Public Disclosure Authorized

Public Disclosure Authorized

What Works for Work

A Guidebook to Proven and Promising Employment Solutions

GLOBAL LABOR MARKET CONFERENCE

THE WORLD BANK
IBRD • IDA | WORLD BANK GROUP

What Works for Work

A Guidebook to Proven and Promising Employment Solutions

Eliana Carranza, Sara De Lorenzo Salvador, Tomas Hellebrandt, Johannes Koettl, Alicia Marguerie, Jamele Rigolini

© 2026 Global Labor Market Conference
This work was prepared by The World Bank at the request of the Global Labor Market Conference. The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this work do not necessarily reflect the views of the Executive Directors of The World Bank or the governments they represent.
The World Bank does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this work and does not assume responsibility for any errors, omissions, or discrepancies in the information, or liability with respect to the use of or failure to use the information, methods, processes, or conclusions set forth. The boundaries, colors, denominations, links/footnotes and other information shown in this work do not imply any judgment on the part of The World Bank concerning the legal status of any territory or the endorsement or acceptance of such boundaries. The citation of works authored by others does not mean the World Bank endorses the views expressed by those authors or the content of their works.

Rights and Permissions
The material in this work is subject to copyright. All queries on rights and licenses, including subsidiary rights, should be addressed to
info@globallabormarketconference.com

Attribution – Please cite the work as follows:
"Carranza, Eliana; De Lorenzo Salvador, Sara; Hellebrandt, Tomas; Koettl, Johannes; Marguerie, Alicia; Rigolini, Jamele. 2026. What Works for Work. World Bank, Washington, DC. © Global Labor Market Conference"

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments v

Abbreviations and Acronyms vii

Overview ix

1. Labor markets in low- and middle-income countries face multiple constraints 1
   - 1.1 Labor demand in formal firms is weak 3
   - 1.2 Labor supply is held back by inadequate skills and vulnerability 5
   - 1.3 Matching workers and firms is hampered by information and mobility constraints 6

2. A catalogue of proven and promising employment solutions 9
   - 2.1 Labor market programs deliver impact across diverse settings 10
   - 2.2 Design and context matter for success 14

3. How to design high-impact labor programs 21
   - 3.1 Four policy areas 22
   - 3.2 Five design principles 23
     - Tailoring to context and worker profile 23
     - Programs work better when they are comprehensive and cross-sectoral 29
     - Aligning behavior with outcomes improves labor market impacts 29
     - Private sector involvement helps with aligning design and market needs 34
     - Integration with social protection systems boosts impact for the most vulnerable 37

4. Conclusions: designing employment solutions for impact at scale 41

Appendix A: A selection of successful programs from the catalogue 45
- High readiness, high opportunities: Connect to Jobs 47
- High readiness, low opportunities: Unlock Talent 61
- Low readiness, high opportunities: Bridge the Gaps 71
- Low readiness, low opportunities: Jobs for the Poor 93

Appendix B: Converting evaluation findings into percentage impacts 123

References 125

Figures

Figure O.1: From diagnosis to scaled employment solutions xi
Figure 1: Economic growth has been strong in many LICs and MICs... 1
Figure 2: ...and educational outcomes have improved steadily 1
Figure 3: Informality and precariousness remain high and persistent 2
Figure 4: Limited progress on inclusion of women in the labor market 2
Figure 5: Formal sector job creation lags labor force growth in LICs and MICs..... 3
Figure 6: ...contributing to high youth idleness and precarious employment 3
Figure 7: Employment regulations in some LICs and MICs are fairly strict... 4
Figure 8: ...and relative minimum wages are quite burdensome compared with HICs . 4
Figure 9: Undereducation for one's jobs is more common in LICs and LMICs 5
Figure 10: Few firms train their workforce, despite proven benefits 6
Figure 11: Use of informal recruitment channels is the norm in many MICs 7
Figure 12: Mobility constraints in rural areas are associated with higher informality..... 8
Figure 13: Employment impacts of labor market programs have varied significantly... 9
Figure 14: ...as have impacts on earnings..... 9
Figure 15: Average impacts are larger in LICs and MICs and increasing over time 10
Figure 16: Proven and promising programs can be found across country income groups... .10
Figure 17 ...and across the full range of labor market programs 10
Figure 18: Framework for designing impactful interventions 21
Figure 19: A 2×2 framework to tailor to local context and workers' profiles 23
Figure 20: From diagnosis to scaled employment solutions 41
Figure 21: Distribution of studies by quadrant 45
Figure 22: Distribution of studies by implementing entity.....45
Figure 23: Distribution of studies by country income group 45
Figure 24: Distribution of studies by policy area 45
Figure 25: Distribution of studies by target group ...46

Tables

Table 1: Types of labor market constraints 2
Table 2: Many programs have generated large impacts on employment and income 12
Table 3: Details of impact calculation on earnings and employment of select programs.....123

Boxes

Box 1: Selection approach of employment solutions 11
Box 2: Program impacts can extend years after the intervention 13
Box 3: Value for money can be substantial.....15
Box 4: Programs can generate positive spillovers to nonparticipants 16
Box 5: Programs have been successful even in challenging FCV settings.....17
Box 6: Design and context matter for success.....18
Box 7: High-readiness, high-opportunity: Connect to Jobs 25
Box 8: High readiness, low opportunity: Unlock Talent.....26
Box 9: Low readiness, high opportunities: Bridge the Gaps.....27
Box 10: Low-readiness, low-opportunity: Jobs for the Poor 28
Box 11: Comprehensive and cross-sectoral programs offer greater impacts 30
Box 12: Performance-based contracts help align service providers' and programs' objectives.....31
Box 13: Employers' objectives can be aligned using financial and non-financial incentives.....32
Box 14: Participants' engagement can be improved through monetary and non-monetary incentives 33
Box 15: Private sector involvement can take many forms 34
Box 16: Aligning behaviors of private service providers with policy makers' objectives 35
Box 17: Self-employed and small entrepreneurs can be supported in many ways 36
Box 18: Integration with social protection leverages complementarities 38

Acknowledgments

This work was carried out under the Technical Cooperation Program between the World Bank Group (WBG) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), at the request of the 2026 Global Labor Market Conference (GLMC), to be held in Riyadh on January 26–27, 2026. It is jointly authored by Eliana Carranza (Senior Economist), Sara De Lorenzo Salvador (Junior Professional Associate), Tomas Hellebrandt (Consultant), Johannes Koettl (Senior Economist), Alicia Marguerie (Senior Economist), and Jamele Rigolini (Senior Advisor).

The work draws on a collaborative team effort, benefiting from task leadership by Johannes Koettl and Jamele Rigolini, and grounded in the analytical framing and narrative direction developed under the Labor and Skills Global Solutions Group by Eliana Carranza, Alicia Marguerie, and Jamele Rigolini. Sara De Lorenzo Salvador took part in the curation and organization of evidence on proven and promising solutions, with assistance from Alina Zoe Runk. The drafting was led and coordinated by Tomas Hellebrandt, with the structure, evidence, and messaging shaped through iterative exchanges among the authors. Generative AI tools were used in limited ways to support drafting efficiency. All conceptual framing, interpretation of evidence, and narrative development are the authors' own.

The team is grateful to Safaa El Tayeb El-Kogali (Country Director, Gulf Cooperation Council Countries), Fadia Saadah (Regional Director for MENA), Iffath Sharif (Global Director, Social Protection and Labor), Cristobal Ridao-Cano (Practice Manager for MENA, Social Protection and Labor), and Christian Bodewig (Practice Manager) for strategic direction and support. Thanks are also extended to Carole Chartouni (Senior Economist), Ekaterina Pankratova (Senior Social Protection Specialist), and Nayib Rivera (Economist) for support to the WBG/KSA technical cooperation program, and John Giles (Lead Economist), Joana Silva (Deputy Chief Economist for Human Development) and Penny Williams (Manager) for peer review comments.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ALMP	Active Labor Market Program
BPO	Business Process Outsourcing
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
ECA	Europe and Central Asia
EAP	East Asia and the Pacific
FCV	Fragility, Conflict, and Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GLMC	Global Labor Market Conference
HIC	High-Income Country
IERR	Internal Economic Rate of Return
ILO	International Labor Organization
IRR	Internal Rate of Return
ISCO	International Standard Classification of Occupations
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
LCR	Latin America and the Caribbean
LICs	Low-Income Country
LMIC	Lower-Middle-Income Country
LMIS	Labor Market Information System
MENAAP	Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and Pakistan
MIC	Middle-Income Country
MIS	Management Information System
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OJT	On-the-Job Training
PES	Public Employment Service
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
RCT	Randomized Controlled Trial
SA	South Asia
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SMS	Short Message Service
SP	Social Protection
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
STEP	Skills Toward Employment and Productivity
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UMICs	Upper-Middle-Income Countries
WBG	World Bank Group

Overview

Governments in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) face growing pressure to create jobs amid shrinking fiscal space and weak growth prospects. Each year, millions of young people reach working age, yet the supply of formal wage jobs lags. Many workers—particularly women and youth—remain in low-productivity jobs with limited earnings and protections, or face exclusion from the labor market, often searching in vain for opportunities that match their skills or aspirations.

Employment solutions—like active labor market programs (ALMPs), regulatory reforms, or alignment of social programs—are effective tools to address these challenges. ALMPs are programs that aim to keep workers employed, bring them into employment, increase their productivity and earnings, and improve the functioning of labor markets (Brown and Koettl, 2012). They include a wide range of interventions, such as wage subsidies, in-work benefits, entrepreneurship support, job counseling, labor intermediation, public works, and work-based or classroom training. Regulatory reforms, like redesigning labor regulations and taxes, consolidating social support programs into integrated systems, or building capacity within implementing agencies, are also an important part of employment solutions. When well-designed and tailored to local needs, these solutions expand job opportunities, connect workers to better employment, and provide firms with the skilled labor they require. While they do not replace the need for broader reforms in education, business regulations, infrastructure, or financial markets, they can deliver improvements in employment and earnings in the near term—and their impact only increases as the structural reforms that underpin long-term job creation take hold.

Recent years have seen a strengthening evidence base for employment solutions, with rigorous evaluations indicating that well-crafted programs can achieve impacts that far exceed earlier interventions. The most effective programs show improvements in earnings that are three to five times larger than the average program, underscoring the payoffs to investing in good design and implementation. Moreover, employment solutions tend to be more effective in low- and middle-income countries than in high-income ones, because of the type of constraints LMICs face.

This guidebook reviews those high-performing employment solutions and distills lessons on how to replicate them. It draws from more than a hundred successful programs and reforms implemented in diverse settings, showing that targeted and well-designed solutions can quickly make a difference in many different contexts. The guidebook builds on the 2025 Global Labor Market Conference (GLMC) report on making labor markets work for youth (World Bank 2025a), expanding the scope to a much larger set of programs, reforms, and beneficiary groups.

To help policy makers navigate these options, this guidebook proposes a simple framework linking labor market challenges to specific families of interventions. The challenges include labor demand constraints, like high informality, conflict and violence, or credit constraints; matching constraints related to information gaps and limited mobility; supply constraints, like skills gaps or social norms; and regulatory and institutional constraints, like inadequate employment protection legislation, educational, training, employment or care services. Interventions to address these challenges include programs and policies stimulating labor demand, like supporting self-employment and

entrepreneurship; strengthening workforce preparedness; improving job matching and labor mobility; and improving labor market regulations and institutions.

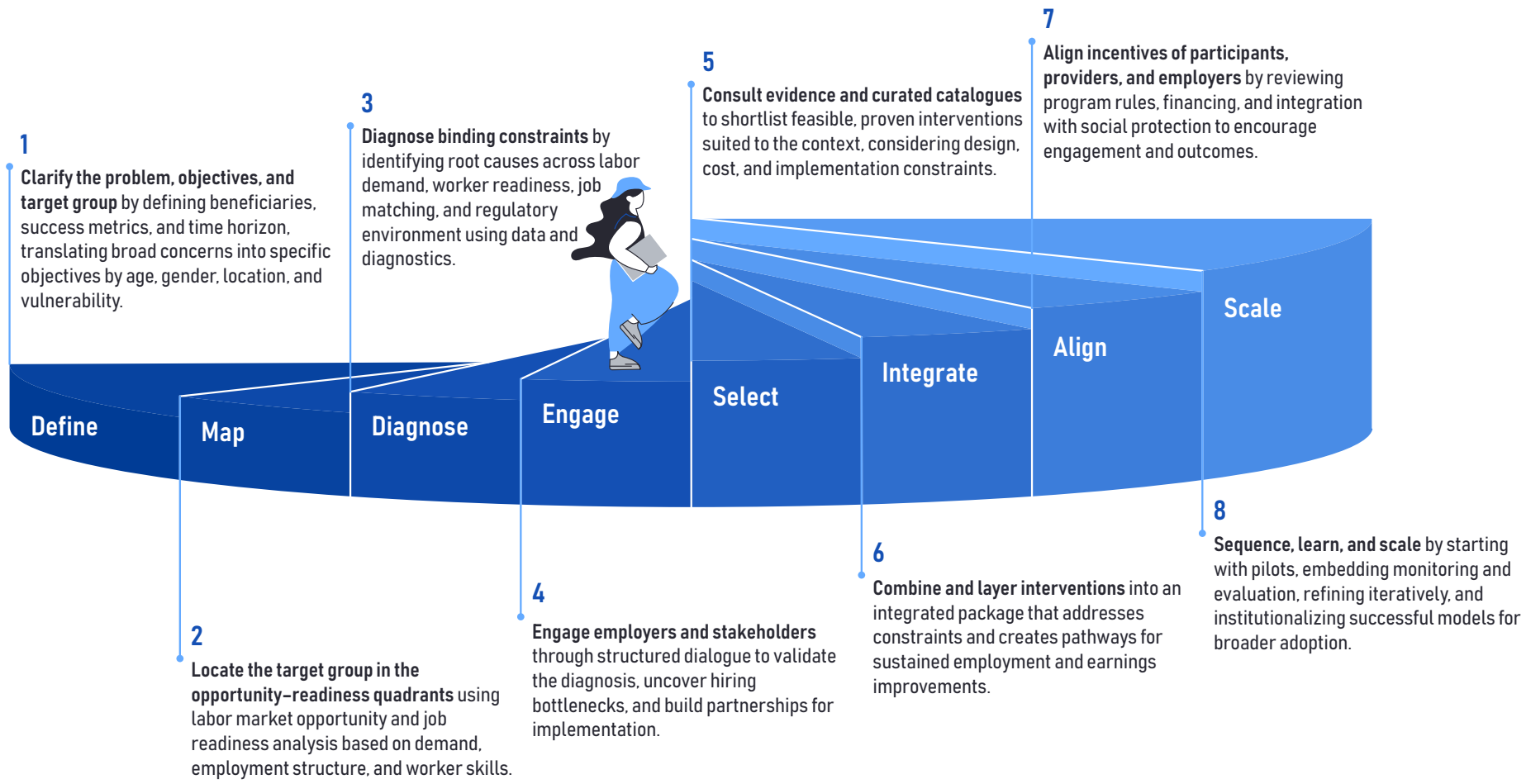
To succeed, interventions should abide by five essential design principles. The same type of intervention—for example, a training program or a wage subsidy—can produce either modest or substantial results, depending on design, implementation and local context; how it is targeted and to whom; whether it responds to actual demand from firms and workers; and whether complementary constraints such as finance, childcare, or transport are addressed. The five essential design principles that will ensure significant results are achieved: first, they should be tailored to the local context and to the needs and constraints of the specific groups that programs want to support; second, they should be comprehensive enough to tackle multiple, reinforcing constraints to employment; third, they should align the incentives of providers, employers, and participants with the desired outcomes; fourth, they should address employers' needs and be implemented in partnership with the private sector; and fifth, they should be linked to social protection systems to enhance impact among poor and vulnerable households.

Intended as an operational resource, this guidebook also provides global evidence and concrete examples to inform real-time policy decisions. It offers a structured approach to understanding where specific employment solutions and programs fit within broader jobs strategies, what results are feasible given local conditions, and how different interventions can be adapted and scaled. It also provides an accompanying catalogue of programs and country experiences to illustrate the range of options available and to show how they have been adapted in practice, helping policy makers design interventions that are both evidence-informed and tailored to local constraints. A step-by-step guide distills the key lessons from the guidebook into a practical sequence that can be applied when designing or reforming employment solutions (Figure O.1).

Ultimately, the guidebook encourages governments to view these employment solutions as strategic investments in more inclusive and resilient labor markets, offering meaningful gains when chosen and implemented thoughtfully. When design is grounded in evidence and adapted to local realities, policy makers can reasonably expect impacts on employment and earnings that are several times larger than the average program—turning employment solutions into a powerful complement to longer-term structural reforms.

The guidebook is structured as follows. Section 1 discusses employment constraints in LMICs. Section 2 provides an overview of proven and promising solutions, with a detailed catalogue presented in Appendix A. Section 3 offers a framework for designing impactful interventions. Section 4 concludes with considerations for scaling up these programs.

Figure 0.1: From diagnosis to scaled employment solutions



Source: World Bank.

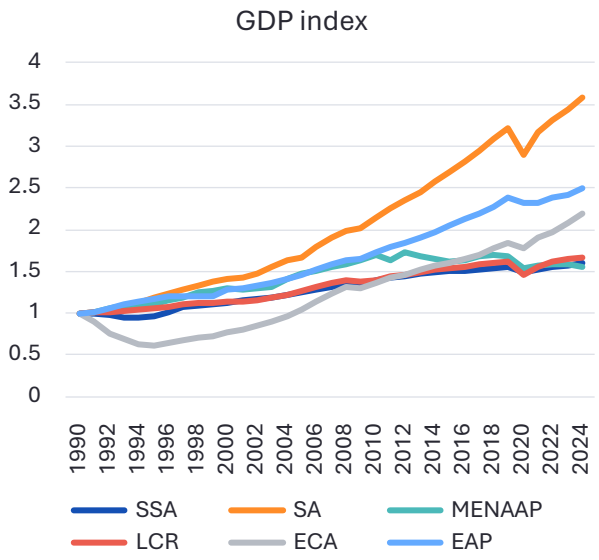
1 Labor markets in low- and middle-income countries face multiple constraints

Over the past 30 years, many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) have seen steady gains in per capita income and educational attainment. Economies across Africa, the Middle East and Latin America now produce roughly 50 percent more output per capita than in 1990 (Figure 1), while per capita gross domestic product (GDP) in other regions has more than doubled. Adult literacy rates have risen as education systems have been strengthened, and younger cohorts have entered adulthood with higher levels of schooling than their parents and grandparents (Figure 2).

Yet stronger growth and gains in schooling have not translated into equally strong improvements in employment outcomes. Labor markets are failing to deliver the opportunities people need to meet their aspirations. The self-employment rate—a broad indicator of informality and low-productivity work—has remained stubbornly high over the past 30 years, falling markedly only in the fastest-growing regions of South and East Asia (Figure 3). Its persistence reflects widespread economic vulnerability rather than thriving entrepreneurship. Women's labor force participation has likewise remained broadly stable in many countries; it continues to be low because women shoulder a heavy burden of care responsibilities and face restrictive social norms that limit their options (Figure 4).

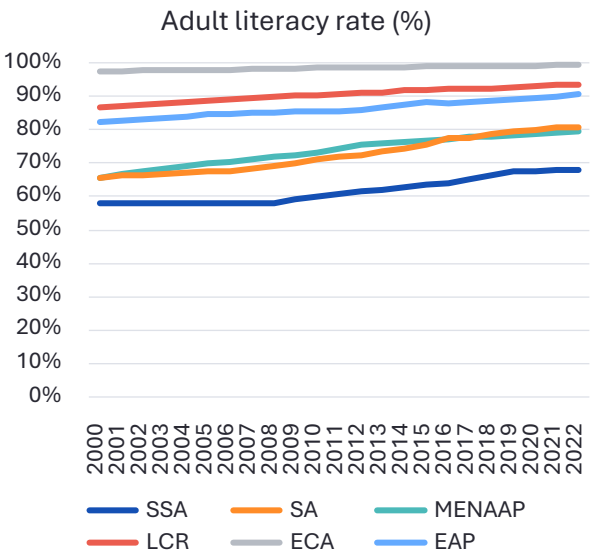
Behind these outcomes lie multiple, reinforcing constraints across labor demand, labor supply, worker–firm matching, and the regulatory and institutional environment. In many economies, the creation of good-quality wage jobs in formal firms is too slow or too uneven to absorb growing working-age popula-

Figure 1: Economic growth has been strong in many LICs and MICs…



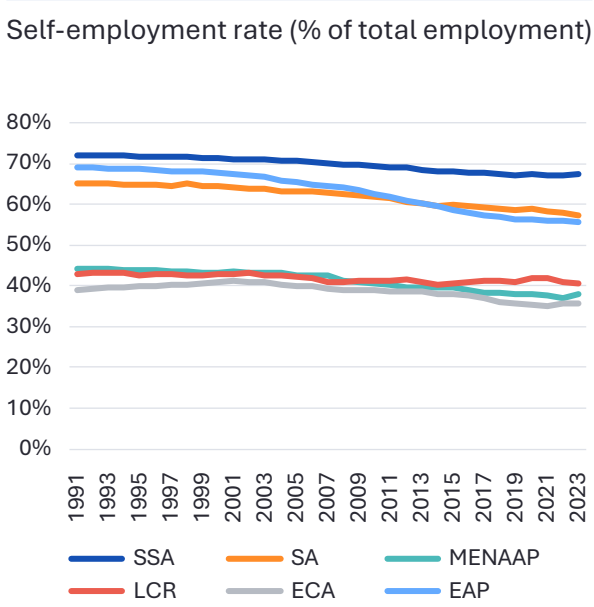
Source: World Development Indicators, simple average, excluding high-income countries (HICs).
Note: Refer to Abbreviations and Acronyms section for explanation of regional labels.

Figure 2: …and educational outcomes have improved steadily



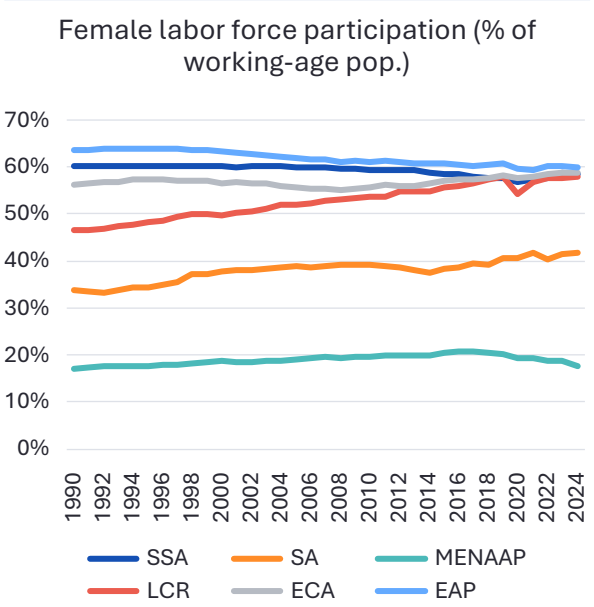
Source: World Development Indicators, simple average, excluding HICs.
Note: Refer to Abbreviations and Acronyms section for explanation of regional labels.

Figure 3: Informality and precariousness remain high and persistent



Source: World Development Indicators (modeled International Labor Organization [ILO] estimates), simple average, excludes HICs.
Note: Refer to Abbreviations and Acronyms section for explanation of regional labels.

Figure 4: Limited progress on inclusion of women in the labor market



Source: World Development Indicators (modeled ILO estimates), simple average, excludes HICs.
Note: Refer to Abbreviations and Acronyms section for explanation of regional labels.

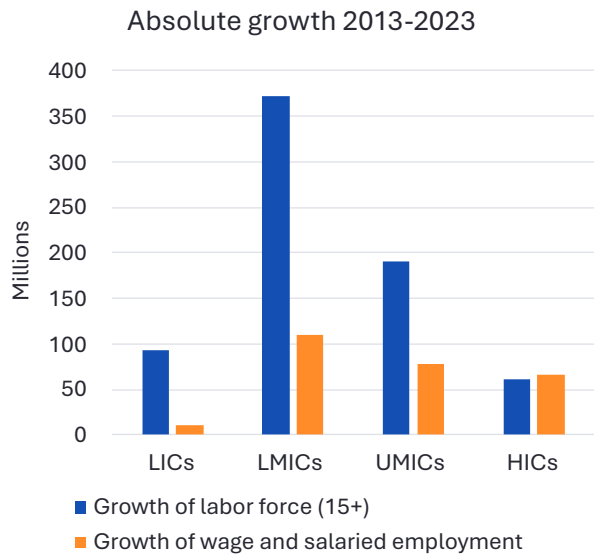
tions. Many workers, in turn, are unable to take advantage of existing opportunities because they lack the skills, resources, or support needed to participate in more productive employment. And even when jobs and workers are available, they often fail to find each other due to information gaps, weak intermediation platforms, and mobility or transport barriers. These problems are often compounded by regulations and institutions that are not well suited to supporting job creation, job search, or effective program delivery (Table 1).

Table 1: Types of labor market constraints

Demand constraints	Matching constraints	Supply constraints
• High informality, not enough quality paid jobs • Conflict and violence • Credit constraints	• Employers lack information about workers • Unemployed lack information about job opportunities • Mobility constraints	• Inadequate skills • Low household income and resources • Cognitive biases • Restrictive social norms
Regulatory and institutional constraints		
• Burdensome employment protection regulations • High minimum wages	• Underdeveloped PES • Inadequate certification of skills • Weak social protection puts pressure on unemployed to find work quickly at the expense of quality	• Lack of childcare options for women • Weak healthcare access puts greater care burden on women • Employment restrictions

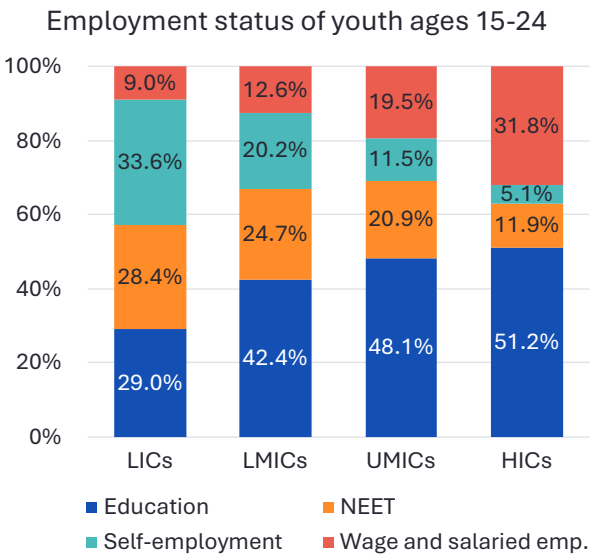
Source: World Bank.
Note: PES – Public employment service.

Figure 5: Formal sector job creation lags labor force growth in LICs and MICs…



Source: World Development Indicators.

Figure 6: …contributing to high youth idleness and precarious employment



Source: International Labor Organization.

Importantly, the prevalence and severity of labor market constraints vary not only across countries but also within them. Workers and firms face very different realities depending on where they are located, the sectors they operate in, and their individual circumstances. A single country may contain dynamic urban centers with diversified, expanding opportunities alongside rural regions marked by limited demand and high vulnerability. Even in advanced economies, highly skilled workers coexist with those who are less qualified, and well-connected labor markets exist alongside underserved areas. This uneven landscape means that within any one country, some workers can progress while others remain locked out, and some firms might strive while others are constrained in their growth.

1.1 Labor demand in formal firms is weak

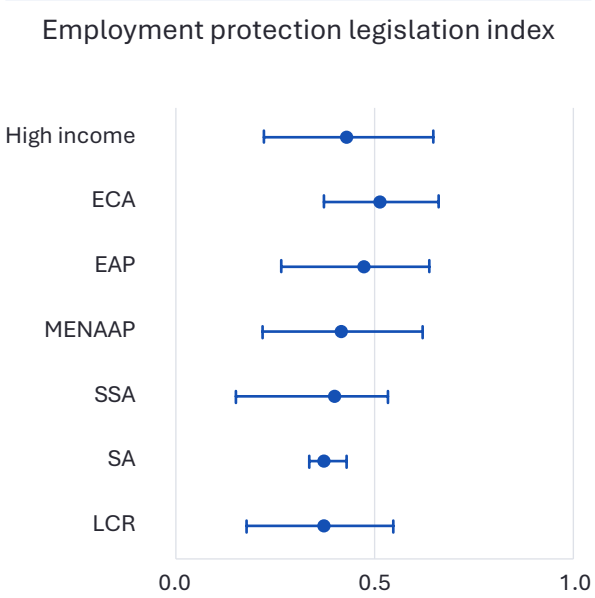
The main labor market challenge in many low- and middle-income countries is the lack of high-quality jobs. Such jobs allow workers to accumulate skills and human capital and experience career progression and earnings growth over time. They are typically found in large, formal firms that drive aggregate productivity growth.

Job opportunities in the formal sector are not keeping pace with labor force expansion. While in HICs the net increase of wage jobs (a proxy for formal jobs) slightly exceeded the net inflow into the labor force, the picture is very different elsewhere (Figure 5).[1] In upper-middle-income countries (UMICs), an estimated 2.5 additional working-age individuals entered the labor force for every new wage job created. The gaps are even larger in lower-middle-income countries and low-income countries (LICs), where 3.4 and 8.8 additional working-age people entered the labor force per new wage job, respectively.

With so few formal jobs available, a large share of workers, especially youth, turn to self-employment and small household enterprises, which together constitute a substantial portion of private sector jobs in many developing countries. In HICs, the vast majority of youth are either in education or in formal wage employment. In LICs, by contrast, limited traditional firm-based wage employment, combined with lower educational attainment and the perception that schooling yields low returns, sharply narrows young people's

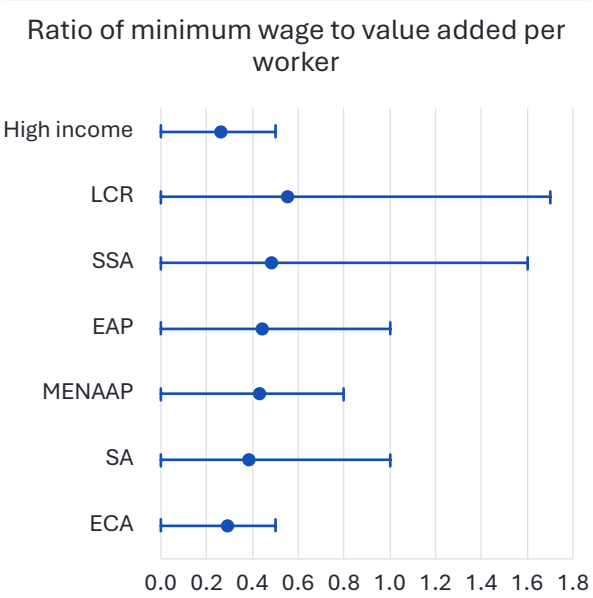
1. Not all wage jobs are formal, and not all formal sector jobs are also high-quality jobs. However, wage jobs are the closest proxy to high-quality jobs that can be found in publicly available harmonized databases.

Figure 7: Employment regulations in some LICs and MICs are fairly strict…



Source: International Labour Organization.
Note: The dot shows the mean index while the line shows the min-max range. Refer to Abbreviations and Acronyms section for explanation of regional labels.

Figure 8: …and relative minimum wages are quite burdensome compared with HICs



Source: World Bank Employing Workers project.
Note: The dot shows the mean index while the line shows the min-max range. The calculation is based on the minimum wage for a 19-year-old full-time grocery cashier working in the largest city. Refer to Abbreviations and Acronyms section for explanation of regional labels.

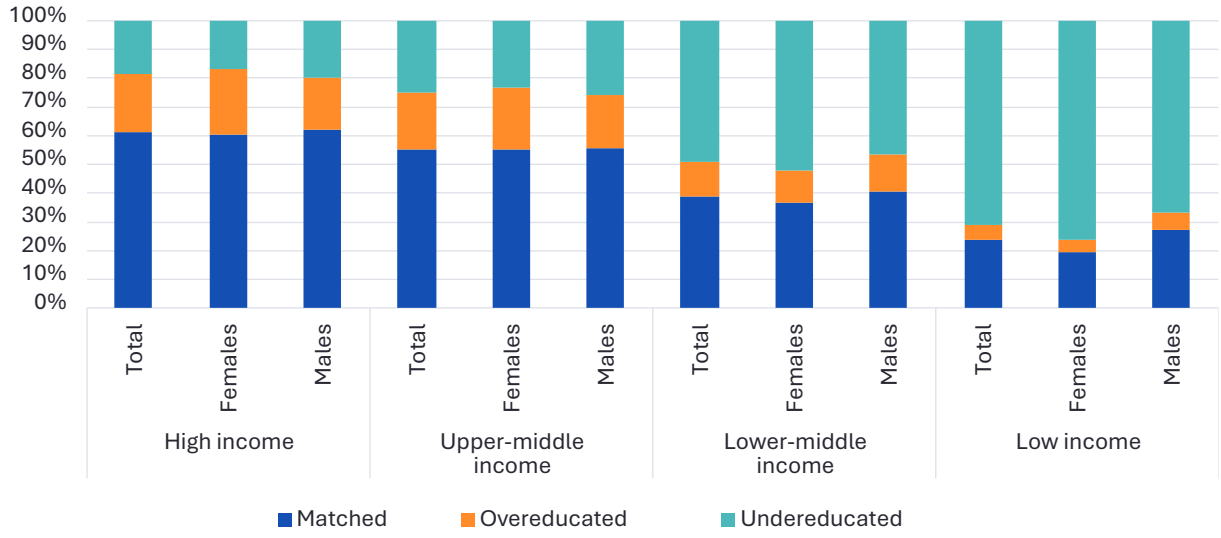
options. As a result, many end up in self-employment or are not in employment, education, or training (NEET) (Figure 6). Youth unemployment and underemployment are a concern in many countries, given the risk of permanent earnings and productivity losses from prolonged school-to-work transitions.[2]

Entrepreneurs and workers often operate informally after weighing the costs, the benefits, and their particular context. In poorer countries, many firms are simply too small and too unproductive to shoulder the costs of formality—such as taxes, social security contributions, and compliance with labor regulations. Limited domestic demand, lack of access to finance, new technologies and other productive assets, and weak managerial capacity place a constraint on firm growth and prevent low-productivity informal firms being displaced by more productive, formal competitors (La Porta et al. 2014). In middle-income countries (MICs), a different pattern also emerges: a subset of firms remains informal—or formally registers but still employs part of its workforce informally—primarily to avoid taxes and regulations (Ulyssea 2020).

In some countries, government regulation increases the cost and complexity of formal employment to the point where firms hold back on creating formal jobs. For example, in parts of Europe and Central Asia (ECA) and East Asia and the Pacific (EAP), the burden of employment protection legislation exceeds the average for HICs (Figure 7). Similarly, the average ratio of the minimum wage to the average value added per worker is higher in LMIC regions than in HICs—possibly too high for firms to comply with the regulation (Figure 8). When minimum wages and employment rules are out of line with productivity and enforcement capacity, firms may respond by hiring fewer workers formally, relying more on informal employment, or not expanding at all.

2. The specific challenges faced by youth and the importance of early-career interventions are discussed in more detail in the 2025 Global Labor Market Conference (GLMC) report (World Bank 2025a).

Figure 9: Undereducation for one's jobs is more common in LICs and LMICs



Source: International Labour Organization.
Note: The method used to identify mismatched workers is based on the educational requirements set out in the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) for each one-digit ISCO occupational group, and on the level of education of each person in employment. See ILOStat (n.d.) for more details.

1.2 Labor supply is held back by inadequate skills and vulnerability

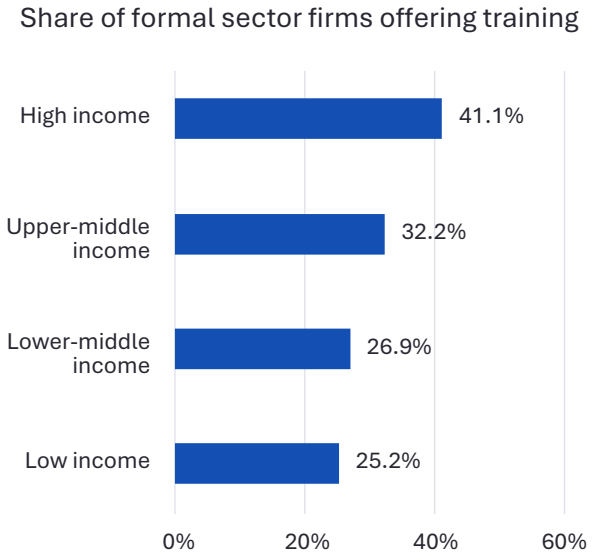
Workers in LMICs are far more likely than those in HICs to be in jobs for which they are undereducated. Most workers in HICs (61 percent) are in jobs that match their level of education, with the rest roughly evenly split between being undereducated and overeducated for their jobs (Figure 9). In LMICs, the share of well-matched workers falls, and the group of mismatched workers is increasingly dominated by the undereducated. In LICs, as many as 71 percent of workers are undereducated for their job. Although many of the undereducated consist of contributing family workers[3] who have less than basic education, the problem extends all the way to high-skill occupations in many countries (Stoevska 2021).

Part of what looks like undereducation on paper reflects how skills are acquired and certified, rather than what workers actually know. Many workers in LMICs gain relevant skills on the job or through informal apprenticeships but lack formal certificates to prove their competencies. Measures of skill mismatch that rely only on formal qualifications therefore tend to overstate the extent of undereducation. Subjective measures—based on workers' own assessment of whether they have the right skills for their current job—show lower levels of mismatch than these normative measures (ILO 2019). However, the absence of recognized certification is not just a measurement issue; it has real-world consequences. A lack of formal credentials can, for example, hinder the transition of experienced workers from the informal sector into better-quality formal jobs that require documented qualifications.

Education systems are often slow to respond to changing skill demand in transforming economies, which contributes to skill mismatches. As economies grow and jobs shift from agriculture into industry and services, employers look for new mixes of skills—ranging from basic literacy and numeracy to problem-solving, teamwork, technical, and digital skills. But school and training systems often adjust slowly, so curricula, teaching methods, and training programs fall behind what labor market demands. Without reforms that support

3. Contributing family workers are individuals who help a family member run a family business, farm, or enterprise without receiving regular, explicit monetary pay, often benefiting indirectly from family income.

Figure 10: Few firms train their workforce, despite proven benefits



Source: World Bank Enterprise Surveys.

lifelong learning and skills development, countries will struggle both to equip new entrants with the skills needed for emerging jobs and to help mid-career workers upgrade or replace skills that have become obsolete. Evidence suggests that countries undergoing faster industrialization and structural change tend to see higher rates of skill mismatch among young workers (ILO 2019).

Firms in LMICs lag in closing skill gaps through training. The share of formal firms that offer structured training programs to their workers is significantly lower in LMICs than in HICs (Figure 10). Low training provision reflects several constraints that are more acute in poorer settings, including tighter credit constraints and smaller average firm size, which make it harder for employers to finance and organize training (Almeida and Aterido 2015; Popov 2014).

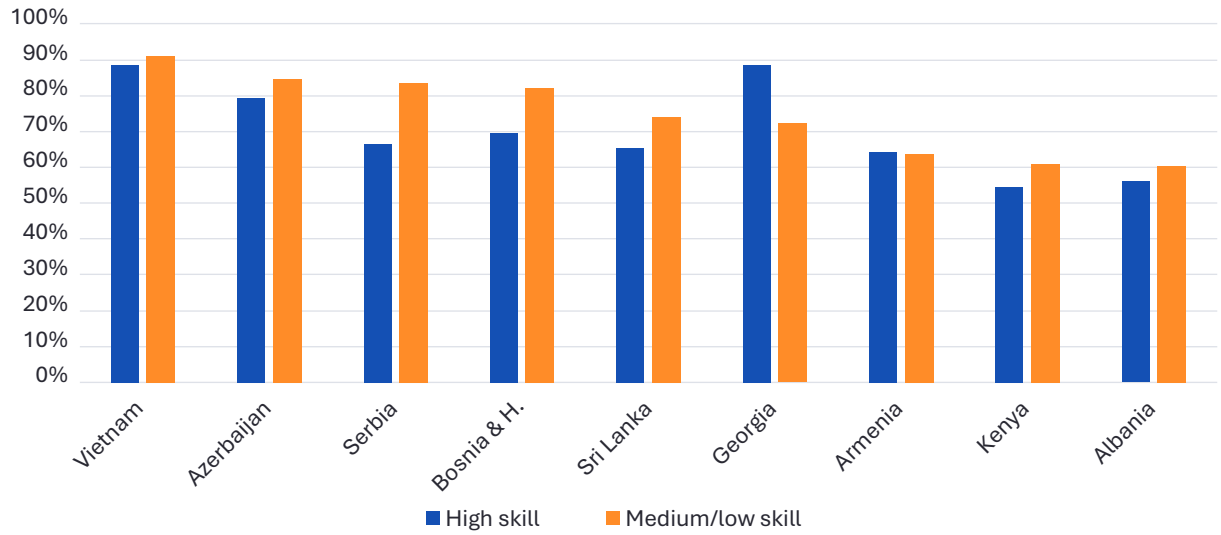
Beyond skills, poverty itself also affects people's ability to access better employment opportunities. Subsistence activities—such as informal casual work or subsistence self-employment in agriculture or petty trade—do not generate sufficient income to allow investment in human or physical capital that would help people escape poverty, whether by moving up the jobs ladder or by growing their own enterprises. Poor people are typically cut off from credit that could help them overcome these constraints. Poverty also affects cognitive functioning and reduces 'mental bandwidth': it shortens time horizons and makes it difficult to engage in forward-looking behaviors, such as investing in education or capital, that require discipline and self-control (Mani et al. 2013; Shah et al. 2012). Also, the lack of basic income security may prevent people from making high-risk, high-return choices.

1.3 Matching workers and firms is hampered by information and mobility constraints

In many LMICs, workers and firms struggle to find suitable matches because information about jobs and candidates is limited and unreliable. Employers rarely see a candidate's true productivity before hiring, and workers have only a partial view of what a job really entails—its conditions, tasks, or prospects. These information problems create classic risks: employers fear ending up with low-productivity hires and workers fear landing in bad jobs. As a result, both sides look for signals—such as degrees, school prestige, tests, references, or probation periods—to reduce uncertainty. But sending strong signals is costly, and many workers in low- and middle-income and informal settings either cannot send them or send noisy signals that do not align cleanly with the skills needed for specific jobs. The result is slower hiring, more reliance on personal networks, and systematic mismatches that weigh on productivity.

Because of these information gaps, many firms tend to favor informal recruitment channels over more open, formal ones. Evidence from the World Bank's Skills Toward Employment and Productivity (STEP) Employer Survey shows that in many MICs, a large share of firms rely on personal contacts and recommendations from people they know when hiring new workers (Figure 11). In contrast, more formal recruitment methods, such as Public Employ-

Figure 11: Use of informal recruitment channels is the norm in many MICs



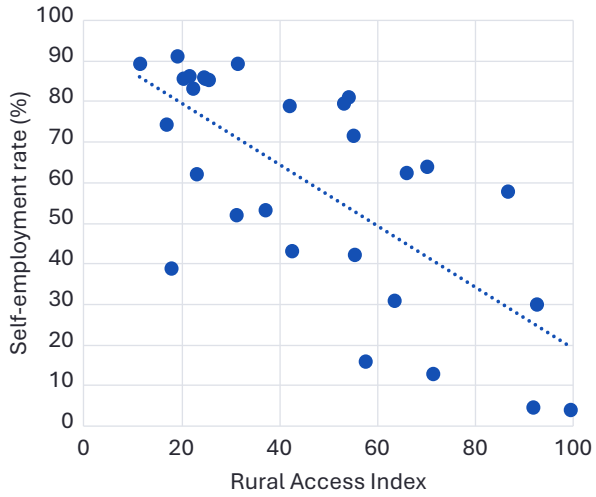
Source: World Bank STEP Employer survey, Vietnam (2011), Azerbaijan (2013-2014), Serbia (2015-2016), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2016-2017), Sri Lanka (2012), Georgia (2012), Armenia (2013), Kenya (2016-2017), Albania (2017).
Note: Survey question: "Do you recruit from the following sources: Informal channels (personal contacts, people recommended by others)."

ment Services (PES), links with educational institutions, internet or media job postings, or direct offers to experienced workers in other firms, are used by a much smaller fraction of firms. This pattern reflects the need for trusted information in environments where formal labor market institutions and data are weak.

Informal hiring channels can help firms identify suitable candidates, but they can also reinforce favoritism and exclusion. Hiring through personal networks allows firms to tap into private information (for example, when an existing employee recommends someone they know), which can improve match quality. Social ties in referral relationships can also act as a disciplining device, encouraging higher effort and reliability from referred workers (Heath 2018). However, these benefits are not guaranteed. Informal recruitment can reduce the pool of candidates considered when incentives for accurate referrals are weak and people refer based on family ties and social connections rather than competence (Beaman and Magruder 2012; Meliciani and Radicchia 2011). The evidence of the overall impact of informal recruitment on job match quality and productivity is mixed, suggesting that outcomes depend heavily on context and design (Burks et al. 2015; Matsuda and Nomura 2025). What is clear is that informal channels on their own are unlikely to fully overcome deeper information and search frictions, and their predominance disproportionately disadvantages groups with smaller networks and less social capital, including many women (Beaman et al. 2018).

Limited physical mobility and weak infrastructure further constrain matching between workers and firms, especially in rural areas. In LMICs, there is often a stark spatial mismatch between where people live and where jobs are located. Such mismatches exist in HICs as well, but they are much harder to overcome when transport and infrastructure are underdeveloped. Poor roads and limited transport options sharply restrict the distance people can realistically travel for work. The Rural Access Index (RAI)—which measures the share of the rural population living within 2 km of an all-season road—is below 50 percent in many LMICs. There is a strong negative relationship between the RAI and the informality rate: where road access is worse, informality tends to be higher (Figure 12). This pattern indicates that constraints on labor mobility, driven by poor infrastructure, push more workers and firms into informal arrangements.

Figure 12: Mobility constraints in rural areas are associated with higher informality



Source: World Bank Rural Access Index and World Bank Development Indicators.

Even within cities, many residents, especially the poorest, cannot reach most job opportunities within a reasonable commute. In several of the largest African cities, for example, the average resident can reach *less than one-third* of all jobs in the city within 60 minutes of travel time. This is not just about long commutes—it is also about unequal access. In many cities, better-off neighborhoods are much better connected to areas with employment, while poorer residents live in locations with the weakest transport links and the fewest nearby jobs. These patterns of unequal access lock disadvantaged groups into a narrower set of options and reinforce cycles of social and economic exclusion (Quiros et al. 2019).

High costs and other barriers to moving, within countries and across borders, stop many workers from relocating to where the jobs are, even when the move would pay off. Beyond daily commuting constraints, workers often face legal, administrative, social, and financial obstacles to migration (both internal and international). These include formal restrictions, complex registration requirements, lack of information about opportunities elsewhere, and the need for housing and social networks in destination areas. In Brazil, for example, migration data shows that the average cost of moving between two municipalities (including the social cost of moving such as leaving family and friends) is around 0.8–1.2 times the mean annual wage (Morten and Oliveira 2016). Poorer and credit-constrained households are much less able to cover such up-front costs, which means that they cannot take advantage of better-paying jobs in other locations, even when the long-term returns to migrating are very high.

2 A catalogue of proven and promising employment solutions

The best employment solutions in LMICs deliver impacts that are three to five times larger than the average program. A recent meta-analysis of 102 randomized controlled trials (RCTs) of ALMPs shows substantial variation in results around the average (Yeyati and 2025), especially for training programs and programs that support entrepreneurship (Figure 13 and Figure 14). ALMPs are also the type of employment solutions with the largest number of rigorous evaluations and, likely, the widest variety of design features and delivery models. The top 10 percent of impact estimates are 4.8 times above average for employment outcomes and 3.8 times above average for earnings outcomes across programs.

On average, labor market programs tend to work better in LMICs, especially for young and vulnerable groups. An ILO–World Bank meta-analysis of 228 impact evaluation studies of youth-targeted programs finds that average impacts are about twice as strong in LMICs compared to HICs (Figure 15), likely because the constraints these programs are trying to address are more severe, as discussed in the previous section (Puerto et al. 2022). The same analysis shows that within LMICs, impacts are larger for younger and more vulnerable groups—such as women, low-skilled workers, and marginalized youth—who face the greatest barriers in the labor market. Evidence from RCTs points in the same direction: average impacts are significantly larger in LMICs than in higher-income settings (Yeyati et al. 2025).

The effectiveness of youth labor market programs has also increased over time, suggesting policy learning and better program design. Programs targeting youth that started since 2008 have performed, on average, twice as well as earlier cohorts of programs (Figure

Figure 13: Employment impacts of labor market programs have varied significantly…

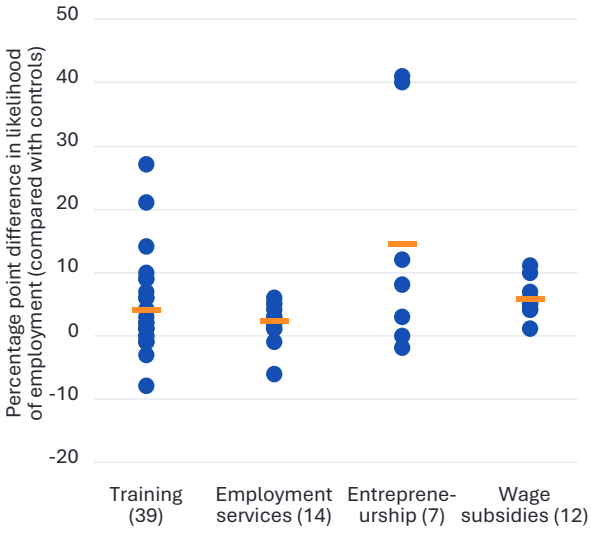
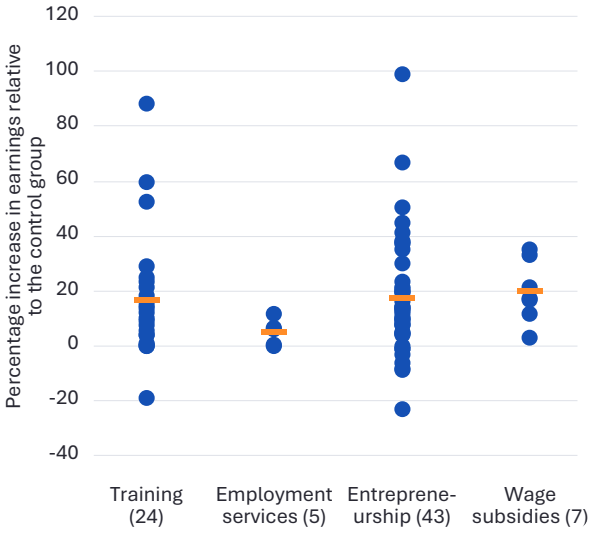
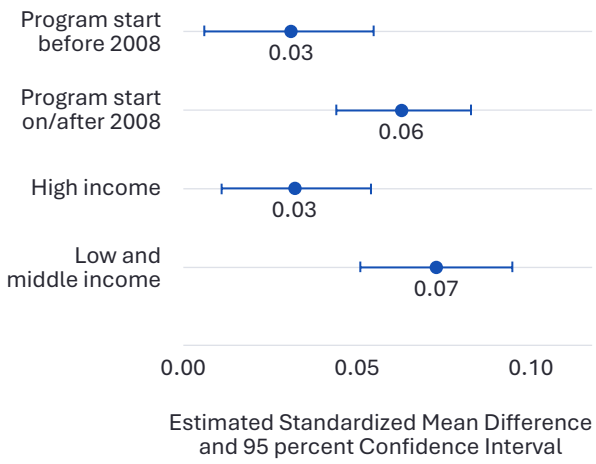


Figure 14: …as have impacts on earnings



Source: Yeyati et al. 2025. Data available at https://www.utdt.edu/ver_contenido.php?id_contenido=16655&id_item_menu=25812
Note: Red dash indicates average impact.

Figure 15: Average impacts are larger in LICs and MICs and increased over time



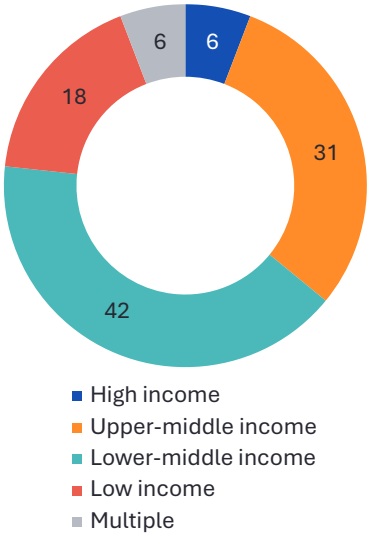
Source: Puerto et al. 2022.

15). This improvement likely reflects learning from experience and the use of evidence to refine program design—for example, by better targeting beneficiaries, combining interventions, or engaging employers more effectively. It may also partly reflect the changing composition of the evidence base, with a growing share of evaluations coming from LMICs, where, as noted above, program impacts tend to be larger (Puerto et al. 2022).

2.1 Labor market programs deliver impact across diverse settings

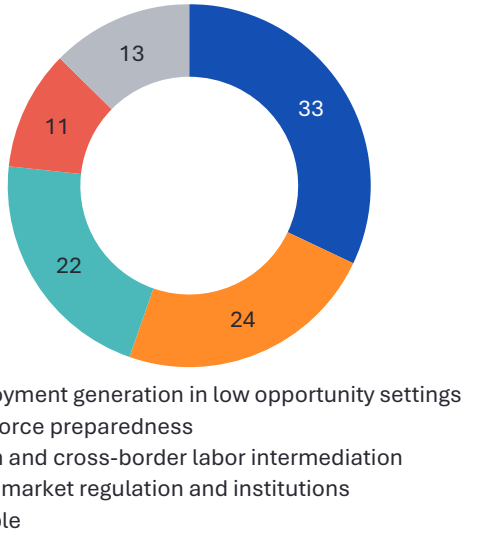
A catalogue with evidence from more than 100 labor market programs—most of which have been rigorously evaluated—shows that meaningful improvements in employment and earnings are achievable across a wide range of country contexts and program types. Box 1 describes the criteria on how employment solutions were selected for the catalogue. Information in the catalogue includes labor market context on the intervention, target group, administrative complexity, period of implementation, number of beneficiaries, and achieved impacts on labor market outcomes. The catalogue spans interventions implemented in LICs, LMICs, and UMICs, with nearly three-quarters taking place in middle-income settings (Figure 16). The diversity of effective programs—across training, intermediation, entrepreneurship support, wage subsidies, and integrated approaches (Figure 17)—demonstrates that well-designed interventions can deliver impact even in challenging labor market environments. A subset of illustrative interventions is presented in Appendix A, and the full catalogue, summarizing program background and design features, is available in Excel format.

Figure 16: Proven and promising programs can be found across country income groups…



Source: World Bank.

Figure 17: …and across the full range of labor market programs



Source: World Bank.

Box 1: Selection of employment solutions

The selection of employment solutions into the catalogue was based on four main criteria:

- First, a program had to have been rigorously evaluated using experimental or quasi-experimental methods that compare the outcomes of the recipients of the intervention (treatment group) with an appropriately constructed group that does not receive the intervention (control group). Such evaluations allow causality to be established, and these programs are labelled as "proven" in the catalogue and in Appendix A of this report. A few exceptions to this were made to capture certain types of employment solutions where experimental or quasi-experimental evaluations are not available, and less rigorous evaluations have been performed. In addition, the catalogue also includes several World Bank programs that have not yet undergone impact evaluation but that illustrate important design principles that this report identifies as a source of success. These programs are labelled as "promising" in the catalogue and in Appendix A.

- Second, a program had to have had a positive and statistically significant impact on employment and/or income/consumption. The catalogue therefore contains only successful interventions, not those that have been found to have had little impact. The exception here are those programs that have not yet undergone impact evaluation.

- Third, programs were selected so as to capture the widest possible range of employment solution types and to have the widest possible representation across regions of the world.

- Fourth, we focused on programs in low- and middle-income countries, with a few exceptions for interesting programs and interventions in Chile, Uruguay, and Saudi Arabia.

To help illustrate the points being made in the rest of the report, about the breadth of available evidence or about the design features of programs that are associated with success, a series of boxes contains selected programs from the catalogue. These examples were selected based on relevance to the point being made and to showcase a range of successful programs and approaches across different countries and regions.

Many labor market programs in the catalogue have generated large impacts on employment and income. Impacts exceeding 30 percent on employment and/or income are not uncommon and have been confirmed by rigorous evaluations across a wide range of countries and employment solution types (Table 2).

Many labor market programs also deliver gains that last well beyond the life of the intervention. Not all evaluations track participants over long periods of time, but evidence from a growing number of evaluations shows that positive impacts on employment or earnings can persist over horizons of 3–10 years (Box 2).

Table 2: Many programs have generated large impacts on employment and income

Country	Name of intervention	Type of employment solution	% impact on employment	% impact on income/ consumption
Argentina	Entra21	Training + internship models	79% (formal employment, men)	199% (earnings, men)
Bangladesh	Vocational Training "Plus" Program	Training + internship models	256%	304%
Colombia	Permiso Especial de Permanencia	Reducing regulatory barriers	not statistically significant	22% (labor income), 48% (consumption)
India	Bandhan TUP program	Graduation programs	not measured	105% (self-employment earnings), 29% (consumption)
Liberia	Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women	Microentrepreneurship support	53%	113%
Nepal	Employment Fund	Vocational training (basic)	46%	72%
North Macedonia	Subsidized Employment Program	Wage subsidies	87%	93%
South Africa	Skill certification	Certification (skills recognition)	17%	34%
Uganda	Women's Income Generating Support	Microentrepreneurship support + cash grant	103%	67% (earnings), 29% (non-durable consumption)
Zambia	Supporting Women's Livelihoods	Multi-pronged approaches (integrated programs)	not available	62% (income), 38% (consumption)

Source: Argentina (Alzúa et al. 2016); Bangladesh (Shonchoy et al. 2018); Colombia (Ibáñez, et al. 2025); India (Banerjee et al. 2021); Liberia (Adoho, et al. 2014); Nepal (Chakravarty, et al. 2019); North Macedonia (Armand, et al. 2026); South Africa (Carranza, et al. 2022); Uganda (Blattman et al. 2016); Zambia (Botea, et al. 2023).
Note: % impact is calculated by dividing the impact estimates by the control group means (see Appendix B). TUP - Targeting the Ultra Poor.

Box 2: Program impacts can extend years after the intervention

Persistent impacts are possible in diverse contexts, income levels, and types of labor market programs, including training (Colombia and Uganda), complex 'graduation' programs with asset transfers (India), and simpler cash transfers (Sri Lanka).

Colombia: Jóvenes en Acción (Youth in Action) program

A training and internship program consisting of three months of classroom training (provided by private training institutions) and three months of on-the-job training (unpaid internships by legally registered companies). The program included a small stipend for participants. A substantial part of the payment to the training institutions was conditioned on the student completing the internship, with additional payments if the trainees were hired. The program increased the probability of formal employment by four percentage points over 3–9 years after intervention (Attanasio et al. 2017).

Uganda: Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA) program

Combination of vocational training, which includes skills in specific trades and financial literacy, with life skills training focused on sexual and reproductive health, family planning, and rights. Training was provided by a female mentor for two years in development clubs, which provide a safe space and other opportunities for socialization. The program increased self-employment by 48 percent after two years (Bandiera et al. 2020).

India: Bandhan Targeting the Ultra Poor (TUP) program

A 'graduation' program that offered eligible poor women a choice of various productive asset bundles to instigate occupational change (82 percent chose livestock). They also received weekly visits from Bandhan staff for a period of 18 months which delivered training on generating income from the chosen asset. Subsistence allowance was provided for the first 30–40 weeks to help smooth income during transition and prevent liquidation of assets. The program increased self-employment income by 105 percent and household consumption by 29 percent after seven years with impacts sustained up to year 10 (Banerjee et al. 2021).[4]

Sri Lanka: Transfers of cash or capital to microenterprises

One-time grants equivalent to between US$100 and US$200 were provided to a randomly selected sample of microenterprises. Half the grants were provided as cash, the other half as in-kind purchases of equipment or materials. The intervention increased survival rates of male-owned firms by nine percentage points five years after the transfer (De Mel et al. 2012).

4. See Table 2 and Appendix B.

Value for money can be substantial. Impact size is not the only metric of success. What also matters from a public finance perspective is value for money, that is, the impact per dollar spent or the return on investment in the form of higher employment and earnings.[5] Unfortunately, cost-benefit calculations are not standard in the literature, but several programs have generated very favorable results across different settings and program types and range from relatively cheap interventions, such as the grant and business development services under the Kenya Youth Employment and Opportunities Project (KYEOP - US$387 per beneficiary), to the more expensive, such as the graduation program in Ethiopia (US$1,249 per beneficiary) (Box 3).

Some labor market programs boost not only their direct beneficiaries, but also others in the surrounding community. These 'spillover' effects can include higher demand for local services, more jobs created by expanding microenterprises, or shared knowledge and networks among nonparticipants. Because such impacts are hard to measure, they are often overlooked in program evaluations. Yet they matter for policy design and value-for-money assessments, and several programs have already demonstrated that meaningful positive spillovers are possible (Box 4).

Positive program impacts are also possible in fragile and conflict-affected settings, if design takes into account context-specific challenges. In such environments, labor market programs must contend with insecurity and access constraints, weak or contested institutions, and high levels of displacement and vulnerability among refugees and internally displaced persons. Risks to social cohesion and women's safety are often heightened, and severe data gaps make it harder to design, target, and monitor interventions. Short and volatile funding cycles, together with exposure to macroeconomic and climate shocks, further undermine the consistency and scale of delivery. Yet experience shows that, with careful adaptation, strong local partnerships, and flexible implementation, meaningful progress is possible even in these highly challenging circumstances (Box 5).

2.2 Design and context matter for success

Successful interventions change with context. For youth programs in LMICs, entrepreneurship support and employment services tend to generate larger impacts. By contrast, in HICs, skills training and wage subsidies perform better on average (Puerto et al. 2022). At the same time, impact size alone does not tell the whole story: program costs matter. Low-cost interventions can still deliver excellent value for money, even if their impacts are more modest in absolute terms.

Some design features are also associated with higher impacts. Youth programs that include soft skills training—such as communication, teamwork, and problem solving—alongside certification tend to perform better. Successful programs also often combine several types of support to tackle multiple barriers at once and build partnerships between public agencies and non-public actors, particularly in LMICs (Puerto et al. 2022). RCTs further suggest that individualized mentoring and follow-up for participants, monetary incentives, and a clear focus on a particular sector or type of economic activity are all associated with a higher likelihood of improving earnings or employment outcomes (Yeyati et al. 2025).

Ultimately, program success hinges on how well interventions are tailored to the specific constraints of each labor market. Similar programs have worked very well in one setting but not in another, and small differences in design have sometimes led to large differences in impact (Box 6). Success is never guaranteed, but its chances can be greatly improved by following a few commonsense design principles. The next section discusses these principles in more detail.

5. Cost-benefit analyses typically compare the (public) cost of employment solutions to the (private) returns in the form of higher employment and earnings to program participants. Although the public sector may also gain from such programs in the form of higher tax revenue and there may be spillovers through higher consumption spending to the broader economy, these effects are not typically captured in cost-benefit analyses, though they are measured in some cases (see Box 4).

Box 3: Value for money can be substantial

High returns on investment can be achieved at different levels of program complexity, from short-term training programs (Togo and Colombia) to more extensive and comprehensive packages of interventions (Kenya and Ethiopia).

Togo: Personal initiative training

The program focused on teaching a mindset of self-starting behavior, innovation, identifying and exploiting new opportunities, goal setting, planning and feedback cycles, and overcoming obstacles, targeted at existing enterprise owners. Training involved 36 hours of classroom instruction, followed by four monthly 3-hour visits by a trainer to the business. The training cost was about US$750–760 per invited participant and in the first two years increased monthly profits by roughly US$60 (around 30 percent), so that the cost was recouped in just over a year (Campos et al. 2017). Longer-term follow-up, seven years later, shows that average profit gains persist and even grow to about US$90 per month (around 50 percent), implying a cumulative return of roughly 900 percent on the initial training cost, with larger long-run gains for male than for female entrepreneurs (Campos et al. 2025).

Kenya: Kenya Youth Employment and Opportunities Project (KYEOP)

The project contained a wide range of interventions including grants up to around US$400 to start or grow a micro-business and business development services consisting of classroom, one-on-one, and digital training targeted at entrepreneurial youth. This arm of the project cost US$374 per beneficiary and increased annual earnings per beneficiary by US$387, achieving an Internal Economic Rate of Return (IERR) of 100 percent, recovering costs in 10 months (World Bank 2024a).

Colombia: Jóvenes en Acción (Youth in Action) program

Training and internship program (see Box 2) cost US$812 per beneficiary and increased annual earnings by US$212, achieving an Internal Rate of Return (IRR) of 29.5 percent (Attanasio et al. 2017).

Ethiopia: 'Graduation' program

The program targeted the poorest households and offered a productive asset grant (typically livestock), skills training, weekly coaching from non-governmental organization (NGO) staff for 24 months, and consumption support from an existing food-for-work program. The program cost US$1,249 (US$4,157 in purchasing power parity [PPP] terms) per participant and generated benefits per household of US$10,805 in PPP and present value terms, achieving an IRR of 13.3 percent (Banerjee et al. 2015).

Box 4: Programs can generate positive spillovers to nonparticipants

Program impacts can extend beyond the impact on participants, either because of effects of reforms on the broader market (Mexico and India) or because the benefits from interventions such as money and know-how spill over to other households in the community (Niger).

Mexico: Rapid Business Opening System Reform (*Sistema de Apertura Rápida de Empresas*, SARE)

The reform simplified business registration procedures in low-risk industries, reducing the average number of days to open a business from 31.1 to 1.4, the average number of procedures from 7.9 to 2.7 and the number of office visits from 4.2 to 1. Apart from increasing wage employment in the eligible industries by 2.2 percent, the reform also reduced prices in eligible industries by ~1 percent, benefiting consumers (Bruhn 2011).

India: National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA)

The NREGA entitles every household in rural India to 100 days of work per year at the state-level minimum wage. The Act contains several restrictions on the work that together create a strong incentive to select projects that require mainly unskilled labor. The program increased daily wages of casual laborers by 4.7 percent on average, including for workers in the private sector (Imbert and Papp 2015).

Niger: Entrepreneurship Support Program under the Niger Refugees and Host Communities Support Project (*Projet d'Appui à la Réforme du Climat des Affaires*, PARCA)

The entrepreneurship arm of the program involved a one-time US$200 cash grant (corresponding to more than one-third of the yearly GDP per capita in Niger), life skills training, and a 6-day business training that covered skills for both agricultural and non-agricultural activities. The program increased household income by 17 percent among program participants, and by 15 percent among non-eligible households living in program villages (Fernandez et al. 2024).

Box 5: Programs have been successful even in challenging FCV settings

Fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV) need not preclude success, provided program design and implementation are adapted to these challenges.

Nigeria: Community-based skills training program

A classroom-based vocational training program in conflict-affected northern Nigeria delivered through Community Skills Development Centers (COSDECs) with fully equipped workshops and production facilities. The program increased employment of participants by 35–39 percent, profits by 38 percent and wage income by 54 percent (Crawford et al. 2021).

Afghanistan: Targeting the Ultra Poor (TUP) program

This graduation program provided a comprehensive package consisting of a productive asset (typically cow with calf), monthly cash transfer, biweekly training sessions on livestock rearing and entrepreneurship, health subsidy with hygiene kit, biweekly mentoring visits, veterinary services, and linking households to education, health and financial services where needed. The program increased income of participating ultra-poor households by 32 percent and consumption by 16 percent after five years (Bedoya et al. 2023).

Côte d'Ivoire: Emergency Youth Employment and Skills Development Project (Projet d'Emploi Jeunes et de Développement des Compétences, PEJEDEC)

A government-led program in post-conflict urban areas offered disadvantaged youth (18–24) formal apprenticeships combining on-the-job training with vocational courses and certification, plus a modest stipend. The program increased youth entry into formal apprenticeships by 71 percentage points, with limited crowding out of traditional apprenticeships, so roughly three-quarters of formal slots translated into net new positions. Four years after launch, treated youth earned about 15 percent more and performed more complex, non-routine tasks, mainly in self-employment (Crépon and Premand 2025).

Liberia: Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women Project (EPAG)

The project provided 16–27-year-old urban women with six months of classroom training in business or job skills plus life skills, followed by six months of placement support, coaching and modest stipends. It increased employment by 47 percent and earnings by 80 percent, with larger gains for the business skills track (53 percent and 113 percent, respectively).[6] The program also improved access to money, self-confidence, and reduced anxiety about the future, alongside some gains in household food security and gender norms (Adoho et al. 2014).

6. See Table 2 and Appendix B.

Box 6: Design and context matter for success

To be successful, programs must consider the labor market context, address the needs of the target group, and ensure behaviors are aligned with outcomes. Paying attention to incentives of participants and providers and to the multitude of constraints facing vulnerable groups can make or break a program.

Cash grants in Uganda and Ghana

The Women's Income Generating Support (WINGS) program in Uganda offered grants of US$150 (about US$375 in PPP terms) and five days of business skills training and planning, plus ongoing supervision to help implement the plan to rural poor, war-affected women. An RCT evaluation showed the program increased non-farm self-employment by 103 percent, work hours by 63 percent, earnings by 67 percent and non-durable consumption by 29 percent after 16 months (Blattman et al. 2016).

By contrast, a randomized experiment in Ghana that provided a no-strings-attached cash grant to urban microenterprise owners with no additional support and compared this treatment to the provision of in-kind capital transfer found no statistically significant impact on profits after 9–12 months from the cash transfer (Fafchamps et al. 2014).[7]

The difference in impact can be partly explained by design differences. The Ugandan program was designed to build commitment to the business and prevent leakage to other uses by delivering the cash only after the completion of a business plan, providing supervisor follow-up and fostering savings groups that protected assets. By contrast, in Ghana there were no strings or even guidance attached to the cash transfer and so self-control problems were more severe and much of the grant was often diverted to finance other household needs.

Differences in context also likely mattered. The Ugandan program was implemented in post-conflict villages with thin markets and no access to credit, with significant unmet demand for goods and services that the grant helped microenterprises to meet. By contrast, the Ghana experiment was implemented in a dense urban market with easier access to wholesale suppliers and micro-credit and many similar microenterprises with very small efficient scale. Competition thus quickly eroded any extra profits.

Vocational training in Nepal and Kenya

The Employment Fund (EF) in Nepal finances vocational training and placement services for youth ages 16–35 years, organized under a competitive bidding system. Providers receive an outcome-based payment from the EF that is higher for trainees who are employed. In addition, the EF uses a progressive incentive scheme that rewards providers who train individuals from vulnerable groups. Impact evaluation shows that the program increased likelihood of non-farm employment by 46 percent and income by 72 percent after 1–3 years from training completion (Chakravarty et al. 2019).

7. The impact estimates are obtained from Table 3 in the paper.

On the other hand, a technical and vocational voucher program in Kenya provided out-of-school youth ages 17–28 years vouchers that could be redeemed with a public or private provider of their choice with no performance incentives. Impact evaluation showed no statistically significant impact on employment or earnings within three years of training completion (Hicks et al. 2016).

The design of the two programs differed significantly in their approach to incentives. In Nepal, training centers were only fully paid once graduates passed a skills test and showed evidence of income-generating activity (IGA). Providers therefore screened applicants and worked hard on placement and follow-up. In Kenya training providers faced no penalty if graduates remained jobless.

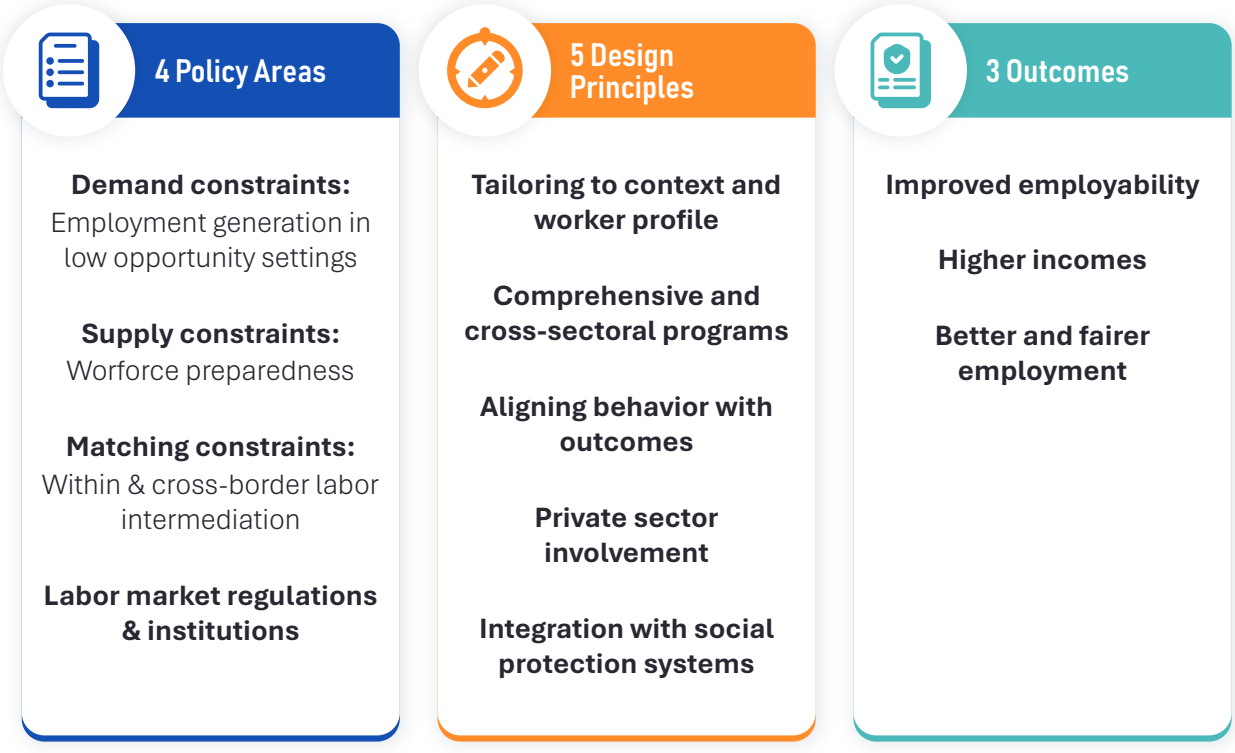
There were also differences in the focus of the training financed. The Nepalese program focused on home-based low-capital trades (for example, tailoring, beautician, small-electronics repair) suitable for self-employment, while the Kenyan trainees gravitated toward capital-intensive skills (for example, motor vehicle, construction). Without complementary interventions to address capital constraints or matching with potential employers, they could not monetize these newly acquired skills.

Concerning context, the two interventions were implemented in very different labor markets. In Nepal, the formal sector is very small, so most young people work in agriculture or home-based microenterprises. The training focused on increasing productivity in the latter. In Kenya, the formal sector employs around 10 percent of the workforce and offers very large wage premiums, which incentivizes youth to search and queue for formal jobs, even when their chances are quite low. The training alone was not sufficient to boost the chances of participants.

3 How to design high-impact labor programs

While deep structural reforms drive long-term productivity, effective employment solutions can improve employment outcomes in the short to medium term. More employment and higher earnings can be supported by measures that boost labor demand, strengthen workers' skills and readiness on the supply side, improve how workers and firms are matched, and ease key regulatory and institutional constraints (Figure 18), in line with the challenges discussed in section 1. To succeed, such interventions should however abide to essential design principles: first, they should be tailored to the local context and to the needs of the specific groups that programs want to support; second, they should be comprehensive enough to tackle multiple, reinforcing constraints to employment; third, they should align the incentives of providers, employers, and participants with the desired outcomes; fourth, they should address employers' needs and be implemented in partnership with the private sector; and fifth, they should be linked to social protection systems to reduce risks and enhance impact among poor and vulnerable households. The rest of the section discusses the policy areas and design principles in more detail.

Figure 18: A framework for designing impactful interventions



Source: World Bank.

3.1 Four policy areas

When private firms are not creating enough jobs, governments can stimulate hiring or step in as an employer of last resort. Policy makers can offer financial incentives to private employers—such as wage subsidies for firms that hire specific categories of vulnerable workers—or extend financing to credit-constrained firms (both formal and informal ones) that have potential to expand and create new jobs. They can also create jobs more directly through public works programs that offer temporary employment on public capital projects, especially in areas where there are few formal employers.

In places with very limited wage employment, entrepreneurship and self-employment support through economic inclusion programs is often the most effective solution to help people at scale. Economic inclusion programs help poor and vulnerable people move into sustainable livelihoods by tackling multiple constraints at once. In low-opportunity settings, this often means helping people start or grow very small businesses. Typical measures include training in business and accounting skills, combined with grants—either in cash or in kind—that provide productive assets to credit-constrained households. Although mainly geared toward self-employment, such programs can sometimes lead to the emergence of successful new businesses that eventually create jobs for others.

On the supply side, workforce preparedness programs aim to boost people's employability and remove barriers that keep them out of work. These interventions often include technical and vocational training, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training. However, workforce preparedness is not just about skills but also about the ability of people to navigate the labor market, write a CV, and present themselves well at job interviews, hence career counselling and work-readiness training are also important. This category also includes programs that tackle specific obstacles that prevent people—especially women, youth, and people with disabilities—from participating in the labor market, for example by improving access to childcare services or addressing restrictive social norms. Income support measures that are explicitly linked to job search or participation in training—such as activation-linked cash transfers—also fall under this category.

Labor intermediation policies help workers and employers find each other more easily, both within countries and across borders. They strengthen the institutions and tools that connect jobseekers and firms, including PES, private placement agencies, and digital platforms. Key measures include providing job-matching services and search support to jobseekers and employers, investing in labor market information systems, and improving the certification of skills so that qualifications more accurately signal worker productivity to potential employers. Labor intermediation across geographic space can take the form of migration or mobility assistance to help workers move or commute to areas with better job opportunities, as well as global skill partnerships that match labor supply and demand across borders.

Labor market regulations and institutions set the 'rules of the game' that shape labor supply, labor demand, and how workers and firms are matched. These rules influence the costs and benefits of employment for workers and of job creation for employers. Some regulations—such as extending social insurance to informal workers—primarily affect labor supply, for example by improving health outcomes. Others—such as easing business registration or reforming excessively burdensome employment protection legislation—aim to stimulate labor demand. And other regulations influence both: unemployment insurance, for instance, influences workers' bargaining power and the quality of the matches they ultimately obtain.

3.2 Five design principles

Getting the mixture of policies right is no easy feat, but adherence to five key design principles can greatly increase the chances of success.

Tailoring to context and worker profile

Local labor markets differ in the types of opportunities they offer, and workers differ in their readiness to access specific employment opportunities and in the constraints they face in finding work. Local labor markets vary widely in the opportunities they provide—how strong labor demand is, the sectoral composition of employment, how many paid formal jobs are available, and what typical wages look like, among other factors. These features can differ sharply even within the same country, for example, between urban and rural areas. At the same time, workers differ in how ready they are for the job market: in their education levels, work experience, and soft skills, as well as in their incomes, access to credit, social networks, and other resources that help them upgrade skills and connect to jobs without government support.

Taken together, these two dimensions—local opportunity and worker readiness—define four broad 'quadrants' that can help policy makers think through which types of interventions are most likely to work in a given setting (Figure 19). Because people and places are so varied, most countries have places and groups that fall into more than one quadrant, and the mix of labor market programs should reflect this diversity in their design. The rest of this subsection discusses the types of programs that can be found in each of the four quadrants of Figure 19. More details on each quadrant, including discussion of the most prevalent types of constraints and lessons learned from successful programs, can be found in Appendix A.

In high-readiness, high-opportunity settings ('Connect'), the focus should be on helping work-ready people connect to existing jobs and signal their skills to employers. The most common type of intervention in this quadrant is job intermediation and labor market information, including services such as job

Figure 19: A 2×2 framework to tailor to local context and workers' profiles

Source: World Bank.

counseling, placement support, job fairs, online job portals, and better data on vacancies and skill needs. These efforts are often combined with measures that recognize and certify existing skills so that employers can more easily assess candidates. Overall, these programs concentrate on people who already have the skills to succeed but are prevented from fully bringing those skills to the market because they lack information, connections, or recognized credentials. Also relevant in this setting are measures to reduce regulatory barriers and ease restrictive social norms that constrain certain groups, particularly women (Box 7).

Programs in the high-readiness, low-opportunity quadrant ('Unlock Talent') span a wide range of measures aimed at boosting local labor demand or substituting it with demand from outside the local area. This reflects the fact that the most common labor market constraints in this quadrant are insufficient demand for skilled labor and spatial mismatch between people's location of residence and the location of job opportunities. Local labor demand can be supported by using wage subsidies, reducing regulatory barriers, and reducing credit constraints facing employers. Workers can also be supported in searching for jobs outside their immediate local area using transport subsidies, or by providing job search support to connect workers to opportunities outside their local area. In addition, international mobility can be supported through Global Skill Partnerships, which are bilateral agreements between two countries where the destination side helps finance and/or provides technology for training in the origin country, so that workers are trained to destination country standards before migrating, while the origin country also gains expanded training capacity (often including training for non-migrants)—aiming to create human capital rather than "drain" it. Finally, entrepreneurship support can also be a viable alternative to boost labor demand and generate jobs (Box 8).

Most programs in the low-readiness, high-opportunities quadrant ('Bridge the Gaps') fall into the workforce preparedness category, though intermediation and wage subsidies for vulnerable groups are also important. Interventions aimed at imparting technical and soft skills to help workers better meet employer demand include technical and vocational education and training (TVET); training combined with internships at employers' premises; dual education models that mix classroom learning with work-based training; and short, targeted courses to fill specific skill gaps. Several programs also provide job intermediation and matching services, which are especially valuable where school certificates do not clearly signal what skills people actually possess and where job search is hampered by weak institutions. To reduce employers' reluctance to hire young people and other disadvantaged groups viewed as 'risky', some interventions in this quadrant also use wage subsidies to make it more attractive for firms to take on these workers (Box 9).

In low-readiness, low-opportunity settings ('Jobs for the Poor'), programs should mainly help people earn a living through self-employment and microenterprise support and offer public works program to offset periods of particularly low labor demand. Supporting self-employment is a natural focus where paid work is scarce. These programs typically combine multiple interventions to address the many constraints people face, including low skills and lack of finance. However, other types of programs have also had some success in this quadrant. Workforce preparedness measures usually center on apprenticeships, the most common training model in this setting, but vocational training and interventions that ease specific barriers such as childcare or access to finance for women have also been successful. To partially offset periods of particularly weak labor demand, public works programs can also offer temporary employment. On the regulatory and institutional side, training systems and employment services should also be strengthened. Some governments have also explored ways to extend social insurance to informal workers to encourage more productive self-employment (Box 10).

Box 7: High-readiness, high-opportunity: Connect to Jobs

Connecting people to good jobs can mean proactively matching low-income graduates to formal employers through co-designed services (Mexico), using standardized skill certification to reduce matching frictions (South Africa), or correcting misperceived social norms that keep well skilled women out of the labor force (Saudi Arabia).

Mexico: Youth Labor Market Inclusion Project

The pilot program supported low-income upper-secondary graduates to enter formal jobs in strategic sectors such as the automotive industry. It combined a school-based labor market literacy workshop (to close information gaps about local vacancies, wage trajectories, and social security), with a time-bound formal employment incentive paid directly to youth who obtain and retain a formal job. The package was tightly tailored to a context where most 17–20-year-olds worked informally and where firms faced high search costs, skills gaps, and turnover in entry-level positions. Design features—targeting final-year students in all school tracks, co-design with employers, careful calibration of the subsidy, and SMS-based follow-up—directly addressed both youth and firm constraints and made formal work a more viable first step (World Bank 2023a).

South Africa: Skill certification

The intervention tackled severe matching frictions facing unemployed and underemployed urban youth, especially jobseekers from marginalized groups with limited post-secondary education and weak networks. Participants completed standardized assessments of cognitive and non-cognitive skills and received personalized branded certificates that credibly signaled their strengths to employers. Youth learned more about their own skill profiles and used this information to target applications where those skills were valued, while firms could screen candidates beyond coarse proxies like schooling or experience. This light-touch, low-cost design fit the context of high youth unemployment and thin formal recruitment channels, directly easing the key constraint of poor information about workers' abilities. The certificates raised participants' employment rates by around 17 percent, increased their earnings by 34 percent within a few months, and improved job quality, showing that better skill signaling can meaningfully ease youth labor market frictions (Carranza et al. 2022).

Saudi Arabia: Correcting misperceived social norms

The intervention targeted young married men who, under guardianship rules, effectively decided whether their wives can work at a time when female labor force participation was below 20 percent, despite rising female education and growing job opportunities. Men were shown credible, survey-based evidence that most similar men supported women working outside the home and were then offered a chance to enroll their wives in a job-matching service; a related experiment informed women about this support when choosing between an at-home and an outside job. This light-touch design directly tackled the binding constraint—misperceived social norms and fear of disapproval, rather than lack of skills or jobs—leading more men to back wives' job search and more women to apply, interview, and choose outside-the-home work (Bursztyn and Yanaizawa-Drott 2018).

Box 8: High readiness, low opportunity: Unlock Talent

Unlocking talent often means expanding or redirecting demand—by using long-term finance and performance-based grants to spur private job creation (Türkiye), backing growth-oriented start-ups with capital, mentoring, and networks (Africa), or opening up new sectors to young women by providing credible information about safer, higher-return jobs (India)—so that skilled workers have real opportunities to put their capabilities to work.

Türkiye: Formal Employment Creation

The project channels long-term loans and performance-based grants through the Development and Investment Bank of Türkiye and partner banks to large enterprises and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with a proven capacity to generate formal jobs in provinces hosting high concentrations of Syrians under Temporary Protection. By easing firms' access to medium- and long-term finance in these lagging regions (where unemployment, informality, and credit constraints are particularly severe), the intervention directly tackles binding demand-side constraints. The mix of loans, job-creation-conditional grants, and technical support to firms embodies a comprehensive, private-sector-led approach to job creation (World Bank 2020a).

Africa: TEF Entrepreneurship Program

The program targets early-stage and aspiring entrepreneurs across Africa who have ideas and basic education but face tight constraints in finance, business capabilities, and networks. Its core design—a competitive selection process, structured online training focused on core business skills, intensive mentoring, a US$5,000 seed capital grant, and continued access to pan-African networks—tackles Africa's chronic constraints of limited credit, weak managerial skills, and shallow entrepreneurial ecosystems. Impact findings that beneficiaries grow faster, attract more investors, and create more jobs than comparable non-beneficiaries suggest that this integrated package is well tailored to the realities of budding African entrepreneurs (ORB International 2022).

India: Information provision about BPO sector

The intervention brought Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) recruiters to villages 50–150 km away from Delhi, where local employment options for young women were scarce even as new call center jobs were opening in the city. Recruiters held women-only meetings to explain wages, hours, and safety conditions, and then provided several years of placement support, lowering information and search costs while addressing safety and reputational concerns of parents and young women. The program directly connected educated but underemployed young women to real vacancies, addressing binding constraints in information, networks, and social norms. This design proved well suited to their needs, raising female employment, schooling, and aspirations (Jensen 2012).

Box 9: Low readiness, high opportunities: Bridge the Gaps

Bridging the gap to good jobs means tackling skills and signaling deficits in different ways—by offering short, employer-driven training that build occupation-specific technical and soft skills (India); by running longer, full-time courses that blend remedial basic education, vocational content, and life skills (Brazil); or by using temporary wage subsidies to create on-the-job learning opportunities and experience (North Macedonia).

India: Generation programs

The programs offer short, intensive courses that prepare educated 18–27-year-olds for entry-level jobs in retail sales, call centers, and junior technology roles in growing urban service sectors. Applicants are screened for basic skills and motivation, then receive several weeks of occupation-specific technical training plus structured soft skills and professional behavior modules, followed by job placement support and 3 months of mentoring designed with employer input for hard-to-fill vacancies. This bundle fits a context where jobs exist but many low-income youth face skills mismatch, weak signals, and limited networks rather than outright lack of openings, and it delivers higher employment, earnings, and job relevance than comparable public training schemes— evidence that the model is well aligned with their constraints and aspirations (Borkum et al. 2023).

Brazil: Galpao Aplauso program in Rio de Janeiro

The program targeted disadvantaged favela youth facing high unemployment, informality, and violence, even as jobs were growing in manufacturing and construction. It offered a 6-month, full-time course that combined remedial math and Portuguese, vocational training aligned with local demand, intensive life skills modules, and strong job placement support, using theatre and expressive arts as the core teaching method to build discipline, teamwork, and self-confidence. This bundle matched a group whose main barriers were weak basic and socioemotional skills, poor-quality schooling, and lack of credible signals to employers. By upgrading both hard and soft skills and directly establishing links to firms, the program relaxed these constraints and produced sizable medium-term gains in youth employment and earnings (Calero et al. 2017).

North Macedonia: Subsidized Employment Program

The program targeted registered unemployed people who either received Social Financial Assistance or were from vulnerable groups, in a labor market with very low employment rates. It offered employers a 6-month wage subsidy plus a training subsidy when they hired eligible jobseekers and committed to keeping them for at least a year, with jobseekers and vacancies matched by the PES. This design tackled key constraints: firms' uncertainty about the productivity and training costs of disadvantaged workers and jobseekers' lack of recent experience and credible signals. By linking a temporary subsidy with vacancies and on-the-job learning, the program raised employment by 87 percent and earnings by 93 percent (Armand et al. 2026).[8]

8. See Table 2 and Appendix B.

Box 10: Low-readiness, low-opportunity: Jobs for the Poor

In low-readiness, low-opportunity settings, jobs programs for the poorest can take very different forms—combining safety nets with skills and productive grants (Nicaragua), easing liquidity and risk constraints to migration (Bangladesh), or pairing short-term public works with savings incentives and training to smooth shocks and build assets (Democratic Republic of Congo).

Nicaragua: Atención a Crisis

The program targeted extremely poor, drought-exposed agricultural households with a one-year conditional cash transfer (CCT) and, for some, either vocational training or a productive grant linked to a simple business plan. The design responded to the scarcity of formal jobs, high exposure to shocks, and binding constraints in skills and capital. The CCT provided basic protection and encouraged school and health service use, while the training and grants relaxed human capital and liquidity constraints so households could move into non-farm wage work or small self-employment. The program integrated social protection, skills, and entrepreneurship support, and evidence shows that both the training and grant arms helped beneficiaries diversify income and better cope with later drought shocks (Macours et al. 2022).

Bangladesh: Migration incentives

The intervention offered very poor, largely landless households in rural northwestern Bangladesh—where the pre-harvest 'monga' lean season brings sharp drops in local farm work and recurrent hunger—a small incentive (about the cost of a round-trip bus ticket) as cash or an interest-free loan, conditional on a family member migrating temporarily to a nearby town for work. The intervention was well tailored to its target group: for ultra-poor workers with basic skills but no savings, the real barrier was liquidity and risk around migration, so a small, time-bound subsidy directly granted access to urban casual work. This simple nudge increased seasonal migration, raised lean season consumption at home, and led many households to keep migrating even after incentives ended (Bryan et al. 2014).

Democratic Republic of Congo: Eastern Congo Workfare Program

The program offered short-term jobs to poor residents of five cities, paying the minimum wage for about 90 days to work on road rehabilitation, street cleaning, and similar tasks. To move beyond temporary relief, a random subset also received an incentivized savings scheme—with matched deposits into restricted accounts—and market-oriented vocational or business training delivered by local NGOs after the works ended. This package was well suited to urban youth, women, and displaced people, who face high unemployment, informality, liquidity constraints, and little access to training. By combining immediate income support with opportunities to build savings and acquire locally demanded skills, the program functioned as a 'productive safety net', tailored to a fragile, low-opportunity urban labor market where both protection and pathways to better livelihoods are needed (Brandily et al. 2025).

Programs work better when they are comprehensive and cross-sectoral

When people face multiple and different constraints to employment, one-size-fits-all interventions are unlikely to succeed. Often, workers are not constrained by a single problem, but by several that cluster together—skills gaps, weak labor demand, poor infrastructure, mobility barriers, liquidity constraints, and information and signaling frictions. In such settings, tackling only one constraint in isolation is rarely enough. Moreover, people in need of employment support are often highly diverse in terms of age, gender, education, income, care responsibilities, location, and work experience. These twin forms of complexity—multiple overlapping constraints and heterogeneous beneficiaries—mean that effective programs need to be comprehensive and cross-sectoral, with support packages and delivery models that can be adapted to different people and places rather than relying on a single, standardized design.

When there are multiple constraints that are mutually reinforcing, integrated packages of support tend to deliver larger and more durable gains than single interventions. Pairing training with job search and matching, for example, tackles skills and information gaps simultaneously; coupling entrepreneurship support with finance and coaching relieves capital and managerial bottlenecks; layering transport, childcare, or care-sensitive design over core services raises participation and persistence. Overall, comprehensive programs that intentionally combine complementary levers (skills, intermediation, opportunity support, and enabling services) deliver larger employment and earnings gains than isolated instruments.

Differences in target groups also call for flexible program design that tailors support to each person and the specific opportunities available in the local labor market. Effective designs adapt the mix of services to context (for example, scarce wage jobs versus expanding sectors; rural versus urban markets) and to profiles (for example, skill baselines, care responsibilities, mobility constraints), using profiling and case management to match individuals to appropriate interventions. Scaling this approach requires delivery systems (intake and outreach, profiling tools, referral protocols, and coordinated provider networks) so that each subgroup receives the right bundle at the right time. The result is a portfolio of segmented but coordinated offers rather than a single program: for some, work-based learning plus placement; for others, value-chain–linked self-employment packages; for still others, hiring incentives with on-the-job upskilling, each calibrated to the person and the place. Box 11 discusses various successful programs that provide comprehensive support, design to tackle a variety of constraints, in a targeted manner to beneficiaries.

Aligning behavior with outcomes improves labor market impacts

Aligning incentives of service providers, employers, and workers is essential for impact. Incentives go beyond simple wage subsidies or bonuses: they include how contracts are written, what gets measured and rewarded, how risks are shared, and which services are easy or hard to access. Evidence from activation components embedded in cash transfer schemes, public works, skills programs, and entrepreneurship support all point to the same lesson: without explicit alignment between desired outcomes and what each actor is rewarded for, even well-resourced programs can deliver weak employment gains, focus on the easiest-to-serve clients, or underinvest in quality.

For service providers (PES, NGOs, private training institutes, and intermediaries) the main levers to align behaviors are performance-based contracts and information. Pay-for-results models that remunerate providers when participants are placed into formal jobs and again when they are retained after several months have been shown to increase formal employment even in very adverse labor market conditions. To encourage inclusion, payments should be higher for placing harder-to-serve groups, accompanied by strong verification and monitoring systems.

Box 11: Comprehensive and cross-sectoral programs offer greater impacts

A comprehensive and cross-sectoral approach can be achieved by coordinating a multi-component package across ministries and employers around a single youth cohort (Kenya's KYEOP), by segmenting heterogeneous beneficiaries into tailored tracks that combine skills, finance, and counseling (Bangladesh's RAISE), or by deploying a standardized multisector 'graduation' bundle that relaxes several constraints at once across diverse settings (six-country Graduation programs).

Kenya: Youth Employment and Opportunities Project (KYEOP)

The program tackled multiple, interlocking constraints with a coordinated package delivered across government and in partnership with employers. It provided training plus work experience through internships/apprenticeships to reduce skills and experience gaps and offered start-up grants and multipronged business development services to spur self-employment and entrepreneurship. It also improved labor market functioning via a national labor market information system and youth policy support. These interventions were implemented jointly by ministries and agencies such as the Youth Affairs Ministry, the National Industrial Training Authority, and the Micro and Small Enterprises Authority (World Bank 2024a).

Bangladesh: Recovery and Advancement of Informal Sector Employment (RAISE)

The RAISE project runs two interlinked tracks—an economic inclusion program for low-income urban workers and microentrepreneurs, and a reintegration program for returning migrants. The binding constraints for the first group are skills gaps, weak job matching for informal trades, and liquidity constraints, so the program pairs experiential learning (informal apprenticeships) to build marketable skills and signals, with business training to strengthen management practices, and targeted microfinance to relax capital constraints for self-employment. By profiling and counseling, applicants are directed into one of four tailored packages, depending on whether they need skills, finance, or both. For returning migrants, the constraint set is different—debt burdens, psychosocial stress, and the need to either re-enter domestic jobs or prepare to re-migrate—so the program centers on case management and counseling, modest cash support to stabilize incomes, and referrals to existing government services by an integrated Labor Market Information System (LMIS); this keeps unit costs efficient while aligning services to each returnee's pathway (reintegration versus remigration) (World Bank 2021a).

Six countries: Graduation programs

Across Ethiopia, Ghana, Honduras, India, Pakistan, and Peru, the Graduation model used a common, codified package that deliberately spans sectors to relax multiple, mutually reinforcing constraints at once. Every site layered six complementary levers—(1) a productive asset; (2) short-term consumption support; (3) technical skills for the chosen livelihood; (4) regular coaching/home visits; (5) savings access or nudges; and (6) basic health/life-skills services—so capital, income smoothing, know-how, behavior change, financial inclusion, and health risks were addressed together rather than piecemeal. The specific asset options were chosen after country-level market analysis to fit local opportunity structures. Most sites also connected participants to health systems or insurance, reinforcing the cross-sector links. The results show broad gains in income, consumption, and assets across the distribution, consistent with a model designed to be comprehensive yet replicable across contexts (Banerjee et al. 2015).

Performance-based conditions and results-based financing in government-wide employment operations can further align ministries and PESs around better targeting, modernized case management, and more effective employment solutions, rather than simply counting enrollments. Non-financial incentives—transparent scorecards, public recognition, and technical support tied to results—also matter, especially where providers' financial autonomy is limited (Box 12).

Employers respond to a different set of incentives, with subsidies being one element of the toolbox. Co-financed training and apprenticeship schemes that reward firms when trainees demonstrate higher skills or successfully transition into self-employment can raise training quality and lead to sustained earnings gains, even when the bonus amounts are modest relative to firm profits. Training funds and matching grant schemes that reimburse part of the cost of structured internships, on-the-job training, or upskilling of existing workers have been used to encourage firms to invest in transferable skills rather than relying on unpaid or low-paid informal apprenticeships. Access to credit or de-risked finance can also be conditional on verifiable net job creation, formalization, or the hiring of priority groups (for example, women or youth), effectively turning concessional finance into an incentive for better jobs. Finally, regulatory and recognition-based incentives—such as reduced compliance burdens, priority access to public procurement, or public labeling for firms that provide decent work, training, and fami-

Box 12: Performance-based contracts help align service providers' and programs' objectives

Performance contracts and financial incentives can be used to incentivize both public and private service providers to align their behavior with program outputs. More examples of such incentives in relation to private providers can be found in Box 15, which discusses private sector involvement in labor market programs.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Employment Support Project

The project helps unemployed people, especially youth, long-term unemployed and low-skilled workers, move into regular private sector jobs by funding wage subsidies, on-the-job training, self-employment support, and stronger employment services. To align practices with these goals, most project funds are paid out only when public employment offices and ministries reach clear targets, such as placing specific groups into jobs, improving the design of their programs, using online job portal data for monitoring, and raising the share of vacancies that are filled through their matching services. The project also links support to regular evaluations and feedback from jobseekers and employers, so providers are rewarded for learning from results and adjusting programs to what works best (World Bank 2022a).

Ghana: Incentive experiment within the National Apprenticeship Program

The experiment tests whether financial rewards to small business owners who train apprentices can improve the quality of informal apprenticeship training and apprentices' later earnings. To align trainers' behavior with this goal, some received a bonus that depended on how well their apprentices scored on an independent skills test compared with other apprentices, while others received a fixed payment simply for taking part. Because the bonus rose with apprentices' test performance, it encouraged trainers to focus more on genuine skill transfer and regular practice rather than treating apprentices mainly as a source of cheap labor (Brown et al. 2024).

ly-friendly conditions—can nudge employers toward more inclusive and higher-quality employment practices (Box 13).

Program participants can also face economic, social, and behavioral barriers to enrolling and staying engaged. Well-designed incentives can offset direct costs (transport, childcare, foregone earnings), reduce risk, and support sustained effort. Cash stipends or temporary income support linked to attendance and completion make it feasible for low-income groups to participate, while complementary savings incentives and financial inclusion measures help them transform short-term program income into longer-term investment in self-employment or job search. Non-financial levers—certification, mentoring, psychosocial support, and behavioral nudges such as plan-making and reminders—have been shown to

Box 13: Employers' objectives can be aligned using financial and non-financial incentives

Incentives can be applied in different ways to bring employer behavior in line with policy goals—from time-bound wage subsidies tied to retention and no-layoff conditions (North Macedonia), to reputational and regulatory incentives (South Africa), to competitive, co-financed grants that fund training and productivity upgrades (Ghana).

North Macedonia: Subsidized Employment Program

The program helped employers hire people who had been out of work for a long time by offering temporary wage support for new hires matched to vacancies through the public employment agency. Employers received a monthly payment that covered most of the wage and an extra allowance for training costs during the first 6 months, but in return had to keep the worker for at least another 6 months without support. They were not allowed to cut overall staff while using the program and, if they dismissed a subsidized worker early, had to hire another eligible worker or repay the money (Armand et al. 2026).

South Africa: Youth Employment Service (YES)

YES is a business-led, non-profit initiative that gives unemployed young people a year of work experience while helping firms improve their standing on the national black economic empowerment scorecard. Companies that create enough one-year jobs for eligible youth can move up one or two scorecard levels, which makes them more competitive for contracts, investors, and customers. Firms can host youth themselves or sponsor placements with vetted partners, while the program handles recruitment and payroll, lowering risk and administration. The year also works as a long trial period so employers can keep their best recruits, turning compliance spending into a pipeline of proven talent (World Bank 2022b; YES 2021).

Ghana: Jobs and Skills Project

The project invests in apprenticeships, entrepreneurship support, and upgrades in small and medium firms to help people move into better jobs and to raise workplace productivity. Employers are encouraged to act in line with these goals through competitive grants: firms only receive funds if they submit strong plans to train workers and improve business practices, and they must contribute their own resources and spend the grant on approved training and technology. Applications are scored more highly when firms show potential to create jobs, especially for women and people with disabilities, and they must report on employment, working conditions, and progress over time (World Bank 2020b).

increase job search intensity, soft skills, and confidence at relatively low cost. Gender-sensitive design is particularly important: safe and accessible training locations, provision for childcare and transport, flexible schedules, and women-only spaces or cohorts have all helped raise female enrollment and completion, especially among adolescents and young women. At the same time, strict conditionalities or sanctions can unintentionally exclude those with care responsibilities, disabilities, or unstable living conditions; aligning participant incentives with outcomes therefore means lowering unnecessary access barriers while

Box 14: Participants' engagement can be improved through monetary and non-monetary incentives

Participant engagement and sustained effort can be strengthened in many ways—by asking trainees to put 'skin in the game' through a refundable deposit and completion bonus (India), by using simple action planning tools, reminders, and social accountability (South Africa), or by combining stipends, childcare, coaching, and staged start-up grants that directly reward persistence along longer program pathways (Benin).

India: Social Awakening Through Youth Action program

The program in India offered a 6-month subsidized course in stitching and tailoring to young women from low-income households, aiming to build skills and raise their chances of paid work or self-employment. To keep women engaged, the organizers limited classes to about 2 hours a day and promised a certificate on completion. Participants also had to pay a small monthly deposit that was fully returned, with a little extra, only if they stayed until the end. This worked like a small savings scheme that you lose if you leave early, giving women a strong reason not to drop out and to complete the course (Maitra and Mani 2017).

South Africa: Behavioral nudge experiment

The study worked with unemployed young people who attended a short career workshop and tested whether adding a simple planning exercise could improve their job search and employment chances. Participants were guided to write a detailed weekly job search plan that specified what actions they would take, on which days, and through which channels. This 'if-then' planning was sometimes combined with text reminders or naming a friend who would be told about their goals. These tools were designed to nudge participants to follow through on their intentions, apply for more jobs, and use more formal search channels, bringing their behavior closer to the program's employment goals (Abel et al. 2019).

Benin: Youth Inclusion Project

The Benin Youth Inclusion Project helps undereducated and underemployed young people in high-risk areas build skills, find work, or start small businesses. It offers free life skills, technical, and entrepreneurship training, coaching, and internships, including residential training or internships with housing and transport stipends so rural youth can participate even when opportunities are far from home. The design is gender-sensitive: young women from very poor households and violence-prone areas receive dedicated support, community childcare spaces look after their children during classes, and cash transfers help them cover basic costs while they train or apprentice. Youth who complete the package and prepare a business plan can obtain start-up grants paid into bank or mobile accounts, directly rewarding sustained effort and take-up of livelihoods opportunities (World Bank 2020c).

keeping a clear focus on learning, job search, and work (Box 14).

Private sector involvement helps with aligning design and market needs

Employment solutions are most effective when they harness the private sector not only as an engine of job creation but also as a partner in policy, skills development, and service delivery. Beyond hiring workers, firms help ensure that programs reflect real labor market needs and that people acquire capabilities valued by employers. And when wage jobs are limited, as is the case in many LMICs, supporting private initiative through self-employment and microenterprise becomes a critical pathway to productive work.

Employers should have a seat at the table when setting priorities and designing skills and employment policies. Their input can align curricula and short courses with market demand, provide trainers with current industry know-how, and expand practical learning via apprenticeships, internships, and other work-based modalities. Private sector engagement is likewise essential for calibrating regulations on hiring, separations, compensation, and bene-

Box 15: Private sector involvement can take many forms

The private sector can be involved in the design of employment solutions using employer surveys and consultations (Mexico), by embedding firms in sector skills councils (Cambodia), or by co-delivering training and internships with feedback loops that refine content over time (Rwanda).

Mexico Youth Labor Market Inclusion Project

The project discussed in Box 7 that combines job search assistance workshop and a wage subsidy targeting low-income youth was designed after consultation with stakeholders including local business groups using qualitative techniques such as focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Topics included recruitment strategies, skills required, preferences in certification and training, turnover of youth employees, salaries and salary growth, benefits, perceptions of the dual education system, among others (World Bank 2023a).

Cambodia: Skills for Better Jobs Project

A project aiming to strengthen the country's TVET system included the strengthening of Sector Skill Councils in priority sectors and the establishment of Industry-School Committees at selected training institutions to increase the industry's voice in training design and delivery. Result-based financing was provided to motivate these institutions and their industry partners to create and implement multiyear Industry Linkage Development Plans to respond to industry needs (World Bank 2024c).

Rwanda: Akazi Kanoze Program

A program combining training with internships/apprenticeships was designed based on a comprehensive needs assessment with the private sector to identify the skills demanded by the market. A series of consultative workshops with private sector companies, education experts, government officials, and other stakeholders were used to localize curriculum design. Employer satisfaction surveys were used to identify gaps and improve the training package over time (Alcid 2014).

fits so that they encourage formal job creation while protecting workers. Firms also have strong incentives to co-finance specialized or sector-specific training that builds the future workforce they need (Box 15).

Businesses and private providers can also complement public institutions in service delivery. They can provide intermediation, placement, and matching services, run training centers that expand the menu and reach of quality programs, and operate under performance-based contracts in hard-to-serve locations or for groups requiring tailored approaches. With greater operational flexibility, private actors can pilot new delivery models and technologies, helping to innovate and scale what works while coordinating with PES; however, the public financing of private provision of selected labor market services requires attention to incentives and capacity of providers (Box 16).

Where wage employment is thin, employment solutions should also support more productive self-employment and small-scale entrepreneurship. Typical constraints include limited finance and collateral, weak networks, and gaps in managerial and technical skills. Economic inclusion and enterprise promotion programs combining seed grants or microcredit

Box 16: Aligning behaviors of private service providers with policy makers' objectives

When financing private sector providers, incentive mechanisms can be incorporated into contracts to better align the behavior of private providers (both formal and informal) with the objectives of policy makers.

Peru: PROJOVEN youth training program

PROJOVEN was a vocational program combining classroom and on-the-job training (OJT). The classroom component was provided by public and private training institutions that competed in public calls to obtain funding. The program required letters of intent from private firms to host the OJT phase, with a significant part of the payment to the training institutions contingent on completion of OJT. The participating firms did not obtain funding from the program, so placements were driven by genuine employer demand (Díaz and Jaramillo 2006).

Colombia: Empléate program

The government contracted external service providers (including private firms, NGOs, and regional employment/training agencies) to deliver job intermediation and placement services to poor and vulnerable individuals. The providers operated under pay-for-performance contracts where payment was conditional on the successful placement of participants into formal employment with premia for remaining in the job for 3 and 5 months and for the placement of vulnerable groups (Gómez and González-Velosa 2023).

Senegal: Informal apprenticeships

The program aimed at strengthening Senegal's informal apprenticeship system. Informal apprenticeships rely on private provision by design, and the program demonstrated that they can be made more effective by establishing an institutional framework for certification, by providing technical and pedagogical training to master craftsperson, and by providing grants to upgrade technology as a means to improving learning conditions in the workshops (World Bank 2025b).

Box 17: Self-employed and small entrepreneurs can be supported in many ways

When wage employment is absent, there are many ways to support the self-employed and small-scale entrepreneurs. Examples range from a complex 'graduation' program in Bangladesh, through a slightly pared down 'cash + support' package in Senegal, to a short 'training-only' program in Kenya.

Bangladesh: BRAC's Targeting the Ultra Poor program

Eligible ultra-poor women in rural Bangladesh are offered a choice from a menu of livestock bundles worth around US$560 in PPP terms and complementary support worth about the same amount. The support consists of initial classroom training followed by regular assistance through home visits by a livestock specialist every 1–2 months for the first year after transfer, and by BRAC's program officers on a weekly basis for 2 years after transfer. Beneficiaries also receive a subsistence allowance for the first 40 weeks to help smooth any short-run earnings fluctuation due to adjustments across work activities. The program also provides health support and training on legal, social, and political rights and sets up village committees to provide additional support. Participants are encouraged to save with BRAC and are offered BRAC microfinance upon graduation. The program increased earnings of participants by 21 percent after 4 years compared to the control group, with effects persisting 7 years after transfer (Bandiera et al. 2017).

Senegal: Yokk Koom Koom program

A microentrepreneurship promotion initiative layered on top of the National Safety Net Program (NSNP) that provides regular cash transfers. The program consists of (1) 3.5 days of microentrepreneurship training on creating and managing income-generating activities (IGAs) and presentation of opportunities in the local area; (2) formation of credit and savings groups with weekly group meetings; (3) group coaching after the weekly meetings and individual coaching on demand; (4) productive grant; (5) 2.5 days of life skills training; (6) community awareness (project presentation video followed by debate). The program increased income from the IGAs by 22 percent after 18 months with impact sustained after 36 months (Bossuroy et al. 2025).

Kenya: Agency-Based Empowerment Training

The program consisted of a 4-day workshop emphasizing self-reflection, goal setting, and internal locus of control, rather than technical or business skills. Participants also received a half-day training course on selling improved cookstoves (ICS) that was to be the core of their business. Training was followed by 8 months of follow-up to help the entrepreneurs build their ICS business. Compared to a control group that received standard entrepreneurial training of equivalent duration, participants of the empowerment training more than doubled their sales, were significantly more likely to demonstrate business commitment over time, and nearly three times more likely to be higher sellers. Women outsold men by a margin of nearly 3 to 1 and were more likely to continue to pursue leads despite limited sales (Shankar et al. 2015).

with coaching, business services, and market links can raise earnings and resilience. Complementary policies that strengthen value chains, extend quality advisory services (for example, agricultural extension), and improve local infrastructure, especially in rural areas, further expand market access for micro- and small enterprises (Box 17).

Integration with social protection systems boosts impact for the most vulnerable

Social protection and labor market policies are most effective when designed as complements rather than substitutes. Policy debates often assume that providing income support would weaken work incentives and reduce labor supply. However, a large body of evidence shows that well-designed cash transfers do not meaningfully discourage employment or participation. The binding constraints to work tend to be limited human capital, liquidity constraints, risk exposure, and limited opportunities—not necessarily a lack of willingness to engage in the labor market.

The question is not whether to provide income support, but how to design and connect social protection systems with labor markets to promote better employment, higher productivity, and upward mobility for the most vulnerable. When well-integrated, social protection and employment solutions can form an 'opportunity ladder', with social protection providing the lower rungs and ALMPs providing the upper ones. To move beyond subsistence and onto the higher rungs of paid employment or entrepreneurship, people need a minimum level of resources that allows them to exit a survival mindset, free up mental bandwidth, and engage seriously with programs that require time and effort today in exchange for better jobs and earnings tomorrow. This is the role of social protection.

An important dimension of seamless support is integration—ensuring that social protection and labor market programs operate as a coordinated whole rather than as parallel tracks. Integration increases effectiveness and cost-efficiency, yet in many LMICs social protection and employment systems still function separately and coordinating across government ministries is limited, limiting their combined impact. Integration spans three interconnected dimensions. First, delivery integration involves shared social registries, common unique IDs, interoperable management information systems (MISs), case management tools, and payment systems that enable referrals and bundled services. Second, programmatic bridges connect safety nets to profiling, employment services, training, or entrepreneurship pathways through individualized case management, with complementary support such as childcare or transport where needed. Third, governance and learning integration aligns institutions through joint steering arrangements, shared results dashboards, cross-agency protocols, and feedback loops that refine eligibility rules, program design, and incentive structures.

A second dimension concerns how tax and benefit structures shape worker participation, productivity and upward mobility, a consideration particularly salient in middle and higher-income settings. Designing income support to preserve incentives aligned with efficient labor market functioning—through a design that disregards a part of income generated from work earnings, in-work benefits, and smoother tapering of transfers—helps ensure that taking up work, increasing hours, or moving into better-paid jobs is rewarded rather than penalized. For instance, as social protection systems become more generous and complex, abrupt benefit withdrawal can discourage formal employment and weaken the effectiveness of labor market activation measures if not carefully calibrated. Linking eligibility to participation in employment services can reinforce activation, provided practical barriers such as childcare, transport, or health limitations are addressed. Incentive-compatible benefit design must become integral to building systems that facilitate labor market inclusion and sustain productivity gains (Box 18).

Box 18: Self-employed and small entrepreneurs can be supported in many ways

A tighter link between ALMPs and social protection systems can take many forms, including shared 'plumbing' and data (Bangladesh), cash-plus layering that adds coaching and business support onto transfers (Niger), and an activation bridge that routes transfer recipients into services with light conditionality (Argentina).

Bangladesh: Recovery and Advancement of Informal Sector Employment (RAISE)

RAISE supports low-income urban workers and returning migrants with a twin track of economic inclusion and reintegration, built on one digital and case management backbone (see Box 10). Integration with the social protection system shows up in the 'plumbing' and the user journey. A case management MIS registers applicants, tracks services, embeds a grievance redress module, and is interoperable with other government registries so beneficiaries can be referred across programs without re-enrolling. The program sets up formal data sharing so agencies can exchange beneficiary information, runs a single reintegration information system that connects to existing migration databases, and links it to an online one-stop portal where returnees can access both welfare and employment services. Payment rails are leveraged for stipends and one-time transfers that offset transport, childcare, and other participation costs to increase take-up. Together, these links let RAISE use social protection systems to find and support vulnerable people, route them into tailored ALMP services (apprenticeships, business training, finance), and feed outcomes back into the shared information system for oversight and learning (World Bank 2021a).

Niger: 'Cash-plus' program tackling capital and psychological constraints

In Niger a government-led program deliberately layered labor market interventions onto the national cash transfer program. Beneficiaries were women already targeted by the safety net, who were then offered ALMP-style services: group savings, coaching, microentrepreneurship training, and market access facilitation, with variants that added a productive cash grant and/or psychosocial support (life skills plus community norm sessions). This design used the social protection platform for targeting and delivery (the existing registry and payment infrastructure), while ALMP components provided the activation bridge from income support into income generation. It was run through the government's safety net agency (Cellule Filets Sociaux) under the Sahel Adaptive Social Protection program and was built to be low-cost and scalable through government systems—a practical example of social protection 'plumbing' enabling integrated jobs interventions (Bossuroy et al. 2022).

Argentina: Seguro de Capacitación y Empleo (SCE) activation program

The SCE was explicitly designed as an activation 'bridge' for beneficiaries of the Plan Jefes CCT in response to improving economic circumstances. Eligible Plan Jefes participants were routed into SCE, where they could access education completion support, vocational training and apprenticeships, PES intermediation, wage subsidies, and self-employment/microbusiness promotion—a comprehensive ALMP menu embedded in the social protection program. Unlike Plan Jefes, SCE cash transfers were conditional on 'activation'

duties (registering with the PES, regularly attending to develop a career plan, taking part in training/orientation/apprenticeships, and accepting suitable job offers) and continued to be provided for a limited period even after the beneficiary found a job, which increased the attractiveness of formal employment. SCE used the CCT platform for targeting and referral, positioned SCE as a scalable exit pathway from non-contributory assistance, and, by shifting people toward formal jobs, aimed to lower reliance on transfers over time (Mourelo and Escudero 2017).

4 Conclusions: designing employment solutions for impact at scale

Good design is essential for impact at scale. Constraints differ across places and groups, and similar instruments can perform very differently depending on context and design. At the same time, well-designed programs can deliver sizable and often persistent gains in employment and earnings. The most successful interventions are those that are carefully tailored to local opportunity structures and worker profiles, combine multiple components to tackle several constraints at once, engage the private sector, and make deliberate use of social protection systems as a platform for inclusion and activation.

But, practically, how to design effective programs? The following step-by-step guide distills the key lessons from the guidebook into a practical sequence that can be applied when designing or reforming labor market programs (see Figure 20 and also Figure O.1):

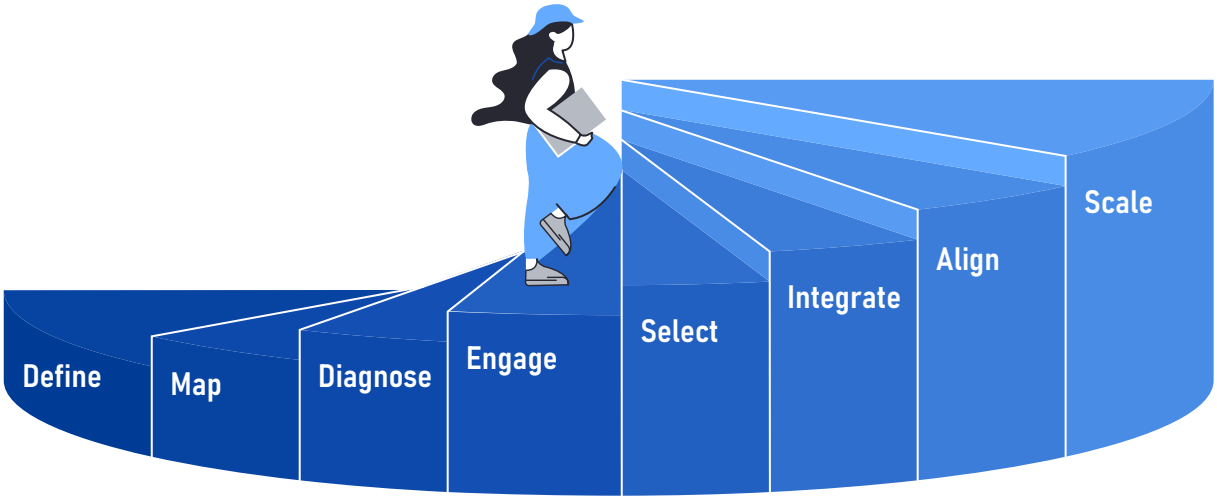
Step 1 – Clarify the problem, objectives, and target group.

One should begin by defining precisely who the beneficiaries are, what 'success' means, and over what time horizon. This involves translating broad concerns about unemployment, informality, or low earnings into concrete objectives for specific groups, disaggregated by age, gender, location, and vulnerability.

Step 2 – Locate the target group in the opportunity–readiness quadrants.

Using the framework in section 3, each main target group should be placed in one of the four quadrants based on the strength of local labor market opportunities and the job readiness of the target group. This requires basic analysis of labor demand, the structure of employment, and workers' skills, resources, and constraints.

Figure 20: From diagnosis to scaled employment solutions



Source: World Bank.

Step 3 – Diagnose binding constraints across demand, supply, matching, and regulations.

Building on the quadrant assessment, policy makers should systematically identify which constraints limit better jobs for the target group, drawing on data, diagnostics, and qualitative work. This implies distinguishing symptoms from causes and organizing constraints into those affecting labor demand, worker readiness, job matching, and the regulatory or institutional environment.

Step 4 – Engage employers and stakeholders to refine the diagnosis.

Programs are more effective when they are shaped together by policy makers, beneficiaries, and employers. Policy makers should therefore validate and deepen their diagnosis through structured dialogue with employers, employer associations, unions, local governments, service providers, and relevant civil society organizations. These exchanges can help uncover practical hiring bottlenecks, reveal how existing services and regulations are perceived, and build the partnerships needed for later implementation.

Step 5 – Consult the evidence – including from the curated catalogue offered in the report – to identify appropriate interventions.

Once the problem and constraints are clear, policy makers should use the evidence to identify proven interventions for a given context. The aim at this stage is to generate a short list of feasible options across relevant quadrants of the framework, paying attention to broad design features, cost, and implementation constraints, rather than choosing a fully specified model.

Step 6 – Combine and layer interventions into a coherent approach.

With a short list of options in hand, the next task is to assemble them into an integrated package that addresses the main constraints faced by different beneficiaries in a coherent way. Evidence from the catalogue's case studies shows that strategically layering components and services can create pathways—from initial outreach to sustained improvements in employment and earnings.

Step 7 – Align incentives of participants, providers, and employers.

Incentives matter. Policy makers should review how program rules, financing arrangements, and integration with social protection influence the behavior of beneficiaries, service providers, and employers. This includes considering how to encourage take-up and effort by participants, focus providers on outcomes, and make it worthwhile for employers to engage with the programs.

Step 8 – Sequence, learn, and scale.

Labor market programs should be treated as evolving systems rather than fixed projects. Policy makers should start with manageable pilots or phased rollouts, embed strong monitoring and evaluation from the outset, and use emerging evidence to iteratively refine targeting, components, and delivery arrangements. Successful models can then be institutionalized within employment services, training systems, and social protection platforms, allowing them to be scaled and adapted as labor markets evolve.

Scaling up labor market programs also hinges on a robust delivery architecture that integrates people, processes, data, and finance. Core investments include proactive outreach and interoperable registration and profiling systems that enable needs assessment and effective profiling; and shared MISs that track services provided, referrals, and outcomes over time. Effective case management—anchored in standardized assessment tools, individual action plans, coordinated referral pathways, and regular follow-up—should ensure that front-line staff can tailor support and help workers navigate services across employment, skills, social assistance, and entrepreneurship programs. Clear governance arrangements are also essential, with defined roles, service standards, and data-sharing protocols across public agencies, private providers, and community organizations, with mechanisms for quality assurance, grievance redress, and performance monitoring. A durable financing model is equally critical. Countries should budget for the full cost of delivery—front-line staffing, training and supervision, digital infrastructure, continuous system maintenance, and monitoring and evaluation—rather than only program benefits. Financing should also blend public and private sources and focus on outcomes. Without this backbone, programs will remain small and fragmented. With it, countries can reach diverse workers—youth and adults in formal and informal employment—and adapt support as needs and opportunities evolve, improving efficiency, equity, and resilience.

Thanks to robust delivery systems, many programs are already reaching the scale needed to achieve meaningful impacts. In India, the National Rural Livelihoods Mission has mobilized over 100 million rural women into self-help groups; in Kenya, the Youth Employment and Opportunities Project provided training, internships, and grants to more than 60,000 young people and 80,000+ young entrepreneurs; in Zambia, the Supporting Women's Livelihoods program reached 144,297 extremely poor women across all provinces; and in Argentina and Bangladesh, new integrated employment and social protection programs are serving or aiming to serve several hundred thousand workers and households. These experiences show that when governments invest in robust delivery systems labor market programs can move beyond pilots and operate at scale. Building on this progress, countries can adapt and connect even more programs, so that over time many more workers, of all ages and in all types of work, can count on timely support to find better jobs and build more secure livelihoods.

A A selection of successful programs from the catalogue

For each of the four quadrants in Figure 21, this Appendix presents a collection of factsheets that provide details about selected interventions from the catalogue, summarizing the context, policy design, results, and lessons learned. The full catalogue of successful employment solutions is available in Excel format.

Figure 21: Distribution of studies by quadrant

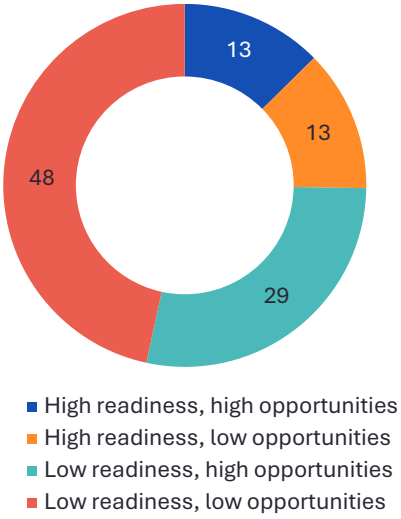


Figure 22: Distribution of studies by implementing entity

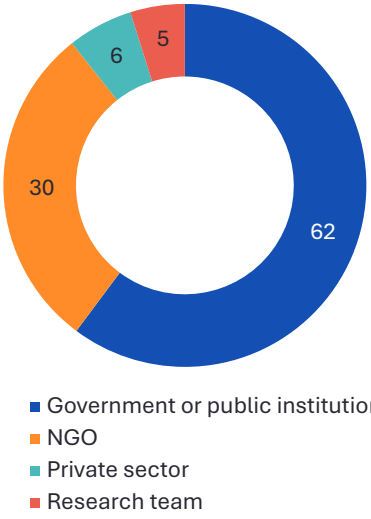


Figure 23: Distribution of studies by country income group

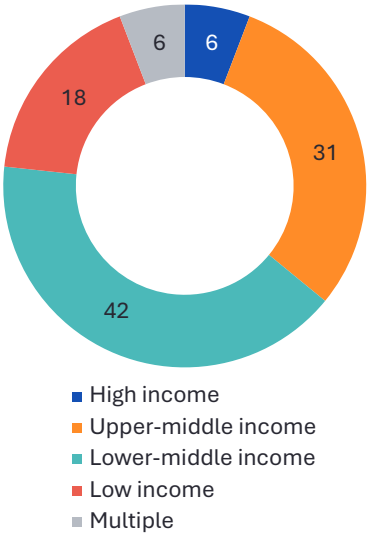


Figure 24: Distribution of studies by policy area

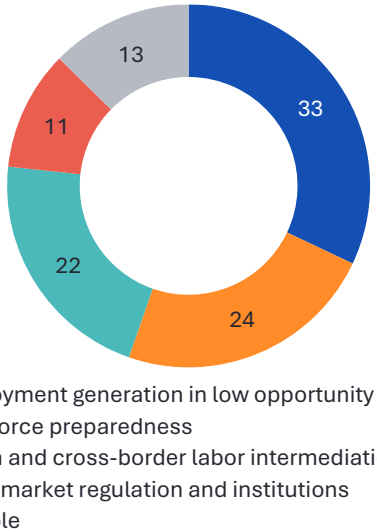
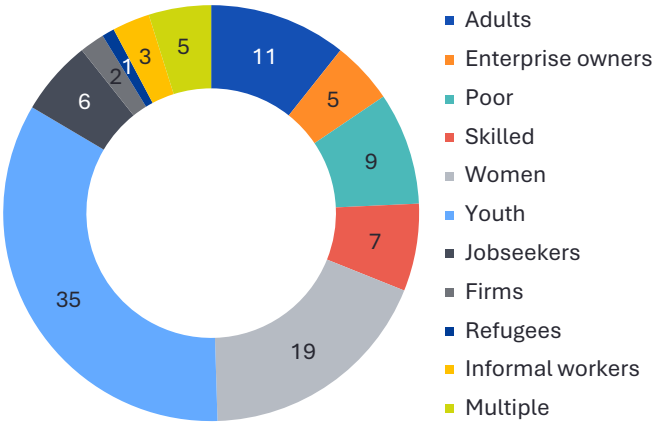


Figure 25: Distribution of studies by target group



High readiness, high opportunities:

Connect to Jobs

Interventions in this quadrant target people who are generally work-ready in a context where job opportunities are available. Target groups have above average educational attainment or significant job experience, though they may be vulnerable on account of their youth, gender, or low socioeconomic status. Many interventions in this quadrant were implemented in UMICs with relatively thicker labor markets (though often significant informality) or in urban settings in poorer countries where most job opportunities are located.

Successful matches are most commonly hindered by information constraints in this quadrant. The programs in Bangladesh (Sharma et al. 2021), South Africa (Carranza et al. 2022), Uganda (Bassi and Nansamba 2022), Mexico (World Bank 2023a), and Colombia (Gómez and González-Velosa 2023) all sought to address the problem of employers' inability to observe quality and workers' inability to credibly signal it, exacerbated in many cases by search costs and informal hiring channels that punished workers with low social capital. Also represented in the quadrant are programs addressing constraints on female employment coming from legal restrictions and traditional social norms in Saudi Arabia (Bursztyn and Yanaizawa-Drott 2018; Daher et al. 2023), India (Gupta et al. 2025), and Uruguay (Querejeta et al. 2023).

The most common type of intervention in this quadrant is job intermediation and labor market information. This category accounts for 7 out of a total of 13 interventions in this quadrant and includes skill certification, placement services, school-to-work transition support, and labor market information. These interventions are directly targeted at the information and matching constraints that dominate this quadrant. Other interventions in this quadrant include reducing regulatory barriers and gender norm interventions that seek to address barriers faced by women and other vulnerable groups such as Venezuelan migrants in Colombia (Ibáñez et al. 2025).

Interventions addressing information and search constraints need to be designed with both workers and employers in mind, provide appropriate incentives, and be differentiated across types of workers. The programs in South Africa and Uganda show that certification of skills should be backed by a respected intermediary and designed with input from employers to ensure that the skills measured are those that provide the best signal (Bassi and Nansamba 2022; Carranza et al. 2022). In South Africa, employer-recognized certificates were shown to outperform worker-only signals showing that frictions are two-sided. In Bangladesh, recognition of prior learning was most effective where alternative signals were thin, with larger gains for women and greater use of formal search channels, so targeting and level-setting should be gender- and sector-aware (Sharma et al. 2021). Outsourcing intermediation in Colombia produced stronger placement and retention when payments were tied to verified outcomes (Gómez and González-Velosa 2023). On the jobseeker side, search-literacy content plus high-frequency, status-based SMS follow-ups and transparent incentive/verification rules were used effectively in Mexico (World Bank 2023a).

The most important lessons from interventions addressing regulatory barriers that hold back participation of certain types of workers is that they must be paired with practical enablers and careful work with social norms. When night shift bans were lifted in India, female employment rose mainly in larger, export-oriented firms, consistent with firms better able to absorb compliance costs (transport, harassment redressal, separate facilities) (Gupta et al. 2025). Reforms should therefore be targeted where these fixed costs can be met and enforcement is credible. Mobility reforms show the same pattern: offering women de facto access to driver's licenses in Saudi Arabia increased independent mobility and raised

employment by roughly one-third, but scale requires expanding training center capacity and lowering fees. Effects were concentrated among the never-married or widowed women indicating a need to address attitudes of husbands (Daher et al. 2023). Another intervention in Saudi Arabia shows that husbands' attitudes can be shifted when misperceptions of social norms are corrected and when messages are specific, local, and timed to real decisions (Bursztyn and Yanaizawa-Drott 2018). By contrast, broad information campaigns without a concrete lever tend to move knowledge and some attitudes but not behavior.

Bangladesh

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Country Classification:	Lower-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Informal sector workers with basic literacy and numeracy and experience-based skills but no formal certification, across five divisions—Chittagong, Dhaka, Khulna, Rajshahi, and Rangpur

Context

- Non-agricultural work was largely **informal**—accounting for about 82–91% of jobs—and was most common among **workers with less schooling**.
- **Vocational training participation was extremely low** (≈1.7%), and only ~12% held higher secondary or tertiary qualifications, leaving a large segment with **skills acquired on the job but without formal certification**—limiting access to better-quality jobs and contributing to wage gaps.
- **Women faced significant disparities** in employment and earnings, with gender-segregated occupations.
- The **2011 National Skills Development Policy** introduced the **Recognition of Prior Learning** (RPL) and a National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework (NTVQF) with six levels, implemented through the TVET system. The NTVQF standardized competency requirements and enabled quality-assured assessments.

Program Overview

The RPL assessments consisted in the following:

- **Assessment Centers** advertised, screened, and conducted assessments; industry assessors were drawn from a Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB) certified pool and assigned to centers for each round.
- The **operational model** followed a standardized 3-day process:
  - **Day 1–2 (Orientation & Practice)**: Registration, introduction to NTVQF standards, and guided practice so candidates understand tasks.
  - **Day 3 (Assessment):** Practical, competency-based test by certified industry assessors with BTEB supervision.
  - **Post-assessment:** Scoring, moderation, and certificate issuance.
  - **Certification Structure:**
    - Statement of Competency (SoC): fully competent across all required units.
    - Statement of Achievement (SoA): partially competent; candidates can return to complete remaining units.

Results & Outcomes

In 2018, a Randomized Controlled Trial followed +1,100 applicants, with half invited to take the assessment and half serving as a control group:

- 100% of the assessed received a certificate; ~67% received SoC (fully competent) and 33% received SoA (partially competent).
- RPL **increased the chance of being employed by 7–8 percentage points**, especially for those previously unemployed or out of the labor force.
- **Women** with certifications experienced **wage gains of 20%** relative to control group.
- RPL recipients **used more formal channels** to obtain jobs (73% vs 27%) and were **more likely to work in formal firms and larger companies.**
- The program **certified over 30,000 participants**, demonstrating strong demand and delivery capacity.

Lessons Learnt

- **National qualifications framework:** Credible, competency-based assessments build employer trust and signal skills.
- **Short-run gains:** Specially in employment outcomes and transitions to formal/larger firms. Women, in particular, see wage benefits, suggesting RPL can mitigate gender gaps.
- **Re-entry for the unemployed:** RPL is effective for inactive or unemployed workers return to the labor market.
- **High demand and scalability potential:** Invest in assessor pipelines, center accreditation, digital scheduling/records, and candidate support to maintain quality at volume.
- **Certificates' recognition:** Without official recognition as equivalent to formal qualifications, RPL certificates may not grant access to further training or higher-level credentials, limiting opportunities for upskilling.

Sharma, Uttam, Tashmina Rahman, Mokhlesur Rahman, Mustahsin-Ul Aziz, and Shiro Nakata, Shiro. 2021. "Effects of Recognition of Prior Learning on Job Market Outcomes: Impact Evaluation in Bangladesh." Policy Research Working Paper 9644, World Bank, Washington, DC.

Colombia

Empléate (Get Employed) Program

Country Classification:	Upper-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Poor and vulnerable individuals (identified on the basis of a means test or participating in social programs targeting vulnerable groups)

Context

- Prior to the pandemic, around **60% of workers** in Colombia were in **informal employment**. Many of these jobs collapsed during lockdowns.
- The economic downturn hit vulnerable groups hardest: **women, youth, and low-educated workers experienced larger job losses and slower recovery** following the early pandemic shocks. Labor market recovery began in 2021, but progress has been uneven across sectors.
- Many displaced workers faced a **sectorial mismatch**, having experience in industries heavily affected by COVID-19, such as trade, hospitality, and services, which required transitions to new types of occupations.

Program Overview

- *Empléate* was a **pay-for-performance employment program** targeting **poor and vulnerable workers**. Service providers—including employment/training agencies and firms—were paid only for verified job placement and retention outcomes, rather than for inputs or activities.
- **The payment structure rewards sustained employment outcomes**. Payments included US$405 for each participant placed in a formal job, US$149 if the job was retained after 3 months, US$68 if the job was retained after 5 months, US$68 premium for participants in priority groups.
- Services varied by provider and according to the needs of the beneficiary, but all focused on **formal job placement**, including **job intermediation**, **case management**, **training**, and **transport allowances**.
- To evaluate the program, applicants were randomly assigned to receive services from one of the service providers or no services (control group).

Results & Outcomes

- Program participants were **9% more likely to secure a formal job** five to eight months post-treatment.
- Impacts were **larger among men and individuals with experience in sectors less affected** by the pandemic, reaching **22%** and **17%**, respectively, while there was no evidence of impacts among women or those without secondary education.
- Participants placed through private firms **increased monthly wages** by about **US$5.4 (≈14%)** in the medium run.
- Workers with prior experience in less-affected sectors raised wages by about **US$6.4 (≈17%)**.
- Conditional on formal employment, participants were **3% more likely** to work in large firms (20+ employees), suggesting **improvement in job quality**.

Lessons Learnt

- **Pay-for-performance and retention incentives**: Adding payments for keeping workers in jobs beyond initial placement encouraged providers to focus on job quality and sustainability.
- **Provider flexibility**: Allowing providers to design their own package of services (intermediation, case management, training, transport allowances) fostered innovation and adaptation.
- **Vulnerable groups need greater support**: Larger or tailored incentives and measures to address specific barriers (e.g. childcare support, flexible schedules) may be needed to generate impact.
- **Use of social registries**: Leveraging existing databases allowed rapid **targeting** of vulnerable populations—a model replicable in other countries with strong registry systems.

Gómez, Maria Fernanda, and Carolina González-Velosa. 2023. "Can a Pay-for- Performance Program Help the Vulnerable find Jobs during a Pandemic?: Experimental Evidence from Empleate in Colombia." Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank.

Colombia

Permiso Especial de Permanencia (PEP): Regularization Program for Venezuelan Migrants

Country Classification:	Upper-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven
Target Population:	Venezuelan migrants residing in Colombia, with non-regular status

Context

- Approximately 7 million people have left Venezuela amid severe economic challenges, political instability, and a humanitarian crisis. Of these, **2.5 million settled in Colombia**.
- Migrants with non-regular status have **limited access to public services** (education and emergency health only) and are **excluded from formal employment**, relegating them to informal jobs with low wages and poor conditions.
- The PEP program was designed to address these vulnerabilities and facilitate the **social and economic integration** of Venezuelan migrants.

Program Overview

The PEP program was launched by the Colombian government in 2018. The program aimed to support migrants by granting them **regular migratory status** which would allow access to formal employment, entrepreneurship, and public and private services. It was implemented in 2 key steps:

- **AMV Census** *(Registro Administrativo de Migrantes Venezolanos)*: Nationwide, to assess Venezuelan migrants in non-regular situation. Not advertised as a pathway to regularization; simply a data-gathering exercise. **442,462 migrants registered**.
- **PEP Announcement and Application**: All migrants registered in the RAMV were eligible to apply for the PEP. 64% of RAMV registrants (about 281,307 people) received the PEP.

The components of the PEP program were: i) a **regular migratory status** granted for **2 years**; ii) migrants allowed to hold **formal employment** and engage in **entrepreneurship**; iii) registration in the national social registry for access to **social protection programs** (like subsidized healthcare and government transfers) and iv) access to **financial services**.

Results & Outcomes

- **Regularization of 281,307 migrants** of the roughly 2.5 million Venezuelan migrants displaced in Colombia.
- Beneficiaries of the PEP program saw a **48% increase in per capita consumption.**
- **22% increase in monthly labor income.**
- 1.2 standard deviation **improvement in health status**.
- Most regularized migrants **remained in the informal sector** in the short term – probably due to Colombia's high rate of labor informality, the COVID-19 pandemic, and some employers not recognizing the PEP permit.

Lessons Learnt

- **Effectiveness of regularization:** Regularization programs such as PEP proved highly effective and fiscally sound. The main gains for migrants came from integration into social protection, healthcare, and financial systems, beyond access to the right to work.
- **Fiscal contributions:** Households with regular migratory status contributed more to public revenues through taxes and tended to require lower public spending, including reduced healthcare costs.
- **Beyond work permits:** Granting a work permit alone was insufficient in the short term to transition migrants into formal employment; additional constraints such as credential recognition and limited labor demand needed to be addressed.
- **Evaluation:** Linking census registration to PEP eligibility enabled a credible evaluation of the program's effects.

Ibáñez, Ana María, Andrés Moya, María Adelaida Ortega, Sandra V Rozo, and Maria José Urbina. 2025. "Life Out of the Shadows: the Impacts of Regularization Programs on the Lives of Forced Migrants." Journal of the European Economic Association 23 (3): 941–982.

India

Reducing Regulatory Barriers: Lifting Night Shift Bans on Female Employment

Country Classification:	Lower-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	Not applicable - Legislative
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven
Target Population:	Women in the manufacturing sector in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh

Context

- India has historically had a very **low female labor force participation rate**, partly due to **social norms and legal restrictions**.
- The Factories Act (1948) **prohibited women from working night shifts in factories**, limiting their employment opportunities and making it harder for firms to staff round-the-clock production.
- The ban was considered a barrier to both women's economic empowerment and firms' competitiveness, especially in export-oriented sectors.
- The change was part of **broader labor law reforms** and efforts to make **workplaces safer and more inclusive for women**, including requirements for transportation, lighting, sanitation, and anti-harassment measures.

Program Overview

- Amendment of the Factories Act and adoption of **new labor codes** (OSHWC Code) to allow women to work night shifts with their consent.
- State and central regulations required employers to provide **safe transportation, well-lit workplaces, sanitation facilities**, and compliance with **maternity and anti-harassment laws**.
- States adopted the central regulations at different times, creating a natural experiment for impact evaluation.
- Some states required written consent from women and minimum numbers of women on duty during night shifts for monitoring purpose.

Results & Outcomes

- Large firms increased the **share of female employees by 3.5%** and the number of females hired by 13%.
- The number of large firms **hiring at least one female** increased by **6.5%**.
- No significant impact on male employment, indicating **net job creation rather than substitution**.
- **Export-oriented sectors** were **more likely to increase female employment** at both intensive and extensive margins (especially where global supply chains and export competitiveness were at stake).

Lessons Learnt

- **Simple regulatory changes can have large effects:** removing legal barriers can quickly expand opportunities for women, especially in sectors with high demand for labor.
- **Safe environments for women:** Success depended on accompanying safety measures for transportation, workplace safety, and anti-harassment.
- **Export sectors were key drivers:** Firms facing international competition were most responsive to the regulatory change.
- **Scalability:** Continued progress requires addressing restrictive social norms, improving workplace infrastructure, and enforcing safety standards.

Gupta, Bhanu, Kanika Mahajan, Anisha Sharma, and Daksh Walia. 2025. "From Dusk Till Dawn: The Impact of Lifting Night Shift Bans on Female Employment." Ashoka University Economics Discussion Paper No. 147.

Mexico

Youth Labor Market Inclusion (MYLMI) Project

Country Classification:	Upper-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	US$2 million (Jobs MDTF)
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Low-income youth aged 17–21 graduating from upper secondary schools (vocational, technological, and general tracks) in San Luis Potosi, Mexico

Context

Mexico faced persistent challenges in youth employment:

- In 2019, **74.5% of working youths were informally employed**, and many young people entered the labor market with limited experience.
- Although formal jobs yielded stronger wage growth over time, **starting wages were 9–17% lower for young labor market entrants**, making formal employment less attractive to school leavers.
- Firms struggled to find skilled young workers, as **many lacked market-relevant skills** and work experience.
- **Gender disparities** persisted, with more young women planning to continue studying, while those who were employed earned less and faced fewer growth opportunities, particularly in sectors such as manufacturing.

Program Overview

MYLMI piloted an integrated package of interventions from 2017 to 2023 to facilitate youth transitions into formal employment:

- **Labor market literacy workshop** were delivered in schools by the National Employment Services. The workshops provided information on job search, public employment services, and local labor market opportunities.
- A **wage subsidy of Mex$900/month** (approx. US$45) was paid directly to youth for up to 6 months, conditional on finding and retaining formal employment. This formal employment incentive (FEI) was not visible to employers, reducing stigma and administrative burden.
- **High-frequency SMS surveys** were used for continued **monitoring and outreach** to track youth employment trajectories, job satisfaction, and provide reminders about project activities.
- The program was implemented in **collaboration with local government**, the **private sector** (notably the automotive cluster), **academia**, and **NGOs**.

Results & Outcomes

- The wage subsidy (FEI) **raised formal employment** among vocational school graduates by **4.2 percentage points (16.8%) over 2 years**, driven by a **5.1 percentage point (30%) increase in jobs with permanent contracts**.
  - About half of the effect was due to a **reduction in informal employment**.
- Youth with temporary contracts were **26% less likely to leave their job** and **70% more likely to transition to permanent contracts**.
- The incentive **did not affect short-term choices** for students planning to continue education.

Lessons Learnt

- **Early intervention:** Supporting youth before they enter the labor market is essential, as educational and employment trajectories are path-dependent.
- **Cost-effective outreach:** SMS-based outreach enabled ongoing engagement and feedback, though response rates were lower than face-to-face methods.
- **Short-term incentives:** Temporary wage subsidies can have important influence on career choices and subsequent employment outcomes and earnings.

Abel, Martin, Eliana Carranza, Kimberly Geronimo, and Maria Elena Ortega. 2022. "Can Temporary Wage Incentives Increase Formal Employment? Experimental Evidence from Mexico." Policy Research Working Paper No. 10234. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Saudi Arabia

Experiment Correcting Misperceptions of Social Norms

Country Classification:	High income
Implementing Organization:	Research Team
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Married Saudi men, aged 18-35, from different neighborhoods in Riyadh

Context

- At the time of the experiment in 2017, **female employment rates were very low**, at **less than 15%**, and the share of **women working outside the home** (WWOH) was around **4%**.
- Employment outside the home often depends on **spousal approval**, reflecting prevailing **social norms and household decision-making**. The intervention also explored the idea that most men may support women working, but believe others do not, which discourages them from showing support.
- In the years preceding the program, Saudi Arabia was implementing **reforms to encourage women's economic participation**, including **lifting the driving ban** and making changes to **guardianship laws**.

Program Overview

The intervention aimed to **correct married men's beliefs** about social norms and increase their willingness to help their wives search for jobs:

- To measure views on women working, men first completed a **private survey** reporting their own opinions on women working outside the home and estimating how many other men in the same session supported women's employment.
- To test the effect of **correcting misperceptions**, half of the respondents were **randomly shown the true level of peer support** (treatment group).
- Finally, all men were presented with information about a **Saudi start-up providing job matching services for women** and asked to make an **incentivized choice** between receiving an online gift card or signing their wives up for these services.

Results & Outcomes

- **87% of men privately supported women working outside the home**, but most underestimated peer support.
- Correcting misperceptions made male respondents **36.4% more likely to sign their wives up** for a job matching mobile application specializing in the female labor market compared to others (control group).
- In the follow up, wives of treated participants were **67% more likely to have applied** for a job outside the home.
- In a separate experiment, informing women about the actual level of support for WWOH leads them to switch from temporary, remote employment to **higher-paying, outside-the-home** versions of their jobs.

Lessons Learnt

- **Information is a low-cost tool:** Simply providing accurate information can shift behavior in contexts where conversations about sensitive topics are rare, and misperceptions persist.
- **Ensuring buy-in from gatekeepers:** Engaging the heads of households or guardians proved as important as directly supporting potential workers.
- **Leverage existing social change:** Information interventions may be more impactful when aligned with ongoing reforms.
- **Peer effects and close networks:** Correcting misperceptions can be particularly powerful in tightly knit communities where social sanctions (real or imagined) shape behavior.

Bursztyn, Leonardo, Alessandra L. González, and David Yanagizawa-Drott. 2020. "Misperceived Social Norms: Women Working Outside the Home in Saudi Arabia." American Economic Review 110 (10): 2997–3029.

Saudi Arabia

Lifting the Female Driving Ban

Country Classification:	High income
Implementing Organization:	NGO
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Female beneficiaries of social programs offered through local NGOs, living in Riyadh

Context

- Until 2018, **women's mobility in Saudi Arabia was significantly restricted**, including a long-standing **ban on driving**, reflecting broader legal and social norms that influenced labor market access and gender roles.
- The **driving ban was lifted in 2018** as part of the **Vision 2030 reform agenda**, which aimed to raise female labor force participation from 22% to 30%. Despite the reform, ***de facto* access remained limited**, as the high cost of training and restricted supply meant that only **2% of women obtained a license** within two years.
- The rationale for the reform was to enable **independent travel and allow greater mobility to facilitate women's access to employment opportunities** particularly in a context where public transport and social norms limited travel.

Program Overview

- At the time of the program, the **course fee for women** was 3,000 SAR (~US$800)—about **50%** of the average **monthly salary for Saudi women** and six times higher than the course fee for men.
- In cooperation with the Saudi government, a randomized controlled trial provided a randomly selected group of women **with free, immediate access to the sole authorized driving school**, removing a major financial and logistical barrier (treatment group), while women who were not offered free lessons formed the control group.
- Since the program targeted beneficiaries of social programs, participating women were disproportionately **poor**.

Results & Outcomes

- Two years after the program, **54% of women** offered free driving lessons obtained a **driver's license**, compared to only **10% in the control group**. These women were **61% more likely** to have driven in the previous month and **19% more likely** to leave the house unchaperoned, reflecting increased **independent mobility**.
- Women in the treatment group were also **33% more likely to be employed**, with gains concentrated among **never-married and widowed women**, who negotiate employment with fathers or other relatives.
- **Married and divorced women with children**, who remain influenced by a husband or ex-husband, **were 48% less likely to be in the labor force**. These women also showed reduced autonomy in financial decisions, possibly reflecting household adjustments following changes in mobility norms.

Lessons Learnt

- **Securing practical access:** Granting a legal right is not enough without removing barriers for policy uptake such as high fees and limited availability of driving schools.
- **Transport as a binding constraint for women:** In contexts with weak public transport and legal barriers to mobility, access to private transport can have positive impacts on female labor force participation.
- **Intra-household dynamics:** Limited decision-making power for women at home can reduce the impact of broader reforms, highlighting the importance of household-level considerations.
- **Complementary reforms:** Combined **legal and social reforms**—such as lifting the driving ban alongside guardianship rule changes—may produce stronger impacts on women's mobility and employment.

Daher, Chaza Abou, Erica M. Field, Kendal M. Swanson, and Kate H. Vyborny. 2023. "Drivers of Change: How Intra-household Preferences Shape Employment Responses to Gender Reform." NBER Working Paper Series.

South Africa

Skill Certification

Country Classification:	Upper-middle income
Implementing Organization:	NGO (*Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator*)
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Young unemployed adults (18–29) in Johannesburg, from marginalized groups at risk of long-term unemployment

Context

Johannesburg's labor market presented several challenges that motivated the intervention:

- Employers had **limited sources of reliable information** about job seekers' skills, as many young people lacked work experience and school grades were not informative about workplace skills.
- Firms faced **high costs associated with hiring** due to **strict labor laws** protecting new hires.
- **High reservation and minimum wages floors** further affected labor market dynamics.
- **Youth unemployment** in Johannesburg were extremely high during the intervention period (2015-2018), 51%-53% for ages 15–24, and around 32% for ages 25–34. Rates in Johannesburg tend to be higher than the national average, reflecting intense **urban labor market pressures**.

Program Overview

The experiment (conducted 2015-2018) aimed to improve communication between job seekers and employers, helping both sides make better decisions. It was designed to be scalable and adaptable to other contexts:

- **Standardized Skills Assessments**: Candidates completed computer-based tests measuring **non-specialist skills**, including communication, concept formation, focus, grit, numeracy, and planning.
- Participants received a **branded public certificate**. Certificates were co-branded by Harambee and the World Bank.
- **Certificates** were designed to be **credible signals** that could be submitted with job applications, making skills visible to employers.
- The program was rigorously evaluated using a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT), in which 6,891 candidates were recruited and randomly assigned to benefit from the program, or not (control group).

Results & Outcomes

- Publicly certified jobseekers saw a **17.3% increase in employment** within 3 to 4 months post-certification, compared to the control group.
- Weekly **earnings increased by 34%**.
- The average earnings gain in the first three months was 2.3 times the average variable cost of assessment and certification.
- Certification increased the probability of having a **written contract by 2 percentage points**.
- Effects were larger for jobseekers lacking other ways to communicate their skills (e.g., no work experience or university education).

Lessons Learnt

- **Two-sided intervention:** Hiring interventions are more effective when they address information gaps on both sides of the market. Making credible information on skills available to employers improved hiring decisions and wage offers, not only job seekers' search strategies.
- **Scalable design:** Standardized, low-cost design enables scalability and replication–adopted in Kenya and by South Africa's Department of Labor.
- **Equity gains:** The biggest benefits were for those lacking degrees or work experience.

Carranza, Eliana, Robert Garlick, Kate Orkin, and Neil Rankin. 2022. "Job Search and Hiring with Limited Information about Workseekers' Skills." American Economic Review 112 (11): 3547–83.

South Africa

Teaching Labor Laws

Country Classification:	Upper-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Private Institution (UCT Law@Work Club) and Research Team
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Small- and medium-sized firms (10-300 employees) in manufacturing and trade registered with the Unemployment Insurance Fund between 1990 and 2012

Context

- South Africa has experienced significant labor market challenges in recent years, with national **unemployment** reaching **32.3% in 2024**.
- **Labor laws were comprehensively rewritten after 1994**, with major acts passed between 1995 and 1998 that redefined hiring, firing, working conditions, and employment equity; new institutions such as the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation, and Arbitration (CCMA) and Labor Courts were created in 1997 to manage dispute resolution.
- Although **hiring and firing** costs are not high by international standards, procedures are perceived as **complex**, contributing to employer concerns that dismissals are particularly difficult, **and labor regulation remains one of the most cited obstacles to business**, especially for small and medium-sized firms.
- Evidence suggests that employers' perceptions may be shaped by **limited information and regulatory complexity**: many disputes are resolved efficiently through CCMA conciliation, but rare, highly publicized Labor Court cases and intricate rules can reinforce confusion.

Program Overview

- The program provided participating firms (the treatment group in the evaluation) with **free, 21-week access** to the **UCT Law@Work Club's labor-law information services**, consisting of **biweekly electronic newsletters** (41 in total) and **full free access to the Club's labor-law website**, which is normally a paid membership service.
- The newsletters delivered concise **labor-law updates, case summaries**, and **human resource management advice**, while also directing participants to further resources such as video tutorials and discussion forums.
- The website offered a **comprehensive range of labor-law resources**, including information on acts and amendments, a case law library, a discussion forum with expert responses, a learning center, downloadable legal templates, video tutorials, and an archive of all newsletters.

Results & Outcomes

- Approx. 6 months after the program, firms that received the information service had **12% higher employment levels** compared to firms that did not (control group), with current **staff increased by ~11.8 employees**, representing a **15.2%** increase. Employment gains occurred even among firms that had indicated a preference for smaller staff at baseline.
- Program participation **reduced the share of firms that viewed labor regulation as a constraint** on by **21.4%**.
- The increase in total staffing was **not limited to a single type of contract**, suggesting no evidence of large substitution effects between workers.
- Employment impacts were larger among firms that outsourced all or part of their human resources operations, suggesting that **external HR consultants may** find it beneficial to **exaggerate the complexity of labor laws**.

Lessons Learnt

- **Limited knowledge of labor laws**: Regulation knowledge is an often-overlooked barrier to firm growth and employment: Providing clear, targeted legal information can be an effective policy tool for stimulating employment.
- **Low cost of delivering information**: Delivering the program cost approximately US$200 per firm, resulting in a cost per job created of less than US$20.
- **Higher optimal employment**: Employment gains suggest the program helped firms increase the workforce level they desired, as they learned to manage their staff more efficiently.
- **Scale-up potential**: The approach could be validated in other contexts, particularly where labor regulations are complex, as in post-apartheid South Africa.

Bertrand, Marianne, and Bruno Crépon. 2021. "Teaching Labor Laws: Evidence from a Randomized Control Trial in South Africa." American Economic Journal: Applied Economics 13 (4): 125–149.

Uganda

Certification Intervention

Country Classification:	Low income
Implementing Organization:	NGO
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Trainees at vocational training institutions

Context

- Uganda's entry-level labor market is dominated by **very small firms** in trades such as carpentry, welding or hairdressing, which **lack resources for modern recruitment methods**.
- Firm owners report that **assessing soft skills** and the potential costs of **employee misconduct** are more pressing challenges than traditional business constraints like demand or electricity.
- **Weak legal institutions** and limited **contract enforcement** increase the importance of **worker trustworthiness and reliability**.
- Young vocational graduates have **technical and practical skills** but little or no formal work experience, making it hard to **demonstrate employability** or **signal soft skills credibly** to potential employers.

Program Overview

The Certification intervention tested whether verifiable signaling of soft skills could improve employment outcomes for vocational training graduates. Two interventions were implemented:

- **Certificates of non-cognitive (soft) skills** based on assessments including **teacher surveys, psychometric scales** and **incentivized trust games**. Skills assessed include communication, willingness to help others, trustworthiness, creativity and attendance.
- **Matching**: Vocational training graduates were **matched with SMEs** for real **job interviews**.

To evaluate the program, interviews were split into two (random) groups to compare them: in one group, both the worker and employer could see the worker's soft skills certificate; in the other group, neither could see it.

Results & Outcomes

- **Earnings increase by 11%** in the two years post intervention, conditional on being employed, and this effect is larger at the top of the skill distribution.
- **Increased assortative matching** between higher-skilled workers and higher ability managers, **improving matching productivity**.
- Certificates caused workers to **raise their labor market expectations**, while high-ability managers **revised their assessments of the workers' skills upwards**.
- While overall employment probability did not change, involvement in **productive activities**—defined as non-casual work or education/training—**increased by 8%** on average.
- The **gains** to workers, including higher earnings and better matches, **outweighed the program costs**.

Lessons Learnt

- **High value in informal or SME-heavy markets:** Certifying non-cognitive skills is particularly effective in labor markets where information frictions are high.
- **Institutional credibility:** Certificates worked because they were backed by a trusted intermediary (BRAC Uganda).
- **Employer engagement:** Success requires collaboration with employers to ensure the certificate measures skills they truly demand.
- **Need for inclusive design:** Impacts were strongest for higher-skill workers, so lower-skill youth should be offered coaching or remedial training.
- **Complementarity with skills upgrading programs:** Certificates boosted incentives for workers to invest further in training.

Bassi, Vittorio, and Aisha Nansamba. 2022. "Screening and Signalling Non-Cognitive Skills: Experimental Evidence from Uganda." The Economic Journal 132 (642): 471–511.

Uruguay

Messaging Intervention

Country Classification:	High income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Parents aged 18-42 who are not beneficiaries of any parental leave scheme

Context

- In 2013, Uruguay established a **parental leave program** that allowed new parents to halve their daily working schedule while receiving full-time pay, from the end of maternity leave until the child reached six months of age.
- The program aimed to **address persistent gender gaps in care responsibilities and labor force participation**.
- Although either parent could use the benefit, **fathers** accounted for only **2% of beneficiaries**. Low take-up was linked to **limited information**, perceived **costs** and **career penalties**, and **entrenched gender norms**.

Program Overview

The intervention targeted barriers to fathers' participation in parental leave:

- Parents (men and women) who were not benefiting from any parental leave scheme received **information about the policy** based on publicly available sources.
- Recent parents received, in addition, a **testimony from a father who had benefited from the subsidy**.
- A third group received the information message and a **planning reminder** encouraging advance planning of subsidy use (for example, shared childcare responsibilities), aimed at challenging gendered beliefs about the mother's exclusive role during the child's first months.
- All messages were delivered **via email, SMS, or both** and included a link to an information brochure.
- The interventions were evaluated and compared using a randomized-controlled trial.

Results & Outcomes

- Receiving **the information message significantly increased knowledge of the program**.
- **Some success in changing gendered attitudes** (e.g., reduction in women's agreement with the statement that mothers should exclusively take care of their baby during the first months), **but no effects for men** or on planning to use parental leave among either women or men.
- Among recent parents, there was indicative evidence that **the planning reminder reduced traditional gender norms** compared to the information and role model messages.
- **The testimony message significantly increased fathers' intentions to use parental leave**, but had no effect on planning, intentions, or use among women.

Lessons Learnt

- **Low-cost, targeted information** and **awareness-raising interventions** can substantially increase program knowledge: Impact was more modest among recent parents, likely because this group already had better knowledge of the program.
- **Careful messaging:** Role model messages and planning reminders can shift gendered attitudes, but require **careful design to avoid reinforcing stereotypes**. The planning message may have inadvertently reinforced gender norms by mentioning breastfeeding and creating a strong association between the parental leave and the mother's role as the exclusive caregiver during breastfeeding.

Querejeta, Martina, Cecilia Olivieri, Ailin Tomio, Jorge Luis Castaneda, and Ana Maria Munoz Boudet. 2023. "Sharing Parental Leave between Mothers and Fathers: Experimental Evidence from a Messaging Intervention in Uruguay." Policy Research Working Paper No. 10340. Washington, DC: World Bank.

High readiness, low opportunities:

Unlock Talent

Interventions in this quadrant target people who are generally work-ready in a context where job opportunities are scarce. Target groups typically consist of skilled workers with completed secondary and in some cases tertiary education, though they may be vulnerable on account of their youth or gender. Interventions in this quadrant were often implemented in lower-middle and low-income countries with relatively thin labor markets and few formal jobs or in upper-middle income countries facing difficulties such as recession (Mexico) or natural disaster (Türkiye).

The most common labor market constraints in this quadrant are insufficient demand for skilled labor and spatial mismatch between people's location of residence and the location of job opportunities. The range of local contexts in this quadrant is quite diverse. Depressed labor demand is a common feature with causes including natural disaster and credit constraints in Türkiye (World Bank 2025c), conflict in the West Bank and Gaza (World Bank 2023b), and burdensome regulations in India (Besley and Burgess 2004) and Mexico (Bruhn 2011). Spatial mismatch and the related constraint of lack of information on job opportunities outside the local area is another common constraint which can be present within a single urban agglomeration (Abebe et al. 2016), across the rural-urban divide within a country (Jensen 2012), or across countries (Berg 2025; Holzmann et al. 2016).

Interventions in this quadrant span a wide range of measures aimed at boosting local labor demand or substituting it with demand from outside the local area or with self-employment. Local labor demand can be supported using wage subsidies (West Bank and Gaza), reducing regulatory barriers (India and Mexico) and reducing credit constraints facing employers (Türkiye). Alternatively, workers can be supported in searching for jobs outside their immediate local area using transport subsidies (Ethiopia), by providing job search support to connect workers to jobs outside their local area (India) or internationally through Global Skill Partnerships. The TEF entrepreneurship program in Africa shows another alternative for highly educated people in a low opportunity context, which is to support them in setting up their own businesses (ORB International 2022).

Successful interventions to boost local demand show the importance of simple and clear rules and procedures, and attention to incentives. Mexico managed to slash red tape associated with registering a business by centralizing interactions in a one-stop-shop and harmonizing local regulations across municipalities, creating new jobs as a result (Bruhn 2011). The experience of amending legislation on labor disputes across Indian states shows that employers reluctance to hire can be reduced by clear, predictable, and time-bound procedures for hiring, firing, and dispute settlement, so firms can plan with confidence while workers still retain basic protections (Besley and Burgess 2004). In Türkiye, maximizing the employment impact from long-term financing and grant provision involved targeting firms with the biggest employment creation potential (World Bank 2020a). Where local demand collapses, as in the conflict-affected areas of West Bank and Gaza, time-bound wage support is best routed through delivering socially useful services, with stipends set just below the minimum wage to deter displacement, and one beneficiary per household to spread reach (World Bank 2023b).

Global Skills Partnership and platform work can also help workers reach employment opportunities that are not locally available. Lessons learned from successful Global Skill Partnerships include the need for quality training, qualification bridging, integration support and portability of social security benefits (GSP 2021a, b). Training should be organized in countries of origin with curricula co-designed

with destination employers, co-financed by the destination, and split into "migrant" and "stayer" tracks so domestic capacity is built while targeted shortages abroad are met (Acosta et al. 2025). Fee-free, transparent recruitment should be conducted via bilateral public-agency agreements that embed pre-departure language and technical preparation, qualification recognition/bridging (typically within 12 months), and structured post-arrival integration support, as practiced under Germany's Triple Win program (Berg 2025). To reduce legal uncertainty and make mobility attractive and fair, portability of social security benefits should be secured through bilateral social security agreements that aggregate contribution periods and coordinate pensions and health benefits with clear administrative cooperation and procedures (Holzmann et al. 2016). An alternative to moving people to where the jobs are is to support capacity for platform work by combining practical technical training with "how to freelance" content, mentoring and other follow-through support, as in the West Bank and Gaza (World Bank 2023b).

Despite constrained demand, cost-effective interventions addressing information and transport constraints can also work in this quadrant. In Ethiopia, a 2-day job application workshop with credible certification of skills was enough to move outcomes at much lower cost than longer training programs or wage subsidies. Likewise, a transport subsidy of as little as US$1 per day to help people search for work in the city center generated big impacts on likelihood of formal employment (Abebe et al. 2016). In India, short information and recruitment sessions in rural areas around Delhi covering opportunities in the BPO sector in the city generated lasting impact on employment and earnings of women. Follow through support after the sessions and gender-sensitive framing that positioned BPO as white-collar, "cleaner", and safer work where women have a comparative advantage contributed to success (Jensen 2012).

Ethiopia

Assisting Job Search in Low-Employment Communities

Country Classification:	Low income
Implementing Organization:	NGO
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Young, adults aged 18 to 30, living in Addis Ababa, who completed high school and are not currently working in a permanent job or enrolled in full-time education

Context

Addis Ababa experienced **strong economic growth**, averaging around **10% per year**, alongside rapid **urbanization**.

- **Youth unemployment** was high, at **27.9% overall** and **33.6% for women**, with educated unemployment common—many young people had completed secondary education but could not access formal jobs.
- **Job search was costly**, as one of the most popular methods involved visiting job vacancy boards in the city center, which posed financial barriers for poor youth living on the periphery.
- Young jobseekers with no work experience also faced **information frictions**, struggling to signal their skills to employers and often lacking familiarity with application processes and standards. Many became discouraged and exited the labor market.

Program Overview

The experiment randomly assigned participants to one of two different interventions to compare their effects on labor market outcomes:

- **A transport subsidy** that covered the cost of travelling to the center of the city for job search. The median subsidy was **20 ETB/day** (**≈ US$1** at the time), usable up to three times per week for 16 weeks.
- **A job application workshop** that included two components: i) **testing and certification of general skills** (math, English, reasoning) and ii) **training** on creating effective job applications (CVs, cover letters, and interviews). The certification was provided by Addis Ababa University.

Results & Outcomes

Evidence from the randomized controlled trial indicates:

- The **transport subsidy increased formal employment by 25%**, while the **job application workshop increased formal employment by 25%** and the **likelihood of a permanent job by 40%**.
- Job seekers receiving either intervention were **less likely to drop out of the labor force**.
- Both interventions **improved search efficacy**, increasing the rate at which applications led to job offers.
- Transport subsidy impacts were strongest for **lower-educated and disadvantaged youth**, who faced the steepest financial barriers.
- Workshop impacts were strongest for **better-educated youth**, who could leverage the certificate and improved application skills.

Lessons Learnt

- **Low-cost barrier removal**: Addressing simple frictions, such as transport costs and information on how to apply for jobs, can substantially improve employment outcomes.
- **Short, focused interventions can be effective**: The two-day job application workshop was enough to change outcomes.
- **Credible certification**: Certificates issued by recognized institutions, such as Addis Ababa University, provide effective signals of skills to employers.

Abebe, Girum, Stefano Caria, Marcel Fafchamps, Paolo Falco, Simon Franklin, and Simon Quinn. 2016. "Curse of Anonymity or Tyranny of Distance? The Impacts of Job-Search Support in Urban Ethiopia." NBER Working Paper Series.

India

Business Process Outsourcing (BPO): Sector Job Information Provision

Country Classification:	Lower-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Research Team
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Rural women aged 15-21, located 50–150 km from Delhi and with secondary education

Context

- In the early 2000s, India's **Business Process Outsourcing** (BPO) sector experienced rapid **growth (30–40%** annual growth in the 2000s), generating thousands of **white-collar job opportunities**. These jobs were particularly suitable for women, offering **safer and more socially acceptable employment** compared to manual labor.
- In rural districts near Delhi, awareness of these opportunities and knowledge of how to access them was extremely limited due to **information gaps**.
- **Educational attainment** in these areas was also below the minimum required for most BPO positions, further restricting access for rural women.

Program Overview

- The program provided **three years of recruiting support for BPO jobs** and was evaluated to test whether **increasing women's economic opportunities** shifts incentives around marriage, fertility, and schooling. Main interventions included:
- **Annual information and recruiting sessions** (2003–2006) offered an overview of the BPO sector and job types, lists of firms hiring, application guidance, interview preparation, English language assessment, and Q&A sessions;
- **Annual booster sessions and follow-up** provided free, ongoing placement support for three years;
- **Each recruiter served ~10 villages**, reaching about **125 relevant girls and women** beneficiaries per recruiter. Recruiter compensation averaged US$15,000 (salary and expenses), implying **US$12 per individual** served.
- The program was easy to implement, requiring only **geographic targeting** and **no complex individual eligibility** screening.

Results & Outcomes

- Young women (18–24 at follow-up) were **4.6 pp more likely to work in the BPO sector** and **2.4 pp more likely to have paid work outside the home**.
- The program placed **~900 women into jobs** over three years.
- **Young women** (18-24) were **2.8 pp more likely to enroll in vocational training**.
- Girls' **school enrollment** (6–17) **rose by 5 pp**, and younger girls (5–15) showed **better nutrition and health** investment.
- **Young women** (15–21 at baseline) were **5.1 pp less likely to marry** and **5.7 pp less likely to give birth** during the study period.

Lessons Learnt

- **Bridging information gaps:** Success depended on connecting labor supply and demand, particularly in rural areas.
- **Targeted interventions:** Effects were concentrated on the intended beneficiaries (young women and girls), with minimal spillover to men or other household members.
- **Job attractiveness:** White-collar jobs carry less social stigma, are perceived as safer, and align with women's comparative advantages, making them more attractive for female labor force participation.
- **Empowerment through opportunities:** Expanding economic opportunities and providing accessible information enabled women to make informed choices, complementing efforts to shift social norms.

Jensen, Robert. 2012. "Do Labor Market Opportunities Affect Young Women's Work and Family Decisions? Experimental Evidence from India." Quarterly Journal of Economics 127 (2): 753–792.

Mexico

Rapid Business Opening System (SARE) Reform

Country Classification:	Upper-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven
Target Population:	Informal business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs seeking to start a business

Context

- Mexico experienced stagnation in **formal job creation** following robust **growth in the 1990s**, with a **slowdown beginning in 2001** largely due to a recession in the U.S.
- Most new labor market entrants were **absorbed by the informal sector**, often with **lower wages and limited job security**.
- International assessments highlighted **challenges in the business environment**, with firm establishment involving **complex procedures and high costs**, which constrained formal job creation. Streamlining administrative processes and enhancing transparency remained key opportunities for progress.
- **Rapid growth of the working-age population** also increased demand for jobs, particularly in urban areas.

Program Overview

The SARE Reform aimed to **simplify local business registration procedures** for firms in industries not requiring special permits.

- **One-stop shops were created to allow** all necessary paperwork to be submitted in a single location.
- The Federal Commission for Improving Regulation coordinated with municipalities to **standardize requirements, simplify and unify forms, checklists, and procedures**.
- Municipalities **revised and harmonized local regulations** so that low-risk businesses no longer needed approvals from each individual municipal department. Instead, they submitted a **simplified sworn declaration of compliance**.
- The SARE program was **implemented gradually** across municipalities, starting in May 2002, and by November 2011, a total of 191 municipalities had adopted SARE.

Results & Outcomes

- **Average days to register a business were reduced from 30.1 to 1.4**. Required **procedures cut from 7.9 to 2.7. Office visits reduced from 4.2 to 1**.
- Comparing early-adopting regions with late-adopting ones shows the reform **increased the number of registered businesses by 5%**, mainly due to former wage earners opening businesses.
- **Wage employment in the eligible industries increased by 2.2%**, helping previously unemployed move into jobs, suggesting new firms created jobs beyond self-employment.
- The **income of the previously unemployed individuals rose by about 6%**.
- **Greater competition** led to prices falling by ~1% in eligible industries, while the income of existing registered firms declined by 3%.

Lessons Learnt

- **New firm creation:** Business registration reforms can stimulate new firm creation; however, alone may not be sufficient to formalize existing informal businesses.
- **Centralized processes:** Success hinged on centralizing interactions into a single municipal office with clear checklists and deadlines, minimizing contact with multiple agencies to enhance transparency and accountability.
- **Targeting low-complexity sectors:** Focusing on firms that did not require complex permits (e.g., retail, small services) and areas with lower policy sensitivities enabled faster implementation and visible results.
- **Trade-offs for incumbents:** While the reform imposed costs on existing firms, it benefited workers through job creation and consumers through lower prices.

Bruhn, Miriam. 2011. "License to Sell: The Effect of Business Registration Reform on Entrepreneurial Activity in Mexico." The Review of Economics and Statistics 93 (1): 382–386.

Türkiye

Formal Employment Creation (FEC) Project

Country Classification:	Upper-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution (TKYB, Türkiye Kalkınma ve Yatırım Bankası)
Project Budget:	US$430.85 million
Effectiveness Rating:	Promising
Target Population:	Firms (SMEs and large firms) with job creation potential, in 24 provinces of Türkiye; both Turkish citizens and refugees seeking work, with a focus on women

Context

- Türkiye hosts a **large refugee population**, including over **3.6 million Syrians under Temporary Protection**. Many reside in provinces facing high unemployment and economic challenges.
- Key issues included **high unemployment**, particularly among refugees and women, and widespread **informality**.
- Small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which account for most **firms, struggled to grow and create formal jobs** due to **high labor costs, limited access to finance**, and **skills gaps**.
- Limited employment opportunities **generated pressures on both refugee and host communities**.

Program Overview

FEC aimed to support **formal job creation** by firms in provinces with a high concentration of Syrians under Temporary Protection, benefiting both Turkish citizens and refugees. The program was implemented by TKYB, the **Development and Investment Bank of Türkiye**, and included the following components:

- **Loans** to financially viable SMEs and large enterprises with high job-creation potential;
- **Conditional grants**, including for women-inclusive firms, linked to creating or retaining jobs for refugees and women;
- **Technical and institutional support** through skills and capacity building for firms, TKYB, and Participating Financial Institutions (PFIs), alongside **robust monitoring and evaluation systems**.

Results & Outcomes

As of December 2025:

- **Over 9,500 formal jobs** created (grant component), above the initial target of the project.
  - Of these jobs, **2,300 for refugees and 4,500 for women**.
- **536 beneficiary firms received grants**, and 129 sub-loans were provided to SMEs and large enterprises.
  - **374 women-inclusive firms** received grants.

Lessons Learnt

- **Multi-pronged approach:** Addressing formal job creation requires combining access to finance, conditional grants, and skills development.
- **Targeted incentives:** Specific grant targets for refugees and women are essential, but achieving refugee employment goals remains challenging due to skills, language, and legal barriers.
- **Institutional capacity:** Building capacity in TKYB and PFIs, including environmental and social risk management, is critical for implementation.

Building on FEC-1, the Formal Employment Creation 2 Project (FEC-2), approved March 2025, will further strengthen job creation and economic recovery in regions hit hardest by the 2023 earthquakes. With a simplified design, it focuses on direct lending to SMEs and large firms and expanded capacity-building. FEC-2 aims to create 17,000 formal jobs, ease credit constraints, and foster inclusive growth in Türkiye's most vulnerable provinces.

World Bank. Formal Employment Creation Project (P171766). World Bank Projects & Operations. Accessed January 8, 2026. https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P171766.

West Bank and Gaza

Gaza Emergency Cash for Work and Self-Employment Support Project

Country Classification:	Lower-middle income
Implementing Organization:	NGO
Project Budget:	US$17 million
Effectiveness Rating:	Promising
Target Population:	Vulnerable youth aged 18-34 in Gaza

Context

- In 2018, West Bank and Gaza faced **economic decline**, marked by prolonged **instability**, complex governance challenges, and reduced donor aid.
- **Youth and women face severe employment challenges**: youth unemployment reached **58% for men** and **88% for women**, with **41% of youth not in education, employment, or training**.
- Women face additional challenges, including difficult transitions from education to employment and high exposure to **gender-based violence**.

Program Overview

This project provided short-term income support and increased access to internet-enabled self-employment opportunities through:

- **Cash for Work**: Youth participated in **six-month temporary work** through NGO-led social service projects. Beneficiaries received a **US$380 monthly stipend** and were selected from UNRWA and **Cash Transfer Program** waitlists.
- **Internet-enabled self-employment work (E-work support)**: Youth received **training in technical and freelancing skills** (video editing, digital marketing, freelance technical writing, contract negotiation) for ~2 months and on-the-job support for ~ 6 months. Training organizations selected beneficiaries who had the appropriate technical background to participate in the program.

Results & Outcomes

- **5,052 youth were employed** through the Cash for Work component.
- The **social services provided** under the Cash for Work component are estimated to have **benefited 407,784 vulnerable people**.
- Of the **1,309 youth** who received **e-work support, 1,040 youth** reported that they had completed **at least one paid freelancing job** during the support or six months after.
- The project ensured that at least **half of all beneficiaries were women**.

Lessons Learnt

- **Short-term focus:** In constrained economies with weak institutions and mobility restrictions, focusing on short-term employment in service delivery can generate rapid, high-impact results while strengthening local service provision.
- **Online freelancing:** Supporting online freelancing enabled employment even where private sector job creation was limited, especially for women facing cultural barriers and limitations to their movement.
- **NGO partnerships:** Partnering with NGOs already active in reaching poor and vulnerable populations is essential for effective service delivery, especially when public institutions have limited capacity.
- **Monitoring and adaptation:** Strong monitoring and evaluation systems, with structured communication from the outset, enabled rapid adaptation during shocks and continuity of implementation.

World Bank. Gaza Emergency Cash for Work and Self-Employment Support (P167726). World Bank Projects & Operations. Accessed January 8, 2026. https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P167726.

Countries across Africa

TEF Entrepreneurship Program

Country Classification:	Multiple
Implementing Organization:	NGO
Project Budget:	US$100 million over 10 years
Effectiveness Rating:	Promising
Target Population:	Adult citizens and legal residents of any African country, with a new business idea or an existing (for profit) business that is no older than 5 years

Context

- The **growth of the digital economy**, including mobile money and digital platforms, expanded access to markets and payments, lowering barriers for new entrepreneurs.
- Africa continues to face **a large financing gap for SMEs**, with micro and small firms experiencing severe credit constraints.
- At the same time, a rising youth population creates **vast consumer demand and entrepreneurial potential**.
- **Self-employment** is the largest source of work, as over **80% of workers in Sub-Saharan Africa** are in the **informal economy**.
- **Gender disparities** persist, with women facing greater barriers to capital and professional networks.

Program Overview

The program provided a **holistic, one-year entrepreneurship support package** consisting of four main components:

- **12-week online entrepreneurship training program** covering business management, financial planning, marketing, and operations, designed to build foundational entrepreneurial capacity across diverse sectors.
- **Mentoring** by previous year's participants, who provided guidance on execution of business plans and strategy.
- **Business plan preparation and review**, with only entrepreneurs with strong business plans that met program's thresholds for funding eligibility.
- **Seed capital** investment of US$5,000.
- In addition, TEF offered a new **digital networking hub** for African entrepreneurs, investors, and business leaders.

Results & Outcomes

Comparisons with unsuccessful applicants suggests that TEF is associated with:

- **20% increase in business start-ups.**
- **5% increase in business survival** to 2022 among entrepreneurs who already owned a business when applying (2015-2020).
- **98% increase in the number of employees** (12.9 vs. 6.5 employees). Employees in TEF firms typically earned **over 3 times the average annual per-capita income** in their countries.
- Significant inclusion of **women and youth**: around **50% of entrepreneurs were female**, and more than half of these were aged 18–24.

Lessons Learnt

- **Non-refundable capital reduced barriers:** Equity-free grants encouraged risk-taking among first-time entrepreneurs, especially women and youth.
- **Business plans:** Requiring applicants to prepare strong business planes ensured discipline, filtered quality, and provided learning even for non-selected applicants.
- **Digital platforms for scale:** Online training and mentoring expanded reach to all 54 African countries, demonstrating the value of digital tools such as TEFConnect for scale and inclusivity.
- **Gender-responsive design:** The program's 50% female participation shows that quotas, outreach, and flexible training can reduce equity gaps.
- **High-risk environments:** Strong uptake in fragile and conflict-affected states indicates that entrepreneurship support can be effective even in challenging contexts.

Tony Elumelu Foundation. 2023. TEF Impact Report 2022. Lagos: Tony Elumelu Foundation.

Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu & Vanuatu

Global Skills Partnerships: Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC)

Country Classification:	Multiple
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Promising
Target Population:	Eligibility requirements vary by country and course

Context

- **Many Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste faced high youth unemployment** and limited domestic job opportunities, particularly in skilled sectors.
- **Young people frequently lacked pathways to acquire internationally recognized qualifications**, and **domestic training systems** often struggled with quality, capacity, and alignment with labor markets.
- At the same time, **Australia and New Zealand experienced labor shortages** in key semi- and low-skilled sectors.
- These dynamics created an economic and demographic rationale for a **regional labor mobility framework**. Global Skills Partnerships (GSPs) are bilateral or multilateral agreements that link skills training in a country of origin with regulated labor migration to destination countries, designed to benefit origin and destination countries as well as migrants.

Program Overview

- The Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC), established by the Australian government in 2007, became the region's **largest technical and vocational education and training (TVET) investment**.
- The APTC operates five training centers across the Pacific, offering Australian-accredited **certificate and diploma programs** in sectors such as automotive repair, construction, manufacturing, electrical services, tourism and hospitality, and community services.
- In addition to full credentials, the program offers **micro credentials and short courses**.
- Since 2021, the **labor mobility track**, provides additional support to students to prepare them for employment abroad. This support includes **language, digital and financial literacy training**, and **cultural orientation**.
- APTC works closely with the Australian Pacific Labour Facility to identify **job placement opportunities** in Australia.

Results & Outcomes

- The APTC has produced over **20,000 graduates with full qualifications**.
- Graduate tracer studies consistently report **high employer satisfaction rates (95%+)** in terms of quality of graduates and their technical skills.
- While **migration rates** were only **1.2% in 2014**, these have increased to **8% since 2019**, following program adjustments that better aligned training with Australian visa programs and enhanced coordination with the Pacific Labour Facility.

Lessons Learnt

- **Strengthening domestic systems:** The program shifted from relying solely on country offices and partner institutions to engaging local TVET institutions, training local instructors, and upgrading curricula and facilities, improving cost-effectiveness and responsiveness.
- **Reducing training costs:** Costs per student fell from over A$25,000 in 2011 to under A$15,000 in 2022, achieved by sharing costs with employers, using more local trainers, and offering shorter courses and micro-credentials.
- **Need for improved coordination:** Migration barriers, including lack of work experience and visa regulations, have limited international placement despite local demand. APTC is addressing these challenges by improving coordination with Australian employers and immigration authorities.

Global Skills Partnerships. 2021b. "Migration Pathways: Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC)." Center for Global Development. https://gsp.cgdev.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/CGD-Legal-Pathways-Database_APTC.pdf

Bosnia & Herzegovina, Philippines, Tunisia, Indonesia, Jordan, India and Germany

Global Skills Partnerships

Country Classification:	Multiple
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Promising
Target Population:	Skilled nurses in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Philippines, Tunisia, Indonesia, Jordan, and India; and German healthcare employers facing acute staff shortages

Context

- Germany faced a significant and **growing shortage of nurses**, exacerbated by **demographic changes and an aging population**. Projections estimated a need **for 500,000 new nurses by 2030**.
- In contrast, partner countries had a **surplus of qualified nurses** who could not be absorbed by their local labor markets, resulting in high **unemployment** among nurses.

Program Overview

This program was structured to deliver a triple win: meeting Germany's **skills and labor market needs, expanding employment opportunities for workers** in partner countries, and **strengthening training systems and ethical recruitment** to ensure fair, mutually beneficial outcomes. Key components included:

- Partner country agencies and ZAV **evaluated applicants'** professional and personal qualifications.
- GIZ provided comprehensive **support**, including **German language courses** (up to B1/B2 level), **professional training**, and **orientation** on German life and healthcare systems.
- **Intermediation support** to place nurses with German employers in clinics and care homes.
- **Integration services** through which GIZ assisted with visa applications, travel, adaptation upon arrival, and advised employers on supporting nurses' integration and recognition processes.
- Nurses underwent a formal **qualification recognition process** in Germany.
- **Only countries with a surplus of nurses** were selected, in line with WHO guidelines.

Results & Outcomes

- Since 2013, **over 8,000 nursing professionals** and trainees were placed with German employers, with more than **6,200 arriving by 2024**.
- **Over 80% of nurses** remained with their **initial employers after 2 years** (2018 review).
- Program monitoring confirmed **high professional standards** among selected nurses, and employers report **high satisfaction**.
- Nearly all nurses passed their **recognition exams within 10 months**, with integration support cited as a key success factor.
- **Nurses earned more** in Germany (e.g., Filipino nurses earn at least 6 times more), and **remittances** contributed to development in origin countries.

Lessons Learnt

- **Administrative complexity:** Coordinating across multiple countries, credential recognition, language training, and ongoing support required robust management.
- **Support for adaptation:** Language training, cultural orientation, and administrative support were key for success.
- **Ethical recruitment:** Recruiting only from countries with a surplus of nurses prevented negative impacts on local health systems and aligned with international guidelines.
- **Flexibility and scalability:** Expansion to multiple countries and ongoing process refinement, such as skills partnerships for qualification recognition, demonstrated the program's adaptability.
- **Sustainable labor mobility:** Partnerships were more sustainable and politically viable when they invested in strengthening the health workforce in origin countries. Programs like the Philippines-Germany Nursing Global Skill Partnership built on this model by training both migrants and non-migrants, mitigating brain drain while expanding the overall supply of skilled nurses.

Berg, Kim. 2025. "A Win-Win-Win Situation – More Nurses for Germany." https://www.giz.de/en/newsroom/stories/triple-win-nurses-germany.

Low readiness, high opportunities:

Bridge the Gaps

Interventions in this quadrant target people who have gaps in work readiness in a context where job opportunities are available. Target groups tend to have lower educational attainment, limited or no work experience and disadvantaged socioeconomic background. Overall, 19 out of 28 programs in this quadrant are targeted to youth. Many were implemented in UMICs or HICs with relatively thicker labor markets (though often significant informality) or in urban settings in poorer countries where most job opportunities are located. Also represented in this quadrant are programs geared toward specific high-growth sectors of the economy with expanding opportunities.

Skill gaps are the most prevalent type of constraint in this quadrant. They come in four types: (a) weak foundational skills (literacy, numeracy, problem solving); (b) missing occupation-specific technical competencies; (c) shortfalls in socio-emotional/'work-readiness' skills such as teamwork, communication, reliability, and navigating workplace norms; and (d) growing digital skills gaps. TVET systems often struggle with outdated curricula, uneven instructor quality, and inadequate equipment—problems that weaken the relevance of training and slow school-to-work transitions. Several interventions also try to address low formal training coverage and low-recognition credentials, which depress access to good jobs even when workers have learned informally on the job. Together, these constraints generate a skills pipeline that is too narrow, uneven in quality, and poorly credentialed for labor market needs.

Other constraints represented in this quadrant include information constraints and a labor cost wedge for disadvantaged groups. Employers face information asymmetries about applicants' true ability and fit, especially for youth and women, and conventional credentials often carry noisy signals when education quality is variable. As a result, firms struggle to screen high-ability candidates and rely on crude proxies that exclude many capable workers. Jobseekers, meanwhile, face search frictions: low-quality or fragmented labor market information, limited reach of PESs, and reliance on informal networks that transmit vacancies unevenly. Several interventions seek to address limited LMIS functionality, sparse use of real-time data, weak counseling and career guidance coverage, and thin integration between training providers and employer demand—conditions that make it hard for workers to discover viable options and for firms to find the skills they need. A related constraint is depressed demand for certain vulnerable types of workers because the expected cost of hiring from these groups (wages plus payroll charges, onboarding/supervision time, early low productivity, and potential separation costs) can exceed the firm's expected short-run returns, so employers may under-hire some type of workers, such as youth, even when vacancies exist.

Most interventions in this quadrant fall into the workforce preparedness category, though intermediation and wage subsidies for vulnerable groups are also represented. Interventions aimed at imparting technical and soft skills to help workers better meet the demands of employers include TVET programs, models that combine training with internships at employers' premises, dual education programs that combine school-based learning with structured work-based training, and short-term programs designed to fill specific skill gaps. Together, these programs account for 15 of the 28 programs in this quadrant. A number of programs also provide job intermediation and placement services to address the information constraints described above. Wage subsidies to offset the labor cost wedge for certain disadvantaged groups and incentivized hiring can also be found in this quadrant.

Successful workforce preparedness programs show that they are best structured as pipelines to specific jobs, with attention

paid to certification, incentives for providers and participants, and gender-sensitive design. Classroom training should be integrated with mandatory, quality-assured work-based learning and employer co-design, as in Peru (Díaz and Jaramillo 2006) and the Philippines (Igarashi and Acosta 2022). A bundled curriculum—occupation-specific skills complemented by work readiness and baseline digital skills—can boost impact, as in Rwanda (Alcid 2014), India (Borkum et al. 2023), and Brazil (Calero et al. 2017). Competence is made legible through recognized credentials, which were a feature of programs in Uganda (Alfonsi et al. 2020) and Indonesia. Provider performance is sharpened by results-based payments, as shown in Colombia (Attanasio et al. 2017) and Cambodia (World Bank 2024c). Participation and completion are increased through practical supports (transport/meal stipends, childcare, safe schedules), with gender-sensitive design yielding outsized gains for women, as in Bangladesh (Shonchoy et al. 2018) and Argentina (World Bank 2022c).

Successful interventions addressing information frictions show that these are best reduced when screening is centralized and targeted to weak-signal groups. Hiring barriers rooted in information asymmetry are eased when screening and shortlisting are centralized, interviews are guaranteed and scheduled by the intermediary, and allocations are handled with transparent rules to curb congestion, as in North Macedonia (Armand et al. 2026) and Uruguay (Le Barbanchon et al. 2023). Strong early work experiences—even brief, supervised placements—were shown to create credible signals of reliability and productivity, especially when reference letters or certificates were issued, for example in Rwanda (Alcid 2014) and the Philippines (Igarashi and Acosta 2022). Search costs were lowered when participation logistics were aligned with constraints (for example, school hours), and the largest gains were realized among jobseekers with the weakest signals (youth, long-term unemployed, lower-educated), as in South Africa (Abel et al. 2020) and Uruguay (Le Barbanchon et al. 2023).

Experience with wage subsidies suggests that they worked best when embedded in public intermediation and provided appropriate incentives to employers. The largest impacts were obtained in North Macedonia, whose program involved screening applicants and matching them with employment opportunities based on qualifications and experience, coupled with compulsory retention periods and training cost coverage that encouraged on-the-job learning (Armand et al. 2026). Stand-alone, voucher-style subsidies still raised employment in South Africa but with more modest effects (Levinsohn et al. 2014). In Chile, employability improved while wages showed no consistent gains and results varied markedly across regions, indicating that careful targeting and context-specific calibration are required (Oyarzo and Ferrada 2024).

Argentina

Entra21 Program

Country Classification:	Upper-middle income
Implementing Organization:	NGO
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Low-income, un- or underemployed youth between the ages of 18 and 30 who have some secondary schooling in Córdoba, Argentina

Context

- Argentina, like many upper-middle-income countries in Latin America, has faced persistent **youth labor market segmentation**: youth have been nearly three times more likely to be **unemployed** compared to adults, and **formal jobs have been scarce** for low-income youth.
- Low-income youth, particularly those with incomplete secondary education, have encountered structural barriers to labor market entry, including **limited work experience, weak job search networks**, and a **mismatch** between school-acquired skills and employer demands.
- In Córdoba, youth from poor households have been especially vulnerable to **long-term informality and exclusion from formal job** opportunities, compounding intergenerational poverty risks.

Program Overview

Entra21 aimed to improve employment opportunities for at-risk youth through:

- An **integrated training package** combining life-skills modules and 100+ hours of employer-aligned technical training.
- Additional training hours varied by course track, covering either extra technical skills or basic foundational skills, making the program **significantly more intensive** than other youth training schemes.
- Part-time **internships with private firms** (up to 4 months) to acquire on-the-job skills. Firms were also required to provide a **workplace mentor** and **certify work experience and training** at the end of the internship.
- **Strong private sector engagement** shaped curriculum and training design and ensured the relevance of content.
- All eligible applicants were entered into a public lottery that randomly selected who would be invited to participate in the program (treatment group) and who would serve as the control group.

Results & Outcomes

- **Formal employment increased** by 8 pp (**32% higher** than the control group) in the short term.
- **Short-term earnings** were **40% higher** for participants, though gains diminished over the long run.
- Employment and earnings gains were **stronger for men** than women.
- Income gains decreased over time but remained positive on average.
- Analysis of employment transitions indicated that gains stemmed primarily from **greater persistence in formal employment**, rather than higher initial entry into jobs.

Lessons Learnt

- **Private sector involvement:** Strong engagement of firms drives significant labor market gains.
- **Data-driven monitoring:** Long-term administrative data provides valuable insights into employment dynamics and should be integrated into monitoring systems.
- **Scaling considerations:** Scaling intensive programs requires caution, as success may rely partly on self-selection of socially-minded firms, and impacts may differ outside pilot environments.

Alzúa, María laura, Guillermo Cruces, and Carolina Lopez. 2016. "Long-run Effects of Youth Training Programs: Experimental Evidence From Argentina." Economic Enquiry 54 (4): 1839–1859.

Argentina

Promoting Better Jobs through Integrated Labor and Skills Programs (FOMENTAR)

Country Classification:	Upper-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	US$250 million
Effectiveness Rating:	Promising
Target Population:	Youth, women, and vulnerable workers (informal workers and people with disabilities), along with employers and Public Employment offices

Context

- Argentina has faced persistent economic volatility, high inflation, and recurring crises, which have contributed to poverty, inequality, and **widespread labor market informality**.
- The COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impact further worsened employment conditions, especially for **youth, women, and informal workers**.
- Employment and training programs are **fragmented**, and training often **lacks alignment with labor market demand**.

Program Overview

The FOMENTAR program, launched in May 2022, aims to modernize training and employment services:

- **Competency-based training and certification system expansion:** scaling up vocational training, certification, and alignment with labor market needs.
- **Stipends in ALMPs:** financial support to encourage participation in training, apprenticeships, and labor orientation.
- **Strengthening the network of Employment offices:** capacity building, training, and standard-setting for local employment services.
- **Strengthening information systems and monitoring:** enhancing labor market information systems, the Employment Portal, and the Labor Market Occupations Observatory.

Results & Outcomes

- **1.23 million people** registered in the Employment Portal & **7,344 firms** registered vacancies.
- **388,316 participants** engaged in FOMENTAR programs, including:
  - **177,793 youth** (18–24 years),
  - **149,627 women** (25–59 years),
  - **10,032 men** (45–64 years).
- **2,090 staff of employment offices trained** and **1,587 certified**.

Lessons Learnt

- **Integrated approach:** Combining training, certification, and employment services increases reach and efficiency.
- **Digital delivery improved reach and costs:** Virtual courses attracted higher-than-expected participation. Virtual courses can expand access and reduce costs. The Employment Portal improved efficiency by streamlining course delivery and simplifying access.
- **Capacity building is key for sustainability:** Improving the capacity of local employment offices to deliver the services has been key, but it requires sustained investment in staff training and certification.

World Bank. Promoting Better Jobs through Integrated Labor and Skills Programs (P176781). World Bank Projects & Operations. Accessed January 8, 2026. https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P176781.

Argentina

Seguro de Capacitación y Empleo (SCE) program

Country Classification:	Upper-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Promising
Target Population:	Unemployed heads of household (male or female) with completed secondary school and one child under the age of 18

Context

- Following the 2001–02 economic collapse, Argentina has experienced **rapid GDP growth** (≈9% annually in the mid-2000s), **job creation**, and **declining poverty and unemployment**.
- The large crisis-era safety net (a conditional cash transfer program), *Plan Jefes*, reached around 2 million beneficiaries at its peak, but caseloads have fallen considerably by 2010 as incomes and employment recovered.
- Private-sector hiring and formal employment have increased, creating real job opportunities for newly trained participants. Despite these gains, **job quality** has remained a core challenge, with persistent **informality and low wages** motivating post-crisis strategies that prioritize decent work.

Program Overview

A **comprehensive activation program** was designed to gradually replace *Plan Jefes*. Cash transfers were set **50% above the *Plan Jefes* level**, conditional on **regular attendance at the local public employment office** to produce a career plan and participation in recommended interventions, which included:

- Assistance for the completion of **primary and secondary education**.
- Vocational **training** and **apprenticeships**.
- Labor **intermediation** services.
- Indirect **job creation** measures (e.g., employment subsidies).
- Promotion of **self-employment** and micro-enterprise creation.

Results & Outcomes

Relative to *Plan Jefes* (cash transfer without employment support measures), the SCE comprehensive program:

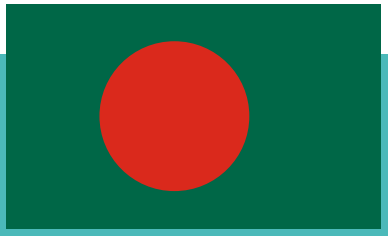
- **Increased** the likelihood of being in **formal employment** in the short term (up to 1.5 years) by around **1 percentage point**.
- Raised real hourly **wages by 17.4%**.
- **Reduced** the probability of being in a **low-paid job by 8 percentage points**.
- **Reduced** the probability of **working excessive hours by 3 percentage points**.
- **Lowered** the likelihood of **unemployment by 8%** among youth aged 18–24.
- Produced **stronger positive outcomes for men** compared to women.

Lessons Learnt

- **Intermediation can improve job quality:** Nearly all participants interacted with their local employment office; many used no tools beyond job-search services.
- **Activation is a credible exit from broad transfers:** SCE program reduced dependence on universal CCTs while improving labor market trajectories.
- **Work-continuation provisions** help smooth the transition from benefits to employment: Temporary benefit retention after taking a job mitigates disincentives to formal employment.
- **Physical presence of employment offices** helps, but density alone doesn't explain outcomes: The expansion to 341 public employment offices provided reach, though office numbers showed negligible direct correlation with SCE participation or baseline outcomes.

Mourelo, Elva López, and Verónica Escudero. 2017. "Effectiveness of Active Labor Market Tools in Conditional Cash Transfers Programs: Evidence for Argentina." World Development 94: 422–447.

Bangladesh



Vocational Training "Plus" Program

Country Classification:	Lower-middle income
Implementing Organization:	NGO
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Youth aged 18-30 from moderate or extremely poor households with irregular income and/or seasonal unemployment

Context

- Bangladesh's rapid **economic growth and urban industrialization**, particularly in the ready-made garments (RMG) sector, has created substantial labor demand.
- **Rural workers**, however, have **often lacked the skills**, urban exposure, and liquidity to access these jobs.
- While skills development has remained central to improving labor market outcomes, many rural youth have continued to face additional barriers to **internal migration**, including **risk aversion, limited information, high relocation costs**, and **employer screening constraints**.
- **"Training Plus"** approaches, which combine **vocational training with targeted support** to facilitate migration and urban job search, have aimed to address the full set of constraints faced by poor rural workers.

Program Overview

The Training Plus program aimed to reduce poverty by enabling rural youth in northern Bangladesh to **access urban employment opportunities in the apparel sector**. It consists in an **integrated approach that combines vocational training with complementary support**—such as information, migration assistance and work-based learning—to enhance employment outcomes:

- The **information support** included a day-long job-related information session covering factory environment, working conditions, wage rates, hiring procedures, and relevant skills.
- The one-month long residential **vocational training session** was tailored to the RMG industry, while **migration support** aimed to remove liquidity and coordination constraints associated with relocating.
- To measure its impact, beneficiaries were assigned to varying packages: (1) information only, (2) information + training, (3) information + training + migration support, and (4) the full package including apprenticeships/internships.

Results & Outcomes

- **Lower uptake and completion** rates among **females**.
- Information alone or standard vocational training without additional support had no significant impact on employment.
- Six months after training, the **Information + Training + Migration Support package** increased **RMG employment by 8.4 pp and raised earnings by ~29%**, while the **full package increased employment by 21.9 pp and more than doubled earnings**.
- **Migration** support alone increased the likelihood of **employment by ~50 pp**.
- The full package and the package with migration support generated positive **impacts on income, remittance flows, household assets, and poverty reduction** even 18 months later.
- The **benefit-cost ratio for the full package was ~8.85**, indicating cost-effective potential for scale-up.

Lessons Learnt

- **Addressing migration barriers:** Reducing liquidity and psychological barriers to urban migration is a highly effective way to connect rural youth to better jobs - more so than skills training alone.
- **Bundled interventions:** Effective labor market integration for rural poor requires combining different components that simultaneously address skills, mobility, and urban adaptation constraints.
- **Targeting female participation:** Non-economic barriers such as social norms and religious practices hinder women's participation in training and labor markets, requiring specific policy attention.

Shonchoy, Abu, Tomoki Fujii, and Selim Raihan. 2018. "Barriers to Labor Migration for the Rural Poor." Research Paper. Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3395229

Bosnia & Herzegovina

Private Provisioning of Employment Services

Country Classification:	Upper-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Private Sector
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Vulnerable unemployed jobseekers—women, long-term unemployed, youth, and those newly unemployed due to COVID-19

Context

- **Unemployment has remained high**, especially among women, youth, and low-skilled workers, with many out of work for years.
- Employers have often struggled to find candidates with **appropriate skills**, while many jobseekers—especially young people and those with lower educational attainment, and the long-term unemployed and inactive—have faced **difficulties signaling their skills**.
- Jobseekers have relied heavily on **informal search channels**, such as friends, family networks, and direct contact with employers, which has disadvantaged individuals with weaker networks.
- **Sluggish economic growth, limited fiscal space**, and a high ratio of registered unemployed to counsellors have put **pressure on public employment services**, constraining their ability to support jobseekers effectively.

Program Overview

The program provided **private employment services to unemployed or previously inactive applicants** from the target group. Applicants were randomly allocated to one of two types of support for evaluation in a randomized controlled trial:

- **Counselling (control group):** profiling, help with CVs and job search planning, provision of labor market information and individual counselling.
- **Counselling plus job matching:** the above, plus direct referrals to employers or submission of jobseeker profiles.

The private provider was paid on a **performance-based contract**: fixed payments for profiling and developing individual action plans and a top-up variable payments for each successful job placement that lasted at least 3 months.

Results & Outcomes

- Counselling + job matching increased the **likelihood of formal employment by 25%** 3–6 months after the program compared to counselling alone.
- The impact persisted, with a **23% higher likelihood of formal employment** after 21–24 months.
- **Effects were stronger for youth** under 30, low-skilled jobseekers (secondary education or less), and those with short unemployment durations (less than one year).
- No significant impact was observed for long-term unemployed participants.
- Counsellors engaged in "**cream-skimming**", prioritizing jobseekers considered more employable for active matching.

Lessons Learnt

- **Outsourcing:** Private providers can effectively deliver employment services in high-unemployment contexts.
- **Active matching:** Direct referrals benefit youth and low-skilled jobseekers with limited networks.
- **Long-term unemployed need more support:** Standard job matching is insufficient; they require complementary or more intensive support (e.g., rehabilitation, coaching, training).
- **Performance Incentives:** Tying payments to sustained placements (not just enrollments) drives stronger provider effort. However, employment verification processes can divert providers from service delivery.
- Prevent Cream-Skimming: Contract design and monitoring must anticipate and ensure inclusion of harder-to-place groups.

Balavac-Orlic, Merima, John T. Giles, Siddharth Hari, and Mirey Ovadiya. 2024. "Private Provisioning of Employment Services: Experimental Evidence from Bosnia and Herzegovina." World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 10826. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.

Brazil

Galpão Aplauso Program

Country Classification:	Upper-middle income
Implementing Organization:	NGO (*Galpão Aplauso*)
Project Budget:	Not available.
Effectiveness Rating:	Promising (measured through a randomized controlled trial).
Target Population:	Low-income youth under 30 residing in Rio de Janeiro. Final selection based on interview clearance and performance in basic math and language tests

Context

- Despite Brazil's overall labor market progress over the last decade, youth from low-income urban areas—especially in favelas—have remained marginalized and have faced disproportionately **high unemployment**.
- Rio de Janeiro's economic dynamism has not translated into inclusive labor market access for at-risk youth, as **territorial conflict** and **insecurity** have further **restricted mobility and employability**.
- Disadvantaged youth have **lacked access to quality education, job networks**, and the socio-emotional and behavioral traits employers often prioritize, such as reliability, teamwork, and perseverance.

Program Overview

Galpão Aplauso was a multi-dimensional youth employability program combining:

- **Academic and vocational education**, including remedial courses in mathematics and Portuguese and construction-related skills such as wood-shop and soldering.
- **Life skills training** covering values and ethics such as civic responsibility, respect, solidarity, health, and honesty.
- The pedagogic model used **artistic expression and theatre as training mechanisms**, enabling youth to learn through playful activities.
- The program was intensive, including 300 hours of **vocational**, 180 hours of **academic and basic skills**, and 120 hours of **life skills training**.

Results & Outcomes

- Short-term employment and earnings effects were positive but not statistically significant.
- After 4–5 months, participants had **a 21.3 pp higher probability of employment, 26.6 pp higher probability of having a salaried job**, and **23.6% higher monthly earnings**.
- No impact was observed on socio-emotional skills.
- No effect on the formality of jobs, likely due to the already high level of formal employment in Rio and no explicit intervention targeting formality.

Lessons Learnt

- **Multi-component programs:** Intensive programs can generate substantial medium-term returns, even for highly disadvantaged youth.
- **Time-intensive interventions:** Positive impacts may appear only after program completion, as participants have limited time for job search during training.
- **Participant traits matter for impact:** There was indicative evidence that baseline socioemotional skills and behavioral traits can positively impact success.
- **Targeting is key for scale-up:** Selective targeting of beneficiaries is crucial; broad public training programs may not have the same effects.

Calero, Carla, Veronica Gonzalez Diez, Yuri S. D. Soares, Jochen Kluve, and Carlos Henrique Corseuil. 2017. "Can Arts-Based Interventions Enhance Labor Market Outcomes Among Youth? Evidence from a Randomized Trial in Rio de Janeiro." Labour Economics 45: 131–142.

Cambodia

Skills for Better Jobs Project

Country Classification:	Lower-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	US$40 million
Effectiveness Rating:	Promising
Target Population:	Upcoming workforce (youth aged 15–25 entering the labor market) as well as current workforce (adults seeking to upskill)

Context

Cambodia has prioritized job creation and workforce upskilling to support a transition from lower-skilled and labor-intensive industries toward higher-skilled sectors. However, the workforce has faced several persistent challenges:

- **Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) enrollment has remained low**, and employer engagement in skills development programs has been limited.
- **Training quality has often been misaligned with industry needs**, leading firms—particularly exporters—to struggle to hire medium-skilled workers.
- **Labor market information and career orientation services have been limited**, contributing to underinvestment in skills by individuals, especially youth, women, and other marginalized groups.

Program Overview

- The project **strengthened the TVET system** to better respond to industry needs by establishing Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) for priority industries, updating curricula through Standard Training Packages, promoting industry–school partnerships, and upgrading training facilities to improve alignment with labor market demand.
- It **expanded the labor market information system**, upgraded local employment offices, and strengthened counseling and career guidance services to support informed education and career choices.
- The project also built the **capacity of sector associations and private training providers** to deliver flexible, employer-responsive training, supported through a competitive grant window for innovative proposals.
- Implementation was led jointly by the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training and the Skills Development Fund, using **performance-based financing for public training institutes and competitive grants for private providers**.

Results & Outcomes

No evaluation or results yet (project is ongoing).

By March 2029, the project aims to:

- Support **8,000 trainees** in priority sectors.
- Provide counseling and career guidance to 25,000 individuals.
- Achieve **75% employer satisfaction** with graduate skills and ensure **75% of graduates**—including women and youth—secured **good jobs** within six months, defined as employment or self-employment earning more than US$237.
- Deliver **10 standard training packages** for priority sectors, **train 240 instructors** on updated curricula, and ensure 85% of supported institutions met annual performance targets.
- Establish a **robust LMIS** and track job placement ratios through upgraded employment offices.

Lessons Learnt

- **Industry engagement:** Strong and sustained engagement with industry—through Sector Skills Councils, employer associations, and formal partnerships with training institutions—is critical to ensure training relevance and employer buy-in.
- **Results-based financing and incentives:** Linking financing to verified results strengthens accountability and incentivizes training providers to improve quality and labor market outcomes.
- **Data-based approach:** Emphasis on collecting and using labor market data to identify priority sectors, inform training and career guidance.

World Bank. Skills for Better Jobs Project (P179159). World Bank Projects & Operations. Accessed January 8, 2026. https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P179159.

Colombia

Jóvenes en Acción (Youth in Action)

Country Classification:	Upper-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	US$22 million
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Poor, unemployed youth aged 18-25 years living in seven major cities (Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, Barranquilla, Bucaramanga, Manizales and Cartagena)

Context

- **Youth unemployment** has remained extremely high among poor urban households, **exceeding 50%** for 18–25-year-olds living in large cities and belonging to the lowest two income deciles.
- Employment opportunities for these youth have been dominated by **informal, low-productivity jobs** without contracts, benefits, or social security.
- **Educational attainment has been low**, as many poor urban youth have dropped out before completing secondary school and few have accessed vocational or tertiary education.
- At the same time, **demand for certified skills has increased**, particularly in urban areas, while training supply has remained weak and fragmented, resulting in persistent **skills mismatches** and **shortages of job-ready workers** reported by firms.

Program Overview

The program was a **training and internship intervention** designed to improve employability and access to formal sector jobs for disadvantaged youth:

- Three months of **classroom training** (by private training institutions) with a **formal certificate**.
- Three months of **on-the-job training** (unpaid internships by legally registered companies) with certification.
- The program included a **small stipend** for participants.
- **Payment for results**: a substantial part of the payment to the training institutions is conditioned on the student completing the internship, with additional payments if the trainees are hired.
- Applicants were either assigned to participate in the program (treatment group) or to a control group (no training).

Results & Outcomes

- **Formal earnings** of beneficiaries were **11.8 percent higher** relative to the control group, and they made larger contributions to social security.
- The **long run effects** of the program are **stronger for women** than for men, narrowing gender gaps in formal employment and earnings.
- **Tertiary education enrolment increased by 31%** compared to the control group with **spillover effects** to other family members also enrolling.
- Cost per participant was modest (**~US$750**). **Long-term gains outweighed program costs**, especially for women.
- A long-term follow-up (3-9 years later) showed that beneficiaries had a **4 pp higher probability of working in the formal sector**, earned **13.6% more in formal earnings**, and contributed **10-15% more to social security**.

Lessons Learnt

- **Private sector delivery works if incentives are right:** Payment for results provided a strong incentive to identify skills for which a demand was present in the labor market.
- **Gender lens:** Programs should actively encourage female participation and address barriers (e.g., childcare, transport).
- **Work experience is crucial:** Internships complemented classroom training and gave youth a first entry point into the formal sector.
- **Certification adds value:** Providing recognized credentials helped participants signal their skills to employers beyond the internship.
- Vocational training skills complement additional skills gained through formal education among participants.

Attanasio, Orazio, Arlen Guarín, Carlos Medina, and Costas Meghir. 2017. "Vocational Training for Disadvantaged Youth in Colombia: A Long-Term Follow-Up." American Economic Journal: Applied Economics 9 (2): 131–43.

Honduras

Temporary Jobs Program for At-Risk Youth (PGET)

Country Classification:	Lower-middle income
Implementing Organization:	NGO (*Fundación Integral para el Desarrollo de Honduras*)
Project Budget:	Approximately US$698 per participant
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Youth aged 18-30 who are not currently in education, training, or consistently participating in the labor market from La Ceiba, Choloma, and El Progreso

Context

- **Violence** has remained a significant challenge and has been particularly concentrated among adolescents and young adults in marginalized urban communities, who have faced limited access to education, employment, and training.
- **Youth unemployment and social exclusion** have persisted, with nearly **one-third of young people remaining out of school and work**, while violence, extortion, and criminal networks have been widespread in urban areas.
- **Criminality and insecurity** have imposed large economic costs—reaching up to 16% of firm sales—while constraining development, reinforcing inequality, and undermining poverty reduction.
- **Structural barriers** to opportunity, combined with exposure to crime, low human capital, and weak social mobility, have reinforced cycles of violence and have limited economic opportunities for youth.

Program Overview

PGET was a three-month program that aimed to improve labor market outcomes and reduce violence perpetration and victimization. It consisted of four components:

- **Technical, vocational, and soft skills training** covered professional conduct, work ethic, communication, conflict resolution, and violence prevention, with participants receiving on average three hours of technical or vocational training and two hours of soft skills training per week.
- **Group-based cognitive behavioral therapy** addressed mental and behavioral biases, impulsive behavior, conflict resolution and issues in participants' lives, through approximately twenty-two two-hour sessions over twelve weeks.
- **Temporary jobs** provided youth with opportunities to practice technical and soft skills through hands-on work and served as a positive signal to potential employers; participants worked eight hours per week on local public goods and community services.
- **A cash grant totaling US$445** was paid in three monthly installments to incentivize participation, ease immediate economic constraints, and support job-related investments such as transportation or work uniforms.

Results & Outcomes

Results from the preliminary impact evaluation indicate:

- 4-5 years after the program, participants were **16% more likely to have worked** recently or to be actively searching for work, **42% more likely to be formally employed**, and **114% more likely to be self-employed**.
- No statistically significant impacts on average hours worked or earnings from the main economic activity.
- The program had no significant effects on antisocial behavior or reported alcohol and drug use but led to **meaningful reductions in intimate partner violence**.
- The intervention generated large and statistically significant **improvements in self-efficacy and reductions in the incidence of mild depression**.

Lessons Learnt

- **Sustained impact:** The program achieved sustained results lasting at least 4-5 years in a fragile environment by combining work experience, practical skills and psychological support.
- **Psychological impacts:** The positive impacts on subjective well-being, self-efficacy, and reduced depression suggest that PGET improved youth's resilience and ability to manage social risk factors present in their communities.
- **Scaling challenge:** While the program improved individual outcomes, the scale may not have been sufficient to alter the social environment, particularly where violent gangs and crime remain pervasive.

Chioda, Laura, Benjamin Feigenberg, Mariana Garcia Martinez, Marcus Holmlund, and Guadalupe Montenegro Muro. 2024. Honduras Safer Municipalities Project: Impact Evaluation of the Temporary Jobs Program for At-Risk Youth. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Indonesia

Labor Market Information and Skills System Transformation (LISTRAF)

Country Classification:	Upper-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	US$145 million
Effectiveness Rating:	Promising
Target Population:	Jobseekers, including youth and women, vulnerable groups with limited access to training and labor market information, employers and training centers

Context

- Indonesia's workforce is **relatively low-skilled**; only 55% completed lower secondary education, while demand grows for digital, cognitive, and interpersonal skills. **Female labor force participation is low**, at 53%.
- The country experienced a shift from rural/agriculture to urban/services, facing labor market challenges such as persistent skills mismatches, **uneven TVET quality, limited on-the-job training, high mobility costs**, and rapid technological change.
- **Employers struggle to hire workers** (77% struggle for high-skilled workers, 66% for mid-skilled, and 40% for low-skilled roles).
- **The provision of labor market information is weak.** The prevalence of informal job search channels combined with spatial and skill mismatches points to the need for better labor market information.

Program Overview

The main components of the LISTRAF project (active) are:

- **Labor Market Information System (LMIS)**: upgrade the existing SIAPKerja (*Sistem Informasi dan Aplikasi Pelayanan Ketenagakarjaan "Ready to Work"*) LMI platform to deliver user-centered services, strengthen data systems for better policy and service delivery, expand inclusive access points through local service units (SKSUs) and increase employer' engagement in the LMIS through enhanced services for employers.
- **Training expansion:** build and upgrade training centers (CMTCs) nationwide, align programs with evolving labor market needs including green skills, and improve outreach to vulnerable groups through mobile SKSUs.
- **Training quality and governance:** enhance CMTC curricula and partnerships with industry, standardize SKSU services for job placement, and improve institutional management of TVET.

Results & Outcomes

- Reached **3+ million beneficiaries** (registered and engaged through SIAPKerja).
- **30% increase in successful job matches** via the LMIS.
- **122,000+ trainees** enrolled in CMTC programs, including **59,600+ women**.
- **75%** of CMTC **graduates placed in jobs** within six months of completion.
- **Strengthened TVET quality and governance**, including standardized curricula and industry partnerships.

Lessons Learnt

- **Data-driven design:** Aims to improve usability and reach through human-centered LMIS design. Align training with labor market needs using data-driven insights from a solid LMIS.
- **Mobile outreach for inclusion:** Mobile local service units improve accessibility for vulnerable groups and thereby promote inclusion.
- **Employer engagement:** Expected to enhance job matching through active employer engagement.
- **Integrated approach:** Aims to tackle systemic labor market gaps with integrated information, training, and placement interventions.

World Bank. Labor Market Information and Skills System Transformation for Labor Market Flexibility (P166693). World Bank Projects & Operations. Accessed January 8, 2026. https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P166693.

Lebanon

Skilling Up Lebanon (SUL)

Country Classification:	Lower-middle income
Implementing Organization:	NGOs and Private Sector
Project Budget:	US$0.35 million
Effectiveness Rating:	Promising
Target Population:	Youth across schools, universities, and the workforce, with a focus on women and other vulnerable groups

Context

- Lebanon has faced severe economic, political, and labor market crises, with **youth unemployment at 48%** (ages 15–24) and a labor market impacted by the influx of **Syrian refugees**.
- Rapid **digital transformation** has reshaped the nature of jobs; increasing demand for digital, analytical, and cognitive skills.
- **Outdated curriculum**, last updated in 1997, has been limiting youth's acquisition of market-relevant digital skills.
- There is no comprehensive digital skills policy and **limited engagement of the private sector**.

Program Overview

SUL aimed to increase access to market-relevant digital skills for Lebanese youth by **identifying the digital skills most in demand by employers** and **expanding access** to these skills through **training and experience**:

- The project supported a test of the SUL model by **establishing partnerships with companies, setting up digital platforms** for information, monitoring, and evaluation, and by developing a brand and outreach strategy to engage stakeholders. Partnerships were established with **162 companies** for internships and job market analysis.
- Digital skills pilots provided **training and practical experience** for school youth, internships for university students and young professionals, including **career guidance, internships**, and **specialized courses in digital marketing, DevOps, and UI/UX**.

Results & Outcomes

- **162 partner companies** to develop the internship pilot.
- A **job market digest** conducted with 82 national and international companies, providing information on market-relevant digital skills and job openings in the digital and creative sector.
- A **career and internship portal** was developed.
- **1,804 youth trained (57% women)** through **5 targeted pilot programs**, including internships, career guidance, soft- and digital skills training.
- **A 67% increase in employment** and a **94% increase in earnings** for participants who worked before and after the intervention.

Lessons Learnt

- **Adaptability:** Flexible delivery and monitoring are essential in crisis contexts (e.g., shifting to online courses while maintaining in-person support), as well as communicating in a culturally sensitive and timely way with beneficiaries.
- **Designing context-specific interventions:** Tailor digital skills content to local and regional labor market needs; clearly communicate training expectations and requirements to participants.
- **Inclusion and coordination:** Use transparent selection criteria, engage NGOs/CBOs to reach vulnerable groups and ensure gender-sensitive delivery.

World Bank. The Skilling Up Lebanon (SUL) Project (P176444). World Bank Projects & Operations. Accessed January 8, 2026. https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P176444.

Mongolia

Vocational Education Reform

Country Classification:	Lower-middle income*
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Youth who completed 9 to 12 years of schooling and applied for 1 to 2.5 year vocational training programs

** At time of implementation*

Context

- Mongolia has faced a tight labor market with **strong demand for skilled and semi-skilled workers** following the copper-and-coal super-cycle of the late 2000s, which expanded output in mining, construction, and mineral processing and spilled over to other sectors, including services.
- The **TVET sector deteriorated after the transition to a market economy** and has been unable to meet the rising demand for skilled labor.
- **Youth unemployment has remained high**, with many young people working in low-paying informal jobs or in agriculture. Recognizing this skills mismatch, the Mongolian government has reformed and upgraded the TVET sector with support from foreign donors, bringing training closer to labor market needs.

Program Overview

The early 2010 TVET reform included:

- Establishing a **new institutional framework** to align TVET policy with labor market needs.
- Introducing a **competency-based model** with curricula specifying practical skill outcomes tied to occupational standards.
- **Upgrading equipment and infrastructure in priority sectors** such as construction, mechanics, welding, and mining.
- **Retraining instructors and updating teaching methods** to meet Competency-Based Education and Training standards.
- Implementing a **new Labor Market Information System (LMIS)** to track skilled labor demand and guide training provision.
- The impact of the reformed TVET system was evaluated using a randomized controlled trial, with public lotteries for applications organized in ten oversubscribed formal vocational education schools.

Results & Outcomes

The randomized controlled trial revealed:

- Graduates were **14% more likely to be employed** in a paid job one year after completing the TVET program, with a larger effect **for women (+23%)**.
- Graduates were **9% more likely to have held a paid job for more than one month** (+15% for women).
- Impacts increased over time, lasting up to three years post-graduation.
- **Women** completing the 2-year vocational program **earned 13% more**, while no significant impact on earnings was observed for men.
- Graduates worked **2 hours more** per week and were more likely to work **in sectors tied to their training**.
- Positive impacts were strongest in earlier cohorts (2010–2011) and weakened for the 2012 cohort, who graduated during an economic downturn.

Lessons Learnt

- **Competency-based training:** Linking TVET curricula to labor market demand increased outcomes, ensuring graduates had skills that employers valued.
- **Women's labor market outcomes:** TVET had stronger impacts on women, improving employment rates and earnings where alternatives were limited.
- **Targeted trades:** Focusing training on high-demand sectors (construction, mechanics, services...) raised the likelihood that graduates entered relevant jobs.
- **Economic cycles:** Impacts were weaker during downturns, highlighting the need for complementary policies when the economy contracts.
- **Industry engagement:** Collaboration with employers in curriculum design and occupational standards ensured training relevance and improved graduate outcomes.

Balavac-Orlic, Merima, John T. Giles, Siddharth Hari, and Mirey Ovadiya. 2024. "Private Provisioning of Employment Services: Experimental Evidence from Bosnia and Herzegovina." World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 10826. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.

North Macedonia

Subsidized Employment Program (SEP)

Country Classification:	Upper-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Registered job seekers from vulnerable groups (low-income, social assistance beneficiaries, youth); employers fulfilling criteria related to their workforce

Context

- In the years leading up to the program launch (2015), North Macedonia has faced persistent structural and long-term unemployment, with a national **unemployment** rate of **28%**, rising to **54% among youth** (15–24) and 40% among individuals with less than upper secondary education. More than **80%** of the unemployed have been **long-term unemployed**.
- Labor market re-entry has been especially difficult for vulnerable groups, including women, the long-term unemployed, and workers with no formal employment history, due to **information frictions, lack of recent experience**, and **weak signaling mechanisms**.

Program Overview

The Subsidized Employment Program (SEP) was launched in 2015 by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy to increase employment among long-term unemployed individuals. The program had two core components:

- **Job matching**: The National Employment Agency (NEA) screened and matched eligible job seekers to employer-submitted vacancies based on qualifications and skills.
- **Wage and training subsidy**: Employers who hired a matched job seeker for at least 12 months received a six-month wage subsidy to cover the employee's wage and an additional transfer to cover training costs.

For evaluation purposes, all applicants were pre-matched to vacancies and then randomly assigned either to be invited to an interview for a subsidized position (treatment group) or not (control group).

Results & Outcomes

- Being selected for interview resulted in an **87%-96% increase in the probability of formal employment** and an **85%-94% increase in employment duration** (3.5 years after program start).
- Individuals in the treatment group acumulated about **four times more employment days** in an open-ended (as opposed to fixed-term) contracts and experienced a **93%-102% increase in labor earnings** relative to the control group.
- In the first 42 months of the program, the **labor earnings of job seekers who were offered a job were 4.1-4.3 times larger** than those of job seekers who were not offered a job.
- **High-cost effectiveness:** earnings fully offset program costs within 20–22 months, with returns of 113% (low-skilled workers) and 93% (high-skilled workers) over a 42-month window.

Lessons Learnt

- **Targeting the vulnerable:** Women and individuals without formal employment experience saw the largest gains, suggesting the program effectively reduced information frictions and helped employers identify the productivity of candidates with weak labor market signals.
- **On-the-job learning matters for retention:** Improvements in job-related tasks and noncognitive skills highlight the role of on-the-job learning for longer-term employment retention.
- **Selection of participants was pivotal for take-up:** SEP strategic recruitment of both firms and workers contributed to the high take-up, but this may limit scalability.

Armand, Alex, Pedro Carneiro, Federico Tagliati, and Yiming Xia. 2026. "Can Subsidized Employment Tackle Long-Term Unemployment? Experimental Evidence from North Macedonia." Journal of Development Economics 178.

Peru

PROJOVEN Youth Training Program

Country Classification:	Low income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Promising
Target Population:	Poor youth, aged 16-24, with low levels of formal education, no-or little experience that are currently un-or underemployed or out of the labor force

Context

- In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Peru's labor market has been characterized by **high informality and youth unemployment**.
- Despite economic stabilization and growth, many young people—especially from poorer households—have faced barriers to formal labor market entry, including **employer skepticism, lack of technical skills**, and **weak job networks**.
- The **training market** had expanded rapidly but remained largely **unregulated, with no functioning certification system**, wide **variation in quality, limited ties to the productive sector**, and **uneven geographical access**.

Program Overview

PROJOVEN (*Programa de Capacitación Laboral Juvenil*) was launched by the Peruvian Ministry of Labor in 1996 (operational until 2010) to **improve employment opportunities for poor youth** and **enhance the quality of vocational training services**.
The program included:

- 3 months of **classroom-based technical training** covering skills such as knitting, sales support, and baking, followed by a **3-month internship**.
- During the internship, firms provided a **stipend** (lower than minimum wage) and **health insurance** coverage.
- Training was delivered by accredited **private or public training agencies** (PPTAs) and designed **in coordination with the firms** offering internships.

Results & Outcomes

- The program had no significant effect on overall employment but substantially **improved employment quality**—particularly formal employment—for men and younger participants.
- Using electronic payroll data, significant effects were also observed on **registered employment among women (26%)** and **youth** over 18 (**35%**).
- Impacts on labor income and socio-emotional indicators were positive but not statistically significant.
- Differences in statistical significance across data sources may reflect variations in self-reported vs. registered employment, sample sizes, and differential attrition.

Lessons Learnt

- **Demand-driven training:** Combining technical training with firm-based internships is key to improving labor market insertion.
- **Strong data systems:** The absence of a centralized, standardized data repository posed challenges to ensuring full integrity and transparency in the evaluation; and highlights the importance of strong monitoring and evaluation systems.

Díaz, Juan José, and Miguel Jaramillo. 2006. "An Evaluation of the Peruvian Youth Labor Training Program Projoven." IDB Working Paper. Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank.
Díaz, Juan José, and David Rosas-Shady. 2016. "Impact Evaluation of the Job Youth Training Program Projoven." IDB Working Paper Series No. IDB-WP-693. Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank.

Philippines

Dual Training System (DTS)

Country Classification:	Lower-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Promising
Target Population:	Youth who completed lower secondary education (junior high-school)

Context

- The **NEET rate among 15–24-year-olds** has remained around **25%**, highlighting **substantial barriers to school-to-work transitions**.
- Employers have reported increasing **difficulty in hiring workers with relevant skills**—up by 30% over the past six years—especially in growing, innovative, and large firms.
- This has signaled a pronounced **readiness gap** between education outputs and labor market needs.

Program Overview

Modeled on the German system, the Philippine Dual Training System (DTS) was first launched in the 1980s through a joint project of the Southeast Asian Science Foundation and the Hans Seidel Foundation and expanded nationwide in 1991. The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) now manages and coordinates the DTS as an **enterprise-based technical and vocational education and training (TVET) program**.

- The Philippines DTS **combines classroom-based learning** with **structured work-based training: ~40% of the training is school-based**, while **~60% is spent in a company**, giving students hands-on experience and theoretical instruction. The program typically lasts 1.5 to 2 years and targets youth who have completed junior high school.
- Trainees receive **allowances of up to 75% of the minimum wage**, while participating firms are offered **tax incentives**.
- TESDA accredits and monitors both Technical-Vocational Institutes (TVIs) and firms, ensuring **quality across diverse trades and dual learning sites**.

Results & Outcomes

- Since its official start in 1994, DTS has trained **~27,000 students per year**.
- DTS participation was associated with higher earnings, particularly for students with lower prior high school grades. For this group, **DTS graduates earned ~8.2% more than peers from regular vocational programs**.
- Immediately after training, **DTS graduates were ~7 percentage points more likely to be employed**. However, this employment advantage diminished over time.

Lessons Learnt

- **Equity in outreach:** Strongest gains are among trainees with lower prior academic performance; including this group enhances equity and overall impact.
- **Sustaining employability gains:** DTS boosts immediate employment, but effects taper over time; post-completion support and alignment with labor market demand are needed.
- **Incentives matter:** Trainee allowances and firm tax incentives encourage participation and are crucial for program stability.
- **Quality assurance and monitoring:** Dual-site training, diverse trades, and variable supervision increase monitoring costs; robust systems are essential for tracking and ensuring quality.
- **Industry partnerships:** Deepening engagement with larger or innovative firms can improve curriculum relevance and support longer-term employment gains.

Igarashi, Takiko, and Pablo Acosta. 2022. "Who Benefits from Dual Training Systems? Evidence from the Philippines." Philippine Review of Economics 59(1): 26–45.

Rwanda

Akazi Kanoze ("A Job Well Done") (AK) Project

Country Classification:	Low income
Implementing Organization:	NGO (*Akazi Kanoze Access*)
Project Budget:	US$12.5 million
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Vulnerable, rural, out-of-school Rwandan youth, aged 14 to 35

Context

- Despite Rwanda's strong economic growth in recent decades, youth have continued to face **high rates of underemployment, low-productivity subsistence farming**, and casual employment—particularly among secondary school leavers and recent graduates.
- Rural and urban youth alike have struggled with **limited access to job information, poor work-readiness**, and a **mismatch between employer expectations and graduate capabilities**, especially for skills such as communication and teamwork.
- Youth have also reported challenges such as **loss of agribusiness** due to illness or unexpected shocks, **unstable and seasonal employment**, and the need to use savings to support urgent family needs.

Program Overview

- All participants underwent a modular, 100-hour **work readiness curriculum** including personal awareness, communication, professional conduct, financial literacy, personal health, and rights and responsibilities.
- Youth were also offered **workforce development skills training** and **resource programs**, including savings groups, in-depth skills training, entrepreneurship training, and youth mentoring.
- The *Akazi Kanoze* program provided participants with access to **workforce linkage opportunities** (internships, apprenticeships, formal sector jobs, and other livelihood opportunities).
- At the end of the program, youth received a **certificate** signed by the Rwandan Workforce Development Authority.

Results & Outcomes

- Rural beneficiaries were **12% more likely to be employed**.
- Participants reported significant **gains in work readiness**, including ability to apply for jobs or improve current positions.
- Participants gained comfort with **business plan development** and stronger understanding of **marketing** techniques and **customer engagement**.
- Youth noted **improvements in financial management and savings**, particularly for business start-up capital.

Lessons Learnt

- **Work readiness skills:** Self-reflection, planning, marketing, goal setting, listening and speaking, teamwork, and understanding rights and responsibilities were cited as most useful skills.
- **Market context is critical:** Follow-up interviews highlighted the influence of external market factors, such as risks to agribusiness from animal diseases and climate events.
- **Tailored and resilient programs:** Future programs need to align with local labor market demands and youth needs while incorporating strategies to improve resilience against external shocks.

USAID (United States Agency for International Development). 2014. A Randomized Controlled Trial of Akazi Kanoze Youth in Rural Rwanda. Final Evaluation Report.
USAID. 2016. Akazi Kanoze Youth Employment and Livelihood Outcomes: A Qualitative Follow-Up of Program Graduates.

South Africa

The Value of Reference Letters

Country Classification:	Upper-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution and Research Team
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Youth aged 18-34 not working, with prior work experience and up to secondary education level

Context

- South Africa faced **high unemployment**, especially among **youth** aged 15-24 (**~60%** in 2024), and over a third of the youth were **not in education, employment, or training (~34-35%)**.
- Many jobseekers lacked **full secondary education (55%)** and work experience (50.6%), while **education quality was low and highly variable**, limiting the signaling power of credentials.
- Firms often faced **information asymmetries** in hiring, struggling to assess candidate productivity and ability. Large firms sometimes used aptitude tests, but small firms lacked capacity for systematic assessments and relied heavily on **informal hiring through social networks**.
- This approach reinforced bias and inequality, particularly among disadvantaged women. **Reference letters from past employers** offered a potentially more equitable way to reduce information frictions, but many jobseekers did not use letters due to lack of awareness, perceived irrelevance, or time constraints.

Program Overview

The project aimed to improve young jobseekers labor market outcomes by encouraging them to use reference letters in their application. Jobseekers were randomly assigned to one of two interventions:

- **Standardized reference letter**: Jobseekers received a template designed based on employer feedback and were encouraged to have a former employer complete it and use it in their job search.
- **Information and cash incentive**: Some participants received information on the benefits of including a reference letter or a cash incentive (~half a daily wage) to encourage obtaining one.

In addition, for the purpose of research and to measure the value of reference letters, applications were submitted with and without reference letters on behalf of job seekers to test employers' demand.

Results & Outcomes

- Attaching a reference letter to an application **increased callbacks by 60%** and **interview requests by 62%**, with the strongest effects among women.
- **Female participants** using reference letters were **more likely to receive job interviews and to be employed** after 3 months, suggesting that reducing information asymmetries can improve equity and match quality.
- Providing information on the potential benefits of including reference letters **increased the share of participants who obtained one by 12.6 pp**, while offering **cash incentives had no significant effect**.

Lessons Learnt

- **Reducing information frictions:** Standardized reference letters were effective in low-skill labor markets for improving hiring outcomes.
- **Promoting equity:** Strongest impacts for female applicants indicate that reference letters can contribute to more equitable labor market outcomes.
- **Awareness matters:** Information campaigns helped jobseekers realize the value of reference letters, highlighting the importance of knowledge and guidance.
- **Signal credibility:** Well-structured letters detailing specific skills were effective; generic "all-positive" letters did not improve outcomes, suggesting that employers value credible, detailed signals.

Abel, Martin, Rulof Burger, and Patrizio Piraino. 2020. "The Value of Reference Letters: Experimental Evidence from South Africa." American Economic Journal: Applied Economics 12 (3): 40–71.

South Africa

Wage Subsidy Experiment

Country Classification:	Upper-middle income
Implementing Organization:	NGO
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Marginalized South African youth aged 20 to 24 living in Johannesburg, Durban, and Polokwane with surrounding rural areas (Limpopo)

Context

- **Youth unemployment** has been historically high in South Africa, (**around 60% in 2024** among those aged 15–24), with large disparities across racial groups.
- Hiring inexperienced youth has been constrained by severe **information frictions**, as employers have faced uncertainty about applicants' productivity due to **weak signals and limited prior work experience**, combined with high dismissal costs and **perceived regulatory rigidity**.
- **Job search** has been costly, and many young jobseekers have become discouraged, as they often have lacked savings and social networks that are critical for accessing employment opportunities.
- Institutional wage-setting arrangements and historically long commuting distances have created **effective wage floors**, limiting downward wage adjustment and reducing the attractiveness of low-paid entry-level jobs.

Program Overview

- The program introduced a **wage subsidy to reduce youth unemployment** by lowering firms' costs of hiring inexperienced workers:
- Eligible youth received a voucher that firms could redeem upon hiring them. The **subsidy** covered up to **R833 per month or 50% of the wage** (whichever was lower), for a maximum duration of six months or until the total subsidy reached R5,000.
- Firms redeemed vouchers through the **South African Revenue Service** once a voucher-holder was hired and submitted claims to receive reimbursement.

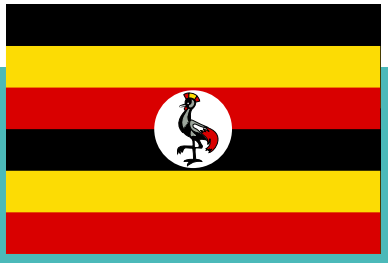
Results & Outcomes

- **Employment probability** increased by around **24%** one year after the intervention (an increase of 5.4–7.4 percentage points) compared to the control group, with effects persisting into the second year at a similar magnitude.
- **Employment duration increased** significantly both one and two years after the intervention.
- Monthly earnings showed positive but not statistically significant effects.
- **No disincentive effects on education**, as labor force participation did not change among youth who were still studying.
- Employment increased even in firms assigned to the program that did not redeem the voucher, indicating that program participation influenced **hiring behavior beyond subsidy take-up**.
- Firm interviews indicated that **voucher take-up was limited** due to administrative burden and concerns about the legitimacy of the vouchers.

Lessons Learnt

- **Persistent effects of early work experience:** Wage subsidies can generate lasting employability gains for youth that extend beyond the subsidy period.
- **Behavioral effects despite low take-up:** Low firm redemption rates do not imply low impact; vouchers influenced jobseekers' behavior by encouraging earlier labor market entry rather than waiting for scarce high-quality jobs.
- **Importance of information and credibility:** Broad communication campaigns and employer outreach are essential to increase trust, visibility, and take-up of wage subsidy programs.
- **Equity considerations:** Wage subsidies may be particularly effective for disadvantaged youth lacking household support and social networks, helping offset structural barriers to entry-level employment.

Carranza, Eliana, Robert Garlick, Kate Orkin, and Neil Rankin. 2022. "Job Search and Hiring with Limited Information about Workseekers' Skills." American Economic Review 112 (11): 3547–83.



Uganda

Firm-Provided vs. Vocational Training for Uganda's Youth

Country Classification:	Low income
Implementing Organization:	NGO (*BRAC*)
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Disadvantaged youth, aged 18-25, with 7-11 years of schooling and not in full-time education; medium-sized enterprises in urban areas

Context

- Uganda had one of the youngest populations globally, with the **second-lowest median age worldwide**.
- **Youth faced multiple labor market challenges: unemployment** exceeded **60%** and over **30%** of young people were **not in employment, education, or training**. Most youth (**90%+**) relied on insecure **informal work**, including agriculture, goods transport, and truck loading.
- **Small- and medium-sized enterprises** (SMEs) in manufacturing and services were **important drivers of economic** growth and employment but faced major constraints. Firm owners reported **lack of finance** (65%), **limited skilled labor** (67%), and **inability to screen workers** (52%) as key barriers.

Program Overview

This program aimed to compare **policies addressing high youth unemployment** in urban areas through two interventions:

- **Subsidized vocational training (VT)** provided youth with six months of **sector-specific training, combining both theory and practical work** aimed at developing sector-specific and managerial and business skills. The training was held for six hours per day, five days a week. Upon completion, youth received a **certificate** verifying their skills.
- **Firm-provided training (FT)** was structured as a **subsidized apprenticeship**, in which untrained youth were matched with SMEs. Firms were offered a **wage subsidy of US$50 per month** (US$12 was to be retained by the owner, and US$38 to be paid to be worker) to hire and train workers on-the-job for six months.
- To evaluate this program, youth were assigned to either one of those two interventions, or no training (control group).

Results & Outcomes

- 2-3 years after the program, both VT and FT participants achieved **large improvements in sector-specific skills**.
- Both interventions led to **higher employment rates** and marked improvements in **aggregate labor market outcomes** (employment, total labor supply, and earnings).
- **VT workers were 9 percentage points** more likely, and **FT workers 6 percentage points** more likely, **to be employed** compared to the control group.
- **FT gains materialize quickly**, as apprenticeships lead to immediate employment, **but fade over time**, while **VT gains emerge slowly but are long-lasting**. This is mainly due to differences in labor market mobility, as VT workers received significantly higher rates of job offers when unemployed.

Lessons Learnt

- **Value of certification**: VT participants benefited from credibly certified skills that could be easily demonstrated to employers.
- **Overcoming firm constraints**: Low compliance in FT (only 24% of assigned youth were hired and trained) showed that interventions must address the opportunity costs for firms, as the subsidy was insufficient to cover training costs.
- **High returns for completers**: Among those who successfully completed training, both VT and FT produced high returns, showing that subsidized apprenticeships could be effective once firm barriers were overcome.
- **Targeting and inclusivity**: Higher-ability youth gained more from FT, while VT enabled a broader range of workers to acquire marketable skills.

Alfonsi, Livia, Oriana Bandiera, Vittorio Bassi, Robin Burgess, Imran Rasul, Munshi Sulaiman, and Anna Vitali. 2020. "Tackling Youth Unemployment: Evidence from a Labor Market Experiment in Uganda." Econometrica 88 (6): 2369–2414.

Uruguay

Yo Estudio y Trabajo (YET) ("I Study and Work")

Country Classification:	High income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven
Target Population:	Youth aged 16 to 20 enrolled in an educational institution, who had not worked formally for more than 90 consecutive days

Context

- Uruguay has experienced **high youth unemployment** (28.3% in 2024) and **informal employment among youth**, limiting young people's transition into formal employment.
- In 2012, **Uruguay introduced a national work-study program** that offered part-time formal jobs to enrolled students, aiming to support skill development without directly substituting school.
- **Combining education with formal part-time work** was seen as a way to support school-to-work transitions without undermining academic outcomes. While early work experience can help youth develop soft and technical skills, signal motivation to future employers, and finance education, it can also compete with study time and hinder learning.

Program Overview

The YET program offered **formal, part-time work experience** in public sector firms for youth enrolled in secondary education.

- **One-year placements** were structured to align with school schedules, prioritizing compatibility with class times rather than field of study (centralized matching).
- A two-day **orientation workshop** and **supervisor assignment** were required at the start of the program.
- **Participants receive a fixed wage** (US$446 per month for 30 hours per week, which is higher than minimum wage) for 9 to 12 months, paid by the firm. Work activities were in administration or operations and focused mainly on support tasks.
- Upon completion, youth receive a **work certificate** to certify their first formal job experience.
- Participants were selected through a randomized lottery, with quotas introduced in later rounds to ensure inclusion of underrepresented groups (e.g., youth with disabilities, youth from low-income backgrounds).

Results & Outcomes

- **Earnings and employment rate more than doubled** after the one-year program, compared to applicants that were not selected (the control group).
- Two years after the program, **participants earnings remained 8% higher**.
- **School retention increased** by 12 percentage points during the program and remained 4 points higher two years later. These effects were larger for poor households, which suggests that credit-constrained youth used program wages to finance additional education.
- **No negative effects on schooling outcomes**.
- Strong effects on post-program earnings and enrollment for **both men and women**.

Lessons Learnt

- **Easing the school-to-work transition:** Work-study programs offer a promising way to reduce the share of youth not engaged in employment, education or training (NEETs).
- **Soft skills and work attitude:** The program also had small positive effects on soft skills such as conscientiousness and improved work attitudes (time management, flexibility).
- **Transferable skills:** Earning effects are not concentrated in the participating firms' sectors, suggesting that students built general, not sector-specific, human capital.
- **No crowding out:** Positive effects on education enrollment during the program (likely due to enrollment conditionality), but also after the program, when there is no binding conditionality.

Le Barbanchon, Thomas, Diego Ubfal, and Federico Araya. 2023. "The Effects of Working While in School: Evidence from Employment Lotteries." American Economic Journal: Applied Economics 15 (1): 383–410.

Low readiness, low opportunities:

Jobs for the Poor

Interventions in this quadrant target people who have gaps in work-readiness in a context where job opportunities are scarce. Target groups tend to have lower educational attainment, limited or no work experience, and disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. Most of the programs in this quadrant were implemented in LMICs and LICs with relatively thin labor markets and few formal jobs.

Of all the four quadrants, this one presents the greatest challenges in terms of the multifaceted and overlapping constraints facing workers and firms. All four categories of constraints in Figure 19 are represented. On the demand side, settings in this quadrant are often rural with limited and highly seasonal work opportunities subject to shocks. Most of the firms are small and informal, with apprentices representing a large share of micro-firm labor and transitions into formal wage work remain rare. On the supply side, workers are held back by lack of marketable skills, know-how, and resources needed to access employment or to grow a business beyond subsistence level. Women are further burdened with care responsibilities and restrictive social norms. The matching process is ineffective due to financial and credit constraints limiting workers' search intensity and their ability to access job opportunities outside of their locality, and due to a lack of standards and certification in informal skills systems. At the same time, institutional capacity is typically weak in this quadrant on account of low national resources and, in some cases, FCV settings.

Support to self-employment and microenterprises is the most frequent intervention in this quadrant, given the dearth of paid work. Programs in this quadrant are usually complex, addressing multiple constraints, including skills and capital. Programs in the workforce preparedness category mostly focus on improving skill acquisition through informal apprenticeships, which is a common form of training in this quadrant, though vocational training programs and programs addressing specific barriers such as childcare and financial inclusion of women have also been successful. Also found in this quadrant are interventions that seek to address labor demand shortages through public work. Intermediation support usually takes the form of cash support to help people search more effectively and/or migrate to areas with better opportunities for employment. Some programs have also extended social insurance to informal workers to stimulate self-employment.

Comprehensive, multidimensional self-employment support programs work best for the very poor, though simpler and cheaper interventions can also generate significant benefits for less vulnerable groups. Because the poor tend to face multiple constraints to employment, multidimensional programs that include a productive asset (such as capital or livestock), training, and other forms of support tend to work better and show large and durable impacts across diverse settings (Banerjee et al. 2015, 2021; World Bank 2024a). That said, depending on the profile and needs of beneficiaries, programs that limit the dimensions of support can also have good results, such as in Uganda (Blattman et al. 2016), Niger (Fernandez et al. 2024), Nicaragua (Macours et al. 2022), and Zambia (Botea et al. 2023). Training-only programs (without grant or asset transfer) have shown promise when targeted at those above extreme poverty. Existing entrepreneurs have benefited from action-oriented training programs, which sometimes outperform standard business curricula, such as heuristic training in Ecuador (Arráiz et al. 2019), and personal initiative training in Togo (Campos et al. 2017). Women with some education/experience benefited from entrepreneurship training that combined 'hard' skills, 'soft' skills, and agency content, and addressed their time, safety and care burdens in Uganda (Bandiera et al. 2020), Kenya (Shankar et al. 2015), and Liberia (Adoho et al. 2014). 'Cash-only' inter-

ventions that provide a one-time grant without complementary training/support have had more limited impact. In Uganda the impact was large but faded by year 9 (Blattman et al. 2020). In Sri Lanka it was limited to men (De Mel et al. 2012).

Public works programs can improve income security when private sector employment is limited, but design matters. Experience from Yemen shows that wages should be set slightly below local casual rates to self-target poorer households, and care should be taken with piece-rate pay because it can create large inequities (World Bank 2003). Higher casual wages and some crowding out of private work were observed in India, so timing and transparent rationing/rotation should be used to address labor diversion in peak agricultural season (Imbert and Papp 2015). In chronic risk settings, predictable multiyear transfers should be considered, as sustained participation improved food security and enabled modest asset accumulation in Ethiopia (Berhane et al. 2014). To boost earnings beyond the program participation period, a bundle of support measures such as savings incentives and training can be layered on top of public works, as in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Brandily et al. 2025).

Effective workforce preparedness programs focus on demand-driven skill provision with recognized certification, and interventions to ease participation barriers faced by women. Apprenticeship programs and classroom-based TVET can both be successful, provided they are connected to demand. Apprenticeships are naturally demand-aligned and strong for practical skills and self-employment, but quality varies across master craftspersons and portability can be limited, so certification and measures to improve the learning conditions in workshops, including financial incentives, can improve outcomes, as shown in Senegal (World Bank 2025b) and Ghana (Brown et al. 2024). Nepal shows that center-based TVET can generate large impacts too, when training providers are contractually incentivized to provide market-relevant training and connect trainees to employers upon completion (Chakravarty et al. 2019). A dual model that combined firm-based and center-based training and provided certification worked well in Côte d'Ivoire (Crépon and Premand 2025). Numerous programs layer entrepreneurship support onto apprenticeship/TVET programs to ease the transition of participants into gainful self-employment (World Bank 2021a, 2024a, 2025b). Female participation can be increased with female-friendly scheduling, safe venues/transport, small group placements, life skills and explicit targets (World Bank 2021a, b). Besides skills, women's participation can be supported by the provision of childcare, which increased employment/earnings of mothers in Kenya (Clark et al. 2019) and Burkina Faso (Ajayi et al. 2023), and financial inclusion measures which increase women's engagement in India (Karan and Mahal 2019).

Successful labor intermediation interventions in this quadrant show that easing liquidity constraints, in addition to providing information, is a key lever. Even small amounts of cash managed to unlock seasonal migration in Bangladesh (Bryan et al. 2014). Small incentives to attend job fairs increased formal employment and broadened search in the Philippines (Beam 2016). Accordingly, transport/subsistence support at critical touchpoints should be budgeted and targeted to the most liquidity-constrained, with information or motivation nudges used as complements rather than substitutes. Risk-covering products must be designed carefully, as insurance with meaningful basis risk can affect decisions to migrate, such as in Bangladesh (Bryan et al. 2014).

Extending social insurance to informal workers can increase labor supply, particularly among women. Delinking coverage from formal jobs increased entrepreneurship and self-employment in China, with the largest gains observed among older, less educated, or less healthy adults (Liu and Zhang 2018). Dependent coverage with minimal cost-sharing can stabilize female labor supply by reducing caregiving shocks, as was the case in Mexico (del Valle 2021) and India (Karan and Mahal 2019).

Afghanistan

Targeting the Ultra Poor (TUP) Graduation Program

Country Classification:	Low income
Implementing Organization:	NGO
Project Budget:	Afghanistan Access to Finance Project (World Bank): US$50 million
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Ultra-poor women in the poorest villages, identified through community wealth ranking and verification, meeting ≥3 of 6 criteria (e.g., no adult male earners, landless, no productive assets, children working, primary woman <50)

Context

- Afghanistan faced **severe droughts in 2018 and 2021, alongside escalating violence and security challenges**, particularly in Balkh province, where conflict-related fatalities increased sharply in 2021.
- In Balkh's study areas, fewer than **4% of primary women were literate**; just over **half of eligible girls attended school**, highlighting compounded constraints for ultra-poor women.

Program Overview

Afghanistan's TUP program was a **multi-component graduation package** adapted from BRAC and tailored to Afghanistan's FCV context. It was implemented over 12 months (shorter than other TUPs). Main components included:

- **Productive asset transfer** (typically cow with calf or pregnant cow; replacement if lost).
- **Monthly cash transfer** (US$15 for 12 months).
- **Biweekly training** (livestock rearing and entrepreneurship).
- **Health subsidy and hygiene kit** (~US$42).
- **Fortnightly mentoring** (health, education, empowerment, inclusion, social cohesion).
- **Veterinary services** (asset verification, supplements/replacement).
- **Linkages to education, health, and financial institutions**.

It was coordinated by MISFA (Microfinance Investment Support Facility for Afghanistan) and implemented by local NGOs, the program combined **high-frequency household visits**, intensive **coaching**, and specialized **livestock services**, using **community-based targeting** to reach ultra-poor women in high-security-risk areas. TUP was financed by the World Bank (IDA) through the Access to Finance project (2015-2021).

Results & Outcomes

- The program reached **12,698 households** across **8 provinces** (2015–2021).
- It achieved an average **graduation rate of 88%** and **64% linked to microfinance/savings** at graduation. Overall, about **89% women** were beneficiaries.
- **Short-term effects** (1–2 years post-transfer): **Consumption increased** by approximately **30%**, and **poverty declined** by **20%**. Women's market participation, household assets, and financial inclusion rose. Gains were observed in psychological well-being, along with higher children's school enrollment and improved child health.
- **Medium-term effects** (~5 years, early 2021): Sustained advantages persisted. **Consumption increased** by **16%**, and **income/revenues rose** by **32%** compared to controls. Asset and livelihood diversification into livestock, wage labor, and agriculture strengthened resilience. Inequality was reduced, and women's empowerment increased.

Lessons Learnt

- **Cost-effectiveness in a fragile setting:** Afghanistan's consumption gains exceeded results reported in similar programs. Conservative cost-benefit estimates indicate IRR ~26% and benefit-cost ratio >2.
- **Effective targeting of ultra-poor:** Participatory rural appraisal plus verification effectively identified the bottom ~5–6% most deprived households.
- **Mentoring and veterinary support:** These interventions were critical to asset productivity and behavior change.
- **Integrated support fosters inclusion:** One-off support that couples immediate consumption support with livelihood assets, coaching, and service linkages foster durable economic inclusion in fragile settings.

Bedoya, Guadalupe, Yulia Belyakova, Aidan Coville, Thomas Escande, Mohammad Isaqzadeh, and Aminata Ndiaye. 2023. "The Enduring Impacts of a Big Push during Multiple Crises: Experimental Evidence from Afghanistan (English)." Policy Research Working Paper WPS 10596. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.

Bangladesh

Migration Incentive Experiment

Country Classification:	Lower-middle income
Implementing Organization:	NGO
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Poor households in Rangpur region selected on the basis of land ownership and food insecurity

Context

- Rangpur has historically been a very poor region, where about **57%** of its 9.6 million people lives below the **poverty** line and roughly 43% in extreme poverty—nearly double the national average. The region has faced recurring **seasonal famine**, locally known as "monga," as **low job opportunities and wages** during the pre-harvest season, combined with higher grain prices, have pushed **household purchasing power below subsistence levels**.
- Nearby urban and peri-urban areas have offered significantly better **casual work opportunities**, including rickshaw-pulling, construction, brick-field labor, and agricultural day jobs.
- Households in Rangpur have been **extremely vulnerable and highly risk-averse**: failed migration attempts, such as paying for travel without securing employment, have often had severe consequences, discouraging families from taking economic risks even when potential returns were high.

Program Overview

The Migration Incentive Experiment (launched in 2008) aimed to **encourage seasonal migration** for work by providing targeted information and financial incentives:

- All beneficiary households received structured **information** on **potential jobs, wages, and likelihood of finding work** in four pre-selected destination areas. To assess the impact of incentives, households were randomly assigned to one of two groups:
  - The first received a **cash incentive of 600 Taka** (≈US$8.50)—slightly more than round-trip travel costs—conditional on sending a household member to work during the 2008 *monga* season, plus a 200 Taka bonus if the migrant checked in at the destination.
  - The second group received an **equivalent incentive as a zero-interest loan, repayable** after the season, with limited liability.
- **Conditionality was strictly enforced**: households that did not send a migrant were required to return the funds.

Results & Outcomes

- **Increased share of households sending a seasonal migrant** by 64% (cash) and 58% (credit), the **information alone had no impact on migration**. Migration remained **19% to 25% higher** in subsequent years, **even without the incentive**.
- **Cash and credit** treatments **increased consumption of family** members remaining at origin by **30-35%** and raised caloric intake by 550-700 calories per day. One year later (2009), the impact on consumption is 60-75% as large as in 2008 even without incentive.
- The impact on household consumption exceeded intervention cost, with **gross return of about 273%**.

Lessons Learnt

- **Liquidity and risk constraint migration:** Information on its own had no significant impact.
- **"Kick-start" support unlock lasting gains:** The incentive enabled households to test their skills at destination or improve prospects by allowing employers to learn about them.
- **High-Risk Contexts:** Such interventions are most promising in situations where the investment is risky and the potential losses carry high utility costs, for example, when households are near subsistence.
- **Positive spillovers and social learning:** Once some villagers successfully migrated, their experiences, information, and contacts helped others follow, reducing perceived risks and facilitating broader adoption.

Bryan, Gharad, Shyamal Chowdhury, and Ahmed Mushfiq Mobarak. 2014. "Underinvestment in a Profitable Technology: The Case of Seasonal Migration in Bangladesh." Econometrica 82 (5): 1671–1748.

Bangladesh

Recovery and Advancement of Informal Sector Employment (RAISE)

Country Classification:	Lower-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	US$300 million
Effectiveness Rating:	Promising
Target Population:	Low-income urban youth—particularly women—alongside returnee migrants impacted by COVID-19. Focus on informal workers

Context

- Over **84%** of employment in Bangladesh has been concentrated in the **informal sector**, where jobs have offered low productivity, limited wages, poor working conditions, and minimal social protection coverage.
- **Youth—particularly women**—have faced barriers to transitioning into secure, productive jobs due to **limited access to skills development**, compounded by significant **mismatches** between existing skills and those required for higher-productivity employment.
- **International migration** has played a major role in the economy, providing employment for up to 1 million workers annually; however, workers have often incurred high **debt burdens to finance their migration**, leaving them vulnerable to shocks.
- The **COVID-19** pandemic, coupled with **large-scale return migration**, has exacerbated vulnerabilities for urban youth and returning workers, heightening the **risks of long-term exclusion from the labor market**.

Program Overview

RAISE provided an integrated package of economic inclusion services. Key components included:

- **Counseling and career guidance** to help participants set career or business goals.
- **Apprenticeships programs** with master craftspersons in industry-relevant skills.
- **Entrepreneurship support** including business development, financial literacy, and mentoring for microenterprises.
- **Access to finance** via credit and microfinance linkages to launch or expand businesses.
- **Social protection for the poor** through access to welfare centers, referral services, cash incentives, and social assistance programs.
- **Support for returning migrants** (implemented by the Wage Earners' Welfare Board) in the form of psychosocial support, skills training, and financial assistance to help migrants who returned during the pandemic.

Results & Outcomes

- **531,337 people** have benefited from economic inclusion support.
- **17,222 youth** completed informal **apprenticeships**, gaining practical skills and work experience.
- **46,570 microentrepreneurs** received training, mentoring, and microfinance support to set up or strengthen their small businesses.
- **180,000+ returnee migrants** accessed counseling, referral services, or cash transfers, facilitating reintegration into the labor market.

Lessons Learnt

- **Bundled and tailored packages:** Integrating services like counseling, skills, finance, and social protection boosted employability and the resilience of youth working in the informal sector.
- **Mentorship:** Apprenticeships and guidance from master craftspersons increased confidence, retention, and labor market relevance.
- **Decentralized service delivery:** Providing services through regional and welfare centers improved accessibility, particularly for vulnerable groups such as women and returning migrants.
- **Dignity and empowerment:** Counseling, psychosocial support, and education assistance restored self-worth, encouraged labor market re-entry, and fostered sustainable livelihoods.

World Bank. Recovery and Advancement of Informal Sector Employment (P174085). World Bank Projects & Operations. Accessed January 8, 2026. https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P174085.

Burkina Faso

Community-Based Childcare Centers

Country Classification:	Low income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Women participants in Burkina Faso's public works scheme (PTR-HIMO), who were out of school or never enrolled and primary caregivers of children aged 0–6

Context

- In 2018, about **37% of young women** (16–35) were **neither in school nor employed outside the home**. Among those working, **33% of young women and 38% of young men** lived in **poverty** (<US$1.90/day).
- **Formal childcare** for ages 0–3 is rare and mainly **private** and in **urban areas**; in 2020, **~71%** of preschool facilities were **private** and only ~5.6% of children aged 3–5 were enrolled; public spending on preschool is historically very low.
- Women's **caregiving** responsibilities **limit both participation and productivity**, often leading to informal, ad hoc childcare arrangements at worksites.

Program Overview

- **Mobile childcare centers** located at or near urban public works sites (PTR-HIMO) under the Youth Employment and Skills Project (PEJDC). The centers "followed" worksites, using tents or safe indoor spaces; operated hours aligned with public works shifts (8:00–14:00; often opened from 6:00); provided 2 nutritious **meals**/day; low-cost toys/**learning materials**; parental **information** on childcare and nutrition; **breastfeeding** accommodations, etc.
- **7–10 trained female public works participants per center** ("*brigadières assistantes maternelles,*" BAMs); **caregiver-to-child ratio was ~1:5**. BAMs received a 3-day pre-service training; compensated via existing public works payroll at the same rate and hours as peers. Government education and social workers supervised the program, and the Ministry of Education helped train the trainers.
- **Nominal, voluntary parent contribution of about US$6/month** (for snacks). The payment was not enforced; childcare access was not contingent on the fee.
- Each center was designed for a **maximum capacity of 50 children**; although **average attendance was ~33** (this increased the unit operating costs: from ~US$16.6/child/month at full capacity to ~US$25.2/child/month).

Results & Outcomes

A randomized controlled trial was conducted to evaluate the program across 36 sites (half of them receiving the program) and results were measured after 2 years:

- **25%** of eligible women used the centers; usage tripled relative to the control group.
- In 2021, **37%** of treatment respondents reported **1 child attended** in the past year vs. <1% in control.
- Positive impact on **employment index (+0.08 SD)**.
- Increase in salaried **income**, especially for mothers of children 0–2 **(+18–20% time in paid work)**.
- **Child development index** improved **(+0.175 SD)**, driven by motor skill improvements.
- Improved maternal psychological **well-being and financial resilience** (savings, emergency funds).

Lessons Learnt

- **Early exposure creates lasting demand:** Initial participation in the program generated sustained use of childcare services, with families continuing to access care even after the public works period ended.
- **Serving very young children is costly:** Child-care for those aged 0–2 raised staffing requirements and operational costs, reducing cost-effectiveness compared to programs focused on older children.
- **Multi-agency alignment:** Effective implementation relied on clear alignment between multiple agencies—Education, Women's Affairs, the project unit, and municipalities—with well-defined roles in training, monitoring, and oversight.
- **Integration:** Embedding childcare within public works and local governance structures helped replicate and sustain services at some urban sites, although longer-term, community-based solutions may be more suitable where public works are short-term or seasonal.

Ajayi, Kehinde F., Aziz Dao, and Mousson Estelle Jamel Koussoube. 2023. "The Effects of Childcare on Women and Children: Evidence from a Randomized Evaluation in Burkina Faso (English)." Policy Research Working Paper 10239. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.

Côte d'Ivoire

Public Works "Plus"

Country Classification:	Lower-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Low-skilled, un- or underemployed youth, aged 18-30, in urban or semi-urban areas

Context

- Côte d'Ivoire experienced over a decade of political, social and economic difficulties. This led to **underinvestment in key infrastructure** such as roads, transport, energy, and water systems, creating major economic constraints and deteriorating living conditions.
- **Weak education systems** and lack of work opportunities also left many young people vulnerable.
- **Youth underemployment was particularly acute** as low-skilled youth in cities and semi-urban areas experienced limited access to stable income opportunities and few pathways to acquire job-relevant skills.

Program Overview

The Public Works program aimed to **provide short-term employment opportunities** while **building their skills** through work experience and training. The main components included:

- Participants were offered **temporary employment / public works** (like road maintenance) for 6 hours per day, 5 days a week, for 7 months and earned ~ US$10 per day, equal to the formal hourly minimum wage.
- Participants also received a **one-week life skills course** covering hygiene, citizenship, and public health.
- **Entrepreneurship track:** A randomly selected subset of beneficiaries also received **entrepreneurship training** with 100 hours of practical, low-literacy-adapted training on starting and managing small enterprises, including basic business skills, simple market research, and development of a basic business plan.
- **Wage employment track:** A different subset received 80 hours of **job search training** including identifying job opportunities, application preparation, interviewing, and employer engagement, which was complemented by field exercises and supervisor coaching. Participants also received a work certificate signaling their strengths.

Results & Outcomes

- During the program, **participants** were **more likely to be employed** (+14pp), **hold wage jobs** (+48 pp) and **less likely to be self-employed** (-10 pp). Participants work more in wage employment (+15.6 hours) and less in self-employment (-5.7 hours).
- The program led to a **significant increase in earnings**, representing about 53% of the average net monthly transfer.
- Youth increased their monthly **expenditures and their savings** (~182% higher than non-participant youth) after approx. 4 months in the program.
- No significant medium-term effects on the likelihood of employment, employment composition, or hours worked. However, some positive evidence that youth **earned more in self-employment** and made **higher investments** in the micro-enterprises they operated post-program.
- Sustained **impacts on savings and psychological well-being** beyond the program.

Lessons Learnt

- **Immediate benefits:** The Public Works program was effective in providing immediate, temporary benefits during the 7 months of employment, inducing significant shifts in the composition of employment and substantial improvements in well-being and work habits.
- **Public works' self-selection mechanism challenged:** the minimum wage attracted a broad cross-section of youth, including some with outside employment opportunities, which can partly explain the limited post-program impacts.
- **Finer targeting:** Effectiveness could have been improved through more accurate targeting, such as prioritizing women or youth with low levels of earnings.
- **Limited skills transmission:** Skills acquired during public works did not significantly drive youth labor market transitions after program completion.

Bertrand, Marianne, Bruno Crépon, Alicia Marguerie, and Patrick Premand. 2021. "Do Workfare Programs Live Up to Their Promises? Experimental Evidence from Côte d'Ivoire." Policy Research Working Paper No. 9611. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Côte d'Ivoire

Subsidized Dual Apprenticeships

Country Classification:	Lower-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Low-skilled youth, aged 18-24, and firms interested in hosting program apprentices

Context

- Following a decade of political, social and economic difficulties, Côte d'Ivoire experienced a return to stability in 2011. Since then, the country has achieved stable economic growth, although **structural challenges** persist.
- **Formal wage employment has remained limited** – only 17.4% of workers have wage jobs and less than half have formal sector jobs. The labor market is dominated by informal employment, particularly in agriculture (46.9%) and micro-enterprises (29.3%), with self-employment as the norm for a large share of the working population.
- **Traditional apprenticeships have remained widespread** and often the only form of vocational training for low-skilled youth who do not complete formal schooling. These are **often privately arranged** between youth (or their parents) and owners of small, informal firms, are **rarely formalized** through a contract, and **often do not lead to certification.**

Program Overview

The subsidized dual apprenticeship program aimed to increase the number of youth participating in **apprenticeship programs** and **improve training quality**. The main components were:

- Youth received a **monthly wage subsidy** of approx. US$54—about half the formal minimum wage—for 12 or 24 months, depending on the occupation.
- The program combined **on-the-job learning** under a master craftsperson with **technical courses** at vocational centers, ensuring apprentices gained both practical and theoretical skills (**dual training**).
- It included a basic **apprenticeship contract** and **certification mechanism**.
- For evaluation purposes, eligible youth and firms were randomly assigned to either participate in the apprenticeship program and receive matched support (treatment group) or to a control group with no apprenticeship.

Results & Outcomes

- The **program increased the share of youth participating in apprenticeships** by 36.5 pp and the amount of formal apprentices per participating firm (~0.77 additional positions per firm).
- No short-term effects on average earnings.
- 18-24 months after the program end, participants had **15% higher earnings per month**, even though they no longer received the subsidy.
- These earnings gains were driven by **increased productivity in self-employment** (23% earnings increase) and **continued earnings as apprentices** (62% increase).
- Youth in formal apprenticeships performed **more complex tasks** and exhibited lower routine task intensity, indicating that the **dual training component successfully built skills.**

Lessons Learnt

- **Dual training apprenticeships:** Combining on-the-job and vocational training increase the attractiveness of apprenticeships for youth, contribute to small firm expansion, and benefit youth over the medium term.
- **New skills and better productivity:** The increase in earnings came from an increase in skills and productivity in current activities, rather than higher labor market mobility and improved access to new wage jobs.
- **Limited displacement:** Minimal crowding-out of traditional apprentices suggests that apprenticeship uptake is constrained more by high recruitment costs and limited youth demand than by firm demand.
- **National policy influence:** The program has informed the national apprenticeship policy in Côte d'Ivoire and will be scaled to reach additional 32,000 apprentices.

Crépon, Bruno, and Patrick Premand. 2025. "Direct and Indirect Effects of Subsidized Dual Apprenticeships." The Reveiw of Economic Studies 92 (5): 2979–3028.

Democratic Republic of Congo

Eastern Congo Workfare Program

Country Classification:	Low income
Implementing Organization:	NGO
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven
Target Population:	Individuals over 18 living in one of five major cities in Eastern Congo

Context

- Eastern DRC has been characterized by protracted **conflict**, widespread **poverty**, and large **gender inequalities**.
- **Insecurity has been widespread even in urban areas**, where nearly 70% of households reported experiencing crime including armed robbery and burglary.
- Baseline surveys revealed **significant labor market exclusion**, with nearly **60% unemployment** and **large gender disparities**: men were significantly more likely to be employed and earned twice as much as employed women.
- Only a **minority of respondents had ever received any form of professional training** (35%), with lower rates among women (27%) and the asset poor (23% for the poorest quintile).

Program Overview

- Local NGOs implemented **labor-intensive workfare programs** in 25 neighborhoods across the 5 cities, with most projects focusing on public infrastructure (e.g., road resurfacing, constructing drainage systems, stair construction. and bridge rehabilitation), providing **temporary employment for four months** at the daily minimum wage of US$3.
- All participants received a **paid one-week soft-skills training** before project start, covering civic education, workplace safety, and financial literacy.
- Two additional components were randomly assigned to subsets of beneficiaries: A **savings incentive** scheme, offering a 1:1 match on daily savings (US$1 saved + US$1 matched), disbursed post-project; and a **hard-skills training module** tailored to local labor markets delivered post-project over 60 days, with participants continuing to receive the daily stipend of US$3.
- This resulted in **four interventions: job offer** (J), **job offer plus savings incentive** (JS), **job offer plus training** (JT), and **job offer plus savings incentive and training** (JST).
- An evaluation compared the relative impact of the 4 interventions.

Results & Outcomes

- ~18 months after the project, JST participants were **5.9 pp more likely to be employed**, worked 3.5 hours more per week, and **earned ~21% more**.
- **Asset ownership** - especially of sewing machines - **increased substantially among JT and JST** beneficiaries, complementing the most popular training (sewing).
- While all program components had a **significant impact on formal savings** for men and women, the savings incentive had the largest effects on the amount of formal savings.
- The workfare program **significantly improved labor market participation and earnings for women**, but not men, 18 months after the end of the program.

Lessons Learnt

- **Gender-focused:** Labor market gains were concentrated among women, who started from lower baseline employment and earnings, highlighting the importance of gender-intentional targeting.
- **Complementary support:** The most sustained gains were found among participants who received both the savings incentive and hard-skills training, suggesting that capital injections and skills development can be complementary, especially in labor markets with high self-employment.
- **Limited social spillovers:** The intervention showed no measurable effects on empowerment, prosocial behaviors, or social capital, suggesting that such goals require separate or additional instruments.
- **Context-sensitive design:** The program was effective in fragile urban settings with weak labor demand and limited training, but scaling to less constrained environments may require better targeting and stronger labor market integration.

Brandily, Paul, Eric Mvukiyehe, Lodewijk Smets, Peter van der Windt, and Marijke Verpoorten. 2025. "From Workfare to Economic and Sociopolitical Stability? Evidence from a Randomized Trial in Eastern Congo." The World Bank Economic Review 39 (3): 711–730.

El Salvador

Promoting Job Opportunities and Skills Development

Country Classification:	Upper-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	US$150 million
Effectiveness Rating:	Promising
Target Population:	Vulnerable (proxied by poverty/income) youth and young adults, aged 18-40, who face barriers to employment opportunities

Context

- Despite moderate economic growth and poverty reduction in recent years, El Salvador has continued to struggle with **low productivity, human capital accumulation, and job creation**. About 70% of workers are in informal, low productivity jobs, particularly affecting youth, women, and people with disabilities.
- **Labor force participation has remained low among women (50%) and youth (45%)**, with women facing additional constraints such as caregiving responsibilities and restrictive social norms. They account for 77% of youth not in employment, education, or training.
- Young people frequently **lack technical, digital, and soft skills** demanded by employers. Education quality and access to training remain uneven, contributing to skills mismatches and low employability.
- El Salvador also faces **structural barriers to economic growth and job creation**. Existing labor market interventions are fragmented and have limited reach, while outdated laws and regulations (e.g., on working hours and part-time work) prevent effective labor market inclusion.

Program Overview

This project aims to improve access to employment opportunities through a multi-pronged approach:

- **Skills development** through **short-term, market-aligned training** programs focusing on both technical and soft skills, as well as special modules to promote climate awareness and adaptation skills. Participants receive stipends (for transport, food, and top-ups for women to cover the cost of care responsibilities) to support attendance and certification upon successful completion.
- **Wage employment support** includes temporary employment subsidies for private firms to reduce hiring risk and encourage on-the-job skills development, with priority given to environmentally friendly and green sectors.
- **Entrepreneurship support** includes business and soft skills training, technical assistance for business plan development, mentoring, support to access marketing and online platforms, and grants for both startup and business expansion.
- **Rehabilitation of infrastructure** and public buildings into *Knowledge and Opportunities Centers* that **centralize access to services and provide safe spaces** for training, entrepreneurship activities, and job seekers support.

Results & Outcomes

The program is ongoing with preparatory activities starting August 2025. By 2028, this project aims to:

- Reach **40,000 vulnerable individuals** and train **32,000 beneficiaries**, half of which women.
- **8,000** beneficiaries will receive **entrepreneurship training** and develop business plans, with a further **4,000 youth** receiving **entrepreneurship grants**.
- **9,000** youth are expected to receive **employment subsidies**.

Lessons Learnt

The project does not yet have lessons to share but incorporates lessons from previous Bank-financed projects:

- **Multi-pronged approaches:** Combining interventions is more effective at addressing the diverse barriers faced by vulnerable groups.
- **Demand-driven skills training:** Training works best when curricula respond to labor market needs and involve private-sector engagement.
- **Entrepreneurship support:** Screening for entrepreneurial potential, tailoring business training, and offering grants (rather than loans) improve firm survival and growth.
- **Institutional capacity and inter-agency coordination:** Strong implementers and high-level, government-led coordination are critical for successful delivery.

World Bank. Promoting Job Opportunities and Skills Development in El Salvador (Project P179829). World Bank Projects & Operations. Accessed January 8, 2026. https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P179829.

Ethiopia

Rural Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP)

Country Classification:	Low income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	US$2.67 billion (Dec 2021 – June 2026)
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven
Target Population:	Rural poor and food-insecure households

Context

- Households faced **chronic food insecurity** driven by repeated shocks such as droughts, alongside **sharp food price inflation** that eroded real incomes, particularly for net food buyers.
- **Thin and uneven markets** led to large spatial price differences, with poorly connected areas most affected and limited migration options constraining coping strategies.
- Households hold very few assets, leaving them vulnerable to shocks. When crises occur, families often sell assets instead of reducing consumption, which keeps them trapped in a **low-asset, fragile state** ("asset smoothing").
- **Strong agricultural seasonality** further compounded vulnerability, with widespread underemployment during the January–June lean season.

Program Overview

The PSNP **enhanced livelihoods support** project offered an integrated package (training, coaching, and cash grants and/or credit) to promote diversified and sustainable rural livelihoods. Key components included:

- **Public works** (wage work) outside the farming season, on labor-intensive projects building community assets in return for **safety net transfers in cash or cereals**.
- A small proportion of households without labor power (e.g., where primary income earner is elderly or disabled) received **direct support (cash grants)**, without work conditionality.
- The rural PSNP was explicitly linked to interventions designed to increase agricultural productivity. These changed over time to deal with emerging problems but included **technical assistance** on methods to increase yields and the provision of **credit** through microfinance institutions and Rural Savings and Credit Cooperatives.

Results & Outcomes

- **~8 million** beneficiaries across **462 districts**.
- The PSNP **improved food security by 1.3 months**, equivalent to reducing the length of the hungry season by one third.
- Five years of participation **raise livestock holdings by 0.38 tropical livestock units**.*
- The **joint impact** of access to both the PSNP and the interventions to increase farming productivity **increased food security by 1.5 months** and livestock holdings by 1 tropical livestock unit.
- There is no evidence that the PSNP crowds out private transfers, although in the study sample these are typically small, or that it reduces entry into non-farm business.

** A tropical livestock unit equals 1 for cattle, horse, and mules, 0.15 for sheep and goats, 0.005 for poultry, 0.65 for donkeys, and 1.45 for camels.*

Lessons Learnt

- **Large-scale delivery is feasible in low-capacity settings:** PSNP operated nationwide with substantial budgets and measurable impacts despite limited infrastructure and administrative resources.
- **Seasonal alignment reduced labor conflicts:** Public Works timing fit the rural calendar (Jan–Jun), limiting clashes with peak farm work while addressing predictable lean-season risk.
- **Complementary productivity support:** Households with both PSNP and interventions to increase productivity saw larger gains.
- **Cash–food mix adapted to thin markets and inflation:** Modalities varied by region based on needs; after the 2008 crisis policy shifted to mixed payments—buffering purchasing-power risk.

Berhane, Guush, Daniel O. Gilligan, John Hoddinott, Neha Kumar, and Alemayehu Seyoum Taffesse. 2014. "Can Social Protection Work in Africa? The Impact of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme." Economic Development and Cultural Change 63 (1): 1–26.

Ethiopia

Urban Productive Safety Net and Jobs Project (UPSNJP)

Country Classification:	Low income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	US$893 million
Effectiveness Rating:	Promising
Target Population:	Urban poor and vulnerable households, with a focus on youth

Context

- **Rapid urbanization and demographic growth have outpaced job creation**, leaving youth – particularly women and less-educated workers – facing **high unemployment and underemployment**.
- **Urban poverty and vulnerability continue to be high in the country.** By 2021, nearly 20% of people in urban areas were living in poverty, a number likely to have risen further as job opportunities remain scarce and inflation reduces the buying power of city households.
- **Ethiopia's social protection system** has been largely **rural-focused**, leaving cities with limited mechanisms to support the urban poor.

Program Overview

Ethiopia's urban safety net began in 2016 in 11 cities, showed strong impacts, and was scaled under UPSNJP (2020) to 88 cities. This project also adapted key lessons from the Rural Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) to an urban context. Key components are:

- **Expansion of the Urban Productive Safety Net**, providing **climate smart public works** (e.g., urban greening, waste management, watershed management, climate-resilient social infrastructure), **savings** and **financial literacy training**, and **income support** for those unable to work.
- **Foster urban youth employment** through structured **apprenticeships** (6 months) with private firms and strengthened **job intermediation** services.
- **Livelihoods/self-employment**: integrated economic inclusion package of livelihood grants, business skills training, coaching, savings/financial inclusion.
- **Enhance institutional capacity** of the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA), the Urban Job Creation and Food Security Agency, and the Jobs Creation Commission to deliver integrated safety nets and employment programs.

Results & Outcomes

- By late 2025, the project has **reached 2.45 million beneficiaries** (target: 3.2 million), including **1.1 million through climate-smart public works** (target: 1.4 million).
- **334,481** beneficiaries have already received **entrepreneurship support**, and **274,200 households** have received **unconditional income support**.
- The project partnered with **5,000 firms** to provide **60,399 youth apprenticeships** by December 2025.
- **74%** of apprentices are **employed 3 months post-program** (69% women).
- **80%** of **entrepreneurs sustain their business** 6-12 months after the grant (69% women).

Lessons Learnt

- **Targeted support:** Support focused on the most vulnerable households achieved better poverty reduction outcomes than broad, untargeted subsidies.
- **Comprehensive packages:** Creating productive jobs for the poor required combining market-relevant skills, access to affordable finance, and coordinated public–private partnerships.
- **Political commitment:** Strong government commitment in Ethiopia enabled active institutional engagement and large investments, supporting expansion and continuity.
- **Delivery systems are key:** Robust management information and payment systems improved registration, disbursement, and reconciliation, while ongoing expansion and stabilization were crucial for scaling the program.
- **Institutional capacity:** The effectiveness of the program depended on the capacity of institutions to implement it, particularly in coordinating multi-city operations.
- **Integrating refugees into a national program:** Required careful program design and a supportive policy environment.

World Bank. Urban Productive Safety Net and Jobs Project (P169943). World Bank Projects & Operations. Accessed January 8, 2026. https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P169943.

India

Bandhan Targeting the Ultra Poor (TUP) Program

Country Classification:	Lower-middle income
Implementing Organization:	NGO (*Bandhan*)
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Ultra-poor women in 120 village hamlets of West Bengal, with limited assets and facing food insecurity

Context

- Ultra-poor households lived on casual agricultural wage labor and low-return self-employment, with little diversification of income streams and faced **marginalization and social exclusion** within their villages.
- Households **lacked access to formal credit or savings mechanisms** and were unable to save or invest enough to transition into higher-return activities, leading to **poverty traps**.
- Over the study decade, broader **labor market opportunities in India were expanding** (urban growth, rising demand for migrant labor), but only households with some initial assets could take advantage of them.

Program Overview

The graduation program (multi-component package), starting in 2007, consisted of four main components:

- **Productive asset transfer:** eligible women were offered a choice of asset bundles, 82% chose livestock.
- **Training:** weekly visits from the NGO staff for a period of 18 months which delivered training on generating income from the chosen asset.
- **Subsistence allowance:** provided for first 30-40 weeks to help smooth income during transition and reduce the need to sell assets or under-invest while assets matured.
- **Saving and health support:** access to savings accounts and basic health services.

Results & Outcomes

Results from the randomized controlled trial showed:

- **Measures of economic well-being improved significantly faster** among households receiving support through the program compared to households without support (the control group) until year seven from the asset transfer, and the resulting treatment control group gap persisted thereafter.
- **Increase in per capita household consumption** by US$0.60 per day (0.6 standard deviations) compared to the control group at seven to ten years after asset transfer.
- **Increase in income** by 0.3 standard deviations.
- **Income diversification:** by year three, treatment households had higher incomes from non-farm microenterprise earnings, and by year seven, higher wage earnings driven by migration, compared to control households.

Lessons Learnt

- **A one-time "big push" can have long-lasting effects:** Benefits persisted for 10 years suggesting treated households moved onto more productive trajectories.
- **Complementary support matters:** Assets alone without knowledge, savings mechanisms, or interim consumption support may not hold long-term impact.
- **Macro context amplifies impacts:** Beneficiary households were better able to seize emerging labor market opportunities (e.g., migration to better-paying cities) compared to the control group.
- **Long-term cost-effectiveness:** Although initial investments were significant, benefits outweighed costs: the program broke even by year 4 and delivered nearly four times the costs by year 10, ensuring lasting welfare gains.

Banerjee, Abhijit, Esther Duflo, and Garima Sharma. 2021. "Long-Term Effects of the Targeting the Ultra Poor Program." American Economic Review: Insights 3 (4): 471–86.

India

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA): Temporary Public Works

Country Classification:	Lower-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven
Target Population:	Adults in rural households looking for employment (universal access, relying on self-targeting)

Context

- **Rural poverty and informality** remained widespread in India, with the majority of poor households relying on casual, low-productivity work and lacking social protection.
- Previous **public works programs** showed potential to support vulnerable workers but suffered from **leakage and weak accountability**. The introduction of a **statutory employment guarantee** aimed to strengthen this "insurance" function, providing poor workers with a reliable fallback at a known wage.
- **Seasonal and under-employment in agriculture** exacerbated vulnerability, as rural labor markets were highly seasonal. The guarantee targeted the lean season, helping stabilize household earnings and smooth consumption when local employment opportunities were scarce.

Program Overview

The NREGA Act, passed in 2005, was phased in starting with poorer districts in 2006, expanded in 2007, and rolled out nationwide in 2008. It continues to operate today as India's flagship rural employment guarantee program:

- The program's objective is to **provide income support and livelihood security through public employment**, while a secondary goal is the creation of **productive rural infrastructure**.
- NREGA established clear **legal provisions and guarantees**, ensuring that each household was entitled to **100 days of wage employment** per year. Work was **demand-driven**: if a household's application for employment was not met within the stipulated timeframe, state rules provided for an unemployment allowance to compensate for the delay.
- Work was primarily **unskilled manual labor** (e.g., earthworks), with minimal use of machinery to maintain labor intensity. Employment was concentrated in the **dry season** to avoid overlap with peak agricultural demand in the monsoon.

Results & Outcomes

- The program reached **53 million households**, providing a total of **2.3 billion person-days** of employment in 2010–2011, making it the largest workfare program globally.
- Significant **increase in public works employment**—about **+1.2 percentage points** in the **dry season** and **+0.5 percentage points** in the **rainy season**.
- There was a roughly offsetting **decline in private work** (including self-employment and domestic work).
- **Daily wages of casual laborers rose** in early-phase districts relative to late-phase districts by around 4.7% on average, suggesting **upward pressure on market wages for unskilled labor**, including in private employment.

Lessons Learnt

- **Wage effects:** Evidence shows that expansion of public works displaced some private employment but raised private-sector wages; wage gains delivered substantial welfare benefits to poorer households—often exceeding the benefits to direct participants.
- **Implementation complexity:** Decentralized and demand-driven design led to varied performance across states depending on capacity, political commitment, and experience (e.g., actual days worked fall short of the 100-day guarantee in some areas).
- **Fiscal considerations:** Program costs may seem to exceed measured direct welfare gains for rural households, though estimates omit the longer-term productivity benefits of new infrastructure created and community resilience.
- **Strengthening Oversight**: Data gaps between administrative and survey measures indicated risks of leakage; strong social audits, payment systems, and transparency mechanisms are key.

Imbert, Clément, and John Papp. 2015. "Labor Market Effects of Social Programs: Evidence from India's Employment Guarantee." American Economic Journal: Applied Economics 7 (2): 233-63.

India

Peer Effects in Business Training

Country Classification:	Lower-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Private Sector and Research Team
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Clients of SEWA Bank, aged 18-50, who live in Ahmedabad, with active savings accounts in the previous two years

Context

- India's urban poor, particularly women, have often worked in **informal self-employment** such as tailoring, piece-rate work, construction work, and rag picking.
- **Restrictive social norms** have remained a key barrier to women's economic participation, especially in regions where female mobility is constrained.
- Despite being connected to financial institutions such as SEWA Bank, which is India's largest women's bank, and having access to savings and credit, **demand for formal financial products among low-income women has remained low**.

Program Overview

A randomly selected set of clients from SEWA Bank, were invited to participate in:

- **A short business counseling program** two half-days with two hours of **in-class training** per day). The training combined elements of existing **financial literacy and business skills** curricula with material focused on aspirations and was developed based on feedback from focus groups with women who had attended previous SEWA trainings.
- The module covered financial prudence, aimed to raise aspirations, and helped participants develop a clear plan to achieve a personal financial objective.
- The defining feature of this program is the introduction of a **peer component** to test whether peer effects can catalyze female entrepreneurship.
- Some women were encouraged to attend the **training and counseling sessions** with a peer of their choice (a close friend or relative), preferably someone who shared their occupation.

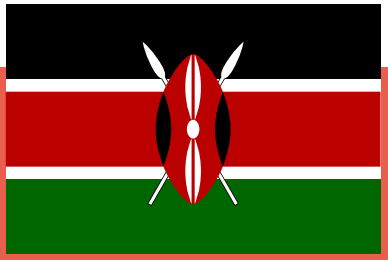
Results & Outcomes

- Women who attended the training **increased their labor supply by 4 hours per week (17%)**.
- There is some indicative evidence that **women who brought a peer were more likely to set business goals** and that these goals were more ambitious.
- Only women that were invited to bring a friend had **a higher propensity to borrow**. Four months later, peer-trained women reported higher volumes of business and **higher rates of business** plan development to increase revenues.
- Those invited to bring a peer reported higher household income and expenditures and were 4 pp less **likely to report their occupation as '*housewife*.'**

Lessons Learnt

- **Psychological barriers:** Goal-setting can increase women's demand for financial services, even without extra loan information or promoting borrowing, showing that overcoming mindset constraints, rather than purely informational and financial, is crucial.
- **Peer effects drive ambitions:** There was suggestive evidence that exposure to peers made participants more ambitious in the goals they set. Presence of peers may be influential in training programs that involve personalized business plans or goal setting, rather than just simple information provision.
- **Heterogeneous impacts of peer-based training:** Intervention effects vary significantly across subgroups. In this case, impacts on loan uptake and labor market outcomes were strongest among women facing more restrictive social norms, underscoring the importance of tailoring programs to groups confronting greater structural barriers.

Field, Erica, Seema Jayachandran, Rohini Pande, and Natalia Rigol. 2016. "Friendship at Work: Can Peer Effects Catalyze Female Entrepreneurship?" American Economic Journal: Economic Policy 8 (2): 125–53.



Kenya

Youth Employment and Opportunities Project (KYEOP)

Country Classification:	Lower-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	US$150 million
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a graduate tracer study and randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Youth aged 18–29 who are unemployed—especially those facing long-term unemployment—and youth working in precarious jobs (low paid, informal)

Context

Kenya has faced a **growing youth population** and significant **barriers to meaningful employment**:

- Education outcomes have not aligned with labor market needs and Kenya has faced a **shortage of market-relevant skills** among young people.
- **Job creation has remained limited**, especially in the formal sector.
- Around **85%** of the workforce has been **informal**, with nearly **half self-employed**. Most urban youth have worked in informal and often precarious jobs.
- **Labor market information has been insufficient** to guide training, job search, and policy decisions.

Program Overview

KYEOP addressed youth unemployment in Kenya through a **multi-pronged approach:**

- **Work-based learning** (wage employment track): The program connected youth to wage and self-employment opportunities through **training, internships, and apprenticeships in both formal and informal sectors**.
- **Entrepreneurship support** (self-employment track): KYEOP promoted entrepreneurship and supported micro- and small enterprises through **startup grants, mentoring, and business development services**.
- The project enhanced **labor market information systems** to improve access to quality data for youth, employers, and policymakers.
- The program integrated **formal and informal private-sector partners**, using **results-based agreements with training institutions and apprenticeships with Master Craftsmen** to improve youth employability.

Results & Outcomes

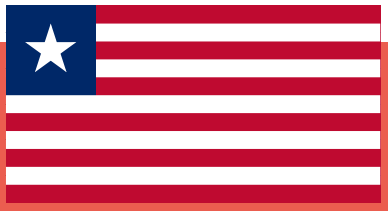
- Benefited **149,451 youth** (63.500 in the **employability track** and 85,951 in the **entrepreneurship track**).
- Wage Employment track: **81.70% employed** after at least six months and **40.3% higher earnings**.
- Self-employment track: **89.60% employed** after at least six months, **50.4% higher earnings**, higher business creation rate and likelihood of business survival
- **2,700 new jobs** from the business plan competition.
- Achieved **gender parity in participation**.

Lessons Learnt

- **Demand-driven interventions:** Comprehensive, market-aligned programs can significantly improve youth employment outcomes.
- **Public-private partnerships:** Engaging both formal and informal private-sector partners ensures program relevance and sustainability.
- **Inclusive targeting:** Gender-balanced and equitable outreach is essential to reach all youth, including the most vulnerable.
- **Tailored support:** Interventions should account for diverse characteristics of youth, such as gender, disability, and geographic location.

These lessons have directly informed a **successor project (National Youth Opportunities Towards Advancement, NYOTA)** which aims to **scale up** and reach **800,000 beneficiaries** with similar and enhanced interventions.

World Bank. Kenya Youth Employment and Opportunities Project (P151831). World Bank Projects & Operations. Accessed January 8, 2026. https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P151831.



Liberia

Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women (EPAG)

Country Classification:	Low income
Implementing Organization:	Government and NGO
Project Budget:	~US$5.2 million for the Liberia EPAG pilot (Rounds 1-2)
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven
Target Population:	Young women, aged 16–27, with basic literacy and numeracy skills, out of school, living in 9 communities in and around Greater Monrovia and Kakata

Context

- Liberia's **post-conflict legacy and very young population** posed significant labor market challenges. Fourteen years of civil war had severely damaged infrastructure, institutions, and schooling, leaving many young people with **limited education and work experience**.
- Labor **informality** was widespread: only about 13–18% of workers held formal wage jobs, while youth and women were disproportionately engaged in **low-productivity self-employment** or day labor.
- **Young women** (ages 15–24) faced particular disadvantages, with **unemployment** around 8%—double that of young men—and accounted for only one-quarter of paid employment despite representing half of the workforce. Key constraints included **limited access to education and training, restricted credit, care responsibilities, mobility barriers, unsafe schooling environments**, and **broader gender-based vulnerabilities**.

Program Overview

EPAG was part of the World Bank–supported Adolescent Girls Initiative (AGI):

- The program offered a **six-month classroom training** followed by a **six-month placement/job search support period**, with participants assigned to either a **Job Skills (JS)** or **Business Development Services (BDS)** track:
  - JS: Training in demand-identified sectors—hospitality, cleaning, office/computer skills, painting, security services, and driving—combined with entrepreneurship modules;
  - BDS: Entrepreneurship training focused on opportunity identification, market analysis, customer service, money management, and record-keeping for micro-enterprise start-up/expansion.
- Free **childcare** at training sites; flexible schedules; **stipends** tied to attendance; **savings** facilitation; **completion** bonuses; volunteer classroom coaches and peer groups; frequent unannounced **quality monitoring; performance bonuses** to providers for successful placements, etc.
- A third round (2013–2014) refined the model (target group expansion, savings matching, etc.) and introduced a jobs track to train childcare and early learning practitioners, offering six months of certified classroom training plus an internship.

Results & Outcomes

- **Employment increased** about a **47% relative to control** (from a ~38% baseline).
- **Earnings** increased by **~80%** on average relative to control; driven by both higher employment and higher earnings among the economically active.
- **BDS track** roughly **doubled the probability of employment** compared to JS; BDS graduates saw **earnings** more than **double**.
- Cost-effectiveness: **BDS training costs were recouped in ~3 years**; JS costs in ~12 years, prompting redesign of JS in later rounds.
- Increased **savings, self-confidence**, and improved household **food security**; shifts in **gender norms**; evidence of sustained impacts more than a year after training (and up to ~30 months in later surveys).

Lessons Learnt

- **Effectiveness of entrepreneurship training:** Programs focused on entrepreneurship outperformed wage-oriented training in contexts with scarce formal jobs and high informality, proving both more effective and cost-efficient.
- **Targeting:** The program reached relatively educated, urban or peri-urban participants due to literacy requirements and urban focus; results may not directly generalize to more vulnerable, illiterate, or rural populations.
- **Design features for retention:** Childcare, flexible schedules, stipends, and performance incentives for providers were key for high retention and transitions to economic activity.
- **Adaptation:** Subsequent rounds condensed training, expanded to rural/younger/less literate girls, added savings matching and stronger private sector linkages.
- **National policy influence:** Lessons from EPAG informed other government-led youth programs.

Adoho, Franck M., Shubha Chakravarty, Dala Korkoyah Jr., Mattias K. A. Lundberg, and Afia Tasneem. 2014. "The Impact of an Adolescent Girls Employment Program: the EPAG Project in Liberia (English)." Impact Evaluation series no. IE 121, Policy Research working paper no. WPS 6832. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.

Mexico

Seguro Popular (SP): Public Health Insurance Scheme

Country Classification:	Upper-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	Not available - Legislative
Effectiveness Rating:	Promising
Target Population:	Individuals not covered by contributory social security (informal workers, unemployed individuals, and their families)

Context

- **Health coverage in Mexico has been highly fragmented**, with half the population insured through two **social security schemes for only formal workers** and their families, leaving informal and unemployed workers largely unprotected.
- Without health insurance schemes, households are **exposed to health shocks** that trigger high out-of-pocket costs and lost work time due to health shocks. Moreover, **caring for sick dependents often limits labor supply**, especially for **women**, who typically bear more caregiving responsibilities.

Program Overview

Seguro Popular (SP) was a **public health insurance program** introduced in 2003 to provide health coverage to people who were not covered by the formal social security system: informal workers, unemployed individuals, and their families.

- **Free** health insurance without co-pays **for those not covered by employer-provided social security**.
- It was designed to **minimize user barriers**: no premiums, no means tests, and no rigid documentation requirements.
- The program's administrative complexity was due to the demands placed on the state: **coordinating inter-governmental financing** across levels of government, contracting and managing a mixed **public–private provider network**, and regularly updating a **large, explicit benefits package**.

Results & Outcomes

- The program's scale was national and substantial: **52.6 million beneficiaries**.
- **Increased labor supply** among informal workers by **reducing transitions from informal employment to non-employment**. Overall reduction of 1.3 percentage points (pp), equivalent to an **8% decrease in quarterly transitions out of employment**.
- **The impact was largely driven by women**—a 3.3 pp reduction (15%) and for female secondary earners, the reduction was even larger at 5.2 pp (22%).
- No effect on transitions from formal to informal employment.

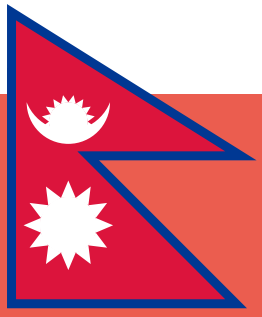
Lessons Learnt

- **Effective labor supply support:** Health risk protection can be very effective for informal workers. By removing out-of-pocket costs and ensuring access to care, Seguro Popular reduced caregiving constraints—especially for women—leading to fewer exits from employment.
- **Gendered Impact:** Strongest effects on women and female secondary earners underscore how household health shocks and caregiving duties disproportionately affect female labor market attachment.
- **Formal employment:** The lack of effect on formal-to-informal transitions suggests that in some contexts broad-based, non-contributory health coverage does not weaken formal employment incentives.
- **Low transaction costs facilitate scale and inclusion:** Eliminating premiums, means tests, and heavy documentation likely supported rapid, wide take-up among hard-to-reach populations.

del Valle, Alejandro. 2021. "The Effects of Public Health Insurance in Labor Markets with Informal Jobs: Evidence from Mexico." Journal of Health Economics 77 (C).

Nepal

Employment Fund (EF) Program



Country Classification:	Low income
Implementing Organization:	NGO (*Helvetas Nepal*)
Project Budget:	~US$35 million
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven
Target Population:	Youth (16–35), prioritizing those with low education and from poor households, and young women

Context

- A large share of the economy has been **informal** (~80–90% of jobs) and the economy has long been **dominated by agriculture**, with wage employment concentrated in urban areas.
- **Underemployment** has been widespread, and most new labor market entrants were absorbed into low-productivity informal work or unskilled jobs abroad.
- Nepal's demographic transition has been bringing **~400,000** youth into the labor force annually; yet job creation has lagged: **in 2021, more than a third of youth were NEET** (not in employment, education, or training).
- **Large-scale migration has affected the local labor supply.** Many young Nepalis—especially men—migrated to Gulf countries, Malaysia, Korea, and India, to earn ~3× domestic wages and sent remittances. Reintegration for returnees was complicated due to skills mismatch with local demand.
- **Female labor force participation** has been far below men's, with **pay gaps** and **sectoral segregation**. Household roles, reservation wages, and female labor force participation have been affected by migration.

Program Overview

The EF program, initially designed in 2008, aimed to expand employability and **placement** into non-farm jobs through short, market-oriented **vocational training** and outcome-based partnerships with training providers:

- **Competitive bidding** system to select **providers**: payments were tied to verified outcomes (**outcome-based payments**)—including training completion and "gainful employment" at 3 and 6 months post-training—with higher payments for verified employment. A bonus scheme rewarded providers more for placing trainees from vulnerable groups (e.g., Dalit, ex-combatants, persons with disabilities, women).
- **Short courses** (4 weeks to 3 months) in more than 65 trades and facilitation of **internships/placements** for six months **post-training**; trainees were encouraged to take the National Skills Testing Board exam.
- **Women** received a standardized **life-skills** curriculum; some trainees received basic **business skills** modules.

The government set the framework and oversight, the NGO implemented and managed, and private providers delivered the services, with international donors financing (SDC, DFID, and the World Bank).

Results & Outcomes

- Increases in **non-farm employment ~10–16%**, with much larger effects for beneficiaries who complete training (up to 31–53%), especially for women.
- Average monthly earnings gains of roughly 572–921 NRs across cohorts; impacts for women are larger, with home-based self-employment accounting for much of the effect.
- Given baseline **monthly income** near 1,272 NRs, a 921 NRs increase implies **~72% earnings growth** in the combined 2010–2012 cohorts.
- Employment effects are substantially larger for women than men; earnings effects are present for both, but **women's gains are more pronounced**.

Lessons Learnt

- **Outcome-based financing drives impact but requires rigorous monitoring**: Such incentives can shift provider behavior toward employment outcomes beyond training completion. It requires strong monitoring to prevent reporting discrepancies.
- **Gender-informed design boosts inclusion**: Program's gains for women came from trades and delivery models compatible with social norms (including pathways to home-based work).
- **Demand-aligned training improves jobs**: Short, practical courses, employer linkages, and internships aligned with local labor demand improved transition into non-farm work.

Chakravarty, Shubha, Mattias Lundberg, Plamen Nikolov, and Juliane Zenker. 2019. "Vocational Training Programs and Youth Labor Market Outcomes: Evidence from Nepal." Journal of Development Economics 136: 71–110.

Nicaragua

Atención a Crisis (Crisis Care)

Country Classification:	Lower-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Extremely poor rural households living in six municipalities in the northwest region of Nicaragua

Context

- The northwest region of Nicaragua has been characterized by **extreme poverty**. Households depend largely on **rain-fed subsistence agriculture**, leaving them highly vulnerable to climate variability and weather shocks. Moreover, the region was affected by a **severe drought** in the year before the project began.
- **Skills mismatch:** few households had the training needed for non-farm jobs, and formal vocational training options were largely absent.
- **Capital constraints** have prevented households from starting or sustaining microenterprises.
- High exposure to shocks meant households often relied on **negative coping strategies** (reducing meals, selling assets, withdrawing children from school).

Program Overview

The program aimed to **improve households' risk management** through **income diversification**. To measure the effects of different components, rural households exposed to weather variability were randomly assigned to three different interventions. These included:

- Basic package: basic **conditional cash transfer (CCT)**, conditional on children's school enrolment and health service attendance, worth 18% of household expenditure on average.
- Training package: basic **CCT** plus a **scholarship for vocational training** for one household member in the main town of the municipality, conditional on regular attendance.
- Grant package: basic **CCT** plus a **productive investment grant** worth US$200, conditional on developing a simple business development plan, with light training and technical assistance.

Results & Outcomes

- Benefited **3,002 households**.
- Results from the randomized controlled trial showed that the basic package **improved consumption** during transfer year but not employment or earnings.
- Grant package: **13 pp (≈190%) higher self-employment** in non-agricultural activities after two years. **43% higher profits** from non-agricultural self-employment relative to individuals who did not receive any package; this was equivalent to a **15–20% annual return** on the initial grant.
- Training package: **30% higher non-agricultural wage earnings** after two years, but no impact on wage employment.
- Both productive packages **reduced the sensitivity of consumption and income to weather variability**, while the CCT alone did not.

Lessons Learnt

- **Productive components boost resilience:** Basic CCTs alone don't build resilience. Complementary "productive" components matter, by helping to relax skill constraints (training) or capital constraints (grants) and diversify income as a result.
- **Capital and training have complementary effects:** Capital and skill interventions work through different channels. Grants encouraged diversification into non-agricultural small businesses. Training encouraged those in wage jobs to move to better jobs or migrate.
- **Long-term protection against shocks:** Productive safety nets can have lasting effects. Even two years after the program ended, households receiving the complementary interventions showed improved protection against shocks. In shock-prone regions, the effect of interventions on risk management is as important as average impact.

Macours, Karen, Patrick Premand, and Renos Vakis. 2022. "Transfers, Diversification and Household Risk Strategies: Can Productive Safety Nets Help Households Manage Climatic Variability?" The Economic Journal 132 (647): 2438–2470.

Nigeria

Apprenticeship and Community-Based Skills Training Program

Country Classification:	Lower-middle income
Implementing Organization:	NGO (*Adam Smith International – Mafita*)
Project Budget:	£36 million (UK GBP)
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Economically and socially vulnerable youth (15–24), including adolescents with specific needs, in Northern Nigeria (Kano, Kaduna, Katsina and Jigawa)

Context

- Northern Nigeria has faced fragility and **internal tensions** since the late 1970s, later intensified by Boko Haram.
- **High poverty and unemployment** fuel risks for marginalized youth. In 2016, **21% of those aged 15–24 were NEET** (not in employment, education, or training), with rates **higher for young women** (25% vs. 18% for men). Even among employed youth, poverty is widespread—about **51% earned less than US$1.90/day**—due to scarce formal jobs and the dominance of low-productivity informal work.
- **Traditional apprenticeship** systems are widespread but have not kept pace with population growth; women and marginalized youth are often excluded from them.

Program Overview

Two **complementary skills programs** for youth were run by Mafita NGO in Northern Nigeria from 2015 to 2020:

- The **Apprenticeship program** was an enhanced apprenticeship which formalized learning-by-doing with clusters of master craft persons. It included **tailored, home-based options** for adolescent girls facing mobility constraints. The duration was 12 months total: 6 months for foundational + 6–9 months for on-the-job technical training.
- The **Community-Based Skills Training Program** was a **center-based** vocational training through Community Skills Development Centers (COSDECs). It offered **standardized classroom** instruction in fully equipped workshops and production facilities run by **government**. ~3 for months foundational + 6–9 months for trade-specific technical training.
- Both programs contained **foundational modules** (literacy, numeracy, and business soft skills), followed by trade-specific **technical training**. Participants also received **stipends** to offset costs and, for some cohorts, **entrepreneurship and financial training**.

Results & Outcomes

The first cohort reached **~4,000 youth** trained.

Enhanced apprenticeships impacts:

- Self-employment: **+17%** (~+8 pp);
- Wage employment: **+10%** (~+2 pp);
- Self-employment profits: **+17%** (~NGN 543/month).

Community-Based Skills Training Program impacts:

- Self-employment: **+35%** (~+14 pp);
- Wage employment: **+39%** (~+4 pp);
- Self-employment profits: **+38%** (~NGN 979/month);
- Wage income: **+54%** (~NGN 406/month).
- Impacts were **stronger for women**, particularly girls participating in inclusive education programs.
- **Self-employment** increased **~74%**, and **profits doubled** for those in **center-based** training.

Lessons Learnt

- **Apprenticeships work in fragile settings:** Well-designed apprenticeships and vocational training can boost employment and earnings for marginalized youth, including adolescent girls, even in fragile settings.
- **Tailored delivery:** Gender-sensitive and flexible delivery models (e.g., home-based training) generate larger gains for the most vulnerable groups.
- **Business and soft skills matter:** Foundational literacy and numeracy showed limited effects, while business-related and socioemotional skills appear more closely linked to outcomes.
- **Economic gains are not enough:** Income gains do not eliminate high-risk behavior; complementary interventions are needed for social outcomes.
- **Cost-effectiveness:** Center-based training proved more cost-effective than enhanced apprenticeships; scale-up should optimize components and assess the added value of entrepreneurship and additional financial support.

Crawford, Emily Elizabeth, Ben Crost, Oeindrila Dube, Samih Ferrah, Marcus Erik Holmlund, Nausheen Khan, Eric Mvukiyehe, and Nuruddeen Sambo Umar. 2021. A Way Out?: Evidence from Two Trials of the Mafita Apprenticeship and Community-Based Skills Training Programs in Northern Nigeria - Endline Evaluation Report (English). Washington, DC: World Bank Group, Development Impact Evaluation (DIME) Department.

Niger

Entrepreneurship Support Program under the Niger Refugees and Host Communities Support Project (PARCA)

Country Classification:	Low income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	US$30 million (total PARCA: US$80 million)
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Households classified as "*poor but able to meet basic consumption needs,*" drawn from both host communities and forcibly displaced populations (refugees, internally displaced persons [IDPs], and returnees)

Context

- In 2018, Niger was hosting **800,000+ forcibly displaced people**; Diffa, Tillabéri, Tahoua, Maradi, and Agadez faced large inflows—including **refugees and internally displaced persons** (IDPs)— due to regional insecurity.
- Nearly half of the population lived **below the national poverty line**, livelihoods were heavily dependent on **subsistence agriculture**, and recurrent **climate shocks** further undermined resilience. Displaced and host households often competed for scarce resources, creating socioeconomic tensions and increasing risks of conflict.

Program Overview

PARCA (2018) was designed to treat forced displacement as a long-term development challenge, not just a humanitarian crisis. The project emphasized **economic inclusion, social cohesion, and resilience-building**, aiming to improve livelihoods and reduce vulnerabilities among both displaced and host households while mitigating potential social tensions.

- PARCA's Entrepreneurship Support Program had the goal of improving livelihoods and well-being of vulnerable households by **enabling productive investments and income-generating activities**. It's core components ("light" economic inclusion package) were:
  - One-time **US$200 cash grant** (~1/3 of Niger's per capita GDP) to invest in **productive activities**;
  - **Life skills training** focused on basic economic skills, financial literacy, and entrepreneurial mindset;
  - **Business training** (6 days) covering: i) financial education and microenterprise management and ii) technical skills for local agricultural and non-agricultural markets (GERME Level 1 curriculum).
- Delivery relied on **community-based selection** through village committees, where applicants verbally presented an income-generating idea to qualify for the grant, with no requirements beyond completing the training.

Results & Outcomes

Short-term (~3 months post-intervention) impacts:

- Any **household income +4 percentage points** vs control (from 94% control baseline).
- Among households with income: **+17% increase in income**.
- **Non-farm microenterprise profits: +98%** vs control on average; larger for host households (+161%) than for displaced (+61%).
- **Consumption: +14% on food**; +49% on utilities.
- Households with outstanding loans ≈–41%; small but **positive rise in savings** incidence.
- **Positive spillover effects** among non-participant households in treated communities (e.g., income, utilities spending, livestock), indicating broader local economy impacts.

Lessons Learnt

- **Simple packages:** A simple package of short training and grant delivered sizable short-term gains in income, profits, and financial resilience—even in FCV settings.
- **Tailoring according to constraints:** Hosts gained profits in non-farm SMEs, while displaced households saw greater improvements in income and financial well-being; tailoring could enhance equity and effectiveness.
- **Mitigate resource-related tensions:** Trust increased, but resource tensions also rose; future designs should include mitigation measures such as water and land management.
- **Political and security shocks:** Contingency planning for phased transfers, alternative delivery channels, and secure payment systems are critical.

World Bank. 2024d. "Entrepreneurship Support for Host and Displaced Communities: An Impact Evaluation of the Niger Refugees and Host Communities Support Project." Endline Evaluation Report. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Niger

Tackling capital and psychological constraints

Country Classification:	Low income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Poor women over 20, among households that are recipients of cash transfers; the selection uses geographical and household-level targeting

Context

- In the Sahel, households have faced **recurrent droughts and food insecurity**, increasing risk and discouraging investment.
- **Agriculture** has dominated but has been **low-productivity and poorly commercialized**. Over 90% of households have someone in agriculture, largely subsistence; only about 25% of farmers sell any crop.
- **Non-farm and wage employment have been scarce**. In rural areas, non-farm jobs have been rare (under 10%), though they have been a common secondary activity (about one-third); the wage sector has employed only about 4% of the workforce, mostly in public jobs**.**
- **Female labor force participation has been low**, with more than one-third of women out of the labor force, primarily due to household responsibilities and restrictive norms.

Program Overview

The initiative was a **"cash-plus" program** that combined multiple interventions delivered on top of a **national poverty-targeted cash transfer** program for women. Core components included:

- Group-level **coaching sessions**, formation of village **savings and loans associations**, a week-long **micro entrepreneurship training** course, and information sessions on **market access**.
- A **capital intervention arm** that included a lump-sum **cash grant** worth US$311 in PPP terms to promote investments in income-generating activities.
- A **psychosocial intervention arm** that offered individual-level **life skills training** and community-level **sensitization on aspirations and social norms**, including film screenings and discussions.
- The interventions were evaluated separately and in combination, using a randomized controlled trial.

Results & Outcomes

- **Capital intervention: 0.12 s. d.** increase in daily consumption per adult equiv. and **0.18 s. d.** increase in income after 18 months (median).
- **Psychosocial intervention: 0.18 s. d.** increase in consumption and **0.19 s. d.** increase in income.
- **Both capital and psychosocial interventions: 0.25 s. d.** increase in consumption and **0.31 s. d.** increase in income.
- Effects driven largely by **increases in off-farm business revenues**.
- The psychosocial components induced an increase in **household revenues** while the grant was used partly to grow the **beneficiary's own business**.
- **High cost effectiveness**: IRR of 66% for the psychosocial arm, 44% for the full arm and 15% for the capital arm assuming 50% dissipation.

Lessons Learnt

- **Comprehensive support:** Providing integrated interventions can unlock strong returns, even in fragile agrarian contexts.
- **Psychosocial support:** Psychosocial components have significantly increased impact at low cost.
- **Government systems to enable scale:** Leveraging government systems and a cash-transfer platform keeps costs low and implementation scalable.
- **Community engagement:** Engaging households through the community-wide norm-shifting activities strengthened empowerment, social support, and partner dynamics—important for sustained take-up.
- **Group platforms lower delivery costs and build social capital:** Village savings groups + coaching increased saving and financial inclusion—key for resilience.

Bossuroy, Thomas, Markus Goldstein, Bassirou Karimou, Dean Karlan, Harounan Kazianga, William Parienté, Patrick Premand, Catherine C. Thomas, Christopher Udry, Julia Vaillant, and Kelsey A. Wright . 2022. "Tackling Psychosocial and Capital Constraints to Alleviate Poverty." Nature 605: 291–297.

Senegal

Improving Youth Employability Through Informal Apprenticeship

Country Classification:	Lower-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	US$53 million
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Vulnerable low-educated youth (15–30) in the informal sector, and the master craftspersons (workshop owners) who train them

Context

- Senegal has experienced steady **economic growth**, yet **poverty and inequality** have remained widespread.
- **Youth unemployment and inactivity** have been especially high, particularly among young women.
- **Education gaps** have persisted: two-thirds of children have finished primary school without functional literacy or numeracy, and access to TVET programs has been limited.
- In this environment, **informal apprenticeships** have become the main pathway for skill acquisition for **over 400,000 youth**. While they have provided hands-on experience, **informal apprenticeships have largely remained unregulated**, resulting in **variable training quality, long durations**, and **no certification**, leaving participants without recognized skills or capital to enter formal employment or start their own businesses.

Program Overview

The project aimed to **strengthen the apprenticeship system** and improve employability through two main interventions:

- **Strengthening the informal apprenticeship system** by creating a **national framework to certify informally acquired skills** (Validation of Experience-based Skills, VAE), developing competency-based training programs for 12 trades, and building the capacity of government institutions, Chambers of Trade, and artisan associations to regulate and support the sector.
- **Improve the quality of skills formation** by **training master craftspersons** and offering apprentices complementary **training in literacy, socioemotional skills, and entrepreneurship**. It also provided **equipment grants** to workshops (up to US$2,000), small **cash transfers** (approx. US$200), and delivered **sanitary kits** and **emergency support** to 7,000 workshops during COVID-19.

Results & Outcomes

- A **national certification system** was institutionalized by decree in 2022, supported **by 12 new competency-based curricula** and the launch of the *E-jang* **e-learning platform**.
- **23,300 apprentices** and **7,451 master craftspersons** were trained, and **5,811 apprentices** completed the skills validation process.
- **6,500 workshops and 10,020 apprentices received financial support**, contributing to a **19.5 percentage point** increase in **workshop formalization**.
- Impacts included **higher earnings for female apprentices** and longer skill-building retention among male apprentices.

Lessons Learnt

- **Formal skills recognition:** There is strong demand for formal certification; leveraging existing, recognized credentials is more effective than creating new ones.
- **Engaging local institutions:** Engaging Chambers of Trade and artisan associations is crucial for mobilizing beneficiaries and promoting sector formalization.
- **Training master craftpersons:** Training and equipping masters generates indirect, long-term benefits for apprentices and strengthens the overall sector.
- **Tailor support by training stage:** Early-stage apprentices benefit most from skill transmission, while late-stage apprentices require support for transitioning to employment.
- **Evaluation from the outset:** Rigorous impact evaluation provides valuable data for future project design.

World Bank. Improving Youth Employability Through Informal Apprenticeship. (P167681). World Bank Projects & Operations. Accessed January 8, 2026. https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P167681.

Senegal

Yokk Koom Yook Program

Country Classification:	Lower-middle income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	US$28.0 million
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Poor and vulnerable households (beneficiaries of the National Safety Net Program, PNBSF), initially targeting women aged 18–45 and later extended to adults up to 65. Prioritization of women and households facing multiple barriers to economic inclusion

Context

- About 94% of workers in Senegal are engaged in **informal employment, primarily through self-employment**. While unemployment is low, **underemployment** is widespread.
- There has been a large, youthful influx of **new job-seekers** (about **300,000 annually**), especially in urban areas.
- **Poor households**—particularly those headed by **women**—have been facing **liquidity, skills, and social-norm constraints** that limit the productivity of microenterprises.

Program Overview

- The YKK program was designed to complement **Senegal's National Safety Net Program (PNBSF)**, which provides quarterly cash transfers to reduce extreme poverty and support household consumption.
- YKK helps these households **start small businesses**, strengthen their resilience to shocks, and ultimately increase and diversify their incomes for **long-term economic inclusion**. Thus, the YKK program is a **micro-entrepreneurship** promotion initiative layered on top of the national safety net.
- The "full package" includes: **community mobilization** to build motivation and participation; weekly meetings to encourage **savings**, provide small loans, and strengthen social cohesion; **life skills & micro-entrepreneurship training**; a **one-time grant** (150,000 FCFA) to invest in participants' businesses; **group coaching and follow-up** to support startup management; and specific activities to support **women's entrepreneurship**.
- The control group includes beneficiaries of cash transfers through PNBSF that did not receive any additional support through the YKK program.

Results & Outcomes

- The **pilot** reached **15,000 urban and peri-urban households**; the program has since expanded nationwide.
- After **18 months, income from SMEs was 22% higher** for those who received the full package and 23% higher for those who received the "capital" package (training, savings, coaching, grant).
- Beneficiaries **diversified economic activities** in non-agricultural sectors, with a 24% increase in the number of businesses.
- After **36 months, incomes were 25% higher and savings** were **92% higher** among beneficiaries.
- **School attendance** for children of beneficiaries was **4% higher,** sustained at 36 months.
- The program's benefits in business revenue, profits, and savings **exceeded costs within 18 months**, supporting replication and scale-up.

Lessons Learnt

- **Coordination and grant management challenge:** Administrative complexity from coordinating actors, deploying coaches and intensive grant management (verification, payments and follow-up).
- **Integrated support drives impact:** The combination of training, coaching, savings groups, productive grants as well as the 3 months of post-grant support for business development was key for maximizing impact.
- **Cost-effectiveness and design support scalability:** The grant, while costly, enabled investment and was key to success. The cost-benefit was positive after 18 months. The program was optimized for nationwide expansion, including local language materials, streamlined training, and context-specific delivery.
- **Robust Social Protection (SP) systems enable delivery:** Senegal's strong SP infrastructure (national registry, digital payments, collaboration with local NGOs) facilitated effective implementation.

Brunelin, Stephanie, Elisa C. A. V. Larcher, Line Le Teuff, and Claudia Santamaria Ruiz. 2025. "Senegal: How to Increase and Diversify the Incomes of the Poorest: Findings from the Yokk Koom Koom Program Experience." ASP In Brief, April 2025. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Togo

Personal Initiative Training (PI) for Microentrepreneurs

Country Classification:	Low income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	~US$750 per participant training
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Microenterprise owners in Lomé city, operating for at least 12 months, with fewer than 50 employees, non-agricultural, and unregistered

Context

- Lomé's labor market has been dominated by **informal employment** and **microenterprises** that have remained small, undifferentiated, and typically grown slowly beyond subsistence levels.
- While **traditional business** development services have remained essential **for strengthening operational capacity**, evidence has shown they may not fully unlock growth—particularly for women. Standard trainings have often struggled to translate knowledge into practice and have **overlooked behavioral and psychological aspects**.
- **Personal initiative training** has complemented these services by fostering a proactive, opportunity-seeking, and persistent mindset—qualities increasingly recognized as critical for sustaining enterprise growth in informal markets.

Program Overview

The intervention, launched in 2014, consisted of 2 training models for microenterprise owners in Togo, compared and evaluated using a randomized controlled trial: **Traditional Business Training vs. Personal Initiative (PI) Training**.

- Both programs used the same delivery model (**classroom** sessions plus **on-site coaching** visits per business) but differed in content and **pedagogical approach**.
- The **PI training** applied a **psychology-based** approach to build a **proactive, self-starting**, future-oriented, and persistent **entrepreneurial mindset**. It focused on: i) identifying and exploiting opportunities and differentiating from competitors; ii) goal setting, planning, feedback, and overcoming obstacles and iii) "financial bootstrapping" (e.g., advance payments, supplier terms) to tackle finance constraints without bank loans.
- To evaluate the program, 500 eligible firms were offered PI training (high take-up at 84%), 500 other firms were offered traditional business training and 500 were offered no training (control group).

Results & Outcomes

Based on evidence from the randomized controlled trial

Short- to medium-term results (~2.5 years after training):

- **PI increased monthly profits by ~30%** (US$60); traditional training's ~11% gain was not significant.
- **PI raised monthly sales by ~17%.**
- **PI strengthened proactive behavior**, innovation, diversification, borrowing, and investment. Despite not teaching "hard" practices, PI trainees adopted nearly as many as those in traditional training.
- **Women's profits rose ~40%** with PI (vs ~5% in traditional).

Long-term results (≈7–7.5 years after training):

- **Profits ~US$91/month higher** on average; **business survival** remained high (91% PI vs 88% no training).
- **Men's profits grew by ~77%** with stronger capital accumulation; **women's long-term gains faded**, likely due to sector and household investment constraints.

Lessons Learnt

- **Mindset-focused training delivers higher returns:** It delivered larger and faster impacts than traditional business skills training while remaining cost-effective. With program costs of ~US$750 per participant, it paid back within a year; estimated 10-year returns of roughly 140–393% depending on benefit duration.
- **Growth-ready entrepreneurs:** PI training is well-suited for growth-ready microentrepreneurs in informal urban settings.
- **Trainer quality and delivery fidelity:** High-quality trainers and consistent delivery are essential to sustain behavioral change and long-term impacts.
- **Complementary support:** Strong short-term gains for women may fade due to sector and household constraints. Complementary support—sector diversification, access to growth sectors, capital deepening, and household-sensitive design—can help sustain women's outcomes.

Campos, Francisco, Michael Frese, Leonardo Iacovone, Hillary C. Johnson, David McKenzie, and Mona Mensmann. 2025. "Long-Term and Lasting Impacts of Personal Initiative Training on Entrepreneurial Success." AER: Insights 7 (4): 463–479.

Uganda

Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA) Program

Country Classification:	Low income
Implementing Organization:	NGO (*BRAC Uganda*)
Project Budget:	Not available (4-year cost per eligible girl: ~US$17.9)
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Adolescent girls aged 14–20, both in- and out-of-school

Context

- In the late 2000s, nearly **60% of the population was under age 20**, creating high pressure to support school-to-work transitions.
- The formal wage sector was small, with most employment in **agriculture** or **informal services**. Young women were often unemployed (~86%), and those working frequently on self-employment or vulnerable jobs. This context makes **self-employment programs** more realistic than wage-placement initiatives.
- Many adolescent girls experienced **stalled school-to-work transitions**, with 20–24-year-olds often neither in education nor employment. High adolescent **fertility, early marriage, and dependency burdens** further constrained human capital and labor outcomes. **Limited sexual and reproductive health** knowledge, combined with high risks of sexual coercion, underscored the need for life skills training and safe spaces.

Program Overview

The objective of the ELA program (2008-2010) was to empower adolescent girls by improving economic opportunities and agency through **bundled training and safe spaces**:

- The program was delivered through **community-based adolescent clubs** led by trained female mentors—slightly older peers who serve as role models. Participation was voluntary, with light eligibility requirements, and no cash stipends or employer placements provided. Training was for **2 years**, after which the clubs continued to serve as **safe spaces and social networks** for participants. Main components were:
  - **Vocational skills** in trades (e.g., hairdressing, tailoring, agriculture, poultry, computing, small enterprise);
  - **Financial literacy** (budgeting, accounting, financial services);
  - **Life skills** on SRH, family planning, HIV/STI awareness, consent, negotiation, conflict resolution, and legal rights (e.g., child marriage, violence).
- The program was evaluated using a community-level randomized controlled trial, with impacts measured at two and four years after the training rollout.

Results & Outcomes

- 4 years after the intervention, **participation in any income-generating activity** increased by 4.9 percentage points (about **48**% above baseline), driven mainly by **self-employment**.
- **Self-employment nearly doubled** after two years (12.2% vs. 6.3% in the control group) and remained about 50% higher than controls after four years (9.5%).
- **Annual earnings** rose by **US$50** per participant.
- The **likelihood of having a child declined** by 3.8 percentage points (about a **34%** reduction from baseline), and **marriage or cohabitation fell** by 8 percentage points.
- **Reports of sex against one's will** in the previous year **decreased** by 5.3 percentage points, roughly a **30%** reduction relative to baseline.

Lessons Learnt

- **Bundled design:** Combining vocational/financial skills with life skills and safe spaces drove lasting gains in earnings and agency.
- **Specifics matter for replication:** Success depended on life skills provision, safe spaces, skilled mentors, and strong community buy-in; lack of these can limit replication.
- **Standardization improves cost-effectiveness:** 4-year cost per eligible girl (~US$18) was modest relative to impacts. Standardization of repeatable routines (mentor recruitment/training, session scheduling) and minimal administration reduce costs and support scalability.
- **Positive externalities:** There were positive effects on non-participants showing community-wide benefits.

Bandiera, Oriana, Niklas Buehren, Robin Burgess, Markus Goldstein, Selim Gulesci, Imran Rasul, and Munshi Sulaiman. 2020. "Women's Empowerment in Action: Evidence from a Randomized Control Trial in Africa." American Economic Journal: Applied Economics 12 (1): 210–59.

Uganda

Micro entrepreneurship Support & Cash Grants among the Ultra Poor: WINGS Program

Country Classification:	Low income
Implementing Organization:	NGO (*AVSI*)
Project Budget:	Not available
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through a randomized controlled trial)
Target Population:	Young women, extreme poor, with low education level (~3 years) and little prior business activity

Context

- Northern Uganda emerged from a 20-year conflict that displaced approximately 2 million people and severely affected livelihoods. By 2007, two-thirds of households were **unable to meet basic needs and most depended on food aid**.
- The economy has been predominantly **rural and low-skill, with limited non-farm employment**; petty trade and small-scale livestock or cottage production have been the main sources of cash income.
- **Access to finance has been limited**; loans have been rare and costly, and risk-sharing networks weak. The conflict disrupted networks, trust, and cooperative structures—**limiting informal insurance and business support**.
- By **2007-2009 security improved** and communities began returning and rebuilding farms and livelihoods from scratch; economic recovery remained slow despite national growth.

Program Overview

AVSI's Women's Income Generating Support (WINGS) program in northern Uganda offered young, marginalized women a bundle of **micro-entrepreneurship support plus cash grants** to start a micro-businesses:

- A **one-time cash grant** of **US$150** (~US$375 in PPP), **five days of basic business skills training and planning**, and **ongoing supervision** to implement their plans.
- The grant—roughly 30 times participants' baseline monthly earnings—directly tackled binding **capital constraints** in a postwar context where fixed entry costs are the first barriers to microenterprise formation.
- Unlike multi-component "graduation" programs that combine food stipends, livestock assets and training, microfinance access, and life-skills coaching, WINGS took a lighter, **cash-centric approach tailored to a post-conflict setting** and focused explicitly on young women.
- WINGS was evaluated through a randomized rollout covering 120 villages and 1,800 participants.

Results & Outcomes

- The standard WINGS program (without added group encouragement) **doubled the non-farm business** to ~80% vs. 39% in the compared to non-WINGS (control group).
- Weekly **hours worked** increased from **~15 to ~24**.
- **Cash earnings increased** by about US$1 per day (PPP), roughly doubling baseline levels. A conservative estimate of **household consumption rose** by approximately one-third, to about US$1.25 per day (PPP). Annualized, nondurable consumption increased by roughly US$465 (PPP)—about one quarter of the standard program cost of US$1,946 (PPP).
- The evaluation found **limited short-term impacts on women's independence, community status**, or **protection from partner violence**, despite economic gains.

Lessons Learnt

- **Cost-effectiveness:** WINGS' simpler, cash-focused model delivered short- to medium-term consumption gains comparable to more complex "graduation" programs, like livestock-based, at about half the cost, suggesting strong value-for-money. However, long-term sustainability and impacts warrant follow-up.
- **Capital constraints matter:** In contexts where fixed costs of entry are binding, modest capital plus basic business training can rapidly shift women into nonfarm enterprise and increase earnings.
- **Income alone does not ensure empowerment:** Rapid income gains did not automatically translate into changes in social empowerment or reductions in partner violence, indicating the need for complementary interventions for social outcomes.

Blattman, Christopher, Eric P. Green, Julian Jamison, M. Christian Lehmann, and Jeannie Annan. 2016. "The Returns to Microenterprise Support among the Ultrapoor: A Field Experiment in Postwar Uganda." American Economic Journal: Applied Economics 8 (2): 36–64.

Zambia

Education and Women's Empowerment and Livelihoods Project (GEWEL)

Country Classification:	Lower middle-income
Implementing Organization:	Government/Public Institution
Project Budget:	US$342.54 million
Effectiveness Rating:	Proven (measured through an impact evaluation)
Target Population:	women aged 19-64 and schoolgirls aged 14-18 from extreme poor households

Context

- Despite a decade of growth, over 64% of Zambians lived under US$2.15 per day in 2022, with **nearly half in extreme poverty** and women and girls disproportionally affected by economic and climate shocks.
- The country's Human Capital Index remains low; children today will only be 40% as productive as they could be with full education and health. Young women and girls have been disproportionately affected, with **early pregnancy, child marriage, and economic hardship driving high school dropout rates**.
- Most rural women work in **informal agriculture** (90%), often **unpaid or self-employed in low-productivity activities**. Lack of access to markets and credit limits their ability to build sustainable livelihoods.

Program Overview

The GEWEL project has aimed at increasing access to livelihood support and access to secondary education through two types of interventions:

- **Supporting Women's Livelihoods (SWL)** through a comprehensive **livelihoods package** including context-specific training, mentoring, peer support, productivity grants, and support to form savings groups.
- **Keeping Girls in School (KGS)** through **tuition fee and education grants**, a case management system aimed at identifying and supporting girls at risk of dropping out, and an empowerment initiative to address school-related gender-based violence and provide safe spaces for learning. The component targeted households benefiting from the government's Social Cash Transfer (SCT) program.

Results & Outcomes

- The SWL component provided **comprehensive livelihood packages to 144,297 poor women** and had sustained impacts on consumption, income, food security, assets, and mental health.
- The **KGS initiative enrolled 173,311 girls** in secondary schools. The case management system **brought 650+ out-of-school-girls back to the classroom** and prevented 600+ girls from dropping out.
- Results from the impact evaluation show that **beneficiary households are more resilient**, have higher consumption levels, rate their own welfare higher, and are more likely to own domestic and productive assets such as mosquito nets and cell phones.

Lessons Learnt

- **Strong case management systems:** Strong case management can play a crucial role in improving education outcomes for at-risk girls by providing individual support and follow-up. The case management system is being scaled up to all KGS schools, and the Government has committed its own financing to bring it to additional districts by 2026.
- **Layering services (cash 'plus' approach):** Establishing referral mechanisms and linking Cash Transfer programs to productive activities enhanced resilience and prevented households from returning to poverty after shocks.
- **The power of grants:** While the full SWL package delivered strong, sustainable impacts, the grant alone showed significant improvements and should be prioritized in resource-constrained environments.

Botea, Ioana, Andrew Brudevold-Newman, Marcus Goldstein, Corinne Low, and Gareth Roberts. 2023. "Supporting Women's Livelihoods at Scale: Evidence from a Nationwide Multi-Faceted Program." NBER Working Paper Series 31625, August. Revised September 2025.

B Converting evaluation findings into percentage impacts

This table details the calculations used to derive the percentage impacts for inclusion in Table 2. It covers cases where impacts are not taken directly from headline estimates in the original evaluation studies, but are instead converted to express impacts in percentage terms, to ensure comparability across programs, and, where relevant, focusing on a specific sub-group of beneficiaries or on a particular sub-component of the program.

Table 3: Details of impact calculation on earnings and employment of select programs

Country	Study	Measure	Location	Coefficient	Control group mean	% impact (coefficient/ control group mean)
Argentina	(Alzúa et al. 2016)[9]	male formal employment	Table 3	0.1982	0.2505	79%
		male earnings	Table 4	1054.99	529.4	199%
Bangladesh	(Shonchoy et al. 2018)	employment	Table 5	0.282	0.11	256%
		wage income	Table 6	8947.121	2939	304%
India	(Banerjee et al. 2021)[10]	self-employment earnings	Table 3	108.36	103.15	105%
		per capita consumption	Table 2	21.252	72.95	29%
Liberia	(Adoho, et al. 2014)[11]	employment	Table 3a	0.226	0.425	53%
		earnings	Table 4a	768	680.1	113%
North Macedonia	(Armand, et al. 2026)	ever employed	Table 2	0.2	0.23	87%
		labor earnings	Table 2	57.93	61.98	93%
Uganda	(Blattman et al. 2016)	non-farm self-employment	Table 3	0.401	0.39	103%
		earnings	Table 3	10.372	15.53	67%
		non-durable consumption	Table 3	31.031	107.74	29%

9. The impact on women was smaller so the headline estimates, averaged across men and women, were 32% on employment and 40% on earnings. We use the average for the period Q2-2011 to Q1-2015 in tables 3 and 4.
10. The headline results express impact estimates in terms of standard deviations. We use Table 2 and Table 3 in the paper to express them as % changes for consumption and self-employment income respectively. We focus on the seven year horizon.
11. We focus on the Business Development Services arm of the program, which exhibited larger impacts. The headline results in the paper show the average impact of the BDS arm and the Job Skills arm, which were 47% on employment and 80% on earnings.

References

Abebe, Girum, Stefano Caria, Marcel Fafchamps, Paolo Falco, Simon Franklin, and Simon Quinn. 2016. "Curse of Anonymity or Tyranny of Distance? The Impacts of Job-Search Support in Urban Ethiopia." NBER Working Paper Series.

Abel, Martin, Rulof Burger, and Patrizio Piraino. 2020. "The Value of Reference Letters: Experimental Evidence from South Africa." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 12 (3): 40–71. https://doi.org/10.1257/app.20150554

Abel, Martin, Rulof Burger, Eliana Carranza, and Patrizio Piraino. 2019. "Bridging the Intention-Behavior Gap? The Effect of Plan-Making Prompts on Job Search and Employment." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 11 (2): 284–301.

Abel, Martin, Eliana Carranza, Kimberly Geronimo, and Maria Elena Ortega. 2022. “Can Temporary Wage Incentives Increase Formal Employment? Experimental Evidence from Mexico.” Policy Research Working Paper No. 10234. Washington, DC: World Bank. http://hdl.handle.net/10986/38462

Acosta, Pablo, Çağlar Özden, Jeremy Lebow, Limon Rodriguez, and Evelina Dahlgren. 2025. *Global Skill Partnerships for Migration: Preparing Tomorrow’s Workers for Home and Abroad*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.

Adoho, Franck M., Shubha Chakravarty, Dala Korkoyah Jr., Mattias K. A. Lundberg, and Afia Tasneem. 2014. “The Impact of an Adolescent Girls Employment Program: the EPAG Project in Liberia (English).” Impact Evaluation series no. IE 121, Policy Research working paper no. WPS 6832. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/610391468299085610

Ajayi, Kehinde F., Aziz Dao, and Mousson Estelle Jamel Koussoube. 2023. “The Effects of Childcare on Women and Children: Evidence from a Randomized Evaluation in Burkina Faso (English).” Policy Research Working Paper 10239. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.

Alcid, Annie. 2014. "A Randomized Controlled Trial of Akazi Kanoze Youth in Rural Rwanda." EDC.ORG. https://edc.org/resources/a-randomized-controlled-trial-of-akazi-kanoze-youth-in-rural-rwanda/.

Almeida, Rita K., and Reyes Aterido. 2015. "Investing in Formal On-the-Job Training: Are SMEs Lagging Much Behind?" *IZA Journal of Labor & Development* 4.

Alfonsi, Livia, Oriana Bandiera, Vittorio Bassi, Robin Burgess, Imran Rasul, Munshi Sulaiman, and Anna Vitali. 2020. "Tackling Youth Unemployment: Evidence from a Labor Market Experiment in Uganda." *Econometrica* 88 (6): 2369–2414.

Alzúa, María Iaura, Guillermo Cruces, and Carolina Lopez. 2016. "Long-run Effects of Youth Training Programs: Experimental Evidence From Argentina." *Economic Enquiry* 54 (4): 1839–1859. https://doi.org/10.1111/ecin.12348

Armand, Alex, Pedro Carneiro, Federico Tagliati, and Yiming Xia. 2026. "Can Subsidized Employment Tackle Long-Term Unemployment? Experimental Evidence from North Macedonia." *Journal of Development Economics* 178. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2025.103598

Arráiz, Irani, Syon P. Bhanot, and Carla Calero. 2019. "Less is More: Experimental Evidence on Heuristic-Based Business Training in Ecuador." *Academia*. https://www.academia.edu/102076097/Less_is_More_Experimental_Evidence_on_Heuristic_Based_Business_Training_in_Ecuador.

Attanasio, Orazio, Arlen Guarín, Carlos Medina, and Costas Meghir. 2017. "Vocational Training for Disadvantaged Youth in Colombia: A Long-Term Follow-Up." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 9 (2): 131–43.

Balavac-Orlic, Merima, John T. Giles, Siddharth Hari, and Mirey Ovadiya. 2024. "Private Provisioning of Employment Services: Experimental Evidence from Bosnia and Herzegovina." World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 10826. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099503006262434572.

Bandiera, Oriana, Niklas Buehren, Robin Burgess, Markus Goldstein, Selim Gulesci, Imran Rasul, and Munshi Sulaiman. 2020. "Women's Empowerment in Action: Evidence from a Randomized Control Trial in Africa." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 12 (1): 210–59.

Bandiera, Oriana, Robin Burgess, Narayan Das, Selim Gulesci, Imran Rasul, and Munshi Sulaiman. 2017. "Labor Markets and Poverty in Village Economies." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 132 (2): 811–870.

Banerjee, Abhijit, Esther Duflo, and Garima Sharma. 2021. "Long-Term Effects of the Targeting the Ultra Poor Program." *American Economic Review: Insights* 3 (4): 471–86. https://doi.org/10.1257/aeri.20200667

Banerjee, Abhijit, Esther Duflo, Nathanael Goldberg, Dean Karlan, Robert Osei, William Parienté, Jeremy Shapiro, Bram Thuysbaert, and Christopher Udry. 2015. "A Multifaceted Program Causes Lasting Progress for the Very Poor: Evidence from Six Countries." *Science* 348 (6236).

Bassi, Vittorio, and Aisha Nansamba. 2022. "Screening and Signalling Non-Cognitive Skills: Experimental Evidence from Uganda." *The Economic Journal* 132 (642): 471–511.

Beam, Emily A. 2016. "Do Job Fairs Matter? Experimental Evidence on the Impact of Job-Fair Attendance." *Journal of Development Economics* 120: 32–40.

Beaman, Lori, and Jeremy Magruder. 2012. "Who Gets the Job Referral? Evidence from a Social Networks Experiment." *American Economic Review* 102 (7): 3574–93.

Beaman, Lori, Niall Keleher, and Jeremy Magruder. 2018. "Do Job Networks Disadvantage Women? Evidence from a Recruitment Experiment in Malawi." *Journal of Labor Economics* 36 (1): 121–157.

Bedoya, Guadalupe, Yulia Belyakova, Aidan Coville, Thomas Escande, Mohammad Isaqzadeh, and Aminata Ndiaye. 2023. "The Enduring Impacts of a Big Push during Multiple Crises : Experimental Evidence from Afghanistan (English)." Policy Research Working Paper WPS 10596. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099837211062311087/pdf/IDU-e486b8ed-e7a1-4d23-a60d-848c87baeeb1.pdf.

Berg, Kim. 2025. “A Win-Win-Win Situation – More Nurses for Germany.” https://www.giz.de/en/newsroom/stories/triple-win-nurses-germany.

Berhane, Guush, Daniel O. Gilligan, John Hoddinott, Neha Kumar, and Alemayehu Seyoum Taffesse. 2014. "Can Social Protection Work in Africa? The Impact of Ethiopia’s Productive Safety Net Programme." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 63 (1): 1–26.

Bertrand, Marianne, and Bruno Crépon. 2021. “Teaching Labor Laws: Evidence from a Randomized Control Trial in South Africa.” *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 13 (4): 125–149.

Bertrand, Marianne, Bruno Crépon, Alicia Marguerie, and Patrick Premand. 2021. “Do Workfare Programs Live Up to Their Promises? Experimental Evidence from Côte d’Ivoire.” Policy Research Working Paper No. 9611. Washington, DC: World Bank. http://hdl.handle.net/10986/35406

Besley, Timothy, and Robin Burgess. 2004. "Can Labor Regulation Hinder Economic Performance? Evidence from India." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 119 (1): 91–134. https://doi.org/10.1162/003355304772839533

Blattman, Christopher, Eric P. Green, Julian Jamison, M. Christian Lehmann, and Jeannie Annan. 2016. "The Returns to Microenterprise Support among the Ultrapoor: A Field Experiment in Postwar Uganda." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 8 (2): 36–64.

Blattman, Christopher, Nathan Fiala, and Sebastian Martinez. 2020. "The Long-Term Impacts of Grants on Poverty: Nine-Year Evidence from Uganda's Youth Opportunities Program." *American Economic Review: Insights* 2 (3): 287–304.

Borkum, Evan, Irina Cheban, and Edith Felix. 2023. *Generation Evaluation in India and Kenya: Phase II Report*. Washington, DC: Generation.

Bossuroy, Thomas, Dean Karlan, Harounan Kazianga, William Parienté, Patrick Premand, Chris Udry, Julia Vaillant, and Kelsey Wright. 2025. *Impact des mesures d'inclusion productive "Yokk Koom Koom" aú Sénégal*. Programme de Protection Sociale Adaptative au Sahel.

Bossuroy, Thomas, Markus Goldstein, Bassirou Karimou, Dean Karlan, Harounan Kazianga, William Parienté, Patrick Premand, Catherine C. Thomas, Christopher Udry, Julia Vaillant, and Kelsey A. Wright . 2022. "Tackling Psychosocial and Capital Constraints to Alleviate Poverty." *Nature* 605: 291–297. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-022-04647-8

Botea, Ioana, Andrew Brudevold-Newman, Marcus Goldstein, Corinne Low, and Gareth Roberts. 2023. “Supporting Women’s Livelihoods at Scale: Evidence from a Nationwide Multi-Faceted Program.” NBER Working Paper Series 31625, August. Revised September 2025. https://doi.org/10.3386/w31625.

Brandily, Paul, Eric Mvukiyehe, Lodewijk Smets, Peter van der Windt, and Marijke Verpoorten. 2025. "From Workfare to Economic and Sociopolitical Stability? Evidence from a Randomized Trial in Eastern Congo." *The World Bank Economic Review* 39 (3): 711–730.

Brown, Alessio, and Johannes Koettl. 2012. “Active labor market programs : how, why, when, and to what extent are they effective?” *Europe and Central Asia Knowledge Brief No. 58*. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/120561468282885115

Brown, Gabriel, Morgan Hardy, Isaac Mbiti, Jamie McCasland, and Isabelle Salcher. 2024. "Can Financial Incentives to Firms Improve Apprenticeship Training? Experimental Evidence from Ghana." *American Economic Review: Insights* 6 (1): 120–136.

Bruhn, Miriam. 2011. "License to Sell: The Effect of Business Registration Reform on Entrepreneurial Activity in Mexico." *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 93 (1): 382–386. https://doi.org/10.1162/REST_a_00059

Brunelin, Stephanie, Elisa C. A. V. Larcher, Line Le Teuff, and Claudia Santamaria Ruiz. 2025. “Sene-

gal: How to Increase and Diversify the Incomes of the Poorest: Findings from the Yokk Koom Koom Program Experience." ASP In Brief, April 2025. Washington, DC: World Bank. https://documents.worldbank.org/pt/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099053025143015053

Burks, Stephen, Bo Cowgill, Mitchell Hoffman, and Michael Housman. 2015. "The Value of Hiring through Employee Referrals." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 130 (2): 805–839.

Bursztyn, Leonardo, and David Yanaizawa-Drott. 2018. *The Effects of Misperceptions of Social Norms on Female Labor Force Participation in Saudi Arabia*. Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab.

Bursztyn, Leonardo, Alessandra L. González, and David Yanagizawa-Drott. 2020. "Misperceived Social Norms: Women Working Outside the Home in Saudi Arabia." *American Economic Review* 110 (10): 2997–3029. https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20180975

Bryan, Gharad, Shyamal Chowdhury, and Ahmed Mushfiq Mobarak. 2014. "Underinvestment in a Profitable Technology: The Case of Seasonal Migration in Bangladesh." *Econometrica* 82 (5): 1671–1748. https://doi.org/10.3982/ECTA10489

Calero, Carla, Veronica Gonzalez Diez, Yuri S. D. Soares, Jochen Kluve, and Carlos Henrique Corseuil. 2017. "Can Arts-Based Interventions Enhance Labor Market Outcomes Among Youth? Evidence from a Randomized Trial in Rio de Janeiro." *Labour Economics* 45: 131–142.

Campos, Francisco, Michael Frese, Leonardo Iacovone, Hillary C. Johnson, David McKenzie, and Mona Mensmann. 2025. "Long-Term and Lasting Impacts of Personal Initiative Training on Entrepreneurial Success." *AER: Insights* 7 (4): 463–479.

Campos, Francisco, Michael Frese, Markus Goldstein, Leonardo Iacovone, Hillary C. Johnson, David McKenzie, and Mona Mensmann. 2017. "Teaching Personal Initiative Beats Traditional Training in Boosting Small Business in West Africa." *Science* 357 (3657): 1287–1290.

Caria, Stefano, Grant Gordon, Maximilian Kasy, Simon Quinn, Soha Osman Shami, and Alexander Teytelboym. 2024. "An Adaptive Targeted Field Experiment: Job Search Assistance for Refugees in Jordan." *Journal of the European Economic Association* 22 (2): 781–836. https://doi.org/10.1093/jeea/jvad067

Carranza, Eliana, Robert Garlick, Kate Orkin, and Neil Rankin. 2022. "Job Search and Hiring with Limited Information about Workseekers' Skills." *American Economic Review* 112 (11): 3547–83.

Chakravarty, Shubha, Mattias Lundberg, Plamen Nikolov, and Juliane Zenker. 2019. "Vocational Training Programs and Youth Labor Market Outcomes: Evidence from Nepal." *Journal of Development Economics* 136: 71–110.

Chioda, Laura, Benjamin Feigenberg, Mariana Garcia Martinez, Marcus Holmlund, and Guadalupe Montenegro Muro. 2024. *Honduras Safer Municipalities Project: Impact Evaluation of the Temporary Jobs Program for At-Risk Youth*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Clark, Shelley, Caroline W. Kabiru, Sonia Laszlo, and Stella Muthuri. 2019. "The Impact of Childcare on Poor Urban Women's Economic Empowerment in Africa." *Demography* 56: 1247-1272.

Crawford, Emily Elizabeth, Ben Crost, Oeindrila Dube, Samih Ferrah, Marcus Erik Holmlund, Nausheen Khan, Eric Mvukiyehe, and Nuruddeen Sambo Umar. 2021. *A Way Out? : Evidence from Two Trials of the Mafita Apprenticeship and Community-Based Skills Training Programs in Northern Nigeria - Endline Evaluation Report (English)*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group, Development Impact Evaluation (DIME) Department. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/709381625123968029.

Crépon, Bruno, and Patrick Premand. 2025. "Direct and Indirect Effects of Subsidized Dual Apprenticeships." *The Reveiw of Economic Studies* 92 (5): 2979–3028.

Daher, Chaza Abou, Erica M. Field, Kendal M. Swanson, and Kate H. Vyborny. 2023. "Driv-

ers of Change: How Intra-household Preferences Shape Employment Responses to Gender Reform." NBER Working Paper Series. https://doi.org/10.3386/w31715

De Mel, Suresh, David McKenzie, and Christopher Woodruff. 2012. "One-Time Transfers of Cash or Capital Have Long-Lasting Effects on Microenterprises in Sri Lanka." *Science* 335 (6071): 962–966.

del Valle, Alejandro. 2021. "The Effects of Public Health Insurance in Labor Markets with Informal Jobs: Evidence from Mexico." *Journal of Health Economics* 77 (C).

Díaz, Juan José, and Miguel Jaramillo. 2006. "An Evaluation of the Peruvian Youth Labor Training Program Projoven." IDB Working Paper. Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank.

Díaz, Juan José, and David Rosas-Shady. 2016. "Impact Evaluation of the Job Youth Training Program Projoven." IDB Working Paper Series No. IDB-WP-693. Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank.

Fafchamps, Marcel, David McKenzie, Simon Quinn, and Christopher Woodruff. 2014. "Microenterprise Growth and the Flypaper Effect: Evidence from a Randomized Experiment in Ghana." *Journal of Development Economics* 106: 211–226.

Field, Erica M., Leigh L. Linden, Ofer Malamud, Daniel Rubenson, and Shing-Yi Wang. 2019. "Does Vocational Education Work? Evidence from a Randomized Experiment in Mongolia." NBER Working Paper Series.

Field, Erica, Seema Jayachandran, Rohini Pande, and Natalia Rigol. 2016. "Friendship at Work: Can Peer Effects Catalyze Female Entrepreneurship?" *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 8 (2): 125–53.

Fernandez, Chloë, Samih Ferrah, Andrea Guariso, Marcus Holmlund, Tara Mitchell, and Carol Newman. 2024. *Entrepreneurship Support for Host and Displaced Communities*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.

GSP (Global Skills Partnerships). 2021a. Pilot Project Addressing *Labour Shortages through Innovative Labour Migration Models (PALIM)*. June 30, 2021.

GSP. 2021b. "Migration Pathways: Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC)." Center for Global Development. https://gsp.cgdev.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/CGD-Legal-Pathways-Database_APTC.pdf

Gómez, Maria Fernanda, and Carolina González-Velosa. 2023. "Can a Pay-for- Performance Program Help the Vulnerable find Jobs during a Pandemic?: Experimental Evidence from Empleate in Colombia." Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank. https://doi.org/10.18235/0005029.

Gupta, Bhanu, Kanika Mahajan, Anisha Sharma, and Daksh Walia. 2025. "From Dusk Till Dawn: The Impact of Lifting Night Shift Bans on Female Employment." Ashoka University Economics Discussion Paper No. 147.

Heath, Rachel. 2018. "Why Do Firms Hire Using Referrals? Evidence from Bangladeshi Garment Factories." *Journal of Political Economy* 126 (4).

Hicks, Joan Hamory, Michael Kremer, Isaac Mbiti, and Edward Miguel. 2016. *Evaluating the Impact of Vocational Education Vouchers on Out-of-School Youth in Kenya*. International Initiative for Impact Evaluation.

Holzmann, Robert, Jacques Wels, and Pamela Dale. 2016. *Assessing Benefit Portability for International Migrant Workers: A Review of the Belgium-Morocco Bilateral Social Security Agreement*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.

Ibáñez, Ana María, Andrés Moya, María Adelaida Ortega, Sandra V Rozo, and Maria José Urbina. 2025. "Life Out of the Shadows: the Impacts of Regularization Programs on the Lives of Forced Migrants." *Journal of the European Economic Association* 23 (3): 941–982. https://doi.org/10.1093/jeea/jvae044

Igarashi, Takiko, and Pablo Acosta. 2022. "Who Benefits from Dual Training Systems? Evidence from the Philippines." *Philippine Review of Economics* 59(1): 26–45.

Imbert, Clément, and John Papp. 2015. "Labor Market Effects of Social Programs: Evidence from India's Employment Guarantee." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 7 (2): 233-63.

ILO (International Labour Organization). 2019. "Skills and Jobs Mismatches in Low- and Middle-Income Countries." https://www.ilo.org/publications/major-publications/skills-and-jobs-mismatches-low-and-middle-income-countries.

ILO. n.d. *ILOSTAT Country Profiles*. https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/country-profiles/

Jensen, Robert. 2012. "Do Labor Market Opportunities Affect Young Women's Work and Family Decisions? Experimental Evidence from India." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 127 (2): 753–792. https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjs002

Karan, Anup, and Ajay Mahal. 2019. "The Impact of Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana on Female Labour Force Participation in India: A Matched Difference-In-Differences Analysis." https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3371821.

La Porta, Rafael, and Andrei Shleifer. 2014. "Informality and Development." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 28 (3): 109–126.

Le Barbanchon, Thomas, Diego Ubfal, and Federico Araya. 2023. "The Effects of Working While in School: Evidence from Employment Lotteries." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 15 (1): 383–410.

Levinsohn, James, Neil Rankin, Gareth Roberts, and Volker Schöer. 2014. "Wage Subsidies and Youth Employment in South Africa: Evidence from a Randomised Control Trial." Working Paper 02/2014, Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers.

Liu, Lulu, and Yuting Zhang. 2018. "Does Non-Employment Based Health Insurance Promote Entrepreneurship? Evidence from a Policy Experiment in China." *Journal of Comparative Economics* 46 (1): 270–283.

Macours, Karen, Patrick Premand, and Renos Vakis. 2022. "Transfers, Diversification and Household Risk Strategies: Can Productive Safety Nets Help Households Manage Climatic Variability?" *The Economic Journal* 132 (647): 2438–2470. https://doi.org/10.1093/ej/ueac018

Maitra, Pushkar, and Subha Mani. 2017. "Learning and earning: Evidence from a randomized evaluation in India." *Labour Economics* 45: 116–130.

Mani, Anandi, Sendhil Mullainathan, Eldar Shafir, and Jiaying Zhao. 2013. "Poverty Impedes Cognitive Function." *Science* 341 (6149): 976–980.

Matsuda, Norihiko, and Shinsaku Nomura. 2025. "The Temptation of Social Networks under Job Search Frictions." *World Bank Economic Review* 39 (1): 1–25.

Meliciani, Valentina, and Debora Radicchia. 2011. "The Informal Recruitment Channel and the Quality of Job-Worker Matches: An Analysis on Italian Survey Data." *Industrial and Corporate Change* 20 (2): 511–554.

Migration Partnership Facility. 2021. "Pilot Project Addressing Labour Shortages through Innovative Labour Migration Models (PALIM)." https://www.migrationpartnershipfacility.eu/mpf-projects/17-completed-action-pilot-project-addressing-labour-shortages-through-innovative-labour-migration-models-palim

Morten, Melanie, and Jaqueline Oliveira. 2016. "Paving the Way to Development: Costly Migration and Labor Market Integration." *NBER Working Paper No. 22158*.

Mourelo, Elva López, and Verónica Escudero. 2017. "Effectiveness of Active Labor Market Tools in Conditional Cash Transfers Programs: Evidence for Argentina." *World Development* 94: 422–447. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2017.02.006

ORB International. 2022. *TEF Impact Report 2022*. Charlottesville: ORB International.

Oyarzo, Mauricio, and Luz María Ferrada. 2024. "Exploring the Impact of Employment Policies on Wages and Employability in the Chilean Local Labor Market." *Regional Science Policy and Practice* 16 (7).

Popov, Alexander. 2014. "Credit Constraints and Investment in Human Capital: Training Evidence from Transition Economies." *Journal of Financial Intermediation* 23 (1): 76–100.

Puerto, Susana, Chiara Curcio, Jonas Bausch, Jonathan Stöterau, and Michael Weber. 2022. *The Impact of Active Labour Market Programmes on Youth: An Updated Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis*. Geneva: International Labour Organization.

Querejeta, Martina, Cecilia Olivieri, Ailin Tomio, Jorge Luis Castaneda, and Ana Maria Munoz Boudet. 2023. *Sharing Parental Leave between Mothers and Fathers: Experimental Evidence from a Messaging Intervention in Uruguay*. Policy Research Working Paper No. 10340. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Quiros, Tatiana Peralta, Tamara Kerzhner, and Paolo Avner. 2019. "Exploring Accessibility to Employment Opportunities in African Cities: A First Benchmark." *World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 8971*.

Shah, Anuj K, Sendhil Mullainathan, and Eldar Shafir. 2012. "Some Consequences of Having Too Little." *Science 338* (6107): 682–685.

Shankar, Anita V., Mary Alice Onyura, and Jessica Alderman. 2015. "Agency-Based Empowerment Training Enhances Sales Capacity of Female Energy Entrepreneurs in Kenya." *Journal of Health Communication* 20: 67–75.

Sharma, Uttam, Tashmina Rahman, Mokhlesur Rahman, Mustahsin-Ul Aziz, and Shiro Nakata, Shiro. 2021. "Effects of Recognition of Prior Learning on Job Market Outcomes: Impact Evaluation in Bangladesh." Policy Research Working Paper 9644, World Bank, Washington, DC. https://hdl.handle.net/10986/35522

Shonchoy, Abu, Tomoki Fujii, and Selim Raihan. 2018. "Barriers to Labor Migration for the Rural Poor." Research Paper. Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3395229

Shonchoy, Abu S., Tomoki Fujii, and Selim Raihan. 2024. "The Impact of a Vocational Training "Plus" Programme on Employment and Income." *ABFER 11th Annual Conference*.

Stoevska, Valentina. 2021. "Only Half of Workers Worldwide Hold Jobs Corresponding to Their Level of Education." https://ilostat.ilo.org/only-half-of-workers-worldwide-hold-jobs-corresponding-to-their-level-of-education.

Tony Elumelu Foundation. 2023. *TEF Impact Report 2022*. Lagos: Tony Elumelu Foundation. https://www.tonyelumelufoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2023/09/TEF-IMPACT-REPORT-2022.pdf

Ulyssea, Gabriel. 2020. "Informality: Causes and Consequences for Development." *Annual Review of Economics* 12: 525–546.

USAID (United States Agency for International Development). 2014. *A Randomized Controlled Trial of Akazi Kanoze Youth in Rural Rwanda*. Final Evaluation Report.

USAID. 2016. *Akazi Kanoze Youth Employment and Livelihood Outcomes: A Qualitative Follow-Up of Program Graduates*.

World Bank. 2003. *Yemen - Social Fund for Development Project (English)*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/896941468767064268.

World Bank. 2018. *Improving Youth Employability Through Informal Apprenticeship*. (P167681). World Bank Projects & Operations. Accessed January 8, 2026. https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P167681.

World Bank. 2019. *Urban Productive Safety Net and Jobs Project (P169943)*. World Bank Projects & Operations. Accessed January 8, 2026. https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P169943.

World Bank. 2020a. *Türkiye - Formal Employment Creation Project (English)*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/211181585965751622.

World Bank. 2020b. *Ghana - Jobs and Skills Project (English)*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/619371593741732140.

World Bank. 2020c. *Benin - Youth Inclusion Project (English)*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/183171606230224321.

World Bank. 2021a. *Bangladesh - Recovery and Advancement of Informal Sector Employment Project (English)*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/765871616119278727.

World Bank. 2021b. *Jordan - Support to Private Sector Employment and Skills Project (English)*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/428271640181364007.

World Bank. 2021c. *Promoting Better Jobs through Integrated Labor and Skills Programs (P176781)*. World Bank Projects & Operations. Accessed January 8, 2026. https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P176781.

World Bank. 2022a. *Bosnia and Herzegovina - Second Employment Support Project (English)*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/993961656602367244.

World Bank. 2022b. *Strengthening 21st Century Skills is a Viable Pathway to Improving Youth Labor Market Outcomes in South Africa : An Impact Evaluation of the Youth Employment Services (YES) Program (English)*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099925001092361952.

World Bank. 2022c. *Argentina - Promoting Better Jobs through Integrated Labor and Skills Programs Project (English)*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/962691646063938924.

World Bank. 2023a. "Implementation Guide of the Mexico Youth Labor Market Inclusion Pilot." https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099060123135567453.

World Bank. 2023b. *West Bank and Gaza - Gaza Emergency Cash for Work and Self-Employment Support Project (English)*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099164003212316734.

World Bank. 2023c. *"Labor Market Information and Skills System Transformation for Labor Market Flexibility (LISTRAF) Project in the Republic of Indonesia."* Report No. PAD4052. Project Appraisal Document. Washington, DC: World Bank. December 18, 2023. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099122123150015590/pdf/BOSIB-57fc4455-cf84-4c92-bea2-c4aa45654912.pdf

World Bank. 2023d *The Skilling Up Lebanon (SUL) Project (P176444). World Bank Projects & Operations*. Accessed January 8, 2026. https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P176444.

World Bank. 2023e. *Promoting Job Opportunities and Skills Development in El Salvador (Project P179829)*. World Bank Projects & Operations. Accessed January 8, 2026. https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P179829.

World Bank. 2024a. *Kenya - Youth Employment and Opportunities Project (KYEOP) (English)*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099032224040028003.

World Bank. 2024b. *Jordan - Enhancing Women's Economic Opportunities in Jordan Operation (English)*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099030724090013143.

World Bank. 2024c. *Cambodia - Skills for Better Jobs Project (English)*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099050624102561519.

World Bank. 2024d. "Entrepreneurship Support for Host and Displaced Communities: An Impact Evaluation of the Niger Refugees and Host Communities Support Project." Endline Evaluation Report. Washington, DC: World Bank. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099062624150011318/pdf/P16909212830e20031a9cb103b0c49f1534.pdf.

World Bank. 2024e. *Labor Market Information and Skills System Transformation for Labor Market Flexibility (P166693)*. World Bank Projects & Operations. Accessed January 8, 2026. https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P166693.

World Bank. 2024f. *Skills for Better Jobs Project (P179159)*. World Bank Projects & Operations. Accessed January 8, 2026. https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P179159.

World Bank. 2024g. *Recovery and Advancement of Informal Sector Employment (P174085)*. World Bank Projects & Operations. Accessed January 8, 2026. https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P174085.

World Bank. 2024h. *Kenya Youth Employment and Opportunities Project (P151831)*. World Bank Projects & Operations. Accessed January 8, 2026. https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P151831.

World Bank. 2024i. "Promoting Better Jobs through Integrated Labor and Skills Programs in Argentina." Project Appraisal Document. May 2, 2024. Washington, DC: World Bank. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099050624102561519/pdf/BOSIB1c-cb5ec0301b1bbe41c8681031bc39.pdf.

World Bank. 2025a. *Making Labor Markets Work for the Youth*. Washington, DC: World Bank. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099021125104529845/pdf/P506693-6eb8104a-0f5f-43e4-ab0b-7017bd23765a.pdf. © Global Labor Market Conference.

World Bank. 2025b. *Senegal - Improving Youth Employability Through Informal Apprenticeship Project (English)*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099030625145031361.

World Bank. 2025c. *Turkiye - Second Formal Employment Creation Project (English)*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099031225175219760.

World Bank. 2025d. "Improving Youth Employability through Informal Apprenticeship in Senegal." Implementation Completion and Results Report. February 26, 2025. Washington, DC: World Bank. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099030625145031361/pdf/BOSIB-3cd19187-b7ae-4e17-b8ec-8a94ee302c5e.pdf.

World Bank. 2025e. "Promoting Skills and Jobs – Kenya." Project Information Document. October 7, 2025. Washington, DC: World Bank. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099100725052599041/pdf/P174085-8be91c0f-24c6-40fd-8e92-7ac4c0863a62.pdf.

World Bank. 2025f. *Gaza Emergency Cash for Work and Self-Employment Support (P167726)*. World Bank Projects & Operations. Accessed January 8, 2026. https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P167726.

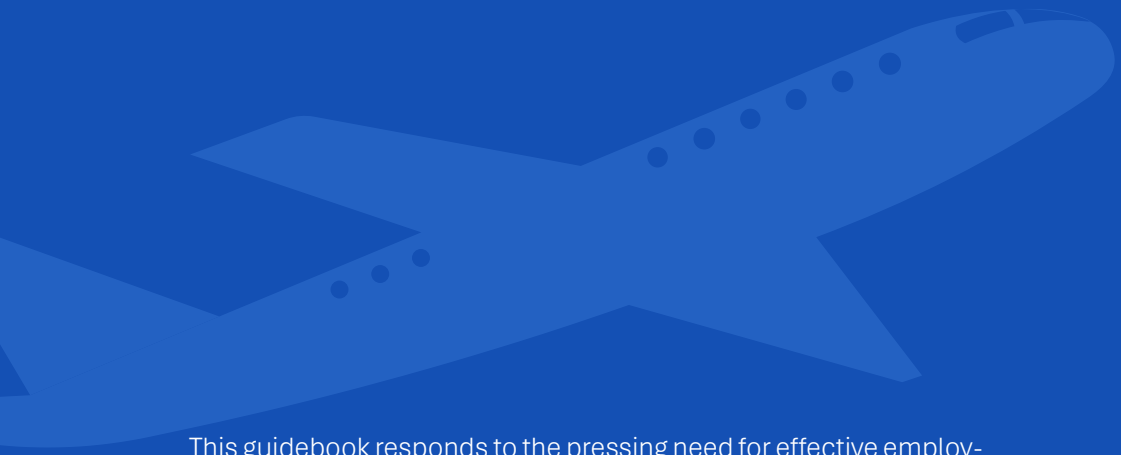
World Bank 2025g. "Urban Productive Safety Net and Jobs Project in Ethiopia (P169943)" Implementation Status and Results Report. December 27, 2025. Washington, DC: World Bank. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099122725113517450/pdf/P169943-609aa809-5d17-49c6-be34-060768802859.pdf

World Bank. 2025h. *"Urban Productive Safety Net and Jobs Project Enables Economic Inclusion for Women."* Feature Story, January 14, 2025. World Bank. https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2025/01/14/urban-productive-safety-net-and-jobs-project-enables-afe-economic-inclusion-for-women

World Bank. 2025i. "Recovery and Advancement of Informal Sector Employment in Bangladesh (P174085)." Project Information Document. October 7, 2025. Washington, DC: World Bank. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099100725052599041/pdf/P174085-8be91c0f-24c6-40fd-8e92-7ac4c0863a62.pdf.

YES (Youth Employment Services). 2021. "Youth Employment Service Growing SA's Taxpayer Base." https://blog.yes4youth.co.za/updates/youth-employment-service-growing-sas-taxpayer-baseyouth-employment-service-growing-sas-taxpayer-basev.

Yeyati, Levy, Martín Montané, Luca Sartorio, and Alfonso Guana. 2025. "What Works for Active Labor Market Policies? A Meta-Analysis of RCT Findings." *Economía LACEA Journal* 24 (1): 81–104.



This guidebook responds to the pressing need for effective employment solutions in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), where demographic pressures, fiscal constraints, and persistent labor market challenges hinder inclusive growth. Motivated by the imperative to inform policy with actionable evidence, the guidebook compiles a curated catalogue of over one hundred employment solutions, spanning active labor market programs, regulatory reforms, and integrated social protection measures. The selected interventions have been implemented across diverse contexts and have demonstrated above-average impacts on employment and earnings. The guidebook synthesizes lessons learned regarding their design, implementation, and contextual adaptation and finds that well-designed, contextually tailored interventions can achieve employment and earnings gains several times greater than typical programs. It distills five key design principles and offers a practical framework to guide policymakers in diagnosing constraints and selecting interventions, positioning these employment solutions as strategic investments for more inclusive and resilient labor markets.

© 2026 Global Labor Market Conference