

# Creating opportunities for unemployed youth



Kofi Annan, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations once said: "Young people should be at the forefront of global change and innovation. Empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace. If, however, they are left on society's margins, all of us will be impoverished. Let us ensure that all young people have every opportunity to participate fully in the lives of their societies." As a child-focused organisation World Vision is working across the region to ensure that children not only survive to adulthood, they are equipped to thrive. In the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Southern Asian countries where we operate, youth (and adults) face a growing obstacle of unemployment. We are working with individuals and communities to reverse these trends and help youth write their own future, one with a more positive ending.

## WHAT IS HAPPENING



Worldwide nearly **75 million youth are unemployed** and projections for 2015-2018 show little hope of improvement. (ILO, Global Employment Trends for Youth, 2012)



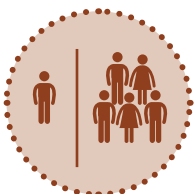
Across the region, **35 per cent of unemployed youth** (between the ages of 25 and 29) **have been unemployed for more than 12 months.** (ILO, Global Employment Trends for Youth, 2013)



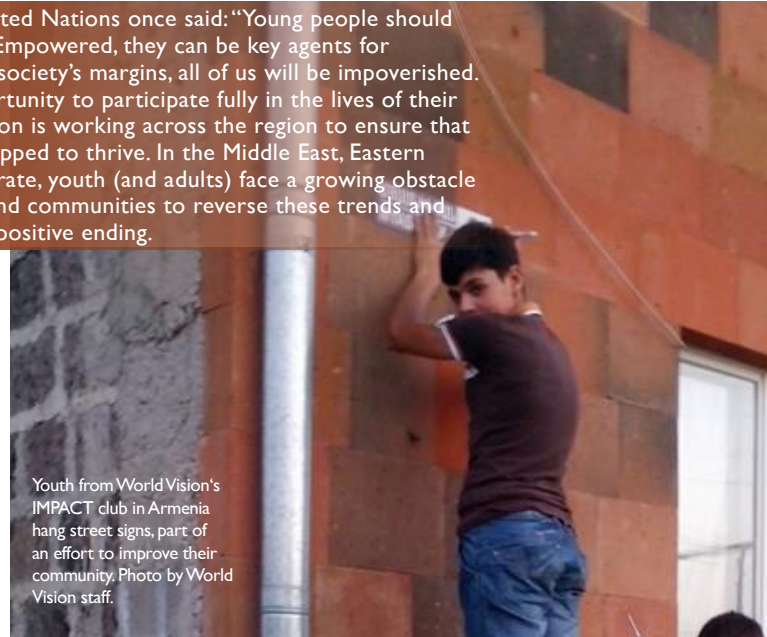
Georgia and Armenia have the **highest unemployment rates in Eastern Europe** with unemployment rates at 45 per cent (for males) and 56 per cent (for females). (ILO, Global Employment Trends for Youth, 2013)



**Half** of the youth (ages 15-24) with a job are employed in **low skilled and elementary occupations.** (ILO, Global Employment Trends for Youth, 2013)



Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds face a **higher risk of social exclusion.** This represents a vicious cycle of inter-generational poverty. (ILO, Global Employment Trends for Youth, 2013)



Youth from World Vision's IMPACT club in Armenia hang street signs, part of an effort to improve their community. Photo by World Vision staff.

## THE ISSUE

Youth often struggle to find ways to fulfil their potential, whether that is to start an enterprise, get a job, or change things that don't work well in their communities. When given the opportunity, they seek ways to use their energies to provide for themselves and make their voices be heard. This is the area where World Vision is working.

## OUR APPROACH

- **Youth Economic Engagement** – World Vision has developed an integrated approach to helping disadvantaged youth develop the skills, behaviours and attitudes necessary to obtain sustainable livelihoods and participate constructively in their communities. Using a curriculum based on experiential training methodologies, we help youth form groups to cultivate competencies in the areas of: active citizenship, leadership, employability and social entrepreneurship. As a result, more youth are equipped to find jobs, start small businesses and become active members who bring positive change to their communities.
- **Youth Activism** – Through building evidence on how our interventions enable youth to become social activists, we promote positive social change that influences the attitudes of adults towards youth, encouraging them to be taken more seriously and seen as partners in the development of their communities.
- **Youth Leadership for Community Engagement** -- Youth are enabled to become community leaders in World Vision's sponsorship programmes through organizational, project management and advocacy capacity building opportunities which provides them the opportunity to gain transferable skills, experience.

## BUILDING COMMUNITY THROUGH BUSINESS

Unemployment rates in the Gaza Strip are over 40 per cent, making it especially difficult for youth, like Mahmoud, 22, to find steady work. Frustrated by the lack employment and difficult access to technology, Mahmoud had an idea. He wanted to start a computer shop in his village.

Thanks to support from World Vision, he was able to start his business. Today, not only does Mahmoud's shop provide internet and fix computer parts for the village, the shop has also become a centre for local youth to come together to discuss ideas, study, and inspire each other.

Seeing Mahmoud's success, his friends were also inspired to start their own business ventures; some have opened barber shops and grocery stores while others have opened maintenance facilities.

Even more important than a place to do research and study, Mahmoud's computer shop has created a venue for people to come together and identify solutions for local problems. Most recently Mahmoud and other community members came together to build a playground for children to play football. They also collected small funds from other village residents and rented a machine to level the ground and build the village's first and only playground.



Hayk Mkrtchyan, 21, has been a member of one of the SKYE clubs in Armenia for more than a year. Photo by World Vision staff.

## ARMENIA: EQUIPPING YOUTH

In Armenia, World Vision is helping build capacities of youth through holistic clubs that increase confidence and self awareness, develop leadership skills, expand knowledge and adjust attitudes, as necessary of youth in order to allow them to be constructive economic and civil participants in their communities.

Youth are divided into two age-specific groups in order to provide the most appropriate training and opportunities: IMPACT clubs are designed for youth between the ages of 12 and 17 and SKYE (Skills for Knowledge and Youth Economic Engagement) Clubs are designed for youth between 18 and 26 years of age.

Hayk Mkrtchyan, 21, has been a member of one of the SKYE clubs in Armenia for more than a year. ***“The advantage of the SKYE club is that it doesn't criticize your mistakes, but [instead] allows you to learn on them,”*** he says.

***“For me, as a future economist, the most important thing about the club is that in addition to theory, I have had the opportunity to take my first steps into the business field through this club... The club changes many young peoples' lives, It gives us an opportunity to fulfil our dreams and feel valued both by the club and the community,”*** he adds.



Mahmoud working in the maintenance section of the computer shop. Photo by World Vision staff.

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