

# Meeting youth unemployment head on

At 21 per cent, youth unemployment in Africa is much higher than the world average of 14.4 per cent and second only to the Middle East and North Africa's 25.6 per cent. The high share of young people (ages 15–24) in Africa's population contributes to the severity of the problem.

There are notable differences in youth unemployment with regard to gender. The unemployment rate for young women in Sub-Saharan Africa is 18.4 per cent—lower than the unemployment rate for young men (23.1 per cent)—but young women's labour force participation is lower as well. The lower unemployment and labour force participation rates for young women indicate the impact of cultural norms and role models, which restrict women's employment options to unpaid household work. A further disadvantage for girls is their limited access to education, as compared with boys, which also limits their prospects for jobs in the formal labour market.

Youth unemployment in Africa also has a geographical dimension: it is generally higher in urban areas than in rural ones. However, the lower youth unemployment figures in rural areas are likely to mask a significant amount of underemployment in low productivity smallholding agriculture. In fact, countries with a large formal agricultural wage sector, such as Kenya and São Tomé and Príncipe, have high youth unemployment in rural areas.

Several factors account for the high youth unemployment rate in Africa, most notably low economic growth, which is manifested in low economic activity and low investment. Low economic activity entails low overall job creation. Given the sustained population growth rates, labour markets are not able to absorb all the newcomers, resulting in scarcity of jobs, which leads to more selection by education and experience; precisely the assets that young people are struggling to acquire.

Lower enrolment rates, coupled with low completion rates, low quality of education and a failure to orient curricula with the needs of the private sector have contributed to the mismatch of skills of youth labour markets in Africa. Limited formal work experience and a lack of general and job-related skills also put young Africans at the end of the hiring list. The situation further deteriorated in the 1990s when downsizing meant that the public sector ceased absorbing qualified labour. Consequently, a rapidly growing informal sector has become the “sponge” that provides job avenues to all categories of youth labour, including skilled workers.

The health status of young people affects their employment situation. Young people who are HIV-positive eventually become ill with HIV-related diseases, which can increase their

“ Youth unemployment in Africa is ranked second in the world ”

absence from work, reduce their productivity and lower their chances of being employed. If left untreated, people are ultimately unable to work.

Unemployment has social as well as economic consequences for young people. Unemployed young people are forced to find alternatives to generate income, including activities in the survival-type informal sector and, in extreme cases, criminal activity. Urban youth unemployment is further exacerbated by rural-urban migration. Rural migrants believe that more jobs and social opportunities are available in urban areas, but once in the cities they find themselves without a job and with limited social networks. Trapped and discouraged by bleak job prospects, some turn to the sex, criminality and drug industries to survive.

Youth joblessness also implies missed opportunities in the use of human resources to produce goods and services. In addition, smaller tax revenues result from a smaller tax base for income tax and indirect taxes such as the value added tax. A further implication is related to security. An increase of one percentage point in the ratio of people ages 15–29 to people ages 30–54 increases the likelihood of conflict such as civil unrest or war by 7 per cent. Higher crime rates also have a direct economic cost in terms of loss of foreign direct investment. For example, foreign investors have cited crime as the most serious deterrent to investing in South Africa. If young people continued in secondary education, one possible consequence could be a reduction in the crime rate.

Tapping into the unused potential of unemployed young people could prove a crucial asset for economic development on the continent. Rather than accepting unemployed young people as a burden to society, there is an urgent need to focus on youth employment or occupation policies and to mainstream those policies into a larger development strategy framework. Well targeted youth policies—and specifically national employment policies—public spending directed at young people, projects to tackle rural employment, and the creation of job centres should be an integral part of such a strategy. Public work programmes and internships through public-private initiatives aimed at young people can provide them with an entry to the labour market and improve access to and equity in education. Guided by the needs of the private sector, they can also enhance the quality, curriculum content and resource allocation of the education system. In this regard, it is particularly important to engage young people in monitoring public resource spending.

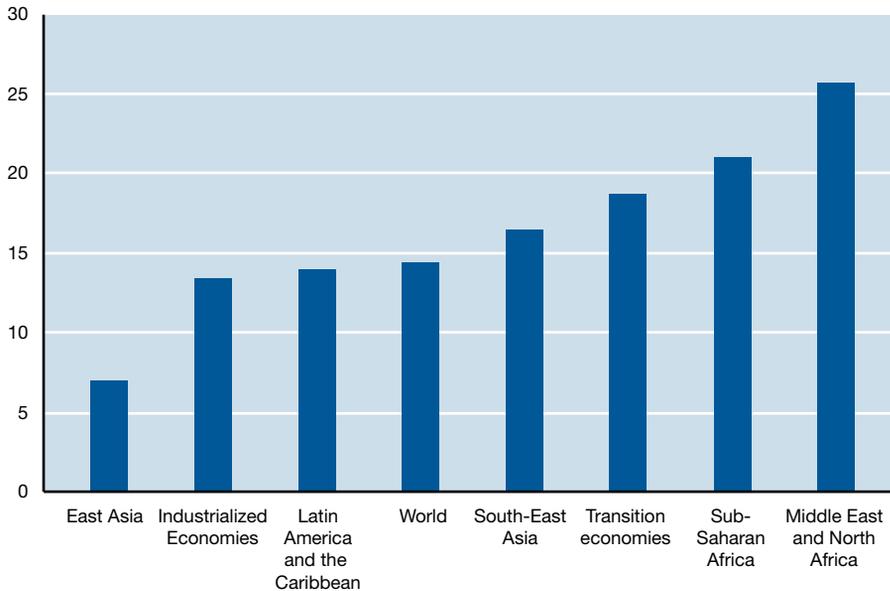
## Africa's youth unemployment: a reason for concern

The youth population in Sub-Saharan Africa was estimated at 138 million people in 2002–2003, with 28.9 million, or 21 per cent, of them unemployed.<sup>1</sup> This is the second highest youth unemployment rate in the world, exceeded only by the Middle East and North Africa, where youth unemployment is 25.6 per cent (figure 5.1). East Asia has the lowest youth unemployment rate with only 7 per cent.

As the fastest growing labour force in the world on current trends, Sub-Saharan Africa's youth labour force will be even more difficult to accommodate in the future. In fact, the

**Figure 5.1**

*Youth unemployment rates, by region, 2003 (%)*



Source: ILO 2004b.

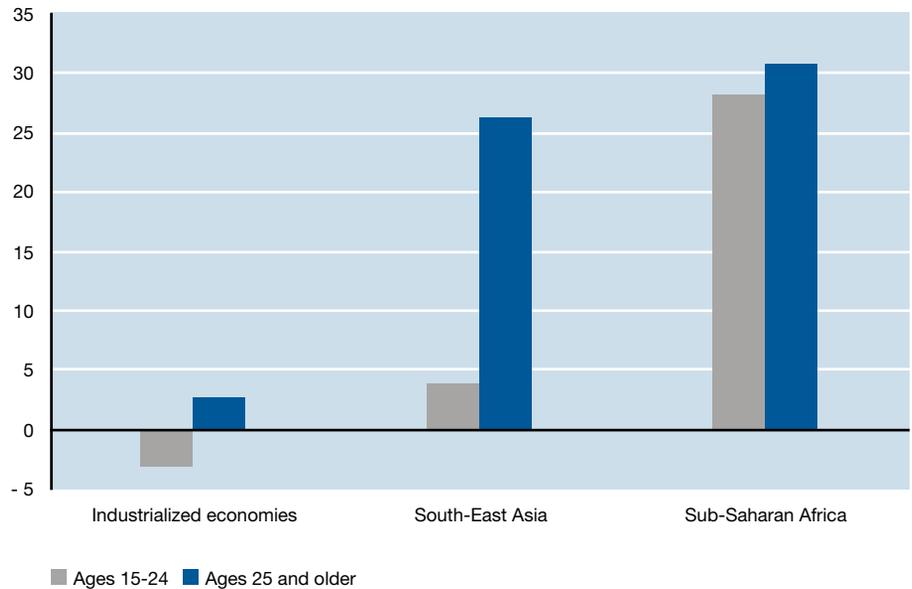
ratio of youth unemployment to adult unemployment was 3.6 in 1993 and remains virtually unchanged at 3.5 in 2003. Over the last decade the rate of youth participation in employment in Sub-Saharan Africa rose from 64.4 per cent to 65.4 per cent, but it dropped in the rest of the world—from 58.8 per cent to 54.9 per cent—as young people entered the workforce later due to more time spent on education (ILO 2004b).

The situation of young people in the labour market is aggravated by the fact that the formal labour market is still small. Young people are often at the end of the job queue for the formal labour market because they lack adequate skills and experience, as well as efficient social networks. Excluded from reasonably paid formal employment, young people are left with atypical or vulnerable forms of formal employment with low pay or the informal sector, where legal protection is limited. As a result, the bulk of young people are engaged in easy-entry informal sector activities with low returns and long hours of work, including street vending, car washing and watching, and making and selling crafts. Numerous young people are compelled to perform jobs with the lowest level of protection, even though they are among those who need the most protection.

A significant number of young people are discouraged by an unsuccessful job search and leave the formal workforce entirely. A survey in South Africa revealed that 39 per cent of unemployed young people have almost given up actively searching for a job and 47.1 per cent gave up because they found no job opportunities in their areas. Some 23.5 per cent said that they could not afford transportation to look for work. And 57 per cent had in-

“ Fertility rates are declining at a much slower pace in Africa ”

**Figure 5.2**  
*Projected regional labour force growth, by age group, 2003–15 (%)*



Source: ILO 2004b.

quired at workplaces, farms and factories or called other possible employers, but only 6.9 per cent had registered at employment agencies or trade unions (Kanyenze, Mhone and Sparreboom 2000). The survey illustrates the lack of transparency in the labour market, where employers and potential employees are unable to advertise jobs or qualifications, making it more difficult and costly to actively search for a job.

### Demographic factors affect youth unemployment

The fast growth in Africa’s youth population is a major factor in youth unemployment, with the demographic situation especially serious in Sub-Saharan Africa. Still high, fertility rates are declining at a much slower pace than in the rest of the world. On current economic growth rates, future increases in the youth labour force do not bode well for the labour market. The youth labour force in Sub-Saharan Africa is projected to grow by 28.2 per cent between 2003 and 2015, compared with a mere 3.8 per cent increase in South-East Asia (figure 5.2) and a 3.1 per cent decline in industrialized economies (including the transition economies). This sharp increase in youth population will boost the supply of young people in the labour market, further constraining job creation. Sub-Saharan Africa is also the only region where adult and youth labour forces will grow at a similar rate, around 30 per cent, with further adverse repercussions for the youth labour market (ILO 2004b).

## Lower unemployment rates for young women—but also lower labour market participation rates

At 18.4 per cent the female youth unemployment rate is lower than the 23.1 per cent male youth unemployment rate, though the share of young women participating in the labour market is lower than for young men (ILO 2004b).

A large number of young women work in the household, where their labour is not accounted for in the system of national accounts. This situation is especially common in urban areas, where the share of women working exclusively in the household is higher than in rural areas. For example, in Zambia 39 per cent of urban young women work at home, compared with half that figure in rural areas (Leibbrandt and Mlatsheni 2004). In several African countries cultural norms and the absence of appropriate role models hamper young women from actively searching for a remunerated job. Many young women are not counted in unemployment statistics because they have simply never actively searched for a job in the formal sector. Informal sector participation among women is so high because women find it easier to combine work in the informal sector with their household duties. If more women started to actively search for formal sector jobs, their recorded unemployment rate would be higher.

Women are also underrepresented in higher education, where the number of young men enrolled is higher. In effect, while many young men are studying, women of the same age support the family and work in the household. Literacy rates for young men ages 15–24 are significantly higher than for young women in the same age group. In Guinea 48 per cent of young men in urban areas are in school, compared with only 22 per cent of young women (Leibbrandt and Mlatsheni 2004).

## Rural underemployment and urban unemployment

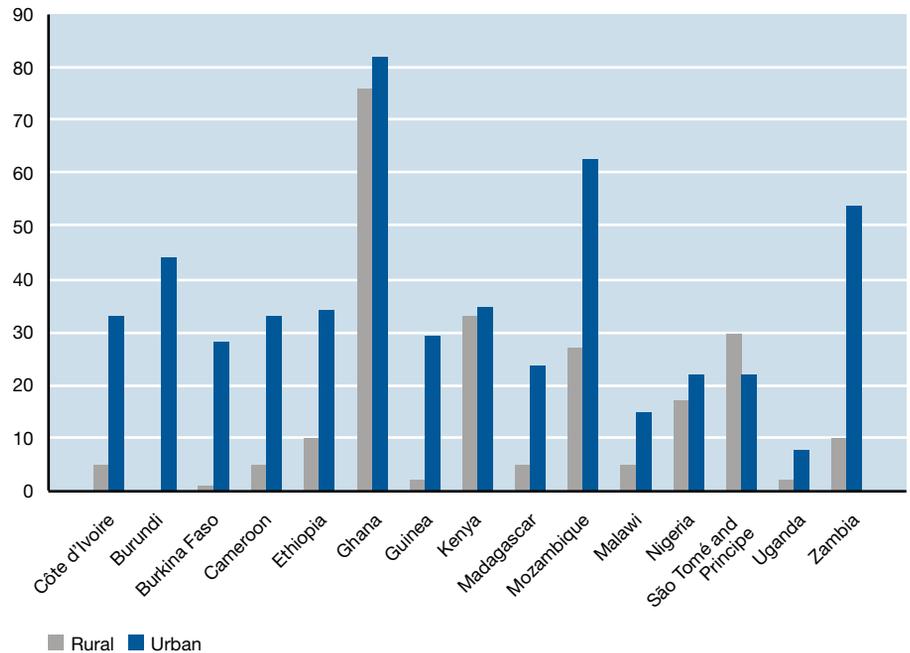
Youth unemployment in urban areas is generally higher than in rural areas. In rural areas most employment is in small-scale agriculture, which is why official unemployment levels are low. With incomes meagre due to low productivity, rural areas have more underemployment. But rural unemployment is high in countries with commercial farms and a formal agricultural wage sector, such as Kenya and São Tomé and Príncipe (figure 5.3). In Kenya, for example, rural youth unemployment has reached 33 per cent (Leibbrandt and Mlatsheni 2004).

In all cases rural exodus continues to be a problem. Many young people migrate to urban areas to find a job with higher remuneration, but jobs in urban areas are not easy to find. Urban employment generally accounts for only a small share of total employment. Once in the cities, these young people might face unemployment as well as underemployment (UN 2003). Migration to urban areas can also be attributed to other non-job-related reasons, including ethnic tension, which is less prevalent in urban areas, or the desire to live in an urban area with more amenities.

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Cultural  
norms keep women  
away from labour  
markets  
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**Figure 5.3**

*Rural and urban youth unemployment rates in selected African countries, (%)*



**Source:** Leibbrandt and Mlatsheni 2004.

## The roots of youth unemployment are deep

Young people are at a disadvantage on the job market thanks to a combination of poor economic performance and limited availability of assets such as education, experience, health and finance. There is a vicious circle of low growth, which reduces availability of assets, which leads to even lower growth. Insufficient aggregate demand, lack of skills among young people and the relative size of the youth labour force are the most commonly cited causes of youth unemployment (Blanchflower and Freeman 1999).

A central reason for high rates of unemployment is low economic growth, which is manifested in low economic activity and investment rates, which do not generate enough additional employment (see chapter 2). The combination of both low economic activity and high population growth results in a scarcity of jobs, meaning that hiring is based more on experience and education, the very assets young people are struggling to acquire (Box 5.1).

Even in an economic upturn, lack of work experience combined with lack of assets puts young people at a disadvantage for new job opportunities. In economic downturns the last-in, first-out of hiring and firing disproportionately affects young people.

## Box 5.1

### Hope through youth employment

African young people facing unemployment as well as social exclusion are particularly vulnerable. Living in substandard housing and working in survival-type economic activities reinforce young people's perception of a bleak future. But different kinds of microenterprises in degraded urban areas give rise to legal economic production and a more hopeful future.

For example, the Kibera Youth Project in the heart of one of Africa's poorest slums in Nairobi is engaged in producing an entire line of solar panels. For many young people working on the project, it is the first time anyone in their immediate family has been given or held a job.

Only a few months after the youth group completed its first prototype solar panel, it drew up a business plan to turn the project into a self-sustaining enterprise. If successful in attracting investment, the group would like to expand its sales to the rural parts of Kenya, where electricity supply is irregular.

Group coordinator Fred Ouko stated that the young people involved in the project are gaining confidence and "are making a full product, selling it, and they know they can do this for themselves".

**Source:** Hicks 2004.

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Low youth  
literacy in SSA  
contributes to high  
unemployment  
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## Low levels of education and skills mismatch reduce chances in the labour market

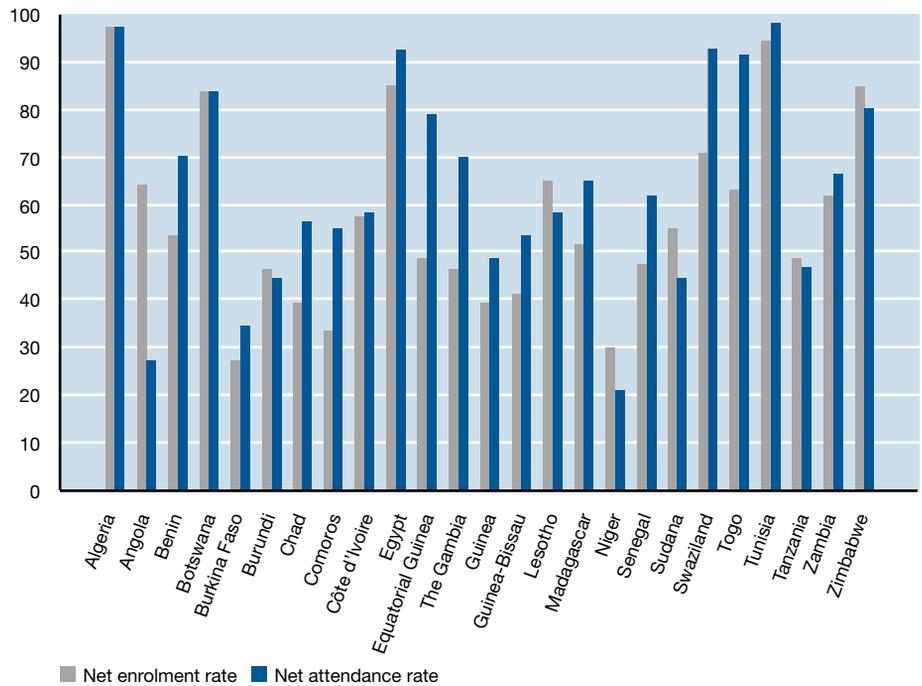
Investment in human capital in Africa is critical for supplying adequately skilled workers. The low level of education of young people is a significant factor in the longer unemployment spells they face. Youth education in Africa is below the average: for example, youth literacy in Sub-Saharan Africa is 76.8 per cent, lower than the 94.8 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean and 98 per cent in East Asia and the Pacific (UNDP 2004).

Besides the low enrolment rates in Africa (figure 5.4), primary school completion rates are also low: the world average was 81 per cent in 2001, while the average for Sub-Saharan Africa was just above 50 per cent. North African countries are in a better position with completion rates of 74 per cent (ECA 2004b).

In most of Sub-Saharan Africa the formal primary school age does not correspond to the age range of those enrolled. Part of the gap between enrolment and attendance figures in Africa can be attributed to initial enrolment, which takes place at ages above the official age. The school to work transition phase comes later, when pressure to earn a living rather than continue education becomes more acute.

In recent years returns to secondary education have decreased. A study in Kenya reveals that over 1978–95 the wages paid to workers with secondary education fell, while the direct cost of a secondary education remained stable. This made secondary education less attractive to young people, and the private rate of return to secondary education declined

**Figure 5.4**  
**Primary school enrolment and attendance rates for selected African countries, 2001 (%)**



**Note:** Averages are weighted by population.

**a.** Includes only Northern Sudan.

**Source:** UNESCO 2002.

from 23 per cent to 7 per cent. The social rate of return also fell from 20 to 6 per cent over the same period (Appleton, Bigsten and Manda 1999).

Some young Africans believe that they are not adequately rewarded for their time at school, seeing it as “unproductive”. In rural areas parents may prefer using their children’s labour to reinforce the family’s prospects in agriculture. But youth unemployment in Africa is higher among the less educated than among the more educated. In South Africa, for example, nearly two-thirds of unemployed young people do not hold a secondary school level certificate. In Ethiopia 45 per cent of unemployed young people are illiterate, and 33 per cent have only a primary level education.

Post-primary education in Africa since independence has been developed largely to supply the public sector. The 1990s reforms towards more market-oriented economies have not been matched by adequate adaptation of the curricula. And skills demanded by the labour market are not matched by the educational product (“skills mismatch”), illustrating the lack of a functioning feedback between educational institutions and the private sector.

The low quality of education, which leads to a general lack of skills, is another cause of youth unemployment. Free education programmes are often limited to primary education and provide only basic skills. High dropout rates worsen the situation further. Out-of-school training would be required for these young people to qualify for jobs, but in most cases the resources for training and skills development are scarce, if available at all (Leibbrandt and Mlatsheni 2004). In some countries training activities were offered in areas such as carpentry, auto mechanics and bricklaying, among others. Because these training activities ignored labour market demand, they led to unemployment and low returns on investment in training. When training activities are offered, they need to be carefully assessed against the kind of skills required on the labour market (Kanyenze, Mhone and Sparreboom 2000).

Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa have introduced apprenticeships—structured programmes that integrate theoretical learning with working experience (box 5.2). They involve partnerships between governments, service providers and the private sector and are a good example of the kind of feedback mechanisms needed to address the skills mismatch in Africa. Expanding similar mechanisms to formal schools is a promising way to enhance the skills match. A similar system of productivity councils—where the skills profile needed by the private sector was fed directly into the curricula of the educational sector—was part of the economic success of the East Asian countries.

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor research project found that young people (ages 18–34) were the most likely to become active as entrepreneurs. A third of successful entrepreneurs came from that age group (Leibbrandt and Mlatsheni 2004). Promoting self-employment and entrepreneurial skills and granting access to assets such as education, training, health and finance enable young people to take advantage of the opportunities offered by self-employment.

## **Box 5.2**

### ***Apprenticeship in Nigeria***

An example of the attempt at linking education and training at the workplace is the Nigeria's National Open Apprenticeship Scheme in Nigeria under the Ministry of Labor and Productivity's National Directorate of Employment. Under the scheme vocational education and training in more than 100 occupations are provided to unemployed young people. The programme uses production facilities such as workshops and technical instructors of private industries, government institutions and, by way of a subcontracting arrangement, wayside craftspeople and tradespeople (informal sector operators).

Unemployed young people and school-leavers can train for six months to three years under reputable master craftspeople. To enhance trainees' theoretical understanding of the trade in which they are involved, theory classes are organized every Saturday to complement the practical training received. Since the scheme's inception in 1987 nearly 600,000 unemployed young people have received training, and 400,000 of them have started their own microenterprises.

**Source:** Kanyenze, Mhone and Sparreboom 2000.

## AIDS is a serious health issue for young people

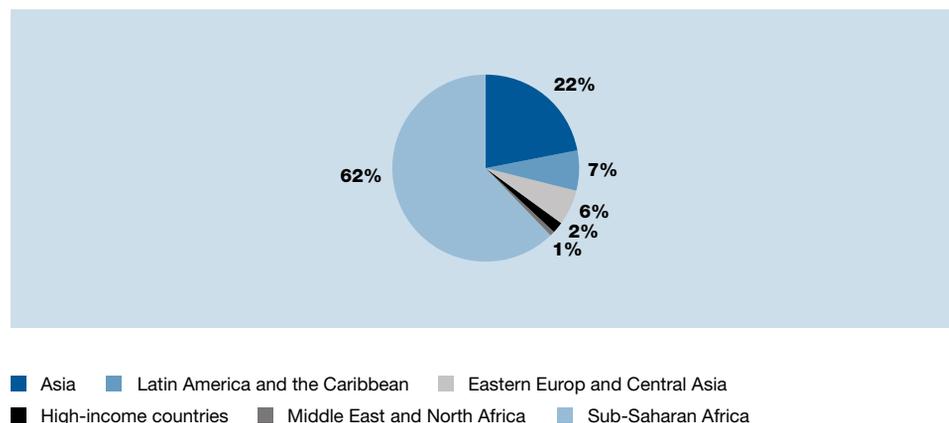
The poor health status in Africa is a severe bottleneck to employment and economic growth. At 45.2 years, life expectancy in Sub-Saharan Africa is among the lowest in the world. Of 100 newborns fewer than 30 reach age 40 in Swaziland, fewer than 56 in Cameroon and more than 90 in Algeria do (UNDP 2004). Among other factors, weak healthcare institutions and the AIDS pandemic contribute to high mortality in Sub-Saharan Africa. AIDS is the single most serious health issue in Africa today because of its negative effect on productive age groups. At the end of 2003 an estimated 35.7 million adults (ages 15–49) across the world were living with HIV/AIDS—10 million of them young people. Even more worrisome, every day more than 6,000 young people contract HIV worldwide (UNAIDS 2004).

“ 75 per cent of the young people living with Aids in SSA are women ”

Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest share of young people living with HIV: nearly two-thirds reside in the region (figure 5.5). It is also disheartening that three-quarters of the young people living with HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa were women, making the share of women living with HIV/AIDS 1.7 times higher than in any other part of the world (UNAIDS 2004).

Young people who are HIV-positive eventually become ill with HIV-related diseases, increasing their absence from work, reducing their productivity and lowering their chances of employment. Untreated, young people are ultimately unable to work. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO 2004c), by 2005 more than 2 million workers across the world will be unable to work at any time as a result of HIV/AIDS, and by 2015 that figure will be more than 4 million. Already an estimated 36.5 million people of working age have HIV/AIDS, and by next year the global labour force will have lost as many as 28 million workers due to AIDS since the start of the epidemic.

**Figure 5.5**  
*Distribution of young people living with HIV, by region, end 2003*



Source: UNAIDS 2004.

Because the burden of caring for sick family members falls more heavily on women and girls, they are forced to leave economically productive activities and divert their time to care giving. If 2 million workers are unable to work because of HIV/AIDS, approximately 2 million more people of working age will be unable to work because of care duties; the indirect impact of care can thus double the direct impact of the illness (ILO 2004c).

In 2003 the number of HIV/AIDS orphans, defined as children and young people ages 0–17 who have lost one or both parents to AIDS, reached 15 million, and more than 80 per cent of them were in Sub-Saharan African countries. Having been robbed of parental care and guidance, the orphans often withdraw from school, leaving them ill-equipped to find work.<sup>2</sup>

## Consequences of youth unemployment are severe

In Sub-Saharan Africa the lack of job prospects and the likelihood of a desolate future for unemployed young people may contribute to socially deviant behaviour. Furthermore this situation could reinforce marginalization of young people from the labour market and society at large.

### **Young urban migrants have no jobs and limited social networks**

The motivation underlying urban-rural migration is similar to the motivation underlying international migration of young people discussed in chapter 6. Many young people migrate from rural to urban areas expecting better opportunities there (Ogbu and Ikiara 1995; Linden 1996; Sommers 2003). This has created a rapid growth in urban population and intensified competition in the urban labour market (Schoumaker and Beauchemin 2002).

In a context where social relations are as crucial as qualifications, young urban migrants searching for a job face an uphill struggle of “surviving” with limited social networks (Lange and Martin 1993). Increasingly, the informal sector provides employment to young educated people, whose access to modern sector employment is declining. With lower literacy rates, rural young people are at a disadvantage relative to more educated urban young people (box 5.3). The rise in criminal activity, drug addiction and prostitution among young unemployed migrants is due partly to the combined effects of the lack of social networks and insufficient job opportunities.

### **Youth unemployment contributes to crime and violence**

The death rate attributable to violence in Africa is estimated at 60.9 per 100,000 people—more than twice the global rate (WHO 2004a). Crime and violence have been increasing in many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa among unemployed young people. Youth gangs, viewed as second or substitute families, typically satisfy the economic and social needs of unemployed young people through violence.

“*Social networks are key to find a job in urban areas*”

Some young people enter the criminal world at a very young age and end up becoming victims of crime themselves. The combination of youth unemployment and availability of firearms has been deadly. According to the Nairobi Youth and Crime Survey, the most common major offences for which young offenders were arrested were theft, assault and drug possession (UN-HABITAT 2004b).

### **Box 5.3**

#### ***Urban unemployment among young people in Burkina Faso***

Like many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, Burkina Faso's urban unemployment rate increased 10 percentage points, from 30.7 per cent to 40.2 per cent, for young men and 8 percentage points for young women between 1980 and 2000.

The downsizing of the public sector in the 1990s reduced employment opportunities for young educated people. For example, in Ouagadougou the unemployment rate in 1992 was estimated at 43.3 per cent among 15- to 29-year-olds, compared with 6.7 per cent among those age 40 and older.

Burkina Faso also witnessed a rapid increase in its urban population, fuelled by young migrants moving for economic reasons, which also intensified competition in the urban labour market.

The result: a lower quality of jobs supplied and new generations of young Africans increasingly turning to less profitable and less stable economic activities in the informal sector of the economy. The informal urban sector accounted for 80 per cent of jobs in Ouagadougou in the 1990s.

*Source: Calves and Schoumaker 2004.*

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In South Africa,  
most young men  
between 15-21 die  
from gunshots  
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The South African government found that homicide, primarily involving firearms, was the leading cause of death among young men ages 15–21 and that gunshots from all causes were the leading cause of non-natural death in South Africa (Fleshman 2001). According to an advocacy group, Gun Free South Africa, 12 per cent of gun death victims in 1998 were young women, and about 7 per cent of gun death victims were under age 17 (Fleshman 2001).

### **Commercial sex work is more common among young unemployed girls**

In Africa unemployment has driven many young women and girls into sex work. Struggling to support families and provide care to sick members of the household, they are often restricted in their opportunities for education and training. The lack of job opportunities and their disadvantageous social role, both in terms of assets (education and health) and cultural norms, make them more likely to end up as sex workers (ILO 2005).

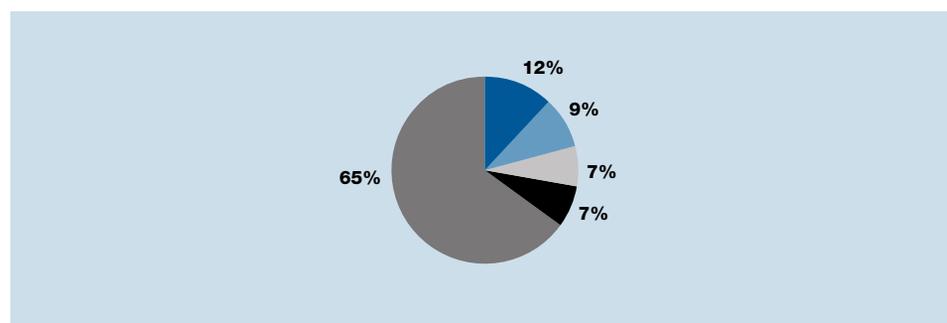
The demand for commercial sex workers from international tourism flows to Africa is on the rise. In Madagascar, for example, sex tourism has challenged the well-being of poor unemployed young women, who often struggle with hunger and destitution. In Kenya the boost in foreign tourism led to an increase in the number of commercial sex workers, as already occurred at Kenya's beach resorts (Meares 1996). Cameroon faces the same type of problem. And in Ethiopia young unemployed women are unwittingly drawn into prostitution, which also appears to be linked to rural-urban migration.

Another repercussion of unemployment closely linked to prostitution is higher HIV prevalence. Surveys of sex workers in some urban areas between 1998 and 2002 indicate extraordinarily high prevalence rates—for example, 74 per cent in Ethiopia and 50 per cent in South Africa (UNAIDS 2004).

## Drugs and unemployment

Young people not attending school, living on the street and outside the reach of mainstream services, are more likely to abuse illicit substances than are employed young people (UN 2003). Figure 5.6 show the major problem drugs in Africa as reflected by treatment demand. In SSA, the main drug used by adolescents is Cannabis sativa, or marijuana, which in 2002 accounted for 99 per cent of seizures made by the authorities, with 34.6 million users representing 7.7 per cent of the continent's 15-24 year-old population. In other parts of the world, such as the United States and Europe, Cannabis accounts for over 90 per cent of all youth drug use. Drug abuse decreases young people's possibility of finding employment and results in additional costs to the economy.

**Figure 5.6**  
Main problem drugs in Africa, 1995–2002



■ Opiates ■ Cocaine-type ■ Amphetamine stimulants ■ Others ■ Cannabis

**Note:** Data are unweighted average of treatment demand in 24 African countries in 1995–2002.

**Source:** UNODC 2004.

“Unemployment can drive women to sex work”

## Jobless young people: an unaffordable price

Youth unemployment and its possible repercussions come at a price to the economy, to society and to the individual. Furthermore, the health burden of HIV/AIDS on GDP in Sub-Saharan Africa is closely linked to unemployed young people. Being young and unemployed in Sub-Saharan Africa contributes to high social costs that further constrain public expenditure (Brenner 1979).

### **The economic cost of youth unemployment**

The most direct impact on the economy of an unproductive youth labour force is lost output in terms of goods and services. With no income tax to collect and the loss of receipts from indirect taxes such as the value added tax, the government takes in less in tax revenue (Bellemare and Poulin-Simon 1994).

The macroeconomic impact of HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa is critical. Of the youth population in Sub-Saharan Africa, 6.9 per cent of women and 2.1 per cent of men were living with HIV by the end of 2003 (UNAIDS 2004). This means that 4.76 million women and 1.44 million men were living with HIV in 2003 in the region. Of this total, a significant share is believed to be unemployed young people.

Between 1992 and 2000 the HIV/AIDS epidemic reduced GDP per capita growth for 33 African countries by 0.7 per cent a year. If HIV/AIDS prevalence rates were to remain the same between 2002 and 2020, these countries will have grown 18 per cent less, a loss of \$144 billion. The cumulative effects of HIV/AIDS on costs such as replacing workers, depleted organizations and institutions represent even more substantial economic losses (ILO 2004c). Low economic growth has an adverse impact on the ability of governments to raise tax revenues—because they depend on the size of the economy—while increasing the demand on government expenditure, including poverty alleviation. This directly distorts government budgets, especially health budgets.

A study of seven Caribbean countries estimated the economic cost of healthcare expenditures, government transfers, the financial costs of crime, child support, the failure to address adolescent health and teen pregnancy. Annual direct financial expenditures averaged \$28–\$262 per birth, depending on the country. The sum of direct financial expenditures, foregone tax revenues, cost to society of criminal activity and foregone benefits from spending government transfers and healthcare on other areas ranged from \$33 per year and per birth in Guyana to \$363 in Saint Kitts and Nevis (World Bank 2003a).

A cost-benefit analysis of 41 programmes that focus on young people in developing countries showed the value of the opportunity cost of investing in formal schooling for young people, basic education and literacy for adolescents. High returns were also registered for some types of school health services (micronutrient supplements) and some types of reproductive health investments. Increased education for young people has several positive outcomes: a lower probability of youth unemployment, lower incidence of HIV infection and reduced likelihood of violence and civil conflict (Knowles and Behrman 2003).

A comparison of the benefit-cost ratio of investing in young people versus productive sectors such as livestock and agricultural development projects shows that it can be more profitable to invest in young people than in these sectors. Investment in education especially pays off in open and integrated economies that are linked to the rapid advances of technology. The benefit-cost ratio of a cotton processing and marketing project in Kenya in 1979 was only 1.8, while that of a youth basic education and literacy programme in Colombia was as high as 19.9. These are valid economic reasons to channel public resources towards young people (Knowles and Behrman 2003).

At the individual level, being unemployed at an early age combined with intermittent unemployment has a direct negative impact on future income streams. This is termed “wage scar”. In the United Kingdom the wage for a 42 year-old who has been repeatedly unemployed since youth is 12-15 per cent lower than the wage of a worker who has never been unemployed. This magnitude, however, decreases to 8-10 per cent if individuals avoid repeated incidences of unemployment once they are past youth (Gregg and Tominey 2004). Long and repeated unemployment of young people in Africa is likely to decrease wage levels as much as in the United Kingdom.

## Youth unemployment results in higher HIV medical costs

Unemployed young people are at a much higher risk of contracting HIV/AIDS than are employed young people. This is due to persistent behavioural risks, and lack of information, education and services (UNAIDS 2004).<sup>3</sup> Young unemployed women in Sub-Saharan Africa are more vulnerable to HIV infection than are young men. At least three-quarters of young people infected by HIV in Sub-Saharan African countries by the end of 2003 were women. The ratio of infected young women compared to infected young men in Sub-Saharan Africa

“ Investment in youth programmes shows a high rate of return ”

### Box 5.4

#### Private sector response to HIV/AIDS

Some private companies have reacted to the HIV/AIDS epidemic—for example, the Debswana Diamond Company in Botswana. Vital to the country’s economy, the company accounts for 33 per cent of GDP, 65 per cent of government revenue and over 70 per cent of foreign exchange earnings. In 1999, 75 per cent of retirements from the company and 59 per cent of deaths of company workers were due to AIDS (Whiteside and Barnett 2002).

In the mining sector, in particular, the nature of the industry and the composition of the workforce lead to a unique risk situation with respect to HIV transmission and additional costs to the industry (Whiteside 2000). It is more costly for the company to train new employees than to provide antiretroviral drugs to its employees and dependents. The Debswana Diamond Company also distributes antiretroviral drugs to its affected employees. In general, however, the private sector has been slow in responding to the epidemic.

Source: UNECA 2004c.

ranged from 20 women for every 10 men in South Africa to 45 women for every 10 men in Mali and Kenya. This is caused partly by the lack of employment opportunities that many young women face, leading to commercial sex with older men to support themselves and their families. Exacerbated by the higher biological vulnerability of girls and women to HIV infection, gender imbalance,<sup>4</sup> patterns of sexual networking and age-mixing, girls and women are the main victims of this deadly disease (UNAIDS 2004).

In Sub-Saharan Africa the annual medical cost of AIDS (excluding antiretroviral therapy) is estimated at about \$30 per patient, compared with overall public health spending of less than \$10 per capita for most African countries (Fredriksson and Kanabus 2004). This means that Sub-Saharan Africa would have to spend \$186 million a year on young people infected by HIV. For an example of the private sector responding to HIV/AIDS see box 5.4.

Spending on HIV/AIDS reduces resources for other communicable diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis. The World Health Organization's Commission on Macroeconomics and Health has also confirmed the huge cost of economic loss from the disease. It estimates that the total benefits from one averted HIV/AIDS infection in a poor country are as high as \$34,600 when annual average earnings are \$1,000 a year (Curtain 2003).

## **Social costs of youth unemployment**

Youth unemployment has a significant social cost. In addition to the indirect health cost, youth unemployment partly contributes to illicit activity, which increases insecurity.

Even in developed regions the increase in criminal activity by unemployed young people has had a social cost. In New South Wales, Australia, over 1989–99 long-term unemployment substantially increased young men's likelihood of committing a property crime. Providing more job opportunities for young men could reduce property crime in New South Wales by nearly 6 per cent a year. The crime rate could be reduced by nearly 15 per cent a year if these individuals completed high school (Champman and others 2002). A similar study conducted in England and Wales on the link between unemployment and crime suggests that youth unemployment and the different types of crimes such as burglary, theft, fraud and forgery and total crime are significantly and positively correlated (Carmichael and Ward 2001).

The increase in criminality in a country as a consequence of youth unemployment causes losses in foreign direct investment. For example, foreign investors have cited crime as the biggest deterrent to investing in South Africa (UNODC 2003). Mass unemployment among young people also disrupts long-term development of labour skills and experience. Sustained unemployment could also cause young people to be hostile to the world of work and more receptive to drugs and crime (Nattrass 2002).

Civil disorder, sometimes developing into civil strife and conflict, is one of the most serious constraints to Africa's development (Fosu 2005). Young unemployed men are prime candidates for recruitment as soldiers in any civil disorder. The chances of a poor country experiencing civil conflict have also been linked to the size of its youth population. In addition, lower education status of young men is associated with a higher propensity for

internal conflict. Other things being equal, increasing the young male population in secondary education by 10 percentage points reduces the risk of civil conflict by 4 percentage points (Collier 2000). More pertinent with regard to youth unemployment: without an alternative, conflict could be seen as an income-generating activity (Collier 2000).

Large youth bulges,<sup>5</sup> a characteristic of Sub-Saharan Africa's demographic structures, make countries more unstable in general and more susceptible to armed conflict. A one percentage point increase in youth bulge is associated with an increased likelihood of conflict of about 7 per cent. And countries that experience youth bulges of 35 per cent or more run three times the risk of conflict of countries with youth bulges of 17 per cent, the median for developed countries (Urdal 2001).

## Addressing youth unemployment

The loss in GDP attributed to youth unemployment combined with the cost of mitigating the impact of drug use and criminality associated with unemployment reinforce the need to address the issue. The identification of key youth policy interventions and adequate resource allocation are crucial. Domestic resources in Sub-Saharan Africa are limited by low tax revenues and fiscal sustainability criteria that set upper limits on government expenditure, as well as competing priorities of government expenditure in general. These binding domestic resource constraints should not deter from refocusing public expenditure towards young people. Increased expenditure to raise the educational and health status of young people does not divert funds to the social sector but is a way of prioritizing allocation within the social sector. More efficient public expenditure in general based on decentralization and a public expenditure tracking system contributes to additional resources for youth targeting.

The need to create an enabling environment for the private sector is important (see chapter 7). One of the key areas is to mainstream youth employment within development frameworks in order to mitigate the marginalization of young people in Africa.

### Youth employment policies must be mainstreamed

Job creation is essential to Africa's current and future generations. Investments in human capital can have low rates of return if output growth and aggregate labour demand do not adequately expand. Youth unemployment is a component of aggregate unemployment and cannot be tackled unless economic growth is sufficient. Besides accelerating growth, mainstreaming youth aspects within overall development paths is necessary. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers' focus on employment creation as an exit strategy from poverty is a crucial policy instrument for targeting young people.

An analysis of 21 African countries' Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers<sup>6</sup> reveals that only 11 have at least one core section analyzing youth employment. Seventeen countries have specifically targeted employment creation for young people, mainly through training, education and the development of the private sector (table 5.1).

“  
Better educated  
youth reduces the  
risk of civil conflict  
”

**Table 5.1****Employment issues in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers in 21 African countries**

Issue	Number of countries dealing with the issue
Analysis of youth employment	11
Goals or actions targeting employment creation for young people	17
Macroeconomic goals linked to employment creation	7
Training goals linked to employment creation	21
Education goals linked to employment creation	15
Private sector development linked to employment creation	20

**Source:** UNECA, from official sources.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers identify three major areas of action for youth employment: training and education, macroeconomic policies and private sector development. These are crucial areas for tackling youth unemployment, but they need to be deepened and backed by adequate resources. For example, on-the-job training is listed as a way to tackle youth unemployment. However, the educational skills required for on-the-job training are not identified, undermining the cost-effectiveness of such actions. The identification of actions necessary for tackling youth unemployment must be well targeted and must be of a more structural nature.

**Develop a national employment strategy targeting youth employment.** The youth unemployment problem in developing countries has been internationally recognized. The Youth Employment Network is a UN-sponsored forum with young people involved as partners in devising solutions to the unemployment issues affecting them. Of the 10 lead countries adopting a National Action Plan on youth employment, 5 are from Africa. Though the action plans are country specific, their main thrust is based on the four E's: employability, equal opportunity, entrepreneurship and employment creation (Youth Employment Network 2004). Those action plans can serve as an example for other African countries.

South Africa developed a comprehensive strategy after the 1998 Presidential Job Summit and has undertaken several initiatives to increase employment opportunity for young people. These initiatives include learnership programmes, where young people receive theoretical training then follow up with on-the-job practice—a process that involves government, training service providers and the private sector. Youth Advisory Centres based in communities with a large youth population also provide information on careers and job opportunities and organize training workshops on job-related skills such as writing resumés and interview techniques (Youth Development Network 2004). Namibia, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe have also initiated or advanced this process.

**Create job centres with a specific youth department.** Job centres coordinate demand and supply on the labour market: private sector enterprises can advertise vacancies, saving job-seekers time and money from going to the enterprises to ask for a job. To successfully establish job centres it is important to go beyond mere administration of vacancies.

“Only 50 per cent of African Poverty Reduction Strategies address youth”

Close contact must be maintained with the private sector to continuously assess skills demands. The job centre also needs to advise young people on marketable skills. And it needs to stay in close contact with training institutions. For young people, job centres can provide information on different professions, facilitate decisionmaking on what to study and promote internships. In its turn, the private sector needs to publicize vacancies and provide data. This will pay off by saving enterprises the transaction cost of searching for adequately skilled staff.

“ An essential tool, job centres encourage youth to seek employment ”

## Resource use: a refocus

In developing countries youth unemployment has been highlighted as a crucial area requiring pertinent policy interventions. At the international level the urgency of the youth problem was recognized and clearly identified in the Millennium Development Goals. Millennium Development Goal Target 16 is to “develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth.” In this context the Youth Employment Network was created. The International Labour Organization sees decent and productive work for young people as both an integral part of the Millennium Declaration and a key contributor to meeting other Millennium Development Goals, including those relating to reducing poverty. On a regional level the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa has decided to focus its fifth African Development Forum on the issue of youth and leadership in order to place young people within development agendas and optimize synergies of young people and related policies for accelerating Africa’s development (ILO 2004b).

Official development assistance flows to health (\$1.2 billion in 2003) and education (\$1.3 billion) were the largest share of aid to Africa (OECD 2003). In Africa public expenditure on education averages 3.8 per cent of GDP and public expenditure on health averages 2.8 per cent of GDP (World Bank 2000). The need to mobilize more resources for young people more efficiently cannot be overstated. There is also a need for education and health service providers to be closer to end-users and for young people to be more involved in the process.

**Decentralization.** Decentralization covers the issues regarding the appropriate balance of financial and administrative responsibility among central governments, subnational governments, institutions engaged in the provision of services and target communities. There are two key considerations in determining this balance: efficiency and feasibility.

Government budgetary allocations are public, but information on actual spending is generally unavailable (Kanungo 2003). A public expenditure analytical tool is crucial for ensuring that resources for youth unemployment are used efficiently.

Public expenditure tracking surveys have been conducted in Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia, and they should be replicated in other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. The main findings show how necessary public expenditure tracking surveys are:

- In Uganda only 22 per cent of funding for books and other instructional material, key to improving educational quality, reached end users in 1996—and in Ghana only 49 per cent did (Reinikka and Smith 2004).

- Estimations for Uganda show that 40 per cent–94 per cent of total drugs provided by the government did not reach their targeted end-users (Ablo and Reinikka 2000).
- Accountability is key: if young people in rural areas are supplied with information on funds designated to them, they can hold local authorities responsible for efficient targeting and spending. After the introduction of public expenditure tracking surveys in Uganda funds for education provided by the central government that actually reached their target shot up from 13 per cent to 80 per cent–90 per cent in 1999–2000 (Reinikka and Smith 2004).

## Public-private partnerships

Public-private partnerships are essential for overcoming supply constraints in education and provide feedback from the private sector to the education system, which mitigates the skills mismatch. The private sector can participate in education by providing inputs such as textbooks, operating public schools and delivering education through private schools. By contrast, the government is concerned with access, equity, quality and whether public resources are used to support the realization of a well educated society (UNITAR and DMAN 2001).

Provider or regulator. Governments must move from providing education and health services to regulating them:

- The government of Uganda gave Makerere University more responsibility to make it financially viable. This has enabled the university, in consultation with the business sector, to design new courses that target professionals and companies in order to increase their skills. Integrated internship programmes also offer the possibility of smooth transition from school to work (Dang 2002).
- Public-private partnerships improve the quality of education by using private sector core competencies to robustly link education with job skills and gainful employment, as practiced by the United States Agency for International Development's Office of Global Development Alliance. The Global Learning Portal, one of the alliance's activities, provides pre-service and in-service training for teachers at all levels in developing countries to improve their capacity and hence the quality of education. Ethiopia, South Africa and Uganda are among the pilot countries (USAID 2005).

**Overcoming supply constraints.** With funds limited by macroeconomic stability programmes, government face serious financing gaps for investment. New ways of financing investment have to be found. These might include involvement of the private sector and NGOs, only to mention a few.

- Public-private partnerships have been considered as a strategy for building schools in South Africa, particularly in the provinces of Free State and Mpumalanga.

- The emergence of private financial institutions (microfinance institutions, cooperatives and private banks) in many parts of Africa means that public-private partnerships in financing education (administration of government loan) could be used to decrease transaction costs and increase efficiency. They could prevent a low student loan repayment rate, such as Ghana's low 8 per cent rate for tertiary education.

*Improving management.* Different education services—such as in-service training of teachers, developing curriculum and learning materials and training school managers and governors—can be outsourced to private contractors (Pampallis 2003). The Aga Khan Development Network partnership with the government of Pakistan is an example of improved quality of education service delivery and promotion of professional development for teachers (AKDN and DFID 2003).

Provision of information communication technology courses by the private sector in public universities is another area of partnership. In South Africa Educor, a local company, was contracted to provide the entire computer training programme of a public university (Dang 2002).

## **Public works programmes as an entry gate to the labour market**

In addition to low demand for labour, a barrier to finding work for many young people is lack of work experience. They must become accustomed to regulated working hours. Public work programmes can be useful for drawing young people away from the street and helping them to pursue other goals, such as environmental cleanup programmes (Box 5.5). In Ghana young people were employed in reforestation and urban sanitation programmes, and in Nigeria young people have been employed on government agricultural plantations (Nwuke 2002).

The use of public works programmes for young people can be further enhanced by combining the entry gates to the work environment and training. Public works programmes should be seen within the wider context of continued education, acting as a catalyst for combining wage-earning apprenticeships and market-driven skills acquisition.

## **New directions for the education system**

Improving access to education is imperative, especially because less-educated people have access to fewer jobs. In Sub-Saharan Africa youth literacy increased from 66.8 per cent in 1990 to 76.8 per cent in 2002—insufficient for active participation in the job market because basic education is a prerequisite for training young people (UNDP 2004).

Youth unemployment is partly the result of a mismatch between inadequate educational outcomes and skills demand. The education system must provide the skills profiles required by the labour market to enhance the employability of young people. At the formal school level this requires achieving full enrolment in primary schools. Complementary policy

“Integration is necessary between universities and business”

### Box 5.5

#### A countercyclical safety-net role

A large public works programme that covers infrastructure, health and education is operated by the Social Fund for Development in Egypt. Nongovernmental organizations manage it, and the private sector is in charge of implementation and maintenance. At least 25 per cent of programme funds have to be spent on labour whose salaries must not exceed local wage rates. Between 1991 and 1997 more than 42,000 jobs were created, 90 per cent of them temporary, and most of the participants were young. The Social Fund's Small Enterprise Development Organization targets university graduates with its loan programmes, which provide start-up loans with heavily subsidized interest rates. Credit officers are actively encouraged to approach university graduates.

To create permanent jobs and to involve the private sector in training young people, the government decided to introduce a dual system in technical education and vocational training in 1991, known as the Mubarak-Kohl initiative. The private sector contributes by defining the training needs, and the Ministry of Education supervises the design of a pedagogical, organizational, legal and financial framework that fits the local situation. For the pilot phase, cities with a high number of medium-size and large enterprises were chosen. Eventually, all types of training will be organized along the lines of the dual system. After completing preparatory school, all Egyptian children will have the opportunity to enrol in technical secondary education and graduate three years later. Ideally, they will find employment in the business where they acquired their skills, and if not they have improved their chances of finding a job elsewhere.

The initiative was considered very successful: over 1995–2003 some 8,000 young people were trained, with 1,480 companies and 40 schools participating. The initiative is scheduled to be extended.

*Source: Kanyenze, Mhone and Sparreboom 2000.*

“Public works  
are one doorway to  
the job market”

interventions are required to enhance quality, gender parity, curriculum development and secondary education.

**Increased enrolment.** Primary school enrolment must be increased by:

- Involving local stakeholders—parents and communities—to increase enrolment in primary schools. Tanzania and Uganda increased enrolment substantially through parent and community involvement.
- Backing political commitment to universal primary education with adequate domestic and external resources, not only of a financial nature. Lower school fees have led to huge increases in enrolment in Kenya and Uganda. Ghana is expanding its school feeding programme to cover 2.5 million students. A United Nations Children's Fund and World Food Programme initiative in Malawi showed a 36 per cent increase in attendance among schools with nutrition schemes (South African Institute of International Affairs 2004).

- Ensuring timely enrolment. Late starters at primary school receive greater peer pressure to start working, are less likely to develop basic reading and writing skills and have a lower training capacity.

**Quality of primary education.** The drive for higher enrolment can lead to a decrease in education quality due to declining spending per pupil. Quality is ensured by high completion rates and by the increased supply of quality teachers and adequate equipment, including books and laboratory facilities.

The number of additional primary school teachers in Africa needed to achieve full enrolment by 2015 is three million (South African Institute of International Affairs 2004). Due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, many African countries do not have an adequate supply of graduate teachers, which has led to a declining teacher-student ratio, a proxy for quality that has reached 1 to 100 in some places. Many African countries have used teachers that are not graduates, further decreasing quality. For example, 75 per cent of teachers in Benin are unqualified, 30 per cent of teachers in Mozambique have not received any training, and 30 per cent of teachers in Angola have fewer than five years of schooling (South African Institute of International Affairs 2004). The policy interventions required are:

- Increasing the supply of teacher training institutions and qualified teachers. The cost can be mitigated through distance learning. For example, in Zimbabwe five training centres are connected by the Internet for online teacher training.
- Providing on-the-job training for teachers. African governments must update the technical competence of teachers, based on modern teaching methodologies and a changing curriculum content.
- Ensuring that teachers have beneficial conditions of work conducive to retention within the profession. This can be achieved through government policy.
- Offering short-term courses that combine pedagogic techniques and classroom experience for school leavers who temporarily replace graduate teachers. This is crucial for upgrading quality.
- Ensuring that books and teaching equipment are available. An extremely important element for quality education, they generally have a high cost but are necessary. Regional cooperation in areas such as book supplies can mitigate some of these costs.
- Pursuing private-public partnerships, which have high potential for improving school quality. For example, Sasol (a South African oil company) supports a number of schools to meet its own labour demand. It ensures trained teachers and adequate facilities for students.
- Increasing the use of information technology, which has enormous potential to provide teaching material and at the same time decrease cost (box 5.6).

“ Africa needs an additional five million primary teachers ”

“  
Curricula  
need to include more  
technical subjects  
”

**Gender parity.** Boosting female enrolment in formal schooling is important because it has spillover effects on the economy. Education for girls reduces child and maternal mortality, decreases vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and increases enrolment of the children of educated mothers (South African Institute of International Affairs 2004). A single year of primary education for a girl corresponds to a 10 per cent–20 per cent increase in women’s wages. An extra year of education for girls has been shown to reduce infant mortality by 5 per cent–10 per cent (South African Institute of International Affairs 2004). To improve gender parity, African governments must:

- Accelerate girls’ enrolment through incentive schemes. For example, homegrown feeding programmes generally support both genders, but affirmative action for girls could be implemented. Bangladesh successfully eliminated fees for girls in primary education and introduced food for education. In return for food parcels, parents must ensure that their daughters attend school for at least 75 per cent of the school year.
- Reduce or waive miscellaneous costs. Eliminating hidden costs, such as those for uniforms, stationery and textbooks, greatly increases girls’ enrolment.
- Emphasize gender in the public resource transfer to education to make it more cost effective.

**Curriculum development.** There is an urgent need to move from incremental or cumulative concepts and mnemonic notions to instrumental or problem-solving tools curricula. This requires a curriculum that focuses on technical and scientific subjects. South Africa has introduced an outcome-based education curriculum reform that is student-centred and that introduces a problem-solving approach to education (South African Institute of International Affairs 2004).

This requires an adequate supply of trained teachers, a serious constraint in Sub-Saharan Africa. For example, in six of nine provinces surveyed in South Africa 60 per cent of educators had not been trained in math and science. The number of university science graduates

### **Box 5.6** ***E-slates to the rescue***

At the Mbita Point primary school in Kenya students are using handheld computers to get up-to-date information on textbooks.

A pilot project by Eduvision has implemented a wireless connection to a base station at the school that is in turn connected to a satellite receiver. This allows downloading of visual and textual information that can be placed on e-slates of students.

The project intends to download more than 15 million books in the public domain and make them accessible to rural schools at a lower cost than acquiring new textbooks.

Source: Siddle 2005.

who could form a pool of science teachers is very low. For example, only 4 per cent of university graduates study science in Ethiopia, 1 per cent in Namibia and 11 per cent in Eritrea. Other policy actions that should be taken include:

- Giving priority to mathematics and science education at all levels of education and offering incentives to attract students in tertiary institutions. The University of Pretoria, for example, sponsors 140 students a year in math and science.
- Collaborating on science and mathematics institutions across countries. A collaborative initiative on science and mathematics teaching that link teachers in Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe through the Internet has been successful (UNESCO 1999). The project reduced the unit cost of training a science teacher through distance learning and could be repeated in other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Developing public-private partnerships to create a curriculum that responds to skills profiles demanded by the labour market. The Carnegie Corporation provided the University of Makerere and the University of Dar es Salaam with \$4 million to boost enrolment of women undergraduates in science and technology (South African Institute of International Affairs 2004).
- Standardizing textbooks and training materials in science and math on a regional level to mitigate costs (South African Institute of International Affairs 2004).

**Secondary schooling.** The need to invest in secondary education in Sub-Saharan is imperative. Current completion rates for junior and higher secondary education are about 15 per cent–25 per cent. Secondary education is crucial because it provides critical higher skills and knowledge, which have become a determinant of competitiveness in the world economy. Policy on secondary education has only recently been recognized as an area of neglect (Lewin 2004). For example, Uganda’s Universal Primary Education Programme has been running for seven years and is successful, but in 2003 fewer than half of the 700,000 students who finished primary school could be accommodated in secondary schools. To expand secondary education in order to tackle the educational mismatch is important, African governments must:

- Increase enrolment at the secondary level while keeping unit costs in check.
- Develop distance learning for secondary school students, while reducing costs and allowing access to rural areas.
- Allocate adequate domestic and external funding for a more balanced education budget between primary and secondary schooling.

**Vocational training.** The number of young people working in the informal sector in Africa indicates that besides formal schooling policy interventions, skills development and nonformal education are critical. Out-of-school young people must be involved in vocational training if social exclusion is to be avoided and employability enhanced (box 5.7). The policy interventions in this context are:

“ Vocational training is critical to promoting social inclusion ”

“ Gainful employment requires good health ”

- Providing adequate financing for vocational training.
- Linking vocational and entrepreneurial training with job centres to ensure that the skills profiles supplied match demand.

### **Box 5.7** *Madagascar finds a clearly effective approach*

Madagascar's government and the UN System Joint Programme to Promote Basic Education for All Malagasy Children were behind an innovative nonformal education programme. Launched in 2001, it offers learning opportunities for out-of-school children, illiterate and jobless young people and adults. Today, one of three children are not in school in Madagascar, while one of three adults cannot read or write.

Specialized centres have been set up in each province to offer adolescents a chance to catch up with five years of primary schooling. In just 10 months they receive intensive training that permits them to pass the end of primary school exam.

For illiterate young people and adults, the way to literacy is different. They attend the intensive functional literacy for development courses in two phases: the first phase is 48 days and covers reading, writing and numeracy; the second phase is 36 days and provides basic technical and professional training. The aim is to give participants skills to find jobs or improve their earnings. Sixteen areas have been proposed, including farming, fishing, carpentry and sewing.

**Source:** [http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=27727&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=27727&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html).

## **Internship programmes and on-the-job training**

Internship programmes and entry wages that are below average wages are another way to give young people a chance to work. Many employers are reluctant to employ young people without experience. Working for a period with lower wages could give young people a chance to demonstrate their competencies and acquire new skills through learning-by-doing. The introduction of apprenticeships in Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa has proven successful and could be replicated in other countries (see box 5.2 for information on apprenticeship programmes in Nigeria).

In Zimbabwe a cluster of Dutch companies is prepared to take part in a project to provide one year of work experience for young people. This follows a successful programme begun in 1982 between Philips and the Dutch trade unions: about 80 per cent of the young people covered by the programme later found paid employment. Philips itself employed a quarter of them, but the majority were absorbed by small and medium-size enterprises (Kanyenze, Mhone and Sparreboom 2000).

In South Africa a global initiative to support young people called Make a Connection offers an innovative training course to unemployed college graduates. The training period lasts three months and is supposed to build participants' self-confidence and motivation, improve their teamwork and presentation skills, teach them basic computer literacy and how to look for and keep a job. Internships and other activities provide additional exposure to the world of work.

## Realigning job expectations

Many young people, especially university graduates, expect to find a job in the public sector. Studies from Ethiopia and Tunisia show that university graduates are prepared to wait for a long time for a public sector job instead of actively seeking a job in the private sector or starting a business on their own (Adenikinju and Oyeranti 2004). Entrepreneurial skills and workshops on how to find business ideas should be integrated in school and university curricula to encourage young people to start their own business.

## Healthier young people perform better

There is a two-way causality between youth health and unemployment. Unemployed young people's health is vulnerable because of the risks attached to poverty, marginalization and deviant behaviour. Poor health prevents them from actively participating in the labour market due to absenteeism, which in turn causes a lack of trainability and lower productivity. Good health is the basis for performing well in education, training and on the job. In Sub-Saharan Africa young people are heavily affected by HIV/AIDS.

**Combating HIV/AIDS.** Prevention must be a central pillar in the fight against HIV/AIDS. In order to do so, young people need to be involved as much as possible in the effort. Half of all new HIV infections worldwide are in young people; more than six thousand contract the virus each day (UNAIDS 2004). Policy actions to fight HIV/AIDS among young people include:

- Providing education and information—starting at an early age—on how to maintain good health and prevent HIV infection. The ABC's of prevention (abstinence, being faithful, condom use) should be a part of curricula (Alonso and de Irala 2004). A study in 17 African countries showed that simply receiving primary school education can halve young people's risk of contracting HIV (South African Institute of International Affairs 2004).
- Offering life skills education courses at job centres, especially to out-of-school young people.
- Tailoring programmes specifically to young people because the way that they obtain information and their needs are different from the ways of adults. Young people themselves should be involved in the design and implementation of courses (Box 5.8).

- Specifically targeting young people with voluntary testing and counselling.
- Making antiretroviral drugs available to employed and unemployed young people.

### **Box 5.8** *Prevention in Botswana*

Tsa Banana (For the Teenagers) was a tailor-made programme for young adults in Botswana, funded by the United States Agency for International Development. Launched in 1995, it existed for one year, during which youth awareness of HIV/AIDS increased, and the risks of having unsafe sex decreased. HIV/AIDS awareness tools such as T-shirts, stickers and pamphlets were given to young people. The programme evaluation showed that 68 per cent of female teenagers and 71 per cent of male teenagers had heard about Tsa Banana and that more than half had taken part in the programme's activities. As a result, young adults were more convinced of the importance of protection against HIV.

*Source: UNAIDS 2004.*

“30 per cent of youth in 22 countries have never heard of AIDS”

**Gender inequalities.** Government should pay special attention to the situation of young women and girls. Three-quarters of young people infected with HIV are women and girls. Several social factors are driving this trend. Young African women tend to have male partners much older than themselves, and those partners are more likely than young men to be infected by HIV because they have had multiple sex partners. In this context, it is imperative that countries in Sub-Saharan Africa enforce existing laws against underage female brides.

Gender inequalities in the region make it much more difficult for women to negotiate condom use. Furthermore, sexual violence, which damages tissues and increases the risk of HIV transmission, is widespread, particularly in the context of violent conflict (UNAIDS 2004). Access to education and training for young women must be improved. The more girls are educated, the longer they refrain from sexual activity and the more likely their negotiating power increases for condom use (South African Institute of International Affairs 2004).

While often seen as a burden to society, unemployed young people in Africa can also be considered an opportunity for the future, given the proper education and training. The alarming youth unemployment figures in Africa and the prospects of a bleak future require immediate action interventions and medium-term plans that address the structural causes.

Policy interventions to tackle youth unemployment should combine enhancing the employability of youth and mainstreaming youth policies within national development frameworks. Young people need to be equipped with the right skills, in both education and health, to actively participate in the labour market. With better perspectives on the labour market they will be more encouraged to engage in secondary education and additional training.

## Endnotes

- 1 Youth is defined by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs as the population ages 15–24 years, although the definition varies among countries and development institutions. In this analysis the UN definition is used unless otherwise indicated. In 2002 Sub-Saharan Africa's population was 688.9 million, with youth assumed to account for a fifth of the total. Youth unemployment in Sub-Saharan Africa was 21 per cent in 2003 (ILO 2004b). Leibbrandt and Mlatsheni (2004) also estimated the share of youth population for 15 Sub-Saharan Africa countries at one fifth and the (urban-rural) population-weighted unemployment rate for youth at 21 per cent. This unemployment rate is applied to youth population to calculate 28.9 million unemployed youth on the continent.
- 2 Many orphans are now heads of households and are far less likely to attend school, more likely to be undernourished, less likely to receive immunization or healthcare, more likely to be very poor and more likely to become involved in risky situations such as crime, prostitution and others (World Bank 2000).
- 3 At least 30 per cent of young people in 22 surveyed countries had never heard of AIDS and how it is transmitted. Up to 87 per cent of 15- to 19-year-olds do not believe that they are at risk (UNICEF 2004).
- 4 Some studies have shown that girls are in a less of a position to demand condom use during sexual intercourse.
- 5 Youth bulge is defined as the ratio of the population ages 15–29 to the population ages 30–54 (Urdal 2001). The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs defines youth cohorts as population ages 15–24 years relative to the total adult population (age 15 and older).
- 6 Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia

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