An empirical review of youth employment policies (YEPs) and their impact in Niger

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Key messages

Nigerien youth need integrated, inclusive, quality actions and ongoing supervision to ensure their social integration, economic fulfilment, and effective participation in Niger’s development.

The review of relevant interventions suggests the following policy approaches.

• Priority support is needed for young entrepreneurs (graduates and those at a similar level) who have already started their own businesses. This is the policy option most likely to succeed for this group and to generate new jobs for youth.

• For out-of-school youth, an integrated approach that combines vocational training and integration is appropriate, but only if it is modern and of high quality and if it is based on consultation with social actors at all levels.

• Youth who are promoting their projects and programmes need a systematic, upstream communication plan to guarantee the inclusiveness of their actions.

• Having a single fund for the integration and promotion of youth employability with specific budget lines for each type of intervention makes it possible to pool efforts and strengthen the transparency and coordination of actions.

Impediments to youth employment and entrepreneurship in Niger

The difficulties faced by young people in Niger in relation to employment and the development of their own business activities are the result of their low level of education (1 in every 2 Nigerien youth has no education and more than 3 out of every 5 have only a primary education (INS, 2016), as well as their limited vocational training.

This situation deteriorated between 2005 and 2018, when the proportion of young people aged 15-24 who were not in employment, education or training (NEET) increased from 23% to 69% (with the rate three times higher among young women) (Banque Mondiale, 2020).

Young people’s options are also limited by the challenges to their access to financing to engage in productive activities. They must also contend with a lack of technical skills, coupled with a lack of job opportunities. All of these factors combine to condemn them to underemployment, which affects 68.4% of those who are working (INS, 2014).

The State and its partners have supported multiple youth employment interventions. However, a rapid increase in the number of young people seeking employment or a productive activity, coupled with the weak development of the private sector, means that it was not possible to achieve Niger’s ambition of creating 50,000 jobs per year or to achieve a permanent employment rate of 40% for rural youth by 2021 (Ministère du Plan, 2017).

Our comprehensive review of youth employment policies implemented directly or indirectly over the past decade is intended to support the Mastercard Foundation’s Young Africa Works (YAWS) strategy, which aims to enable 30 million young Africans, including women, to access dignified and fulfilling work by 2030 (Mastercard Foundation, 2021).
Outline of youth employment policy options

The main youth employment policy options available in Niger are as follows:

**For young graduates and similar youth:**
- placement of trainees
- entrepreneurship or financial support and
- entrepreneurship support with ongoing technical coaching.

**For youth who have dropped out-of-school or who have never been in school:**
- placement of trainees in workshops
- vocational and technical training and
- financial support for entrepreneurship.

**We evaluated four existing policy options:**

- **Option 1:** Placement of interns
- **Option 2:** Vocational training and integration into an economic activity
- **Option 3:** Support for youth entrepreneurship
- **Option 4:** Support for youth entrepreneurship with ongoing technical supervision

**Methodology**

This evaluation is based on a thematic analysis using the information collected during interviews with stakeholders and focus groups with young beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. When evaluating the four policy options, we considered two distinct groups of young people: tertiary graduates and out-of-school and out-of-school youth, applying a ranking system for each option with scores from 1 to 10.

**Three evaluation criteria were used to evaluate the performance of the different policy options.**

- Efficiency/effectiveness: the achievement of objectives, the extent of the programme’s contribution to the promotion of decent employment, and its rational use of resources.
- Impact: the assessment of all the medium and long-term effects of the project on young people, both positive and negative, planned or unforeseen, as well as the factors that contributed to or prevented the achievement of the various results. This criterion also explored sustainability, including mechanisms to sustain any gains made.
- Inclusiveness: an essential principle for the mobilization of all segments of the population. Each option was evaluated on the extent to which it benefits everyone without distinction. This criterion explores, therefore, the consideration of gender.
Key findings

Our evaluation of the four policy options shows that:

- For young graduates and similar youth, the optimal policy option proved to be support for entrepreneurship, including continuous technical supervision to support the development and modernization of their activities.

- For young people who have dropped out of school or who have never been in school, the best policy option is the integrated approach of vocational training and integration through an income-generating activity. When this is linked to a tontine mechanism at the grassroots level (which allows participants to pool their risk), the empowerment of beneficiaries becomes more sustainable.

The key stakeholders and focus groups were also asked for their views on the results of programme implementation, in particular the obstacles to impactful youth employment policies (Figure 1). Almost 40% of participants cited a lack of follow-up support mechanisms for youth. In terms of the merits of support for entrepreneurship, vocational training, and youth placement initiatives, they drew distinctions between the benefits of these different approaches for graduates and for out-of-school youth (Figure 2).

The key stakeholders and focus groups were also asked to share their perspectives on the factors that shape either success or failure (Figure 3), with participation and communication seen as major factors in success, and a lack of relevant education, communication, coordination and monitoring as contributing factors in failure.

Figure 1. Obstacles to the impact of youth employment policies

Figure 2. The merits of different approaches

Main obstacles according to the stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obstacle</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The mentality of young people and their low level of initiative</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficit in information and corruption</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficiency of the follow-up and support mechanisms for young people</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequacy of the supply compared to the demand</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural drift</td>
<td>7%</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: Authors, based on survey data.

Support For Entrepreneurship:
A success for young graduates and similar entrepreneurs who already have an activity.

Support For Vocational Training:
Benefits out-of-school youth if implemented in an integrated approach that spans training, opportunity research and funding.

Youth Placement Initiatives:
Appreciated by young people but are insufficient and hampered by the weakness of follow-up mechanisms.

Figure 3. Factors that shape success or failure

Success factors:
- Participation of youth and marginalized groups in policy formulation and implementation
- Participatory approach to empowering the population at the grassroots level
- Communication of interventions upstream (before the start of activities)

Failure factors:
- The low level of initiative of young people as a result of the lack of practical activities in their school curriculum
- Lack of a communication plan
- Scattered actions and a lack of synergy
- The failure of the monitoring mechanism

Source: Authors, based on survey data.
Recommendations and roadmap

Youth employment projects and programmes are not implemented efficiently and effectively as a result of the multiplicity of actors and the weaknesses of monitoring mechanisms. To accelerate the economic integration of young people, the policy approaches outlined below.

1. **Give priority support to young entrepreneurs who have already started a business**
   - By providing technical support and guidance to draw up a business development plan via incubator centres or private non-governmental organizations
   - By facilitating their access to opportunities (participation in international fairs, search for new outlets, etc.).
   - By supporting them financially for the granting of new machines with low-cost repayment facilities

2. **Stimulate the supply of jobs in the private sector**
   - By motivating the supervision of young people and their recruitment in the private sector in return for benefits and advantages.
   - By reviving the application of the Young Entrepreneur’s Charter.

3. **Prioritize integrated approaches to vocational training for out-of-school youth**
   - By reinforcing the quality of training.
   - By systematizing post-training follow-up.
   - By capitalizing on community self-help initiatives.

4. **Improve follow-up mechanisms for young people**
   - By strengthening the technical and financial capacities of public project implementation bodies.
   - By pooling the efforts of private actors.

5. **Scale up information and guidance platforms for young people**
   - By multiplying the number of youth guidance centres and providing them with substantial human and financial resources.
   - By diversifying communication channels (private and public actors).

6. **Coordinate funding for youth employment**
   - By merging the isolated funds for youth employment that are currently managed by different state institutions
   - By creating a single fund for the integration and promotion of youth employability
   - By ensuring that this fund has adequate budget lines for specific interventions.

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**References**

Banque Mondiale, 2020. World Development Indicators.


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The ‘What Works for Youth Employment in Africa’ initiative

The Partnership for Economic Policy is partnering with the Mastercard Foundation for a three-year initiative on What Works for Youth Employment in Africa. The initiative aims to provide evidence that can drive policy reform to increase youth employment in 10 African countries: Ghana, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and South Africa. The initiative aligns with the Mastercard Foundation’s Young Africa Works strategy that seeks to enable 30 million young Africans, particularly young women, to access dignified and fulfilling work by 2030. Teams of local researchers and policy stakeholders are carrying out gender-aware policy and impact reviews in each country. The resulting analysis and findings will build a body of knowledge on youth employment policy in Africa, and will be stored in a new online knowledge repository.

For more information, please visit: [www.pep-net.org/programs/youth-employment](http://www.pep-net.org/programs/youth-employment)