



Youth active citizenship for decent jobs

A handbook for policy & practice



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Content

4	Acknowledgements
6	Introduction
8	Part I: Connecting youth employment and citizenship
9	Youth employment and peace
11	The political economy of youth interventions
14	Integrating youth active citizenship in youth employment interventions
20	Part II: Case study in Zimbabwe
22	The impact of Covid-19 on informal urban traders
25	Gendered safety at work
27	Interactions between workers and local governments
28	Perspectives on formalisation
30	Politics pervading the economy
32	Part III: Designing new approaches
34	#1 Respond to political context
36	#2 Build civic skills and knowledge
38	#3 Strategise for an inclusive and safe workplace
40	#4 Address social and gender norms
41	#5 Build alliances for national policy influence
42	#6 Engage the informal economy
44	References

Introduction

This Handbook has been created for development partners and civil society actors that design and implement youth employment interventions, particularly in contexts marked by fragility and political-economic crises.

Youth employment programmes usually strengthen young people's business and entrepreneurship skills. They fail to consider the civic and political competencies needed by young people in order to negotiate fair, safe, and decent working conditions and influence the wider policy environment for decent work. The Handbook offers suggestions for integrating **youth active citizenship** strategies into youth employment interventions, thus building young people's civic and political skills. Adopting these strategies will strengthen the capacities of young people to engage both private sector and government actors, foster inclusion, and strengthen coalitions that can influence an enabling environment for decent jobs for youth. Recognising that many young people start their trade and businesses in the

informal economy, the Handbook takes their experiences as the point of departure.

It is widely recognised that political economy matters for development and development interventions. This also applies to youth employment programming. Ideas in this Handbook recognise that politics influence youth employment opportunities. This is particularly the case in contexts commonly referred to as fragile, conflict-affected and violent settings (FCVS). Approaches to youth employment interventions need to respond to these dynamics to avoid that powerful actors capture them to serve their interests and avoid increasing risks to conflict. Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic has proved that fragility is multidimensional and manifests in many countries across the globe. Early on in the pandemic, it quickly became clear that the informal economy would be hard hit. In addition, the challenging politics of FCVS influence opportunities for both formal and informal employment.

This Handbook was developed based on the findings of a study with informal traders and entrepreneurs in urban Zimbabwe and co-created by researchers and associations for informal traders. The lessons learnt and recommendations included in the Handbook are formulated in a way that they can be taken forward for youth employment interventions in other countries. The Handbook is organised as follows:

Part I argues why a focus on youth active citizenship is necessary within youth employment interventions. It first explains the assumed link between youth unemployment and violence, and why this has been critiqued. It then elaborates on the political economy of youth employment interventions and why political context matters. Finally, it explains different approaches to strengthening young people's civic capacities and how these might connect to youth employment.

Part II presents the findings of case study research in Zimbabwe's capital Harare and its second-largest city, Bulawayo. The study entitled 'Learning on the Streets' examined the experiences of young market traders and informal traders just before and during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. The

different sections illustrate the need for integrating aspects of active citizenship into youth employment programmes.

Part III proposes six intervention areas and concrete recommendations for how to integrate youth active citizenship strategies into youth employment interventions. It starts with suggestions for understanding context and adjusting strategies accordingly. It then explains how civic and political skills can be strengthened, with attention to gender and diversity. It argues for strategic collaboration between actors such as women's organisations and informal worker associations, which can help influence the policy environment for safe and decent jobs. It also highlights the need for dedicated support to formalising jobs.

This Handbook will be useful for:

Policy actors and donors who fund youth employment interventions: They can use this Handbook to expand their modalities for youth employment interventions to include approaches to youth active citizenship; and think about opening up firms and government to youth participation.

Civil society actors active in the field of youth employment: They can use this Handbook to design strategies that support building civic skills within youth employment programmes and build alliance for advocacy and policy influence.

Part I

Connecting youth employment and citizenship

Youth employment and peace

➤ The issue of youth unemployment has become prominent in debates about security and development. Yet, most young people do not engage in violence, even when un/underemployed.

A number of influential studies suggested a correlation between a country's instability and 'youth bulges' – and particularly large numbers of unemployed youth (Urdal, 2006). And the rest remains as it is: However, the evidence for a direct and casual relationship between youth unemployment and violence is weak and often contradictory (Cramer, 2010; Dowd, 2017; Ismail and Olonisakin, 2021).

A straightforward critique is that even in politically unstable settings the majority of youth remains peaceful. Also, many nations with large youth populations have not experienced recent conflicts (Sommers, 2011).

Conflict analysts agree that causes of conflict are multiple, hence youth unemployment alone is not the sole cause of instability (Brück et al., 2016). Studies have indicated various frustrations among youth such as over the lack of opportunities for youth to participate in governance and decision-making; corrupt governance and nepotism; and structural issues like inequality (Dowd, 2017; Ismail and Olonisakin, 2021).

Hence, young people do not simply complain about a lack of jobs and earnings, but over what they see as political causes of unemployment and resultant lack of prospects. Nonetheless, policy discourse

is dominated by narratives about youth as potential 'trouble makers'. Partly as the result of the dominant narrative that youth unemployment might be a factor in driving violence and political instability, numerous youth employment programmes are implemented with the objective to promote peace (Brück et al., 2016; Izz, 2013; 2020).

The bulk of youth employment interventions provide skills training, often combined with loans or grants. In general, these programmes are vastly critiqued for their ineffectiveness, as they do not tend to create jobs but train youth for jobs that do not (yet) exist (Fox et al., 2021). Also the presumed 'peace effect' has been questioned (Blattman and Ralston, 2015).

A large evidence review concluded that the impact of youth unemployment is often assumed and not measured (Brück et al., 2016). Only a few programmes include a detailed theory of change and dedicated strategies for promoting peace through employment (*ibid.*). It is now well argued that youth employment interventions should be part of a wider menu of activities to promote peace and stability; and only if a conflict analysis demonstrated that youth un/underemployment is part of the underlying conflict dynamics (Brück et al., 2016).

In recent years, strong counter-narratives about 'violent youth' have emerged in academia and international community, particularly those aligned with the UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (2015). The flagship report for Resolution 2250, 'The Missing Peace', and various studies have emphasised that most young people abstain from violence and contribute to peace in various ways (Agbiboa, 2015; Berents and McEvoy-Levy, 2015; UN, 2018).

These studies caution against the securitisation of youth and for a recognition of youth perspectives and agency (Williams, 2016). They also call for meaningful youth participation: one of the pillars of UNSCR 2250. However, funding for youth remains skewed towards youth employment and relatively limited funding is going into youth active citizenship (Oosterom, 2018). This Handbook provides pointers for expanding existing youth employment interventions with approaches that strengthen youth active citizenship.



The political economy of youth interventions

➤ Youth employment interventions are often implemented in contexts where economic resources, may be used to further entrench power of specific groups or elites, increase clientelism and reinforce inequalities. In some contexts, youth employment interventions themselves are a political resource to some. Programmes need to integrate the challenging, political and institutional context factors as part of the design.

Fragile, conflict-affected and violent settings (FCVS) are defined as having weak institutions, being at high risk of political instability, experiencing or emerging from violent conflict, having unstable policy environments and being vulnerable to external shocks (Cheema, 2017, p. 26; Blattman and Ralston, 2015). FCVS are further defined by the lack of state capacity to keep a monopoly over violence, few constraints over the power and control over executives and the enmeshing of political and economic elite, resulting in a situation in which access to economic resources, power, and security is mediated through powerful groups (Cheema, 2017). In these conditions, interventions that promote skills for employability are unlikely to improve employment and raise incomes. Physical and human capital are likely to have low returns due to uncertainty and the risk of losing assets (for instance due to a limited rule of law that protects property ownership, helps ensure certainty over investments); and there might be a low state capacity to help foster and enabling environment for employment creation (Blattman and Ralston, 2015). Institution building is therefore essential, which underlines the need for integrated approaches. The ILO (2019)

conducts needs and damage assessments during the aftermath of crises to help direct responses, in which youth should be included.

Izzi (2020) has argued that ‘more reflection needs to be given on how Decent Work parameters can be achieved in post-conflict and fragile settings, as well as any trade-offs that may emerge between (short-term) stabilisation needs and Decent Work criteria’. She underscores that youth employment interventions may be ‘captured’ by politicians, indicating the potential risk of politics interfering with interventions. An evaluation of the UK-funded Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Program (NSRP) found that politicians used youth employment programmes as “a source of funds to mobilize political support” (NSRP, 2014: 29, cited in Izzi, 2020). In states with dominant ruling parties, state-initiated youth funds and employment programmes have been used to co-opt (urban) youth and strengthen party cadres (De Nunzio, 2014; 2015; Oosterom and Gukurume, 2019).

Such risks may vary depending on programme modality, for instance the institutions involved in making information

about opportunities available, decisions over programme beneficiaries, and actual distribution of funds. Izzi (2020) underlines the importance of monitoring the downstream disbursement of funds and scrutinizing the selection of youth participants, as this may occur along partisan lines or other fault lines. The risk of fuelling tensions or resources falling into the wrong hands will vary by context.

Izzi (2020) also highlights the challenge of 'targeting', which is not simply an operational issue but connected to a theory of change around how an intervention supports certain groups, and to what effect. Targeting former fighters has been associated with tensions between ex-combatants and 'ordinary' youth and communities, as in the case of northern Nigeria and former Boko Haram fighters (SFCG, 2017).

Where demobilized combatants were targeted with employment interventions part of Nigeria's Amnesty programme, this strengthened the (informal) political power of ex-commanders in some cases (Ebiede, 2017). These examples illustrate the importance of conflict analysis and the honouring of 'do no harm' principles.

Donors and implementing organisations need to be aware of the political economy of youth interventions as these can be a political resource to some actors. A conflict and political economy analysis can help the design of appropriate interventions, and 'do no harm principles' need to be honoured.





Integrating youth active citizenship in youth employment interventions

➤ The 2015 United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) offers new impetus to designing interventions that address the imbalance in funding for youth employment and civic and political engagement.

While the convention recognises the importance of youth employment, it also promotes their political participation: young people's voice should be supported in relevant institutions and interventions. The Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth initiative developed in parallel to the YPS agenda and was launched by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum in 2016 (ILO, 2016). While it is a UN-wide effort it has no Resolution behind it and uses existing ILO frameworks. There are important connections between the YPS and decent jobs agenda, in particular with respect to youth participation. Youth employment interventions can potentially promote youth participation with respect to work, thus addressing their economic and political exclusion.

There is an opportunity to connect the global initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth to the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda, promoting youth participation and endorsing young people as actors for positive change.

It is recognised that not just the magnitude of youth unemployment is a global challenge, but the creation of decent, good-quality jobs for youth (Kluve et al. 2017). It is this emphasis on decent jobs that the Handbook is concerned with. It is through (collective) youth participation and policy influence that decent jobs can be achieved. Youth participation for decent jobs requires dedicated strategies. To design programmes that combine business development with youth participation, existing knowledge and evidence of various approaches participation can be used.

➤ Three sets of interventions are relevant:

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is an approach that emphasises resources and assets, and the development of cognitive and non-cognitive skills of youth, which they need to realise their aspirations and potential and to engage positively with the world outside, while recognising that this requires an enabling environment (Alvarado et al 2017). A number of PYD programmes implemented in the global south have shown some positive results for addressing gender norms; and PYD programmes focusing on sexual and reproductive health have shown a positive impact on practices and behaviours (ibid).

Youth Empowerment Programmes (YEPs) emphasise building self-efficacy and self-esteem, and the ability of youth to take part in decision-making spaces that are usually occupied by adults. YEPs offer leadership training, mentoring, and supported access to government structures and other decision-making spaces (Morton and Montgomery, 2012). YEPs have shown some positive results in Europe, North America and Australia, but there is a dearth of evidence for other parts of the world (ibid.). While many economic empowerment programmes make broader claims on achieving 'empowerment' outcomes, in reality the meaning of empowerment is often reduced to increase in earnings, without accompanying strategies for attaining greater political influence in decision-making (Cheema, 2017).

Youth Active Citizenship (YAC) programmes. More than PYD and YEP, YAC programmes recognise the right of young people to participate in governance and decision-making processes and therefore intervention strategies are usually aimed at supporting young people to do so, for instance by creating interface or dialogues with state actors. Youth active citizenship is closely linked to notions of empowerment, because of its emphasis strengthening the capacities for voice and participation.

Currently, there is a lack of academic evidence of YEP and PYD programmes for countries in the global south, and specifically in relation to employment (Morton and Montgomery, 2012; Rankin et al., 2015; Alvarado et al., 2017). YEP and PYD strategies have been adopted by civil society organisations and development actors that focus on youth, though usually not within employment programmes.

In a review of youth employment interventions, Fox and Kaul (2017) propose that PYD strategies for developing youth's non-cognitive and transferable 'soft skills' may be used to enhance youth employability. However, this would again leave out young people's political exclusion and marginalisation, and strategies to address this.

Other studies explore the impact of youth employment on empowerment. A review by Linssen et al. (2021) finds that some youth employment programmes positively influence social empowerment at the individual level, which includes aspects such as enhanced self-esteem, self-worth, confidence and mental health (Banks, 2017; Adoho et al., 2014; Bukuliki et al., 2020). Other forms of social empowerment impact included the in expansion of (peer) networks and increased social standing and respect in the community (Banks, 2017; Isosolo et al., 2019).

Programmes that make youth-led programming part of their design have a chance to nurture civic and political competencies, because young people get a chance to collaborate, engage in leadership and collective decision-making, often in a 'safe space' created by the programme (Oxfam, n.d.). Youth employment programmes, however, rarely include strategies that support young people to liaise with government and private actors over the wider policy environment, leaving out the dimension of political empowerment.



Taking a youth active citizen approach means addressing economic, social and political exclusion.

It prioritises young people's voice and participation alongside decent and meaningful work.



It is important to recognise that a lack of decent livelihoods and access to economic opportunities are intimately linked to power inequalities (Gaventa and Marturano, 2016). These power inequalities are deeply gendered. YAC approaches take underlying power dynamics that cause inequalities into account, prompting an analysis of the specific power and gender dynamics that exclude youth both economically and politically. Beyond social empowerment (such as building peer networks, self-esteem, and community respect), YAC approaches have the potential to promote political empowerment.

While much progress has been made in promoting youth engagement in programmes (Oxfam, n.d.; Plan International, 2021), Chelangat et al. (2021) note that policy making and implementation lack substantive youth engagement. Adopting a YAC approach in youth employment programmes is about enhancing young people's ability to negotiate with employers and relevant government actors about labour conditions and targeting policies and institutions to improve the enabling environment. While the right policies matter, it is equally important that young people have the capacities to influence the policy environment and engage state and corporate actors. They also need to be able to use the avenues for holding state and corporate actors to account, like in the case of labour rights violations and lack of decent work conditions.

The reality for many young people is that they start as informal workers, traders and/or entrepreneurs (Flynn et al., 2017). For those working in the informal economy, a specific set of actors and institutions will be relevant. In their case, too, civic competencies are needed. Those wanting to formalise their

businesses need to engage various actors, including banks and tax authorities. The ILO recognises 'collective bargaining' as a right in Convention 154 of 1981, which is understood as the negotiations and discussion that take place between an employer(s) and employees, for instance on critical issues like earnings and working conditions.

However, informal workers do not have formal employers and are generally engaged in many different forms of collective negotiation with various actors that are not employers, like local government actors (Carré et al., 2018). In various contexts and in FCVS in particular, politics pervade informal (urban) economies and trade networks (Goodfellow, 2020; Oosterom, 2019), generating specific challenges to young people who need to navigate politics as part of their search for opportunities.

Programme design needs to be based on an analysis of this institutional context which can be integrated into a theory of change for tackling the barriers to empowerment. To move from employment to genuine empowerment, social norms and the formal and informal institutions that drive youth exclusion, need to be addressed. This Handbook proposes six intervention areas which youth employment interventions should address to work in a more holistic, integrated matter. Part III of the Handbook elaborates all six areas in detail.



- #1 Respond to political context
- #2 Build civic skills and knowledge
- #3 Strategise for an inclusive and safe workplace
- #4 Address social and gender norms
- #5 Build alliances for national policy influence
- #6 Engage the informal economy

Part II

Case study in Zimbabwe

While youth employment interventions envision formal and decent jobs for youth, in reality many young people will start as entrepreneurs in the informal economy or find informal employment.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, government measures resulted in the disruption of the education of children and youth as schools were closed for long periods of time; and economic growth halted in many places. This is likely to result in the expansion of the informal economy, which means that youth employment programmes need to engage with the informal economy and find ways of targeting relatively disadvantaged youth.

It is therefore crucial to aim interventions at sections of the economy where large numbers of youth are already working, rather than just the elite few, increasing their productivity and earnings. Opportunities for formalisation may be considered, but need to accommodate youth perspectives on conditions. This section of the Handbook discusses key findings from the research project 'Learning on the Streets', which focused on urban informal traders in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe's multiple economic and political crises of more than two decades have had a devastating impact on the economy, with high inflation rates and

weakening purchasing power (Helliker and Murisa, 2020). In this context, the informal economy became of major importance to the urban population, especially for young people (Kamete, 2008). Street vending remains illegal and is met with police action, while market vendors pay council fees (Kamete, 2010).

Each section below outlines key findings per topic, illustrating dimensions of active citizenship that will need attention in youth employment programmes. The methodology of the research entailed individual interviews with 40 young male and female traders in the age of 18 to 25 in Harare (capital) and Bulawayo (Zimbabwe's second largest city), which focused on experiences of vending. In addition, focus group discussions with groups of young informal traders were organised in both cities by VISET and BVTA, two associations for informal traders. The group discussions focused on challenges of informal trade and Covid-19 impacts, and on ways to improve vending conditions and potentially formalise trade into small businesses.

The impact of Covid-19 on informal urban traders

On the 26th of March 2020, the government of Zimbabwe announced a full lockdown to curb the spread of covid-19. A strict lockdown was in place until August. Markets had to close and people had to stay home, with the exception of essential workers who had to carry letters authorising them to travel (Kiaka et al. 2021). Informal traders did not have access to exemption letters as they were not classified as essential service providers, despite urban residents relying on them for access to food. Study participants recalled they felt highly vulnerable to being infected by the Covid-19 virus as most live and work in congested spaces without adequate access to water and sanitation.

Informal traders devised multiple strategies to circumvent law enforcement and lockdown measures, like getting into town as early as 4am before the police mounted their roadblocks, risking police harassment, extortion and sexual abuse. Some reported sexual harassment or 'sextortion' from law enforcement agencies. Many had their goods confiscated.

Our partner BVTA in Bulawayo witnessed a case of a member whose child's arm was broken by municipal police, who wanted to confiscate goods from their stall. Many traders diversified trade and started selling in their residential areas. Cross-border traders could no longer travel to neighbouring

countries to buy or sell their wares. They resorted to contracting transporters, which increased their costs. Some lost their wares due to the dishonest mediators or the carelessness of cargo trucks drivers. Overall, most informal traders saw their earnings reduce significantly, with many reporting that they ate fewer meals per day and ended up buying cheap ingredients.

Cases of gender-based violence increased, as was the case globally. Some women experienced abuse by spouses who demanded the money the women earned from informal trading. Others reported unwanted pregnancies because they could not access contraceptives.



Once strict lockdown measures were lifted, markets could reopen under certain conditions. While informal trade is often associated with health and safety issues in public discourses, urban informal traders in Zimbabwe actively promoted health measures promoted by the World Health Organisation. The findings also show they bore the financial burden of these measures. For instance:

- Market traders practiced social distancing within their markets by increasing the sizes of vending bays. However, this reduced the number of informal traders in the market as markets were decongested to minimise the transmission.
- Informal traders were involved in the manufacturing of reusable masks and selling them at affordable prices.
- Informal traders bought and used hand sanitizers, water dispensers and ropes for themselves and their customers.
- Informal traders operating in open spaces created fences and designated entrances market so that everyone entering would have their hands sanitized and temperature checked.
- Informal traders employed people to ensure compliance of hand sanitizing and wearing masks, and crowd monitoring. Informal traders encouraged each other and customers to wear their mask correctly.
- Informal traders engage in cleaning markets.
- Associations deployed 'Market Bailiffs' in different markets who encouraged workers to take the Covid-19 vaccine to minimise chances of severe symptoms.

This demonstrates the positive contribution of informal traders to public health and safety while trying to sustain an income. Traders however reported the high costs for obtaining the materials and for employing people who monitored health and safety. This added to their financial challenges as business was already low. It was also noted that basic services such as washrooms, for which city councils are responsible, are not always maintained well.



Take-away

Workers are actively involved in promoting health measures relevant to the kind of work they do.

Expansion of social protection programmes to informal workers is needed, especially in crisis situations, which require systems to identify and reach beneficiaries.

Gendered safety at work

Female traders face a range of gendered challenges, from additional financial burdens to health risks. For instance, a study on Markets in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, found that female traders pay up to 18 times more for their daily use of the market toilets than they pay as market tax (Siebert and Mbise, 2018). During the pandemic, they had to figure out childcare while also reported health risks (Boateng-Pobee et al., 2021). Female informal traders in Zimbabwe indeed reported various gendered challenges at work, of which some constitute rights violations and are severely detrimental for their health and wellbeing.

Female traders emphasised their poor working conditions, working long hours for low wages, with short and informal contracts and no paid maternity leave. Referring to patriarchal norms, women noted they often cannot own the means of production. Female informal traders are more likely having to combine work, childcare and other caring responsibilities, leaving them little time to access public services when they need them. Sub-standard water and sanitation facilities create health risks on days of their menstruation and for those caring for babies and infants.

The study found that women frequently experience sexual harassment when at work, from customers, co-workers and those in positions of authority who abuse their powers. In particular in times of economic crisis, vulnerability to sexual harassment increases. Women reported they need earnings and secure their vending space at lucrative locations to support their children. They feel pressured to have customers address or touch them in inappropriate ways to sell their goods, or feel pressured by those who oversee stall allocation or collecting fees and

contributions. At times women are forced to pay “bribes in kind” when they do not have money to pay law enforcing agencies who would have seized their goods. Women are also more vulnerable to crime and theft of their wares, pushing them to pay fees for storage or watchmen, often taking 30 to 40 per cent of their income.

Women lack social security in the case of pregnancy and childbirth. Some women noted that ‘falling pregnant was a sure way of terminating your contract’, with maternity leave or benefits being non-existent, even if they would formalise their business. In the focus groups, women highlighted it was now common to delay childbearing to secure work, as taking time off work results in decline of their business. Some return to work immediately or soon after birth, exposing themselves to health risks. They often bring their new-born babies and children with them, which exposes to dust, challenging weather, and lack of hygienic facilities. One case was reported of a two-month old baby who died as the municipal vehicle was chasing the baby’s mother.

Traders reported an increase in informal traders with disabilities, due to the fall of social welfare allocations, including women. These traders struggle with lack of decent infrastructure (lack of ramps, no concrete surfaces) and suitable sanitation facilities. Traders with disabilities were also unable to run away from law enforcement actors.



Take-away

Business development and support to (informal) traders needs to be aware of gender-specific challenges and vulnerabilities.

There is a need to strengthen the confidence and capacity of young women to report instances of sexual harassment.

Business development programmes need to incorporate training on workplace policies, reporting and redress mechanisms, and building an organisational culture that discourages (sexual) harassment.

Women organisations -especially those dealing with gender-based violence - need to link up with trader associations to raise awareness about gender and safety at work.

Women need to be involved in the formulation of policies and regulatory frameworks so that these respond to their needs.

Interactions between workers and local governments

➤ The findings show that most individual traders lack knowledge and experience for strategic engagement with government actors. Active vendor associations exist in both cities, but there are differences in collective bargaining. In Bulawayo, vendor associations meet the Bulawayo City Council officials a number of times per year. The relationship between associations and the Harare City Council was considered more contentious, partly caused by the presence of organised groups with leaders that appeared to serve their own financial interests more than representing informal traders.



Informal traders in Bulawayo critiqued the municipal government for not creating sufficient designated vending spaces, considering how many people need to rely on vending due to the economic situation. Informal traders who were operating in city centres were relocated in efforts to decongest the city during the COVID-19 pandemic and as a panacea to reduce conflicts over space. However, informal traders were not allocated spaces in their areas of

residence. While many pay fees to city councils, their contribution to the local economy is classified as miscellaneous. Many traders feel their inputs during consultative meetings with city council officials does not lead to any result.

Take-aways:

- The right to collective bargaining needs to be implemented by having formal interfaces between government authorities and groups of workers and professionals. Mechanisms need to include provisions for workers that are not part of collective associations.
- Different categories of workers need relevant networks to associations and organisations that can represent their interests and engage in policy influence.
- Informal trader associations need to be organised to maximise collective action and influence and avoid duplication of efforts with regards to stakeholder engagement.

Perspectives on formalisation

➤ Most informal traders who participated in focus groups for this study were in favour of formalising their trade if under the right conditions. They indicated they would prefer working legally and avoid encounters with law and order actors. They wish to have more security and do not object to paying taxes and fees, as long as they can earn a decent living.

In Bulawayo, the rent for a vending stall at a city council-owned markets is 10 US dollars in the city centre and 5 US dollars in the townships. When renting a stall in a privately owned market, informal traders pay between 45 and 60 US dollars per stall. Here, stall owners can sublet their stalls for a fee, but this is prohibited at city council markets under the City Council Hawkers and Vendors By-laws of 2020. In Harare, stall rentals cost between 5 and 10 US dollars per day. The fees are too high for many informal traders who belong to lower-income groups.

Many indicated they were better off bribing police officers if that enables them to trade at lucrative places in the city. Some are aware of by-laws and the formalities required for registering as trader and obtaining a license, mostly through information provided by vendor associations. Informal traders in Bulawayo were more likely to access the city council for registration directly than those in Harare. In Harare, accessing market stalls often happened through a mediator (market committees or 'group leaders'), making informal traders more vulnerable to paying additional fees.

Informal traders view formalisation as a prerequisite for their businesses to grow and become sustainable. They felt that the

formalisation should include registration and allocation of appropriate spaces for their trade; social and legal protection and taxation. They want to be part of representative organisations that interface with city councils; and have formally recognised channels for collective bargaining. They seek opportunities for financial inclusion to invest in and expand their business. They were in favour of diverse opportunities for formal investment and loans from financial institutions, either as individuals or in groups and associations. Some existing initiatives can be strengthened and learnt from. In Bulawayo some female traders have initiated self-help safety nets, which need to be stable and are resilient to crisis. Further, traders felt city councils need to increase the number of licensed spaces for trading in busy parts of the city, which will be well-served with respect to women's needs in particular.



Take-away

Informal traders need to be part of policy-making and decision-making processes to ensure that formalising trade benefits traders, the government, and the people.

They need to be part of policy-making and decision-making processes in ways that enhance the benefits of formalising trade for both the traders and government authorities.

Politics pervading the economy

Various studies have demonstrated how politics influence the informal economy and street- and markets in particular. Politics can involve the contestation between city councils, national government ministries, and non-state powerful actors, some of which can be connected to business and/or political parties.

In the study, election periods were named as moments when politics was felt in the streets and markets, when politicians and self-proclaimed activists seek to influence traders and markets (Newsday, 2021; ZimEye, 2021). Research findings indicate that politics influence informal traders in between elections as well. The issue of 'space barons' came up in various interviews and group discussions.

'Space barons' claim to be leading groups or associations and sub-let stalls and tables to individual informal traders. They charge fees in addition to the levies that informal traders should pay to city councils, thus mediating between local government authorities and informal traders as brokers. Some of these space barons are perceived to be linked to political parties and enjoying protection, with policies being complicit or afraid to take action against them. Such politics were experienced more intensely in Harare than in Bulawayo.

In the event of new trading opportunities, new markets opening, and/or new investments being made available, these brokers can manoeuvre to redirect opportunities to themselves and their networks, which may or may not be partisan. Investments channelled through such networks feed into

undemocratic practices. The brokers also impact on prices by extracting exorbitant amounts from traders and generate pressures on urban infrastructure. A way forward is for local authorities to construct adequate marketplaces in favourable locations and the promulgation of legislation that ensures the elimination of middlemen, putting local authorities in charge of stall allocation.



Take-away

Political actors can manoeuvre themselves as brokers for economic opportunities.


Politics can pervade formal and informal economies. Articulating these issues publicly may constitute a risk to the intervention, depending on the nature of civic space.

Even within one country, political dynamic can vary between locations. This suggests a challenge for interventions aiming to ‘work at scale’.



Part III

Designing new approaches



This part of the Handbook proposes strategies for improving youth employment interventions. Young people do not only need to acquire business skills, but also civic and political skills to negotiate safe and decent work and influence the policy environment, individually and collectively.

This section is divided into six components that are critical for achieving decent work for youth. Each of the six sections proposes various strategies. New programmes that combine strategies in innovative ways need to come up with systems for monitoring and evaluation as well as impact evaluations, which can measure the impact both on employment and aspects of active citizenship.

Respond to political context

➤ Youth employment interventions do not occur in a neutral space: they are part of the political economy of actors and interests. Risks of political interference vary depending on regime type, the strength of various political actors (including political parties and non-state actors) and prevalent conflict dynamics.

Especially in repressive regimes and conflict-affected settings, the presence of influential political actors deepen the complexity of the politics surrounding interventions, often operating 'behind the scenes'. This calls for political economy analysis and conflict analysis, which both need to inform intervention strategies. In particular, the targeting of participants and the mechanisms for granting access to opportunities such as trainings, loans and funding.

The discourse on young people is part of the wider political environment. In FVCS, certain actors seek to undermine dissenting voices by labelling them 'frustrated youth' or 'violent youth'. This discourse needs to be handled with care as they can become part of violence dynamics.



#1 Respond to political context



- Assess the potential risk of political actors interfering with an intervention through context analysis (political economy analysis, conflict analysis or a combination of both).
- Assess the potential impact of the intervention on social divisions and other potential conflict dynamics using a conflict sensitivity analysis.
- Put in place oversight mechanisms to check which actors are (informally) benefiting from the intervention and access to opportunities.
- Avoid a discourse that portrays youth as potential risk.

2 Build civic skills, knowledge and competencies

➤ Where youth employment programmes include modules on 'soft' skills in addition to business and financial management, these are commonly focused on communication, CV writing, doing job interviews and applying for grants. Yet, whether working in formal or informal employment, young people will need to have knowledge of the relevant rights, laws and policies and acquire a range of civic and political skills to use them.

They will need to know who can support and represent them, while also needing the skills to negotiate fair pay and safe and decent working conditions as individuals. This includes growing the confidence and ability to stand up for yourself. Young people need to be able to raise health and safety risks at work with employers and authorities, including difficult issues like sexual harassment. This requires general presentation skills to present in public, in formal settings and in front of seniors and authorities. It is best that these skills are nurtured within the safe space of a programme and among peers, before putting them in practice. Approaches need to take a gendered approach as challenges for presenting in public are different for men and women.

Leadership skills will be important for workers and those who are likely to become employers themselves. Inclusive and transformative leadership is key for the future of work, respecting the dignity of all people. Young leaders need to recognise when others should get a chance to speak and help create opportunities for equal participation. Young women need to grow the courage to take leadership positions. Many youth employment programmes already include strategies for role

models and mentoring, but often mentoring is focused on how to run a business. This can be expanded to learning about civic and political engagement. Similarly, peer-learning can be extended to learning how to network, articulate rights and issues to do with fair pay and safety, and how to undertake collective action. The collective dimension is critical for doing negotiations and taking other forms of action. Having unions and associations in place is one thing, but having a meaningful voice in these is another. Young people will need to learn how such collectives can be strategically used, while they may also find they need to strategise to get themselves heard and respected within them.

Youth employment interventions have prioritised strengthening individual skills, while collective capacities are essential for negotiating safe and decent work.



The kind of civic and political skills needed will vary depending on political dynamics. A collective analysis of the web of key stakeholders, their power, and how to navigate them is important in all settings, but in FCVS, this analysis can be essential to learning the often informal 'rules of the game'. In contexts where institutional frameworks are weak, finding and creating spaces for young people to safely interact with actors governing their trade and workplace may be a first step. Where economic opportunities or certain sectors or trades are politicised, strategies need to be carefully designed with attention to 'do no harm'.

In sum, conventional youth employment trainings need to be complemented with modules on these critical soft skills which can then be practised in safe spaces.

- The ability to voice risk and challenges at work, as well as negotiate decent working conditions and pay.
- The ability to engage in collective bargaining with employers and state actors.
- Capacities for collaborating collectively and taking action, including through unions and associations.
- Inclusive and transformative leadership skills.

3 Strategise for an inclusive and safe workplace

Equality and inclusion at the workplace matter to everyone, but due to social and gender norms young workers will find it harder to enjoy equal standing. Workplaces are deeply gendered, with female workers facing specific health and safety issues. Intersecting with #2 (“Build civic skills, knowledge and competencies”) is the need for knowledge and awareness of rights, laws and policies that should help youth negotiate safe and decent work for all. At the same time, the responsibility to secure safe and inclusive workspaces does not rest on the shoulders of young people alone. Multipronged strategies are needed that strengthen civic competencies of young people on the one hand, and capacities of firms and governments on the other.

Donors and implementing organisations involved in ‘matching’ young people to private sector actors need to actively work with employers to create safe and decent working conditions.

This includes putting in place gender and inclusion policies and workplace sexual harassment policies, as well as appropriate complaint procedures. In large firms, women’s safety committees need to be established. With respect to informal workers, gender and safety needs to be part of the collective bargaining structures.

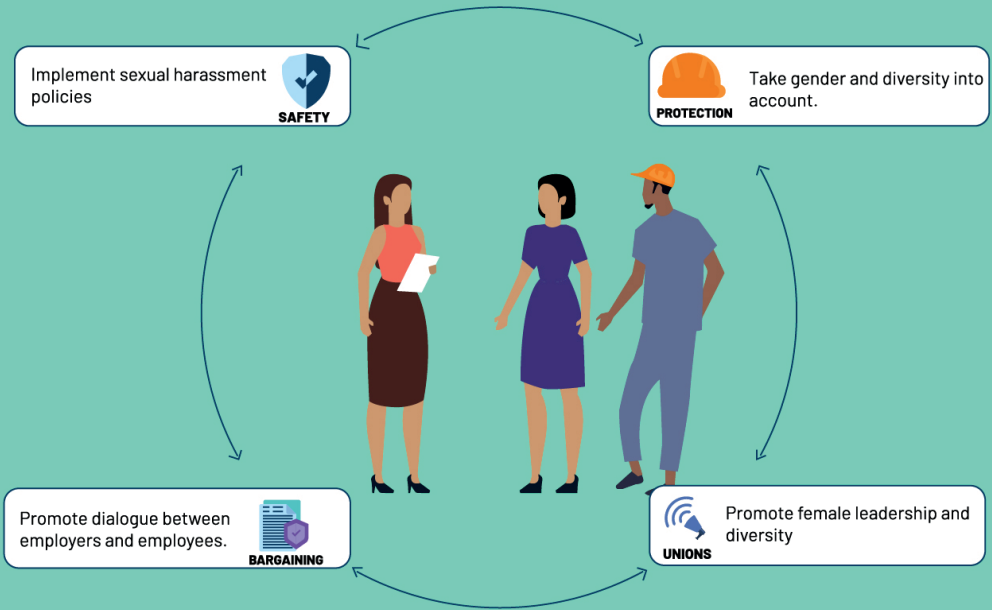
Processes to build these structures take time and effort. Firms potentially require technical capacity and funding to help them design an inclusive process, involving management and different layers of the workforce. Firms can be motivated with incentives or awards for ‘safest place to work’. Apps to report sexual harassment are developed that enable women to report

incidents safely and through pictograms, which is helpful in contexts where vocabulary about harassment is limited or taboo.

Meanwhile, governments need support to institutionalise and implement safeguarding policies in their engagement with firms, while firms also need to align their policies with government frameworks. In 2019, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) adopted the Convention on Violence and Harassment No. 190 and its Recommendation R206, which applies to both formal and informal workers and recognises a wide range of acts as sexual harassment.

However, in many countries harassment policies and laws are seldom and weakly implemented. The ILO Convention is a major step in promoting the decent work agenda, which youth employment interventions need to integrate into their design and activities.

#3 Strategize for inclusive and safe workspaces



Support youth to:

Learn about and understand relevant labour rights and policies.
Learn about and understand relevant channels for collective bargaining.
Build civic skills to use them (#2).

Work with employers to:

Form adequate structures for collective bargaining.
Ensure equal representation in structures for collective bargaining of men and women, and for different categories of workers.
Design and implement workplace policies on sexual harassment.
Promote female leadership.

Influence and support governments to:

Adopt ILO Convention No. 190 and design and implement policies regarding sexual harassment; and also for safe working conditions, and inclusion.
Design, implement and monitor complaint mechanisms.

4 Address social and gender norms



Intersecting with #2 and #3 is the capacity to recognise, articulate and address power dynamics that result from prevailing gender norms and social norms related to age and hierarchy. Age and gender hierarchies limit young people's opportunities to negotiate with supervisors, managers, employers and government actors.

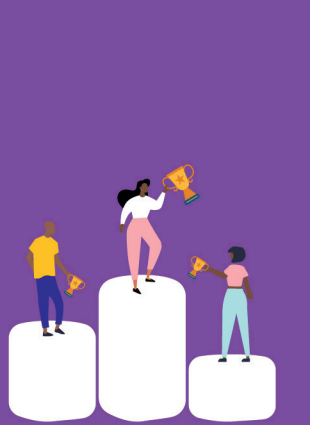
Firms and employers may hold negative stereotypes and prejudice about young people: for example, they are 'idle' or lazy and do not want to do manual labour, they are troublesome and demanding. Some may believe that certain jobs are not for girls, and gender norms limit the opportunities for young women to attain leadership roles. Social and gender norms are pervasive and influence young people in the workplace and in society at large and are therefore not easy to change. A theory of change must be based on an understanding of norms and address power, leadership, values, and principles.

- Help young people develop awareness about gender and age norms; nurture peer learning and collective action to help overcome limiting social norms.
- Facilitate dialogues between firms/employers and young workers.
- Promote positive messaging about young people in the workforce.
- Incentivize employers to think differently, for instance with awards for 'best youth employer of the year'.

#4 Integrate awareness and strategies for addressing norms related to gender and age



Peer learning, collective action, intergenerational dialogue.



Incentivise employers to value youth.



Support women in leadership

5 Build alliances for national policy influence

Young people are often excluded from policy issues if these are not deemed specific for youth. National Youth Councils have limited influence and youth civil society may be invited to discuss youth funds but not macroeconomic policy or labour market policies. As part of the wider ecosystem on youth employment, youth should be part of policy debates on labour market policies, social protection and financial inclusion policies, and worker rights associations.

Their participation needs to be meaningful, not tokenistic, with young people supported to articulate themselves with confidence as argued in #2. Donors and development partners can pave the way for meaningful youth inclusion when engaged in policy dialogues of their own. While donors may support young people through funding interventions, they can also leverage their access to government departments: as allies they can use diplomatic efforts to negotiate access to policy spaces for young people.

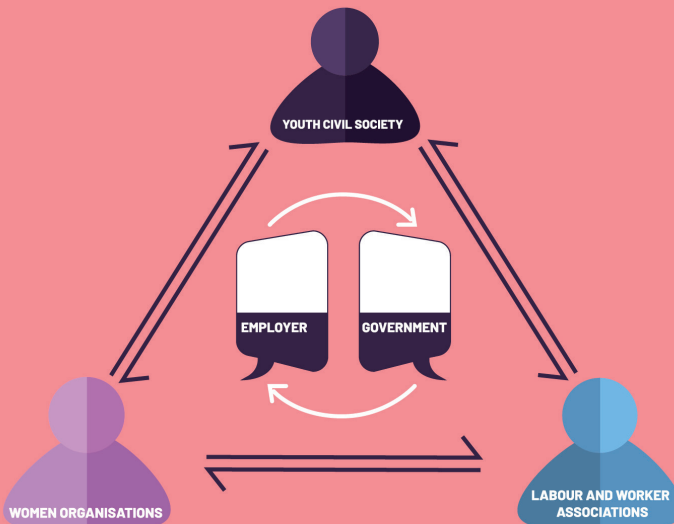
Depending on the context, networks between youth civil society and relevant labour organisations need to be fostered to maximise collective capacities for policy influence. Alliances may need to be built between informal

worker associations and youth civil society; and to women's organisations that have actively mobilised around sexual harassment and inclusion. Within FCVS, synergies with civil society actors involved in National Action Plan for Youth, Peace and Security may be relevant to pursue.

Intergenerational alliances can help foster good and productive relationships and mitigate stereotypes about youth. Adult 'champions' in companies as well as inside government can help promote youth engagement and the decent jobs agenda overall.

- Pave the way for including youth civil society in policy dialogue on labour policy, social protection policy, financial inclusion, and labour rights and associations.
- Broker dialogues between employer organisations and youth civil society in critical growth sectors.
- Foster alliances and networks between youth civil society, labour and worker associations, and women associations.

#5 Build alliances for national policy influence



6 Engage the informal economy

➤ When planning interventions that aim to reach relatively disadvantaged youth, there is a chance that their businesses and trade are part of the informal economy. Known challenges and young people's experiences with informality need to be addressed. At the same time, programmes need to support young people and help formalise businesses.

In 2015, the International Labour Conference adopted Recommendation 204 concerning the Transition from the Informal to the Formal Economy. The objectives of the Recommendation are to:

- a. facilitate the transition of workers and economic units from the informal to the formal economy, with respect for workers' fundamental rights and ensuring opportunities for income security, livelihoods and entrepreneurship;
- b. promote the creation and sustainability of enterprises and decent jobs in the formal economy, and create coherence in macro-economic policy, employment policy, social protection and other social policies; and
- c. prevent the informalisation of formal jobs.

Governments need to ratify the Recommendation and implement frameworks. They may need technical expertise and knowledge of international best practices to design social protection schemes for the informal economy. Laws and regulations must be crafted and co-constructed with informal traders and workers, including them in decision making processes.

The associations for informal traders involved in this study have recommended that formalisation needs to be accompanied with measures promoting inclusion. Local authorities can make the economy more inclusive by allowing informal traders to bid for tenders while providing taxation measures. Governments need to promote financial inclusion for women in particular, with various financial inclusion strategies for women's micro, small and medium enterprises; and access to a range of financial products and services that cater for their multiple business and household needs. To further a process of formalization, certain requirements for formalising a business need to be relaxed as, for instance, submitting tax clearances from revenue authorities. Young people need to be trained on how to register and have knowledge of tax and custom regimes.

Communication channels must be strengthened between local authorities and informal traders. This can be done through townhall meetings, consultation meetings, surveys, village/ward meetings and through elected representatives. However, young people need to be supported to adequately engage in these spaces through strategies incorporated in #2.

POLICY MAKERS

NEW POLICIES
People's Requests

- ✓ Reduce complexity and costs of registering and formalization.
- ✓ Access to financial inclusion, credit and loan facilities for informal traders and entrepreneurs
- ✓ Engagement between informal workers and traders and relevant government actors, including the youth.
- ✓ protection schemes for informal traders like maternity leave, benefits and pension schemes.

INFORMAL ENTREPRENEURS

- Reduce complexity and costs of registering and formalisation.
- Make information on taxation easily accessible and available; and integrate in interventions where relevant.
- Improve financial inclusion, credit and loan facilities for informal traders and entrepreneurs with specific attention to women and people with disability.
- Design social protection schemes for informal traders like maternity leave, benefits and pension schemes.
- Design communication channels between informal workers and traders and relevant government actors, supporting meaningful youth engagement in the process.

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