

*1. If you look at the 3 regions that we focus on (MENA, Horn of Africa, Sahel) – can you mention specific trends per region which are relevant for the strategy. Are there, for example, specific sectors where there is much to be gained? Or specific skills that young people lack in a certain region or sector?*

## **Sahel**

West Africa and the Sahel are faced by enormous challenges in the coming 30 years. The ECOWAS countries populate 350 million people (2016). Medium variant of population predictions for 2050 show that the region will have close to 800 million people in 2050. At the same time, weak economic development goes hand in hand with increasing integration in the world market and limited revenues for the government. This all leads to unprecedented challenges in governance, regional integration, poverty reduction, environmental protection, competitiveness and democratisation all in one time. This is further complicated by lack of progress in regional organisation and a divide between English and French speaking countries. West Africa and Sahelian development depends on long-term phenomena – education, skills and redistribution of power. For the purpose of this consultation, we will elaborate on 3 important trends in the Sahel a bit further: Population growth and migration, Conflict and stability and Food economy and (youth) employment.

### **1. Population growth and migration**

The high growth of the population is leading to migration or a high degree of mobility. In most Sahel counties, patterns can be seen of migration from North to South, in almost every country, from interior to the coast, and, most importantly from rural to urban areas. In Northern Sahelian countries, vivid migration has taken place over the past years to the North (Mediterranean Sea) as well. Towns have absorbed two-thirds of population growth and will continue to expand. The proportion of town-dwellers rose from 13% in 1960 to 40% in 1990. It is expected the urbanisation rate will be close to 60% in 2020. The development of small towns will be affected by their relationship with major cities and even more importantly, by the population and economic dynamics of neighbouring rural areas. A concentration in a small number of centres of growth is combined with many areas still in isolation, low population density and little infrastructure, hence unattractive for youth to settle. The region has been able to cope with massive growth in its population. This happened without major disasters or increased poverty. This in itself is a remarkable achievement. Three land-locked countries (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger), all of them in the Sahelian zone, are most vulnerable in term of food and nutrition. For their food and other imports from outside of the region, and for their export to the world markets these states depend on their coastal neighbours. The three land-locked countries currently have a population of almost 60 million. According to mid-variant predictions there will 160 million in 2050.

### **2. Conflict and stability**

Violence in the Sahel region mostly happens within national border. Borders disputes and open conflicts between states, such as Mali and Burkina Faso (Agacher Strip War, 1985-86) remain rare, as do conflicts between states and non-state actors whose claims are, for the most part, essential national rather than transnational. At the same time, it can be observed that the number of countries affected by Islamist violence has risen in the last ten years, with some cross-boundary spill-over (looking at the situation in Burkina Faso, which according to many is fuelled by the interventions in Mali). The spatial concentration of activity, confirmed by a reduction in the number of locations targeted by extremist groups and in the average distance between violent events, point more towards opportunistic relocation than to an escalation of conflicts in the region (Dowd, 2016). In terms of how this affects youth, the role of trafficking amid these security dynamics cannot be underestimated, whether in terms of its structuring or destructing effects on politics, territories or societies. The form of the

different types of trafficking and their criminal severity differ: trafficking is linked to complementarities between neighbouring economies, which can be exploited at border crossing, or to past and recent rebellions (in Libya in particular), with the circulation of weapons growing and extending across the region. Lastly, cigarette and drug trafficking, and terrorism, connect the Sahara-Sahel to the world economy, an indication of the region's issues and in turn, of potential solutions. Since the mid-2000s, security concerns and terrorism have made the bioclimatic characterisation of the area overly narrow. The word Sahel now refers to a fluid space mainly characterised by geopolitical uncertainty and where governance of outlying area is no longer adequate. (An Atlas of the Sahara-Sahel, OECD, 2014).

### 3. Food economy and (youth) employment

The food economy is the largest employer in the region and its potential will continue to increase with population growth, urbanisation and income growth. Agricultural employment still accounts for the majority of food economy jobs and an important question is how this sector will evolve. There is potential to increase agricultural productivity and to provide for decent livelihoods. Key issues in the agricultural jobs agenda include identifying where this potential is highest and why, how obstacles to entry for women and youth can be removed and determining the projections for labour's exit from agriculture. This last point is linked to issues such as land availability and farm size, rural transformations, rural employment diversification and broader structural transformations. Employment patterns for 20-24 year olds in the food economy mirror trends in the total working age population. However, youth can play an important role in the development of food economy activities, including agriculture. The transformations in the food economy mean that greater skills and education are necessary to access employment opportunities and develop activities. For instance, data for Senegal shows that when youth are heads of agricultural production units, they are strongly involved in producer organisations and co-operatives, as well as credit and water usage associations. Equipping youth with the skills and education needed and reducing barriers to productive resources, which are significantly higher for youth and young women in particular, will promote employment potential and diversification. The various activities involved in producing food, from the farm to processing, packaging, transporting, storing, distributing and retailing, account for 66% of total employment. While the majority of these jobs (78%) are in agriculture, off-farm employment in food-related manufacturing and service activities is growing in number and share. Off-farm activities carry a particular importance in the food employment agenda. In many rural areas most off-farm jobs are in the food economy and are major sources of employment and income diversification. Well-rounded jobs strategies, in particular for youth and women, need to integrate a systems approach that captures the links between agricultural productivity, off-farm employment and rural and urban areas. Promoting non-agricultural employment will depend on supporting private enterprises, in particular SMEs, to drive growth and job creation. Policies aimed at supporting value chain development, integrated skills development and systems as well as improving the overall business climate are needed. Another important aspect is that women dominate employment in off-farm segments. Policies and investments promoting off-farm food economy activities will therefore have a particularly large impact on women. Although women dominate employment in off-farm segments including food-away-from-home, food processing and food marketing, women rarely have access to the resources needed to develop their activities in relation to their potential and ambitions. Youth are of particular importance to the jobs agenda given their high share in the total population. In West Africa, 19% of the population is between 15-24 years, representing 36% of the total working age population (15-65 years). Young adults, between 25-34 years, add another 26% to the total working age population. Overall, youth have the lowest labour force participation rate, with large differences across countries, rural and urban areas, and gender. Youth labour force participation rates are significantly lower in coastal countries ranging from 33% to 57% compared with non-coastal countries - Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso - where youth participation rates range from 64% to 82%. These high participation rates are strongly influenced by the high level of youth activity in rural areas combined with a high share of rural youth within total youth populations. In all countries, youth labour force participation rates are higher in rural areas than in urban areas. In Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, the share of employed youth living in rural areas is

significantly higher at 90%, 87% and 80%, respectively. This is also clearly reflected in the high share of agricultural employment (63%) in total youth employment.

### **Ethiopia (Horn of Africa)**

In Ethiopia, the informal labour market is expanding in numbers, with many youngsters having no or little regular income. Sector wise, agriculture comprises the majority of employment in rural areas: around 68% of the workforce, or 33 million. For formal labour market, formal qualification is required, employment on contract basis. Government policy and strategy to expand formalized decent employment, should absorb labour force from informal labour market. The GTP-II policy of the Ethiopian government aims to diversify the Ethiopian economy. During the last decade, employment in the industrial sectors grew from 7 million to approx. 15-17 million in 2017 or 1 million every year. Although the growth rates are impressive, especially in the service sector, textile sector, construction sector and the education sector, they need to be balanced in relation to population growth over the same period of time. Considering population growth, about 3 million jobs would be required per year, which is currently by far not met. Also, the issue of living wages for e.g. the textile sector needs due attention, as it may increase unrest amongst youth groups in different parts of the country.

### **Sectors where there is much to be gained**

Areas to focus on in the youth strategy are education, hands-on (technical and agricultural) vocational training with attention to life skills, and entrepreneurship training. But also basic public health and hygiene; natural resource preservation and infrastructure maintenance will be important. Sectors in the Sahel with a lot of potential are agricultural production and processing (value-chain), the mining sector, solar energy, waste recycling, ICT and construction. Policies and investments promoting off-farm food economy activities will have a particularly large impact on women. The employment opportunities in food value chains, including in farming, require skill sets that are rapidly evolving. Anticipating and supporting these educational requirements are of major importance to the jobs agenda. Equipping youth, and in particular young women, with the necessary skills and education and reducing barriers to productive resources, will significantly promote employment potential and diversification. Foreign aid's driving force must be the encouragement of greater fluidity in economic relations within the region. This means communication infrastructure investment to facilitate trade as well as population mobility. Finally support in land management is needed, improving the circulation and use of knowledge and actively supporting education, communication and information. Important will also be to align strategies between donors and governments.

*2. Do you have examples of successful "scaled up" initiatives / programs in the field of education and work to increase youth employment, and if so, which ones? Or do you know of certain successful initiatives that are worth scaling up in the 3 regions mentioned?*

### **Job Booster**

After many years of experience in implementing vocational training (TVET) and job mediation programmes, Woord en Daad decided to develop the Job Booster (JB) approach. For the sake of this consultation, we share some main features of this approach.

The JB approach aims to create effective and efficient market linkages between (poor and vulnerable) job seekers and job providers, providing brokering services for both groups. The JB approach has a radical market focus: job opportunities and employer demands for labour are mapped through a market scan. JB negotiates (large) employment contracts with companies, ensuring that trained job seekers can be employed by companies. Job opportunities are offered to job seekers and training centres to respond to. The job seekers with the right skills sets will get the jobs. Trained youngsters can subscribe to JB employment services or job seekers are trained for this by relevant market driven TVET institutes to obtain the right skill set. Training is not provided by JB itself; JB works with a range of TVET

institutes and selects those institutes which can meet the market requirements for companies with employment opportunities. In other words: the training centre with the best price-quality, is offered the possibility to connect their students to the job opportunities. TVET institutes can be assisted by the JB office to work market driven, by providing them temporarily assistance based on quality assessments. Beside, individual job students can subscribed to the Job Booster database to find a job. Young people seeking to start an own business/ self-employment could be trained in business plan development, and receive an entrepreneurship training.

The JB approach is modelled through a social enterprise, to keep the radical market orientation. The services of JB need to be paid by actors based on agreed results (result-based payment): private and public actors pay for a successful job placement, job seekers pay a fee for (a guaranteed) job placement, and other public and private actors could support the entity in financing. With a business case approach, financial independence of a Job Booster office is scheduled within 5 years from the start. JB could also offer additional paid services, like a soft skill video-training, subscription to a job database, additional trainings on job, etc. Job Booster also works on scale. For example in Burkina Faso WD has experience with contacts for a 1,000 or more job placements, making it possible to be of service for not only small but also large employers. Job Booster must work with a minimum level of job placements per year, to become financial independent, depending on the country context.

The experience so far in implementing Job Booster in Burkina Faso, Chad and India show that the model provides a promising approach to education and work, and increase quality of trainings by having the market as radical starting point.

### **Employable Youth in Ethiopia**

Woord en Daad currently implements the Employable Youth in Ethiopia (EYE) programme, funded by the Dutch MoFA under the Addressing Root Causes (ARC) fund. The programme has identified unemployment and underemployment as a primary drive for irregular and illegal migration among youngsters aged from 15-34. The programme has highlighted the skills mismatch between employer and employees. From the Ethiopia context and in line with the Ethiopia government strategy garment/textile, furniture and hospitality have been identified as key sectors for youth employment. Both self-employment and wage employment are the options for youth employment. From our experience in the EYE programme, there is a big gap on the existing skills among graduates and the required skills on the part of the employing organizations. Filling the skills gap that exists between employees and employer is the top strategic intervention. So far, the programme has been able to achieve good results in the area of vocational training, job mediation, entrepreneurship training and self-employment. The Programme has been implemented in the Southern corridor of Ethiopia, but this programme has the potential to be scalable with large target and broader geographic coverage. Such strategies can be relevant in other countries in the Horn of Africa or elsewhere, where similar challenges related to youth unemployment, underemployment and migration affect the future outlook of youngsters.

### **Market info**

General recommendation: in many countries there is a monopoly on info regarding e.g. financial products, education options, job opportunities and the quality of public and private service providers. This leads to a disadvantage for certain groups like youth and women. Strategies utilizing new technologies can be developed to provide (labour market) information to these groups but also to include them in decision making.

<p><i>3. Do you have specific ideas or additions about how we can make young people part of this policy? How do we ensure that they participate in the implementation of this strategy?</i></p>
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In most countries, formal and informal youth networks and organisations are existing and often functional, influential, pro-active and dynamic. It will be important to consider to involve representatives of those organisations in drafting further the youth strategy. So it may not only be about implementation, also in formulation of the strategy. Next to that, it is worthwhile considering those organisations to play an advisory role in operationalization of the strategy. Looking at implementation, it can be helpful to look at the degree to which youth are involved in implementation as well as design of specific programmes right from the start (being in the lead or being part of consortia), as part of the set of criteria for selecting partners to implement the strategy (by private sector, NGOs, (semi-) governmental bodies or knowledge institutions).

*4. Anything else you feel is worth mentioning?*

The answers to the consultation questions have been formulated with input from different countries in the focus regions. We appreciate the initiative of defining and implementing a youth strategy - and to consult actors for that. Contributing to a positive future outlook for youngsters worldwide is important from many different perspectives, and we believe that the Netherlands can meaningfully contribute to that.