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in West Africa**



**“Strategies to Promote Youth Self-employment
in West Africa”**

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Problem: the Explosion in Youth Unemployment – A Plague Looming Large over the Economy and the Political Order

In a much publicised statement made in 2006, Charles Atangana (AEM) UK warns that youth unemployment in Africa constitutes a more serious threat than terrorism – an H-bomb which the political leaders must disarm by every possible means.

All employment figures indicate that the youth represent 37% of the population of working age, and 60% of all unemployed. Young people start working at an early age – one quarter of children aged between 5 and 14 years are actively employed, especially in the rural areas. Although in urban areas it is youth unemployment which is more widespread, in the rural areas there is a preponderance of underemployment.

The youth are employed mainly in the agricultural sector, where they account for 65% of the total work force. This frightening figure is illustrative of the vital importance of the problem of youth employment. All expert opinions acknowledge however, that “with 1.5 billion young people aged from 12 to 24 years in the world, the next generation represents a considerable opportunity for the acceleration of economic growth and poverty reduction”. Denouncing the intolerable levels reached by youth employment and other forms of social exclusion in a number of countries, the Director-General of the International Labour Office (ILO), called on these countries to adopt exceptional and immediate measures in favour of workers caught in the trap of poorly paid jobs or victims of long-term unemployment.

Under such conditions, according to Mr. Hansenne, “If we fail to contain the social costs of the economic transformations wrought by globalisation and technological change, we risk being swept into a perilous zone of social and political turmoil”.

Objectives of the Report

The principal objective of the meeting was to offer experts from the West African countries a forum for reflexion and exchange on the appropriate strategies and actions by which to promote youth self-employment in Africa. The specific objectives assigned to the meeting were to analyse causes of and trends in youth unemployment, as well as the challenges linked to youth self-employment in the sub-region; to review national policies on accelerated growth and poverty reduction with a view of identifying any gaps in terms of job creation and jobs for the youth in particular; to share the experiences, challenges and good practices at the national level

and to formulate recommendations on action-oriented strategies for the promotion of youth self-employment in the West African member states.

This study therefore begins with a detailed analysis of youth unemployment, seeking to clearly identify the determinants for success or the flaws in the national policies on growth and poverty reduction/development. Secondly, it articulates action-oriented strategies capable of promoting youth self-employment, and will serve as a working document for the discussions of this ad hoc meeting of the Group of Experts.

Definition of Basic Concepts

I Glossary

I.1 Economic growth

Economic growth is generally defined as an increase in the capacity of an economy to produce goods and services within a period of time, as measured against another period of time. In most countries, data on growth is published quarterly. Nominal growth is defined as economic growth including inflation, while real growth is nominal growth minus inflation.

I.2 Active population

The active population is composed of the number of unemployed plus the number of employed persons aged between 16 and 65 years. Active population comprises all persons classified as salaried or unemployed according to the definitions contained in this glossary.

I.3 Unemployment

Unemployment is the state in which an individual is seeking paid employment because s/he has none. Unemployment does not include full-time students, retired persons, children, or those who are not actively seeking paid employment.

The Investors' Glossary defines unemployment as "the state of a worker who is able and willing to take work but cannot find it".



1.4 Unemployment rate

The official definition of unemployment given below in a series of four definitions inevitably raises a number of complications. (1) a person who loses a 40-hour-per week job but who works for 1h 00 mowing a lawn for a salary is considered to be employed. (2) a person who merely shows an interest in finding a job is classified as **jobless**. "Discouraged workers" who have lost a job but made no effort to find another one within a given week are considered jobless.

These two possibilities demonstrate that "unemployment rate" as stated may not be as final as it appears. Nonetheless, unemployment rate may be defined as the number of jobless persons divided by the active population, where the active population is the number of jobless persons plus the number of employed.

Unemployment is an important measure of the dynamics of an economy. A high unemployment rate generally indicates an economy in recession with few job opportunities, while a low unemployment rate indicates a healthy economy.

It is difficult to define the terms "employed" and "jobless". These concepts are subject to labour laws which differ from one country to another. For example, the meanings of the terms below are defined according to American labour law (Source: Department of Statistics).

1.5 Employed persons

Employed persons are defined as persons aged 16 years and above, who, during the reference week (a) have performed any form of work (lasting at least one hour) as employees, independent workers, members of the liberal professions, agricultural workers, or who have performed at least 15 hours of unpaid work within an enterprise headed by a family member and (b) all those who hold down jobs or own enterprises from which they are temporarily absent. Each employed person is counted only once even though s/he may hold down more than one job. Persons excluded from this category are those whose activities involve working in the vicinity of their own residence (painting, carrying out repairs, or performing household chores), or performing voluntary work for religious, charitable or other organisations.

1.6 Unemployed persons

Jobless persons are defined as young persons aged 16 years and above, who, during the reference week were unemployed; were available for work, except in the event of temporary illness; took active steps in search of employment during a period of four weeks ending in the reference week. Persons waiting to be recalled to a job from which they were dismissed need to have not been seeking employment in order to be classified as jobless (ILO, 2007).

1.7 Jobless persons

The term refers to persons within the active population who are not employed but are actively seeking for work.

1.8 Inactive

The term refers to those who do not have a job and are not seeking employment. An inactive youth may be one who is pursuing secondary or higher studies. However, s/he may also be a discouraged worker who is not seeking work because s/he feels that s/he lacks the necessary qualifications, does not know where to or how to look for work, or feels that no suitable work is available.

Overview

This report highlights a very real problem which is fast spreading across the West African sub-region, namely, the low rate of youth self-employment, and above all, the prevalence of unemployment and underemployment among the youth. The numbers of the young people in West Africa should be perceived as an asset rather than a burden. Between 2008 and 2009, the population of Africa grew by 2.3% to approximately 1 billion. Of this number, 70% are under the age of 30 years, making Africa one of the youngest continents in the world¹. The young men and women have potentials which remain unharnessed due to the absence of initiatives, funds, qualifications and strategies. It is therefore, and in fact high time for national policies reflecting these realities to be put into effect in order to mitigate the effects of any possible damage which the countries may have suffered. However, there can be no doubt that the high levels of youth unemployment in West Africa constitute a challenge to sustainable development and a source of major concern to the countries of the sub-region as well as intergovernmental organisations.

Africa in general and West Africa in particular, have recorded relatively high growth rates over the last five years, with the continental average peaking at 6.1% in 2007. However, this growth has not been paralleled by an expansion of the labour market. This is a major problem calling for fundamental shock treatment, since implementation and the concrete results expected of the national job promotion policies are slow to manifest. West Africa stands in need of concrete strategies to support youth self-employment and break the yoke of unemployment and poverty. This report places West Africa in its sub-regional context and presents an analysis of the principal trends and causes of youth unemployment in its countries. It also identifies the challenges confronting those of the youth in or seeking self-employment.

After an analysis of the growth and poverty reduction strategies adopted in the sub-region the report highlights the gaps in the process of job creation for the youth and proposes action-oriented strategies and programmes to promote youth self-employment.

The methodology adopted consisted of collecting and analyzing of data sourced from studies essentially based on documentary reviews and internet resources, as well as official national, regional and international data resources.

¹ ECA, Economic Report on Africa 2010 (Promoting High-level Sustainable Growth to Reduce Unemployment in Africa)

The major challenge encountered in the preparation of this report was the absence of up-dated data, particularly on youth self-employment. This lack of information has also been observed by various other institutions, including the ILO, and reflects the fact that African countries, including those in West Africa, only began (and then only tentatively) to collect data on unemployment in 1990. To date, only Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritius and South Africa collect unemployment data on a regular basis.

The report is the outcome not only of fruitful discussions with experts, but also of the sharing of national-level experiences and perspectives on the process for the promotion of youth self-employment.

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We wish to thank all participants at the meeting of the ad hoc Experts Group on “Strategies for promoting youth self-employment in West Africa” which took place in Dakar, from 13 to 17 March 2010. We particularly wish to thank the Ministry of Youth and Employment of the Republic of Senegal, and ECOWAS, which not only co-sponsored the meeting but also contributed the technical expertise of two experts to the deliberations. Our thanks also go to all the intergovernmental organisations, including the Mano River Union, Africa Rice, AFRISTAT, ADB, NBA, UEMOA, and ACMAD, who attended the meeting and contributed significantly to the deliberations with a view to improving the quality of the meeting report.

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Foreword

Youth unemployment today affects all the States of the sub-region. Youth self-employment is therefore a most current issue, and one of special importance. The phenomenon is a consequence of the absence of employment and self-employment opportunities for the youth, as well as the particularly high unemployment rate in the sub-region. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), “Reducing the world’s rate of youth unemployment by half could add \$2,200 bn – \$3,500 bn to the global economy. About 20% of that gain would go to sub-Saharan Africa”.

Unemployment in West Africa is attributable to a complex mix of factors, the most important of which are the stagnation or weakness of economies which cannot generate a rapid enough growth rate to create a sufficient number of jobs at the very time when the population is expanding at a tremendous rate. “Development experts say that Africa’s economy needs to grow by 7 per cent annually in order to cut in half by 2015 the percentage of people living in poverty, a target agreed upon by the international community.” (ILO).

In many West African countries, the productive sectors of the economy have been unable to create the jobs needed to reduce the levels of youth unemployment. Moreover, neither the public nor the private structures in place can provide strong enough support for youth job creation efforts. The State is the main employer of labour, followed in general by precarious industries which cannot, on their own absorb the huge number of young people born of the population explosion. Low literacy levels and the deficiencies of the educational systems also deny the youth the opportunity to acquire the skills they need for insertion into the productive system. This inevitably results in a rise in the number of unemployed persons and consequently, of unemployment levels.

As far back as May 2006, speaking at the annual conference of African Ministers of Finance, Economic Planning and Development held in Burkina Faso in May 2006, the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Mr Abdoulie Janneh observed, “The Plan of Action is a fine blueprint, but we must go beyond the planning stage.”

In its analysis of the problem of youth self-employment this report reaches almost the same conclusions as those of the ECA Executive Secretary, which recommend to the States of the sub-region to work towards the promotion and expansion of youth self-employment.

According to the ILO “In part, the weakness of the employment policy dimension of PRSPs probably reflects the relative absence of labour ministries and their social partners from the consultation processes for the drafting of the first papers. Larger questions, such as how to translate economic growth into jobs, are yet to be fully integrated into poverty reduction strategies.” (Gumisai Mutume)²

Nonetheless, as the former ECA Deputy Executive Secretary, Mr Makha Dado Sarr, points out, “Given their importance for the development of low income countries, these strategic poverty reduction papers could constitute a useful tool for the promotion of youth employment and self-employment”. These papers have given rise to grand development programmes in the countries in question, hence the focus of the ECA and AU on encouraging African countries to incorporate job promotion programmes into their strategic papers.

In March 2006, Egypt hosted an ECA-sponsored conference on strategic papers. Participants examined twenty-one (21) poverty reduction papers and observed that two-thirds of the papers now included job creation measures, marking a significant improvement in comparison to the first strategic papers. Some of these measures are focused on generalising access to education, training, loans, and the construction of infrastructures as a means of attracting investors. However, according to the ECA, none of the 21 strategic papers explicitly and directly addressed the issues and problems of employment.

After a detailed study of the problem of youth self-employment in West Africa, the report observes that the growth performance achieved in the last few years has not translated into jobs for the youth. It recommends to governments in the short term to enact legislation on youth projects, and create a legal and financial framework to support youth self-employment and encourage a spirit of entrepreneurship among young people which will enable them to overcome cultural obstacles and seize any local opportunities which might open up. It further suggests to the decision-makers to support youth initiatives and encourage collective and individual lending, and in the case of collective loans, use a guarantor close to the youth concerned. In addition, negotiations with suppliers should be carried out directly in the interests of risk minimisation – in other words, governments are enjoined to create capital lease facilities with which the young

² Gumisai Mutume in *Africa Renewal*, Vol.20 n°3, October 2006, page 6: “Wanted: jobs for Africa’s youth”

applicants are associated. Finally the report recommends that the institutions put in place effective repayment procedures, train the youths in their local languages, sensitise them to social protection and encourage them to join mutual credit associations.

It is against this backdrop that the ECA Sub-regional Office for West Africa has selected the theme of youth self-employment in West Africa as one of extreme topicality. The report examines, evaluates and recommends policies which are favourable to youth job creation in general and self-employment in particular, acknowledging these areas as the cornerstone for economic and social development in West Africa.

ACRONYMS

ACMAD	African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development
ADB	African Development Bank
AFRISTAT	Africa statistique (Economic and Statistical Observatory for sub-Saharan Africa)
AGETIP	Agence d'Exécution de Travaux d'Intérêt Public (Senegalese Public Works and Employment Agency)
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
ILO	International Labour Office
ILO	International Labour Organisation
NBA	Niger Basin Authority
NGO	Nongovernmental Organisation
NPDC	National Planning and Development Commission
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
RDI	Research and Development Institute
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
UEMOA	Union économique et monétaire de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (West African Economic and Monetary Union)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
UNOWA	United Nations Office for West Africa
WB	World Bank
YEN	Youth Employment Network
YERP	Youth Employment Rehabilitation Programme
YIF	Youth International Foundation/ Fondation Internationale des Jeunes

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Sub-regional Context

1. One of the major challenges facing the African continent in general and the West African sub-region in particular, is its continuing vigorous population growth and the poor economic prospects which prevent it from meeting the increased needs of its people. Annual population growth rate for Africa is estimated at 3% (UNDP, 2002), 50% of which are the youth. The population of West Africa (including Mauritania) is estimated at 300 million inhabitants, half of whom are below the age of 20, while three quarters are below the age of 30. Official unemployment figures for the countries of the sub-region, according to international standards, averages between 8 and 10% (ILO, 2007). This relatively low figure, which does not reflect the realities of unemployment in these countries, also fails to include the substantial number of persons engaged in vulnerable, indecent occupations. Unemployment in post-conflict countries is endemic. In Liberia, for instance, about 80% of the active population is unemployed.

2. Projections indicate that the population of the sub-region will cap 430 million inhabitants by 2020, with an ever-increasing number of young people seeking employment, accompanied by the ever-stronger pressure which is being brought to bear on land and urban agglomerations.³ With an estimated 18.1% of jobless young people as at 2005 (ECA, 2007, ILO, 2007), youth unemployment levels in the sub-region rank among the highest in the world.

3. The structural weakness and extremely limited diversification of the economies of the sub-region prevent job creation in sufficient numbers to absorb the growing annual number of young entrants into the labour market. Records in Senegal show that 100,000 freshly qualified youths arrive on the labour market every year (YEN, IYF, 2009). The Beninese Ministry for Youth puts this figure at 30,000 for the Republic of Benin, while ILO estimates place the annual number of young graduate entrants into the labour market in Mali at 100,000.⁴

³ United Nations Office for West Africa, 2007

⁴ ILO Sub-regional Office for the Sahel, Dakar, Senegal, 2006

4. These structural constraints are exacerbated by the numerous crises facing the countries of the sub-region, including that of the educational system, which is ill-matched to the demands of the labour market, the food crisis, and the recent economic, financial and energy crises.

5. The poorly developed private sector does not create enough jobs to absorb the rising number of young entrants into the labour market. Government, which in the past was the principal employer in the formal labour market is unable to create enough new jobs to absorb the large numbers of young graduates into the civil service. As a result, the informal sector has become the only heaven for young graduates, as well as those with neither degree nor other form of qualification, some of whom try to smuggle their way into Europe under tragic conditions risking their lives..

6. In view of the preceding the promotion of self-employment for young men and women appears to be a reliable alternative, and indeed, a strategic response to what is commonly referred to as the youth employment crisis.

7. The high and endemic youth unemployment level goes beyond hampering development of the full potential of the youth; it also undermines the stability and socio-economic development prospects of the West African countries themselves. A transnational study on war and conflict in West Africa reveals that many unemployed youths enlisted as combatants in the armed groups in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire etc., thereby contributing to the aggravation of the long-drawn-out, devastating conflicts and other social problems which bestrew the contemporary history of the West African sub-region⁵. Youth unemployment therefore constitutes a threat to the peace, security and stability of the sub-region, as well as its economic advancement. A study conducted by the Office of the United Nations Secretary-General for West Africa (UNOWA) indicates that youth unemployment is not only a tragic waste of precious human resources, but a ticking time-bomb threatening security in West Africa.⁶

8. Although the number of young people in West Africa constitutes a huge challenge to the achievement of sustainable development, it should be borne in mind that it also constitutes a

⁵ "Youth Unemployment and Regional Insecurity in West Africa" United Nations Office for West Africa, August 2006

⁶ UNOWA Issue Paper on "Youth Unemployment and Regional Insecurity in West Africa", August 2006

valuable asset and an opportunity for the sub-region. If these young people are educated, mentored, and their energy and potential properly harnessed, they could become a veritable catalyst for wealth creation and positive change in a region which needs to exploit its vast reserves of natural and mineral resources, as well as the development potential which it possesses to such a considerable degree. This will contribute to the acceleration of regional integration and the attainment of the millennium development goals (MDGs). As the former United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan rightly observed, promoting youth employment offers “the most obvious bridge between the development and security agendas embodied in the Millennium Declaration”⁷.

9. Youth unemployment in West Africa has become a major cause for concern to the countries of the sub-region and to regional and international organisations. In October 2004, the African Union, in collaboration with the ILO, organised an Extraordinary Summit on Employment and Poverty Reduction in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso). The Heads of State, having reiterated their determination to combat this scourge, adopted a Declaration, a Plan of Action and a monitoring/evaluation mechanism designed to place the fight against unemployment at the very heart of the poverty reduction and development agendas of their countries. At the regional level, in 2009, the ECOWAS Commission drew up a Five-Year Common Plan to promote employment in the countries of the sub-region.

10. At the strategic and operational levels, although most West African countries have adopted macroeconomic measures which have yielded positive growth rates in the region of 5%, (ECA, 2008) over the last five years, this growth has failed to generate enough jobs, especially for the youth. Similarly, national job promotion policies have been slow to yield concrete actions and results. There is an imperative need for strategies and proactive, action-oriented programmes in favour of youth self-employment in order to break the vicious circle of youth unemployment, poverty and social exclusion.

11. This report is made from the working document for the meeting of the ad hoc Experts Group Meeting on *"Strategies for the Promotion of Youth Self-employment"* organized by the UNECA SRO-WA, which took place in Dakar, Senegal, from 16 to 17 March 2010.

⁷ UNO-WA, op. cit.

1.2 Objectives of the Report

12. The objectives of the report are the following:

1. To analyse the root causes of youth unemployment and identify the determinants for the success or failure of job promotion policies and strategies and of youth self-employment projects in West Africa;
2. To articulate action-oriented strategies capable of promoting youth employment and self-employment;
3. To provide material for the deliberations of the ad hoc meeting of the Group of Experts.

1.3 Structure of the Report

13. The introduction presents background information on the sub-region. Chapter I analyses the trends and principal causes of youth unemployment in the countries of the sub-region, highlighting the challenges confronting those of the youth seeking self-employment. In Chapter II the report presents an analysis of the growth and poverty reduction strategies of the West African countries, highlighting gaps in terms of job creation and youth employment. Chapter III proposes action-oriented strategies and programmes designed to effectively promote youth self-employment, the last chapter is the conclusions of the report.

1.4 Methodology

14. The study is based mainly on documentary reviews and internet resources. Data has been obtained from national and regional resources as well as international organisations, namely, the ADB, ILO, ECA, World Bank, UNDP, United Nations Office for West Africa and the Youth Employment Network). The insufficiency of available information has prevented adequate capture of certain aspects of youth unemployment and self-employment, including their socio-cultural impact, inter-regional migration and the exportation of banditry and criminality to neighbouring countries. One of the outcomes expected of this meeting which was for the experts from the different countries represented on the group to input further information was fulfilled

15. , The report is now finalised, and will be published and widely disseminated, with the aim of assisting the Member States to devise appropriate responses to the challenge of youth self-employment in West Africa.

Chapter I: The Challenge of Youth Employment – Scourge or Inevitability – the Contribution of Youth Self-employment

I.1. Definitions

16. The definition of “youth” for practical purposes varies from one country to another. Youth is generally defined as that group of the population aged between 15 and 24 years. In many African countries however, the age limit for the youth extends up to 35 years.

17. It is important to note that the youth do not constitute a homogenous group. There are differences between young people, arising from their social background (whether they are from poor or wealthy families), their geographical location (urban or rural), and their gender (whether male or female), which impact on the job opportunities open to them.

18. While young people in general, and in West Africa in particular, encounter age-related discrimination on the labour market on the grounds of lack of professional experience, difficulties in obtaining the guarantees which would enable them to obtain bank loans, and the absence of powerful connections, it is young women who encounter the added problem of gender-related discrimination (UNOWA 2006, ILO, 2009). They are frequently less educated than their male counterparts. The literacy rate for young men is estimated at 42.6 % compared to 18 % for young women. In Niger these figures are estimated at 15.1 % for women, and 42.9 % for men. In Mali also, young women are more vulnerable to unemployment than young men, and in Senegal, literacy rate is estimated at 15.9 % for women, and 32.7 % for men.⁸

19. Finding decent employment is a major concern for young men and women, and an important economic and political stake for the countries of West Africa.

20. The ILO defines decent work as the sum of *"the aspirations of the people in their professional lives. Decent work involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income; provides security in the workplace and social protection for workers and their families; offers better prospects for personal development and encourages social integration; gives people the freedom to express their concerns, to organise and to participate in decisions that affect their lives; and guarantees equal opportunities and equal treatment for all, both men and women."*

⁸UNDP Human Development Reports, 2007, 2009

21. In other words, access to decent employment is a fundamental human right⁹ which few young people in West Africa enjoy, as attested to by the high levels of youth unemployment analysed earlier.

22. Unemployment is understood differently depending on schools of thought and economic paradigms, which in turn determine the political implications of the problem and the responses it elicits.

23. Keynesian economic theory views unemployment as the result of insufficient effective demand for goods and services in a given economy. This leads to a decline in the production of goods and services, and a resultant decline in the demand for workers. In other words, the weak economic productivity which characterises most West African countries triggers a sharp drop in production levels and in the economic incentives offered by the countries, as well as their employment prospects.

24. Conversely, the neoclassical economic paradigm underscores the rigidity of the labour market imposed by a number of institutional forces, such as unionisation, and inflexible wage regulation, which dampen job creation. This approach to the unemployment problem informed the economic stabilisation programmes adopted in West Africa (and elsewhere on the continent) under the auspices of the Bretton Woods institutions. These programmes resulted, among others, in massive lay-offs, which exacerbated the vicious circle of unemployment, poverty and social exclusion¹⁰.

25. From a conceptual and analytical viewpoint, the ILO definition of unemployment appears more comprehensive and permits a better contextualisation of the phenomenon in West Africa, taking due account of the specificities of the sub-region.

26. *"Are considered unemployed those who are 16 years and over who had no employment during the reference week, were available for work, except for temporary illness, and had made specific efforts to find employment sometime during the 4-week period ending with the reference week. Persons who were waiting to be recalled to a job from which they had been laid off need not have been looking for work to be classified as unemployed"* (ILO, 2007).

⁹ ILO: "Global Agenda for Employment " Global Forum on Employment, Geneva, 1-3 November 2001

¹⁰ CC. Soludo and T. Mkandawire, (1999), "Our Continent, Our Future. African Perspectives on Structural Adjustment Programmes", IDRC/CODESRIA/Africa World Press

27. The self-employed or independent worker is defined as an individual who heads an enterprise or exercises a profession on an individual basis. (ILO, 2009).

I.2 Trends in Youth Unemployment in West Africa

28. The 2009 ILO Report on “Global Employment Trends” underscores the fact that the economic and financial crisis triggered a spike in unemployment rates, outstripping the figures for 2007 by 30 to 50 million. Developing countries, including those in West Africa, were the most adversely affected in this regard.

I.2.1 Low Unemployment Figures which do not Reflect the Realities of West Africa

29. Official unemployment figures for West Africa, according to the ILO definition (international standards) are not very high. The unemployment rate for Burkina Faso was estimated at 2.5% for 1998, and 2.4% for 2003. In Mali the estimate was 3.3% for 1997 as against 8.8% for 2004, while in Ghana, the estimate was 7.5% for 1998 and 10.1% for 2000. There was a perceptible trend towards an increase in the unemployment rate in Mali and Ghana.

I.2.2 Explanations for the Low Official Unemployment Figures

30. Reports on unemployment in Africa prepared by ILO (2007), ECA (2006), and RDI(2005) provide an insight into the reasons for these low unemployment rates.

- (i) In the West African countries (as in other African countries), many individuals are engaged in subsistence employment within the agricultural sector. A large proportion of the population is self-employed, most frequently using family members as auxiliaries. Such persons are deemed to be active, although they are engaged in precarious, and in fact, indecent employment. Technically and by international standards, they rank as being employed, and are therefore not counted among those seeking employment, or among the unemployed. Many persons deemed to be active (having employment) belong to the category of poor workers, or those living on less than 1 US dollar or 2 US dollars a day. According to ILO figures (2007),¹¹ the proportion of poor workers living on less than 1 US dollar is estimated at 15% in Côte d’Ivoire, 28.8% in Senegal, 74.1% in Niger, 54.8% in Ghana and 33.6% in The Gambia. The proportion of poor workers living on less than 2 US dollars is far greater than those in the first category, and is estimated at 55.3% in Côte d’Ivoire, 83% in Senegal, 70.8% in The Gambia, 95% in Niger and 89.7% in Ghana.

¹¹ ILO, “Trends in Employment in Africa”, Geneva, 2007

- (ii) Official unemployment rates do not take into account the discouraged of the labour market, meaning, unemployed persons who are not seeking employment because they believe they stand no chance of finding any.
- (iii) The problem of underemployment: surveys conducted in 2005 by the Research and Development Institute (RDI)¹² on employment in West Africa suggest that underemployment is in fact the main obstacle to the improvement of conditions on the labour market which affect some 67% of the active population. As a result, about 2.7 million persons out of more than 4 million are deemed to be fully employed. Underemployment may be invisible or visible. *Invisible* underemployment describes a situation in which persons are actively employed and earn less than the minimum hourly wage for a job in which their skills are not fully utilised. *Visible* underemployment describes a situation in which persons work less than 35 hours a week against their will.
- (iv) The absence of statistics: In 2007, the ILO observed that the absence of accurate statistical and updated data on unemployment remains a major constraint militating against a proper evaluation of the scope and trends of the unemployment phenomenon on the continent in general, and in the sub-region in particular.

¹²RDI, Memoire online: <http://www.ird.fr/fr/actualités/fiches/2005/fiche218.htm> by Gaelle CAYAU, University of Montpellier 3 Paul Valérie. Master 1 Institution – Organisation-Development – Strategic Human Resource Management

Box 1: The Absence of Accurate Statistical Data: a Major Challenge

Statistics on employment-population ratios (unemployment) in Africa are scarce. Figures were not available prior to 1990. Since then, 32 African countries have collected unemployment figures for at least one year; 17 countries have collected figures for at least one year since 2000, while only 5 collect figures on a regular basis, i.e. for practically every year over the last decade. These countries are Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia (North Africa); Mauritius and South Africa (sub-Saharan Africa).

ILO, "Employment Trends in Africa", 2007, page 6

Table 1: Activity, Unemployment and employment in the Capitals of the UEMOA Countries

Indicators	Cotonou	Ouagadougou	Abidjan	Bamako	Niamey	Dakar	Lomé	Ensemble
	2001	2001	2002	2001	2002	2002	2001	
Number of Active Persons	368,000	368,000	1,517,000	397,000	227,000	745,000	404 000	4 026 000
Duration of activity (10 yrs & above)	59.9	58	65.1	52.4	48.8	51.1	67.9	58.7
Activity rate for men	58.8	66.3	70.1	59.3	63.5	62.1	68.9	65.3
Activity rate for women	60.9	49.6	60.3	45.6	35.2	41.1	66.9	52.5
Number of discouraged workers	96,000	112,000	310,000	112,000	94,000	161,000	90 000	976 000
Number of unemployed (ILO definition)	20,400	56,500	205,400	28,000	29,900	87,000	33 300	460 500
Definition unemployment rate (ILO definition)	5.5	15.4	13.5	7.1	13.1	11.7	8.2	11.4
Unemployment rate in the broad sense 1	6.8	22.4	15.8	12.5	23.3	18.9	11.2	15.9
Unemployment rate in the broad sense	25.1	35.1	28.2	27.5	38.6	27.4	25	28.7
Visible underemployment rate	13.4	10.6	12.6	17.1	16	16.2	17.1	14.3
Invisible underemployment rate	61.1	66.5	53.2	45.4	51.1	57.8	55.8	55.2
Global underemployment rate	69.2	73	66.4	58.8	64.4	69.4	68.4	67.1

Source : INSEE, DIAL, and AFRISTAT, 2005

31. Despite variations between individual countries, youth unemployment figures remain high for all the countries of West Africa, and exceed the national percentage. They are estimated at 31% for Côte d'Ivoire, and are extremely high in countries emerging from conflict such as Liberia (88%) and Sierra Leone (60%). The extent of youth unemployment in certain countries of the sub-region is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Youth Unemployment in the Mano River Union and Côte d'Ivoire

Country	Total Population (millions)	Percentage of Youth (0-14)	Percentage of Youth (15-24)	Percentage of Youth (25-29)	Unemployed Youth
Côte d'Ivoire	18.2	45.1%	22%	7.6%	31%
Guinée	9.4	44.4%	19.2%	7.3%	N/A
Liberia	3.3	44.8%	19.7%	7.5%	88%
Sierra Leone	5.5	43.4%	18.8%	7.3%	60%

Source: United Nations Office in West Africa (UNOWA), 2007

The absence of data on self-employment makes it impossible to fully understand the scope and trends of the phenomenon. However, it can objectively be safely assumed that the trend is towards an increase, as attested to, among others, by the proliferation of young street hawkers in the West African capitals. Table 1 above presents the different forms of unemployment in the sub-region.

I.3 Causes of Youth Unemployment

32. The causes of youth unemployment are well documented. The 2002 ECA Economic Report on Africa concludes that youth unemployment is a symptom of (i) the absence of employment opportunities in underdeveloped and low-growth economies; (ii) high population growth rates; and (iii) low literacy and numeracy levels, poor quality education with limited labour market relevance (ILO, 2007)¹³.

33. In short, the causes are multidimensional and interconnected, and may be classified under two major categories, namely, underlying and direct or indirect causes.

¹³ ILO (2007) "Employment Trends in Africa" Geneva, 2007

I.3.1. Causes linked to the Population Explosion

34. According to “Economic Prospects for Africa” (January, 2010), the population of young people aged between 15 and 25 years of age represents 60% of the total population of the continent and 45% of its total active population. Projections place this figure at 75% by 2015. The situation varies appreciably from one country to another. In Mali, the proportion of young people aged less than 15 years is estimated at 58% of total population (World Bank, 2005) while those aged less than 25 years is estimated at 68% (Traoré, 2005/8). The representation of young people on the labour market is estimated at 35% for those aged between 15 and 19 years of age, and 23% for young women in the same age bracket. It is estimated at 54% for young people aged between 20 and 24, and 31% for women in the same age bracket. This suggests that young women are more affected by unemployment than young men, as confirmed by the situation in other countries in the sub-region and elsewhere. It has in fact been proved that as a result of gender inequality, translating as inequality in education, access to resources and economic opportunities such as land, credit facilities etc., and also as a result of inequality in the division of labour and gender-stereotyping, women are more frequently unemployed than men (ILO, 2009).

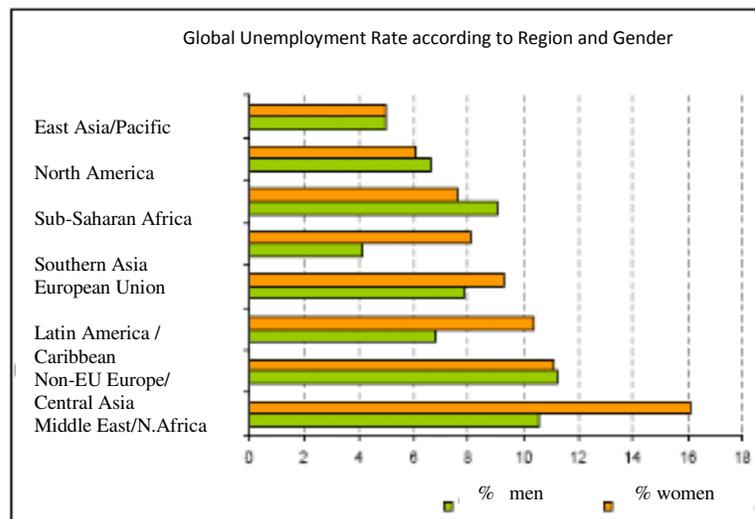
35. However, as the table below indicates, the official unemployment rate for women may be lower than that for men, as was the case for sub-Saharan Africa in 2004. This situation is attributable to the fact that women operate more frequently in the informal sector and engage in more precarious, poorly remunerated work (RID, 2005).

36. According to the ILO, exclusion from the labour market affects all population groups. It particularly affects the most qualified. Today in Africa, the diploma is no longer the passport to employment.¹⁴ As a result, the continent is characterised by under-employment of skilled labour. Sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the greatest number of working poor. The ILO, in a 2006 report titled "Global Employment Trends for Youth", states that "when young people are not unemployed they are working poor. Unemployment on the continent is due to the lag between the growth of the labour market and that of the population. 57.7% of people in sub-Saharan Africa live on less than one dollar per day and 87.1%, on less than two dollars. In other words, according to Dorothea Schmidt, an economist at the ILO and co-

¹⁴ http://www.dial.prd.fr/dial_publications/PDF/Dialogue/vieux_numeros/dial4/art1.htm <http://www.dial.prd.fr/>

author of the report, only one in ten young people earn enough to rise above the threshold of \$2 per day”. Whereas in South Asia, where the trend was previously most apparent, the number of young working poor fell from 60 million to 45 million, in sub-Saharan Africa it rose from 36 to 45.4 million. These young people who are often from poor families, share their earnings with their families or are themselves, especially due to AIDS, heads of family.¹⁵

Graph 1: Global Parity, Unemployment Rate according to World Region and Gender



Source: ILO, 2007 (data/2004)

37. The steady rise in demographic growth rate coupled with the increase in the proportion of youth to general population is attributable to the high fertility rate in the West African countries. This in turn is partly attributable to a combination of cultural and religious factors (erroneous interpretation of religious teaching). Despite all efforts to reverse this trend, birth rate in West Africa remains high. Niger and Mali have an average estimated fertility rate of 7 children, while the rate in Ghana is 4.4 children (ECA, 2009).

38. This demographic dynamic is not accompanied by a corresponding increase in productivity in the economic, agricultural or industrial sectors. On the contrary, an endemic

¹⁵ http://www.afrology.com/presse/afrique_emploi2006.html

For the three links above see Gaëlle Cayau, "The fight against Poverty in sub-Saharan Africa through the improvement of the labour market and the contribution of youth employment to development".

vicious circle is generated. Nerlove¹⁶ documents the fact that "a high fertility rate, combined with low productivity, poverty, poor education and low status of women and children are bound in a web of interaction with environmental degradation and declining food production, in such a way that stress from one of these sources can trap certain societies, especially those living on unproductive lands, into a vicious circle of increasingly destructive responses."

I.3.2. Direct and Indirect Causes

1°) Weak Structural Transformation of the Economy and Low Economic Productivity

39. Although the West African countries have registered cumulative positive growth rates (of about 5%) over the last five years, this growth does not reflect a positive transformation of the structure of the national economies. The economic sector in West Africa is still dominated by the production and export of raw materials and mineral resources, with negligible value added. As a result, the economic return from these resources remains inadequate, especially in terms of wealth retention, job creation, growth retention and redistribution of said growth among the different sectors of the population¹⁷. Although the agricultural sector is the main employer in West Africa, absorbing more than 50% of job seekers, (YEN, 2009)¹⁸ the jobs created are not always decent and are characterised by very low skills requirements, low wages, poor working conditions, including lack of social protection and above all high job insecurity.

2°) Distortion of the Labour Market: the Gap between Job Offer and Demand

40. This cause is linked to the previous one, namely, low economic productivity and extremely weak structural transformation. The economies of the sub-region have witnessed the erosion of their job offer capacity over the years, in the face of the strong push in job demand, especially from the youth. In Burkina Faso, the Observatoire National de l'Emploi et de la Formation professionnelle (National Observatory for Employment and Vocational

¹⁶Example of Nerlove's parable of firewood, 1991

¹⁷ ECA, Sub-regional Office in West Africa "African Wealth Creation and Retention Strategy",

¹⁸ The Youth Employment Network and the International Youth Foundation, (2009), "Private sector demand for Youth Labour in Ghana and Senegal"

Training)¹⁹ notes that cumulative job demand from 1998 to 2005 was estimated at 47,993 for a total job offer which was barely equal to 12,322 (6,525 direct offers and 5,797 indirect offers). This means that only 12 job seekers out of every 100 found employment over that eight-year period.

3°) High Illiteracy Levels and Low Youth Employability

41. While there is a growing number of very well educated young people, the illiteracy level remains a major source of concern for Africa in general, and West Africa in particular. According to UNESCO (2006) estimates, Africa has more than 133 million young illiterates (representing more than 50% of the young population). The same proportion is observable in West Africa, with major disparities in gender. In Ghana, for example, literacy level in 2007 was estimated at 66.4% for men and 49.8% for women (WDI 2007; NDPC, 2007). Many young people have few or no skills, and are therefore excluded from enjoyment of a productive economic and social life. However, it should be noted that these young people can exhibit a very dynamic spirit of enterprise which they readily capitalise upon by creating their own businesses, generally in the informal sector of petty trade. One look at the markets in West Africa bears eloquent testimony to this fact. However, their entrepreneurial spirit is hamstrung by the enormous constraints arising from illiteracy, amongst other things. Since they are unable to read or write, their understanding of market forces is a daily apprenticeship, and not based on a rational anticipation of events. The fact that they are able to make headway in an increasingly competitive environment is a tribute to their capacity for adaptation, which should, in fact, be backed by government.

42. Employability may be defined as the potential of an individual to find and retain employment. This refers back to a certain number of attributes such as the possession of knowledge, skills and expertise required on the labour market.

43. Youth employability in West Africa has been stretched to its limits by the high levels of illiteracy and the mismatch between the educational system and the labour market.

¹⁹ Observatoire Nationale de l'Emploi et de la Formation Professionnelle: Recueil de données statistiques sur l'emploi au Burkina Faso, (Compilation of Statistical Data on Employment in Burkina Faso) December 2005

4°) Mismatch between the Educational System and Labour Market Needs

44. It is encouraging to observe that the West African youth of today pursue their education further than their elders. Nonetheless, although they have a good education and good qualifications, the gap remains the acquisition of those practical professional skills which will enable them to be absorbed into a constantly changing labour market. This is due, among others, to the mismatch between school curricula, with their emphasis on general theory which is difficult to transpose into practical skills for the labour market (UNOWA, 2006). Ill-adapted school curricula are responsible for the mismatch described above. Many analysts are of the view that the skills of job seekers do not match employers' demands (Mhone, et al., 1999; Kent and Mushi, 1995).

45. The educational systems in place in most of the countries of the sub-region are colonial legacies whose main purpose was to train qualified hands to work in the colonial civil service. The emphasis was therefore on bureaucratic training rather than acquisition of technical and practical skills geared towards production and immediate profitability.

5°) Non-conducive Government Policies and the Problem of Poor Motivation

46. Government policies in Africa in general and in West Africa in particular, do not systematically prioritise job-creation, self-employment and entrepreneurial development. Although some effort has been made, government policies do not clearly articulate incentives and systemic guidelines for the job markets. Nonetheless it is encouraging to observe the emergence in the last few years, of a number of national and regional policies aimed at promoting youth employment and self-employment.

47. These different interrelated causes are all constraints working against the promotion of youth self-employment which, as indicated earlier, appears more and more in the light of an appropriate response to the problem of youth unemployment.

48. Although the causes and challenges described in this paper are applicable to all West African countries, there are, nonetheless variations between the individual countries which need to be highlighted.

I.4. Country-specific Examples

49. Without laying any claims to exhaustiveness, the purpose of this section is to identify certain country-specific characteristics of youth unemployment in three countries of the sub-region, namely, Senegal, Cape Verde and Liberia. The choice of these three countries is predicated on the fact that their specificities are relatively similar to those identified in the other countries of the sub-region.

1°) Senegal: Principal Causes and Challenges

50. Socio-economic indicators suggest that over the past five years the country recorded one of the best economic performances in sub-Saharan Africa. Although this good performance was instrumental to the reduction of the country's poverty index from 68% in 1994 (61.4% of households) to 51% in 2005, poverty persists and remains high, particularly in rural areas (World Bank, Economic Country Brief, 2009).

51. A further point to note is that the good economic performance failed to generate enough decent jobs, particularly for the youth, as evidenced by the high unemployment rate which is estimated at 38% (ILO, 2007, 2008). Table 3 below illustrates the point.

Table 3: Senegal – Human Development Index (HDI), 2007

HDI Value	Life expectancy at birth (years)	Adult literacy rate (% ages 15 and above)	Combined gross enrolment ratio (%)	GDP per capita (US \$)
164. Gambia (0.481)	146. Ghana (56.5)	140 Central African Republic(48.6)	164. Comoros (46.4)	145. Solomon Islands (1,725)
165. Eritrea (0.472)	147. Gambia (55.7)	141. Mozambique (44.4)	165. Sierra Leone (44.6)	146. Cote d'Ivoire (1,690)
166. Senegal (0.464)	148. Senegal (55.4)	142. Senegal (41.9)	166. Senegal (41.2)	147. Senegal (1,666)
168. Gambia (0.456)	150. Tanzania (55.0)	144. Sierra Leone (38.1)	168. Sudan (39.9)	149. Kenya (1, 542)

182. Niger (0.340)	176. Afghanistan (43.6)	151. Mali (26.2)	177. Djibouti (25.5)	181. Congo(DR) (298)
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Source: UNDP: Human Development Index, 2009

52. The characteristics of job seekers in the 10 regions of Senegal may be summarised as follows:

- There are more male job seekers (64%) than female (36%);
- Young people (aged between 15 and 35 years) represent 56% of all job seekers;
- The majority of job seekers (53%) have no education. 74% and 87% of those who attended school went no further than primary school level and the fourth year of the secondary school cycle respectively;
- 57% of job seekers have no qualifications and only 1.6% hold a university degree;
- The Dakar region has the highest concentration of job seekers (21%) followed by the Saint-Louis region (15%), Fatick and Kolda (10% each), Thiès, Louga and Ziguinchor (9% each), Diourbel and Kaolack (7%), and Tambacounda (4%);

53. The proportion of young people (aged between 15 and 35 years) among the job seekers is particularly high in the urban centres of Dakar (74%), Thiès (60%), and exceeds 50% in the regions of Tambacounda, Fatick, Kaolack and Louga.

54. Unemployment affects all economic sectors. M. Sarr, (2004)²⁰ identifies four determinants of poverty and unemployment in Senegal.

(i) Non-conducive Economic Growth

The type of economic growth achieved since 1995 is essentially attributable to sub-sectors which generate very few lucrative job opportunities. These are the groundnut oil processing plants, cement factories, sea food processing plants, chemical plants, and the telecommunications and tourism sub-sectors. The agricultural sector has a narrow production base dominated by groundnuts which is the main export product. The impact of growth on

²⁰ Makha Dado Sarr, (2004), "Poverty Reduction Strategy and Youth Employment in Senegal"

rural incomes, job creation and youth employment in particular was therefore negligible or non-existent.

(ii) A weak industrial sector

The structure of the industrial sector does not facilitate the promotion of high value added exports or the accumulation of capital. As in other West African countries, industries are mainly extractive, and controlled by multinationals. Young employees of such companies are generally engaged in a precarious, poorly paid capacity. Most industrial companies are classified as “light industries”, a term which is used to qualify companies engaged in the processing of agricultural products (such as groundnuts, cashew nuts, fruit etc.) and raw materials. The industrial sector is yet to generate the capacity to assimilate the structural change which, in combination with the revitalisation of the agricultural sector, will contribute to improving the quality of economic growth and create jobs.

(iii) Low capital accumulation

Low capital accumulation in the industrial sector has hampered the development of infrastructure - transport, telecommunications, water resources, energy etc., which sustains the productive job-creating sectors.

55. Unemployment remains a major challenge to development in Senegal, and as a result, is well articulated in the country’s poverty reduction strategy paper. The Senegalese government has undertaken a number of actions aimed at promoting employment, and youth employment in particular. These include the creation, since 1989, of AGETICP, which is the implementing agency for labour-intensive infrastructural programmes.

2°) Cape Verde: Principal Causes and Challenges

56. The Cape Verdean economy is seriously challenged by its limited natural resource base, and particularly by serious water shortages which are exacerbated by lengthy cycles of drought. The economy is service-based, focusing on the sectors of trade, transport, tourism and the public service, which account for about three quarters of GDP. Although 70% of the population lives in the rural areas, the share of food production in GDP is low. Composite GDP according to sector presents as follows: agriculture 9.2%, industries 16.5%, services 74.3% (UNDP, 2009). About 82% of food products are imported, thereby generating a substantial trade deficit financed by external aid and transfers of funds by migrant nationals.

57. This kind of structure explains the country's limited economic prospects, and by the same token, the constraints in the way of job creation.

Table 4: Cape Verde - Human Development Index, 2007

HDI Value	Life expectancy at birth (years)	Adult literacy rate (% ages 15 and above)	Combined gross enrolment ratio (%)	GDP per capita (US \$)
120. Kyrgyzstan (0.710)	95. Iran (71.2)	89. Oman (84.4)	115. Indonesia (68.2)	125. Mongolia (3,236)
121. Cape Verde (0.708)	96.. Cape Verde (71.1)	90. Cape Verde (83.8)	116. Cape Verde (68.1)	126. Cape Verde (3,041)
182. Niger (0.340)	176. Afghanistan (743.6)	151. Mali (26.2)	177. Djibouti (25.5)	181. Congo(D R)(298)

Source: UNDP: Human Development Index, 2007

58. Although Cape Verde recorded a good economic performance over the last few years, during which it placed 102nd out of 177 countries and ranked fifth of all African countries in the human development index classification, it still faces a high unemployment rate, especially among its young people.

59. The population of Cape Verde is estimated at 429,479 inhabitants (2009), with an active percentage of 58%. Population breakdown according to age bracket is as follows: 0-14 years: representing 35.2% of population, and composed of 76,012 males/74,993 females; 15-64 years: representing 58.5% of population, and composed of 123,376 men/127,653 women; and 65 years and above: representing 6.4% of population, and composed of 10 040men/17,400 women. (Estimate, Indice Mundi, 2009)

60. Although the proportion of the active population in the formal sector which is jobless fell from 26 to 17% between 1998 and 2008, the unemployment rate, estimated at about 21%, remains high. Youth unemployment rate, at 38%, is far higher than the national average (Indice Mundi, 2009).

61. The main causes of unemployment are the following:

- (i) Mismatch between jobs and education and/or training schedules;

- (ii) Absence of guidelines to effectively focus government policy towards youth employment;
- (iii) Lack of resources, in conjunction with the lack of confidence on the part of the financial institutions which refuse to grant credits to young entrepreneurs.

62. The government of Cape Verde views youth unemployment as a developmental problem. In this regard it has undertaken a number of actions, including the “Youth and Social Cohesion” project which was launched in 2010. The objective of the project is to ensure the participation and integration of the youth into the socio-economic development process through the creation of economic opportunities to facilitate their insertion on the job market. The project also helps to encourage and develop an entrepreneurial culture aimed at achieving job creation and youth self-employment.

3°) Liberia: Principal Causes and Challenges

63. Liberia has undergone a protracted and devastating civil war which has seriously affected the economic and social prospects of the country. The HDI for Liberia is very low, at 0.442, which placed the country among the last three in the HDI classification in 2007 (169th) just ahead of Guinea at 170, and Niger at 182. Poverty and unemployment have become endemic to this country. Unemployment rate is estimated at 85% (ILO, 2009), with the youth representing 88% of the unemployed (UNOWA, ILO, 2007).

Table 5: Liberia - Human Development Index (HDI), 2007

HDI Value	Life expectancy at birth (years)	Adult literacy rate (% ages 15 and above)	Combined gross enrolment ratio (%)	GDP per capita (US \$)
168. Gambia (0.456)	14.0 Eritrea (59.2)	132. Morocco(55.6)	141. Cambodia (58.5)	178. Guinea-Bissau (477)
169. Liberia (0.442)	141. Liberia (57.9)	133. Liberia (55.5)	142. Liberia (57.6)	179. Liberia (362)
170. Guinea (0435)	142. Sudan (57.9)	134. Pakistan (54.2)	143. Tanzania (57.3)	180. Burundi (341)
182. Niger	176. Afghanistan	151. Mali (26.2)	177. Djibouti	

(0340)	(43.6)		(25.5)	
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Source: UNDP : Human Development Index, 2007

a) Civil War

61. The civil war which raged from 1989 to 2003 completely destroyed all social, economic, political, cultural and educational institutions in Liberia. The country faces the huge challenge of providing its young men and women with the minimum skills and knowledge needed to gain access to decent employment and acceptable means of subsistence. The former combatants add a further dimension to the problem by virtue of the need for special programmes to ensure their reintegration into the country's educational, social and economic system.

b) The Absence of Infrastructure

62. Most of the country's infrastructure was destroyed during the war, and its absence hampers the creation and operation of small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs).

- (i) Disruption of agricultural systems: agricultural land was mined, and the rural population abandoned their farms and fled in search of security.
- (ii) Destruction of the secondary sector: the war destroyed old and new factories as well as the country's service sector. The industrial sector which is the engine for sustainable growth was annihilated by the war, thereby paralysing the economic sector.
- (iii) General collapse of the economy: decades of economic plundering and social disinvestment exacerbated by two civil wars, and an eroded human capital have undermined the social fabric and ravaged the productive assets of the country.
- (iv) Lack of skills: with the restoration of peace and the reinsertion of combatants into a normal social life, one of the major problems that emerged was that of the mismatch between the skills of the youth and job demand. Most young people had enrolled as soldiers/combatants during the war and had therefore not received any teaching or training during the 15 years of conflict.

63. The situation of these three countries illustrates the acuity of the problem of youth unemployment in West Africa. The creation of decent jobs for the youth is shown to be a

development priority necessary in order to break the vicious circle of poverty, youth unemployment and conflict.

64. Extensive standardisation measures have been introduced, which include the conduct of detailed studies on youth unemployment. There is now an urgent need to move away from policy/strategy formulation towards effective implementation. To this end, the growth and poverty reduction strategies formulated by the West African countries must be examined with a view to identifying gaps in terms of job creation and youth self-employment.

Chapter II: Gaps in the Growth Policies and Poverty Reduction Strategies in the West African Countries in Terms of Youth Employment



2.1 Longstanding Neglect of Job Creation

65. In many African countries, including those in West Africa, the lukewarm, and indeed, total lack of interest in job creation has for long constituted the gap in development planning and management. It is clear that job creation in general, and youth employment in particular, has not been viewed as a priority issue within the framework of the development strategies of the West African countries, as illustrated by the various analyses presented above. In the 80s, African countries experienced an unprecedented economic recession triggered, among others, by a decline in prices of raw materials on the world market, the heavy debt burden and a downturn in growth prospects. Structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) were introduced under the auspices of the Bretton Woods institutions, namely, the World Bank and IMF, aimed at helping these countries to respond to the challenge of recession through the introduction of a series of macroeconomic stabilisation programmes. The measures contained in the structural adjustment programmes included the downsizing of government services, the adoption of more flexible labour laws designed to facilitate layoffs and introduce various

restrictions on hiring. The result was a growing number of unemployed, with the youth bearing the brunt of the process for the reasons analysed earlier.

66. The social repercussions of these structural adjustment programmes, especially in terms of increased poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion, are still being felt. The remedial measures, focused on the social dimension of adjustment, are yet to produce the expected results (CC ; Soludo, T. Mkandawire, 1999).

67. The failure of the structural adjustment programmes which had been backed by massive advocacy campaigns led by nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and other stakeholders, triggered a rethink of the development agendas of the World Bank and the IMF, culminating in the launch, in 1996, of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC). The objective was to grant debt relief and low-interest loans to these countries, with a view to cancelling or reducing the burden of external debt repayment to bearable levels. Countries eligible for admission into this initiative were required to draw up a Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) informed by five fundamental principles.

68. PRSs are required to be:

- (i) Country-driven, promoting national ownership of strategies through a broad-based participation of the civil society;
- (ii) Results-oriented and focused on outcomes that will benefit the poor;
- (iii) Comprehensive in recognising the multidimensional nature of poverty;
- (iv) Partnership-oriented, involving coordinated participation of development partners (government, domestic stakeholders and external donors); and
- (v) Based on a long-term perspective for poverty reduction.

69. PRSs constitute a roadmap for all interventions (by Government and its development partners) designed to combat poverty. They could in fact prove to be an important means by which to address the different causes of poverty, including unemployment and youth unemployment in particular, in an integrated and holistic manner.

2.2. Gaps in Terms of Job Creation within the PRS Framework

70. By July 2007, 53 countries, 28 of which were in Africa, had completed the formulation of their PRSs (World Bank, 2008). All West African countries have either adopted a PRS or a

comparable national development plan, yet to date only 27 African countries are currently implementing their PRSs.

71. A review of PRSs from a job creation and youth employment standpoint reveals that none of the first-generation PRSs makes reference to job creation or youth employment (ILO, 2007). However, the failure of the positive growth rates registered by the West African countries to translate into sufficient job opportunities, and the fact that the vicious circle of poverty and unemployment continued and indeed worsened, impressed upon the authorities the need to address this issue as a matter of extreme urgency.

72. Second-generation PRSs included job creation among their objectives or strategic guidelines (pillars) for poverty reduction. Guinea-Bissau is a case in point²¹. The country's poverty reduction strategy paper clearly states that high unemployment and heavy dependence on agriculture as the main source of household employment and income is a major cause for concern with regard to the implantation of a poverty reduction strategy. In addition, there is no provision for the support measures needed to ensure the attainment of the fixed objectives of the strategy. This gap was also identified in other strategy pillars for Guinea-Bissau. The World Bank Staff Evaluation Note (SAN) points out that whereas the Bissau-Guinean PRSP outlines major areas of intervention within each strategic axis, it omits to prioritise implementation of the different activities and programmes. Table 6 below presents the status of PRSs in some West African countries, indicating identified strategic axes.

Table 6: Status of PRSs in Some West African Countries: Integration of Job Creation/Youth Employment

Country & Status	PRSP – Priority Measures
<u>BURKINA FASO</u>	Acceleration of broad-based growth
PRSP II (2004)	Access to basic social services
HIPC CP (2002)	Income-generating activities for the poor
UNDAF (2006)	Good governance
<u>BENIN</u>	Acceleration of growth
PRSP II (2007-2009)	Infrastructural development

²¹ (Guinea Bissau, Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper – Joint Staff – IMF/World Bank Advisory Note, September 2007).

	<p>Strengthening of human capital</p> <p>Promotion of good governance</p> <p>Balance and sustained territorial development</p>
<p><u>GHANA</u></p> <p>PRPI (2005)</p> <p>HIPC CP (2004)</p> <p>UNDAF (2006)</p>	<p>Acceleration of growth and private sector-driven human resource development</p> <p>Good governance and civic responsibility</p>
<p><u>LIBERIA</u></p> <p>I-PRSP (2006)</p> <p>UNDAF (2003)</p>	<p>National security</p> <p>Revitalisation of the economy</p> <p>Strengthening of the rule of law</p> <p>Rehabilitation of infrastructures and basic service provision</p> <p>Job creation</p>
<p><u>MALI</u></p> <p>PRSP II (2006)</p> <p>HIPC CP (2003)</p> <p>UNDAF (2008)</p>	<p>Systematic integration of employment into economic and sectoral policy</p> <p>Job creation and boosting of productivity</p> <p>Employment intensive approach to public works</p> <p>Promotion of gender equality</p>
<p>Nigeria</p> <p>PRSP (2004)</p> <p>UNDAF (2002)</p>	<p>People empowerment (including employment social protection and gender equality)</p> <p>Private enterprise promotion</p> <p>Better governance</p>
<p>Niger</p> <p>PRS II (2008-2012)</p>	<p>Acceleration of strong growth driven by a sustainable and diversified employment sector/equitable access to quality social services, population growth control.</p> <p>Reduction of inequalities and strengthening of protection for vulnerable groups/infrastructural development</p> <p>Promotion of quality governance/effective PRS implementation</p>

Source: Adapted from ILO (2007) and MDG-based Country PRSs

73. Table 6 reveals that some progress has been made with regard to viewing job creation as a priority area of intervention within the framework of the second-generation PRSs of the West African countries. Four countries, namely Liberia, Ghana, Niger and Mali have clearly

articulated job promotion as a priority measure within their PRS framework. Mali's PRS II places greater emphasis on job creation, which is included in three priority areas of intervention out of four. Mali has also adopted a National Employment Policy and Plan of Action. However, effective implementation continues to pose a challenge.

74. Ghana's second-generation PRS (GPRS II.) 2006 - 2009 is also seen to be more sensitive to the problem of youth employment. The strategy highlights the survey on causes of youth unemployment which is presented in the conclusions of the National Development Plan. The growth and poverty reduction strategy revealed the gaps between the educational system and the skills and expertise required on the labour market. According to a 2008 ERNWACA²² study on the causes of youth unemployment in Ghana, an analysis of the national development plan, and particularly of the 2006 – 2009 Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS I), reveals the following gaps at different levels of the educational cycle:

- (i) At the primary level, the strategy identifies the policy gaps which need to be filled, namely, little progress in enrolment into schools; continuing disparities in access to education based on geographical location and gender; the poor quality of teaching; inadequacy of technical, vocational and information and communication technology (ICT) training.
- (ii) At the secondary level, GPRS II identifies policy issues which include the lack of equipment in the secondary schools; problems relating to the training and motivation of teachers; and the inability of the system to absorb most of the children who complete the compulsory primary education programme.
- (iii) At the tertiary level, the strategy states that key policy issues at this level relate to the inability of existing infrastructures to absorb the growing number of young adults seeking admission into tertiary institutions; understaffing in terms of qualified and motivated lecturers. These inadequacies are major constraints which determine the employability of the youth.

²² ERNWACA: Educational Research Network for West and Central Africa /ROCARE: Réseau Ouest et Centre Africain de Recherche en Education. 2008 Grant Program for Educational research: Graduate Unemployment in Ghana: Possible case of poor response of university programs to the demands of job market

75. The PRSs of Burkina Faso, Benin and Nigeria do not clearly reflect a prioritisation of employment. The promotion of youth employment is barely given a mention in most of the country PRSs.

2.3 Growth Strategies which are Insensitive to Job Creation and Youth Self-employment

76. As the table below indicates, the countries of the sub-region recorded positive growth rates ranging from 3 to 6% for the period from 2001 to 2008. Post-conflict countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone recorded a substantial increase in growth rate, due mainly to international aid granted for reconstruction purposes.

Table 7: GDP Growth Rate at 2001 Constant Prices

Country	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Benin	6.10	4.50	4.12	3.10	5.36	6.38	4.00	5.30
Burkina Faso	5.90	4.97	7.82	5.07	6.82	7.66	6.00	6.10
Cape Verde	5.43	4.36	4.91	3.96	2.44	3.98	3.80	5.30
Côte d'Ivoire	0.55	1.97	1.70	1.60	1.00	2.50	1.70	3.80
The Gambia	5.80	4.75	5.07	5.31	2.77	3.99	7.00	6.00
Ghana	2.32	6.63	5.63	5.87	5.77	0.82	6.30	6.90
Guinea	3.78	4.72	1.03	2.68	2.20	7.10	1.50	5.10
Guinea Bissau	0.20	6.83	0.70	3.96	4.02	4.46	2.50	2.10
Liberia	13.60	-0.70	-23.98	22.27	9.65	14.01	9.40	10.40
Mali	12.32	4.19	7.79	1.16	7.68	7.71	5.20	4.80
Niger	-17.30	5.60	4.71	1.97	7.72	5.10	3.13	4.30
Nigeria	3.81	2.20	11.00	5.98	6.35	7.10	4.30	8.00
Senegal	4.58	0.65	6.66	5.58	5.47	3.96	5.10	5.70
Sierra Leone	-12.85	49.94	11.96	9.53	7.87	16.35	7.40	7.00
Togo	1.61	3.03	2.09	4.41	1.12	4.12	2.90	3.50
ECOWAS	2.91	2.80	7.35	4.97	5.49	6.10	4.26	6.82

Source: ECOWAS National Accounts, 2006 World Economic Outlook

77. However, these growth rates failed to generate decent jobs, as evidenced by the high youth unemployment figures, underemployment and precarious employment which continue to exist in the countries of the sub-region. This situation is in large part attributable to the fact that the determinants for growth are insensitive to job creation in general and youth employment in particular. Agriculture is one of the determinants for growth in the West African countries, yet the lack of diversification within the sector which remains geared towards the production of food and traditional export crops (cotton, cocoa, coffee, groundnuts etc.), coupled with low productivity, limit the capacity of the sector to generate decent employment. This notwithstanding, the agricultural sector remains the cornerstone of the

economies of the sub-region. Substantial amounts of capital must be invested in the modernisation and revitalisation of the sector in order to enable it to contribute effectively to job creation for the youth, and by the same token, to poverty reduction. Recommendations to this effect are articulated in Section 4 of this report.

78. One of basic indicators linking growth and employment is the elasticity of employment in relation to growth. It compares the percentage change in employment with the percentage change in GDP.

79. The higher the elasticity, the more employment is being created by the given growth rate in GDP (H. Son, 2005)²³.

80. The volume of production (Y) is deemed equal to the product of the volume of work (L number of hours worked) divided by work productivity (Y/L) which represents the average productivity of the hour of work. This relationship is expressed in the following equation: $Y=L \times Y/L$.

81. The productivity of work, or the relationship between the result obtained (production) and the quantity of work factors (technical, human) is an important variable of growth.

82. All things being equal, growth of production is equal to the sum of growth due to variation of the volume of work and growth due to the evolution of work productivity. Thus, if growth of work productivity is higher than economic growth, the volume of work, i.e. the number of hours worked (product of volume of the number of jobs offered by average duration of jobs offered) diminishes. It can therefore be deduced that the volume of jobs offered is (i) an increasing function of economic growth; (ii) a decreasing function of the duration of work; (iii) and a decreasing function of work productivity.

83. The above analysis confirms that economic growth by itself is not sufficient to generate an adequate number of jobs; determinants of such importance as volume of work and productivity must also be taken into account. For example, GDP growth may be attributable to optimisation and intensification of the use of available jobs, without, however, increasing the number of jobs. In such a case, GDP growth will have had no (short-term) effect on job creation.

²³ Hyun H. Son, "Vietnam: Jobs, Growth and Poverty". International Poverty Centre, 2005

84. Detailed analyses of the problem of youth unemployment have been carried out by the West African countries with the assistance of the United Nations system, the World Bank, and other development partners. These have yielded policies and programmes aimed at addressing the issues raised. Continental (the African Union) and sub-regional organisations (the ECOWAS Commission) as well as individual countries have drawn up policies and strategies for the promotion of youth employment. However, all this theoretical work is yet to be translated into concrete actions capable of yielding the prospect of decent employment for the young people of West Africa. As the 2006 UNOWAS Report observes, "... arguments in favour of investing in the youth, although they are reiterated in speeches, particularly during election campaigns, are rarely put into practice".

85. It is not enough to incorporate job creation and youth employment into the strategic axes of the PRSs, even though this is a key step towards the elaboration of properly adapted plans of action. Concrete strategies are an indispensable means by which to motivate and support young men and women in their ventures into self-employment.

Chapter III: Self-employment Promotion Strategies for West Africa

86. Decent employment is not only a fundamental dimension of human rights, development and personal dignity, but also of the developmental process of a country - that dimension which Amartya Sen defines as “*the process of empowerment and self-reliance*” (le processus d'habilitation et d'autonomie).²⁴

Box 2: Employment and Human Rights

Work is thus as much about human rights as it is about income. The fair treatment and dignity to which people aspire in employment must be assured for there to be decent work. In the XXIst century, rising to the challenge of employment, or ensuring that each person can find work without being forced to accept any kind of work, under any kind of conditions.

ILO: Global Agenda for Employment. Global Forum for Employment, Geneva, 1-3 November 2001

87. The opportunity cost of not fighting youth unemployment is extremely high, not only for the young people themselves, but also for the entire community. The fact of not being able to find decent employment in their youth is sufficient to permanently destroy the individual's confidence in his/her chances of finding employment. This will often lead to a pattern of poor professional performance which follows the individual all through life²⁵. It is a documented fact that investing in job creation and youth employability can yield substantial economic returns. It is estimated that if the youth unemployment rate in sub-Saharan Africa were to be halved, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) could increase by 19%.²⁶

88. It is encouraging to observe that a number of initiatives have been launched by the countries of the sub-region and their development partners with a view to taking up this challenge.

²⁴ Amartya Sen, “Development as Freedom”, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999

²⁵ ILO, Global Employment Trends, 2006

²⁶ ILO (2004), “Global Employment Trends for Youth”

89. The United Nations Social Summit in Copenhagen (March 1995) and the United Nations Millennium Declaration (September 2000) acknowledged youth employment to be a global challenge with implications in terms of chronic poverty, job stability and social exclusion²⁷. States were therefore urged to make a firm commitment to adopt and effectively implement decent and productive youth-oriented job creation strategies. In 2003, the United Nations, in partnership with the ILO, World Bank and the Youth Employment Network (YEN), launched a global initiative aimed at bringing together policy-makers, workers' and employers' organisations, the youth, and other stakeholders with a view to finding appropriate responses to the issue of youth employment. The YEN Office for West Africa, based in Dakar, Senegal, seeks to raise awareness on the issue and to mainstream youth employment as a socio-economic, political and security issue needing particular attention. The YEN Office for West Africa, based in Dakar, Senegal, seeks to raise awareness on the issue and to mainstream youth employment as a socio-economic, political and security issue needing particular attention. The Office works to create synergies, build linkages at both national and regional levels, and engage with the private sector to find ways to increase its involvement in initiatives to create employment opportunities for young people in West Africa²⁸.

90. Since its inception, YEN has initiated a number of strategic programmes and actions, including a capacity building programme designed to promote youth employability, and the organisation, in partnership with the private sector, of a job fair which was held in Dakar, Senegal, from 9 – 10 June 2009, aimed at connecting young job seekers with private enterprises and other contacts.

91. YEN has also conducted various studies including one on job creation initiatives targeting the youth. The Network has collaborated with the International Youth Foundation, on an empirical study, commissioned in July 2009, on "Private sector demand for youth employment in Ghana and Senegal". The study is based on the findings of a survey of a sample group of 378 formal and informal sector enterprises. This detailed study, which is the first of its kind, successfully filled the huge information gap on sectors which hold a vast potential for youth employment, the views of enterprises on the recruitment of young people,

²⁷ World Bank Youth Employment Workshop, Washington DC, June 2003

²⁸ "Youth Employment Initiatives in West Africa: An Overview of Survey Results" published by the Youth Employment Network- West Africa, November, 2008

the minimal skills required in order to find employment, gender inequality in recruitment practices and interventions for the promotion of youth employment. The study further revealed that the high-potential youth employment sectors in Ghana are (i) the financial and banking sectors, with an average of 37 available jobs per enterprise; (ii) the agricultural sector, with 26 available jobs per enterprise, and the logistics sector in which 20 jobs are available per enterprise.

92. In 2008, YEN launched a competitive grant scheme (of 2000 - 50.000 US dollars) to fund initiatives led by young people from the countries of the Mano River Union.

93. As a result of the mounting attention focused on the problem of unemployment in general and youth unemployment in particular, most West African countries have adopted institutional measures aimed, among others, at setting up structures for the promotion of youth employment. These include Ministries in charge of Employment and Vocational Training; an Observatory for Employment and Vocational Training in Burkina Faso; a Job Promotion Agency with specialised departments for the promotion of youth employment and self-employment; a Youth Council in other countries etc.

94. The countries of the sub-region have also formulated national policies aimed at resolving the problems confronting the youth, including the problem of unemployment. However, two gaps have been identified in connection with these policies. The first arises as a result of the continuing strong emphasis on economic growth rather than its determinants. It is vital to act on the latter and to redirect them towards youth-oriented job creation in order to break the vicious circle of (youth) unemployment, poverty and exclusion. There is a pressing need to view youth-oriented job creation as one of the fundamental determinants of growth and poverty reduction within the framework of the strategic planning of socio-economic development in the countries of the sub-region. The second gap relates to national unemployment policies which are still too generalised, failing to take systematically into account the very specific constraints which are peculiar to the young, namely, lack of expertise and experience, unfamiliarity with the labour market, inaccessibility of bank credit facilities etc., and the diversity which exists within this section of the population.

95. There is therefore a vital need to draw up specific and appropriately designed programmes within each economic sector in order to respond to the specific needs, constraints and motives of young people of both genders, which will equip them for self-employment.

96. The fact of being a self-employed or “independent” worker traditionally carried with it a negative connotation, being considered as being professionally inferior in status, and socially conferring scant recognition. Young people (and indeed their parents) prefer the status of salaried rather than independent worker (ILO, 2007). This negative perception of self-employment (though gradually disappearing) does not encourage young people to fully exploit their hidden potential by entering into self-employment. Although the stereotype image is fading, other challenges remain, effectively undermining the capacity of the young generation to venture into independent employment. The lack of entrepreneurial skills, specifically tailored training programmes, funding, government support programmes, market information etc. have been identified as major constraints.²⁹

97. The following specific measures and programmes are needed to promote and encourage youth self-employment.

3.1 Collection of Accurate Data

98. The availability of accurate, age and gender disaggregated data is a condition sine qua non for the success of all actions aimed at promoting youth employment and self-employment. Accurate data make it possible to capture the nature of the unemployment phenomenon and the dynamics of youth self-employment. The cardinal principle for planning in any area is that the policies, strategies and programmes adopted should address the causes and not the symptoms of the problem. The absence of accurate statistics on youth unemployment and self-employment in West Africa is one of the principal constraints militating against the formulation and implementation of appropriate policies for the mainstreaming of youth employment and self-employment. Where such statistics exist, they are general in character, and not age or gender disaggregated.

Recommended Measures and Actions

99. It is vital the national Offices of Statistics construct and collate age and gender disaggregated statistics on the following:

- The proportion of young employees in each sector, and the form of their employment, namely, short-term/seasonal; long-term; average wage; work conditions and environment, including access to social protection;

²⁹ UNIDO, UNOWA, YEN, (2007) , « Best practices, Policy Environment, Tools and Methodologies for Youth Employment in West Africa »

- The proportion of discouraged young people i.e. those who do not seek for employment because they think they stand no chance of finding any;
- Diversity within the youth as a social group;
- The proportion of young holders of multiple qualifications/certificates who do not however have the skills needed to fill job offers, and who therefore lack employability;
- The proportion of sectors with a strong potential for youth employment;
- The proportion of self-employed youth and their practical experiences.

100. It is important to systematically integrate the characteristics of youth employment and unemployment into the conceptual, theoretical and analytical framework of national statistics in general and of studies on employment in particular. This will facilitate the formulation of coherent and targeted strategies.

3.2. Macroeconomic Measures and Actions for the Systematic Integration of Youth Employment and Self-employment into the MDG-based PRSs

3.2.1 Youth Employment and Self-employment Considered as One of the Principal Objectives of PRSs

101. MDG-based PRSs offer a unique opportunity in this regard, and countries must make every effort to ensure that the specific challenges facing the youth are analysed and addressed during the different phases of the formulation of their PRSs:

- (i) Poverty participatory assessment (PPA): this initial phase of the PRS process is key for the capture of the nature, causes and characteristics of poverty. It involves the quantitative and qualitative evaluation of poverty. Young people must participate in this evaluation process and express their perception of poverty, the way in which they are affected by poverty, and describe the strategies/alternatives which they have developed in order to cope. This is a process which encourages personal development, and could elicit creative ideas on strategies for improving their living conditions, and for escaping unemployment through self-employment;
- (ii) Poverty diagnosis and analysis: the youth analyse their own unemployment situation in order to obtain a first-hand understanding of the correlations and causal links between unemployment, poverty and socio-economic exclusion;

- (iii) Articulation of youth employment and self-employment as determinants and pillars of poverty reduction;
- (iv) Formulation and costing of concrete measures needed, including targeted investment in order to support the creation of small and medium-scale enterprises by the youth;
- (v) Implementation of MDG-based youth-led PRSs through allocation of adequate funding;
- (vi) Monitoring and evaluation using accurate age and gender-disaggregated statistics.

102. Information culled from MDG-based PRSs sensitive to youth self-employment should be integrated to form national and regional employment strategies with a view to stimulating strong, youth employment-driven growth.

103. The following measures should be implemented in tandem with the process outlined above, in order to render the determinants for growth more responsive to job creation and youth self-employment.

3.2.2 Disaggregation of Growth

104. Heavily aggregated growth data impede a clear understanding of its key determinants in terms of job creation and poverty reduction. It is vitally important that growth data should be disaggregated to facilitate a better understanding of their different components. To this end, economic planners should define the macro, meso and micro growth components, as well as the interrelation between the three levels. In the process, they need to pay particular attention to the different engines of growth within each sector and their responsiveness to job creation and poverty reduction.

105. The agricultural sector is one of the major determinants for growth in Africa, since it provides employment for the majority of the population and contributes more than 50% of GDP. Increasing investment levels and modernising the sector by providing modern production factors will contribute to growth, and by a knock-on effect, redistribute it among a substantial proportion of the poor and of vulnerable groups, including the youth.

106. It is vital, during the planning stages of growth policies, to carefully identify the target groups. Policies in general, and policies on growth in particular, are often much more effective if properly targeted. In the case of West Africa, one of the reasons for the failure of youth self-employment reform policies is their failure to specifically target the youth. This

could be due to the assumption that the policies would produce the same results on all sections of the population, which assumption has proved false in this specific instance. Populations are composed of different groups existing in dissimilar situations and under dissimilar conditions. As a result, Government policies and programmes of any kind – whether they concern poverty or job promotion - cannot be expected to have identical effects on everyone. This is particularly true of the youth for the reasons outlined above. By the same token, due consideration must be paid to gender specificity, given that the constraints and needs of young women and young men are not the same.

107. In addition, policies on growth should initiate programmes which are able to open up job opportunities for the youth, with due attention paid to gender differences. Youth employment-based infrastructural programmes and similar programmes have proved ineffective. However, the example of AGETIF (the Public Works and Employment Agency) is an illustration of the capacity of a sector to generate a substantial number of decent jobs.

Box 3: Senegal – Good Practices: Job Creation for the Youth, the AGETIP Example

AGETIP was set up by the Senegalese government in 1989 with World Bank support, and with the aim of executing high labour-intensive (HLI) public works programmes with the capacity for rapid job creation and large-scale income distribution. AGETIP is a typical example of effective and intelligent public-private partnership in the sense that the Senegalese government limits its interventions to the essential functions of planning, monitoring and control. Project execution is delegated to AGETIP, with a proviso regarding efficiency in execution. The Agency operates as a private sector SME, adopting the principle of delegated contract management involving the private sector (enterprises, NGOs, consultancies, etc). Performance record (incomplete) to date: provided training to 636 enterprises, sponsored the literacy teaching of 168,182 persons, 87% of which are women; granted micro-credit facilities to 2,816 artisans (adapted to their situation) to the tune of 8 billion CFAF; provided 437,858 time-bound jobs and 3,700 contract jobs for 910 enterprises and consultancies. Its on-going framework programme for the upgrade of urban road networks will create 13,000 time-bound jobs for young workers. The success of AGETIP has inspired the creation of similar kinds of agency in 15 countries, 9 of which are in the sub-region (Benin, Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Mali, Niger, Togo, Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau and the Republic of Guinea).

Source: (1) The AGETIP-Senegal model for job creation, Forum for Peace and Conflict Prevention and the United Nations Office for West Africa, February 2004. (2) Habib Demba Fall, “L’AGETIP a vingt ans- Une longue marche au cœur de la fracture”, Le Soleil, 3 July 2009

3.2.3 Promoting Youth Entrepreneurship in the Different Sectors

108. In economic parlance, entrepreneurship is defined as the recognition of an opportunity to create value added and the process of seizing that opportunity, whether or not it leads to

the constitution of a new entity. The creation of value added is a fundamental dimension of entrepreneurship; however, the creation of value added is the outcome of a strategic and creative thought process which young people have difficulty in developing. This suggests the need to boost their skills in this direction through entrepreneurially-focused vocational training.



109. According to Schumpeter (1950), an entrepreneur is a person who wants and is capable of transforming an idea or invention into a successful innovation. Entrepreneurship for K. Knight (1967) and Peter Drucker (1970) is about taking risks. The entrepreneur is a person who is willing to stake his/her career and financial security to implement an idea, to put his/her time and capital into a risky business. Another definition of entrepreneurship describes the process of discovery, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities. Thus an entrepreneur may be defined as “someone who acts without regard to the resources currently under his control in the relentless pursuit of opportunity” (Jeffrey Timmons).

For Verstraete and Fayolle (2005) four paradigms help to define the field of entrepreneurship research: the creation of an organisation (not reduced to the mere creation of business, the terms "organisational emergence" or "pulse of an organisation" is more appropriate), the detection-building-operation of a business opportunity, value creation, innovation. These paradigms can be combined, rather than opposed. The first is the most characteristic of

entrepreneurship, but cannot be without the other three which it may incorporate. The paradigm of innovation is more questionable, since some phenomena are not entrepreneurial innovation. However, some thinkers, like Paturel (2007) propose to overcome these paradigmatic disputes by proposing a definition of syncretic entrepreneurship. It is “based on an idea, exploiting an opportunity within an organisation driven, created from scratch or taken over at first, and then further developed by a single individual or team, thus undergoing a major change in its life, a process that leads to the creation of a new value or economic value out of existing waste (Paturel, 2007). In this perspective, entrepreneurship is inextricably linked to the project approach.

110. The Member States should institutionalise the following measures:

- (i) Boosting of the quality and image of vocational training through the creation of entrepreneurial training centres which are better integrated into the national educational system;
- (ii) Implementation of practical support programmes designed to tutor and mentor young learners and aspiring entrepreneurs;
- (iii) Creation of micro credit schemes specifically targeting the youth as a means of resolving the problem of finding financial guarantees;
- (iv) Review and adaptation of the youth development funds created by so many West African countries in order to meet the new and structural financial needs of young entrepreneurs.

Box 4: Technical and Vocational Training: The Experience of the Senegal-Japan Technical Centre

The Senegal-Japan Technical Centre is funded by the Japanese government. The Senegalese government supports technical and vocational training as a means of developing light industry under the national plan for the transformation of the economic structure of the country and the review of its dependence on agriculture and mineral exploitation. In the mid-80s, the Japanese government, through its development agency, JICA, built a vocational training centre in Dakar within the framework of its pilot technical cooperation programme. The centre provided technical and financial assistance as well as professional expertise through the teaching staff which it also provided. Although the technical and financial assistance ended in 1991, the professional cooperation aspect of the project continues. JICA provided 25 experts to teach at the centre on both a short and a long-term basis, covering the disciplines of electronics, automation and industrial information technologies. The students are trained up to the intermediate and higher

levels, and earn a certificate delivered by the Ministry of Education. Parallely, Senegalese trainers are sent to Japan to attend a technical teacher training course which will qualify them to take over from the Japanese experts who presently teach at the centre.

Source: Ministry of Establishment, Employment and Professional Associations of Senegal, 2007

111. Young people must be encouraged to go into sectors with promise for the future, and particularly the new information technology and communication (NITC) sector. Technical training has an important role to play in this regard, and must be made a compulsory requirement. The Senegalese example of the Senegal-Japan technical centre is one worthy of emulation which should in fact be planned as a permanent arrangement.

3.2.4. Optimisation of Resources Allocated by West Africa for the Promotion of Youth Employment

112. West Africa has vast natural and mineral resources – unexploited arable land, copper, gold, petroleum, diamonds, timber etc. Disputes over the management and redistribution of these resources have been at the core of many of the wars and conflicts in the sub-region. However, if properly managed and wisely utilised, these resources could open up enormous job creation opportunities for the youth of the sub-region.

3.3. Sectoral Measures and Actions for the Systematic Integration of Youth Employment and Self-employment into the MDG-based PRSs

1°) The Agricultural Sector

113. The sub-region has thousands of hectares of unexploited arable land. As indicated in Table 8 below, only 1.5% (790,000 hectares) of arable land has been utilised.

Table 8: Land Use in West Africa (1961-2002)

	Land Area (1000 ha)	Arable Land (%)			Land Assigned to Permanent Crops (%)			Grazing Land (%)		
		1961	1980	2002	1961	1980	2002	1961	1989	2002
West Africa	790,000	7.6	8.1	10.3	0.8	1.1	1.5	28.8	28.8	29.2
World	13,432,000	9.5	10	10.4	0.7	0.8	1.0	23.2	24.1	25.6

Source: FAO Statistical Yearbook, 2004

114. The “Office du Niger”, was created in 1932 in the Niger River basin by the French colonisers, and covers an area of approximately one million hectares, of which only some 150,000 hectares are under exploitation. These vast resources of land and water could be used under a sub-regional integrated agricultural programme, for the promotion of youth employment.

115. In the last two years there has been a renewed interest in agricultural development as a result of the food crisis, and the food riots which it triggered in the sub-region. Member states have launched a number of agricultural programmes such as REVA (Return to Agriculture), GOANA in Senegal (the Grand Agricultural Offensive for Food and Abundance), and the rice initiative in Mali, which are all aimed at intensifying rice production in order to satisfy national demand. Such initiatives should be consolidated and expanded to include other products within the global framework of agro-industrial development policy. Agriculture in Africa must look beyond the simple objective of exporting raw materials and move towards the creation of value added through the processing of agricultural products in order to supply the rising needs of the domestic and regional markets. YEN could play a catalytic role in the promotion of youth self-employment, through the creation of joint enterprises within the agricultural sector (for the production and processing of agricultural products etc.).

Box 5: Good Practices: Côte D’Ivoire, UNIDO Support to Youth Cooperatives

In northern Côte d'Ivoire, UNIDO is providing support for youth cooperatives and promoting those enterprises which are capable of generating income and creating job opportunities for the youth. The project targets the agricultural sector, focusing on cashew nut processing plants. It aims at boosting productivity by introducing modern techniques which will replace manual methods within the cashew nut production channel.

Source: UNIDO, UNOWA and YEN, (2009), « Best Practices, Policy Environment, Tools, and Methodologies for Youth Employment in West Africa

2°) The Crafts, Industry and Tourism Sectors

116. These two sectors are considered to be major job outlets with the potential to absorb the flow of unemployed youth.

117. Many young women and men are active in a highly informal manner in the crafts sector, exploiting various local products such as leather (Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso), cotton (Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mali, Sierra Leone,...), silver, gold (Ghana, Sierra Leone, Mali, Senegal, etc ...) and wood. Although they may have the creativity of their craft, they lack the necessary expertise to refine their products. Their earnings are therefore minimal because of the poor quality of their products. This lack of expertise is compounded by financial constraints and lack of market information - particularly information on regional and international markets.

Recommended Measures and Actions

- Creation of micro-financing mechanisms to enable the youth to invest in modern equipment;
- Promotion of the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) in vocational training and apprenticeship in order to provide the youth with the technical skills needed to design and refine their crafts;
- Support of informal/traditional apprenticeship workshops;
- Encouragement of youth participation in the national, regional and international markets through trade fairs and using YEN as a bridge.

3°) The Informal Sector

118. The informal sector is the main generator of employment, particularly for the young people of the sub-region, absorbing, in the case of Nigeria, more than 70% of job seekers (I. Akintoye, 2008). The sector is viewed as providing a cushion against the effects of the employment and poverty crises which have gripped the countries of the sub-region. However, most informal sector employment is precarious and poorly paid, with the result that those functioning in such employment are classified as poor workers, operating in highly uncondusive conditions, with neither health cover nor social protection. The sector is unorganised and unregulated, with most enterprises operating without registration. In political terms there is a pressing need to modernise and develop this sector, to which end the authorities must:

- (i) identify and register enterprises and operators in each area of activity;

- (ii) build the capacity of the economic operators or enterprises and workers in order to increase their skills and technical and managerial abilities to meet the requirements of their respective areas of activity and the changing trends in the national, regional and international markets;
- (iii) establish a link between the formal and informal sectors to allow the transfer of skills and competence, and create a synergy in their respective actions;
- (iv) support the creation of enabling working conditions in order to increase the productivity and wellbeing of workers by granting them enjoyment of the rights to which they are entitled under the labour code.

3.4. Promotion of a Public-private Partnership Favourable to Youth Self-employment

119. The importance of private sector involvement in job creation and self-employment is widely recognised (YEN, UNOWA, 2009). Governments need to take concrete steps to promote the private sector and encourage private sector recruitment of young job seekers. Due to the inexperience and lack of professional exposure of these young people, the sector is generally reluctant to hire them, and they are discriminated against on the job market (ILO, 2007). The authorities should introduce special measures including the granting of tax deductions as a recruitment incentive to encourage enterprises to recruit young men and women. Mali adopted a youth employment tax in 2009. This measure is an experiment which should be documented with a view to advocating its adoption by other countries in the sub-region³⁰. Enlightenment and outreach programmes should be organised for the benefit of young job seekers in order to develop their management and entrepreneurial skills.

3.5. Financial Support for Youth Self-employment

120. YEN has identified the lack of financial resources as one of the structural challenges which drastically limit youth self-employment. Special measures need to be taken to facilitate access by the youth to interest-free or low-interest loans, if only during the start-off years of their activities. Some countries in the sub-region have set up youth employment funds to this end. However, these have proved inadequate to meet the high and increasing demand for financing by young entrepreneurs. Micro-credit and finance institutions should be strengthened to enable them to grant interest-free credit to young people submitting viable

³⁰ For information on the Mali experiment see www.apej.org (Youth Employment Promotion Agency) or www.afdevinfo.com

projects, but lacking the requisite funds or guarantees to finance their implementation. A further option would be to charge a low rate of deferred interest over a given period, in order to allow the young entrepreneurs time to accumulate capital, reinvest and consolidate their business activities before gradually repaying the credit facilities made available to them.

3.6. Towards a More Integrated Regional Approach to the Promotion of Youth Self-employment

121. Although national action-based interventions are essential to youth self-employment, they must work in tandem with integrated regional programmes which are capable of factoring in the dynamics and regional perspectives of youth self-employment. It is encouraging to note the existence, in this regard, of a regional strategic institutional framework, namely, YEN-WA. The following actions need to be taken in accordance with this regional perspective:

- (i) Creation of a dedicated regional fund to support youth self-employment;
- (ii) Modernisation and upgrade of existing regional vocational training centres which should be linked with national training centres in order to teach the youth the skills and expertise which they need;
- (iii) Strengthening of the Youth Employment Network – West Africa, and promotion of exchanges of knowledge and good practices on youth self-employment;
- (iv) Support for the creation or strengthening of strategic partnerships between YEN and other networks world-wide in order to encourage the exchange of experiences.

122. Regional organisations, including the ECOWAS Commission, have a preponderant role to play in driving this regional dynamic. The Bank for Investment and Development of the Economic Community of West African States (EBID) and the Regional Solidarity Bank (RSB) should create lines of credit specifically targeting the young entrepreneurs of the sub-region.

Box 6: ECOWAS Commission Initiatives for the Promotion of Youth Employment

The ECOWAS Commission's Department of Human Development and Gender has carried out various activities aimed at the promotion of youth employment.

In April 2008, ECOWAS and the European Union jointly organised a meeting on employment, which was held in Luxembourg. The two institutions analysed the problem of unemployment in West Africa,

and the need for economic growth-driven development policies with a focus on employment, and youth unemployment in particular. A joint declaration on youth unemployment in West Africa was issued at the end of the meeting.

In 2009, the Department drew up a sub-regional employment promotion policy, and organised sub-regional youth capacity building workshops on agriculture, electricity and entrepreneurship in Bamako, Abuja and Ouagadougou respectively.

The young people of the sub-region were also encouraged to attend the ECOWAS Trade Fair held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in April 2008, with a view to introducing them into the world of business.

Conclusion and Recommendations

123. Considerable efforts have been made in the last few years to find an appropriate response to the problem of youth unemployment in West Africa. The problem was exacerbated by the economic and financial crisis, which further eroded the capacity of the States to address the issue.

124. The promotion of youth self-employment initiatives has become a matter of extreme urgency in order to integrate the youth into the socio-economic development and regional integration processes.

125. The above recommendations speak to the urgent need for strategic action-based interventions informed by a holistic, integrated regional approach, as the means by which the vicious circle of youth unemployment, poverty and social exclusion can be transformed into a magic circle of human capital consolidation, poverty reduction, and lasting peace in the West African sub-region.

126. With this end in view, it is important to develop and maintain a strategic partnership between the public and private sectors, and all development stakeholders with regard to the execution of synergised actions in favour of youth self-employment.

127. Top priority status should be given to agriculture and agro-industries in view of their highly beneficial long-term knock-on effects on the different sectors of the national economies.

128. New initiatives should be launched based on the exploitation of the natural resources and arable land with which West Africa is endowed.

129. Human capital development should be supported and encouraged by the introduction of appropriate training programmes backed by an educational system designed to boost productivity and produce a qualified and semi-qualified workforce.

130. Particular attention should be paid to vulnerable and often marginalised groups (women, the youth, and the handicapped).

131. The quality of employment-related data should be upgraded. It goes without saying that accurate and reliable data are essential to the effective and appropriate resolution of the problem of youth employment and self-employment.

132. Determined efforts should be made to coordinate growth strategies and employment. Job creation must be included in development policies as a priority concern. To this end, there must be genuine coordination between the ministries, and within the Governments themselves, between decision-makers, without which, economic growth will never go hand-in-hand with job creation.

133. By virtue of its mission and its strategic position as a United Nations institution dedicated to the promotion of regional integration and the socio-economic development of Africa, the ECA will work in collaboration with UNOWA, the ECOWAS Commission, UEMOA, and all other stakeholders, to support the member states in concretising their commitments and policies in favour of youth employment and self-employment.

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