africa: Unlocking the Potential of Agribusiness*. Washington DC: World Bank).

30   World Bank (2012). Op. cit. p. 21.

Even without a direct focus on public sector growth, respondents pointed to several issues relevant for understanding labour demand dynamics in the sector. Problems surrounding low generational turnover, exacerbated by poor administration systems that enable the presence of 'ghost workers', play a role in locking young people out. A spokesperson for Sierra Leone's Public Sector Reform Unit (PSRU) argued that the perception of the public sector as being 'bloated' can be misleading. She noted that the PSRU's analysis has instead revealed that middle management positions tend to remain vacant due to a lack of skilled candidates. The situation was similar in Liberia, where one UN official stated that the issue he was most concerned about regarding the country's recovery was the 'missing middle' of the civil service – an issue he suggested would eventually catch up with the government.[31] This suggests again that the skills gap may be more significant than a lack of job opportunities when it comes to identifying the nature of the employment challenge. It also raises crucial questions regarding the 'generational change agenda' that young people in Liberia have been pushing for, pointing to the need for decision-making power to be transferred to the younger generation.[32] In light of this skills gap in middle management, some interviewees were concerned that the current youth cohort may not be qualified to effectively take over public sector jobs and thus to effect transformative generational change.

The informal economy

Significant constraints in both the private and public sectors' abilities to create employment for youth in Liberia and Sierra Leone – along with prevailing uncertainty about the speed and direction of these countries' growth paths – means that in the medium term the informal economy is likely to remain the most realistic employer. Currently, up to 80% of Liberians are engaged in the informal economy,[33] while in Sierra Leone only 3% of young people aged between 20 and 24 and 8% of those aged between 25 and 35 have formal sector jobs.[34]

Despite these realities, considerable limitations remain in international institutions' engagement with the informal sector. The informal economy, according to definitions by the International Labour Organization (ILO), refers to all those economic activities that are not directly regulated by the government and that lack social protection. However, this sector is highly varied and includes a large spectrum of activities. The broad nature of the informal sector is important to note as it highlights that most of the urban poor in Liberia and Sierra Leone are engaged in some form of remunerative activity. This means, as noted above, that unemployment in these settings often refers to those who are engaged in marginal economic activities within this spectrum of informality. The WDR 2013 identifies the importance of the informal sector, yet it argues that it generally has low productivity. At the same time, the report suggests that formalisation per se, given the standard of labour regulations in low-income countries, does not necessarily transform informal work into 'decent work'.

In both Liberia and Sierra Leone, policy and programming on youth employment revealed a lack of direction in dealing with the informal sector. This was most obvious in the contradictory messages that coexist on the informal economy. On the one hand, it is seen as the only realistic

31   He cited the example that ministers often come to meetings alone, having no one to take minutes, write reports, advise them, etc. While those at ministerial level are competent and well educated, conflict disrupted the educational opportunities available to many in the age range of those who would now be mid-level to senior civil servants.

32   See, for example: A. Cuffy (2012). 'Generational Change: A Way Forward for Liberia?', *The Liberian Journal*. Available at http://www.theliberianjournal.com/index.php?st=news&sbst=details&rid=2412

33   'Liberia' profile, German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ). Available at http://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/325.html

34   P. Peeters, W. Cunningham, G. Acharya and A. Van Adams (2009). *Youth Employment in Sierra Leone: Sustainable Livelihood Opportunities in a Post-Conflict Setting*. Washington DC: World Bank.

source of income generation; on the other hand, it is portrayed as being unproductive and as encompassing certain activities that tend to be dismissed as low quality or inappropriate – such as the ubiquitous practice of commission-chasing on Freetown's streets, wheelbarrow peddling in Monrovia, or driving a motorcycle taxi in both cities. Programmes we looked at that involved the informal economy were rarely connected to an analysis of market demand. This means that types of work that may in fact be productive and profitable (such as motorbike riding) tend to be devalued as they are not generally included in pre-packaged DDR-style skills trainings.

Education

Analysis of youth employment programming and its relation to labour market issues in Liberia and Sierra Leone highlighted skills mismatches as one of the key issues. Identifying the root causes of mismatches also requires identifying failures in the educational system and its ability to prepare graduates for the world of work. While education interventions have often focused on ensuring high levels of enrolment, it is increasingly recognised that the problem is one of *quality* as much as quantity.[35] Indeed, Liberian and Sierra Leonean informants expressed concerns over their educational systems' ability to endow students with adequate critical thinking and transferable skills, as well as pointing to curricula that are outdated and that do not match market needs. Mismatch between skills and market needs are thus perpetuated by higher education institutions, something that a senior official at Sierra Leone's Ministry of Labour identified as a legacy of colonial administrations' priorities in training white-collar workers. However, mismatch is not the only concern. As we have seen, these countries' various economic sectors continue to face significant constraints and, in the short term, existing labour markets may simply be unable to absorb a large cohort of graduates. From a peacebuilding perspective, expectation management is an essential component of a realistic approach to these countries' economic prospects.

Of course, education is not limited to universities. Indeed, most of the training projects we analysed were situated within technical and vocational education and training institutions (TVETs). These institutions' lack of capacity, including limited opportunities for development or for updating teachers' expertise, played a significant role in the inertia and lack of innovation in the skills trainings funded by the UN and the World Bank. For example, the headteacher of a Freetown TVET, when asked what criteria they use to choose the courses, responded: "this is what we have been doing, so we continued". Initial needs assessments and success criteria that focus on numbers of students trained rather than employability made it possible for TVETs' low capacity and low propensity for innovation to go unnoticed. A further factor working against TVETs is the limited support from government for such institutions. In Sierra Leone, for example, representatives of TVETs felt that vocational training was not perceived to be as valuable as traditional education, even if it may in fact lead more directly to income-generating activities.

35   D. James-Wilson (2008). Youth Livelihoods Development Program Guide. Washington DC: USAID; UN Economic Commission for Africa (2011). Op. cit.

2. Youth

As with unemployment, the definition of 'youth' as the beneficiary category of employment interventions is contested, with significant implications for programming. Increasingly, scholarship on youth in Africa has highlighted the social construction of 'youth', moving beyond models that emphasise chronological age and linear models of individual development.[36] Analysts have identified the period of youth in contexts of economic crisis as one of "waithood"[37] and even "social death"[38] because markers of adulthood, often defined according to socio-economic standards such as marriage or getting a job, are increasingly difficult to achieve. In addition, youth have been repeatedly portrayed as either "makers or breakers",[39] suggesting that they have the potential to play a key role in either successfully developing or destabilising their countries. This is reflected in the aforementioned narrative of youth as a threat, which underpins much of employment programming in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

These more fluid definitions of youth have made it possible to contextualise this target group and to understand how socio-economic factors such as unemployment influence youth's standing in society. In particular, such definitions can shed light on how inability to achieve economic independence relegates a large group of people to the inferior position of 'youth', often regardless of their age. However, the expansion of youth as a category has also largely obscured the heterogeneity within the group, making targeting fraught for programmers. A first issue is how in Liberia and Sierra Leone 'youth' often means 'young men' (likely because of its widespread association with potential for violence). However, the category actually encompasses both young men and women, who often have different needs as well as facing different labour market challenges. Furthermore, both countries have opted for expanding their formal definition of youth to include people aged between 15 and 35. This broader category better reflects the situation faced by a growing number of young people, whose ability to make the transition to socially sanctioned adulthood is significantly limited. However, this long interval underestimates the difference in experiences faced by young people at different stages of their progression towards adulthood. Thus, the term 'youth' offers little additional guidance for targeting the needs of different cohorts. For example, as discussed above, forward-looking labour market analyses may reveal different opportunities for youth-friendly employment in the short term to those in the medium or longer term, when nascent industries may be better able to absorb young people. This would therefore require training of the youngest 'youth' in the skills needed by these emergent industries, while older youth may need shorter-term solutions.

The programming analysed for this report struggled with effective targeting and identifying a useful definition of youth for different programmes, what parameters to use and how programming objectives might link with that chosen definition. Various additional terms were used to narrow down the target cohort, but without much success in practice. For instance, terms such as 'vulnerable' varied considerably within countries across national partners, with many service providers feeling that, to reach numerical targets, they needed to adjust definitional boundaries. In some instances, this resulted in literacy requirements being lowered or even dropped entirely; in one case, it led to extending the age group to include 'youths' of 56 years of age alongside 15-year-olds. In the face of already multi-faceted, variable and heterogeneous challenges, an overly open-ended approach to definitions and categorisations can prevent programming from focusing and result in limited resources being spread too thinly.

---

36   A. Honwana (2012). *The Time of Youth: Work, Social Change and Politics in Africa*. Sterling: Kumarian Press; M. Utas (2003). *Youth and the Liberian Civil War*, Doctoral Thesis. Uppsala, Sweden: University of Uppsala.

37   A. Honwana (2012). Op. cit.

38   H. Vigh (2006). *Navigating Terrains of War: Youth and Soldiering in Guinea-Bissau*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.

39   A. Honwana and F. de Boeck (2005). *Makers and Breakers: Children and Youth in Post-Colonial Africa*. Oxford: James Currey.

Broad targeting can also prevent a more nuanced understanding of profiles of different groups of young people and of the intricacies of their lifestyles and responsibilities, including things like the opportunity costs involved in taking part in an employment project. In terms of challenges at the targeting stage, we found that there was a need for adequate assessments of previous trainings, as many participants had already been trained but found the trainings too short or superficial. This resulted in missed opportunities for 'topping up' previous knowledge rather than starting from scratch. Similarly, some interviewees admitted that projects often did not target the 'right' people, for example the most vulnerable. Moreover, they felt it was important to recognise that what makes a group the right target group may have more to do with whether the group members sincerely want to be there, whether they show up to trainings and so on. This further emphasises the importance of better fine-tuning of programming for different categories of youth, as current projects may not be designed in a way that can realistically lead to success with groups such as the most vulnerable or hard-to-reach young people. Such an approach does not necessarily mean dropping these projects because they benefit other kinds of young people, but rather suggests the importance of matching group characteristics to project design.

All those involved in programme design highlighted the difficulty in targeting young women. They noted that women tended to need far more encouragement and direct engagement in order for them to feel comfortable asking questions and putting themselves forward for registration. Furthermore, the nature of many female beneficiaries' responsibilities to their families made it difficult for them to take part, although a number of factors were highlighted as avenues to facilitate attendance – such as flexible classes, provision of day care, specialised graduate support, and sensitising husbands, boyfriends and families to the benefits of their participation. The need to better understand participant circumstances also reflects the role played by perceptions *of* youth by programmers. For example, trainers expressed a degree of concern with some participants' attitudes and commitment to the project. Young people were often seen to be short-sighted or as focusing too much on material remuneration rather than longer-term gains. However, while implementers' perceptions may accurately reflect young people's attitudes, it is important to contextualise youth behaviour. Discussions with young people confirmed their tendency to take a short-term perspective. Yet they also pointed to the difficulty of reconciling current pressing needs and responsibilities faced by many youth in fragile and post-war settings with commitment to training processes, whose benefits are seen only much further down the line if at all.

Therefore, incentives can play an important role in addressing these tensions. Where used correctly, relatively small incentives were frequently mentioned as making a big difference to participants. These varied from stipends to small rewards like cake, soap, transport money or phone credits to award attendance and dress standards. Less tangible benefits – such as a sense of pride at graduation (wearing a cap and gown, inviting relatives and so on) or the life skills noted above – were also reported as being significant. During the trainings, the importance of demonstration was emphasised as essential for the training to be worthwhile. Practical applications were seen as preferable to theoretical learning. Structured, organised lessons and weekly work plans helped beneficiaries feel that they were making progress and staying on track; they also empowered them because they could see that they were learning. The more empowered they felt throughout the training, the more they were dedicated to remaining committed. Finally, the lack of follow-up after projects was found to have a negative effect, with beneficiaries who had put time and energy into a programme saying they felt embarrassed to return to their communities with nothing tangible to show for it.

Understanding the circumstances of different groups of young people also entails engaging with their expectations and their engagement with the highly charged employment debate. Paramount among these was young people's understanding of what counts as work, which was largely influenced by the ambivalent attitude towards the informal economy highlighted above. Discussions with young people engaged in various informal and often precarious and low-income livelihoods, such as motorbike riding or street trading, showed that, regardless of

their profitability, these activities were not considered to be jobs. Young people's understandings were steeped in norms of respectability that go beyond the World Bank's definition of a job as an activity that "generate[s] income, monetary or in kind, without violating human rights".[40] When asked what sort of work they would like to do, marginal youth tended to cite trades that were commonly offered by employment programming (such as hairdressing), regardless of the saturation of market demand for these trades. This raises questions about the impact of previous programming on young people's expectations and their evaluations of certain occupations over others. Most of all, however, young people coveted waged work, in particular white-collar jobs in the public or mining sector. Recent hype around the arrival of mining multinationals has fuelled unrealistic expectations regarding the availability of opportunities in the sector. Young people therefore considered their current activities as necessary 'fast money' to face current constraints, but did not envision their futures in those activities.

This gap between current economic realities and young people's expectations is fuelled by the inability of programmers, as well as policy-makers such as political leaders, to convey a realistic picture of short- and medium-term possibilities. The consequences are twofold. Firstly, current economic activities in which young people already engage in the informal economy are devalued and dismissed by programmers and young people alike, in favour of other forms of work that do not match market demand. Secondly, and most importantly from a peacebuilding perspective, the potential for frustration is high in this context. Failing to manage expectations is arguably a bigger potential driver of conflict than the absence of jobs itself.

---

40   World Bank (2012). Op. cit. p. 5.

3. Politics and institutional dynamics

Political will and dynamics

It has become commonplace to discuss youth employment programming in either economic or technical terms and to avoid the critical political dimension of the issue – despite its significant implications for and impacts on politics, and vice versa. While politicians of all the main parties frequently state their commitment to the challenge of youth employment and pay considerable lip service to it throughout their campaigns, it is more difficult to determine how deeply political will runs and is embedded within governments, and whether it has the weight to compete with other, conflicting priorities faced by the countries.

The need for political will exists on several different levels. Firstly, there is the need for governments (and their international partners) to make the difficult, sometimes unpopular decisions needed to promote holistic employment-creation plans that have a high level of ambition but that also take into account the realities of their political economy. Such plans would likely go far beyond the typical realm of youth programming to include sectors chosen for their ability to contribute to growth and sustainable peace. This will often necessitate promoting deep structural changes and more sophisticated, costly, longer-term and less visible programming than the kinds of programmes examined in this research.

Up until now, there has been excessive emphasis on the supply side of the employment problem, perhaps because skills training is quicker, easier and more appealing (as well as easily communicated) to the public. Focusing more on the demand side would require significant economic restructuring, including the need to tackle complex and controversial issues such as local content policies and extractive industry contracts. However, the current mismatch between supplied skills and vacancies, along with the flooding of the market with certain vocational trades, shows the crucial need to address employment demand. This is despite the fact that such a shift in focus would mean not only uncertain rewards, but also initially less visible dividends.

Unfortunately, a vision such as this is often at odds with how political incentives are structured. These dictate a preference for short-term, quick-impact projects that offer high-profile and press-friendly wins, which are well timed with electoral cycles and concerns about constituencies. One project implementer, for example, argued that certain centres had to be opened in specific parts of the country because of particular politicians' needs to reward their electorates, regardless of the maximisation of efficiency or accessibility. The implementer candidly reflected the difficulties involved in resisting these pressures by saying: "Sometimes you are powerless, otherwise you become persona non grata." Pressure to use certain facilities and to accept a certain number of participants, despite not having the capacity to do so well, were also mentioned as a frustration related to the impact of the political agenda on this programming area.

Secondly, to move away from the upbeat economic forecasting that current discussions are too frequently based on, governments need the political will to have honest conversations with young people and the rest of society about the limits to short- to medium-term employment generation because of the very real constraints that exist regarding their country's political economy and current capacity. The economies of the Mano River region are still in the difficult process of recovery and, while projections are positive, trickle-down and job-creating growth will take time to materialise. Even once more broad-based growth does happen, sectors generating considerable optimism actually hold little hope for becoming large-scale employers; governments should clearly say so. Employment in the informal economy, while being the most likely candidate for medium-term income generation for large swathes of the population, is largely devalued – even in societies

where highly coveted 'professional' jobs are currently almost non-existent. The situation clearly calls for a restructuring of expectations as well as an honest discussion about what valuable work means. Changing attitudes needs political leadership.

There also continues to be a tension in fragile contexts between the need for governments to take charge of service delivery, and restore a social contract with their populations, and their capacity to do so. The concept of 'national ownership' is politically important, for different reasons, for both governments and international institutions: the former must be seen to have it, while the latter must be seen to support it. Given this dilemma, however, the challenge of capacity constraints should not be used by either side to justify ineffective delivery or inaction in laying the foundations for structural reform. Efforts need to move beyond rhetoric, acknowledging the very real limits to local capacities at present and addressing them substantially rather than simply nominally (for example, through short-term international capacity-building consultancies) so as not to compromise effective and sustainable programming. Direct implementation (by the multilaterals themselves) without robust support to capacity building will neither achieve the goals of the project nor help to restore the population's trust in their governments' ability to deliver.

Lastly, at this phase of recovery, governments need to recognise that quality matters as much as quantity and that large-scale employment of the nature valued by youth and society in general will take much longer than most would like. Pushing back on what is politically expedient is challenging as political incentives often work against these kinds of considerations. Governments must be seen to be doing something, especially around election time. Therefore, training large numbers of youths – even if the trainings on offer are of low quality or do not match labour market needs – may be more important for short-term windfalls than admitting the considerable limitations of the job creation agenda. As pointed to earlier, public work schemes often fit this bill perfectly. Those involved in these schemes frequently criticise them for being too short term, engaging young people for only a few months, giving them few skills and then leaving them where they began. The upside of these schemes is that they offer governments and partners the opportunity to boast about large numbers of beneficiaries. It is of course important in fragile democracies for governments to feel the pressure of accountability to their electorate. However, the danger is that these pressures result in band-aid solutions rather than the development of long-term visions that translate into improved and more consistent livelihoods for young people.

These aspects of political will are important in contributing to a more productive social contract between the state and young people, moving away from the dangers of inflated expectations or stigmatisation and exclusion. Strengthening this social contract also means increasing genuine representation and participation of young people in conversations and decision-making about their future – although this is dependent on the level of 'voice' they are afforded by existing representative structures. Including young people in development processes is critical as they are the best source of knowledge about the challenges they face and the significant barriers that exist to their effective engagement – in particular, the exclusionary nature of formal settings and the elitist nature of decision-making in the final stages.[41]

However, another important aspect that emerged from conversations in Liberia and Sierra Leone is that existing structures that are generally expected to be representative of young people may in fact prove not to be. This was evident on two levels. The first is that some projects used community leaders, or boards of established leaders in geographic areas, to identify potential beneficiaries and to advise on project development. While community leaders are undoubtedly more aware of local dynamics than external actors, this often ignores the significant power dynamics that

---

41   DFID-CSO Youth Working Group (2010). *Youth Participation in Development*. London: DFID-CSO Youth Working Group. pp.9–10.

exist within communities. It is not simply an issue of favouritism, but a deeper concern over the representativeness of leadership in contexts, especially in rural areas, where traditionally gerontocratic structures persist. This issue is especially salient in places like Liberia and Sierra Leone, where intergenerational conflict emerging from youth exclusion and exploitation by elders formed key grievances for young fighters.

Community and youth participation has been a central part of programming in recent years, helping to ensure the rebuilding of trust and collaboration in societies torn apart by conflict and instability. Implementers often go to great lengths to include youth leaders as civil society participants in these boards of advisers. While this is an important step forward, it leaves unquestioned the relationship between youth leaders and the larger youth cohort within communities, a second important aspect of the 'voice' issue. It should not be assumed that youth leaders, who in some cases come from elite backgrounds, are automatically representative of broad-based youth concerns and experiences. Youth groups' membership and governance, the way they interact with and are perceived by other young people and groups, and especially their relationships with and importance to political networks and key political figures ought to be understood before their involvement can be considered to be representative. Conversations with marginal youth in both Monrovia and Freetown, for example, reflected significant dissatisfaction with youth organisations' ability to speak on their behalf. This sentiment was echoed even more strongly in rural areas, where capital-based youth groups are not always seen to be connected enough to the plight of rural youths.

Of course, this observation ought not to discredit youth organisations as a whole, but should rather serve to highlight the importance of being aware of local power dynamics, across generational, geographic and class spectrums, rather than assuming representativeness. Young people's ability to make their voice heard is also dependent on their understanding of how political processes work. Their accounts of experiencing political mobilisation tend to reflect a sense of disempowerment and cynicism, characterised by expectations that politicians will only come to them when they need their votes and that promises are rarely kept. However, this is not to imply that youth are victims. Far from it, they often shrewdly play the game, rallying behind those who make promises and offer short-term gains while aware of the trade-offs, thus undermining the possibility for a more honest debate.

Institutional dynamics and bottlenecks

The UN and the World Bank, while not answerable to constituents in the same way that governments are, can similarly be constrained and diverted by incentives that do not necessarily encourage the best decision-making regarding project design and implementation. Just as governments must be seen to be delivering outputs rather than impact, there is a good deal of pressure on the institutions to make that possible – even if a lack of governmental capacity undermines the ability to coordinate a holistic plan for job creation, which addresses both the supply and demand side of employment. Institutional partners' mandated imperative to underwrite the local ownership agenda has often meant that they feel their hands are tied; they have therefore been unable to establish ways of working with understaffed and under-capacitated government partners, systems and structures in a way that simultaneously supports and strengthens them, as well as allows them to take the lead. Furthermore, political sensitivities combined with inadequate coordination have tended to undermine clear delineation of each respective actor's duties, leading to inefficiencies, gaps and overlaps. Overcoming this requires effective and committed collaboration, but also the ability and willingness to move beyond individual institutional incentives and silos to achieve a unitary vision for employment generation shared among all stakeholders.[42]

---

42 The consultative processes behind the drafting of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), for example – and in Sierra Leone the process of international partner streamlining arising from the Agenda for Change – can offer good opportunities for this type of collaborative effort.

In addition to internal systemic constraints, the way the youth employment problem has been framed has led to some counterproductive consequences. Treating unemployment as a security issue may add urgency and help to mobilise different actors and their resources. However, it not only risks deepening the marginalisation of the unemployed as a whole, but also incentivises a short-termist approach to programming through projects that are framed as preventing 'social breakdown'. Framing programmes on this basis skews the way that success is defined and what qualifies as a suitable and sustainable result. In discussions with staff of international institutions, the semantics of success was given a lot of attention. The current trend of focusing on articulating impacts that are clearly measurable and quantifiable has reinforced the presumption that the higher the number of youths in a programme, the more inherently successful it is in delivering dividends. This is partly because these programmes look more impressive on paper, but also because they fulfil another criterion of success by being able to 'get the money out of the door' quickly.

We found that the monitoring of many youth programmes still tends to be inconsistent and mostly focused on how the programme went through its cycle and whether activities were satisfactorily delivered on time. In all but a few cases, extremely little was known about what happened to most beneficiaries once they walked out of the door on the last day and how their lives changed after taking part. With programming of this nature, the actual delivery is just a small fraction of what is important, with the hope that the real impact will occur after programming is completed. Thus, it does not make sense that the monitoring cycle stops when programming does. For example, if we monitored how many beneficiaries received and kept a job for six months, nine months and one year after programming, would the way we define success be the same?

An exclusive focus on these narrowly prescribed definitions of success can distort what is most important – that graduates are better prepared to find paid employment, self-employment or otherwise. For example, a dropout rate of only 10% to 15% would be deemed a success, yet it does nothing to reveal how many students actually did well (absorbed the material) or how many found employment afterwards.[43] The difficulty of articulating 'quality' has also meant that indirect, less quantifiable benefits that might accrue to beneficiaries do not receive enough attention – despite the possibility that these could have longer-term impacts on beneficiaries' lives than the technical trainings themselves.[44] The perfunctory mention of many of these 'life skills' in formal programme documentation leads one to assume that these aspects are secondary to the core technical skills and livelihood focus. Additionally, while exposure to new experiences through on-the-job training or work placement also helps to build self-esteem and familiarity with appropriate professional conduct, it is often not prioritised enough.

Since more meaningful metrics tend to be harder to quantify as well as to achieve, their pursuit ought to be accompanied by a greater acceptance of creativity, flexibility and risk. Programmes too often follow the path of least resistance, doing what governments and donors are most familiar and comfortable with. This programming inertia is reflected in the reproduction of aforementioned DDR-style training, which feels 'safe' from the programmers' and implementing partners' standpoint, even though it is fundamentally mismatched with market needs. In discussions with programmers, they outlined how, once the decision has been made to do a 'youth programme', there is little scope to suggest any substantial changes; the project moves forward on

---

43   Notably, programmers' definitions of programme successes differed from those of beneficiaries; the latter were focused on outcomes, the former much more on outputs.

44   This remains a hypothesis, and much more research needs to be done to understand the impact of vocational versus life skills components of trainings. Nonetheless, the importance of the 'indirect' benefits of programming was raised by several programmers, who felt that often it is these aspects that go further towards addressing attitudinal and self-esteem issues faced by many youths and that affect their approach to work.

its own momentum, almost already fully formed with little opportunity for input. Once a project is up and running, mid-term reviews become vital in determining whether anything is going awry – but frequently they are viewed as a perfunctory exercise and take place too late to allow for substantive changes to be implemented as a result; thus, the second half of the project's cycle risks losing its impact. This is partly because it is incredibly difficult to change direction if problems are identified – in no small part because of bureaucratic resistance – resulting in a push to keep going and an attitude of 'hoping for the best.' Especially in FCS, where unforeseen challenges frequently do arise, the ability to respond to these challenges becomes even more critical. But according to feedback we received, it can be easier to admit failure further down the line, when it becomes obvious that something in the project is not working, than it is to draw attention to something earlier on, when there might not be as much of an appetite to adjust it.

The head of the World Bank's Innovation Labs recently conceded to the need to shift this culture so that the organisation becomes more 'failure friendly'. However, this is a process that will face a great deal of political resistance if it does not continue to be persistently championed by thought-leaders from within.[45] Partly because of the pressure to coincide with partner governments' political schedules, but also due to the pressure to coincide with internal programming/funding schedules, risks or delays are not politically palatable. Risks within the implementing environment will be at their most acute during the immediate post-conflict period. As these reduce and the context becomes more stable, there then has to be a commensurate assumption of risk within the programming itself – that is, in terms of taking chances and not necessarily going for the quick-win solution or band-aid effect. Experimentation is required in order to get programming right, but this has significant risk attached to it and the appetite to assume this must be increased. Because of the complexity and uncertainty associated with programme implementation in FCS, the potential for success is correlated with the need to accept the increased potential for failure.

Outside of active conflict zones, fragile contexts are the most challenging contexts in which to implement programming. One obvious impact of this situation on programming is that, because of the well-known capacity constraints, programmes (of any sort) take longer (and are thus more costly) to implement. Yet, there was little evidence that training or budgeting cycles are adequately adjusted to allow for this. UN and World Bank staff in country, as well as implementing partners, frequently expressed their concern that the trainings were not long enough given: a) how long the programme took to set up and get started; and b) the length of time it took to ensure that most beneficiaries had absorbed a minimum amount of the material. One local implementing partner in Liberia, who had achieved impressive results through a World Bank programme lasting 18 months (a length of time that was viewed by other implementers as being realistic in terms of what they are trying to achieve), was then asked to do a similar training in the space of three months for a different World Bank-funded project.[46] While she had to insist that this was accompanied by three to four months of work placement, she still remained sceptical that the programme would be successfully completed by most beneficiaries.[47] However, implementers are unlikely to turn down funding for projects even if they think it will be impossible to deliver the stated impacts. Lastly, some respondents felt that the pressure to spend money quickly, to match certain timelines, prevented projects from becoming more sustainable – which at this point should be the core target of incentives and central to how success is defined.

45   E.L. Pasquini (2013). 'Aleem Walji: An outsider leading innovation at the World Bank', Devex, 19 November 2013. Available at https://www.devex.com/en/news/aleem-walji-an-outsider-leading-innovation-at-the-world-bank/82328

46   The service provider referred to took part in two World Bank programmes – the first referenced here is the project Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women (EPAG) (under the Adult Girls Initiative (AGI)), and the second is the Youth, Employment, Skills (YES) programme.

47   In a telling scene, also from Liberia, filmed for International Alert's documentary 'How, Not How Much', a local implementer sums up the failure of a UNICEF DDR programme for trainee mechanics by stating that it took the entirety of the project for the beneficiaries to be able to identify the tools, let alone learn how to fix engines.

4. Relationships

Regardless of any technical and programmatic advances, increased monitoring and evaluation, or funding that may or may not occur in years to come, relationships will always be at the heart of peacebuilding and development work (and key to its success or failure). There are five sets of actors involved in addressing the youth employment challenge: young people, the government, employers, implementing partners (civil society organisations (CSOs) and international non-governmental organisations(INGOs)) and the international institutions. Relationships between all sets of actors are characterised by different challenges and opportunities. How these interact with the political dynamics described above will greatly affect the basis of decision-making around programming, as well as the operating environment within which the programmes are implemented.

Therefore, a central argument of this report is that consolidating a positive relationship between the actors involved should be one of the first priorities for tackling the employment question. This is even more challenging considering that the subject of employment has in many ways become a language to express concerns around issues of instability, inclusion and future expectations of these countries' trajectories. The (un)employment debates, in other words, are at the heart of the conversation between the youth and these countries' governments and their international partners. As we have seen, however, these conversations have often been couched in value-laden assumptions, perceptions and a general reluctance to speak openly and realistically about the nature of the problem. This has created an unhelpful paradigm, whereby all parties are operating on a 'best case scenario' basis, which has now become internalised to the detriment of a focus on more practical and feasible (but perhaps less appealing) ways forward.

Many young people in these countries are astute and understand their power as a demographic group. This weight as a significant political constituency can be used constructively to lobby for the types of changes desired with respect to their welfare. Worryingly, it can also be used to perpetuate an unhealthy relationship that encourages short-termist and transactional forms of political engagement. Young people tend to be aware of the trade-offs involved in this kind of politics. Yet, as they 'play the game', they tend to expect certain rewards for allegiance and failure to meet these expectations tends to fuel frustration and resentment.

The emphasis that immediate post-conflict programming placed on encouraging young people that their future was open to many possibilities was done with good intentions, but it was not necessarily the best approach. Now a decade on from the end of civil war, this has tainted young people's impressions of what is achievable, contributing to inflated expectations that can potentially lead to significant frustration and disillusionment when their government is unable to deliver. Big dreams also coexist with a feeling of disempowerment in terms of shaping one's own employment direction, and thereby one's own future. In fact, many young people tend to view labour market dynamics as being characterised by networks and personal connections, meaning that dreams can only be fulfilled by the intervention of others. This disassociates mobility from the importance of dedication and hard work, and also compounds the sense of frustration resulting from thwarted aspirations. The 'youth empowerment' agenda has been embraced by international institutions and INGOs. However, empowerment has tended to remain a vague term in practice, running the risk of overshadowing or diluting marginal youth's pressing concerns over job creation or economic empowerment. Many young people pointed to socio-political inclusion as a means of putting pressure on their governments to deliver economic empowerment. Notions of empowerment must be sharpened, therefore, and it is crucial to consider how they can be harnessed to voice concerns aimed at directly improving young people's lives.

The relationship between young people and their governments in Liberia and Sierra Leone is still

fragile. Low levels of trust in governments' willingness and ability to deliver for young people were among the root causes of war, and the conflict further eroded these levels of trust. Greater trust cannot be fostered until there is better awareness and understanding of who these young people are, in their own terms, and what the realities of their lives and situations are, as well as their perceptions of employment and their own incentives and motivations. Restoring this relationship, rebuilding the fabric of society and creating a sense of civic pride are crucial for ensuring the requisite amount of youth enthusiasm and willingness to contribute positively to change in their countries. But youths will only feel inspired to uphold their end of the bargain if they believe in the decisions that their government is making on their behalf and if they can see the possibility of a better life for themselves and their families.

Institutional partners and implementing partners also must strengthen their relationship and communication with their beneficiaries as well as one another. The most marginalised and vulnerable young people tend to have low confidence and at times were found to struggle with maximising opportunities offered by particular programmes – especially where the programme design itself did not recognise the need for extra accompaniment in 'soft skill' areas. Emphasising self-assurance, work-readiness and transferable life skills in training can be just as important as the technical aspects of vocational and business training. Greater programme responsiveness will also require trusting the implementing partners and empowering them with the ability to make key decisions about the project as needed. A balance will need to be maintained between their having the 'permission to use common sense' and ensuring that they stick to the macro-goals and design of the project.

The larger actors within the private sector have not yet fully realised the extent to which building necessary relationships and becoming more engaged in this discussion now will benefit them down the line. Considering the relevance of youth employment to their fundamental self-interest of growing their business, it is actually quite surprising that a greater proportion of the private sector is not more concerned and involved. In both countries, some private sector actors complain about the need to import labour and the lack of certain skills within the domestic labour pool. Since this is already the case, their responsibility is greater than they may have previously realised in terms of helping to create the workforce required to ultimately improve their efficiency, productivity and profit margins.

Likewise, as their economies and institutional capacity grow, governments are increasingly able to make demands of the private sector. In addition to signing important deals, governments also need to step more fully into the role of dictating more complex terms to the investments that are flowing into their country. While it is recognised that there needs to be a balance between attracting increased foreign investment and creating a business environment that is considered less hospitable – considering their attractive resources, both natural and human, the countries of the Mano River region have particularly preferential bargaining positions in terms of being able to make demands of the private sector to ensure that investments include benefits to infrastructure development as well as sustainable dividends for young people, and that they are part of an inclusive and peace-promoting economy.

Lastly, and of central importance given the focus of this report, the relationship between international institutions and governments is also gradually moving to a more equal footing, although there is still a considerable degree of preferential leverage on certain topics and this will continue for some time. As these countries become more stable, there is a natural transition of the type and degree of support that international actors provide. This will not necessarily be a smooth transition, because government capacity will remain limited for some time, extremely so in some areas.

As alluded to before, the most important issue highlighted in our discussions around implementation related to delivery mechanisms and their suitability for implementing the programmes at hand,

which were often large-scale and complicated multimillion-dollar projects. Officials of international institutions and governments pointed to the problematic tension between direct versus contracted implementation as a critical factor affecting the strength of projects. This tension arises from the very real trade-off between efficacy and ownership, an especially salient issue in FCS, where governments are only slowly building both capacity and legitimacy. While local implementation tends to be preferred, the reality is that, for large-scale projects, government and local partners might lack the capacity to set up the appropriate delivery mechanisms.

Several staff of international agencies believed that project delivery might have been better if their organisations had been allowed to play more than just a support role. To ease that gap, in place of directly implementing themselves, a considerable degree of government capacity building is included in many programmes. While this is a fundamental priority, the term tends to be overused as a way of getting around the tensions that exist between efficacy and ownership, and it is still often approached as an additional box-ticking exercise. Real government capacity building does not mean merely placing two international staff in an office within a ministry. It needs to be a central element itself, attached to clear deliverables and targeted activities, where civil servants are consistently shown and taught the specific skills needed to manage these programmes. Moreover, the process should be accompanied throughout, ideally with a gradual handover of responsibilities taking place after mid-term reviews. Capacity building also requires acknowledging the wealth of pre-existing knowledge and skills that exists on the ground as well as the sensitivities of the staff being trained, and incorporating these elements.

In order to find the right match for a particular implementation process, a variety of metrics must be considered when determining whether and which service providers will be adequate. The complexity of working with young people faced with a host of contextual challenges is often best understood by national service providers who have an intimate awareness of the local context and how to respond to and mitigate some of the constraints. They are also more likely to have the right relationships and networks to facilitate important aspects of implementation, such as mentoring, and to better understand the components that make the biggest difference to beneficiaries and their retention. Where certain capacities do not exist yet nationally, governments and international partners must be willing to agree to alternative arrangements that include support for the right kinds of capacity building, that make sense for both parties, and most importantly that will lead to improved outcomes for beneficiaries.

This is a transitional phase for the external contexts of these countries, as well as for the relationships between these governments and their institutional partners. During this time, international partners need to be able to push back on requests for programming from governments that are unrealistic, no longer worthwhile for the stage of economic recovery either country is at, or impossible to deliver under certain circumstances.[48] Governments also need to become more comfortable with encouraging their international partners to more fully buy into the principles espoused in, for example, the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States. They need to be able to urge international partners to 'put their money where their mouth is' in terms of providing the depth and types of support that governments need, and doing so in a thorough and sustainable manner. While some of the growing pains of this transition period cannot be avoided, injecting a dose of honesty and realism (see below) into this relationship could help to address this tension in the interim.

---

48   For instance, the World Bank is still operating cash-for-works projects in both countries, despite the fact that they are a decade out of conflict and that it is difficult to justify the need for such 'safety net' programming, which has no long-term impact and which has the potential to have a destabilising effect within communities. These types of programmes are still requested because of their desirability to governments (and the beneficial publicity that reaching thousands bestows on current governments and the international community alike). They are also 'easy' for the World Bank to implement and the latter has become extremely adept at doing so. However, missing from these discussions are questions about what will happen when the few days of work finish, about whether they will make a demonstrable difference to the lives of the young participants, and about whether the money could be better spent elsewhere on other types of programming, albeit for far fewer numbers of beneficiaries.

Conclusion

"I really disagree with ... the amount of resources being put for the cash for work. I am not convinced because I see it as in fact multiplying the problem ... and this is why, you know, these are small-term jobs ... You give these guys this money, without skill and without outlet, what you do basically you make them survive today and in surviving today they create problems for tomorrow. You have more money, they have money and they socialise and they have more kids, you understand? It's a short-term thing – you give somebody a three- to six-month job, within that three- to six-month job he can have two pregnant girls, because that's what I thought, that's my own feeling. But people will say ok, money is important, it keeps them ... helps domestic commerce, that kind of thing, fine. But the bottom line is, even for an educated person, you have a job that pays you 5,000 dollars and you take that job for a year and after a year you cannot have a job that pays 1,000 dollars, it becomes a problem, a psychological problem; it affects the way you think. And you know because you are used to a high level of life and then all of a sudden ... so that's my approach"

– Sierra Leonean government official[49]

In this report, we set out to contribute to the discussion on youth unemployment in a slightly different way to other recent reports – but in a way that we feel is meaningful and practical, given the impressive body of knowledge that already exists about this topic. Therefore, instead of looking only at what is currently happening in terms of programming responses – both the successful and less successful responses – we wanted to try to understand *why* these are happening.

In doing so, and shedding light on some of the 'details of execution', we hope to support the initiatives and the people who are working to change the way these programmes are conceived, designed and delivered. It is our aim that such programmes will recognise and be more responsive to the external and internal dynamics, discussed above, which currently affect programming.[50] For youth employment programming, moving more closely towards the 'science of delivery', recently espoused by the World Bank's president, would mean that youths do not just complete the programmes provided to them, but that they actually find and retain jobs afterwards.[51]

Just because programming is done in a fragile or conflict-affected country does not mean it automatically contributes to building peace. It is dangerous to assume that peacebuilding is inherently mainstreamed into all employment programmes in such contexts just because there is a link between unemployment and instability. Equally, there is also a risk that, by overemphasising the link between youth unemployment and insecurity in the Mano River region, decision-makers reduce their ability to capitalise on and build the potential of young populations during an important period of transformational opportunity. The framing of the problem, as has been argued throughout this report, is a key starting point in ensuring that these opportunities for sustainable peace and equitably distributed growth are not obscured by too much focus on the risk of instability.

---

49 This interview was compiled for L. Enria (2011). 'Perspectives on Statebuilding: The United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture and the Question of Youth Unemployment in Sierra Leone', Unpublished Masters Thesis. Oxford: Oxford University Department of International Development.

50 J. Yong Kim (2013). 'Toward a global science of delivery', in *Voices on Society: The Art and Science of Delivery*. New York: McKinsey and Company. Available at http://voices.mckinseyonsociety.com/toward-a-global-science-of-delivery/

51 Ibid.

However, given the multiple peacebuilding and development challenges that still remain in Liberia and Sierra Leone – and taking into account today's realities and the aspiration for a future that is equitably prosperous – there is a need for serious reflection about whether this critical challenge is being approached, framed and handled in the most effective way possible.

It is with this objective in mind that we provide some final guiding observations, outlined under the headings below according to themes that we think capture how this agenda should be approached moving forward. In particular, we highlight the need for: more realistic analysis and problem framing; greater honesty about relationships and capacity; and increased innovation in the way we perceive opportunities and approach the challenge. While our research was limited to Liberia and Sierra Leone, we have drawn also on our knowledge of other post-conflict environments. Therefore, these guiding observations are intended for people working in youth employment programmes in any fragile or conflict-affected context.

REALISM in analysis and framing

The youth unemployment challenge is extensive and multi-faceted. Given its daunting nature, there has been some reluctance to describe accurately and speak openly and realistically about the nature of the problem. This has, in turn, created an unhelpful paradigm whereby all parties are operating on a 'best case scenario' basis, which has now become internalised as the 'received wisdom' to the detriment of focusing on more practical and feasible ways forward.

Decision-making processes give insufficient attention to the need for a thorough understanding of how the economies need to be shaped *so that they promote peace and stability* – for example, through wide participation in economic activities and benefits, a move towards merit-based and more broadly accountable political economies, as well as economic growth itself. This includes painting as accurate a picture as possible of how the economy is likely to evolve to meet future needs. It also includes providing answers to fundamental questions about what is to be done in the meantime while waiting for growth, especially when there is a good chance that the absorption capacity of the economy will not be as high as hoped. It is in this 'meantime' that opportunities in the informal economy – those that are often devalued and marginalised – are quite likely to be the only available outlets for many young people. Thus, as is starting to occur in Sierra Leone, greater focus should be placed on how to add value to existing opportunities and on how to improve working conditions within existing occupations.[52]

However, even with this shift in focus, the reality is that programming is never going to be able to reach the numbers that it would need to in order to fully address the problem – the needs and numbers are too great compared with the resources available. As a result, the tendency to value quantity over quality must be resisted. This means paying more attention to what we referred to earlier as the 'semantics of success' – that is, defining clearly what 'impact' means for a given programme and explaining why quality is not just about a certain number of beneficiaries, but also about developing enabling structural factors such as economic infrastructure, facilities for youth education and training, and other factors designed to improve competitiveness in emerging areas of market growth that have clear benefits for peace. These need to take into account both supply and demand factors.

---

52   A focus of UNDP livelihoods work going forward will be on figuring out the best way to build on past activities. This will include finding links between opportunities that already exist or that have been created through previous programming.

Governments and international agencies also need to improve the precision and accuracy of targeting initiatives within the very broad category of youth. They need to be realistic about which groups are more likely to respond better to different types of programming and which kinds of programming are more suitable for achieving the specific outcomes and impacts desired. This requires the admission that the way youth is frequently categorised makes it difficult to reach the 'right' types of youth and that harder-to-reach youth may not benefit in the same way from standard programming as other groups. Moreover, it should be recognised that some programming for more vulnerable youth will not be appropriate or attractive to those in the mainstream. Difficult decisions about who to prioritise and who to engage in the different types of programmes will need to be made.

Lastly, despite significant rhetoric around the importance of agriculture and other non-white-collar jobs, more attention must be paid to transforming the necessary sectors if these areas are to be the engine of growth, employment and peace (e.g. for agriculture, there should be a focus on land and market reform, access to knowledge, technology and credit, tackling market monopolies, etc.). This should be done in a way that will be meaningful to young people and that will address other push and pull factors that are currently driving urban migration and a rejection of other options. The idea that opportunities in rural areas are unattractive can only be changed by making such opportunities more attractive to young people where possible.

HONESTY about relationships and capacity

A central argument of this report is that one of the important ways to tackle the employment question is to consolidate a positive relationship between the actors involved. This is made more challenging by the fact that the subject of employment has in many ways become a language to express concerns around issues of instability, inclusion and future expectations of these countries' trajectories. It is also made more difficult due to problems of confidence and trust between all five of the identified groups involved: government, business, young people, international agencies and implementing agencies. Because of this, these conversations have often been couched in unhelpful assumptions, perceptions and a level of difficulty in being honest with one another. However, being realistic about what is (and is not) possible to expect from the job creation process requires frank conversations among all those involved. Young people, employers, governments, donors and implementing agencies need to stop speaking in euphemisms and to start talking more candidly about possibilities, incentives, but also the considerable constraints that exist. Conversations must be broadened to reflect the full scale of outcomes and scenarios, not just the best-case ones.

This means that governments must provide leadership by speaking more honestly with young people, as well as recognising and respecting them as the key constituency they are. They need to communicate to young people a realistic picture of how they are concretely trying to address their welfare, while also being truthful about the long, hard road ahead, instead of raising their expectations and dreams of the future, regardless of how politically expedient the latter might be. At the same time, young people can do more to engage with and hold their governments to account on reasonable promises, while also accepting their responsibility for becoming more honest and pragmatic about their own aspirations. They need to recognise the challenges facing their country – many of which are outside of the government's direct control – and adjust their expectations and aims accordingly.

Governments and their multilateral partners need to be more honest about the realities of low national capacity and how this affects their ability to deliver effectively. Their aim should be to find ways for implementation to coexist with a nationally articulated vision and for ensuring

long-term institutional support to capacity building that leads to a handover that is achievable, sequenced and clearly benchmarked. International institutions and donors need to be honest internally and with their partners and acknowledge that corners simply cannot be cut when doing this kind of work in fragile settings. Costs will be higher, set-up will take more time and results will not only take a lot longer to achieve, but will also look different – probably less impressive than hitting the high quantitative targets that are feasible elsewhere. The implementing partners have an important role to play in explaining what is needed to achieve the outputs desired, and, as difficult as it may be to turn down money, in walking away from contracts they are offered, where time and other resources are inadequate.

This issue is best addressed in a way that is not piecemeal – the challenge is too big and multi-faceted. While this is everyone's responsibility and in everyone's interest, it is important to be honest about comparative advantage and who is best placed to take on certain responsibilities. International partners know the value of collaboration and are trying to increase this practice through initiatives such as the Global Facility for Employment Creation in Fragile Situations. Nevertheless, momentum has stalled and as of now it is still unclear what the added value of this will be on the ground. The tendency to work, for example, from one's own organisational culture, bureaucratic and funding modalities, and workplans is going to be hard to break. However, the UN, the World Bank Group, bilateral donors and the private sector alike must proactively seek opportunities for joint programming, joint funding, cross-learning and ideas sharing, and be incentivised to do so. This is also necessary for government institutions and agencies that deal with youth and issues that affect them, where failures to adequately define roles have led to confusion, inaction or overlap. If we are honest about who loses out when the above mentioned opportunities are not fully harnessed and silos are allowed to remain – it is the young people themselves.

INNOVATION in recognising opportunities and approach

Admitting the scale of the challenge posed by youth unemployment also means acknowledging that something drastic has to change in the way we try to address it; 'business as usual' is no longer adequate. One-size-fits-all solutions together with aversion to change have led to inertia in the way the youth employment challenge has been tackled in fragile settings. Continuing to deliver the same types of programmes, using the same methods and with the same amount of money and capacity, will not lead to the results we have come to realise will be needed.

Innovation is risky and can lead to outstanding results and impacts, dismal failure, or anything in between. At this point, however, the stakes are too high to ignore the potential that encouraging more innovation in programme design and delivery could lead to. The UN and the World Bank have already begun to talk about the need to take on more risk and try new approaches.[53] However, pilot programmes that embody the types of creativity that will spur novel approaches to old problems, leading to the discovery of better ways of framing and working, are still small scale and not afforded the attention, resources and feedback loop they deserve. International partners must consider how to overcome the fear of failure and resistance to change in order to balance timely intervention and risk mitigation with the ability to innovate and facilitate creative solutions.

---

53   Exciting thinking and new practice in fragile and conflict-affected countries is happening through units such as UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery's Livelihoods and Economic Recovery Group, which tries to find new entry points for youth employment projects, and the World Bank's Social Development Department as well as their Global Center for Conflict, Security and Development Conflict.

Multiple capacities, skills and opportunities already exist in these countries, even if some remain latent or nascent. Important elements of a more innovative approach will be: to link young people with vacancies and potential employers that already exist; to build on the skills they already have; to provide catalytic support to informal entrepreneurs who are already working; to extract the right learning from pilot initiatives and figure out how to scale up what works; to find links between different types of programmes, including those in other sectors; and to capture synergies between the multiple initiatives going on at any point in these countries.

Innovation means looking beyond the narrow confines of the youth employment sector for peace, as it has been recently defined, to other related sectors and to best practice in less fragile contexts. It is beyond the scope of this report to highlight all the best practice that exists in sectors such as education. But we would suggest for example that it is less important to focus on getting higher numbers of students into tertiary education than it is to strengthen the link between education and employment, or to promote dynamic and critical thinking in order to encourage leadership and self-confidence, not just rote learning. This will require that motivated, well-qualified and passionate teachers, trainers and programme implementers – who bring fresh ideas and positive outlooks – are more actively sought, cultivated and incentivised than they currently are. This new guard will bring much-needed enthusiasm to a field that is still too focused on a conflict-past, shaking up the way things are done. Most importantly, they will serve as vital inspiration to the young people whom they are teaching and training – providing a critical impact in places where there are too few positive, everyday role models. A shift in approach is urgent if these countries are to provide an adequate cadre of entrepreneurs, mid-level bureaucrats, technocrats and professionals in the coming years.

Innovation is not just about new products, but also about new approaches and synergies. Designing new approaches and synergies into programmes is critical for achieving better results. And it will help to transform a system that is currently too vulnerable to many of the external and internal dynamics we articulate here. Such innovation will give this system a new equilibrium, bringing together the best of the 'artistic' (creative, dexterous, imaginative) and 'scientific' (predictability, rationality, logic) elements of programme delivery, in order to improve the everyday lives and futures of beneficiaries in a more realistic, honest and innovative way.

Annex 1: People

The authors and researchers spoke to individuals from the following organisations:

Liberia

Action on Armed Violence (AOAV) – formerly Landmine Action
Agency for Economic Development and Empowerment (AEDE)
Bensonville Agricultural Vocational Training Centre (BAVTC)
Centre Songhai Initiative (CSI)
Federation of Liberian Youth (FLY)
Kasawa Fashion House
Liberia Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE)
Liberia Entrepreneurial and Economic Development (LEED)
Liberia Motorcyclist Transport Union (LMTU)
Liberian National Student Union (LINSU)
Mano River Youth Parliament
Messengers of Peace
Ministry of Gender and Development (MoGD)
Ministry of Labour (MoL)
Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS)
Joint Programme for Youth Employment and Empowerment (JPYEE)
Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE)
Youth on the Job Training (YoJT)
Monrovia Vocational Training Centre (MVTC)
NAYMOTE
ONE Liberia
Sinje Youth Training Centre
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
US Agency for International Development (USAID)
World Bank – Monrovia
Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)
Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)
Youth Action International (YAI) Liberia

Sierra Leone

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ)
Labour Commission
Ministry of Finance
National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA)
National Youth Commission (NAYCOM)

Private sector company (2)
Restless Development
Sierra Leone Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (SLANGO)
Sierra Leone Youth Empowerment Organisation (SLYEO)
UK Department for International Development (DFID)
UNDP
United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)
World Bank, Freetown
YMCA

New York and Washington DC

International Labour Organization (ILO), DC Liaison Office
Search for Common Ground (SfCG)
UNDP, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (UNDP-BCPR)
United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO)
USAID
World Bank

Annex 2: Programmes

In addition to collecting information about youth programming in general, the following specific projects were examined more closely in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Liberia

At the time of our field research, in addition to national projects/trainings, the main active multilateral youth programme in Liberia was the World Bank's Youth, Employment, Skills (YES) project and its various sub-components. The UN's Joint Programme for Youth Employment and Empowerment (JPYEE) had recently concluded activities and was in the phase of programme shutdown, although we did speak to affiliated staff.

Youth, Employment, Skills (YES) project – World Bank[54]

US$16 million in funding for 2010–2013 (comprising US$10 million from the Africa Catalytic Growth Fund and US$6 million from the Crisis Response Window of the International Development Association (IDA))

Project development objective: The proposed project development objective (PDO) is to expand the access of poor and young Liberians to temporary employment programmes and to improve youth employability. This objective is in support of the Liberian government's response to the employment crisis.

Component 1: Community Works (US$8.5 million)
Implemented by the Liberia Agency for Community Empowerment (LACE)
• Subcomponent 1.1: Temporary employment through public works
• Subcomponent 1.2: Capacity building for the coordination and monitoring of public works

Component 2: Employment through Skills Training
Implemented by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in conjunction with a consultant firm, Transtec – the actual trainings were implemented by sub-contracted partners (e.g. Action on Armed Violence (AOAV), Kasawa Fashion House, Liberia Entrepreneurial and Economic Development (LEED), and others)
• Subcomponent 2.1: Skills development programme (informal and formal sector)
• Subcomponent 2.2: Institutional capacity-building

The project was amended because of a lack of adequate progress and implementation delays. This was attributed to the "weak implementation capacity of the MoYS and poor coordination between the MoYS and the Ministry of Finance".[55] The project cycle has since been extended until the end of December 2014.

---

54   For more comprehensive information on the YES initiative, see the World Bank's Project Appraisal Document, available at http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2010/06/12418603/liberia-youth-employment-skills-project
55   World Bank (2012). 'Liberia – LR: Youth, Employment, Skills Project (P121686). Implementation Status Results Report', 26 November 2012. Washington DC: World Bank. Available at http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2012/11/16999087/liberia-lr-youth -employment-skills-project-p121686-implementation-status-results-report-sequence-04

Sites visited in Liberia:

Bensonville Agricultural Vocational Training Centre (BAVTC)

Bomi Youth Recreation and Resource Centre

Kasawa Fashion House/training site

Klay Agricultural and Vocational Training Centre

Monrovia Vocational Training Centre (MVTC)

Sinje Youth Training Centre

University of Liberia

Beneficiary/youth group discussions held with:

Centre Songhai Initiative beneficiaries

Mano River Youth Parliament representatives

MVTC beneficiaries

Street youth

University of Liberia students

Youth on the Job Training beneficiaries

Sierra Leone

Youth Employment Support – World Bank[56]

US$20 million in funding (2010–2013)[57]

Project objective: The specific objective of this programme is to increase short-term employment opportunities and to improve the employability of targeted youth. The programme seeks to address constraints on the demand and supply side of the labour market, namely: (i) to improve technical capacity and promote creation and/or expansion of small youth-owned enterprises in economically viable activities; (ii) to improve the skills base of young people to make them more employable; and (iii) to provide a safety net and income supplement for the most vulnerable youth through public works.

Component 1: Cash for Works (US$10 million)

Implemented by the National Commission for Social Action (NACSA)

Rehabilitation and/or improvement of priority infrastructure in three areas: feeder road rehabilitation and maintenance; agriculture; renewable energy/environmental management

Component 2: Skills Development and Employment Support (US$8 million)

Implemented by ChildFund (16 training institutions), Help (13 technical and vocational education and training (TVET) centres) and Partners in Relief and Development (PaRD) (rural youth/agri-processing)

---

56   Further information about this Youth Employment Support project is available at
      http://www.worldbank.org/projects/P121052/youth-employment-support?lang=en
57   This project has also been extended until 31 December 2014.

Technical assistance is provided through apprenticeships, business development, support and coaching, literacy/numeracy and other life skills. The programme also provides employability support and business development. Trainings are offered in catering, auto mechanics, electrical installation, masonry, carpentry, plumbing, hairdressing, metal work, electronics, wheelchair manufacturing and repairs, shoe making, and caterpillar operation and agro-processing.

Component 3: Institutional Support and Policy Development (US$2 million)
Implemented by UNDP and the National Youth Commission (NAYCOM)
Institutional support, policy development and impact evaluation

UN projects[58]

Youth Employment – UNDP
US$594,000 (2010–2011)

Project objective: The central objective is to implement key activities of the National Youth Employment and Empowerment Programme (Ministry of Youth Employment and Sports). The activities encompass the following aims: to develop a national service for youth to access knowledge and skills on starting and operating a small enterprise; to roll out a careers advice and placement service that will enable youth to make well-informed decisions in their education courses; and to strengthen their job-seeking skills and place interns and graduates in positions that will provide a start to their professional career. The project will also support the development of opportunities for greater representation of youth in decision-making forums and engagement in decisions that directly affect their lives.

Implementing partners: Ministry of Youth Employment and Sports, the National Youth Commission (NAYCOM) and the Youth Employment Secretariat

Key outcomes:
Outcome 1: Enterprise development services operational in all districts
Outcome 2: Careers advice and placement services operational in universities and nine TVET centres
Outcome 3: 1,000 youths running their own enterprises
Outcome 4: Youth councils operating in all districts and involved in youth-related decision-making in the local councils
Outcome 5: 2,000 youths engaged in decision-making in their own locality in the main urban areas

Promoting Youth Employment through Enterprise Growth Centres – UNIDO
Project objectives: Key objectives include creating entrepreneurship/employment opportunities for 1,000 youths and women through training, building enterprise infrastructure, and supporting business operation and marketing. The project also seeks to create agro-enterprises and related jobs that will provide income and attract the resettlement and reintegration of youths in rural

---

areas. This will include support to new and/or existing micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to prepare bankable business plans, kick off business operations and build their capacity as required.

Youth Development and Employment – FAO

Project objectives: The project focuses on developing the agriculture component of youth employment and development interventions through training and support to pre-existing infrastructure within the Sierra Leone Agri-Business Initiative (SABI) Centre in Newton. It also focuses on the introduction of specific agro-business and agro-machinery trainings within the centre.

Sites visited in Sierra Leone:

Aid SL (Freetown)

ChildFund (Bo)

Growth Centre (Bo)

Growth Centre (Pujehun)

Help (Bo)

Help (Freetown)

ParD (Pujehun)

SABI Centre (Newton)

YWCA (Freetown)

Beneficiary discussions held at:

Aid SL

Bo Growth Centre

YWCA

Additional sources

Adams, A. (2007). *The Role of Youth Skills Development in the Transition to Work: A Global Review*, HDNCY No. 5. Washington DC: World Bank.

African Grantmakers Network (2010). *A Summary Report on the First Pan African Assembly of the African Grantmakers Network*. Dakar: AGN.

Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development (2007). *'A Lost Generation' – Young People and Conflict in Africa*. Nairobi: ACORD.

Amarasuriya, H., Gündüz, C. and Mayer, M. (2009). *Rethinking the Nexus between Youth, Unemployment and Conflict – Perspectives from Sri Lanka*. London: International Alert.

Azeng, T.F. and Yogo, T.U. (2013). *Youth Unemployment and Political Instability in Selected Developing Countries*, Working Paper 171. Tunis: African Development Bank.

Blattman, C. and Annan, J. (2012). *Reintegrating and Employing High Risk Youth in Liberia*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University and Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA).

Browne, E. (2013). *Helpdesk Research Report: Livelihoods in Fragile Contexts*. London: Governance and Social Development Resource Centre.

Chaaban, J. and Cunningham, W. (2011). *Measuring the Economic Gain of Investing in Girls: The Girl Effect Dividend*, Policy Research Working Paper 5753. Washington DC: World Bank.

Dalberg (2011). *Impact Investing in West Africa*. New York: Dalberg.

Del Felice, C. and Wisler, A. (2007). 'The Unexplored Power and Potential of Youth as Peace-builders', *Journal of Peace, Conflict and Development*, Issue 11.

Dercon, S. (2011). 'Social Protection, Efficiency and Growth', CSAE Working Paper WPS/2011-17. Oxford: Centre for the Study of African Economies, University of Oxford.

DFID-CSO Youth Working Group (2009). 'Youth Submission to DFID's White Paper Consultation – Eliminating World Poverty', based on a consultation held at Department for International Development (DFID), 20 March 2009.

Ellis, K. and Williams, C. (2011). *Maximizing Impact of Youth Entrepreneurship Support in Different Contexts*. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

Fraser, E. (2011). *Helpdesk Research Report: Youth Unemployment and Livelihoods*. London: Governance and Social Development Resource Centre.

Fuerth, M. (2011). *Monrovia – An Assessment of Violence and Insecurity in the Liberian Capital*. London: Action on Armed Violence.

Gratius, S., Santos, R. and Roque, S. (2012). *Youth, Identity and Security: Synthesis Report*. London: Initiative for Peacebuilding – Early Warning Analysis to Action (IfP-EW).

Haider, H. (2011). *Helpdesk Research Report: Youth Statebuilding and Peacebuilding Interventions*. London: Governance and Social Development Resource Centre.

Hatløy, A., Kebede, T., Zhang, H. and Bjørkhaug, I. (2012). *Perceptions of Good Jobs*, Background Paper for the WDR 2013. Washington DC: World Bank.

Hempel, K. and Fiala, N. (2012). *Measuring Success of Youth Livelihood Interventions*. Washington DC: World Bank.

Holmes, R., McCord, A., Hanger-Zanker, J., Bergh, G. and Zanker, F. (2013). *What is the Evidence on the Impact of Employment Creation on Stability and Poverty Reduction in Fragile States? A Systematic Review*. London: ODI

Independent Evaluation Group (2012). *Youth Employment Programs: An Evaluation of World Bank and IFC Support*. Washington DC: World Bank Group.

International Finance Corporation (IFC) (2013). *IFC Jobs Study: Assessing Private Sector Contributions to Job Creation and Poverty Reduction*. Washington DC: World Bank Group.

International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) (2005). 'Youth Transitions to Work: A Continuous Challenge', *IIEP Newsletter*, Vol. XXII, No. 2.

International Labour Organization (ILO) (2007). 'The Informal Economy', Briefing Note for the Committee on Employment and Social Policy, 298th Session, GB298/ESP/4. Geneva: ILO.

ILO (2012). *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2012*. Geneva: ILO.

ILO (2012). *The Youth Employment Crisis: Time for Action*, Report submitted to the 101st International Labour Conference for general discussion. Geneva: ILO.

ILO (2013). *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2013*. Geneva: ILO.

ILO, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) (2011). *Report of the Expert and Inter-Agency Technical Meeting on Broadening Coherence and Collaboration for Rural Development through Employment and Decent Work*. Geneva: ILO.

ILO, UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and Youth Employment Network (YEN) (2010). *Independent Evaluation of the Multi-stakeholder Programme for Productive and Decent Work for Youth in the Mano River Union* (MRU). Geneva: ILO.

International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2012). *Regional Economic Outlook, Sub-Saharan Africa: Sustaining Growth and Global Uncertainty*. Washington DC: IMF.

International Rescue Committee (IRC) (2012). *Youth Livelihoods Report: Investing in a Youth Dividend*. New York: IRC.

Ismail, W., Olonisakin, F., Picciotto, B. and Wybrow, D. (2009). *Youth Vulnerability and Exclusion in West Africa: Synthesis Report*. London: Conflict Security and Development Group, King's College London (and accompanying background papers).

Karaim, R. (2012). 'Youth Unemployment', *CQ Global Researcher*, Vol. 6, No. 5. Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Kemper, Y. (2005). *Youth in War-to-Peace Transitions: Approaches of International Organizations*. Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management.

Kessler, A. (2013). *Measuring Results of Private Sector Development in Conflict-Affected Environments: A Case Study of the Employment Promotion Programme in Sierra Leone*. Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED).

Lemmon, G.T. (2012). *Entrepreneurship in Postconflict Zones*. New York: Council for Foreign Relations.

Making Cents International (2008). *Youth Microenterprise and Livelihoods: State of the Field*. Washington DC: Making Cents International.

Making Cents International (2012). *2012 State of the Field in Youth Economic Opportunities*. Washington DC: Making Cents International.

Mallett, R. and Slater, R. (2012). 'Growth and Livelihoods in Conflict-Affected Situations: What do We Know?', Briefing Paper No. 3. London: Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium, ODI.

National Youth Commission (NAYCOM) and Ministry of Youth Employment and Sports (MYES) (2012). *Sierra Leone Youth Report 2012*. Freetown: Government of Sierra Leone.

Novelli, M. and Smith, A. (2011). *The Role of Education in Peacebuilding: A Synthesis Report of Findings from Lebanon, Nepal and Sierra Leone*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2009). *Promoting Pro-Poor Growth: Employment*. Paris: OECD.

OECD (2011). *Employment Outlook 2011*. Paris: OECD.

Oteng, S. (2006). *Youth Employment and Reintegration Liberia*. Geneva: ILO and UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR).

Page, J. (2011). 'Should Africa Industrialize?', Working Paper No. 2011/47. Helsinki: United Nations University – World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER).

Pain, A. and Levine, S. (2012). 'A Conceptual Analysis of Livelihoods and Resilience: Addressing the "Insecurity of Agency"', Humanitarian Policy Group Working Papers. London: ODI.

Peacebuilding Commission (2011). *Economic Revitalization and Youth Employment for Peacebuilding – With a Focus on Youth Employment and Natural Resource Management*, Background Paper, Working Group on Lessons Learned. New York: PBC.

Puerto, O. (2007). 'International Experience on Youth Employment Interventions: The Youth Employment Inventory'. Washington DC: World Bank.

Schwartz, S. (2010). *Youth in Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Agents of Change*. Washington DC: US Institute of Peace (USIP) Press.

Sommers, M. (2007). *West Africa's Youth Employment Challenge*. Vienna: UNIDO.

Sommers, M. (2009). *Africa's Young Urbanites: Challenging Realities in a Changing Region*. New York: UNICEF.

Students Partnership Worldwide (SPW) and DFID-CSO Youth Working Group (2010). *Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Development Agencies and Policy Makers*. London: DFID-CSO Youth Working Group.

UN (2009). *United Nations Policy for Post-Conflict Employment Creation, Income Generation and Reintegration*. Geneva: UN.

UN, World Bank, German Development Cooperation (GDC), IFAD and EU (2010). *Strategies and Lessons Learned on Sustainable Reintegration and Job Creation*, Joint presentation based on practical experiences in Sierra Leone, 2 December 2010.

UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and UNIDO (2011). *Economic Development in Africa. Report 2011*. New York and Geneva: United Nations.

UNDP (2006). *Youth and Violent Conflict: Society and Development in Crisis?* New York: UNDP.

UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (UNDP-BCPR) (2007). *Programming for Youth in Conflict Prevention and Recovery*. New York: UNDP-BCPR.

UNDP-BCPR (2012). *Livelihoods and Economic Recovery Group Change Strategy 2012–2014*. New York: UNDP-BCPR.

UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2012). *Youth and Skills: Putting Education to Work*. Paris: UNESCO.

UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) (2005). *Youth Unemployment and Regional Insecurity in West Africa*. Dakar: UNOWA.

Unogwu, F., Carter, R. and Lotter, J.A. (2009). *An Introductory Toolkit for Engaging Children and Youth in Conflict Transformation*. Washington DC: Search for Common Ground.

US Agency for International Development (USAID) (2012). *Youth in Development Policy: Realizing the Demographic Opportunity*. Washington DC: USAID.

Von Gienanth, T. and Jaye, T. (2008). *Post-Conflict Peacebuilding in Liberia – Much Remains to Be Done*, Report of the Third ZIF/KAIPTC Seminar. Berlin: Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF).

Walker, G., Wood, J.C. and Allemano, E. (2009). *Liberia Youth Fragility Assessment*. Washington DC: USAID.

Walton, O. (2010). *Youth, Armed Violence and Job Creation Programmes*. Oslo: Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre (NOREF).

Weeks, J. (2011). *Youth Employment and Empowerment Programme* (YEEP): *Macroeconomic Policy and Employment*, A study for UNDP Sierra Leone. London and Sierra Leone: Centre for Development Policy and Research (CDPR), School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and Government of Sierra Leone.

Wilson-James, D. (2008). *Youth Livelihoods Development Program Guide*. Washington DC: USAID.

Women's Refugee Commission (2011). *Tapping the Potential of Displaced Youth*. New York: Women's Refugee Commission.

World Bank (2005). *Children and Youth: A Framework for Action*. Washington DC: World Bank.

World Bank (2009). *Africa Development Indicators 2008/09: Youth and Employment in Africa*. Washington DC: World Bank.

World Bank (2012). *Country Assessment on Youth Violence, Policy and Programmes in South Africa*. Washington DC: World Bank.

World Bank (2013). *Understanding Youth Violence: Cases from Liberia and Sierra Leone*. Washington DC: World Bank.