



LAC GENDER NOTES

FACILITATING THE SCHOOL TO WORK TRANSITION OF YOUNG WOMEN

- Youth who are neither in school, nor employed, nor in training (NEET), remain a sizeable and vulnerable group in LAC, especially among female youth.
- There is a long-term effect on labor markets: generations that have higher shares of NEETs experience long-lasting declines in productivity, lowering overall economic growth. The phenomenon is also correlated with crime, drug use and addiction, disruptive behavior, and social disintegration.
- Motivators to drop out of school and labor markets are likely to differ across genders. For women, gender norms are powerful in keeping girls from aspiring to economic activity. If young women perceive their roles as that of being wives, mothers, and not to be working for an income unless there is physical need for it, they will likely not aspire to do something different.
- Cognitive, socio-emotional, and in-demand technical skills are important for successful school-to-work transitions by young men and women.



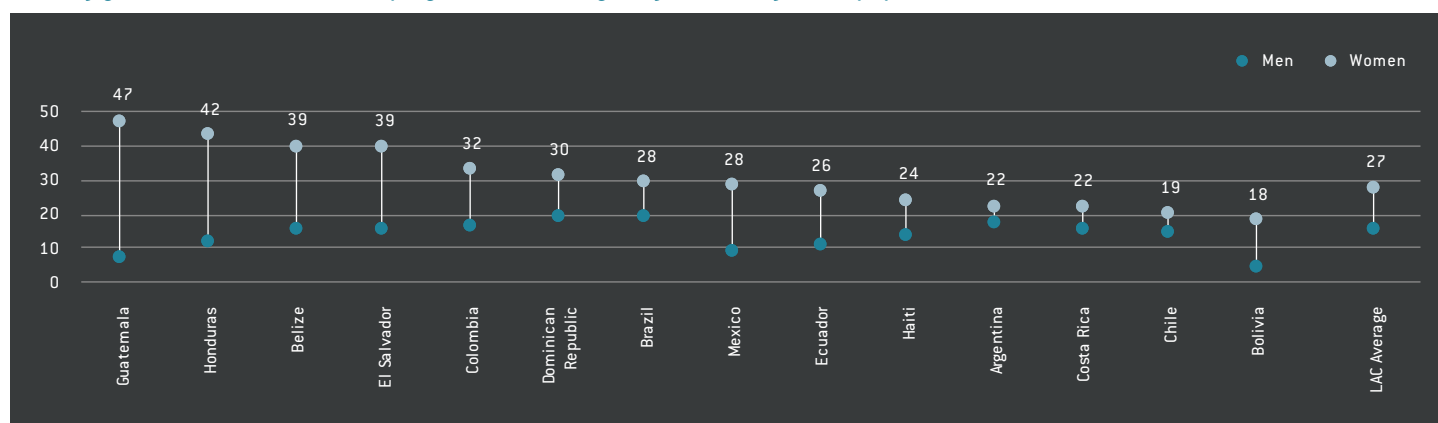
THE CONTEXT

According to De Hoyos et al. (2016), one in five youths between the ages of 18 and 24 in LAC is not in education, employment, or training (a status known as “NEET”), totaling more than 18 million people. Large numbers of young people enter the labor market every year, but many fail to find work. Youth who drop out before completing secondary school typically lack key skills that formal-sector employment requires. Often, they end up settling for less stable jobs in the informal sector, which sets them on a lifetime path of lower earnings and opportunity (De Hoyos et al. 2016). Also, Székely and Karver (2015) show there is a long-term effect on labor markets: generations that have higher shares of NEETs experience long-lasting reductions in productivity, lowering overall economic growth. The phenomenon is also correlated with crime, drug use and addiction, disruptive behavior, and social disintegration (Chioda 2015, Bussolo et al. 2014, and Hoyos et al. 2016). This sizeable population of economically excluded youth may in coming years undermine recent gains in poverty reduction in the region. Given that most NEET youth come from poor households, the trend will also lead to greater intergenerational poverty and obstruct social mobility (Ferreira et al. 2012 and Vakis, Rigolini, and Lucchetti 2016).

Critically, the share of NEETs among young women is significantly larger than among young men (Figure 1). Guatemala, Honduras, Belize and El Salvador have the highest share of NEET women, above 39 percent. According to de Hoyos et al (2016), the single most important risk factor associated with women NEETs is early marriage, compounded by teenage pregnancy. However, the same study found that young men account for the entire growth in the total number of NEET youth in the region. Factors that increase the likelihood of youth becoming NEETs in LAC relate to labor markets, the educational system, and socioeconomic status. These include the high cost of studying; disconnection between subjects taught in school and youths’ lives; uncertainty and lack of information about the future returns of education; scarcity of opportunities in education and work; difficulties in accessing higher education; inability to advance beyond temporary, unstable, high-informality, and low-paid job; constraints to building personal aspirations and internal motivation to return to school or work; inability to take consistent actions towards goals; and discrimination against women in the labor market (Hoyos et al. 2016, Trucco and Ullmann 2015, Costa and Ulysees 2014, Machado and Muller 2018, Monteiro 2013, and Simões et al. 2013). Furthermore, motivators to drop out of school and labor markets are likely to differ across genders. For women, gender norms are also powerful in keeping girls from aspiring to economic

Figure 1. NEETs in Latin America Make up a Higher Proportion of Young Women Than Young Men

Share of youth not in education, employment or training [% of male and female population], 2012-2019 latest data



Source: World Bank Indicators retrieved from International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT database.

activity [Machado and Muller 2018]. If young women perceive their roles as that of being wives, mothers, and not to be working for an income unless there is physical need for it, they will likely not aspire to do something different.

EVIDENCE OF WHAT WORKS

The [review](#) of youth employment programs targetting NEET young women as part of the World Bank's *Adolescent Girls Initiative* identified features that made these programs effective in reaching adolescent girls and young women, successfully imparting the skills that they needed, and helping them access employment and earnings opportunities over the long run [Cassaday et al. 2015]:

- Using recruitment strategies that reached the groups they wanted to help. For example, in Nepal, technical training providers received incentives to recruit very poor, disabled, and otherwise marginalized young women for the training programs.
- Providing the right incentives for the participants, the training providers, and the employers. For example, programs offered benefits such as childcare, food and transport allowances, and literacy training. They adjusted their hours to accommodate trainees' other commitments, including schooling and household chores. Technical training providers in Nepal received incentives to deliver marketable skills to trainees and place them in jobs once training had concluded. In Liberia, training providers received a premium based on job placement results; they also added extra help for the most educationally disadvantaged participants.
- Conducting a preliminary labor market assessment that allowed them to identify the most promising training opportunities, including non-traditional jobs.
- Strengthening trainees' resilience by offering appropriate supplementary skills (business skills, life skills, or both). Life skills training provided the tools and confidence for adolescent girls and young women to take advantage of new economic opportunities.

- Building social and financial capital, which help young girls to build financial assets and agency. Many pilots paired instruction in financial management and business development skills with an opportunity to develop savings. To build financial assets—which in some cases provided essential startup funds that girls and women could protect from their families—trainees in Liberia opened savings accounts, Rwandan trainees joined a savings and credit cooperative, and some youth clubs in South Sudan formed savings groups. In Lao PDR, entrepreneurs who did not receive startup grants were eligible to apply for loans and services from commercial and private banks. The contribution of savings to young women's economic agency cannot be understated.
- Offering safe places for girls and young women to expand their social and also professional networks.

The following provides a description of rigorously tested interventions in LAC that were successful in helping young NEET women access gainful employment.

- ***Providing technical training in non-traditional trades and in soft skills in young women's training programs.*** In Haiti, a pilot *Adolescent Girls Initiative*¹ project aimed to ease the school-to-work transition of young women worked with vulnerable Haitian women aged 17-21 years in the Port-au-Prince area between 2012 and 2014. The majority of women from the metropolitan area of Port-au-Prince work

1 Between 2008-2015, the World Bank supported the Adolescent Girls Initiative (AGI), a public-private partnership to promote the transition of adolescent girls from school to productive employment through innovative interventions that are tested, and then scaled-up or replicated if successful. The initiative was being piloted in eight countries including Afghanistan, Jordan, Lao PDR, Liberia, Haiti, Nepal, Rwanda, and South Sudan. Each program was individually tailored to the country context, and the menu of interventions included business development skills training, technical and vocational training targeting skills in high demand, as well as life-skills training. Because the evidence on what works in facilitating the transition of adolescent girls and young women to productive work is thin, rigorous impact evaluation was an important part of the initiative. Impact evaluations will also help build the case for replication and scaling up based on rates of success. For more information, see: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/adolescent-girls-initiative>

in the informal sector and are employed in low-productivity sectors including retail and wholesale. During the program period, the Haiti AGI provided technical and soft-skills training to over 1,000 young women. The technical skills training was in sectors not traditionally held by women such as in mechanics, electricity, construction, computer sciences, and telecommunications. The soft-skills training included classes on self-esteem, civic engagement and leadership, reproductive health, gender-based violence, preparation for the workplace and work ethics, disaster preparedness, and financial literacy. Evidence from qualitative evaluations of the pilot as well as a randomized [impact evaluation](#) suggest that beneficiaries' capacity to make decisions and pursue desired actions improved. Beneficiaries also were transitioning towards higher-skilled jobs related to the technical training they received and pursuing further education. The Haiti AGI enhanced the employability of the women participating in the program, improving both their technical and socio-emotional skills. Cost-wise, for every dollar spent in technical training, 30 cents were spent in soft skills development, making this latter component worthy of consideration for these types of programs (Rodella et al. 2015).

- **Vocational training and follow-up internships young women's access to economic opportunities.** In **Colombia**, the *Jóvenes en Acción* ('Youth in action') project provided 3-month in-classroom vocational skills training and a 3-month unpaid internship with on-the-job training. The program targeted youth aged 18–25, who were unemployed and in the two lowest income deciles, in urban areas. Trainees also received a daily stipend to cover transportation and lunch costs (higher amount given to women with children to assist with childcare). The [randomized controlled trial](#) found large and significant impacts for young women. Female participants had a nearly 7 percent higher probability of paid employment and worked on average 3 hours more per week (Attanasio et al. 2011). Furthermore, they earned nearly 20 percent more than the control group. In contrast, effects on employment

or earnings were not statistically significant for men. The programme also increased significantly the probability of working in the formal sector (as opposed to the informal economy) for both women and men: female youth were 8 percent more likely to have a formal contract and 7 percent more likely to get formal employment, while the figures for male youth were 6 percent and 5 percent, respectively. Formal wages also increased 33 percent for women and 23 percent for men. Similarly in **Argentina**, the *Programa Joven* ('Youth programme') provided vocational skills training and internships to young women and men aged at least 16 years, from poor households, with low education levels, no working experience, who were unemployed, underemployed or inactive. The program had a duration that varied between 14 and 20 weeks and included 6 to 12 weeks of technical training, followed by 8-week internships. It also covered transportation expenses, provided a stipend for women with young children, and offered medical checkups, materials and work clothing. The [impact evaluation](#) found significant effects on employment, but only for older women (aged 21–35). Similarly, earning outcomes improved for young men and adult women; but effects were not significant for younger women (below 21 years). Differential impacts appear to be explained by local labour market conditions. Importantly, having children was positively and significantly correlated to program participation for women. Another program in **Peru**, the youth labour training program, *ProJoven*, offered a 3-month vocational training and paid internships at private firms for a period of at least 3 months targeting young people aged 16–24 from poor households. During the internship, trainees received a small stipend lower than the minimum wage, covering transportation, meals and medical insurance. Women with children under 5 years of age received a double stipend. Participants also received health insurance. An impact evaluation of the program found that participants had increased their employment rates at 6 and 12 months after training, and demonstrated higher and statistically significant formal employment rates (by 7 to 18 percentage points)

compared to the control group, even 18 months post-training – an indication that the training and internship increased the probability of getting formal employment later on (Diaz and Jaramillo, 2006). Young women were significantly more likely to be employed, to be engaged in formal employment, and received higher monthly earnings than boys and young adults. A follow-up impact evaluation by Nopo, Robles, and Saavedra (2007) also found that employment rates improved 18 months after program completion, with larger employment effects for women. The evaluation also found that income for female participants increased by 93 percent compared to 11 percent for male beneficiaries. In addition, the program encouraged female participation in male dominated trades, thereby contributing to a decline in occupational sex segregation. A more recent study using administrative records by Diaz and Rosas (2016) also found a long-term positive program impact on formal employment with larger effects on reported self-employment for adolescent trainees and for women more generally.

HOW ARE WBG PROJECTS ADDRESSING THIS ISSUE?

Cognitive, socio-emotional, and technical skills are important for successful school-to-work transitions by young men and women. The WBG is helping LAC countries improve gender-equal access, quality, and relevance of skills and training opportunities, especially among vulnerable groups. Improving these skills—and employers' ability to find people who have them—can reduce unemployment, raise incomes, and improve standards of living.

- In **Argentina**, as part of the *Youth Employment Support Project* (2015-21) a UFGF-funded pilot program helped four Municipal Employment Offices (MEOs) 10 better use gender-sensitive approaches in engaging young women, LGBTI youth, and people from indigenous communities. The program employed four major approaches: (1) using inclusive language and mechanisms to promote internships and jobs for vulnerable

and LGBTI youth, (2) training for MEO officials on job interviews and revision of templates for job interviews, (3) redesigning orientation courses to engage excluded groups and enhance their involvement in the program, and (4) providing on-site child care for children of mothers attending training and transport for participants living far away. The Ministry of Labor is currently working on a gender-disaggregated monitoring system that will keep track of results. Scale-up in another 10 MEOs, in big urban centers, and gender sensitivity awareness workshops are being considered to transfer lessons learned.

- In **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**, the *Human Development Service Delivery Project* (2017-22) is helping to expand and improve Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for poor and unemployed persons. The project sets a target of 50 percent women participants and provides a childcare stipend to at least 400 parents of young children to help prevent school dropout.
- In **El Salvador**, the Temporary Income Support Program (PATI) through the *Income Support and Employability Project* (2009-16) helped channel resources to more than 40,000 people in poor urban areas, preventing them from falling deeper into poverty. Of these people, 70 percent were women and 30 percent were between the ages of 16-24. The program began as a response to the country's 2009 financial crisis, which raised unemployment and poverty, particularly in urban areas that lacked any other form of safety net. The PATI also sought to promote opportunities for the urban poor by improving the coverage of labor intermediation, providing skills training, and organizing employment fairs, among other steps. One year after the PATI's completion, an impact evaluation found that participants' monthly income had increased on average by US\$17 per month (FUSADES 2014). Also, a UFGF-funded qualitative assessment found women felt more prepared to find a job or start a business, and reported participating more and taking leadership roles in community organizations (FUSADES 2015).

- In **Saint Lucia**, The *Human Capital Resilience Project* (2017-2022) seeks to attract more females into traditionally “male” fields and vice versa through awareness campaigns and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) training. An Intermediate Results Indicator (IRI) monitors the average gender parity index by TVET field. The Project also addresses potential barriers to participation in TVET, including the cost of child care, through targeted subsidies for participants.
- In **Chile**, the *Strengthening of State Universities in Chile* (2017-2022) is supporting the development of Gender Action Plans in the State Universities’ Centers of Inclusion, which are offices dedicated to supporting women and vulnerable minorities such as indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, sexual minorities economically disadvantaged students, etc. These Gender Action Plans will address issues such as sexual harassment and gender-based violence, the pay and leadership gap, and/or enrollment gaps in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields (according to SIES in 2016, only 29.7 percent of STEM undergraduate students were women), and underscore the continuous importance of supporting women in higher education.
- In **Rio de Janeiro, Brazil**, a pilot intervention “Projetando Futuros [Designing Futures]” that aimed to increase aspirations of boys and girls and to assist them in transitioning from the school to the workplace was carried out in partnership with the Promundo Institute and the Secretaria Municipal de Educação do Rio de Janeiro. *Designing Futures* reached over 250 students and was applied in two schools: one in Complexo do Alemão, a conglomerate of 14 poor communities, and one in the Rio de Janeiro suburb of Cascadura (250 students where reached in total). The program intervention informed by a [qualitative study on the causes of youth NEET in Brazil](#) includes the co-creation (teachers and secondary students) of a toolkit “Designing Futures” and the subsequent use of it by teachers in the classroom. The toolkit includes activities

relative to discrimination in education and the labor market, resilience when looking for a job, learning from role models, and where to find mentors (among others). The toolkit helps teachers foster dialogue with their students about more equitable relations between men and women, time use and division of labor at home, the world of work (and barriers and opportunities associated with it), and possibilities for continuing education. After the first round of implementation, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with teachers suggesting that absenteeism had decreased, that students were recognizing the value of completing education as well as the importance of getting a (good quality) job. School had become a place where the students felt a sense of community, where they felt ‘heard’ and supported, teachers had been showing their ‘human side’ and hence, were perceived as allies, according to the qualitative evaluation (Muller 2020).

WORLD BANK RESEARCH ON THE TOPIC

de Hoyos, Rafael, Anna Popova, Halsey Rogers, 2016. *Out of School and Out of Work A Diagnostic of Ninis in Latin America, Policy Research Working Paper 7548, Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group*

Using all the household survey data available in Latin America during the period 1992 to 2013, this paper estimates that in 2015, 20 million youth ages 15 to 24 years in the region were out of school and not working (making them ninis, for “ni estudian ni trabajan”). The share of out-of-school, out-of-work youth in Latin America, at about 19 percent, is roughly equal to the global average of 22 percent. Although women make up over two-thirds of the ninis in the region, the number of male ninis grew by 46 percent between 1992 and 2010. As a result, the absolute number of ninis rose over the two-decade period, even as women’s education and employment rates were improving. Global comparisons show that Latin America is the region of the world with the largest concentration of ninis

among households in the bottom 40 percent of the income distribution. Coupled with the long-lasting harm it causes to the youth's future labor-market outcomes, the high incidence of ninis among the poorest households tends to lock in income disparities from one generation to the next, obstructing social mobility and poverty reduction in the region.

Machado, Ana Luiza; Muller, Miriam. 2018. "If it's already tough, imagine for me..." a qualitative perspective on youth out of school and out of work in Brazil. Policy Research working paper; No. WPS 8358, Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

Drawing on in-depth interviews with young women and men in rural and urban Brazil, this qualitative research explores gender dimensions in the causes and consequences of being "out of work and out of school." A key conclusion from this research is that the Portuguese term usually applied to describe this group ("nem-nem", for "not in school, nor working") does not translate well the complex realities of this highly heterogeneous group. The paper develops inductively from the data a typology of these youth, who face different barriers along their trajectories: a) barriers to building aspirations and internal motivation to return to school or work, b) barriers to action, and c) external barriers. Participants' position along this spectrum is shaped by social context and gender norms that frame youth's trajectories and envisioned futures. These observed patterns are particularly strong in rural areas, where youth perceive fewer economic opportunities and stronger division of gender roles within the household and in farming activities, which keeps young women in lower paid or unpaid roles. Participants who have successful trajectories to technical schools, universities, or formal work demonstrate strong resilience, which seems to be built on their relationships with their families, peers, partners, and role models, specifically teachers.

Székely, Miguel., and Jonathan Karver. 2015. "Youth Out of School and Out of Work in Latin America: A Cohort Approach." Policy Research Working Paper; No. 7421, Washington, DC: World Bank.

This paper examines the phenomenon of high rates of youth that are out of school and out of work in Latin America. The analysis pursues a dynamic approach by constructing a pseudo-panel from 234 household surveys for 18 countries in the region that allow tracing the life cycle trajectories of different cohorts over time. The trajectories are associated with a series of variables characterizing the household, community, and macro environment in which schooling and labor market participation decisions take place. The most important result obtained is that the persistently high rates of being out of school and out of work among males are strongly associated with greater labor force participation by women, which can be generating a "crowding out" effect against men, given slow job creation rates across the region. The analysis also explores the possibility of scarring effects and finds that higher shares of out of school and out of work youth at ages 15–20 years are associated with lower wages for the same cohorts later in life, at ages 35–40 years, for males and females. As for employment prospects, the analysis finds scarring effects only for females, with greater out of school and out of work youth shares being related to lower proportions of women in the labor market later in the life cycle.

OTHER RECENT KEY REPORTS

Alvarado, Alfredo, Belén Conde, Rafael Novella, Andrea Repetto. 2020. NEETs in Latin America and the Caribbean: Skills, Aspirations, and Information. *Journal of International Development* 32(8): 1273-1307

Using a new dataset, the Millennials in LAC survey that contains in depth information on over 12000 youths aged 15 to 24 who are residents of urban areas in seven LAC countries (Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Haiti, Mexico and Paraguay), the paper analyzes the role of cognitive skills, socioemotional skills, aspirations and expectations on the likelihood of being NEET (not in education, employment or training) using a novel sample of 15 to 24 year old residents

of seven Latin American and Caribbean countries. After controlling for sociodemographic household conditions, the authors find that numeracy and literacy skills, core self-evaluation, extraversion and educational aspirations are negatively correlated with the probability of being NEET even after correcting for socioeconomic characteristics.

Andaleeb and Maria Eugenia de Diego. 2019. *Unpacking School to Work Transition: Data and Evidence Synthesis*. OGIP- Office of Global Insight and Policy/HQ, UNICEF

The purpose of the scoping paper is to inform the development of a common understanding in UNICEF on school-to-work transition issues. The paper is one in a series of products to help UNICEF determine its strategic positioning in this area. The paper clarifies the concepts around school-to-work transition; highlights trends in school-to-work transition of young people and the drivers that shape these trends; and uses the evidence to propose a holistic theory of change for consideration by UNICEF. The paper takes a holistic view of the school-to-work transition of young people aged 15–24 in low- and middle-income countries. Since brain maturation and role transitions of adolescents continue well after the age of 20, an inclusive focus (ages 15–24 vs 15–19) is taken to understand the full scope of challenges and opportunities for successful transitions.

Busso, Matias, Marina Bassi, Sergio Urzúa, and Jaime Vargas, J. 2012. *Disconnected: Skills, education, and employment in Latin America*. Washington, DC: IDB

The book provides a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between schooling and employers in Latin America. It uses multiple surveys and multiple methods. It distinguishes carefully among different types of skills and the relationship of each type to employment outcomes and employer needs. It examines both the demand and the supply side of the labor market and provides guidance for further work. The analysis identifies a major gap between the skills that students are learning in school and those that the labor market needs and seeks from high school graduates. The study also indicates

that Latin American education systems have improved in terms of coverage, but not in terms of quality nor in methods to encourage students to complete their education.

International Labor Organization (ILO). 2020. *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020: Technology and the future of jobs*, Geneva: ILO.

Incorporating the most recent labor market information available, Global Employment Trends for Youth sets out the youth labor market situation around the world. It shows where progress has or has not been made, updates world and regional youth labor market indicators, and gives detailed analyses of medium-term trends in youth population, labor force, employment, and unemployment. The 2020 edition discusses the implications of technological change for the nature of jobs available to young people. It focuses on shifts in job characteristics, sectors, and skills, as well as examining the impact of technological change on inequalities in youth labor markets.

Novella, Rafael, Andre Repetto, Carolina Robino, Graciana Rucci, 2018. *Millennials en América Latina y el Caribe: ¿trabajar o estudiar?*, Washington, DC: IDB.

The report describes the main results of a regional project that involved the participation of more than 15,000 young people between 15 and 24 years of age in nine countries (Brazil, Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Haiti, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay). A quantitative survey and qualitative data collection allow for a better understanding of the abilities, expectations, and aspirations of young people, and the context in which they develop. The novelty of this study is that it goes beyond the variables traditionally collected in household surveys, such as income or educational level, and incorporates other less conventional ones: the information that young people handle about the functioning of the labor market, and their aspirations, expectations, and cognitive and socio-emotional skills. With this, the report aims to provide a better understanding of young people and promote measures more in line with the challenges to develop their potential. Thus, based on these

findings, this publication suggests what policy actions can help young people to make a successful transition from their studies to the labor market.

Stavropoulou, Maria. 2018. *Interventions promoting adolescent girls' economic capabilities: what works? A rapid evidence review*. London: Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence (GAGE)

This rapid evidence review focuses on evaluated interventions that target adolescent girls in LMICs with economic strategies that seek to promote their economic capabilities and empower them. The review examines 57 interventions, grouped into three categories: interventions providing financial education and/or financial assets; vocational and/or business skills training interventions; and integrated interventions providing a combination of support services, including an economic component. The review synthesises evidence on the positive impact these interventions had, and identifies the gaps in our knowledge about which strategies are most effective. All three groups of interventions demonstrated the potential to improve girls' economic capabilities. However, significant evidence gaps remain and more research is needed to determine, for example, the optimal duration and intensity of programmes, the relationship between girls' economic empowerment and their vulnerability to violence and early marriage, and what is effective in certain regions and settings.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). 2019. *Transitions from School to Work*. UNICEF Technical Note New York: UNICEF

The purpose of this paper is to provide guidance on how UNICEF can support government and partners to support adolescents to make a smooth transition from school to decent work. Skills development is a necessary, but not sufficient, component of such programming. Specifically, this Technical Note provides advice on: (1) Barriers for young people in accessing and developing skills for work and making the transition to decent work; (2) Programming principles to guide the design of UNICEF programming in the school to work transition area; (3) Evidence-based strategies for smoothing the transition from school to work with a focus on improving the work outcomes for

older adolescents and young people; (4) Tools and resources for developing programs and partnerships, including working with other UN agencies, to ensure continuity of services as the most vulnerable young people transition from childhood into adulthood; (5) Case studies of UNICEF programs that have improved the skills and/or work outcomes of older adolescents.

GENDER STATISTICS, INDICES, AND MEASUREMENT TOOLS

- [UNDP Human Development Gender Inequality Index](#)
- [UNDP Human Development Gender Development Index](#)
- [World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report](#)
- [OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index](#)
- [World Bank Gender Data Portal](#)
- [World Bank World Development Indicators](#)
- [World Bank Women Business and the Law](#)
- [World Bank Global Findex](#)
- [World Bank Group Enterprise Survey](#)

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