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# GOVERNMENT YOUTH EMPLOYMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES THAT ADVANCE INCLUSIVE GROWTH IN AFRICA

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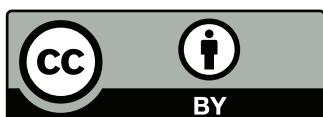
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## Objective

This paper aims to understand how African governments are working towards inclusive growth in which all youth participate. In particular, we analyse the literature on governmental youth employment policies and programmes in Africa, based on a desk review of academic and grey literature. We also assess whether such policies are cognizant of the diversity of youth, and whether youth themselves are meaningfully involved in the formulation and/or implementation of these policies and programmes. Findings from the literature are complemented by cases studies from Ethiopia, Uganda and Somaliland. These rely on an analysis of government policy documents and action plans, and the experiential knowledge of people involved in the policy process and government action.

## Inclusive growth in which all youth participate

There is no universally accepted definition of inclusive growth. Inclusive growth takes a holistic view, moving beyond narrow definitions of productivity or income growth based on Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or Gross National Income (GNI), towards a broader interpretation where growth reduces inequality and poverty. Inclusive growth recognizes that inequalities undermine economic performance, emphasizes equity and equality of opportunities and distributes the benefits of economic progress (more) equitably across societies. The policies and policy frameworks put forward within an inclusive growth paradigm seek to promote inclusion and opportunities for everyone to pursue a better life. Employment and (youth) employment policies are of paramount importance within these policies.

## Youth employment and inclusive growth in Africa

Despite remarkable GDP growth levels in Africa in recent decades, this growth has not been accompanied by increased employment and more decent work. Rather, it has resulted in rising inequalities and 'jobless growth', which does not reap benefits equally across society. There are several ways in which African governments address (decent) youth employment. Common approaches include, but are not limited to: national youth policies, value chain and market system development, active labour market policies, and directly employing youth in the public sector.

A comprehensive and complementary package of interventions that simultaneously address demand- and supply-side constraints are most effective. However, most (rural) youth employment policies focus on labour supply rather than labour demand. The lack of focus on labour demand might hamper inclusive growth, as jobs need to be there to absorb the labour force and to create productive employment that stimulates growth. Furthermore, the effectiveness of policies and programmes highly depends on economic growth and the types of jobs that are created. While promoting economic growth, a balance needs to be struck between several trade-offs, including job creation in the formal versus informal sector, in urban versus rural areas, and in terms of quantity versus quality of jobs. A proper balance of these trade-offs is crucial for economic growth to be inclusive and to create decent jobs for all.

Case studies in Ethiopia, Uganda and Somaliland show that youth (un)employment takes centre stage within higher-level, longer-term and strategic national youth policies. Improving the inclusiveness of the labour market is a common (albeit in some cases implicit) objective of such policies, which are operationalized in more concrete active labour market policies (such as skills development programmes, entrepreneurship programmes and employment services). The objectives of such active labour market policies are generally coherent with those of the national youth policies; furthermore, they combine interventions at both the supply and demand side of the labour market simultaneously. However, the case studies show gaps in the implementation of both the active labour market policies as well as the more strategic national youth policies at lower administrative levels of government (i.e. local and provincial).

In these case studies (Ethiopia, Uganda and Somaliland), agricultural value chain and market development efforts are discussed either as a main driver of economic growth or in a context of structural transformation, where aspirations to move away from agriculture as a main driver of economic growth are put forward. The alignment of such agricultural value chain and market development efforts with national youth policies is not always clear.

## **Diversity of youth**

Youth comprises of a wide diversity of sub-groups, each facing their own particular barriers; it is therefore not possible to serve young people effectively with a one-size-fits-all-approach. Heterogeneity and intersectional barriers need to be taken into account in the design of employment policies and programmes directed at youth, if they are to adequately address the different needs, ambitions and interests of youth when it comes to securing decent work, income and ability to take control of their own future.

The literature shows that African policies and programmes often recognize the heterogeneity of youth by identifying specific target groups. However, in policy formulation these target groups are often categorized in a general sense, and their identification does not necessarily lead to interventions that are tailored to the different needs, ambitions and interests of youth.

The active labour market policies analysed in the case studies do take into account the diversity of youth, in the sense that they are tailored to particular sets of target groups (such as young women or disabled youth). However, the effectiveness of the tailored targeting is mixed in these case studies. They demonstrate that in most instances, despite tailored targeting in the policy formulation phases, most policies do not effectively reach these specific target groups in their implementation stages. This holds particularly true for more vulnerable groups of youth.

## **Meaningful youth participation**

Meaningful youth participation is an inclusive, intentional, mutually respectful partnership between young people and adults. Herein, power is shared, respective contributions are valued and young people's ideas, perspectives, skills and strengths are integrated into the design and implementation of policies and programmes. It occurs when, under enabling conditions, youth representatives actively participate throughout the programme life cycle and enter into youth-adult partnerships that empower youth and may contribute to positive and long-lasting labour market outcomes. There is growing recognition of the importance of youth participation in decision-making. Meaningful youth participation in policy and programme development processes may manifest itself in various forms, and the nature and quality of participation matter for the extent to which youth voices are heard.

Evidence from literature shows that policies and programmes that are initiated or led by national governments in particular are top-down, and allow for little acknowledgement or integration of young people's realities, needs and perspectives. Some policies or programmes do commit to promoting social dialogue and tripartism (i.e. dialogue between government, youth and business), including youth participation in decision-making processes or encouragement of youth to join or form associations and cooperatives, but explicit operationalization of youth participation in decision-making processes remains limited or tokenistic. Lack of meaningful access and integration of youth into the political apparatus of the state, as well as the limited capacities of youth and governments, discourage effective and meaningful participation of youth.

However, in the case studies from Ethiopia, Uganda and Somaliland, we see that youth representatives are actively involved in policy formulation and (to a lesser extent) policy implementation phases. These processes are seen as participatory by both the young people and the practitioners interviewed for these case studies. However, there is doubt about the extent to which the youth consulted during the policy formulation and implementation phases form a diverse and 'representative' constituency. In all three case studies, we find that the young people consulted have already been actively involved in governmental programmes and are generally higher educated. In Uganda and Somaliland, participation particularly lacks representation from youth living in rural areas and/or those from more vulnerable groups. In Ethiopia, it is argued that youth (representatives) that participate in consultative processes are divided along political lines.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations for policy makers emerge from this review of the literature and case studies on youth employment policies and programmes that aspire to inclusive growth.

- ***Think big – but formulate policy that can be implemented locally***

Inclusive growth is an important ambition that many African policy makers endorse. But the realization of this ambition requires an aware, capacitated and resourceful implementation system at the local level, which can then deliver a comprehensive and complementary package of interventions that simultaneously address demand- and supply-side constraints of youth employment.

- ***Support inclusive growth through youth-led innovation***

Traditional value chains will not create enough decent jobs for all young people in Africa. If inclusive growth also takes into account new economies and technologies, such as digital innovations, the future of work and innovative business models, many more new jobs may arise for which young people can set the standard of decent work. Governments should therefore start to think more creatively and consider the big contribution that innovation can make in advancing inclusive growth, recognizing young people as potential drivers of innovation.

- ***Tailor national policies to local contexts and youth diversity***

Effective implementation of youth policies requires strong contextualization at the local level as well as specific strategies and interventions to support marginalized groups to overcome their particular barriers to participation. Thus, tailored implementation requires more than targeting some groups at the national level. Taking account of the heterogeneity of youth and diverse needs of different groups starts with understanding the particular challenges that each of these groups face. Meaningful youth participation is essential to enable true understanding of these barriers. Diverse and inclusive youth recruitment strategies can be a starting point for setting up this engagement.

- ***Recognize and empower young people as drivers of change***

Youth organizations and civil society organizations (CSOs) can be drivers of inclusive change for youth employment and inclusive growth. Therefore, governments should create an enabling environment for young people to participate in policy and programme formulation and implementation processes. Important pillars for meaningful youth participation that governments should consider include youth diversity and representation, youth engagement-enabling environment, youth-adult partnerships, rights-based youth participation and youth empowerment.

## 1.1 Youth un(der)employment in Africa

Unemployment is a pressing challenge in Africa. Young people (aged 15-25) comprised almost 20% of Africa's population in 2019, making Africa the world's youngest continent (UN, 2019). Due to demographic transitions, often referred to as a 'youth bulge' (Mueller & Thurlow, 2019), 12 million young people enter the labour force in Africa each year. While this youth bulge should provide countries with an advantage due to the high proportion of working-age people, known as the 'demographic dividend', in reality youth unemployment and underemployment is rampant.

This paper aims to understand how African governments are working towards inclusive growth in which all youth participate. We synthesize the literature on a variety of active labour market policies that African governments implement for inclusive growth, and investigate whether such policies are cognizant of the diversity of youth. Additionally, we seek to understand the extent to which youth themselves are meaningfully involved in the formulation and/or implementation of such active labour market policies, focusing on three case studies in Uganda, Ethiopia and Somaliland. The paper relies on a desk review of both academic and grey literature, and (governmental) policy documents on employment programmes related to youth, enriched with experiential knowledge of practitioners and youth involved in the policies and programmes highlighted in the three case studies.

Although Africa's economic prospects continue to brighten - a 4.1% real GDP growth is expected for 2021 compared to 3.4% in 2019 (AfDB, 2020) - merely three million jobs are being created every year (Ayele et al., 2018). The number of young people entering the labour market each year far surpasses the number of jobs created. Just over one in five youth were not in employment, education or training (NEET) in 2019; this state of joblessness has been steadily growing since 2012, and the NEET rate is projected to increase slightly by 0.3 percentage points to 20.8% in 2021. With a gender gap of around 10 percentage points in 2018 (ILO 2020b), young women are particularly affected - in large part due to gendered divisions of household responsibilities and care work and gendered social norms. The expected youth unemployment rate for 2020 is highest in Northern Africa (29.8%) and lowest in Sub-Saharan Africa (8.7%) (ILO, 2020c).

Next to unemployment, underemployment is pressing. Youth underemployment encompasses youth willing to work but not seeking work, youth willing to work full time but only working part time, and youth in a job that doesn't reflect either their actual level of education or their financial needs (Feldman, 1996). Underemployment is most problematic in the informal sector, as this sector is less compliant with legal regulations. An estimate of 95% employed African youth work in the informal sector, in areas such as subsistence agriculture and urban self-employment in petty services (ILO, 2020b). These informal sector workers face underemployment and indecent work in a number of ways, including job insecurity, minimal social benefits, often very low pay, and often hazardous working conditions (World Bank, 2008; Ismail, 2016). It is thus key to start recognizing informal jobs as legitimate and to strive to make them 'decent work', given that the majority of youth depend on them (Ismail, 2016; Tuyisabe et al., 2020). The challenge is therefore to create better jobs as well as more jobs.

This evidence synthesis looks at these challenges from the perspective of inclusive growth. What if economic growth is no longer the driving factor of development, but instead the focus is on jobs for all and decent work? By answering the research questions specified below, this paper aims to inform policy development and implementation at the local and national level.

## 1.2 Inclusive growth for youth employment

Youth employment and ensuring decent work are gaining increased attention in policy agendas at various levels in the African context, particularly within an inclusive growth paradigm exemplified by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which stress the importance of youth employment and decent work (Baah-Boateng, 2015). The SDGs furthermore demonstrate the need for national development frameworks to adopt a rights-based approach to youth policy in general and employment policy in particular (ILO, 2019b).



To sustainably address the employment challenges and foster inclusive growth in Africa, it is necessary to implement an appropriate and customized mix of employment policies. Governments have multiple roles to play, from drafting employment policies that advance youth employment to implementing them effectively through government schemes, and ensuring the private sector is a partner in this. Various programmes targeted at youth are offered by governments and also by civil society. Those that target both the demand and supply sides of the labour market simultaneously are deemed most effective (Kluve et al., 2019; ILO, 2020a). The International Labour Organization (ILO) argues that governments' primary responsibility in ensuring access to decent jobs for young people is to cultivate an enabling environment for job creation. This includes providing the conditions, structures, mechanisms and incentives needed to foster inclusive growth and encourage the private sector to hire more young people, improving the quality of jobs and supporting young people who wish to become entrepreneurs (ILO, 2020a).

Inclusive growth also aims to reduce gender inequalities and promote non-discrimination. The rather crude category of 'youth' encompasses a wide diversity of sub-groups (see e.g. Datta et al., 2018; Cho & Honorati, 2014). This heterogeneity, and the intersectional barriers that different groups of youth face to accessing the labour market, need to be taken into account in the design of employment policies to ensure they are inclusive. Young people, in all their diversity, have different needs, ambitions and interests when it comes to securing decent work, income and taking control of their own future (UN, 2019). Promoting youth employment and forwarding inclusive growth requires the engagement of a wide range of institutions in policy making, such as CSOs, youth movements, academia, the private sector and unions. A lack of (diverse) youth voices in the formulation of policies and programmes, however well-intentioned these are, might lead to mismatches and reduce their effects, particularly on marginalized and vulnerable groups of young people (Ismail, 2016; Glassco & Holguin, 2016).

### 1.3 Research questions

This paper synthesizes what is known in current literature about policies and programmes, implemented by African governments, that support youth employment and job creation for inclusive growth. Furthermore, we explore whether these policies and programmes are cognizant of the diversity of youth, and whether young people themselves are meaningfully involved in the formulation and/or implementation of these policies and programmes.

The research questions are specified in the following way:

- 1) What is known in current literature about policies and programmes, implemented by African governments, that support youth employment and job creation for inclusive growth?
- 1a) To what extent are such policies and programmes cognizant of diversity among youth?
- 1b) To what extent are youth meaningfully involved in the formulation and/or implementation of such policies and programmes?

The research questions are answered through a broad literature review and case studies on youth employment policies in Ethiopia, Uganda and Somaliland. The aim is to place findings into local and national perspectives through building upon tacit knowledge in Oxfam's country teams and (youth) networks. The case studies analyse concrete policies and programmes in the reality of their implementation. As such, broad theoretical knowledge gleaned from the literature review is complemented with the experiential knowledge of practitioners and young people involved in the policy and implementation processes. Further details on methodology can be found in Annex 1.

The paper is structured as follows: section 2 defines inclusive growth and outlines the relationship between inclusive growth and employment policies; section 3 presents evidence and examples of African youth employment policies and programmes that advance inclusive growth; section 4 concludes; and section 5 provides recommendations for policy makers.



## 2. Inclusive growth in which all youth participate

There is no universally accepted definition of inclusive growth: it incorporates a wide range of issues that were traditionally viewed in isolation. Poverty, exclusivity, income and wealth inequality, gender inequalities, employment, governance, natural disasters and climate change all directly affect economic performance (Kireyev & Chen., 2017). Inclusive growth encapsulates a more holistic view that takes each of these factors into account. It moves beyond narrow definitions of productivity or income growth, as captured by increased GDP or GNI, towards a broader interpretation where growth reduces inequality and poverty. Inclusive growth recognizes that inequalities undermine economic performance (OECD, 2018), emphasizes equity and equality of opportunities and distributes the benefits of economic progress (more) equitably across societies (IAEG-SDGs, 2016).

In recent years, various policy frameworks and accompanying measures in support of inclusive growth have been put forward, for instance, by the OECD (OECD, 2018), the UN (UN, 2014), the World Economic Forum (WEF, 2018), the IMF (Kireyev & Chen., 2017) and the ILO (ILO, 2019b). These frameworks integrate economic, social and environmental objectives and connect a wide range of economic, social and environmental issues to foster sustainable and inclusive growth. The common thread of such frameworks is that they seek to promote inclusion and opportunities for everyone to make a better life for themselves. Although the frameworks differ in the scope of elements they incorporate, all of them consider employment – and more specifically, full and productive employment – and decent work (ILO, 2008) to be key aspects of inclusive growth. The consensus among economists is that economic growth is a prerequisite of, but is not always sufficient for, job creation. At the same time, more jobs and increased labour force participation, including among women and marginalized groups, are important to foster inclusive growth and reduce poverty and inequality (Kireyev & Chen., 2017)

Decent work for all means opportunities for everyone to find employment that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace, social protection, personal development and social integration (UN, 2016). Policies on decent work include, for instance, equal pay for work of equal value, safe and secure working conditions, rights at work and universal social protection (SDG 1.3; IAEG-SDGs, 2016). The definition of full and productive employment and decent work ‘for all’ highlights the possible inequities between women and men, and includes a specific focus on young people and people living with disabilities (ILO, 2019b). This recognizes the diverse sub-groups within society and the inequalities in opportunities, which are especially limited for marginalized groups. Such frameworks thus seek to reduce inequality and discriminatory practices in labour markets, not only from a moral and legal perspective but also because such inequalities hamper economic performance.

# 3. Youth employment policies and programmes that advance inclusive growth in Africa

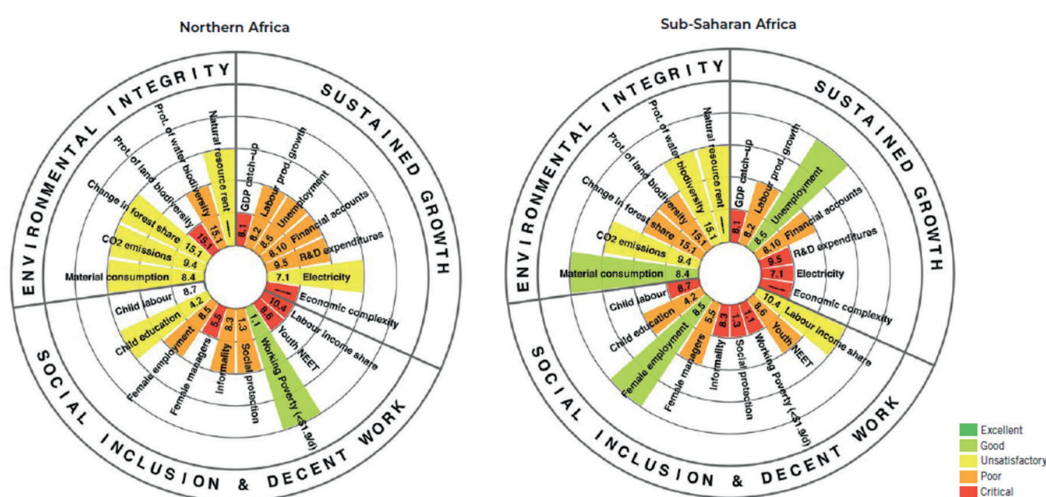
## 3.1 Youth employment and inclusive growth in Africa

### 3.1.1 Youth employment policies and programmes

The ILO (2019b) assessed performance in three key areas of inclusive growth: 1) sustained growth; 2) social inclusion and decent work; and 3) environmental integrity. Figure 1 below shows how the concept of inclusive growth plays out in reality in Africa. Both Northern Africa as well as sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) score 'critical or 'poor' on most indicators, particularly in the areas of sustained growth and social inclusion & decent work. Regional differences show that in some aspects of inclusive growth, SSA is more advanced than other regions (e.g. female employment - the percentage of women among all employed; and unemployment - percentage of the labour force who are unemployed), while in others Northern Africa is more advanced (e.g. working poverty rate - the percentage of employed persons living on less than \$1.90 per day). What is worrying in relation to youth employment is the percentage of youth not in education, employment or training (youth NEET); this is rated poor in SSA and critical in Northern Africa (World Bank, 2008; Ismail, 2016).

Figure 1 underscores that despite remarkable GDP growth levels in Africa in recent decades, this growth has not been accompanied by increases in employment and decent work. It is argued that the growth was fuelled by fluctuations in commodity prices, accompanied by rising inequality and unemployment (Ncube, 2015). This 'jobless growth' (van Niekerk, 2020), particularly in Northern Africa, demonstrates that the benefits of growth have not been distributed equally or in a way that explicitly reduces disadvantage (Klasen, 2010). Instead, economic growth should have a pro-youth focus to alleviate the 'missing jobs crisis' faced by young people (Gyimah-Brempong & Kimenyi, 2013).

**Figure 1: Performance towards inclusive growth in Northern Africa and sub-Saharan Africa**



Source: ILO (2019b)

It is clear that much remains to be done to achieve sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all in Africa. In this paper, we are specifically interested in what is being done by African governments regarding employment for youth that advances inclusive growth. Note that the extent to which youth policies and programmes are 'home-grown' is unclear, because of the likely role of international organizations in African policy-making processes (te Lintelo, 2011). The following subsections present ways in which African governments address (decent) youth employment.

### 3.1.1.1 National youth policies

The African Union has developed several policies and programmes to ensure youth development and exploitation of the 'demographic dividend'. These include the African Youth Charter, Youth Decade Plan of Action and the Malabo Decision on Youth Empowerment (AU, 2021). In the African Youth Charter, which was adopted in 2006 and entered into force in 2009, legally binding articles are formulated in relation to sustainable and inclusive growth and decent work. These include a comprehensive and coherent national youth policy (NYP) (art. 12). In this charter, Sustainable Livelihoods and Youth Employment (art. 15) calls for the right of every young person to have gainful employment and be protected from economic exploitation (AU, 2006). Furthermore, the African Youth Charter emphasizes the need to eliminate discrimination against youth in general (art. 2) and against women and girls in particular (art. 23), as well as calling for respect for the rights of mentally and physically challenged youth (art. 24). Youth participation is also addressed (art. 11), emphasizing the right of youth (including women and marginalized youth) to participate in all spheres of society, including decision-making bodies at various administrative levels. It is argued that the adoption of the African Youth Charter is a significant milestone for youth development and youth employment in Africa (ILO, 2012b).

The African Youth Charter urged African Union member states to endorse and adopt the charter, and to develop and implement a national youth policy (NYP) (Gyimah-Brempong & Kimenyi, 2013). At least 59% of African countries had their own NYP in 2017 (Corrigan, 2017). The motivation for the development of these policies has been a large number of reports by various bodies, in particular the African Youth Report 2009 that stressed the importance of expanding opportunities for and with youth people in Africa to progress on the Millennium Development Goals (Gyimah-Brempong & Kimenyi, 2013). The strategies specified in NYPs differ from country to country, although common themes are education and socioeconomic inclusion (Corrigan, 2017). Employment-promotion provisions in NYPs are diverse. Malawi lists the expansion of opportunities for youth in the agricultural sector, information provision, regulatory reforms, and education and training endeavours. South Africa's policy draws attention to the 2013 Youth Employment Accord between business, labour and government; the tax incentive offered to businesses hiring young people; public work schemes; and ways to expose youth to working environments (Corrigan, 2017). Encouragement of entrepreneurship is often also part of the package; this is illustrated by Zambia's policy, which promotes cooperatives, provision of capital, linkage of youth enterprises to larger firms, and development of entrepreneurial skills among young people (Corrigan, 2017). The success of implementation, however, remains debatable (Corrigan, 2017). Gyimah-Brempong & Kimenyi (2013) argue that progress in the development of NYPs seems to be slow overall and differs across countries, and that policies or actions do not adequately address the challenges faced by youth. Data limitations, including lack of reliable and accurate data, further complicate the assessment of these challenges (Gyimah-Brempong & Kimenyi, 2013).

### 3.1.1.2 Value chain and market system development

Strengthening value chains, especially those with high growth and employment potential, and simultaneously addressing market constraints can help improve business and employment outcomes, including for young people (ILO, 2020a). Ways to do this vary from country to country; they include creating export and trade channels, strengthening business associations, and enabling access to training and support services (ILO, 2020a). As agriculture is the leading employment sector for African youth, with 54% of Africa's workforce relying on this sector (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 2018), of particular importance is agricultural value chain development - although generally this sector is not attractive to youth (ILO, 2019a; ILO, 2020a). There are several ways to make the agricultural sector appeal more to youth, including the integration of (innovative) technology (ILO, 2019a) and entrepreneurship promotion (International Youth Foundation, 2014). Value chain and market system development can have a multiplier effect by addressing market failures and employment creation simultaneously (ILO, 2020a). Boxes 1 and 2 give examples of value chain and market system development.

## Box 1: One District One Factory Industrial Policy in Ghana

In 2017, Ghana launched the industrial policy of a 'One District One Factory' (1D1F) approach in its 254 districts. By building one factory in each district, Ghana aims to create massive employment, particularly for rural and peri-urban youth, to: add value to the natural resources of each district and exploit its economic potential; ensure the even spatial spread of industries and thereby stimulate economic activity and growth across the whole country; promote export and increase foreign exchange earnings; and enhance the production of local substitutes for imported goods (1D1F, n.d. b). To date, 232 projects have been implemented with 76 companies. This includes the creation of 28 new factories and support for 48 existing factories (1D1F, n.d. a).

## Box 2: U-Learn 2 Project in Uganda

The U-Learn 2 Project in Uganda (2016-2021) targets youth aged 18-24 years old living in poverty by developing a market-system-based approach to boost value chains in high-growth sectors (ILO, 2020a), including agri-business, construction, hospitality and tourism. The project is implemented in partnership with Mastercard Foundation. Partnerships were established with over 600 young farmers in an outgrower model. These farmers benefitted from market-relevant technical skills training as well as access to inputs and markets (Swisscontact, 2017). The project managed to create inclusive supply chains, while considerably increasing the average annual incomes of young farmers (Swisscontact, 2017).

### 3.1.1.3 Active labour market policies (ALMPs)

One way to promote youth employment is through active labour market policies and programmes (ALMPs). ALMPs can include a range of measures, for instance facilitating the transition to work, targeting the disadvantages of specific groups of youth, and preventing detachment from labour markets (ILO, 2012a). Kluve et al. (2019) categorize ALMPs into four types: 1) training and skills development; 2) entrepreneurship promotion; 3) employment services; and 4) subsidized employment interventions. Broadly speaking, type 1 includes skills training for youth to improve their employability and access to jobs, type 2 includes business advisory services and/or finance and market access, type 3 includes job counselling, job-search assistance and/or mentoring services, and type 4 includes wage subsidies and public work programmes (Kluve et al., 2019). Studies indicate that ALMPs can effectively benefit the most disadvantaged youth, if properly targeted and implemented (ILO, 2012a; ILO, 2020a; Gatti et al., 2013). While promoting efficiency, growth and social justice, ALMPs can mitigate education and labour market failures (ILO, 2012a). In this way, ALMPs can contribute to indicators of social inclusion and decent work, for instance by reducing youth NEET (the reality for 20-25% of young people in SSA and more than 25% in Northern Africa; see Figure 1) and increasing female employment (40-48% in SSA and 15-30% in Northern Africa; see Figure 1).

#### *Training and skills development*

Much has been written about training and skills development programmes for youth employment. Training and skills development includes services such as training on technical and vocational skills, business skills, literacy and/or numeracy, and behavioural and non-cognitive skills that are implemented in both classroom settings or in the workplace (Kluve et al., 2019). Although Kluve et al. (2019) find positive effects of skills training interventions on employment outcomes, the overall evidence suggests that the impact of skills training on employment is debatable, especially in comparison to other ALMPs (Gyimah-Brempong & Kimenyi, 2013). Skills training might be most effective for women and relatively lower-educated youth (Gyimah-Brempong & Kimenyi, 2013). In order for training and skills development programmes to reach their goals, they need to be coordinated, regulated and endowed with high-quality delivery systems that address the geographical, gender and economic diversity of youth and meet the needs of the industry (ILO, 2012a). Indeed, if weak linkages exist between skills provided by the training and development programmes and those demanded by the private sector, these programmes are of limited benefit for inclusive growth (Kilimani, 2017). Furthermore, in their design the programmes should consider the future of work, as the skills demanded of youth are likely to change along with overall economic transformation (McKinsey Global Institute [MGI], 2017 and 2018; Faith et al., 2020). Coordination between the public and



private sector, for example by means of public-private partnerships, can prove helpful in this respect (Gyimah-Brempong & Kimenyi, 2013). Box 3 gives an example of efforts in this direction in Malawi, Tanzania and Zanzibar.

### **Box 3: FAO Public-private partnership model in Malawi, Tanzania and Zanzibar**

An example of training and skills development programmes is the FAO public-private partnership (PPP) model, which it developed together with the public (governmental) and private sector in Malawi, Tanzania and Zanzibar. This supports young women and men's access to agro sector markets while tackling their main constraints, including skills development appropriate to ongoing labour demands, access to land, access to credit, access to markets, and climate-friendly agro business skills (FAO, 2014). One component of the FAO PPP model is Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS), which provides vocational training tailored to rural settings, combined with employment promotion and access to markets (FAO, 2014).

### ***Entrepreneurship promotion***

Type 2 ALMPs includes entrepreneurship promotion programmes, which provide services such as microfinance, business skills training, assessments by experienced professionals, facilitation of access to value chains, and mentorship (Kluve et al., 2019). Cho & Honorati (2014) adopt a meta regression analysis of 37 impact evaluation studies on entrepreneurship programmes in developing countries, including 11 in Africa. They find positive impact for youth on business knowledge and practice, but no immediate effect on business setup and increased income. Compared to skills training interventions, Kluve et al. (2019) estimate a twice as large aggregate effect size for entrepreneurship programmes - although the level of precision is much lower. The effect disappears if conditioning on programme design features, such as participant profiling and participant engagement mechanisms, is included. Box 4 gives an example of entrepreneurship promotion in Northern Uganda.

### **Box 4: Youth Opportunities Program in Uganda**

An example of entrepreneurship promotion is the Youth Opportunities Program (YOP) in Northern Uganda. The Government of Uganda designed this programme to help poor and unemployed adults become self-employed artisans. Young adults (16-35 years old), in particular rural farmers earning less than one dollar a day, were invited to form groups and prepare a proposal for how to use a grant for non-agricultural skills training and enterprise start-up costs. Up to \$10,000 could be requested. The next step was a government screening of all proposals. Successful proposals received a lump-sum cash transfer with no government monitoring thereafter (Blattman et al., 2014). The government programme was very successful. After four years, groups that received a grant were twice as likely to practice a skilled trade compared to groups who did not receive a grant (Blattman et al., 2014). The programme also contributed to greater capital stocks, increased earnings and increased working hours (Blattman et al., 2014).

### ***Public employment services***

Public employment services (PES) are key in matching supply and demand in the labour market (ILO, 2012a). This is done by, for instance, registering jobseekers, providing counselling and guidance, information systems, managing unemployment benefits and referring to other ALMPs (ILO, 2012a; Kluve et al., 2019). It can also include job-search skills training (e.g. knowledge on contract bargaining, conditions of work, contracting law and labour laws), thereby supporting youth in 'surfing the labour market' (ILO, 2013). Gatti et al. (2013) argue that the efficiency of PES is low in many Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries. They argue that cost-effective services, such as training programmes, job vacancy fairs and job clubs, hardly exist in the region. Overall, PES in the MENA are seen to take a passive approach, as, for instance, few resources are put into marketing PES (Gatti et al., 2013). Similarly, the ILO (2020a) argues that many employment service programmes suffer from low take-up, often because of weak marketing strategies and poor targeting. In their systematic review, Kluve et al. (2019) estimate that programmes

which have PES as the main intervention strategy have an aggregate effect size that is indistinguishable from zero. They do, however, mention that this does not necessarily imply that employment services are not effective; rather, effect size estimates vary significantly from one programme to the other. Furthermore, as illustrated in Box 5, the capacity of PES is often insufficient to deal with the scale of unemployment.

#### **Box 5: Public employment services (PES) in Namibia**

Mwasikakata and Martins (2017) assessed ALMPs and PES in Namibia. Their findings include that the PES in Namibia faces important capacity restrictions that hamper its potential contribution in improving the functioning of the labour market. To illustrate one of the capacity constraints: just one employment officer is associated with over 14,000 unemployed people, or 2,800 jobseekers. Moreover, regional offices of the Employment Services Bureau cover only urban and semi-urban areas, leaving out more than half of the population living in rural areas (Mwasikakata & Martins, 2017). As such, PES in Namibia are not cognizant of the diversity in youth in terms of their region and area of residence.

#### ***Subsidized employment interventions***

Subsidized employment interventions, which can manifest themselves in various forms, are type 4 of ALMPs. Services included in this ALMP are direct payments to employers, tax deductions to employers, direct payments to workers, and public works (Kluve et al., 2019). Kluve et al. (2019) estimate that, similar to PES, programmes which have subsidized employment as the main intervention strategy have an aggregate effect size that is indistinguishable from zero. Again, this does not necessarily imply that subsidized employment interventions are not effective; rather, it could reflect that effect size estimates vary significantly across programmes.

Public works programmes (PWP) are one type of subsidized employment interventions. PWPs contribute to economic growth through direct job creation (ILO, 2020a). They are usually used to help unemployed people gain work experience, or to help recent graduates gain initial access to the labour market (Gyimah-Brempong & Kimenyi, 2013). PWPs can also have a stabilizing effect on income and consumption, especially if offered off-season when demand for agricultural labour is low – this is particularly relevant for rural youth (Faith et al., 2020). McCord & Slater (2009) identify four types of PWPs, including: 1) those offering short-term employment; 2) government employment programmes offering some form of employment guarantee; 3) those promoting labour intensification of government infrastructure spending; and 4) programmes which enhance supply-side characteristics, thereby promoting ‘employability’. The majority of PWPs in SSA focus on type 1 (47%) or type 3 (43%) (McCord & Slater, 2009). Often PWPs are targeted at the poorest and most vulnerable people: 60% of analysed type 1 and type 3 PWPs in SSA target ‘the poor and marginalized’, ‘those affected by disasters’ (one-third of PWPs), and ‘women and female headed households’ (also one-third) (McCord & Slater, 2009). Gyimah-Brempong & Kimenyi (2013) conclude that PWPs generally are not effective. However, Kilimani (2017) argues that PWPs could be better targeted to increase young women’s participation. Although PWPs can take many forms, such as those presented above, they tend to involve large-scale government investments in, for instance, maintenance, construction and repair of rural and urban infrastructure (ILO, 2020a). Thus, in addition to creating (short-term) employment, these programmes have a wider impact in targeted communities by improving long-term economic prospects as a result of new assets and infrastructure (ILO, 2020a). Due to the temporary nature of PWPs, these programmes must be combined with other interventions for sustainable and long-term job creation (ILO, 2020a). An example of a programme that tries to counter this challenge is the Expanded Public Works Programme in South Africa, described in Box 6.

## Box 6: The Expanded Public Works Programme in South Africa

In 2004, the Government of South Africa launched the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) to support the creation of opportunities for young people, including women. The programme supported the creation of short-term employment in infrastructure, non-state community services, social services, and environmental and cultural activities (ILO, 2020a). In some of the programmes a training component is mandatory, improving young people's skills and productivity, hence improving their long-term employability. Between 2009 and 2014, EPWP created over 4.6 million work opportunities. The majority of EPWP participants (70%) have transitioned to longer-term formal self-employment or wage employment. (ILO, 2020a)

Wage subsidies or reductions in social contribution for young workers, also part of type 4 of ALMPs, can help increase the labour demand for youth, if well designed (ILO, 2012a). These subsidies share initial hiring costs between employers and the government. By easing the transition of young workers into the labour market, wage subsidies contribute to reducing youth NEET. Wage subsidies can also contribute to the formality of jobs when specifically addressing labour market disadvantages faced by young people (ILO, 2012a; ILO, 2020a). Targeting of subsidies and provision for only a limited period of time is key for effective wage subsidies, to prevent them from distorting labour markets (ILO, 2012a) (see example in Box 7).

## Box 7: Wage subsidies in South Africa

A wage subsidy bill was signed in 2013 in South Africa, aimed at improving youth employment rates in formal sector firms (Mail and Guardian, 2013). By offering a tax incentive, employers are encouraged to employ young people, as costs of hiring are shared with the government. In this way, demand for labour was stimulated, especially for those aged between 18 and 29 years old with little work experience (Gyimah-Brempong & Kimenyi, 2013). Subsidies were distributed for a limited period of time of six months (ILO, 2012a). A randomized controlled trial by Levinsohn et al. (2014) found that one year after distributing wage-subsidy vouchers, young people who had received a voucher were more likely to be in wage employment than those who had not. Most of these young people were able to remain in employment even after the vouchers expired.

Kluve et al. (2019) conclude that there is no evidence that any one of the four types of ALMPs outperform the others. They do find that programmes which integrate multiple intervention strategies are more likely to have a positive impact, in particular in low- and middle-income countries. They suggest that programmes with multiple complementary activities are better able to respond to the multiple needs and constraints faced by a heterogeneous group of young people (Kluve et al., 2019). Also, the ILO (2020a) and Datta et al. (2018) state that a comprehensive package of interventions that simultaneously address demand- and supply-side constraints are most effective. Furthermore, programmes that profile their target group and include individualized follow-up and monitoring systems are estimated to have larger effects (Kluve et al., 2019).

The effectiveness of ALMPs highly depends on economic growth and the types of jobs that are created (Gyimah-Brempong & Kimenyi, 2013). Thus, while promoting economic growth a balance should be struck between several trade-offs, including (but not limited to) job creation in the formal versus informal sector, in urban versus rural areas, and in terms of quantity versus quality of jobs (Gyimah-Brempong & Kimenyi, 2013). A proper balance of these trade-offs is crucial for economic growth to be inclusive and to create decent jobs for all. In this respect, the policy of creating more jobs might be complicated, as costs of employment for employers may increase with more attention to decent work (Gyimah-Brempong & Kimenyi, 2013).



### 3.1.1.4 Government as employer

In addition to facilitating youth in the transition to work, and better matching the supply and demand of labour, the government can also be a direct employer of youth. By directly demanding labour, the government can absorb part of the labour force. Traditionally, education in African universities has been geared towards public sector jobs (Friesenhahn, 2017), and employment in the public sector is the preferred career choice for many African youth (Ajani & Oyekola, 2019; Gatti et al., 2013). Government jobs are considered to provide lucrative and stable employment, are associated with economic benefits and respectability, and attract youth with intrinsic and/or altruistic service motives (Ajani & Oyekola, 2019; Ng et al., 2016). In addition, respondents in the study by Ajani & Oyekola (2019) in Nigeria touch upon social norms that influence the preference for public sector jobs, when stating that work in the public sector has always been seen as desirable and that parents wish for their children to be “at the helm of affairs in the government and be relevant” (Ajani & Oyekola, 2019, p.120).

However, public sector jobs are in increasingly short supply (Assaad & Barsoum, 2019; Filmer & Fox, 2014; Gatti et al., 2013). Without transforming the educational system, youth are at risk of not finding employment once graduated (Filmer & Fox, 2014; Gatti et al., 2013).

### 3.1.1.5 Employment policies in rural areas

Schwebel et al. (2019) analysed a total of 47 rural youth employment policies in SSA.<sup>1</sup> These include development policies, employment policies, youth employment policies and agricultural or rural development policies. Their analysis focuses on the policy areas addressed. They distinguish between five policy areas: 1) sectoral development (including private sector development); 2) self-employment, employability and skills development; 3) labour market institutions and regulations; 4) social protection; and 5) social and policy dialogue. Within these policy areas, nine constraints to achieving productive and decent employment were identified and analysed. These reflect the main bottlenecks hindering rural youth in accessing decent jobs in rural areas.

Schwebel et al. (2019) focus their analysis on the formulation stage of the policy-making process. A weighted average is calculated for each of the policy areas, based on the explicit mention of constraints in the policy documents. The policy area receiving the highest score is self-employment, employability and skills development, which supports the argument that most rural youth employment policies in SSA focus on labour supply rather than labour demand. The lack of focus on labour demand might hamper inclusive growth, as jobs need to be there to absorb the labour force and to create productive employment that stimulates growth (Kilimani, 2017).

The policy areas of social and policy dialogue, social protection, and labour market institutions and regulations are insufficiently addressed in the policies analysed (Schwebel et al., 2019). Although many policies aim to expand the social protection system – one of the indicators of social inclusion and decent work – only a few explicitly mention social security schemes that target rural youth (Schwebel et al., 2019).

## 3.1.2 Case study: Ethiopia

The young generation in Ethiopia is growing rapidly. The country has over 30 million youth aged 15-29, comprising 28% of Ethiopia's population. This number is anticipated to increase to around 40 million by 2030 (USAID, 2018). According to the Ethiopian Jobs Creation Commission (2019), more than two million youth enter the labour market every year. However, the number of new jobs and opportunities created is far smaller. Unemployment, underemployment and poor working conditions are most prevalent among young Ethiopians. According to the World Bank (2016), youth unemployment was estimated at 25.23% (17.1% male and 30.9% female) in 2015. Although Ethiopia has an ambition to become a middle-income country by 2025, creating sustainable jobs is a critical challenge to achieving this objective.

Between 2004 and 2018, Ethiopia achieved double-digit economic growth, a sixfold increase per capita and a 15%-point decline in the rate of poverty. However, this growth has not been successful in bringing structural transformation and creating more and sustainable jobs in the country. The main explanation for the lack of inclusiveness is that growth has not generated enough ‘quality’ jobs; in particular, jobs offering higher wages and better working conditions for young people (UNDP, 2015).

<sup>1</sup> Countries include Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zambia.

In light of these challenges, the Ethiopian government set out a vision to ensure rapid, sustainable and inclusive growth. They called this the National Strategic Agenda for structural transformation of the Ethiopian economy. The response primarily focused on policies and actions that sought to structurally change the economy on the one hand and to create more and better jobs on the other. The Growth and Transformational Plan (GTP II) was adopted for the period 2015-20. The plan emphasized export-oriented manufacturing and industry development to transform the structure of the economy, create new jobs and expand export earnings. In 2019, the 'Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda' was launched. This outlines various macroeconomic, structural and sectoral reform measures to overcome gaps hindering economic progress. The plan and agenda - and the extent to which they contributed to inclusive growth - are discussed in more detail in the following section.

Recently, the government established a 'Jobs Creation Commission' and developed a 10-year jobs plan till 2030. This includes addressing structural issues, such as a fixed minimum wage, and setting up a revolving fund to enable young people to access finance. Currently, the 'Plan of Action for Job Creation' (2020-2025) is being implemented, which aims to foster an enabling business environment and create 14 million jobs by 2025. Furthermore, the Ethiopian government drafted a 10 Years Perspective Development Plan (2021-30) as a successor to the GTP II. The plan envisions Ethiopia becoming a lower middle-income country by 2025 and an African beacon of prosperity in 2030 - not only in material terms but also in terms of freedom, equality, dignity and inclusiveness. It also aims to reduce the population living below the poverty line to 7% and unemployment to less than 9%. The plan focuses on: enhancing sectors with high productivity and job creation potential; empowering the private sector and promoting both domestic and foreign investments; developing human resources through equitable access to basic services; ensuring economic, social and political participation of citizens, regardless of their background; and improving institutional capacity development to realize the plan's objectives. The Home-Grown Economic Reform Agenda and other sectorial policies and strategies will be used as a tool for implementation of the 10-year plan.

This case study looks into how the policies, actions and reform agendas that focus on structural transformation and job creation link with inclusive growth. We explore the content of the policies and agendas, and how young people have been involved in their formulation. We then investigate implementation or government action and the effectiveness of this, based on experiences to date.

### **3.1.2.1 Policies and actions on paper - focus on inclusive growth?**

The Growth and Transformational Plan (GTP II - 2015-2020) aimed for rapid and inclusive economic growth; its emphasis lay on transforming the economy by developing export-oriented manufacturing and industries. However, the agricultural sector was also recognized as a main driver of economic growth. Empowering women and youth, ensuring their participation and that they equitably benefit from development processes, was one of the nine strategic pillars of the plan. It also directly targeted youth and women's unemployment and underemployment. Private sector development, particularly SMEs, received special attention as potential employment hubs and poverty-reduction mechanisms. The plan emphasized aligning technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes with the demands of the economy and continuing to scale up SME expansion to tackle unemployment. It also aimed at integrating job creation and entrepreneurship programmes with education and training institutions and the manufacturing sector. To this end, it set a goal of organizing 7.43 million young people in SMEs and 1.35 million in cooperative unions (Eyob, 2017). During the 2015-2020 period, economic growth was combined in general with an overall higher level of household income and a reduction in the number of people living in poverty.

The GTP II was followed by the 'Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda' - a blueprint crafted in 2019 to propel the country's economic progress. The reform agenda outlines various macroeconomic, structural and sectoral reform measures to overcome gaps hindering the country's economic progress and to pave the way for jobs, inclusive growth, poverty reduction and prosperity. It focuses on key sectors where Ethiopia has great potential, including agriculture, manufacturing, mining, tourism, ICT and creative industries. Unlike the previous policies and strategies, the reform agenda places much attention on private sector development, representing a paradigm shift from state-led to private-led economic reform. The government has shown an interest in privatizing very large public enterprises to open up the market to both local and foreign investors. Although it is understandable that the government cannot carry the economic weight of the transformation alone, it is doubtful whether privatization will lead to realization of the inclusive economic growth ambition that the GTP II set out.

Linked to the economic transformation plans are the specific action plans for job creation. In order to address job creation challenges in a more coordinated and focused manner, the government established the Ethiopia 'Job Creation Commission' (JCC) in 2018 and mandated it to lead the job creation agenda, coordinate stakeholders, and monitor and evaluate performance. The commission's main goals are to: ensure that practical and employable skills are prioritized in educational programmes; provide effective governance and institutional arrangements to improve and expand skill development and employment-promotion programmes; adopt impact-driven monitoring and evaluation systems, taking stock of what is working and what is not and pivoting quickly to new, promising interventions; and implement evidence-based labour market policies and programmes. The JCC is collaboratively engaging with various line ministries, commissions, banks, regulatory bodies and private sector actors to drive significant job growth by 2025.

The current 'Plan of Action for Job Creation' (2020-2025) prepared by the JCC aims to foster a conducive business environment and create 14 million jobs by 2025. The ambition is specifically to ensure that the newly created jobs are accessible to young people entering the labour force. The Plan of Action is structured around six strategic objectives, in which 'improving the inclusiveness of the labour market' is an explicit strategy.<sup>2</sup> It strives to achieve its objective through providing targeted services to groups normally excluded from the labour market, including vulnerable populations such as refugees, migrants and people living with disabilities. More specifically, it recognizes the structural challenges that women and youth face in accessing the labour market in comparison to males and adults. However, the plan's lack of recognition of the heterogeneity of youth should be mentioned here. For example, in general there is more focus on urban or semi-urban youth, with little attention to rural, pastoral, uneducated and out-of-school youth.

The plan proposes various strategies that seek inclusive labour market participation, including:

- Promoting women's economic empowerment to reduce the level of unpaid employment among women in rural areas;
- Implementing programmes targeted to internal rural-to-urban migrants, refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs);
- Building a disability-friendly labour market by implementing affirmative actions, employment quotas and incentives to the private sector to improve employment opportunities for people with disabilities;
- Introducing a minimum wage, national unemployment insurance and expanding the Productive Safety Net Programmes as social protection measures in the labour market.

The implementation of these strategies and the overall job creation interventions are the responsibility of various line ministries at national, regional and local levels. Though Ethiopia is following a regional- and district-level decentralization, whereby government actors have full autonomy to draft and implement their locally contextualized policies and actions, most regional and district documents are a copy of what was developed by the federal government, with minimum or no modification. The lack of contextualized strategies and actions, combined with a very fragmented implementation process with overlapping roles and responsibilities, can hinder the effective implementation of policies, strategies and actions.

Similar to the GTP II, the Plan of Action has placed much emphasis on transforming the business ecosystem to build vibrant and growth-oriented SMEs and develop human capital to meet the changing labour market demand. Though the share of agriculture for job creation is declining, it will continue to be one of the priority sectors where large investment is made to create employment, as a large portion of Ethiopia's population is still located in rural areas. Industry, services and ICT are also priority sectors in the plan.

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<sup>2</sup> The six strategies are: 1) adopting job-rich macro-policies; 2) building a vibrant local private sector; 3) developing human capital to meet the changing needs of the labour market; 4) strengthening labour market intermediation and linkages; 5) improving the inclusiveness of the labour market; and 6) realizing the job creation potential of prospective high-yield sectors.

### 3.1.2.2 Implementation - the effects of policies and action on inclusive growth

Despite the concrete ambitions stated in the policies and action plans, through our discussions with stakeholders, including young people, partners and government representatives, we can identify distinct gaps in their implementation and effects on inclusive growth, especially at the local level.<sup>3</sup> Many of the implementation challenges were due to a combination of lack of institutional infrastructure and insufficient local capacity for policy/action uptake.

In practice, there is in general a limited awareness and enforcement of policies and strategies at the local level. Although the decentralization of Ethiopian policy implementation aims to accommodate previously repressed and marginalized ethnic and regional groups, in reality there is a lack of capacity at the local level to realize this ambition. Limited training is provided to local policy implementers; this is combined with often fragmented or uncoordinated departments that have overlapping mandates. As all responsibilities are decentralized, there are limited structures for accountability and a lack of consistent monitoring and evaluation of implementation at the national level - which makes it difficult to track progress in a comparative manner. More structurally, the actual budget available for the implementation of policy and action plans is not sufficient.

Next to the general implementation issues, the following bottlenecks were identified that can hamper inclusive growth and labour markets:

- The training given by TVET institutions is not properly organized and, in general, often does not respond to market demands. Many TVET graduates are not in a good position to find a job in the local market due to this skills mismatch, and have not acquired the life skills that employers are looking for.
- The loan provision by microfinance institutions is often characterized by delays, heavy bureaucracy, not providing sufficient funds according to business plans, and not providing further support or training to start-ups. This makes it difficult for young entrepreneurs to access financial credit to start up their business.
- Youth targeting and beneficiary selection by the district-level labour and social affairs office for various services and benefits still lacks clarity and transparency. Benefits mostly go to those who have close contact with and information from the service providers. Youth and their communities are not adequately encouraged to be involved, and hence have no say in youth targeting to effectively screen and select the most deserving recipients of a certain service or support being provided by public actors, private companies or NGOs.
- Youth-mandated offices, especially from regional to district level, do not have gender-disaggregated targets and do not specify the special needs of disadvantaged groups such as women, people living with disabilities, refugees and IDPs, and do not disaggregate results by these groups. This means that plans and reports do not include these voices.
- Although government policy and strategy support the provision to small businesses of land/space in urban areas for material production and product display and selling, this is not done fairly. If provided, the space may be far from infrastructure (particularly electric power) and the market, and there may be inconsistent and inefficient support to create market linkages.

In terms of concrete government action as part of its ambitions for structural economic transformation under its GTP II and Home-Grown Economic Reform Agenda, the development of industrial parks is highlighted as having the potential to stimulate growth, but is not yet making growth inclusive. Industrial park development aims to enhance the growth of the manufacturing sector, create jobs and opportunities for innovation exchange, produce commodities for export and import substitution, and ultimately help the country to realize the ambition to transition to an industry-led economy. Field-level experience revealed that almost all industrial parks have been or are being constructed in urban or semi-urban areas and are hiring youth who are literate. This prevents several groups of young people from benefitting, including women, those living in isolated rural areas and illiterate youth. Some key informants indicated that government-intensive investment in ICT infrastructure has helped youth to access jobs and market information, though there is still a wide disparity between urban and rural youth.

<sup>3</sup> The reflections are based on the results of 10 key informant interviews and five focus group discussions (24 male and eight female) with the Ministry of Youth and Sport, Ethiopia's Jobs Creation Commission, youth federations/associations, NGOs working on youth employment, and Oxfam's implementing partners in Oromia and Somali regions. The analysis was further informed by two group discussions that were part of regional workshops with Oxfam's partners on practical enforcement of existing youth policies and practices for the social and economic empowerment of youth.

### **3.1.2.3 Youth participation in policy implementation and government actions**

Empowering young people and enabling them to participate in the formulation of policy, strategy and actions, as well as implementation and evaluation, is essential to address their real needs and demands, build their sense of ownership of the programmes, and develop their skills to become effective leaders. Accordingly, youth representatives and other stakeholders, including NGOs, were consulted during the formulation or design stage of the policies and government action plans considered in this case study. In the recently endorsed 10 Year Perspective Development Plan (2021-30), not only youth but also people living with disabilities were consulted on the draft plan to identify gaps and improve the plan. However, there is no documented information to show any diversity among the youth who were involved in the design stage, such as the inclusion of urban and rural youth, educated and non/lower-educated youth, gender/non-binary balance, etc. During the implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages, young people and other disadvantaged groups in society will apparently have limited involvement, except as targeted recipients of services.

Indeed, in the interviews and focus group discussions with youth and government representatives, it was highlighted that the youth representatives involved in the formulation or design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and plans are often not truly representative of young people across Ethiopia. In general, they are part of politically affiliated youth associations that are being supported and influenced by government stakeholders, acting upon political interests. As such, the youth representatives are not from deep rural and pastoral areas and cannot showcase the actual challenges young people are facing. In most cases, policies, strategies and actions that are designed at national level are being taken up by regional governments with minor or no adjustments, and without consultation with all stakeholders to ensure they align with the specific regional context. This, coupled with the cost-intensive nature of consultation meetings and limited local budget availability, restricts opportunities for youth and other disadvantaged groups to be involved in regionally adopted policies and programmes.

Moreover, interview and focus group participants felt that the set-up of young people's participation is not meaningful, with youth representatives often only involved at a late stage and being consulted on already drafted policies and plans. This is just the usual top-down approach rather than a balanced bottom-up and top-down approach. Non-federated or local youth associations and youth clubs are only minimally involved in the design and implementation of policies, plans and actions.

The existing youth institutions are not strong enough or sufficiently neutral and independent to raise or have an influence on youth issues at various administrative levels. According to focus group participants and key informant interviewees, this is the underlying reason why youth do not meaningfully participate in the entire process of policy strategy, action planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. They also lack the legal framework and power necessary to hold government departments (or any organization that has an impact on youth) accountable for their action and inaction. Some key informants mentioned that youth themselves lack adequate awareness and knowledge about their rights and the policies, strategies and legal frameworks which could enable them to influence and be part of decision-making processes.

### **3.1.2.4 Conclusion on inclusive growth in Ethiopia**

Ethiopia has made significant progress in designing and implementing policies, strategies and actions to make them more responsive to the high ambitions of inclusive growth and job creation. Structural transformation, job creation and inclusive growth are almost integral parts of all the policy documents analysed for this study. Various stakeholders, including youth and women, have participated and been consulted in the formulation of such policies and strategies. However, the youth and women who have participated are often highly politically affiliated; as such, they cannot be considered true representatives that can voice the needs and demands of different categories of youth in all parts of the country.

Despite the ambitions, the inclusive growth commitments stipulated in policy, strategy and action plan documents have not been adequately practised and realized (although there are some achievements worth mentioning, such as employment opportunities created particularly for youth and women in urban and semi-urban areas). This is due to very low implementation effectiveness on the ground. Governmental stakeholders are not always able to efficiently integrate inclusiveness demands in their action plans to ensure that disadvantaged groups in the community, including youth and women, actively participate,



benefit and are supported equally by the development programmes and outcomes. As a result, youth and women in remote rural and pastoral areas, people living with disabilities, refugees and IDPs have not been benefitting as much as they should from the country's economic growth.

### 3.1.2.5 Recommendations for policy makers and implementers to realize the inclusive growth agenda

1. **To overcome the lack of awareness on the foundations of inclusive growth among local decision-makers it is important to invest in building the capacity of local stakeholder offices.** They need concrete knowledge on existing policy, strategy and actions to help them to prepare very clear, simple and location-specific implementation plans to effectively put policy into practice at all levels. Furthermore, they need the budget to implement the required changes.
2. **To monitor the progress of national policies in a decentralized system** it is important to put in place transparent and well-designed inclusive growth guides, as well as standardized monitoring and evaluation indicators/mechanisms to mainstream the monitoring and evaluation of inclusive growth, youth-focused employment policies, strategies and actions at all levels of the administrative hierarchy.
3. **Making youth and other disadvantaged groups aware of their rights and the policies and actions that could benefit them** would help them to influence local government and other mandated actors for more practical enforcement and possibly improvement of the policies to better reflect and address local demands. This requires government commitment and political will to organize very strong, legal-supported youth institutions that are free from political influence and genuinely able to advocate on youth issues with a high degree of neutrality. This should be accompanied by the establishment of a legal framework to influence and make accountable sectoral organizations, and ensure that young people's demands, rights and issues are addressed in sectoral policies, strategies and actions. The presence of such youth organizations will help to ensure young people's meaningful involvement in policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and political and leadership participation at all levels to produce the next leaders of the country.

## 3.2 Recognition of diversity of youth in African policies and programmes

### 3.2.1 Diversity of youth

The first question in our study focuses on whether African youth employment policies and programmes are cognizant of diversity among youth. Youth comprises a wide diversity of sub-groups that each face their own barriers and are therefore difficult to serve with a one-size-fits-all-approach (Cho & Honorati, 2014; Datta et al., 2018; Faith et al., 2020; Youth Employment Funders Group [YEFG], 2021). Heterogeneity and intersectional barriers need to be taken into account in the design of employment policies and programmes directed at youth, if they are to adequately address the different needs, ambitions and interests of youth when it comes to securing decent work and income, and taking control of their own future. Indeed, failure to consider youth in their diversity and particular social context might even lead to unrealistic policy scenarios (Anyidoho et al., 2012; Schwebel et al., 2019). Kluve et al. (2019) mention in their systematic review that the success of youth employment programmes depends on their ability to “respond to multiple needs and constraints facing a heterogeneous group of beneficiaries” (p.238). This means that (combinations of) interventions need to be specific and tailored to diverse sub-groups of youth.

Schwebel et al. (2019) mention that rural youth employment policies in SSA often fail to reflect the heterogeneity of young people due to a lack of comprehensive data on rural youth. As policy makers are often unaware of the situation of rural youth, these policies are in many cases not implementable and/or sustainable in rural areas (Schwebel et al., 2019). This notion is supported by te Lintelo (2012), who argues that although some national youth policies (NYPs) in Africa do recognize the diversity of youth by identifying specific target groups, the targeting itself often involves very broad categories, such as ‘rural youth’ or ‘the disabled’ (Zambia). Nigeria specifies a longer list of target groups in its NYP, including “students in post-primary schools; students in tertiary institutions; out-of-school, unemployed youth; female adolescents; youths with disabilities; youths with health problems and youths engaged in substance abuse, cultism and delinquency” (te Lintelo, 2012, p.92). In Tanzania, the NYP does not identify

specific target groups but instead directs ministries to develop programmes particularly focused on youth, for example. farming and livestock programmes to train young people in modern agriculture. Box 8 and 9 give two more examples of how national African policies target specific sub-groups of youth. All in all, te Lintelo (2012) concludes that while it is fine for policy to frame young people’s problems, needs and solutions generically, much more sensitivity is needed to the heterogeneity of youth in programmatic efforts. He argues that in this respect, the NYPs are ‘underoperationalized’.

In practice, taking account of the heterogeneity of youth and diverse needs of different groups starts with understanding the root barriers that each of these groups face. To truly understand these barriers, it is essential to meaningfully involve these diverse groups of youth. Diverse and inclusive youth staff recruitment strategies are a starting point for setting up this type of engagement and avoiding merely tokenistic youth participation (YEFG, 2021). Diversity-responsive recruitment methods can be operationalized, for instance, through diversity-responsive human resources support, including both online and offline recruitment, recruitment through peer networks, or allowing candidates to bring a supportive friend to the interview (YEFG, 2021). More on the meaningful participation of (diverse) youth can be found in the next section.

**Box 8: Youth Enterprise With Innovation in Nigeria**

The Youth Enterprise With Innovation in Nigeria (YouWIN!!) is an innovative business plan competition aimed at the creation of jobs by encouraging and supporting youth to develop and execute business ideas. The intervention is a collaboration between government (the Federal Ministries of Finance, Information and Communication Technology, Youth and Sports, and Women Affairs and Social Development), the World Bank and the private sector. Although aimed at all aspiring entrepreneurial youth, due to the entry requirements (e.g. between 18-45 years old, literate, computer literate, business management skills) the intervention mainly attracts educated and skilled youth with access to the internet. These requirements also mean that uneducated, rural youth and youth living with disabilities may be prevented from participating (Ismail, 2016; Rotimi, 2014; Youth Policy Toolbox, 2017). Moreover, the age bracket, which is 10 years above the youth age as defined in Nigeria’s NYP (10-35 years), stops the intervention from serving younger youth in the first place (Rotimi, 2014). Although the programme has had promising results, including the provision of business grants to 24,000 youth, it should be adapted to use other communication channels beyond the internet to be accessible to rural as well as urban youth (Rotimi, 2014).

**Box 9: National Youth Development Policy in Tanzania**

The National Youth Development Policy (NYDP) in Tanzania (URT MLEYD, 2007) defines youth as young men and women between 15 and 35 years old, and calls for gender equity (art. 3.14). In the same article it calls for empowerment of young people, including those living with disabilities. In article 3.25 it refers to minority groups of youth, such as pastoral societies. It calls for sensitization of community leaders, elders and youth from minority groups to involve young people in youth development activities. Lastly, the policy calls for all sectors to take account of all issues facing youth living with disabilities (art. 3.29). However, although in its formulation it pays attention to different youth groups, no baseline study or needs assessment of youth was conducted prior to the formulation of the NYDP (Shindika & Daudi, 2020). Furthermore, 80% of youth have never even seen the NYDP, let alone feel they have ownership of the policy (Shindika & Daudi, 2020). The few young people that had read the policy document said it is ‘outdated’ and unqualified to be called a national policy (Shindika & Daudi, 2020).



### 3.2.2 Case study: Uganda

Uganda has the youngest population in the world, with over 78% under the age of 30 (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Educated and uneducated youth are faced with high levels of unemployment, estimated at 64%. Most employed young people are in the informal sector, and in most cases they earn too little to sustain their livelihoods. The 2016/17 Uganda National Household Survey (UNHS) revealed that the highest percentage of the working population of Uganda (64.6%) was engaged in agriculture, forestry and fishing. The second most prominent industry for Ugandan labourers is trade (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2020). These sectors have an informal character, which makes statistics on employment in Uganda difficult to interpret. The causes of youth unemployment are multifaceted, ranging from insufficient employable skills and limited opportunities, to skills mismatch with the job market (Ahaibe & Mbowa, 2014). Due to the youthful demographic, the situation is further complicated as approximately 400,000 Ugandan youths enter the job market annually to compete for approximately 9,000 available jobs (Magelah & Ntambirweki-Karugonjo, 2014).

At a strategic level, the Government of Uganda has established several policies and programmes aimed at guiding and creating an enabling environment for youth employment. These include the National Youth Policy (NYP), which was adopted in 2001 (reviewed 2016). The NYP focuses on agriculture and associated industries (Republic of Uganda, 2001). Uganda's Youth Livelihood Programme (YLP) and the consequent Youth Livelihood Fund (YLF) are government programmes established under the NYP. These are designed to help young people to find employment by extending grants and other support to small groups of youth entrepreneurs, to enable them to start small businesses and thus create employment for other young jobseekers.

Additionally, there is the National Youth Strategy for Youth Employment in Agriculture (NSYEA) (2017), which aims to interest youth in agriculture as a business. The strategy was developed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF) with support from the FAO and a multistakeholder technical working group. The strategy is guided by the principles related to inclusive growth, namely inclusiveness, non-discrimination, gender responsiveness, innovation, adaptability, good governance and multisectoral collaboration.

In this case study we look at the extent to which Ugandan youth employment policies that advance inclusive growth are cognizant of diversity among youth. We analyse how the NYP and the NSYEA seek to address the diversity of youth in their policy formulation and implementation. First, we analyse how the policies take into account the heterogeneity of youth in their writing. In doing so, we seek to shed light on the development process itself and how the set of policies respond to youth diversity. Second, we describe how the written policy ambitions translate into government actions in their implementation. We look at how implementation gaps can hinder overall objectives and potentially limit the inclusivity of policy results.

#### 3.2.2.1 Policy background with attention to the diversity of youth

The NYP provides a legal framework for participation of youth in development processes: social, economic and political. In short, the specific goal of the NYP is to enhance the economic contribution of youth to Ugandan society (Makumbi, 2018). The policy recognizes the heterogeneity of youth and provides strategies to address the needs of each category, for example, it outlines specific actions for youth living with disabilities, youth living with HIV/AIDS, and young women. It goes beyond youth being employed in traditional sectors such as agriculture, to investing in talent, ICT and social entrepreneurship as forms of employment. The policy identifies some of the things that block youth from participating effectively such as illiteracy, gender discrimination, low incomes, low levels of civic competence and sociocultural prejudices. The NYP is implemented through the YLP and YLF, which assign funds to support youth-led small enterprise development in different sectors. Young people are invited to form small groups, known as youth interest groups, and to complete a project interest form to qualify for funding (Makumbi, 2018). With the YLP programme and related YLF fund, the Government of Uganda targets marginalized youth that do not have access to general banking schemes, including drop-outs from schools and training institutions, youth who have not had the opportunity to attend formal education, single-parent youth, youth living with disabilities, youth living with HIV/AIDS, and youth who have completed secondary school or tertiary institutions (including university) but remain unemployed (Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, 2014).

The National Strategy for Youth Employment in Agriculture (NSYEA) has a clear focus on youth employment and decent work in agriculture, which is the backbone of Uganda's economy. The strategy operationalizes the National Agricultural Policy (2013) and is part of the broader implementation of the Agriculture Sector Strategic Plan (ASSP 2015-2020). The strategy is coherent with the NYP in that it aims to leverage efforts in all sectors to ensure that they contribute meaningfully to the development of youth. It makes a commitment to reducing youth unemployment and poverty.

The NSYEA acknowledges that youth is not a homogeneous group, as in several aspects the strategy refers to different groups of youth. First, this is visible in its commitment to include youth aged between 14 and 17 years, who are usually treated as being below the age of 'youth', despite the fact that many of them are out of school, may have become parents and need support to improve their livelihoods (Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, 2017). Second, the strategy recognizes the gendered impacts of unemployment on youth, with female youth being the most disadvantaged and their situation worsened by negative social norms. These categories of youth require special interventions to improve their livelihoods. The NSYEA makes clear reference to the time that women and female youth spend doing unpaid family and care work compared to their male counterparts, who thus have more access to paid jobs. Third, the strategy targets both in- and out-of-school youth. Fourth, it considers youth employment at all stages of the agricultural value chain and in a wide range of sectors such as apiary, crops, livestock, fisheries and forestry. Participation in each of these industries is reliant on the availability of markets, access to finance, and access to relevant technologies for value addition. Performance is also affected by the existing business environment. This shows that in its writing, the NSYEA pays ample attention to the diversity of Ugandan youth.

### **3.2.2.2 Diversity of youth in policy formulation**

The NYP 2016 adopted a holistic approach to ensure that youth participate actively in all aspects of development. The policy was informed by a deep analysis of all factors that affect youth participation and contribution to development with evidence of gender desegregated data. This analysis was carried out following a countrywide consultation on the gaps and weaknesses of the National Youth Policy 2011. Young people participated in the process to formulate the NYP 2016 as well as an initial review of the policy. The NYP 2016 is very strong on the relevance of youth in the country's development, and is backed by the national constitution. Inclusiveness, gender, heterogeneity and disability come out very clearly, with specific strategies and interventions to ensure non-discrimination and delivery of services tailored to different categories of youth (NYP 2016 p.20-21).

To ensure effective implementation of the NYP, the government, in partnership with line ministries, came up with several strategies and programmes. These include the National Strategy on Youth Employment in Agriculture (NSYEA) 2017, as discussed above. In its formulation, the NSYEA underwent a thorough consultative process which included the political and technical officials of government, line ministries, youth both in and out of school, youth engaged in agriculture and those not in agriculture, as well as university and secondary school students. CSOs were also consulted. A technical working group held four regional consultative meetings, 16 focus group discussions comprising youth and farmers across the region, key informant interviews and surveys across the country (NSYEA, Strategy Formulation process, p.12-13). This process brought together people of different age groups, expertise, education levels and backgrounds, and provided an opportunity for young people to outline their needs and the challenges they face in the sector. Youth consulted for this case study stated that the needs and wishes they brought up in this policy formulation process are indeed reflected in the strategy. They were positive about their participation in the process, and feel ownership of the policy's implementation (see testimony in Box 10 below).

Although they acknowledged that the policy formulation process was participatory, the young people and Ugandan CSOs consulted for this case study felt that the number and diversity of young people reached was not sufficiently representative. First, the youth consulted made up a small group, whose voices competed with those of many stakeholders present in the consultative process. Second, the youth who participated in the process were already in the database of the local government and Ministry of Gender, and have benefitted from programmes such as the Youth Capital Venture Fund or Youth Livelihood Programme. The views of youth who have accessed such programmes is very different from those of young people who are trying on their own to benefit from agriculture. Third, the four regional consultative workshops, which were held in August-September 2016, gave youth limited opportunities to have their voices heard,

as they each combined youth from two regions. Together, these three concerns make it highly doubtful that the most marginalized and younger youth populations that the NSYEA targets participated in the policy formulation process.

### **3.2.2.3 Attention to diversity of youth in implementation of policy frameworks**

Recent policy development and review processes have included the views of youth. These views, representing young people from the village up to the national level, have been collected through, among others, the National Youth Council, youth informal structures and local council leadership structures. The challenge comes in the implementation of these youth employment policies. This is because limited budgets are allocated to these policies and programmes, sometimes resulting in ministries failing to adhere to their commitments to prioritize youth employment efforts.

This results in the first review of the NYP being quite pessimistic. Although funding has been available through the YLP and YLF, this has not been spent sufficiently. CSOs stress that sensitization of youth - especially the vulnerable youth targeted by the NYP - has been minimal. Furthermore, young people themselves stress that the support they have received in filing their application and following the requirements of the fund have been insufficient. Participating youth groups perceive the timeframe for loan repayment as unrealistic for establishing a sustainable, profit-making business; repayments ran far behind expectations, which in turn slowed down implementation at scale (Makumbi, 2018).

The NSYEA was launched in 2017 with the participation of several state and non-state actors. Young people had an opportunity to showcase some of their innovations and best practices in agriculture, and some youth champions in agriculture were awarded with equipment and start-up capital. Following its launch, a number of projects have been developed by the Ministry of Agriculture in partnership with other stakeholders. These projects/programmes include the Agriculture Cluster Development Project (ACDP), National Oil Palm Project (NOPP) and Agriculture Value Chain Development Project. Some young people have benefitted from the agricultural programmes, such as the FAO-led initiative described below; however, the agricultural sector has continued to receive very little allocation from the national budget, making it impossible for all the commitments in the strategy to be achieved.

With leadership of the FAO, a Youth Champions Initiative was adopted (FAO, 2020), where youth 'agripreneurs' (youth aged 18-35 who are engaged in agriculture as a business) are selected from the different districts, taking account of gender considerations. These young people then take part in a competition where winners are awarded financial support to grow their businesses. The award package includes youth peer-to-peer support activities, opportunities to attend technical trainings, exhibitions of agricultural products, and policy dialogues related to youth employment in agriculture. This is aimed at making agriculture attractive to other young people (FAO, 2020). However, the programme's reach is very limited in relation to the youth population of the entire country, and marginalized groups are not always represented.

Thus, despite its great ambition and thorough attention to the needs of different groups of youth, at least on paper, the NSYEA is not fully living up to its commitments. This is because of limited financing to fund most of the programmes in the strategy, as reflected in the testimony of a youth leader in Box 10 below shows how great ideas and inclusive design can become a deception if it is not translated into implementation.

## Box 10: Testimony of a youth leader

*I am aware of the National Strategy on Youth Employment in Agriculture (NSYEA) and I have been part of the implementing partners through our organization, Young Farmers Champions Network (YOFCHAN). Our organization was involved from the beginning of the strategy to its launch.*

*This strategy captures our views as youth because it was developed with youth at the core. It captured youth views up to the district level, and is currently being spearheaded by youth organizations. My recommendation therefore is that policies that target youth should always put them at the core of discussions and implementation.*

*In my view, to a large extent, implementation of the NSYEA has not been as effective as it ought to be. Thus, more could be done to strengthen implementation, for example through mass sensitization and mobilization, as well as increased financing specifically for the strategy.*

The more youth are aware of the provisions within the strategy, the more they will be motivated to participate and raise their demands. For information to reach the wider public, and for implementation to be effective, government stakeholders need to ensure that enough resources inform local personnel, and sufficient budgets are allocated to relevant specific sectors and programmes.

### 3.2.2.4 Conclusion on addressing the diversity of youth in policies and programmes

The experience of the NSYEA shows that it is possible to develop a broad policy that takes into account the heterogeneity of youth and ensure meaningful youth participation. The involvement of youth groups in policy formulation helps to increase young people's ownership of the policy. However, to ensure that the policy formulation process is inclusive, there is a need to consult a wider population, with all target categories and all regions well represented and their views considered. Young people are key in helping to sensitize their peers to the policy and related programmes and initiatives.

Opinions differ as to whether the implementation of the strategy has benefitted youth. Some young people are clearly benefitting, but it is difficult to determine the degree of change in relation to the entire youth population. Furthermore, implementation of the policy with regard to youth diversity is proving more difficult than the policy makers expected. Marginalized groups need additional attention to be included. Multiple initiatives have been launched to implement the policy, but they seem to face difficulty in scaling up, and are often under-resourced.

Once policies, programmes and strategies have been developed, it is necessary to ensure that the public is aware of them. Youth groups and CSOs can play an important role in this - especially in reaching marginalized youth that are not easily reached through the education system. We have seen that as a result of their involvement in policy formulation, youth groups and CSOs are more inclined to take ownership of the sensitization efforts.

### 3.2.2.5 Recommendations for policy makers and implementers to address the diversity of youth

1. Governments should ensure that the implementation, revision, monitoring and evaluation of policies take into consideration the needs and realities of young people in all their diversity - especially categories such as young mothers and young people living with disabilities, among others. This requires a nationwide approach and contextualized implementation, as the needs of youth in urban areas are different from those of rural youth; it is also necessary to take account of the differing needs of women and marginalized groups, and workers in the formal and informal sectors.
2. The relevant ministries, departments and agencies should consult and work with youth and CSOs in the implementation of budgets, plans and programmes that are geared towards the operationalization of policies. This is because youth organizations can target diverse categories of youth, including the most vulnerable young people and those at the grassroots. This will help to expand the scope and scale of policies' reach.

3. The government should ensure adequate budget allocation to youth programmes. This will help to realize effective implementation and delivery on commitments. In the long run, this may have an economic benefit, as a more employable youth population in Uganda may boost the economy. It is important to study the effectiveness of policies in an objective way to prevent its image being damaged.

### **3.3 Meaningful youth participation in policy making and implementation**

#### **3.3.1 Meaningful youth participation**

The second question in our study focuses on whether youth are meaningfully involved in the formulation of youth employment policies and programmes. 'Youth voice' refers to the ability of youth to express their preferences and to be heard by the state, either through formal or informal channels, in written or oral form (Rocha Menocal & Sharma, 2008). Meaningful youth engagement is an inclusive, intentional, mutually respectful partnership between youth and adults, whereby power is shared, respective contributions are valued and young people's ideas, perspectives, skills and strengths are integrated into the design and implementation of policies and programmes (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989). Participation is a right protected by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Checkoway, 2011; UN, 2013). A recently published roadmap by Plan International, Citi Foundation and YEFG (2021) states that meaningful youth engagement in youth employment programmes occurs when "under enabling conditions, youth representatives actively participate throughout the program life cycle and enter into youth-adult partnerships that empower youth and may contribute to positive and long-lasting labour market outcomes" (p.10).

There is growing recognition of the importance of youth participation in decision-making, both for practical reasons and because of political rights (Corrigan, 2016; Gyimah-Brempong & Kimenyi, 2013; ILO, 2020a; te Lintelo, 2011; UN, 2013; YEFG, 2021). Participation is seen to enhance ownership, legitimacy and durability, as well as being essential to the achievement of positive outcomes (te Lintelo, 2011). Taking young people's input into consideration in a co-creation process and treating young people as shared value partners is expected to create returns on investments (YEFG, 2021). On the contrary, a lack of (diverse) youth voices in the formulation of policies and programmes, however well-intentioned these are, might cause mismatches and reduce their effects, particularly on marginalized and vulnerable groups of young people (Ismail, 2016; Gardiner and Goedhuys, 2020; Glassco & Holguin, 2016). Furthermore, a lack of participation of youth in the development of policies might cause negative framing of youth, which generally results in policies that are controlling rather than empowering (Anyidoho et al., 2012). This also links to the argument that young people should be seen as part of the solution to the difficulties they face, rather than these difficulties being a problem that should be resolved by others (te Lintelo, 2011). Thus, both normative (based on values and ideal) and empirical (based on observation of a common practice) arguments can be made in the case for youth participation in the development of policies and programmes (te Lintelo, 2011 and 2012; YEFG, 2021).

##### **3.3.1.1 Youth participation in African policy and programmes**

Integration of meaningful youth participation in employment policies and programmes features five interconnected pillars, as developed by Plan International and Citi Foundation to guide youth participation in economic development programmes (YEFG, 2021). These are: 1) youth diversity and representation, meaning fair, inclusive and context-specific youth representation; 2) a youth engagement-enabling environment, i.e. an environment that is safe, accountable and conducive, supported by factors such as youth-safeguarding policies and mechanisms, gender- and disability-responsive safe spaces, youth-friendly working methods, sustained youth-centred resources and a credible audience; 3) youth-adult partnerships, based on shared value creation, equality, joint work and common norms; 4) youth participation that is rights-based, age/developmentally appropriate, and continuous; and 5) youth empowerment, allowing for personal empowerment, community-level impact and system-level influencing (YEFG, 2021).

Meaningful youth participation in policy and programme development processes in Africa may manifest itself in various forms, including youth forums and youth parliaments, youth organizations, and youth and school councils, but also refers to more one-off events and activities, such as youth information services, youth hearings and workshops, volunteering, training in youth participation in schools, participation in



and use of media, and use of ICT for information and participation purposes (te Lintelo, 2011; Gyimah-Brempong & Kimenyi, 2013). Meaningful youth participation should cover all stages of planning, governance, design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes (YEFG, 2021). Generally, formalized, ongoing processes which bring youth and decision-makers together to discuss policy development has significant advantages over informal and ad-hoc consultations (Youth Employment Network [YEN], 2009). This is because mutual trust is easier to build through long-term engagement, which inspires constructive collaboration (YEN, 2009). This also links to pillar 4 of meaningful youth participation (YEFG, 2021), namely that youth participation should be continuous throughout the programme lifetime.

YEN (2009) distinguishes between five levels of youth participation, which are based on more traditional 'ladders' of participation (e.g. Arnstein, 1969). These are: 1) information providing; 2) consulting, decision-maker-initiated; 3) consulting, youth-initiated; 4) shared decision-making or co-management; and 5) autonomy. These levels of decision-making are coherent with the three attributes of effective and meaningful youth political participation according to UN (2013): consultation, youth-led participation and youth collaborative decision-making. Indeed, being recognized as stakeholder that should be informed is one thing, but is not the same as being part of a partnership in which everyone can equally voice their needs and concerns, and in which decision-making power is shared. The nature and quality of participation matter for the extent to which youth voices are heard.

Schwebel et al. (2019) analysed rural youth employment policies in SSA. One of the five policy areas they include in their analysis is social and policy dialogue, referring to youth participation in decision-making processes or the encouragement of rural youth to join or form associations and cooperatives. In their comparative analysis, the policies rated lowest on this area (Schwebel et al., 2019). The authors mention that some policies did commit to promoting social dialogue and tripartism (i.e. dialogue between youth, government and business), but few explicitly mention the importance of rural youth engagement in decision-making processes. Ismail (2016) argues that policies and interventions initiated or led by national governments in particular are top-down. In these government policies and interventions, there is very little acknowledgement and integration of young people's realities and views (e.g. in terms of their perspectives, innovations and preferred economic activities) (Ismail, 2016). Gyimah-Brempong & Kimenyi (2013) state that efforts to encourage effective political participation by African youth have generally not been successful. They give two reasons for this: 1) lack of meaningful access and integration of youth into the political apparatus of the state; and 2) limited capacities of youth and governments, relating to inadequate skills and resources (Gyimah-Brempong & Kimenyi, 2013).

In his analysis of the national youth policies (NYPs) of Tanzania, Zambia and Namibia, te Lintelo (2012) assessed the involvement of youth in the policy process and concluded that the policies adopt a 'participation-light' approach: "NYPs pay little attention to political participation, integration into adult society, and fostering youth autonomy and fail to develop meaningful forms of participation that can help to bring about youth engagement in policy processes on their own terms." (te Lintelo, 2012, p.98). For instance, the Tanzanian NYP seeks to enable youth and community mobilization for youth rights, but does not talk about engaging youth associations in the formulation or implementation of policies and programmes. In Nigeria, the NYP aims to involve youth in decision-making at all government levels and in all matters affecting them. Nationwide consultations, including with youth organizations, informed the policy process, and young people are also involved in monitoring the policy. However, the Nigerian NYP remains strongly top-down and reserves only a very passive role for youth (te Lintelo, 2012). It is argued that having a voice and being heard literally does not necessarily translate into having influence (te Lintelo, 2012). In addition, Anyidoho et al. (2012) argue that, aside from dedicated NYPs, involvement of young people in other national policy documents, including their participation in formulating these, often remains limited.

Not much evidence was found on the participation of youth in government programmes to implement policies that were developed in consultation with youth. Box 11 and 12 below give some anecdotal evidence on how policy implementation can be strengthened through youth participation, although in both cases the youth participation is fairly limited and tokenistic.

## Box 11: Youth Employment National Action Plan in Egypt

Egypt's Youth Employment National Action Plan (NAP) can be used as an example to illustrate youth participation in the development of government programmes. Two bodies were established for the development of the NAP: 1) the NAP Steering Committee, which is composed of around 25 decision-makers from different ministries, employers' and workers' organizations and other key stakeholders, and is responsible for strategic and political oversight of the NAP; and 2) the NAP Technical Commission, which is composed of around 15 technical experts from selected institutions, including social partners and youth groups, and is responsible for drafting and finalizing the NAP in consultation with and for submission to the NAP Steering Committee (ILO, 2010). Next to these two committees, the Ministry of Manpower and Migration mandated the Egyptian Youth Consultative Group to represent and give voice to the aspirations of young Egyptians in the NAP process (ILO, 2010).

## Box 12: Youth Employment and Empowerment Programme in Sierra Leone

The Youth Employment and Empowerment Programme (YEEP) in Sierra Leone is implemented by the Government of Sierra Leone with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It is a comprehensive development programme aimed at "strengthening the national policy, strategy and the projects for youth employment and empowerment" (Adablah & Bockarie, 2018, p.6). The YEEP has three main components: 1) institutional and policy development; 2) youth empowerment; and 3) employment promotion (UNDP, n.d.). It is based on the concept of genuine and active youth participation, and states that the participation of youth in "planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating programmes that affect them renders these programmes accountable, transparent and legitimate, as opposed to programmes in which they are merely passive recipients and objects of someone else's development plans" (Simmons et al., 2018, p.18). However, there is little indication of youth participation in the YEEP governance; for instance, young people do not participate in decision-making processes at community, district and national levels (Simmons et al., 2018). Hence, youth have limited opportunities to participate in, for instance, management decisions.

### 3.3.2 Case study: Somaliland

Somaliland is a self-declared sovereign state, internationally considered to be part of Somalia. As there are few statistics on youth in Somaliland, we present shortly the fact for youth in Somalia. Somalia has a large youth population, with more than 70% of the total population under the age of 30. Young people are disproportionally affected by unemployment and underemployment. In fact, few other countries have a lower youth economic participation rate than Somalia. It is estimated that 39% of youth (aged 15-24) participate in the labour force, compared to 62% of adults (aged 25-64). Over 36% of Somalia's youth are NEET, with the majority being young women. In general, there are strong entry barriers to the labour market, linked to a lack of skills that the labour market demands, insufficient job opportunities and lack of information about the labour market (World Bank, 2018).

The Somaliland administration has its own National Development Plan and a Somaliland National Youth Policy (SNYP). In both policy frameworks, youth employment is highlighted as an important area for investment. The SNYP has the ambition to coordinate new and existing efforts related to skills development, employment creation, entrepreneurship and accessible labour market information. The Ministry of Employment, Social and Family Affairs (MESAF) plays a key role in the implementation of the employment ambitions laid out in the policies. The Ministry's Strategic Plan (2018-2021) sets out a roadmap to reduce youth unemployment rates and invest in skills development.

Recently, the National Internship Policy (NIP) has been added to the policy framework. The NIP was launched in November 2019 and seeks to create fairer, more inclusive ways for youth to enter the labour market through internship opportunities. It is unique as not only has its development and roll-out been done jointly with young people, but also because it was initiated in direct response to the voiced needs of youth.



This case study focuses on an example of meaningful participation and leadership of youth in policy development – going beyond a consultative process alone and working with young people on the actual formulation of the policy and the roll-out of its content. We explore how young people's voices captured during the development process are reflected in the actual policy created, and how the policy contributes to inclusive growth. Lastly, we reflect on the current state of the policy implementation process, which is being carried out jointly by all relevant stakeholders, including young people.

### **3.3.2.1 Meaningful youth participation in policy formulation**

The Work in Progress! (WiP!) Alliance<sup>4</sup> in Somaliland works with urban young people towards fair and decent youth employment. The Alliance helps to provide young people with a platform to amplify their voices towards decision-makers, and influences the establishment of a more conducive policy and practice environment. In 2018, the Alliance facilitated a reflection process to enable young women and men to provide feedback on the policies and role of MESAF. Young people from universities and TVET institutions and young activists in the urban areas of Berbera, Borama, Burao and Hargeisa were engaged in a series of open youth reflections. Though supported by the WiP! Alliance in Somaliland, we can consider this consultation process as youth-initiated – the third of the five levels of youth participation described by YEN (2009).

In the initial policy-drafting phase, young people indicated that the main limitation they faced was that existing internship opportunities were not inclusive, as only a handful of youth with the right social connections or direct connections to employers were able to access these opportunities. Young women in particular indicated severe barriers to internships, combined with a lack of (social) encouragement for them to take up such opportunities.

Young people also highlighted that the range of internship opportunities available was diverse and confusing. Potential interns did not fully understand the possibilities, given all the different terms and conditions that apply in the implementation of the policy. This complicated structure resulted in only the most privileged youth enrolling in the internship programme. In addition, the lack of understanding of specific conditions and rights that apply to internships was raising the risks of youth being exploited in long-term, unpaid labour or not being provided with meaningful learning and future job opportunities. Youth highlighted that, in their experience, private sector companies in particular were wary of providing interns with meaningful work. This was often fuelled by a level of distrust of companies towards interns, which resulted in them not getting the responsibilities they need for meaningful learning experiences as employers kept files, resources and other information out of reach.

As a result of the reflection series, young people formulated a concrete policy ask to MESAF, calling on it to create a better framework for new and existing internship opportunities that are fair and accessible to all youth. The Ministry was part of the reflection sessions, which proved crucial in its response to the young people's policy ask and its ownership of improving the existing policy framework. In response to the demand from young people, MESAF initiated the process of developing a new internship policy. In this new policy, youth get a share in decision-making, thus moving up to the fourth of the five levels of youth participation (YEN, 2009).

Young people were involved in the various stages of the development of the NIP, alongside other actors including those from academia, the private sector and CSOs. Youth involvement ranged from co-creating the initial draft, validating the final version and participating in the launch of the policy. The process sought to address the heterogeneity of youth by involving diverse groups of young people, and ensuring a gender balance and representation of young people from families with low socioeconomic status and socially excluded groups. However, the young people involved were all in higher education or had recently graduated; this de facto meant that almost all of them lived in urban areas, given the limited access to education in rural areas. Time and budget limitations proved a barrier to expanding the scope to meaningfully include lower-educated young people and rural youth.

It was found that a critical factor for meaningful participation was to ensure that youth voices were included in preparing the initial draft, i.e. instead of seeking feedback on a draft policy, young people were invited to jointly formulate the key policy needs from the start. The WiP! Alliance ensured a safe and youth-

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<sup>4</sup> In Somaliland, the alliance partners are Shaqodoon, Somaliland Skills Training Association (SOSTA), Innovate Ventures, Shuraako and Havoyoco (Oxfam Novib, n.d.).

friendly working environment for young people to share their inputs. Furthermore, a dedicated Ministry representative participated in the sessions and took ownership, throughout the process, of ensuring that inputs from young people were being reflected in the NIP.

Young women and men were able to hold the Ministry to account on the inclusion of their inputs by participating in a second round to validate the policy content. Together with other stakeholders, the formulation was debated and sharpened. The WiP! Alliance ensured that the validation meeting was meaningful for young people, including by the use of youth-friendly language (avoiding jargon during the meetings) and preparation with youth beforehand. Existing power dynamics that could exclude young people were addressed during the meeting, through a set-up that gave young people dedicated spaces and moments to speak out.

To ensure effective implementation of the NIP, young people were directly involved in the launch of the policy and subsequently, the roll-out. This helped to foster ownership of the policy among young people and encouraged them to promote it among their peers. Young people's ownership of the policy was found to be as important to its implementation as its actual uptake by the private sector, institutions and government actors.

### **3.3.2.2 Reflection of youth voices in the policy**

The involvement of young women and men in the formulation of the National Internship Policy in Somaliland highlighted a number of distinct policy needs and key recommendations of young people, which are largely reflected in the policy (NIP 2019). The NIP's core ambition is to tackle the skills mismatch between educational institutes and actual market demands. Internships are seen as part of the solution to overcome this mismatch. To ensure that skills are developed during the internship, the policy lays out a set of quality standards that should be adhered to by the private sector, institutions and government departments engaging in internships. The quality standards mainly revolve around creating a safe and enabling learning environment for interns, but also include more practical factors, such as limiting the duration of (consecutive) internships to avoid the exploitation of interns.

Another key requirement of the policy is for all internships to be made public in a transparent manner, and for employers to adhere to a fair and equitable recruitment and selection process. Moreover, the NIP encourages companies and institutions to proactively support young women through internships. This is mainly operationalized through affirmative action that ensures that at least 30% of all internship opportunities are allocated to young women. While this affirmative action is helpful, it might not be enough to support women in reaching their full potential, due to persistent social barriers (including social norms).

The main policy objectives and directives are operationalized in practical rules and guidelines for companies, organizations and government departments. These range from advice on how to advertise internships locally, and how to adhere to quotas to ensure the participation of young women and youth from minority groups, to the minimum and maximum duration of internships. It is important to note that the NIP applies to internships for students (TVET, college, university or similar) and secondary school graduates. This means the policy is not applicable to young people with lower levels of education. While the policy seeks to open up internships to a more diverse range of young people, large segments of youth will not benefit from its implementation.

### **3.3.2.3 The implementation phase and youth involvement**

Currently, the NIP is being promoted and rolled-out. A coalition has been formed (Carbish Shaqo) between actors from the government, youth, civil society, the private sector and UN organizations, to promote the implementation of the policy. Youth-led organizations comprise more than half of the current coalition members (see Box 13).

### Box 13: Testimony of a Carbish Shaqo member

*When the policy came through, I played a significant mobilization role in disseminating it to as many young people in my network as possible to help them understand that they can get internships, as the policy states. As a result, almost all youth graduates from universities understand that it is undisputed for all youth to get access to internship opportunities. My biggest challenge was to find a way to enter into the job market, as I didn't have any internship/practical experiences. However, after getting an internship opportunity, I was able to easily acquaint myself with what it takes to get a paid job. I am now familiar with the ins and outs of finding a job and I am looking forward to getting my desired job soon.*

MESAF, together with various actors, has undertaken actions to operationalize the policy. The recent launch of the Somaliland National Job Fair is an example of such an initiative. MESAF, Oxfam, SPARK and local implementing partners joined forces to invite more than 20 companies and over 150 youth to meet each other, create networks and provide internship and job opportunities for youth. As a result, 65 youth gained jobs and internship opportunities. Another example of policy implementation is the technology start-up SO! providing newly formed internship opportunities for 20 young people and subsequently giving them completion certificates.

The longer-term effects of the policy remain to be seen. It will be important not only to look at the number of internships created, but also to look at the effects on young people's employability, which groups of young people become more economically empowered, and the extent to which the targeting of the policy results in inclusive growth. The NIP is complemented by the recent launch of a nationwide National Service Programme (NSP), which is being rolled out by the President of Somaliland in an effort to curb the imbalances between spiking graduations and slowing labour market demand. The programme has at the time of writing (March 2021) recruited around 1,000 university graduates on a merit basis. Youth participate in a three-month military training as well as courses relating to public administration. Youth graduating from the programme have been directly absorbed by the various government agencies. The NSP has had a profound impact on young people's chances to earn an income; however, it is only accessible to university graduates, who make up only a small part of the youth population. Furthermore, this initiative has reduced the chances of getting internship opportunities from public institutions through the NIP, as the NSP programme is earmarked to serve this purpose. Oxfam, together with MESAF, is now trying to create a nexus between these two programmes to provide more opportunities and reduce the competition between the initiatives.

#### **3.3.2.4 Conclusions on how youth participation can support the formulation of inclusive growth policies**

We learned from the case of the internship policy in Somaliland that high levels of youth participation are attainable in the context of Africa. Ensuring youth involvement from the start in policy formulation is crucial to move beyond mere consultation and towards more meaningful inclusion of youth voices. In the case of the NIP, we can see the direct reflection of young people's expressed needs and interests in the policy content and, moreover, the involvement of young people in the roll-out of the policy.

However, to advance inclusive growth, it is not only youth that need to be involved in policy making. To ensure successful implementation of policies, employers should also have a role in policy design and roll-out. The private sector is often not involved in the policy development process, which can result in a lack of uptake by potential employers and policy frameworks that are not fit for purpose. The combination of including youth voices with those of a variety of actors appears to have stimulated a successful start to implementation of the NIP. The inclusion of private sector actors in the design of the NIP has supported the engagement of companies in its roll-out (as part of the Carbish Shaqo Coalition). The companies that were directly involved often immediately translated the policy into action, creating more inclusive internship opportunities.

Furthermore, it is important to create coherence and linkages between policies and ensure effective coordination between different government actors. To support reinforcement of the NIP implementation, other existing policies developed by MESAF could be linked with the internship policy to serve the same purpose - leading to inclusive growth and job creation for marginalized youth and young women.

### **3.3.2.5 Recommendations for policy makers and implementers to ensure meaningful youth participation**

1. It is important to work together with youth from the start to develop a clear strategy to ensure the inclusion of all young people and to recognize the barriers and limitations they face - for example, how time and budget constraints can limit meaningful inclusion of the voices of rural young women and men. Working with youth activists who represent youth groups whose voices are not heard can be an entry point to expand youth inclusion.
2. It is crucial to ensure continued action for policy uptake after formulation to bridge the policy-implementation gap. In the case of the NIP, setting up a diverse coalition which includes young people, has functioned as a key driver to promote uptake of the policy. This includes influencing for a strong regulatory framework that operationalizes the NIP.
3. Companies that implement the NIP and create inclusive internship opportunities can become role models for other private sector actors. Showcasing these companies across a wide range of social media platforms could accelerate policy implementation.

## 4. Conclusion

This paper aimed to understand how African governments are working towards inclusive growth in which all youth participate. In particular, we analysed governmental youth employment policies and programmes, and assessed whether these are cognizant of the diversity of youth and whether youth themselves are involved in the formulation and/or implementation of these policies and programmes. The paper is based on a desk review of academic and grey literature, as well as three case studies that analyse government policy documents, action plans and the experiential knowledge of people involved in the policy process and government action in Ethiopia, Uganda and Somaliland.

### 4.1 An inclusive growth mindset exists

We have seen a rising trend in Africa towards the development of youth employment policies that have an inclusive growth goal in mind. The African Union has been an important actor in setting the stage - and many countries have followed in contextualizing their own policies on youth employment. The case study from Ethiopia shows how economic transformation towards inclusive growth can be a central theme for the future of work of African policy making.

Increasingly, there are good examples of how policies on inclusive growth are followed by concrete government practices that support their implementation. A comprehensive and complementary package of interventions that simultaneously address demand- and supply-side constraints are most effective. However, most (rural) youth employment policies focus on labour supply rather than labour demand. The lack of focus on labour demand might hamper inclusive growth, as jobs need to be there to absorb the labour force and to create productive employment that stimulates economic growth.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of policies and programmes highly depends on economic growth and the types of jobs that are created. While promoting economic growth, a balance should be struck between several trade-offs, including (but not limited to) job creation in the formal versus informal sector, in urban versus rural areas, and in terms of quantity versus quality of jobs. This is crucial for economic growth to be inclusive and to create decent jobs for all. As it stands, in this trade-off the needs of different areas (urban versus rural) and different marginalized groups are not always properly taken into account. We have seen that to be successful in this, it is important to have a strong link with local (governmental) actors, as they best understand the challenges and needs of their context.

A final requirement to highlight is the necessity of ensuring sufficient local understanding, capacity and resources to realize inclusive growth policies. As the trade-offs described above need a high level of contextualization, local implementation is of the utmost importance.

### 4.2 Diversity of youth is at the core of policy - but not implementation

African policies and programmes often recognize the diversity of youth by identifying specific target groups. These ambitions show the dedication of African governments to making their policies truly inclusive. However, these target groups are often formulated in a general sense, which in the operationalization of policies does not necessarily lead to interventions that are tailored to the different needs, ambitions and interests of particular groups of youth.

### 4.3 Meaningful participation of youth is needed to achieve inclusive growth

Evidence from literature shows that policies and programmes, particularly those initiated or led by national governments, are merely top-down and allow for little acknowledgement or integration of young people's realities, needs and perspectives. Although some attempts are made towards youth participation, these tend to be tokenistic rather than giving young people real influence. This is unfortunate, as diverse and representative youth participation can contribute to addressing the different needs of the many and diverse groups of youth.

Some policies or programmes do commit to promoting social dialogue and tripartism (i.e. dialogue between the government, youth and business), including enabling youth participation in decision-making processes, or encouraging youth to join or form associations and cooperatives, but operationalization of youth participation in decision-making processes remains limited. Lack of meaningful access and integration of youth into the political apparatus of the state, as well as the limited capacities of youth and governments, discourage effective and meaningful participation of youth.

The case study from Somaliland showed how youth organizations can be part of a policy process from the outset and become involved in decision-making during its formulation. However, even in this case, implementation seems to be lagging behind and competing policies may have an adverse effect - which suggests that youth participation isn't a panacea or a guarantee that inclusive growth will follow.

While our findings highlight the need for the meaningful participation of youth in policy making and implementation, it is important to acknowledge the reality. The theory of participation assumes that there is a well-organized civil society that includes active youth organizations from different constituencies and civic space to make critical voices heard. In an ideal world they would be available, capacitated and independent to give free and unbiased advice that advances inclusive growth. However, the reality is far from this ideal. Youth movements do not always exist, and organized civic space to allow more critical voices to be heard is shrinking in some African countries. Furthermore, young people and their organizations at different levels do not necessarily have the capacities to easily contribute to the required processes. Last but not least, they may not be independent from politics and may not represent a broad constituency that does justice to the diversity and diverse needs of youth.



## 5. Policy recommendations

The following recommendations for policy makers emerge from this review of the literature and case studies on African youth employment policies and programmes that strive to achieve inclusive growth.

### 5.1 Think big nationally - but formulate policy that can be implemented locally

Inclusive growth is an important ambition that many African policy makers endorse. However, it is important that this ambition isn't lost in the formulation - and crucially, the implementation - of policy. Policy makers should think through the realities of large-scale implementation that benefits the whole society and enables all young people to achieve a level of economic empowerment. This requires aware, capacitated and resourceful implementation at the local level to deliver a comprehensive and complementary package of interventions that simultaneously address both the demand- and supply-side constraints of youth employment. To overcome the lack of awareness on the foundations of inclusive growth among local decision-makers it is important to invest in building the capacity of local stakeholder offices. They need concrete knowledge on existing policy, strategy and actions to help them to prepare very clear, simple and location-specific implementation plans to effectively put policy into practice at all levels. Furthermore, they need the budget to implement the required changes.

### 5.2 Support inclusive growth through youth-driven innovation

Traditional value chains alone will not create enough decent jobs for all young people in Africa. Although this is widely accepted, the majority of policies analysed still focus on the traditional value chains that are currently the drivers of youth employment in Africa, such as agriculture and small-scale entrepreneurship. This is a missed opportunity to boost youth employment in Africa. If labour market policies also take into account new economies and technologies, such as digital innovation, the future of work and innovative business models, many more new jobs may arise for young people, which can set the standard of decent work. Governments should start to think more creatively and consider the big contribution that innovation can make in advancing inclusive growth, recognizing young people as the potential drivers of innovation.

### 5.3 Tailor national policies to local contexts and youth diversity

African policy makers acknowledge the diversity of youth, as shown in the specific identification and targeting of marginalized groups in national-level policies. However, this is not being effectively translated into programmes that implement these policies. Implementation requires tailoring at the local level, as well as specific strategies and interventions to support marginalized groups. Meeting the diverse needs of different groups starts with understanding the particular barriers (and opportunities) that each of them encounter. It is thus essential to meaningfully involve these diverse groups of youth to identify (and then overcome or exploit) these barriers and opportunities. Diverse and inclusive youth recruitment strategies are a starting point for setting up this engagement.

### 5.4 Recognize and empower young people to be drivers of change

Youth organizations and CSOs can be drivers of change through their involvement in the formulation and implementation of policies and practices on youth employment and inclusive growth. They can push for their rights to be realized and support the tailored implementation of policies and programmes through needs assessment and sensitization in their communities. Governments should therefore create an enabling environment for young people to participate in policy and programme formulation and implementation processes. Governments should consider the following important pillars for meaningful youth participation: youth diversity and representation; an enabling environment for youth engagement; youth-adult partnerships; rights-based youth participation; and youth empowerment.





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## Literature search

A literature search was conducted in January-February 2021 using the following databases: ILO Labour Discovery Database, EBSCO host, Scopus, decentjobsforyouth.org and S4YE Knowledge Repository. Search terms varied per database. Next, we employed a snowball search based on references of seminal articles in the field. We also asked the review panel to provide references relating to government policies and programmes in Africa on youth employment and/or inclusive growth.

The final list of articles included in the review consists of 101 sources, which include academic as well as so-called grey literature. The full list of articles reviewed can be found in the reference list.

## Case studies

Findings from the literature were placed into local and national perspectives through building upon tacit knowledge in Oxfam's country teams and (youth) networks in Ethiopia, Somaliland and Uganda. For each research question, a case study was developed which focuses on a specific national government policy and/or action that can provide insight on the question. The case studies were developed through analysis of the respective policy documents and action plans, alongside key informant interviews and focus group discussions with, among others, youth, policy makers and CSOs, and include the experiential knowledge of Oxfam and partners working on advancing inclusive growth and youth employment in the field. The following policies were selected for the analysis:

### Case study 1 - The National Strategic Agenda for structural transformation of the Ethiopian economy

Linked research question 1: What is known in current literature about youth employment policies that advance inclusive growth in Africa?

The case study conducts an analysis of the National Strategic Agenda that strives for structural transformation of the country's economy. We focus on how this structural transformation seeks inclusive growth and is benefitting young people and youth employment. This case study provides contextual insights to the linked research question by demonstrating experiences and recommendations with specific policy design, implementation and evaluation that seek a coordinated structural transformation. The case study aims to shed light on the main weaknesses and strengths of the related policies and government actions - especially in terms of addressing systemic challenges and seeking inclusive growth that benefits young people.

### Case study 2 - The National Strategy for Youth Employment in Agriculture in Uganda

Linked research question 1a: To what extent is the literature on youth employment policies that advance inclusive growth cognizant of diversity among youth?

The case study analyses the National Strategy for Youth Employment in Agriculture (NSYEA) in Uganda. We zoom in on the inclusion of diverse youth voices in its development and implementation. We seek to shed light on the development process itself and how the resulting set of policies respond to youth heterogeneity and young people's diverse employment needs and barriers. The case study aims to provide practical insights and contextual examples of what works, and to highlight existing challenges to including diverse youth voices in policy development and addressing the heterogeneity of youth in policy development and implementation.

### Case Study 3 - The National Internship Policy of Somaliland

Linked research question 1b: To what extent are youth involved in the formulation of youth employment policies that advance inclusive growth?

The case study focuses on the National Internship Policy (NIP) of Somaliland. We explore the meaningful participation of youth in policy development – looking at how the NIP went beyond a consultative process alone to also work with young people on the actual formulation and validation of the policy content. We seek insights on whether the influence of youth voices is creating a systemic push to the government to strive for inclusive growth and enforce the policy in order to create meaningful jobs and a nexus for young people to develop the right skills. The case study provides tangible answers to the learning question through the inclusion of an in-depth analysis of a youth employment policy that has been co-created with youth.

## Annex 2: Overview of concepts and definitions

Concept	Definition
Economic growth	The increase in the inflation-adjusted value of the goods and services produced by an economy over a given period of time (UN, 2014).
Inclusive growth	Inclusive growth encapsulates a holistic view, by incorporating a wide range of issues that were traditionally seen as unrelated. As such, it moves beyond narrow definitions of productivity or income growth, as captured by increases in GDP or GNI, towards a broader interpretation where growth reduces inequality and poverty. Inclusive growth recognizes that inequalities undermine economic performance, emphasizes equity and equality of opportunities and distributes the benefits of economic progress (more) equitably across societies.
Full employment	Every person who seeks employment and is available is also able to find a job (ILO, 2019).
Productive employment	Employment that yields sufficient returns to labour to permit workers and their dependants a level of consumption above the poverty line (ILO, 2012b).
Decent work	Opportunities for everyone to get work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration (UN, 2016).
Diversity of youth	Youth is not a homogeneous group. Diversity (or heterogeneity) exists, for instance, in terms of gender, age, region, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, migration status and physical ability. Intersectional barriers add to the diversity of youth.
Youth voice	The ability of youth to express their preferences and to be heard by the state, either through formal or informal channels, in written or oral form (Rocha Menocal & Sharma, 2008).
Meaningful youth participation	An inclusive, intentional, mutually respectful partnership between youth and adults whereby power is shared, respective contributions are valued, and young people's ideas, perspectives, skills and strengths are integrated into the design and implementation of policies and programmes (UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989).



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### **About INCLUDE**

INCLUDE was conceived in 2012 by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to promote evidence-based policymaking for inclusive development in Africa through research, knowledge sharing and policy dialogue. INCLUDE brings together researchers from African countries and the Netherlands who work with the private sector, non-governmental organizations and governments to exchange knowledge and ideas on how to achieve better research-policy linkages for inclusive development in Africa. Since its establishment, INCLUDE has supported more than 20 international research groups to conduct research on inclusive development and facilitated policy dialogues in Africa and the Netherlands.