

Education, Earning, and Engagement for Out-of-School Youth in 26 Developing Countries: What Has Been Learned from Nine Years of EQUIP3?

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Abstract

Since 2003, the EQUIP3 Project has worked to improve earning, learning, and skill development opportunities for out-of-school youth in developing countries. Education, literacy and numeracy programs were blended with employment and livelihood training, leadership, service learning, and civic engagement for more than 200,000 youth. This article explores what has been learned and what next steps should be. Out-of-school youth face increased challenges in successfully gaining employment or livelihood. With less job experience, fewer networks and insufficient education that have failed to provide marketable skills, most out-of-school youth work, but often at subsistence level or in unsafe conditions. Starting with what was known about youth programming at the time and building knowledge through on-the-ground experience, EQUIP3 saw youth through an “assets” rather than “deficit” lens. The project sees young people needing skills related to: 1) *earning* (including readiness skills training, technical skills, entrepreneurship skills); 2) *education* (literacy and numeracy integrated into work readiness and technical training as foundation for other skills needed for work); and 3) *engagement* (sense of affiliation and belonging, realistic, safe ways for youth to contribute meaningfully to communities, societies, even program implementation).

Introduction

Beginning in 2003, and concluding in 2012, USAID has invested more than \$250 million in serving out-of-school and young people disconnected from family, communities, education or work in countries as varied as Haiti, Philippines, Rwanda, and Kosovo, and 22 others. Education, including literacy and numeracy programs, was blended with opportunities for employment and livelihood training, and with leadership, service learning, and civic engagement experiences for more than 200,000 youth. By 2017, when the last of the programs initiated by EQUIP3 is slated to end, that number is expected to reach 300,000.

While 200,000 is a small fraction of the nearly 1.5 billion young people age 15-24 globally, this was nonetheless a significant set of programs serving a varied and sizable population. This article explores what has been learned from this experience, suggesting

next steps and new lines of enquiry to better understand what strategies work best for young people and what the role of local and national context is in shaping opportunities for young people.

EQUIP3 was designed to improve earning, learning, and skill development opportunities for out-of-school youth in developing countries. The project was designed to respond to the understanding that young men and women face increased challenges in successfully gaining employment or a livelihood. They have less job experience, fewer contacts or networks and their education usually does not prepare them with relevant, marketable skills for work (USAID 2012). While most out-of-school youth are involved in some form of work already, the work is often in unsafe conditions and only meets basic subsistence needs. EQUIP3 was one of three USAID-funded “Leader with Associate” programs that promoted improved educational quality in countries around the world.

EQUIP was a partnership with USAID, a consortium of international partner organizations, and host country public and private institutions such as businesses, primary, secondary and tertiary-level schools and vocational training institutes. The EQUIP3 consortium of international partners included Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), as the prime and other organizations such as the International Youth Foundation and FHI360 (formerly AED)¹.

The project has been guided by a practical commitment to the approach that young people are assets, not threats or problems to be solved². Programs have engaged in services and instruction that support young people in considering their economic future—as employees, entrepreneurs, or participants in small-scale livelihood activities. Over the past nine years, the project has helped youth secure productive livelihoods, whether in the formal or informal sector, to serve as their starting point for productive participation in society and the economy.

To support the healthy and positive development of young people, EQUIP3 has helped to equip them with a common set of skills and attributes:

- **Earning:** Work and livelihood development for young people who are out-of-school and out-of-work were a core focus. The approach centered on a package combining work readiness skills training, technical skills, and entrepreneurship skills.
- **Education:** Literacy and numeracy were often integrated into work readiness and technical training as a foundation for the other skills early school leavers

¹ EQUIP3 Consortium partners were: Education Development Center, Inc., FHI360, Catholic Relief Services, International Council on National Youth Policy, International Youth Foundation, National Youth Employment Coalition, National Youth Leadership Council, Opportunities Industrialization Centers International, Partners of the Americas, Plan International, Childreach, Sesame Workshop, Street Kids International, and World Learning.

² The assets-based approach to community development and positive youth development emerged within U.S.-based youth programming starting in the 1990s. See McKnight, J. & Kretzmann, J. (1996) and Benson, P. L. (2003).

needed for work.

- **Engagement:** EQUIP3 programs provide a sense of affiliation and realistic and safe connections that enabled youth to belong and to contribute meaningfully to program implementation and to their communities.

Two broad categories of interventions help youth acquire these skills and assets: Supply-side interventions, which are direct interventions that serve youth, particularly training programs; and demand-side interventions, which target the socioeconomic environment in which youth are earning a livelihood.

While some youth development programs—within and beyond EQUIP3’s portfolio—include both supply- and demand-side interventions, most focus resources on one or the other. Projects have emphasized primarily, but not exclusively, training and other supply-side activities.

Programs have spanned 25 projects in 26 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. Among these countries, EQUIP3 has worked in some of the most challenging contexts, characterized by political instability, natural disaster, or ongoing conflict. In fact, most of the countries in which projects have been implemented could be categorized as crisis- or conflict-affected. As of December 2011, the following had been accomplished:

- EQUIP3 has reached more than 200,000 youth, a number that will increase as 10 projects are continuing, some projected for as long as 2017.
- Programs have trained more than 50,000 youth in work readiness skills to prepare them for employment and livelihood opportunities. Nearly 60,000 youth have completed vocational training, more than 6,000 are employed in the formal or informal sectors, and another 4,000 have started their own businesses or livelihood activities.
- While a core focus of only a couple of EQUIP3 programs, civic leadership training has been provided to more than 1,000 youth, and 40 youth-led community associations have been created. Youth civic engagement programming was viewed as an important element of programs because it enables youth to see themselves as responsible citizens who have a role in their society’s development. Developing a sense of civic responsibility allows youth to serve as a model to others and to consider the effects of their individual choices on the broader community. Training and support to develop the capacity of youth-led groups and organizations empowers youth to take action in their own communities.
- Programs have created more than 400 youth development partnerships or networks, including nearly 700 separate stakeholder institutions³. More than 500

³ Youth development partnerships or networks are defined as groups of organizations (public or

youth-serving institutions⁴ have benefited from training and capacity-building assistance.

History

EQUIP3 was launched in 2003 by the USAID’s Education Office of the Economic Growth and Trade (EGAT) Bureau. Education Development Center led a consortium of other U.S.-based development organizations. Early projects focused primarily on the basic education needs of out-of-school youth. As more projects were implemented and EQUIP3 learned more about youths’ diverse needs and priorities, the projects evolved to focus on youth civic participation and livelihoods as well. The program served as a valuable testing ground, both for adapting approaches from the United States and Europe and for developing whole new approaches tailored to country contexts. Over the past nine years, programming has undergone several stages of evolution, wherein the experiences and lessons from the first set of programs have influenced the design and been incorporated into the implementation of later programs.

As a result, the current set of continuing EQUIP3 programs weave together the program elements of non-formal education, work and livelihoods training and linkages to financing into an ambitious, “cross-sectoral” approach that suits local needs (see Annex C for an overview of EQUIP3 Associate Partner Awards). Projects have also moved from single-sector USAID support (in education or only economic growth) to cross-sectoral support, and projects frequently provided information about HIV and AIDS, and adolescent and reproductive health. Rwanda’s *Akaze Kanozi* (“Good Work”) project combines literacy supports with work readiness and entrepreneurship training, and is delivered through a supported network of Rwandan NGOs. Kosovo’s Young Entrepreneurs Program (YEP) focuses on identifying, engaging and recruiting young people with ideas for their own enterprises. *Mejorando la Educacion para Trabajar Aprender, y Superarse (METAS)* in Honduras supports cognitive skills development along with preparation for work, and community-based strategies to reduce violence and gang involvement. Mali’s Support to Out of School Youth Project (PAJE-Nièta) similarly develops work readiness while supporting development of very small rural enterprises for self-employment. Other project examples of this cross-sectoral approach include Kenya’s Garissa Youth Project, the Youth Employability Skills (YES) Network in Macedonia, Partnership for Innovations Activity (PI) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Skills and Knowledge for Youth Employment (SKYE) in Guyana, and Advancing Youth Project (AYP) in Liberia. These projects will continue to offer lessons about developing small enterprises in vastly divergent economies, from rural sub-Saharan Africa to the Caribbean

private) that are working together on youth development. Stakeholder institutions are defined as each of the “member” organizations that comprise the youth development partnership or network.

⁴ Youth-serving institutions are defined as non-government organizations or host country government entities that provide services for youth.

Basin to the European Union pre-accession countries of Eastern Europe.

The approach has prioritized serving out-of-school youth through local institutions and building the capacity of community-based organizations and government through partnerships and networks. Some are organized within government agencies, such as the non-formal education division of a ministry of education. Others are organized at the community level, in partnership with local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or alliances such as Synergeia in the Philippines and KORA in Rwanda.

Finally, youth programming in developing countries is a relatively new field, and the evidence base weak for what activities and strategies are effective for preparing young people for livelihoods and jobs. Until recently, there have been few tools to measure effectiveness. Over the course of EQUIP3, a number of evaluation tools were piloted to measure outcomes of youth workforce programs. These tools are now being adapted under later EQUIP3 projects and have helped to point to areas of investment for future programs. Moreover, methodologies and models developed under EQUIP3 have contributed to further investments by USAID in youth programming, such as YouthMap, a USAID funded program that supports cross-sectoral youth assessments in Sub-Saharan Africa. (See Annex B.)

Over time, EQUIP3 developed programs that focused at least one and usually two of three primary technical areas: livelihoods and workforce development (*Earning*), literacy and numeracy (*Education*), and youth leadership (*Engagement*).

Earning: Livelihoods and Workforce Development Programs

Livelihood and workforce development projects support youth to improve key skills and accumulate capital, economic and personal. Easily the most complex area of EQUIP3 programs, improving youths' livelihoods and workforce development is the core of many projects. Program experience has shown that successfully positioning youth to enter the workforce or start their own income generation activity requires a package of services and activities directed at both youth and the private sector. Out-of-school youth, who usually have less education, less training and fewer contacts and financial resources, are even more in need of flexible, varied services. Though highly context-specific, each EQUIP3 livelihood development project has one or more components that may be categorized as follows:

- *Work readiness training*: Includes vocational (technical) skills and skills to prepare youth to find work and to work successfully
- *Entrepreneurship training and support*: Provides instruction in how to start a business and may provide access to seed funding
- *Bridging strategies*: Includes complementary services such as mentoring, coaching, work-based learning, linkages to financing, and other resources for business start up, and job placement
- *Demand-side engagement*: Activities that target the social-economic environment

in which youth are earning a livelihood

Each of these livelihood development program components is discussed in more detail below.

Work Readiness Training

Most livelihoods and workforce development projects have work readiness training at their core, in which work readiness is defined as the “soft skills” needed to succeed at work or in a livelihood. Consistent with reports on other youth programs that have found these skills to be essential in livelihoods and employment programming, EQUIP3 work readiness trainings have often been seen by youth trainees, their families, and employers as the most valuable program component (International Youth Foundation 2010). In the PAS project in East Timor, youth pointed to gaining confidence and public speaking skills and cited the Life Map (a professional development plan created by youth at the beginning of the PAS Project’s coaching phase) as the most influential (Education Development Center 2010). Under EQuALLS2 in the Philippines, the project’s business partners rated “positive values and work ethics” as more important than technical skills (Briones 2010). Businesses argued that they can train youth on technical skills, but if youth don’t have positive attitudes, respectful behavior, and a readiness to learn, they have difficulty responding to the norms of the workplace.

Drawing upon both U.S. expertise and experiences of EQUIP3 projects in East Timor and Rwanda, the basic components of a work readiness framework were developed between 2009-2011 to inform training and curricula development for future programs including PAJE Nieta in Mali, AYP in Liberia and SKYE in Guyana. The framework established learning standards for each area of skills as well as sample lesson topics for each skill area. The framework also included key skills that should be imparted through the work readiness curricula:

- *Career identification & job search skills*—such as describing skills and interests, setting career goals, writing a resume, searching for a job, and contacting employers—help youth find and obtain employment.
- *Performance skills*— such as working in a team, being punctual, and accepting supervision respectfully—help youth meet the social and business requirements of the workplace and keep a job.
- *Life skills*—such as maintaining health and hygiene, solving problems, managing conflicts, and basic financial literacy—help youth manage their lives safely and healthfully and balance work as part of a broader set of demands and opportunities.

A work readiness framework was used as the basis for curriculum adaptation for G-Youth in Kenya, PAJE-Nieta in Mali, EQuALLS2 in the Philippines, YES in Macedonia, and AISPY in Yemen; it is underway in SKYE in Guyana and AYP in

Liberia.

Experiences in Somalia showed that it is helpful to offer work readiness training through existing institutions rather than delivering training directly, if technical oversight is provided. In the Philippines, work readiness training maintained support from the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), the national vocational-technical education and training regulatory agency. Training often took place in TESDA centers and TESDA-certified trainers contextualized the training to the local environment. A similar approach was used in Somalia under SYLP. However, when local partners implemented work readiness training without EDC's oversight, the quality of training quality was lower.

Another challenge was the time necessary to build a cadre of local work-readiness trainers with the requisite participatory training styles and understanding of positive youth development. Instilling this approach among trainers requires follow-up coaching and guidance that takes significant time before the training itself.

Experience with work readiness training also highlighted the challenge of meaningfully measuring work readiness skills. While life skills training programs use pre- and post-tests to measure youths' knowledge acquisition, these measures are self-reported and do not gauge how well youth may apply their new skills on the job. Moreover, while employer surveys are helpful for getting feedback on youths' performance, they were not seen as sufficient to measure youths' attitudes and behavior change in the workplace. In response, work is now underway to pilot an improved international work readiness learning assessment. The assessment will measure key skills in four priority topics drawn directly from the work readiness curriculum: critical thinking skills, collaboration skills, interpersonal communication skills, and work habits and conduct.

Entrepreneurship Training and Financing

As noted, EQUIP3's livelihoods programs have evolved to incorporate new components based on a growing understanding of youths' needs. One such component is entrepreneurship training, which has learned the value of drawing on existing entrepreneurship training then adapting it to the specific context of the program. EQUIP3 has partnered with other institutions, for example Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in Rwanda, and the International Labor Organization (ILO) in Kenya, to adapt their existing entrepreneurship training. In Guyana and Liberia, the project developed their training own with local partners. The content of entrepreneurship training varies according to the young people's education level and the local economic context. In Liberia and Mali entrepreneurship training targets low-literacy youth in rural areas and emphasizes development of income-generation activities based on opportunities in the agriculture sector.

Beyond entrepreneurship training, access to financing for youth entrepreneurs is a pervasive challenge in developing countries. Almost universally, lenders view youth

as great credit risks. EQUIP3’s approach has been to: help youth link to microfinance institutions, provide guidance to microfinance institutions to offer youth-friendly credit products and services, offer matching grants whereby youth must contribute an equal amount of capital, or help youth acquire adult guarantors and develop business plans.

In Haiti’s IDEJEN, youth received entrepreneurship training and then formed groups of five to develop a business plan. Groups then received a \$500 grant to start their small business, followed by several months of coaching. This approach presented some interesting challenges which are likely to confront organizations working to facilitate youth’s access to credit. While the group-based model reinforces teamwork, often one youth would emerge as the leader and take over the business. This led to conflict. In addition, the startup grant was often insufficient, depending on the location and type of business the youth wanted to start. Attempts to link youth participants with microfinance services were challenging because most service providers still thought youth were too risky.

In East Timor’s PAS program, youth received a foundational package of work readiness, technical training, and literacy/numeracy training, after which they could choose to pursue non-formal education, find formal sector employment, or start their own business. Of the 1,700 who completed the program, 743 young people chose the entrepreneurship pathway, of whom 59% were women, and 41% had only primary or some primary education. Youth received \$100 grants to start their businesses, with most youth choosing to start a kiosk-based business or a small shop near or/at their home. Unsurprisingly, success varied, with many never turning a profit. It appeared that the business training was not sufficient for youth to learn to analyze potential markets and develop a strong business plan.

Learning from this experience, the Youth Entrepreneurship Program (YEP) in Kosovo offered grants to youth entrepreneurs who have viable business plans and who can contribute an equal cash match to the grant through personal savings, investors, or loans. YEP also partnered with local lending institutions to encourage more lending activities for youth businesses and has negotiated favorable rates with some lending institutions.

Complementary Bridging Strategies

Earlier EQUIP3 livelihood programs have confirmed that training or access to credit alone is insufficient to ensure youth are positioned for jobs and businesses— they need additional support. These supports are termed complementary “bridging strategies,” a process in which youth receive targeted support to help them transition from training to the next step in their career path, be it work or further education and training. The process is based on an understanding of youths’ interests, market needs, training opportunities, and facilitation of a match with potential employers or enterprise opportunities. Ideally, these complementary strategies are offered before, during, and after any training.

EQUIP3 began to offer complementary services under Haiti’s IDEJEN project,

which worked with extremely marginalized youth who lacked access to resources or information as well as training. IDEJEN offered follow-up assistance and coaching to help youth identify and prepare for job opportunities. The project also provided youth with information on the steps and necessary testing to return to school. IDEJEN referred to these services as “accompaniment,” using the French term. Under EQuALLS2, a workforce development study highlighted the importance of this outside-the-classroom support (Briodes 2010). The EQuALLS2 report found that access to capital, linkages to community in-kind resources, and guidance on how to navigate regulations for business startups were of most importance to youth in beneficiary communities in the Philippines.

Subsequent youth programs began to integrate these services into new programs more deliberately, starting with PAS in East Timor and Akazi Kanoze in Rwanda. Bridging strategies are now included in all EQUIP3 youth programs. Specific examples include the SYLP Project in Somalia, which formed business advisory councils and hired a private sector specialist to create a network of friends and champions. This resulted in a 40% internship placement rate. SYLP also capitalized on youths’ facility with technology through partner Souktel’s SMS-based InfoMatch tool, which matches job seekers and potential employers on a mobile phone-based platform. The project trained 6,288 male youth and 4,372 female youth in its vocational training package, and more than 8,000 additional youth have accessed and utilized the InfoMatch tool. The EQuALLS2 Project in the Philippines helped youth create individual development plans that detailed steps for youth to take in applying their training to seeking jobs or self-employment.

As these bridging strategies have evolved, several challenges have arisen. The first has been the lack of an articulated strategy for choosing which support and services to offer so that new programs could replicate those that have proven themselves effective. Another related challenge is measurement of outcomes to determine the level of support needed to accompany training in a particular situation. For example, there is little existing research on the impact of coaching or mentoring on youth employment including how much or how often coaching is needed. Finally, identifying the most sustainable mechanisms to offer these services is a persistent challenge. For example, face-to-face counseling or coaching is likely to offer the highest quality because it is interactive and personalized. However, since staff time is expensive, it may also be the least sustainable. If coaching or mentoring are provided through local sub-partners such as an NGO or training provider, transferring skills to partners on effective coaching techniques takes time to ensure quality. Further piloting of online or cell phone-based delivery systems, such as the InfoMatch SMS-based tool in Somalia, is a worthy area of investment.

Demand-Side Interventions

The final component of livelihoods programs are demand-side interventions, which target the environment in which youth are to work:

- *Policy measures to improve the macroeconomic environment:* Policy measures might pertain to taxes, business registration, or incentives to foreign direct investment. These matters are not often seen as part of workforce programs, although USAID's inclusion of workforce development as part of an investment in economic competitiveness is related.
- *Regulatory measures aimed at improving access to labor markets for youth and the entrepreneurship environment:* Support for access to financing both for SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) and business start-ups can help stimulate growth in the sectors most likely to be open to hiring young people.
- *Value chain development in sectors with the greatest potential for youth employment:* Small enterprises engaged in growing agricultural products that would be bought by firms for agro-processing, providing technical services such as information technology, or making machine parts for manufacturing are often good sources of entry level employment for youth.
- *Development of business services with an emphasis on services geared toward youth-owned enterprises:* For example, the "micro-franchising" model practiced in some regions, involving the sale of everything from cell phone airtime to ice cream bars have proven excellent youth livelihood opportunities.
- *Boosting of the demand for and/or supply of youth financial services:* "youth-friendly" financial products are tailored to the different needs and working conditions of youth entrepreneurs.

Demand-side interventions may have a broader scope than just youth, but nevertheless, can have positive effects on youth, particularly if they create work-based learning or even long-term entry-level employment opportunities. On the other hand, programs that neglect the demand side often fail to address the environmental factors shaping youths' employment and livelihood opportunities. As a result, programs that might result in youth acquiring gainful employment under different demand-side conditions wind up falling short. As noted by the Commonwealth Youth Program and UNICEF, "livelihood interventions in isolation can have limited impacts if broader policy-making at the macro-economic level does not explicitly address issues that affect adolescents" (Brown 2001). Furthermore, the 2007 "World Bank Youth Employment Inventory" observes a misalignment between vocational skills-training program strategies and local and national labor market policies, leading to programs that do not demonstrate close connections with local labor markets (Betcherman et al. 2007).

As best practices in employment programming both in the US and internationally show, it is important to respond to employer needs, utilizing labor market assessments to understand the present needs and future trends affecting employers in a given region or labor market. More work is needed both in the US and abroad to create demand-driven approaches. Direct linkages are needed to private sector employment opportunities, even in economies with weak private sectors. Linkages may take different forms. In strong

economies the challenge may be to link young people more directly with existing demand for labor. In weaker economies with low demand for labor, an emphasis on entrepreneurial skills supports the aim to *create* demand by stimulating the growth in small and medium sized enterprises and supporting young people to initiate new forms of self employment and income generation.

While work readiness programming is a part of many economic growth programs, several EQUIP3 programs tailored their demand-driven approach to working with youth. Businesses are often skeptical of out-of-school youth's capacity as potential interns or employees. Rapid youth assessments have identified a sense of distrust, even fear, among businesses toward disadvantaged youth. Stigmas about hiring out-of-school youth or extending credit to youth are often more daunting than challenges experienced by adults.

In response, several projects worked to generate business support. Rwanda's Akazi Kanoze involved the private sector early by asking business leaders to review EQUIP3's work readiness curriculum. Based on this local review and subsequent feedback, project staff conducted a pilot of the curriculum and then refined it based on feedback. While taking more time and resources, this process yields better results as the curriculum more directly reflects employer needs. This strategy strengthened what Porter calls the "business cluster," defined as geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, suppliers, and institutions that increase productivity of local economies (Porter 1998). Akazi Kanoze also identified the skills that were needed in the labor market, evaluated various industry sectors, and picked three sectors as priority partners. As of November 2011, based on the project's approach, Akazi Kanoze boasted a 50% placement rate for its youth (including youth in paid internships or jobs or youth who started their own businesses) in a country where estimates put unemployment of youth without secondary education at 61% (Republic of Rwanda Donors Group 2006). In Somalia, SYLP fostered business councils with the private sector to place disadvantaged youth in internships and jobs. The goal was to facilitate creation of connections and networking between youth and employers in a structured safe environment in a context where the private sector and employed are hugely challenged by political instability. In Macedonia, "socio-economic councils" engaged business people, educators, and municipal officials in municipality-level forums to support youth employability.

In sum, strategies to prepare youth for livelihoods and employment evolved throughout the course of the project into a more sophisticated package of services meeting a variety of potential needs among out-of-school youth. The ongoing challenge is to measure impacts of these services to specify what "dosage" of each service is needed and what services are more important than others to get young people the skills and resources they need.

Education: A Focus on Literacy and Numeracy

The second of the three major categories of EQUIP's programming was education.

While work readiness has been at the core of most projects, early youth projects learned that youth often lack the necessary basic skills to take advantage of a work readiness or technical skills training program. Early participants could not read, write, or do enough basic math to participate in programs that assumed these skills. The ability to comprehend and use written material and to use numbers for problem-solving, measurement, estimation, and mapping are practical requisites for gaining employment, starting a business, or seeking other opportunities. In response, some programs have added literacy and numeracy training based on identified needs among youth, while in other programs, literacy and numeracy was the core program component around which others were added. Staff quickly learned to assess upfront the language skills of potential youth participants and to plan accordingly. Internal project experts created curricula in some projects, while others worked with partners to adapt existing curricula. Literacy and numeracy curricula have been developed for nine projects, including LCEP in Afghanistan, IDEJEN in Haiti, EQUALLS2 in Philippines, and PAS in East Timor, and added to almost all new-generation programs—Akazi Kanoze in Rwanda, PAJE-Nièta in Mali, METAS in Honduras, MEGA-SkY in India, and AYP in Liberia.

An issue that arose in some programs was which language to use in teaching literacy. While literacy in English or French is an important skill for many jobs, it is well understood that literacy skills are most easily mastered in one's mother tongue. Research has shown that first language literacy facilitates literacy in a second, or other language, an important consideration for instructional policy and practice.

Acquisition of literacy in the national language, even when it is not the first language, is also important, especially for youth who want to pursue secondary or higher education, which is usually available primarily or only in the national language⁵. Once writing skills have been acquired in the first language, some of these skills (letter recognition and production, recognition of the relationship of symbols and sounds, and others) can be transferred to learning to read and write in the second language, especially if first language literacy is taught with this in mind.

The IDEJEN project began with Haitian Creole literacy because the great majority of participants did not know how to read or write in any language. Eventually, the project offered French for students enrolled in its *ecole ateliers* (training centers that offered more advanced vocational training). The PAJE-Nièta project in Mali offers literacy in the local language and also an introduction to French. First language literacy was also an important component of the projects in the Philippines and Afghanistan.

Youth often need to read and write in languages other than the national language for employability. The Akazi Kanoze project in Rwanda responded to this need with a 20-hour conversational English course, which included greetings and workplace English for youth who had some English proficiency. Integrating workforce preparedness or

⁵ Research by Cummins has shown, for example, that high levels of proficiency in the first language affect literacy in the second language (1979).

community participation concepts into literacy and numeracy activities is effective in helping youth apply their skills. Akazi Kanoze also found that a journal could help integrate students' learning: learners used journals to reflect on and answer guiding questions that drew upon knowledge from their basic education classes, job skills training classes, and work experiences. In the PAS project in East Timor, youth in the Oecussi district learned to read and write words in Tetum, the national language, using the work readiness curriculum. Youth also reinforced their numeracy skills by using a cashbook to record their income and expenses for their income-generation activities, which the project had helped them launch. The LCEP project in Afghanistan provides a good example of a basic literacy curriculum that integrates messages of community empowerment.

Closely linked to the importance of basic literacy and numeracy skills is the priority of facilitating young people's return to the formal school system or earning secondary school equivalency certification to better position them for employment. This is challenging for many youth. Often, either there is no government equivalency exam or option to earn a certificate except through the formal system, or the equivalency standards are set so high that few can meet them. In response, some projects have been designed to grant a certificate of primary or secondary equivalency, or a diploma that allows the learner to enter the formal system at a certain level or to present to potential employers and others evidence of education equivalent to that offered in school. These non-formal, accelerated learning programs offer the opportunity to "catch up" on missed formal schooling, often requiring only half the time of formal schools. The Akazi Kanoze project, for example, developed an accelerated learning program for learners at the P4 level to bring them up to a P6 level and earn a primary education completion certificate. The program offered 300 hours of Kinyarwanda language classes, 200 hours of numeracy, and 100 hours of basic English instruction. The curriculum also included work readiness and technical skills training in construction, hospitality, and other sectors where job opportunities were identified. These latter skill areas were included in the non-formal program to equip youth with marketable skills that the formal system did not teach.

In summary, experiences from EQUIP3 highlight the importance of including literacy and numeracy skill-building included in program design when working with low-literate out-of-school youth; the importance of considering what specific language skills are most marketable for employment; and the need to be creative when teaching literacy, weaving literacy skills with other content that is important for project outcomes related to livelihood or community participation.

Engagement: Youth Leadership Skills

The final category, "Engagement," refers to programs that seek to increase young people's involvement and participation in their communities' development. Fostering greater civic engagement among youth was seen as complementary to direct workforce training because it can equip youth will stronger communication, critical thinking and

management skills that they can apply to their careers. Activities often included leadership training, capacity building of youth groups to initiate community development projects, community mapping, or service learning projects. While this third “E” was present to some extent in all EQUIP3 programs, it was the strategic centerpiece for projects in West Bank/Gaza, the Garissa region of Kenya, Somalia, and in Mindanao, Philippines. Practical and policy concerns about maintaining peace and preventing violence and terrorism lay behind the developments in these four. Projects were designed to engage youth in identifying community priorities and needs and to equip them with the requisite skills to take leadership roles in their communities.

The Ruwwad Project in West Bank/Gaza was developed early in EQUIP3 and continued until recently. Youth leadership has been at its core since its launch in 2004. Ruwwad brought together youth from across the West Bank to share ideas and experiences and to identify critical community issues for three-month, youth-led community service initiatives. Training was provided in: leadership and team-building, community organizing and mobilization, ICTs for community development, employability skills, community service planning, budget creation, and media and communications.

One of the greatest strengths of Ruwwad’s training was bringing together youth from different areas of the West Bank, enabling them to learn from each other’s different experiences. Youth trainees expressed how much they appreciated the intensive training on topics such as leadership, teamwork, and conflict resolution skills. Youth designed and led community service projects in several parts of the region, including roving health clinics and an interactive website for informal education among school children ages 6 to 17. These leadership training and community service activities contributed to EQUIP3’s broader goals because they gave youth transferable skills and experiences.

In the conflict-affected region of North Eastern Province, Kenya, the Garissa Youth Project offered youth a package of work readiness training, entrepreneurship and ICT training to build skills for employment and other income-generating opportunities and to prepare youth for technical training or university. In G-Youth’s first phase, there was also a component called, “Youth Action,” which included youth leadership training, youth-led community projects, a youth summit, and the development of youth action plans for community development activities of high priority for youth. During this first phase, 72 community youth leaders from 36 villages received training in proposal development, problem-solving, community storytelling, and public speaking. The project supported youth in implementation of village-based projects and enabled 500 youth leaders and guests to participate in the project’s first Youth Summit.

Building on these successes, G-Youth began a two-year expansion in November 2010, with an emphasis on a “youth-led, youth-managed” approach in which the young men and women from Garissa would have greater responsibility for participation in project management and strategic planning, administering a “youth fund” to finance activities of interest to Garissan youth. The cornerstone of this second phase supported youth groups in advocating for and addressing the needs of youth through their own

initiatives. The youth fund made resources available to youth for different purposes: grants to implement community development or recreational projects; funding to help youth start small businesses; scholarships for youth seeking to complete secondary education or access tertiary training, and capacity-building fund to strengthen emerging youth groups.

Building the capacity of youth to play leadership roles in the project and in their communities was an ongoing challenge during G-Youth's second phase. It became clear that youth leaders needed supervision and intense capacity-building in how to lead and manage teams effectively, particularly among youth who had not worked together before and among whom there was not strong trust. In addition, youth expected to decide project direction without consultation or consensus with the community. They also expected to be paid for participation. These expectations were not realistic and as a result, G-Youth shifted its approach. The project's revised approach focused on supporting smaller groups of youth who had come together themselves to develop projects that responded to community needs (e.g. trash collection, income-generation) and to equip them with skills in project management. With this new approach, the project sought to shift the youths' focus from issues of power and payment to priorities and needs in their communities. The G-Youth example demonstrates the importance of designing youth programs to give meaningful opportunities for youth to participate and contribute to project directions, while also instilling in youth an understanding of their responsibilities to communities and families.

The projects in Somalia (Somali Youth Leadership Program) and in the Philippines (EQuALLS2) projects provide other examples of supporting youth to take leadership roles. SYLP was created to provide Somali youth with greater access to training, internship, work, and self-employment opportunities. The project worked toward these objectives, in part, by hiring local youth as paid interns, drawing young people directly from the training program. The project adapted a "leadership ladder" approach that aimed to include youth in increasingly higher levels of decision-making and leadership within the project⁶. For example, youth were actively engaged in supporting the project administration. The project benefited; young staff were able to communicate well with other youth, especially those who were marginalized, and to gather information from young people. This helped the project overcome the common disconnect between young people and service providers by helping the project understand and then focus its activities on the interests, needs, and concerns of youth (Sully 2010).

In the Philippines, youth received training in communication and community needs assessment and participated in local school management committees along with parents and educators. The project helped youth form associations and clubs to work together on activities for government agencies supported by the project.

Civic engagement has become a common component in many international youth

⁶ The concept "youth leadership ladder" was created by Roger Hart and refers to different possible levels of youth engagement ranging from the 1st rung of "manipulation" to the 8th run in which young people share decisions with adults (See Hart 1992).

programs. This has been partly in response to greater emphasis among donors and implementers on the need to strengthen youth's participation in project management and implementation and also because greater youth participation in governance and civil society is viewed as a potential strategy to stem political instability. EQUIP3's pilot experiences in this area are a useful starting point for shaping new approaches to programming.

Looking Forward

More than 1.5 billion 12–24 year olds worldwide are both an important national development asset and a pressing challenge for the international community. Many of these young people are out of school, with poorly developed cognitive skills, and little experience with work or access to livelihoods or jobs. Yet youth bring unique, fresh perspectives that, if attended to by policymakers and program designers, can transform future programs. EQUIP3's experience confirms the basic approach of combining access to work and livelihood opportunities, education and training, and health services, and to offer youth opportunities for active civic participation and leadership.

Programmatic Lessons: Boiling it Down to the Top Ten

Reduced to simple terms, what do young people need to be active and productive members of society? EQUIP3's projects in 26 countries confirms that young people need *practical, marketable skills*, ranging from literacy and numeracy (the ability to process and use information) to hands-on vocational skills suited to very local circumstances and demand. Young adults need *money*—to live, to save, and to invest in themselves and their families—and connections to ways to earn it. All need *actionable information*—about training and education, work opportunities, better health, full participation in citizenship, and how to be busy and productive. Finally, more than almost any group, young people crave *affiliation*, as well as useful connections that enable them to belong and have access to all of the above.

Herewith, our programmatic Top Ten:

1. *Out-of-school youth projects in developing countries should employ an integrated package of work readiness training, work experience, bridging services, including coaching and linkages to financing, and literacy and numeracy education.*

Perhaps the most important finding from the extensive focus on livelihoods and employment under EQUIP3 is that there is no single element of service, but rather it is an integrated continuum of education (most often starting with literacy and numeracy for early school leavers), supports, and experiences that shows the greatest results. While this

point is widely known, it is not always consistently applied in youth program designs.

2. *A more systematic and structured approach to “bridging services” extends service to support youths’ active transition to work and further schooling.*

Traditionally livelihood-oriented programs “graduate” young people at the conclusion of services, and some programs track their future movements. However, most do not continue to serve young people after graduation, and so lose the chance to confirm and support youth at the most crucial stages of transition to employment or independent livelihood. It appears that a relatively modest innovation--offering a package of bridging services that keep youth engaged even after program completion--could improve employment and prospects for financial independence for many program graduates.

3. *Youth livelihood and employment programs need to add programmatic elements to the “demand side” of the equation – encouraging growth of enterprises that can provide job and livelihood opportunities.*

EQUIP3’s experience with work readiness and placement suggests that a balanced supply-demand approach is essential, one that builds in private sector perspectives, ownership, and expertise from the outset, and which is tailored specifically to young workers. Most small- and medium-sized enterprises, most likely to hire young people in most economies, need technology, training, and often financial support to grow and create jobs.

4. *“Youth” is not a gender-neutral demographic category.*

EQUIP3’s experience confirms that male and female youth have unique needs and priorities; their differing needs and priorities must be taken into account in programming. Gender must be both a consistent and a stronger consideration than it has been in many countries in the design of future youth programs, and it will require particular care to adapt gender issues to varied country cultures and economies.

5. *Youth participation is an effective strategy for building program quality and sustainability and for generating positive perceptions of youth among adults.*

EQUIP3’s experience suggests that investments of time and resources to include youth in assessment/design, management of project activities, and evaluation are well spent because of the positive results in terms of participation and completion rates. But most implementers don’t know how to do it. Making this happen will require support and capacity development, and requires unusual program flexibility and a re-tooling of many program designs to build in youth engagement from the beginning. Moreover, youth

engagement strategies will vary country-to-country, culture by culture.

6. *True youth engagement requires consistent commitment and follow-through from adults.*

Adult-youth partnerships are important for fostering community support for youth leadership and participation, contributing to the exchange of skills and experience and ensuring long-term success of youth-led initiatives. Moving from “youth participating” to “youth owned” is more challenging to adults than to youth, and requires consistent focus from program leaders and funders.

7. *In conflict-affected and crisis countries, programs need to represent a positive alternative to engagement in anti-social activities or destructive or violent group behaviors. This requires programs provide a positive and convincing “counter pull” on youth.*

The factors in the political and social environment that draw youth to destructive groups or individual behaviors need to be offset by attractive alternatives, programs and groups that make youth feel they are part of—and belong to—something important. What are incentives for young people to participate? Experience so far provides some answers to this, but is significantly incomplete. Rigorous, field-based research on the impact of effective strategies for working with vulnerable youth in fragile settings is still needed.

8. *Technology is rapidly emerging in developing countries as a resource for livelihood and employment work and a tool for program and content delivery.*

Advances in technology are remarkable and have only recently been incorporated into program development. Low-cost, high-quality, technology-based delivery systems, e.g., mobile phones for job placement or instruction in financial literacy, can provide access to skills and job information for hard-to-reach, informally-organized populations and can enable more cost-effective monitoring and evaluation by providing easy access to individualized information and field based data entry.

9. *It is possible, and useful, to adapt certain youth development approaches from industrialized nations to developing contexts.*

EQUIP3 and other international programs have successfully adapted “U.S.-born” approaches to developing country contexts. YouthBuild’s approach to work-based learning, work readiness curricula built in response to SCANS skills research, and Search Institute’s “assets-based” approach to youth assessment are three such examples. It is an adaptation process, however, and not simple “adoption”. The most successful of these experiences focus on adherence to a set of principles rather than fixed models and

a prescribed curriculum. The blend of principles and standards with sensitive technical assistance and capacity building can allow for local creativity and innovation.

10. *Combining international expertise and experience with local, country-based networks and alliances will be a common future development in most countries.*

International implementers are learning that doing more of their programmatic work with and through local employers, NGO's, and youth organizations can establish the groundwork for long-term sustainability of an effective program. However, doing so requires that acute attention to clear definitions, specific roles, and investments in capacity building be part of a project from the beginning, and should not wait until the expiration of donor funding support.

Conclusion

Nine years, twenty-six countries, quarter of a million youth—quite a lot, but barely scratching the surface of what is needed to support healthy development of young people globally, EQUIP3 has been a bold experiment and a brave investment by USAID. Much has been learned. Still the nine-year experiment needs to be seen as a foundation on a much larger investment needed to experiment, examine policies and program strategies with increasing rigor and with expectations for efficiency, program quality, and cost-effectiveness.

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ANNEX A: Glossary of Relevant Terms

- Bridging strategies:** Bridging strategies refers to a set of processes throughout the life of a project in which youth receive targeted support (the "bridge") to help them transition from their initial training to the next step in their career path. Support can come in the form of coaching, job or internship placement, work based learning, links to further education, and access to finance.
- Civic participation:** Civic participation often centers on becoming involved in the political process, advocating for issues important to youth and advocacy for youth inclusion in the political process.
- Civic leadership:** Civic leadership opportunities such as training youth as community leaders to identify an issue they would like to address through a small community project, or supporting the development and growth of youth-led groups empowers youth to take action in their own communities.
- Demand-side engagement:** Demand-side engagement involves interventions which target the environment in which youth are earning a livelihood. They include: value chain development in sectors with the greatest potential for youth employment; development of

business services for youth-owned enterprises; and boosting youth financial services; and regulatory and policy measures.

Employment: Youth employment includes but formal employment as well as informal livelihoods (such as running a kiosk) and running a small business.

Entrepreneurship training: Entrepreneurship training includes a range of skills that youth and adults need to be successful in starting and maintaining a small business or income-generating activity, including skills such as recognizing and assessing personal fit for entrepreneurship; conducting market analyses; developing business plans; managing finances and staff; marketing; and long-term sustainability.

Informal sector: The informal sector encompasses livelihood activities, many of which are household livelihood activities. Millions of young people are finding ways to eke out a living and make something from very little—in some cases, something from almost nothing. And they take whatever paths are available to them, pro-social or otherwise.

Formal sector: The formal sector encompasses jobs with normal hours, regular wages, and recognized as income sources on which income taxes must be paid. It includes jobs with the private sector, government, nonprofit sector, and the like.

Livelihood opportunities: Livelihood opportunities refer to interventions that enhance the readiness of young people to engage in sustainable livelihood activities such as: (1) employment in the formal and informal sector; (2) contributions (paid and unpaid) to household-based livelihood activities (in agriculture, fishing, or small scale manufacturing); and, (3) self-employment.

Micro-enterprise: Micro-enterprise involves business activities in areas such as petty trading, the production of food or trade goods, and the delivery of informal services. Businesses are very small.

Training and capacity-building assistance: Training and capacity-building assistance activities build the abilities of learners, young people, and staff of beneficiary organizations.

Vocational training: Vocational training is training on wide range of technical skills needed for specific occupations, industries, or small businesses.

Workforce preparedness: Workforce preparedness involves exhibiting the skills and behaviors necessary to be successful as entry-level workers in any formal sector business or industry or in any informal sector livelihood.

Work readiness skills: Work readiness skills include specific work-related skills that young people and adults need in order to be successful as entry-level workers in any formal sector business or industry or in any informal sector livelihood. These skills are generally thought of as life skills with a strong work focus, and include work-related health and safety at work, work habits and conduct, personal leadership at work, communicating with others at work, team work and collaboration at work, rights and responsibilities of workers and employers, and customer service.

Youth Engagement: Youth Engagement is the process of youth actively, constructively, and sustainably contributing to positive development of their own lives, their families, communities, and nation as individuals or in groups. Through opportunities and experiences

to develop the skills to improve themselves and communities, youth gain the confidence that they can be leaders in their community and nation's development. Successful youth engagement leads to communities and decision-makers seeking youth involvement and leadership in addressing challenges and designing solutions.

Youth-led: Youth-led refers to groups and organizations managed by youth. This involvement empowers them to take action in their own communities.

Youth development partnerships or networks: Establishing networks supportive of youth strengthens collective voice. Networks allow youth to scale their ideas and expand their reach. Practitioners should work to develop networks at the community, national, and global level through in-person and online mechanisms.

Youth-serving institutions: Youth-serving institutions are defined as non-government organizations or host country government entities that provide services for youth.

ANNEX B: Descriptions of Relevant EQUIP3 Tools and Publications

Youth Livelihoods Development Program Guide. <http://www.equip123.net/docs/e3-LivelihoodsGuide.pdf>. This guide responds to the interest on the part of USAID and development practitioners worldwide for a common language to describe approaches for supporting youth to pursue a livelihood or income-generation activity. The document has four sections: Section A: A Common Language for Youth Livelihood Programs; Section B: Conceptual Framework for Youth Livelihood Programs; Section C: Designing Effective Youth Livelihood Strategies; Section D: Additional Information and Resources

Preparing for Work. www.preparing4work.org. EQUIP3 has developed a website called Preparing for Work, which is designed to help country partners and international development practitioners develop better work readiness training programs. The site features peer-reviewed curricula in the areas of work readiness, entrepreneurship, technical skills, and life skills that have been written for an international audience or that are adaptable to an international context. For each set of curricula featured, users will find: A summary of the curriculum; At a glance details; Two peer reviews; Details of any formal program or curriculum evaluation; Information on how to obtain the materials and an option to download free materials when available; Space for users to contribute comments about the materials. The site features an interactive tool for program managers that is designed to help them make a preliminary selection of curriculum materials that best fit with the needs of potential participants, the overall program goals, and the demands and opportunities of the local economy.

Literacy for Out-of-School Youth: A Program Guide. <http://www.equip123.net/docs/e3-Literacy.pdf>. This program guide offers a resource for development specialists initiating or strengthening integrated literacy programs for youth ages 15–24 who are not involved in formal education. The guide is divided into three parts: Part I: Presents the case for investment in integrated literacy programs for out-of-school youth and explores how literacy skills are developed; Part II: Describes the policy context necessary to ensure the success of literacy

programs for out-of-school youth; Part III: Includes a step-by-step process for designing, implementing, and evaluating effective literacy programs.

ANNEX C.

Country	Project Name	Dates	Summary Description	Website
Bosnia – Herzegovina	Partnership for Innovation (PI) Project in Bosnia and Herzegovina	2011–2016	<p>PI is a 5-year, \$5-million USAID-funded project that aims to</p> <p>(1) improve the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), thus enabling them to meet market demand and preserve and generate jobs, and (2) provide new opportunities for employment and self-employment for young people (ages 18–35).</p> <p>PI will achieve these goals through the creation and support of Business Innovation Centers (BICs). BICs will provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater access to training in advanced technical skills, methodological skills to improve efficiency, and skills in technology screening, as well as access to advanced equipment and applications to SMEs • A range of resources to help young men and women gain or improve their access to the ICT (information and communications technology) labor market, or embark on an ICT-related micro-enterprise <p>Key outcomes will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of 2 sustainable BICs • Improved efficiency in 200 firms as a result of BIC services • Employment of 100 youth <p>An external evaluation is planned.</p>	No website yet
Liberia	Advancing Youth Project (AYP)	2011–2016	<p>AYP is a 5-year, \$35-million project that provides increased access to quality alternative basic education services, social and leadership development, and livelihoods for out-of-school youth ages 13–35 who have no or marginal literacy and numeracy skills.</p> <p>AYP works closely with the Ministry of Education and community-based organizations to build their capacity to manage the system and programs that provide youth with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed.</p> <p>Key activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing three levels of curriculum in literacy, numeracy, life skills, and work readiness • Training facilitators to deliver alternative basic education • Providing youth with work-based learning opportunities, and links to skills and entrepreneurship training • Forming youth clubs and local alliances to support youth education and enhanced livelihoods • Developing private-public partnerships <p>AYP’s focus is on testing alternative models, conducting rigorous evaluation, and providing designs for sustainable national service delivery.</p> <p>A midterm external evaluation is planned and budgeted.</p>	http://idd.edc.org/projects/liberia/usaidliberia-advancing-youth-project

Country	Project Name	Dates	Summary Description	Website
Guyana	Skills and Knowledge for Youth Employment (SKYE) Project	2011–2013	<p>SKYE is a 2-year, \$2.6-million project that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expands employment, education, and skill-building opportunities for youth at risk • Strengthens re-integration of youth offenders into society • Improves the enabling environment for youth development <p>Approximately 600 youth ages 15–24 who are at risk for or already involved with the juvenile justice system receive alternative sentencing, work-readiness training, and livelihood coaching. Each youth participant works with a SKYE coach to develop an Individual Employability Plan. This plan outlines how the young person will reach his or her development destination of employment, further education, or small business development.</p> <p>A final evaluation is planned and budgeted.</p>	No website yet
Kosovo	Young Entrepreneurs Program (YEP) in Kosovo	2010–2013	<p>YEP is a 6-year, \$3.27-million project that aims to better prepare Kosovo youth ages 18–35 for work in a growing market economy. To meet this goal, YEP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides ongoing support and matching seed grant assistance to prepare young entrepreneurs • Engages employers and other leaders to combine resources, skills, and policies to create a sustainable system of opportunities and supports for out-of-school and out-of-work young people • Is investing in the development of a sustainable youth entrepreneurial support system. This system includes more youth-inclusive financial and consulting services and a peer support network with links to networks of established entrepreneurs 	http://idd.edc.org/projects/youth-employment-and-participation-yep-project-kosovo
Mali	Mali Out-of-School Youth Project, known locally as PAJE-Nièta (Projet d'Appui aux Jeunes Entrepreneurs-Nièta or Project to Support Youth Entrepreneurs)	2010–2015	<p>PAJE-Nièta (Nièta means “progress” in Bambara), is a 5-year, \$30 million project that serves rural, out-of-school youth in four regions—Sikasso, Kayes, Koulikoro, and Timbuktu.</p> <p>PAJE-Nièta provides youth with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved basic education • Work readiness and technical training • Social and leadership development • Accompaniment towards livelihood activities <p>Partners are CRS, Swisscontact, AJA, AMSS.</p>	http://www.equip123.net/webarticles//anviewer.asp?a=711&z=123
Honduras	METAS (Mejorando la Educacion para Trabajar, Aprender, y Superarse)	2010–2014	<p>METAS is a 4-year, \$10.585 million USAID-funded project. Project goals include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable at-risk youth to gain the job skills, knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and life perspectives needed to create positive futures • Provide Honduran companies with the skilled workforce needed to compete in international markets • Establish private-sector alliances to help youth secure jobs in the local labor market 	http://proyectometas.org/

Country	Project Name	Dates	Summary Description	Website
Afghanistan	Skills Training for Afghan Youth (STAY) Project	2010–2011	<p>STAY was a 1.5-year, \$13.5-million project that provided vocational education and training, community-based skills development, and alternative education to empower 15–24 year olds in five provinces of the south and east regions of Afghanistan.</p> <p>The vision of the STAY project was to mobilize and strengthen youth to contribute to the economic development and security of the country. The goal was to engage and prepare youth for positive and productive roles in work, society, and family life.</p>	http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/USAID/Activity/188/Skills_Training_for_Afghan_Youth_STAY
Macedonia	Youth Employability Skills (YES) Network in Macedonia	2010–2015	<p>The YES Network is a 5-year, \$6.69-million project that teaches youth relevant skills to enable them to participate in the modern economy.</p> <p>The program targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students in their final year in Macedonia’s Vocational Education and Training (VET) schools • Unemployed registrants with the Employment Service Agency (ESA) • Out-of-school youth ages 15–24. <p>The YES Network has already achieved national adoption of the work readiness curriculum—developed in NGO settings—by the formal Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system.</p> <p>An external evaluation is planned.</p>	http://macedonia.usaid.gov/en/sectors/education/YES.html
Kenya	Garissa Youth Project (G-Youth), Kenya	2008–2012	<p>G-Youth is a 4-year, \$6.9-million project in Garissa Town in the North Eastern Province of Kenya. It is designed to create enabling environments that empower youth using a youth-owned, youth-led model.</p> <p>G-Youth:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides youth ages 16–30 with greater access to livelihood opportunities • Promotes tolerance and peaceful coexistence among diverse communities through civic education • Is an example of having youth participation as the centerpiece of the program as well as integrated throughout the program <p>An external evaluation is planned.</p>	http://www.g-youth.org

Country	Project Name	Dates	Summary Description	Website
Rwanda	Akazi Kanoze: Youth Livelihoods Project in Rwanda	2008–2013	<p>Akazi Kanoze is a 4-year, \$9.8-million project that seeks to improve the livelihood options of 12,500 youth, ages 14–24, in Kigali, Rwanda.</p> <p>To achieve this goal, Akazi Kanoze provides youth with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market-relevant life and work readiness training and support • Hands-on training opportunities • Links to the employment and self-employment job market <p>Akazi Kanoze has generated enthusiasm within the national government, leading to their supporting the integration of work readiness curricula within secondary schools.</p> <p>In 2012, a midterm evaluation was underway.</p>	http://akazikanoze.edc.org/
Philippines	EQuALLS2: Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills (EQuALLS) Phase 2	2006–2011	<p>EQuALLS2 was a 5.5-year, \$60-million project that aimed to uplift Mindanao, Philippines, through serving its youth.</p> <p>EQuALLS2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowered communities to support better education • Built teachers' capacity and resources • Offered out-of-school children and youth alternative learning and livelihood opportunities <p>EQuALLS2 was coordinated in partnership with the Philippines Department of Education and three lead implementing organizations: International Youth Foundation, Save the Children, and Synergeia Foundation.</p> <p>The project has generated significant national will and capacity to continue the youth services and programs, largely through local government institutions.</p> <p>An external evaluation is being planned.</p>	http://www.equalls2.org/
Somalia	Somalia Youth Livelihood Program (SYLP)-Shaqodoon	2008–2011	<p>SYLP, known locally as Shaqodoon, was a 3.5-year, \$10.2 million project aimed at providing over 8,000 unemployed and out-of-school youth ages 15–24 across the Somali regions with greater access to training, internships, work, and self-employment opportunities.</p> <p>Shaqodoon:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipped Somali youth with work and life skills to improve their futures and increase the stability of the region • Used Souktel's SMS-based Info-Match tool to match job seekers and potential employers on the mobile phone-based platform <p>An external evaluation was conducted in late 2011 by IBTCI.</p>	www.shaqodoon.org

Country	Project Name	Dates	Summary Description	Website
West Bank & Gaza	Palestinian Youth Empowerment Program (Ruwwad) in WestBank/Gaza	2005–2012	<p>Ruwwad is a 7-year, \$19.675-million project that gives Palestinian youth ages 14–30 opportunities to explore their potential and to learn the tools to become local leaders across the West Bank and Gaza.</p> <p>Ruwwad:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides platforms for youth, including those in marginalized areas, to incubate their ideas, launch them into reality, and promote social change across the West Bank and Gaza • Creates a network of youth clubs and centers in the West Bank that provide diverse services to youth in their communities, giving them foundational skills to apply for work and internships <p>An external evaluation was conducted by JBS International in 2011.</p>	www.ruwwad.org
Kosovo, Montenegro, Azerbaijan, Macedonia, Georgia, and Armenia	Workforce Competitiveness under the Social Legacy Program (SLP)	2006–2011	<p>SLP was a 5-year, \$1-million project that reached out to youth and other vulnerable groups in Eastern Europe, helping them develop the tools they need to become local leaders of social change.</p> <p>SLP supported activities aimed at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving workforce competitiveness in Kosovo and Montenegro • Strengthening disability coalitions of NGOs in Armenia and Georgia • Promoting transparency in education and higher education institutions in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Macedonia <p>Due to widespread socioeconomic insecurity and a dramatic collapse in basic social services, the region struggles to transition towards becoming market-oriented, democratic societies. SLP worked within labor markets and education systems, as well as enhanced social services and safety nets for vulnerable groups (especially people with disabilities).</p>	http://ten.edc.org/
India	USAID/ India's Minority Education and Skills Training for Youth Program (MEGA-Sky)	2009–2011	<p>MEGA-Sky was a 2-year, \$2-million project to create educational and skill-building opportunities for marginalized children and youth, especially within the Muslim community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MEGA operated at the formal and non-formal levels to facilitate access to quality educational opportunities for the acquisition of livelihood and life skills. • SkY (Skills for Youth) worked at the policy level to incubate and replicate successful private sector vocational programs. 	http://mega-sky.edc.org/

Country	Project Name	Dates	Summary Description	Website
East Timor	PAS: Prepara Ami ba Servisu (Preparing Us for Work)	2007–2011	<p>PAS was a 4-year, \$5.5-million project that improved the capacity of local institutions to provide accessible and relevant workforce development and work readiness training to rural youth as a means to earn a better livelihood.</p> <p>PAS training was geared to the specific learning needs and socioeconomic circumstances of minimally educated, low-skilled, out-of-school young women and men, ages 16–30, in rural districts of Timor-Leste.</p> <p>An external evaluation was conducted in 2010.</p>	http://www.equip123.net/webarticles/anmviewer.asp?a=647
Haiti	Haitian Out-of-School Youth Livelihood Initiative (IDEJEN)	2003–2011	<p>IDEJEN was a 7.5-year, \$17-million project that provided education and job training to 13,000 youth ages 15–24 who had little to no formal education.</p> <p>IDEJEN provided program participants with support in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employability and skills training • Basic and vocational education • Job placement and small business development. <p>IDEJEN also provided technical support to different government ministries in the development of youth policies.</p> <p>The IDEJEN Project’s training allowed marginalized youth to deliver services and earn incomes in their communities, which increased their credibility with the adults in their communities. Now youth are seen as resources and positive contributors to development.</p> <p>IDEJEN spun off a local NGO by leveraging new non-USAID funding. This NGO continues activities with a refined implementation model and generates revenue through specialized vocational training schools for youth.</p>	http://idejen.edc.org/
Yemen	Al Saleh Institute Support Project for Youth (AISPY)	2009–2011	<p>AISPY was a 1.4-year, \$1.65-million project designed to assist the Al-Saleh Foundation in supporting youth from Marib, Shabwah, and Al Jouf in developing work and livelihood skills.</p> <p>These skills helped youth find gainful employment or start businesses in their governorates, which contributed to their own economic well-being as well as the future prosperity of their communities and country.</p>	http://www.amideast.org/yemen/professional-development/al-saleh-institute-human-development-support-project-aispy
Bangladesh	Bangladesh Youth Employment Pilot Activity Program (BYEP)	2008–2010	<p>BYEP was a 2-year, \$538,570 project that focused on the challenges and opportunities of improved vocational skills for youth in the fast-growing aquaculture industry.</p> <p>BYEP used a youth-centered approach designed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add value to the golda (fresh water prawn) industry • Provide education skills such as literacy and numeracy • Create employment opportunities for young women and men 	http://idd.edc.org/projects/bangladesh-youth-employment-pilot-byep

Country	Project Name	Dates	Summary Description	Website
India, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Morocco	USAID Cross-Sectoral Youth (CSY) Program	2006–2009	<p>The CSY program consisted of three demonstration projects in DRC, India, and Morocco targeting youth ages 15–24.</p> <p>The program activities focused on the following sectors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth advocacy • Work readiness • Basic education • Health awareness • Civic engagement 	http://www.equip123.net/webarticles/anmviewer.asp?a=645&z=123
Uganda	Education for All (EFA) in Uganda—The Kids League	2005–2006	<p>The EFA program in Uganda focused on using sports as a convening mechanism for education and peace building. It targeted 270 youth and children ages 9–14 in conflict-affected areas.</p> <p>EFA also adapted Search Institute’s Developmental Assets Profile (DAP) approach as part of the monitoring and evaluation of the program.</p>	http://www.equip123.net/webarticles/anmviewer.asp?a=655&z=123
Jamaica	EFA Challenge Grant— Earning, Learning, and Skill Development Opportunities for Out-of-School Youth in Jamaica	2005–2007	The EFA Challenge Grant in Jamaica focused on addressing the education and employment challenges of urban boys. The program targeted 78 out-of-school young men and boys ages 15–24 in Kingston.	http://www.equip123.net/webarticles/anmviewer.asp?a=655&z=123
South Africa	EFA Challenge-City Year South African National Youth Service Program	2005–2006	The EFA Challenge Grant in South Africa supported the adaptation of the U.S.-based youth service model City Year to the South Africa context to address employment, civic engagement, and education issues.	http://www.equip123.net/webarticles/anmviewer.asp?a=655&z=123
Afghanistan	Assessment of the Literacy and Community Empowerment Program in Afghanistan (LCEP)	2004–2006	<p>Between 2004 and 2006, LCEP worked in 190 communities in the provinces of Parwan, Bamyán, Herat, Kandahar and Farah, reaching 38,000 rural Afghans.</p> <p>LCEP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offered integrated community development opportunities through activities in local governance, adult literacy and numeracy, and economic empowerment • Facilitated the growth of 380 democratically elected Community Development Councils or CDCs (of which 190 were female) <p>Through learning centers in each community, village teachers offered literacy and numeracy instruction to learners ages 10 and over. Learners who completed the program were granted 3rd grade equivalency certification by the Afghan Ministry of Education.</p>	No website