

# 4 Review of Youth Employment Programs in Ghana

## PRIMARY YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INTERVENTIONS

Over the years, Ghana has implemented many youth employment interventions through the government, the private sector, and civil society and nongovernmental organizations. Meanwhile, public-private partnerships in youth employment remain limited, and current policies do not define clearly the role of the private sector. A best-case scenario would be one in which the private sector complements the government's job creation efforts. The perspectives of the private sector are therefore critical when developing strategies for youth employment. This section gives an overview of Ghana's existing youth employment programs and their shortcomings and the inherent opportunities for decent employment and job creation (see appendix A for profiles of the youth employment programs referenced in this study).

The youth employment program inventory carried out in 2016 by the World Bank (Avura and Ulzen-Appiah 2016) revealed that in Ghana, programs are highly focused on skills development and entrepreneurship training, and apprenticeships are commonplace. Public sector programs have a broader outreach and lower unit cost than private sector programs. The World Bank found that out of a pool of 145,000 applicants, only 29 percent gained access to programs run by nongovernmental organizations and private institutes. In the public sector, entry was even more restrictive; only 19 percent of approximately 1.3 million youth were accepted (Avura and Ulzen-Appiah 2016). Private sector programs, which focus mostly on skills and entrepreneurship training, tend to be more expensive and operate on a smaller scale relative to public sector programs. In general, the empirical data on the impact of both public and private sector programs are not available because evaluations have not been done. Moreover, tracer studies, which provide information on beneficiaries after they exit the program, have not been conducted for most programs or are not available to assist in evaluating the impact of programs. Information on cost parameters,

such as cost per trainee and operational and investment costs over the program durations, are also limited. This gap needs to be addressed.

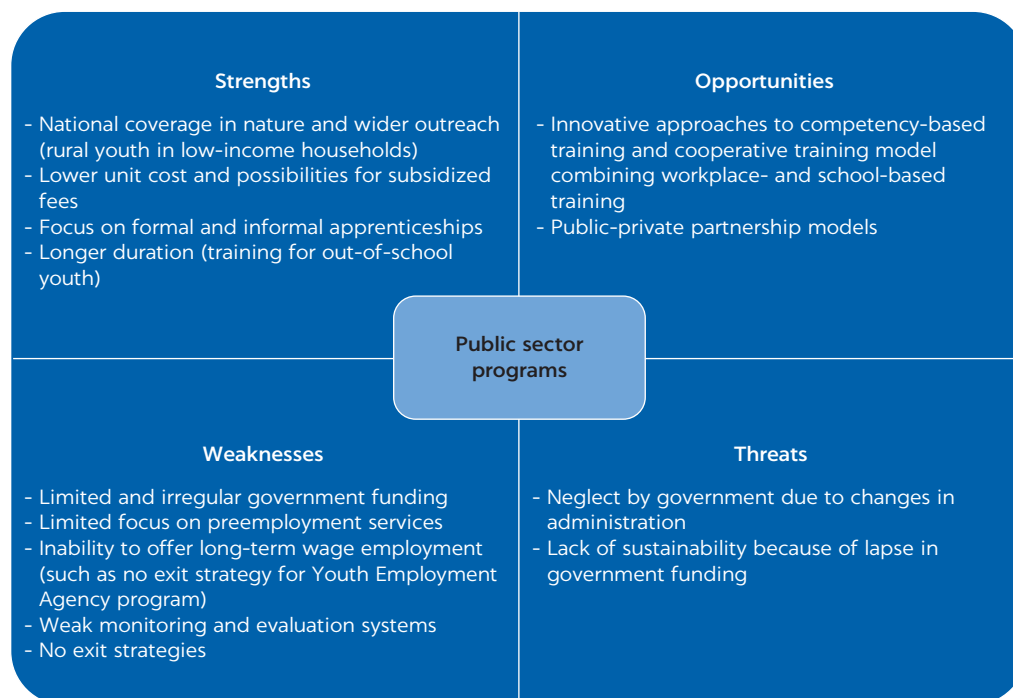
The main government programs that address youth unemployment (both short term and long term) are the following:

- Youth Employment Agency (YEA)
- National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI)
- Opportunities Industrialization Centre Ghana (OICG)
- Youth Leadership and Skills Training Institute
- Youth in Agriculture Programme (YIAP)
- National Entrepreneurship Innovation Programme (NEIP), previously Youth Enterprise Support (YES)
- Rural Enterprises Programme (REP)
- National Service Scheme (NSS)
- Nation Builders Corps (NABCO)

In terms of outreach and funding, the Youth Employment Agency and Nation Builders Corps are the largest programs, each engaging close to 100,000 youth annually. The government funds both programs, which have nationwide coverage.

In the absence of an impact evaluation of the youth employment programs, a strengths weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis was undertaken, based on the inventory of existing public and private programs (see figures 4.1 and 4.2).

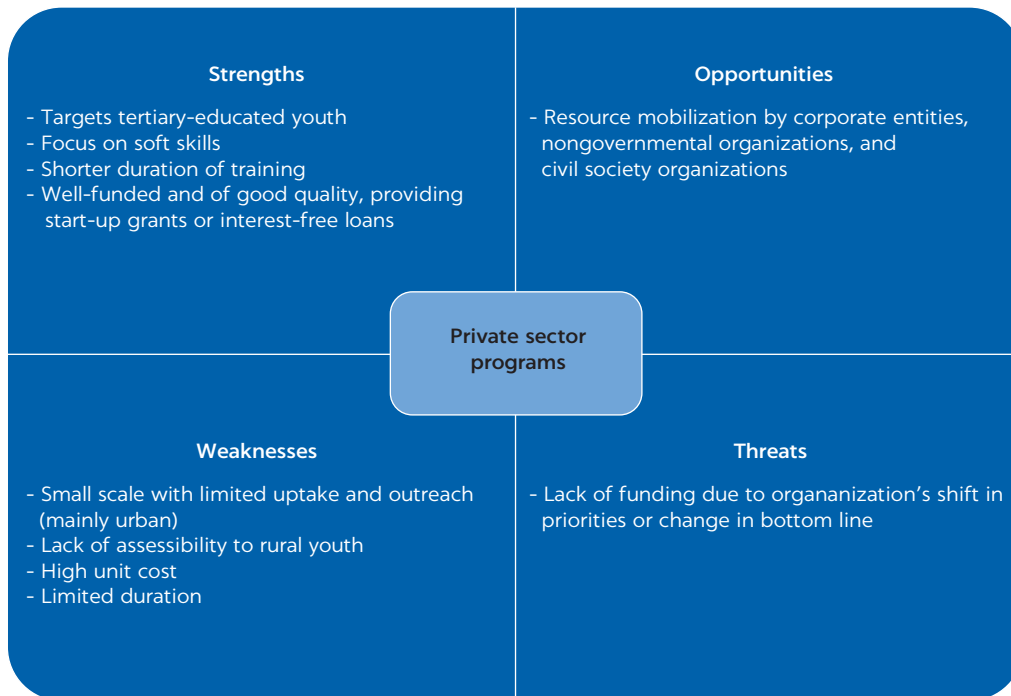
**FIGURE 4.1**  
**SWOT analysis of public youth employment programs, Ghana**



Source: World Bank.  
Note: SWOT = strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats.

FIGURE 4.2

## SWOT analysis of private youth employment programs, Ghana



Source: World Bank.

Note: SWOT = strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats.

## TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAMS

After being neglected for decades, Ghana's technical and vocational skills development programs have undergone a series of reforms since the 1970s. Effective vocational training programs can contribute significantly to worker productivity and economic growth, and since 2001 authorities have renewed the focus on skills development and its capacity to address unemployment. These institutions present an opportunity to offer training aimed at self-employment for out-of-school youth (junior high and high school dropouts) who are unable to further their education (Baffour-Awuah and Thompson 2011). Stakeholders indicated during consultations that demand for technical and vocational training has recently been growing among graduates of tertiary institutions who want to enhance their employability. In response to these needs and to position the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector appropriately to boost economic development, the government has developed the Strategic Plan for TVET Transformation to help the country develop a well-organized, coordinated, and effective national TVET system (Ghana Ministry of Education 2018).

In Ghana, TVET is offered at the pretertiary and tertiary levels in the forms of prevocational, vocational, and technical training. Prevocational training takes place at the basic level and aims to stimulate students' interest in vocational subjects and to equip them with basic skills in these subjects. At the tertiary level, education and training are provided by polytechnics and other institutions in the tertiary subsector. Currently, such training is delivered by different entities:

**TABLE 4.1 TVET institutions, Ghana**

MINISTRY	TYPE OF INSTITUTION	NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS
Ministry of Education	Technical institutes	37
Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations	Vocational training institutes	34
	Opportunity Industrialization Centres, Ghana (OICG)	3
	Leadership training programs	9
	Integrated Community Centres for Employable Skills (ICCES)	63
Ministry of Trade and Industry	Ghana Regional Appropriate Technology Industrial Service	9
Ministry of Agriculture	Agricultural training colleges and farm institutes	3
Ministry of Road and Transport	Technical Training Centre	1
Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development	Community development vocational technical institutes under Local Enterprise Skills Development Programme (LESDEP)	24
Ministry of Tourism	Hospitality schools	—
Ministry of Communications	Information and communications technology (ICT) schools	—
Ministry of Youth and Sports	Youth leadership and skills training institutes	11
Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection	Social welfare training centers	18

Sources: Adapted from Baffour-Awuah and Thompson (2011) and Ghana Ministry of Education (2018).

Note: — = not available.

multiple ministries, private for-profit and nonprofit institutes, and nongovernmental organizations, as well as through informal apprenticeships offered on an individual basis. Table 4.1 provides a breakdown of the multiple ministries that currently have a TVET connection and their respective institutions.

TVET delivery in Ghana is regulated, coordinated, and supervised at the national level by the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET). COTVET was set up in 2006 with a mandate to formulate national policies for skills development across the broad spectrum of pretertiary and tertiary education and the formal, informal, and nonformal sectors. COTVET coordinates and supervises the activities of public and private providers, including apprenticeships in the informal sector. The council is also responsible for supporting the development of standards, validating learning and teaching materials, and mapping out the skills requirements for growth sectors, including scarce skills, as well as emphasizing the use of competency-based training strategies and skills for industry.

COTVET has implemented many projects aimed at improving the overall coordination and quality of the TVET sector. Under the Ghana Skills and Technology Development Project (GSTDP), which is funded by the World Bank and the Denmark Development Cooperation (DANIDA), reforms have addressed sustainable funding, government commitment, resource and infrastructure improvement, career guidance and counseling, high-quality assurance, and improvements in the public's perception of TVET. COTVET has developed many frameworks, including the National TVET Strategic Plan, which is aimed at helping to equip the country's workforce with the skills needed to drive and sustain industries.

Challenges confronting the TVET sector include limited numbers of technical institutes, lack of facilities and materials for training students, lack of competent technical instructors, widespread concern about poor-quality training and training environments, and difficulty in career progression for TVET students.

Linkages to technology and applied research through industry are still limited, and there is a mismatch between skills training and industry needs. COTVET has initiated skills gap assessments in various sectors to ensure that programs are relevant in a fast-changing global work environment that is increasingly dominated by the use of technology, and that the programs themselves and the training they offer meet the standards required by industry. However, more investments are needed to finance construction, as well as to revamp the equipment and tools available to existing vocational training institutions.

The budgets allocated by the government to the TVET sector are limited. According to reports, as of 2011 only 1 percent of the education budget of the Ministry of Education was allocated to the TVET subsector (Baffour-Awuah and Thompson 2011). In 2015 the allocation was 2.3 percent, an improvement over previous years (Ministry of Education 2016). However, external funding for the sector has improved substantially in recent years. Investments by the Ghana Skills and Technology Development Project totaled US\$70 million over five years.<sup>1</sup> The subsequent Skills Development Fund (SDF) supported by DANIDA is investing US\$14 million in the sector. The Skills Development Fund is expected in the medium term to become the government's principal instrument for financially supporting skills and technology innovation. COTVET has also received support from other development partners—such as the African Development Bank, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the German development bank Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), and the German development agency GIZ—to support the government's TVET reform efforts and to support development of the high-quality, mid-level technical and vocational skills needed in the Ghanaian economy.

Some of the existing public sector programs have skills training components, but they would require additional funding to reach more beneficiaries and would need to expand their scope to be most relevant. According to findings from stakeholder consultations, the sectors in which effective skills development could produce economic gains include transportation, hospitality and tourism, construction, agriculture, vehicle repair, fashion design, electronics, and electrical works.

## APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

Apprenticeship in Ghana has evolved over the past four decades since the establishment of the National Vocational Training Institute. The government's educational reform white paper identified apprenticeship as a track for post-basic education (Ghana Ministry of Education 2004). Apprenticeships prepare youth for self-employment or potential wage employment if they are hired by a master craftsperson through exposure to on-the-job learning of job-relevant skills. Apprenticeships are widespread in Ghana, normally targeting junior and senior high school graduates who have not had an opportunity to progress to the next level of education.

Formal apprenticeships are run by institutions including the National Vocational Training Institute, Opportunities Industrialization Centre Ghana, and other TVET institutions. The traditional informal apprenticeship system is often driven by the informal sector. Informal apprenticeship training accounts for 80–90 percent of all basic skills training in Ghana, compared with 5–10 percent by public training institutions and 10–15 percent by nongovernmental

organizations and for-profit and nonprofit providers (Palmer 2009). Graduates of informal apprenticeships have two options for obtaining their certification: (1) certification by the Informal Sector Association or (2) a proficiency certificate issued by the National Vocational Training Institute that requires passing a nonwritten, competency-based skill test.

Ghana's apprenticeship program faces several key challenges. These include a limited number of formal vocational or technical institutes, lack of access by these institutes to technology upgrades, and promotion of entrepreneurial skills as part of their training. To address issues of standardization of training, COTVET introduced the National Apprenticeship Programme (NAP) as a pilot program in 2012. An evaluation of the program showed that (1) uptake and completion of apprenticeship programs differ by gender; (2) access to apprenticeship programs reduced wage employment for men and women and increased self-employment in some groups, particularly among women in the beauty sector; (3) no gains in earnings were found in the short run; and (4) apprenticeship programs can provide youth with skills, and they may encourage youth to shift into self-employment (Mbiti et al. 2019). In the meantime, improved apprenticeship models are being implemented through projects such as the Youth Inclusive Entrepreneurial Development Initiative for Employment (YIEDIE), the Ghana TVET Voucher Project, and the Apprenticeship to Entrepreneurship Project implemented by the National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI). The impact of these programs has yet to be evaluated.

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING PROGRAMS

Entrepreneurship plays a vital role in job creation because it provides employment opportunities for young people. National development planning policies and strategies have identified youth entrepreneurship as an effective engine for economic development. The National Employment Policy proposes introducing support measures to provide special assistance for entrepreneurship development, particularly among women.

Research has demonstrated that, globally, entrepreneurship is indispensable to addressing youth unemployment, particularly for the category of youth who are not inclined to have "job-for-life" careers. Entrepreneurship programs have a higher impact in terms of employment creation (self-employment) than labor earnings (Cho and Honorati 2013; Kluve et al. 2016). Because Ghana's economy has slowed in recent years, promoting entrepreneurial activity can help at the macro level by contributing to the gross domestic product and at the micro level by creating stable and sustainable employment for young people.

Any business start-up needs financial, human, technological, and physical assets. Thus it is essential to have support structures in place to help start-ups acquire such resources to facilitate the business development process. Access to finance is a major challenge for would-be entrepreneurs in Ghana. Most youth lack savings, connections, and knowledge about where and how to secure funding. These issues emerged during discussions in almost all the stakeholder consultations. Start-up funds, such as grants and interest-free loans, support young people trying to launch businesses. However, many programs targeting youth do not provide enough support or information on how to secure funding.

Consultations also revealed that entrepreneurship training programs would be most effective for employment creation among both urban and rural youth if they include group concepts and leverage cooperatives.

Government agencies that promote youth entrepreneurship in Ghana include the National Youth Authority, Youth Employment Agency, National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme, National Board for Small Scale Industries, vocational and technical training centers, and microfinance programs, such as the Microfinance and Small Loans Centre. These institutions have a presence at the regional, metropolitan, municipal, and district levels. Elements of the entrepreneurship programs include provision of business advisory services, start-up kits, development of networking skills, support to access financing, and coaching and mentoring. Many of the programs do not provide support or follow-up services for beneficiaries.

In July 2017, the government launched the National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme (NEIP) with seed funding of \$100 million under the Ministry of Business Development to meet the financing needs of young entrepreneurs who enroll in the program. This multifaceted initiative includes an incubator program for potential entrepreneurs, financing and business development services, and advisory services on how to gain access to markets, among other things. This program replaces the Youth Enterprise Support program. Four modules have been developed under the NEIP initiative: a business incubation program, an NEIP industrialization plan, the Youth Enterprise Fund (YEF), and business advisory services.

Private sector entrepreneurship initiatives include programs such as the Enhancing Growth in New Enterprises (ENGINE) project, the entrepreneurship program of the Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED), the Enablis Ghana program, Impact Hub, and the Ghana Climate Innovation Centre (GCIC). Most private sector programs are well funded and of high quality. They provide competitive start-up grants and loans, mentorship, international exposure, and other business advisory services to beneficiaries. They target tertiary-level graduates but have limited reach and coverage.

## **PREEMPLOYMENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

Preemployment support is a critical element in preparing young people for the world of work. It covers career guidance and counseling, work-based learning, job search assistance, coaching, and mentoring. The goal of guidance and counseling is to enable young people to see and explore their full potential, help individuals to identify and learn the skills that will enable them to be more effective in planning for and choosing jobs, make effective transitions and adjustments to work, and well manage careers and career transitions.

Young people are most effective at work when they are exposed to realistic views of different career paths. They have an opportunity to receive such exposure by spending some time in workplaces through work-based learning. This type of learning, as noted, is often seen as essential for developing workplace skills and promoting the productivity of the labor force. This approach also strengthens hard and soft skills, offers vital workplace knowledge and experience, and instills positive work habits. Research has shown that work-based learning has a positive correlation with higher wages and effectively supports transitions from school to work, leading to high-quality jobs and career

pathways. For employers, work-based learning can help to address skills gaps, support effective talent recruitment, enhance employee retention and satisfaction, and increase overall productivity (Raelin 2008).

Preemployment support services are mostly inadequate and ineffective in Ghana, particularly in public training and academic institutions. The Ghana Education Service (GES) and most tertiary-level educational institutions in Ghana have guidance and counseling units intended to provide support for students. Public vocational and technical institutions also offer some services. However, the effectiveness of these units is limited, and they tend to not provide prolonged coaching and mentoring. Thus youth are mostly left up to their own devices in terms of career development, often resulting in decisions based on peer pressure and trends instead of choosing jobs based on individual talents, strengths, and competencies. This gap in preemployment services exists in all spheres of the educational system. Stakeholder consultations confirmed that funding for preemployment support is minimal.

Identifying internships for students during their tertiary education is a growing trend. Ashesi University, for example, has designed a comprehensive preemployment support structure that offers students services throughout all four years of college. The program integrates guidance and counseling, internships, coaching, and mentoring, and focuses students on ethics, civic engagement, and the development of leadership skills and technological competencies. The goal is to prepare students to be globally competitive with respect to employment. This model also integrates entrepreneurship to help students develop an entrepreneurial mind-set, thereby enhancing their employability. Ashesi University reports successful results, with 94 percent of graduates finding jobs within six months of graduation. This model could be studied further with the intention of replicating it in public tertiary institutions. However, one likely challenge would be funding.

As for job search assistance, the Employment Information Bureau (EIB) of the Department of Labour at the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations (MELR) is the government agency responsible for providing such services. It disseminates occupational information through school visits, makes referrals for training and skills development, and facilitates registration and placement in jobs. EIB has 64 public employment centers in 38 districts across the country to help youth learn about the availability and suitability of jobs. The agency, in collaboration with key stakeholders such as the Ghana Statistical Service and the Ghana Immigration Service, has received support from the World Bank to develop the Ghana Labour Market Information System (GLMIS). This integrated online platform seeks to improve information flow between the demand and supply sides of the labor market. The system has been piloted but is not yet fully operational.

Stakeholder consultations revealed that the impact of the public employment centers is hardly felt by youth across the country, in part because of their limited number, but even more so because of the very limited human capacity within these centers. Furthermore, EIB lacks adequate funding, staffing, and logistics to meet the country's labor market information management needs. New funding from the European Union and the World Bank in 2020 will be critical for improving the effectiveness of the public employment centers and the availability of labor market data nationwide.



## NOTE

1. GSTDP was funded by the World Bank and DANIDA.

## REFERENCES

- Avura, Francis Babongte, and Ato Ulzen-Appiah. 2016. *An Inventory of Youth Employment Programmes in Ghana*. Accra: World Bank.
- Baffour-Awuah, Daniel, and Samuel Thompson. 2011. "A Holistic Approach to Technical and Vocational Skills Development (TVSD) Policy and Governance Reform: The Case of Ghana." Paper presented at ADEA Triennale on Education and Training in Africa, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, November 27–December 2.
- Cho, Yoonyoung, and Maddalena Honorati. 2013. "Entrepreneurship Programs in Developing Countries: A Meta Regression Analysis." Policy Research Working Paper 6402, World Bank, Washington, DC.
- Ghana Ministry of Education. 2004. "White Paper on the Report of the Education Reform Review Committee." Accra.
- Ghana Ministry of Education. 2018. *Strategic Plan for TVET Transformation, 2018–2022*. Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Accra.
- Kluge, Jochen, Susana Puerto, David Robalino, Jose Manuel Romero, Friederike Rother, Jonathan Stöterau, Felix Weidenkaff, et al. 2016. "Do Youth Employment Programs Improve Labor Market Outcomes? A Systematic Review." Discussion Paper 10263, IZA, Bonn.
- Mbiti, Isaac, Jamie McCasland, Morgan Hardy, Kym Cole, Mark Enriquez, and Isabelle Salcher. 2019. "Training for Success: Targeting and Incentives in Apprenticeship Training in Ghana." 3ie Grantee Final Report, International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie), New Delhi.
- Palmer, Robert. 2009. "Formalising the Informal: Ghana's National Apprenticeship Programme." *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* 61 (1): 67–83.
- Raelin, Joseph. 2008. *Work-Based Learning: Bridging Knowledge and Action in the Workplace*. Rev. ed. San Francisco: John Wiley / Jossey-Bass.