

# Chapter 4

What is the Evidence on the Effectiveness of Bank and IFC Support to Youth Employment?

## Chapter Highlights

- The Bank’s rigorous evaluations of youth employment interventions examine short-term effects, find limited positive results, and do not calculate the costs and cost-effectiveness of interventions. The few studies of the employment effect of Bank-supported short-term skills building for unemployed youth suggest questionable results.
- IFC identified youth employment as an issue in the Middle East and North Africa starting in the mid-2000s. The recent regional strategy pays particular attention to youth. A few IFC projects sought to provide opportunities to youth, but evidence on their contribution to youth employment is lacking.
- The results framework used by projects is weak and constrains the analysis of labor market outcomes for these projects.

This chapter presents findings from the IEG systematic review of impact evaluations and from World Bank Group projects. Evidence is presented by single interventions. This follows the interventions listed in table 4.1, which were introduced in chapter 2.

Evidence on the results from the Bank and IFC project portfolio on youth employment has been difficult to obtain, mainly because the data are lacking or because almost two-thirds of the selected projects are ongoing. More detailed information is in appendix F. Appendix D, table D.12 provides an overview of the type of interventions supported by Bank projects in the different regions.

**Table 4.1** Youth Employment Intervention Categories

Demand-side: Fostering job creation/work opportunities (I)	Smoothing school-to-work transition and job mobility (L)	Supply-side: Fostering skill development and labor market relevance of skills (E)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving the business and investment climate</li> <li>• Regulations to encourage the hiring of young people</li> <li>• Fostering self-employment and entrepreneurship</li> <li>• Training in entrepreneurship or business management</li> <li>• Support to start businesses and farms</li> <li>• Providing wage subsidies</li> <li>• Direct job creation (public works programs)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counseling, job search skills, information on vacancies, placement</li> <li>• Improving information on the labor market</li> <li>• Program for overseas employment of young people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving the quality of formal technical and vocational education and training (TVET)</li> <li>• Expanding/improving work-based learning in vocational and apprenticeship schemes</li> <li>• Certification of skills</li> <li>• Remedial education/second chance/non-formal technical and vocational training programs</li> <li>• Providing information on training</li> <li>• Training subsidies and vouchers</li> <li>• Support for transportation and change of residence</li> </ul>

Source: IEG.

## Fostering Job Creation and Work Opportunities (I)

Firms' demand for youth and self-employment is unevenly covered in the Bank's analytical reports, which focus more on the skills gap constraint for employers. The Bank's Investment Climate Assessment reports examine whether entrepreneurs see the lack of skills as a constraint to investment. They identify the sectors that are likely to grow, the kinds of skills needed, and whether young employees are learning these skills (for example, in Mongolia). Where there is little prospect for increasing formal sector jobs as, for example, in sub-Saharan Africa, some Bank reports argue for more focus on raising the productivity and incomes of youth working in the informal sector or in agriculture.

Improving the business and investment climate has been linked to investment and employment growth (Bruhn 2008), but the impact on youth employment is unknown. Four Bank operations supported trade reforms in youth-intensive industries. However, the effect on employment and earnings is unknown. In Liberia, Mali, and Sierra Leone, the Bank facilitated the export of fish and local artisanal products. Reforms in export competitiveness in Turkey contributed to a one percentage point increase in private spending on research and development. In Armenia, an enterprise incubator helped 18 local information technology companies attract foreign investors, resulting in a 15 percent annual increase in graduates employed in information technology. In Bhutan, which has the highest youth-to-adult unemployment ratio (8.7) in the world, the Bank helped shortening the administrative time to recruit foreign workers, thereby increasing the labor supply. The substitution effect on Bhutanese youth is unknown.

Data on job creation for most IFC investment climate advisory projects have not been tracked. IFC-supported investment climate reforms in four African countries (Burkina Faso, Liberia, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone) created roughly 60,000 jobs for all age groups through newly established businesses across different sectors. However, no information is available on the distributional aspects.

Regulations to encourage hiring of youth allow greater flexibility and reduce segmentation in middle-income countries, but the impact on youth employment is not clear. Labor market regulations mainly protect formal sector "insider" workers, and can make it more difficult for youth to enter the market. For example, in Latin America, the unemployment effect of stricter regulations is almost two times larger for youth than for adult workers (Heckman and others 2000). Based on data from 17 OECD countries, Neumark and Wascher (2004) found that the negative employment effect of minimum wages on youth can be reduced by a youth sub-minimum wage. Higher youth minimum wages in Portugal led to a flatter wage profile over time as firms would compensate a higher initial wage with a slower wage progression (Cardoso 2009). The Bank did not collect any information on the youth employment effect from Bank-supported regulatory reforms in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

IFC supports the Better Work program, which improves compliance with labor standards and overall competitiveness in global supply chains in Cambodia, Haiti, Indonesia, Jordan, and Vietnam. The program does not have a youth focus, but data in Haiti, Indonesia, and Jordan indicate that the main beneficiaries are women (70–90 percent) and youth 15–30 years of age (60 percent).

The Bank's analytical work proposes easing regulations for hiring youth, but does not provide guidance for implementation. Several Bank reports (such as the Ghana and Serbia labor market reports) analyze labor market regulations, hiring and firing procedures, and minimum wages in relation to their impact on youth informality. Reports conclude and recommend easing the negative impact of public employment on youth, preventing discrimination of labor market regulations and taxes against youth, and improving school-to-work transition through career counseling, internships, and job search assistance. None of the analytical work discusses how alternative regulations should be formulated or what their fiscal impact would be.

Entrepreneurship training has demonstrated small effects for some groups and limited effects on business performance. An impact evaluation of Mexico's Probecat program (Delajara and others 2006) found no self-employment effect. Rather, on-the-job training for unemployed youth in larger firms increased their employment and income. Bank support to business training for young ex-combatants in Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone does not identify employment effects. However, in Eritrea, 85 percent of participating ex-combatants were economically active after training.

The Bank supported entrepreneurship training in Colombia, Tunisia, and Uganda. In Colombia and Uganda, start-up capital and entrepreneurship training facilitate access to training and employment in rural areas. In Northern Uganda (appendix F, box F.2), the Youth Opportunity Program provides unconditional cash grants to underemployed youth groups to pay for about 10 weeks of full-time vocational training, tools, and business start-up costs. Almost 80 percent of the treatment group enrolled in vocational training (mainly tailoring and carpentry) compared to 17 percent in the control group, who did not receive the cash grant. The employment and earning effect was strong for the treatment group (1,300 youth). About two-thirds found skilled work compared to one-third of the control group. The treatment group reported a 45 percent increase in net earnings compared to their status before enrolling in the program; however, women saw no earning impact, probably because tailoring pays less well than carpentry (Blattman and others 2011). In Colombia, the Bank supported the Young Rural Entrepreneurs training programs, which increased participants' employment rate by about 14 percentage points compared to the control group (Castañeda and others 2010).

In Tunisia, the effect of the entrepreneurship training program for University students is negligible and the cost unknown. An impact evaluation found

that training offered to about 800 university students in Tunisia led to a 3 percentage point increase in their probability of becoming self-employed (about 24 additional self-employed) from a low baseline of 4 percent. The result was stronger for men than for women. The training affected neither the probability of students finding a job nor their earnings (Premand and others 2012). The analysis lacks information on cost, cost-effectiveness, and distributional effects.

Only a few IFC projects sought to provide opportunities to young entrepreneurs, mostly through the Grassroots Business Initiative, and more recently through the Business Edge program in Yemen, and the e4e Initiative for Arab Youth in the Middle East and North Africa region. The 10 IFC advisory projects sought to provide opportunities to youth by supporting capacity-building grants or through loan guarantees and technical assistance to financial institutions and business development service providers. Most of these projects were provided under the Grassroots Business Initiative, which has been spun-off.<sup>1</sup> There are other channels through which IFC creates employment opportunities, directly or indirectly, such as through investment climate reforms, and access to finance and infrastructure. IFC's linkage and supply chain programs account for its most comprehensive effort to create jobs, develop SMEs, and support entrepreneurship through packages of interventions including training, finance, and supplier development.

It is too early to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of IFC's e4e Initiative for Arab Youth program, as implementation has only recently begun. Although the rest of the projects have not explicitly targeted youth as part of their objectives, it is likely that the jobs created would benefit youth. For instance, an IFC agribusiness investment-advisory project with a tea plant in India created 3,000 jobs for youth, which represented 10 percent of the total workforce at the plant.

Temporary wage subsidies paid to employers to hire youth can have a short-term positive employment impact in countries with a formal sector—mainly if the work provides youth with higher-level skills. However, low uptake among employers is a challenge. Kluve (2006), in a review of European countries, found private sector incentive schemes to have a 30 to 50 percentage-point higher employment effect than skills-training programs offered under active labor market programs. In contrast, under the Swedish Youth Practice Program, subsidized youth were less likely to find employment compared to youth who received job search assistance, which was explained by insufficient planning and follow-up and low-quality work without building any higher-level skills (Larsson 2003). The U.K. New Deal includes a wage subsidies program that positively affects youth employment, but it suffered from low uptake among employers (Van Reenen 2003).

South Africa is considering a youth wage subsidy, which is planned to be a voucher that can be cashed by the hiring employer. The introduction is blocked by the South African labor unions.<sup>2</sup> The Bank supported wage subsidies in

Argentina, Bulgaria, Colombia, and Turkey; however, the youth impact is unknown. In Colombia, the subsidy program benefited more than 100,000 workers, but the program was stopped due to low uptake among employers.

Subsidized internships for tertiary students mainly cater to the upper income groups and result in being regressive. The governments of Rwanda and Tunisia are subsidizing internships in the public and private sector for university graduates (IEG 2012a; IEG 2012b; IEG 2012c; IEG 2012d). Findings from Tunisia suggest very low placement rates at below 15 percent in disadvantaged regions compared to the OECD benchmark placement rate of 80 percent for on-the-job training programs (World Bank 2011).

Public works programs provide short-term employment. These programs have been recommended by the Bank in rural areas. In Europe, the employment effect of public works programs, which form part of ALMPs, is negative for youth and scores below other interventions, including wage subsidies and skills training programs (Kluve 2010). Van Reenen (2003) finds a positive employment effect of the public works “environmental task force,” which is part of the U.K. New Deal program. The Bank supported public works programs for all age groups in Argentina, Bulgaria, Colombia, El Salvador, Kenya, and Turkey. Impact evaluations in Argentina and Colombia only report short-term positive income effects related to the income transfer received, but no information on post-program employment. Various Bank reports recommend self-targeted, low-wage public works programs in rural areas instead of the high-cost and poorly targeted active labor market programs.

The coverage of Active Labor Market Programs is generally thorough and systematic in the Bank’s analytical program. Much of the analytic work reviewed (appendix B) added value through the systematic treatment of ALMPs. Some reports describe and analyze the range of programs that are available. In the Kosovo report, for example, a large number of donors have each been supporting different ALMPs. The report analyzes each of these programs, describing how they operate and reporting data on cost per beneficiary and employment impact. The Ghana study provides a separate paper evaluating the National Youth Employment Program and deals with cost-effectiveness issues.

Few Bank reports focus explicitly on rural youth and on youth employment opportunities in the agriculture and agribusiness sectors although the majority of low-income youth live in rural areas. In the Africa region, analytic work tends to focus on formal employment in the urban areas, where political interest and the data can be found. Few reports examine youth employment in rural low-income areas. In Africa, it is most likely that youth will continue to be absorbed in agriculture, non-farm work, or self-employment. Too little is known about what this implies. The Bank could consider studies on the work and earnings situation of youth in agriculture and off-farm activities, and examine rural growth policy and investment to inform future lending for youth employment programs.

## Smoothing School-to-Work Transition and Job Mobility (L)

Although little is known from Bank support, evidence from the OECD and middle-income countries suggests adding school-to-work interventions to skills building increases the employment effect of skills building in a positive growth context. In the U.K. New Deal program, for example, unemployed youth enter a four-month “gateway” with a personal advisor who assists in the job search. The gateway significantly raised transition to employment. If still unemployed after the gateway period, youth either have to enroll in second-chance education or in subsidized job placement (van Reenen 2003; Blundell and others 2004).

The U.S. Center for Employment Training (CET) keeps youth in training for employment-relevant skills until they find a position. They are assisted in the process by a counselor (Miller and others 2003). The U.S. Job Corps is a multi-intervention program for disadvantaged youth with vocationally focused training and job placement assistance in a residential setting. Participation increases educational attainment, reduces criminal activity, and increases earnings. However, the job placement service was weak and strengthening it could enhance program results (Schochet and others 2008; Lee 2009). A positive growth environment supported the success of these programs.

Although 70 percent of Bank projects support “improving information on the labor market,” little is known about how accessible and helpful job information is to job seekers, particularly in low-income areas with few formal sector jobs. Only in the case of Turkey did the analytic work examine this topic in depth. Even so, it is an area often supported by Bank lending (figure 2.2). The analysis of Bank reports identifies extensive coverage of the education system, whereas the school-to-work transition represents a gap in the analytical framework of youth employment.

Job search assistance, better information, and on-the-job training helped reintegrate ex-soldiers in the former Yugoslavia. In Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1996–1999, the Bank supported the re-integration of 300,000 ex-combatants into the workforce, among them 50,000 youth. The program included a municipal-level labor market information system with job vacancies and job seeker registration, education and retraining services with counseling, and a job-finding service. An impact evaluation found youth had the smallest program impacts, though still significant, with an increase in 28 percentage points in employment and a 42 DM (Deutsch Mark) increase in monthly income (Benus and others 2001).

Without tracer surveys, little is known about the employment and earnings effects of job search assistance. The Bank supported job search assistance in 40 percent of 90 projects, including in Armenia, Bulgaria, El Salvador, Maldives, and Turkey. However, only a few projects report information on job placement rates. In Honduras, the employment service reports a 33 percent placement rate for youth. In Tunisia, the employment service

facilitated 69 foreign work contracts to France where 24 percent of youth are unemployed. During a job fair in Serbia, about 12 percent of participants found a job. In Indonesia, private sector providers in the Life Skills Education for Employment and Entrepreneurship program train, certify, and match unemployed youth with domestic and overseas jobs. IFC's Business Edge program for unemployed youth in Yemen provides training and job placement services and reports a placement rate of 45 percent. Most of these job search interventions reach a small number of youth, and they are only helpful in positive job growth environments.

## **Fostering Skill Development and Labor Market Relevance of Skills (E)**

The World Bank Group supports three main types of technical skills building in all regions (see appendix F, table F.2):<sup>3</sup>

- Formal technical education and vocational education training at the junior, secondary, or tertiary education level (comparable to TVET in OECD countries)—for example, the Technical Education III project in India (IEG 2011b).
- Short-term skills training targeted to unemployed youth, comparable to the SENA (Servicio Nacional De Aprendizaje) Colombia program (Medina and Núñez 2001).
- Remedial skills training targeted to disadvantaged youth comparable to the U.S. Job Corps and the Jovenes en Accion programs in Latin America.

### **FORMAL TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING**

Evidence suggests TVET is more effective if provided comprehensively. The OECD (2010) defines a comprehensive approach to TVET as:

- Workplace training (because it provides learning opportunities for technical and soft skills and facilitates recruitment);
- Professional career guidance;
- Effective training of TVET teachers who should work part-time to sustain their industrial know-how;
- Incentives to employers to offer workplace learning; and
- Standardized assessments for TVET qualifications.

In some countries, high private returns to TVET education are observed, but information on costs is needed to draw policy conclusions. A study on the private returns to investment in education from 16 countries in East Asia and Latin America suggests that TVET seems to serve students better in entering wage employment compared with general secondary education (Patrinos and others 2006). Private returns do not take into account the often substantial public costs associated with TVET and related fiscal implications (Mingat and others 2010). Most Bank analytic work reviewed finds low returns to primary

education in the countries studied, and hardly any difference between no education and primary education for employment or lifetime earnings. Returns increase with secondary education. However, Bank work does not examine the costs and cost-effectiveness of formal TVET.

The few tracer studies find positive employment and earning effects of TVET reforms supported by the Bank and IFC. The Bank supported TVET reforms through private sector involvement in management and governance boards in several countries, including India, Ghana, and Zambia. The five TVET projects that tracked employment outcomes all demonstrated improvement; however, the causal chain is difficult to establish without trend and comparison group data. The IEG project performance evaluation in India found an increase in employment rates for polytechnic graduates from 37 to 70 percent over six years (IEG 2011b). In Mauritania, the employment rate for TVET graduates increased from 60 to 80 percent. IFC support to TVET in Latin America increased student enrollment and the student earnings potential (appendix F, box F.5). IFC has reached 1.5 million students through its education investments. However, with a few exceptions, the ultimate impacts of these IFC projects on jobs and wages are not yet known (see appendix E). Bank reports recommend that governments routinely undertake tracer studies to judge the effectiveness of policies and allocate funding.

Workplace training responds to employer needs and increases the effectiveness of formal TVET. The Honduras training program EPEM (Entrenamiento para el Empleo) (not supported by the Bank), provides workplace training for unemployed youth that is designed and delivered by employers. An impact evaluation found that participation in EPEM increased post-training wages, the probability of employment, and the likelihood of a formal sector job with social security and benefits (Rozada 2011). In many low-income areas, the small formal sector limits the number of work-based learning opportunities.

Skills certification of TVET programs needs to be credible to have a signaling effect for employers, but they can suffer from manipulation. Bank-supported TVET programs emphasize accreditation. However, the potential for manipulation in the accreditation process can devalue its legitimacy as an instrument for accountability. The IEG review of Bank analytical reports found that recommendations in those products focused on the governance of TVET to enhance quality of training, though often in countries with weak governance systems. In India, Crisil India, a Standard and Poor's company with an established reputation for providing unbiased credit ratings of companies, has recently started rating Master in Business Administration (MBA) institutes to ensure that these institutes meet the needs of the market (IEG 2011b). IFC has not worked on skills certification systems.

Unrestricted vouchers in Kenya are increasing TVET training uptake in the private sector where dropout rates are lower. Kenya's Technical and Vocational Voucher Program supported by the Bank (Hicks and others 2011) randomly

awarded vouchers to about 1,000 out-of-school youth for technical and vocational training. Among voucher winners, a random half were awarded a voucher that could only be used in public vocational institutions, whereas the voucher for the other half could be used in both private and public schools. The unrestricted group had a significantly higher training uptake of 79 percent compared to 69 percent in the public institution-only group. Students in private sector training reported lower dropout rates. Females have higher returns to training than males do, but males report higher returns for self-employment. The evaluation for labor market outcomes is ongoing and results are expected by September 2012.<sup>4</sup>

Information about returns to training affects choices by young women, and labor outcomes. In Kenya, girls received information on the relative returns to vocational training on female- and male-dominated trades. The informed girls were five percentage points more likely to enroll in male-dominated courses (Hjort and others 2010). Peru's ProJoven program provides skills training and internships. It encouraged equal participation between men and women in its training courses—especially for traditionally male-dominated occupations. Eighteen months later, girls reported a 15 percent increase in employment and 93 percent higher earnings (Ñopo and others 2007).

### **SHORT-TERM SKILLS BUILDING PROGRAMS**

Short-term skills building programs are more effective when three features are present (Fares and Puerto 2009; Betcherman and others 2007), but few Bank projects contain all of them. They include: (i) private sector involvement in training; (ii) classroom instruction combined with employer attachment (internship, apprenticeship); and (iii) training combined with other services, such as job counseling. Almost 40 percent of Bank-supported skills-building projects provide work-based training, but only 17 percent of projects use a comprehensive approach with the private sector participating in education, counseling, and work-based training (appendix F, table F.3). However, the private sector is still small in many low-income countries.

The few studies of the employment effects of Bank-supported short-term skills building for unemployed youth suggest questionable results. In Turkey, 12,453 unemployed youth received skills training supported by the Bank. The dropout rate was 12 percent and the placement rate 43 percent in 2006. However, no medium-term information is available on employment. The remaining one-third of the project portfolio with short-term skills building did not track employment data. Many skills-building programs support the transport and residential expenses of trainees, which is helpful for youth from lower-income groups. However, no information is collected on the distributional impact of skills building.

Three Bank impact evaluations suggest short-term skills building has had limited effects in Latin America (appendix F, table F.4). The Chile Califica evaluation found no employment impact and only positive monthly wage

impacts for participants older than 40 years of age (Santiago Consultores 2009). The Juventud y Empleo program in the Dominican Republic features several weeks of basic skills training by a private provider followed by a two-month internship with fully subsidized wage and limited follow-up with counseling and technical assistance. Nearly all interns were let go after the internship. The program had no effect on participants' employment, but a modest impact on earnings (Card and others 2011). The IDB-supported Colombia Jóvenes en Acción program reached 80,000 participants over four years with classroom training by a private provider and on-the-job training in a registered company. The main impact is a shift from informal to formal employment, but there was no overall employment effect. Job quality improved through an increase in formal sector employment by 6.8 percentage points and in earnings by 19.6 percent. Effects were stronger for women than for men (Attanasio and others 2011).

Women are often benefiting more than men are from non-formal, short-term skills training. Latin America has several short-term training programs that are part of ALMPs. These courses provide basic job readiness skills for unemployed and disadvantaged youth. For example, the Mexican Probecat offers short-term, on-the-job training complemented by internships in the private sector (Delajara and others 2006). El Salvador and Honduras have introduced such programs as well. These short-term training programs generally report higher employment rates for women, better earnings, and shorter cost-recovery times.

There has been a lack of attention in collecting labor market outcome and cost-effectiveness data in skills development projects (see appendix F for more details), which was similarly noted in other recent IEG evaluations (IEG 2010; IEG 2011c).

## **The Bank's Impact Evaluations on Youth Employment**

The Bank's impact evaluations examine short-term effects, find limited positive results, and often fail to address issues important for policymaking. All seven impact evaluations examine short-term effects. Two of them (Uganda and Kenya) currently collect follow-up data collection. Early findings on what works are inconclusive. In sum:

- Short-term training with internships seems to work in Colombia, but not in the Dominican Republic.
- Entrepreneurship training for university graduates in Tunisia has a negligible self-employment effect and no employment and earning effect;
- Entrepreneurship training appears promising in rural areas in Uganda and Colombia.
- Men report better labor market outcomes for self-employment than women, who do better in skills training.

- Comparing the interventions analyzed by these evaluations with the most frequent interventions in Bank projects (figure 2.2) suggests that impact evaluations are not focusing on the “high-frequency or high-cost” interventions supported by Bank projects, which questions their strategic relevance.

Cost and cost-effectiveness analysis of youth employment interventions are not calculated in Bank operations. IEG’s analysis of 39 impact evaluations of youth employment programs found that 20 percent include cost-benefit analysis. None of the 90 Bank projects in the portfolio reports cost and cost-benefit analysis of interventions. Since evaluating the social returns to investment in alternative youth employment programs is critical for both policy makers and international organizations aiming to facilitate employment for young people, future studies should adopt a more substantive focus on this aspect, thereby enabling a comprehensive analysis on the program effectiveness based on the costs and benefits. Given the high cost of impact evaluations, they should be applied selectively to scalable interventions.

The link between the ongoing impact evaluation program and the need for information for future lending is not clear. The Social Protection Network, with the support of the Spanish Impact Evaluation Fund, is conducting additional impact evaluations including on the India Employment Guarantee Program (no information on youth), the Malawi Apprenticeship Program, the Turkey TVET program (only baseline available), and the South Africa Wage Subsidy program. However, this evaluation has not been implemented as the subsidy is blocked by the labor unions. It is not always clear how the selection of these interventions for impact evaluations is related to the sector strategies and future lending.

## Notes

1. In 2008, the GBI department was transformed into an independent organization called the Grassroots Business Fund.
2. Democratic Alliance: South Africa: COSATU’s opposition to youth wage subsidy is hurting the poor. 13 March 2012. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201203131263.html>
3. The World Bank Group supports the entire education sector including higher education facilities, for example in Vietnam, to bringing advanced technologies to developing regions. The recent IEG Education Portfolio Review (2011) examines the effectiveness of this support.
4. The Technical and Vocational Vouchers Program was launched in late 2008. The majority of voucher winners were still in school until December 2011 when the evaluations were done.

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