YOUTH RESEARCH – EDUCATION AND SKILLS

International Qualitative Research for the 2012 Education for All Global Monitoring Report
– Youth and skills: Putting education to work
April 2012

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report details the findings from a programme of focus groups conducted in January and February 2012 by GlobeScan and its international partners on behalf of UNESCO. UNESCO’s 2012 Global Monitoring Report, to be published later in the year, will focus on the issue of young people’s employment opportunities, and how they are affected by skills development. In order to inform this report, and to generate first-person testimonial from young people about their experience of these issues, UNESCO commissioned GlobeScan, supported by Dalberg Global Development Advisors, to recruit, moderate and analyse a programme of focus groups among disadvantaged young people (18-25) in the following countries.

- UK
- Egypt
- Ethiopia
- Mexico
- India
- Vietnam

A full profile of the composition of each group is included in the Appendix.

Separately from the focus groups recruited and moderated by GlobeScan, which are analysed in this report, UNESCO staff convened a separate focus group among indigenous youth leaders in Cartagena, Colombia. The same discussion guide was used and a short summary of the discussion, produced by UNESCO, is included as an appendix to this document.

As well as summarizing the themes observed across the focus groups, this report contains supporting evidence from GlobeScan’s most recent wave of global public polling looking at the level of preoccupation with employment and education issues that exists among the broader population in some of the countries covered by the qualitative research.

A note on interpreting the findings

Qualitative research provides a way of exploring complex and multi-faceted issues in a way that allows respondents to speak in their own words about their own experiences and perceptions. These views may be based on incomplete or erroneous information; these views are nonetheless reported here. The small numbers of participants involved mean that while the responses may be indicative of broader opinion in these societies,
they are not formally representative and care should be taken when extrapolating the findings contained in this report to a wider population.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Labour market problems need to be seen in context

- The findings of this study- and the findings of GlobeScan's regular public attitudes studies around the world - illustrate that labour market concerns are consistently top of mind for this demographic group, as they are for society more broadly. But they do not stand on their own as a problem - they are linked in the mind of young people with an array of related systemic problems - entrenched poverty, a poor education system and lack of infrastructure.

- This link between poverty and the labour market is critical to understand the problems these young people face. Education is seen as a solution to poverty, but it is poverty- the pressing need to work to support their family - that often drives these young people out of the education system.

A public education system that often under-delivers

- The education system in these countries comes in for significant criticism from these young people. Largely shut out from the expensive private institutions that produce the new members of the economic and social elite, their experience is often of poorly-resourced institutions staffed by uninterested or under-qualified teachers.

- Many contend that these schools’ approach to educating young people is excessively theoretical and does not equip them either with sufficiently transferable skills that are valued by employers - notably computer skills and English- or with sufficiently extensive and focused work experience.

Young people see lack of experience and qualifications, not lack of skills, as the primary barrier

- Even so, young people do not, for the most part, ascribe their trouble in finding secure employment to a lack of skills, or necessarily associate skills with specific key competencies, but more with a general level of experience gained either through training, education or work. The perception that employers are focused on recruiting only those with a high level of formal qualifications and direct, extensive, highly specific experience of their own particular specialism is very widespread, and seen as a near-insuperable
barrier to entry to the job market. Additionally, respondents across countries refer to the need for useful ‘connections’ in order to find work.

- Traditional values remain entrenched in a number of the countries in the study, and can be an additional barrier when they make it difficult for women to complete their education or take on full time work, or when caste prejudices restrict the ability of people to take up certain professions.

But education does deliver useful outcomes – and those who drop out regret it

- Despite the perceived shortcomings of state education provision, those who drop out of the education system early mostly regret doing so, as this deprives them of the qualifications regarded as the minimum requirement for many stable jobs. The education system is also seen to provide people with a basic level of social skills- the ability to talk to a wide range of people - that is crucial in order to be able to operate within society.

Few secure avenues into the labour market are open to these young people, making ‘ways out’ look attractive

- The young people who participated in this study were, for the most part, at the margins of the labour market. Despite, in many cases, having significant responsibilities to support and look after family members, their employment opportunities are limited to poorly-paid, short-term or irregular work, often many miles from where they live and with few work-related benefits. In this context, it is not surprising that ‘way out’ offered by emigration, crime or marrying wealthy foreigners can seem attractive.

Consistent view that the state should step in to help young people, but little faith in some countries that it will do so

- Expectations of help in making their way in the job market vary significantly from country to country. In the more developed nations in the study (UK and Mexico) there is an assumption that the state could be stepping in to equip young people with the education, training and experience they need, even if it is not doing so. In countries like Ethiopia where the state is skeletal in comparison, respondents accepted they were ‘on their own’ and needed to rely on their own efforts, even if they did not have much faith that this would be sufficient.

Stability and control are the main priorities

- Ultimately, the young people we spoke to crave stability and the ability to support themselves and their families. Nevertheless, despite the priority to meet their basic needs, when prompted, many young people have ambitious and specific long-term aspirations. But with such a limited sense of control
over their own destiny, these ambitions seem to take a back seat to more
day-to-day concerns.
Implications

The findings from this study underline once more that no single solution to the problems that young people face in the labour market exists. The problems are complex and interconnected, and will require a holistic approach to policy coordinating many different actors.

Any strategy will need to foster stronger links between government, employers and schools to ensure:

- That students understand from an early age the range of professional avenues open to them, and what each will mean in terms of the skills, qualifications and experience that they need to acquire.
- That there is increased access to focused and well-planned work experience within the context of full-time education for a larger number of students. This will need to reflect where local career opportunities are concentrated, without limiting the horizons of those who have broader aspirations.
- That students are helped to start to build the sort of informal personal networks that will maximise their chances of securing work in their chosen field in a world where ‘who you know’ still matters.

With young people often perceiving the value of education only through the prism of formal qualifications, government will need to reframe the agenda for schools to ensure that a broader skills-based education is delivered, and that young people understand the value and application of what they have learned.

But what these focus groups also demonstrate is that in many of the countries covered, exclusion and marginalisation from the labour market exists in a context of poverty where the state is often barely present as a force in people’s lives. A concerted effort to improve young people’s chances of success in the labour market will therefore need to draw upon multiple sources of funding and support. UNESCO, with its ability to bring together governments, business and NGOs and act as a champion for change, surely has a role to play here.
3. EDUCATION AND SKILLS IN CONTEXT

NATIONAL CONTEXT FOR TESTED COUNTRIES

EGYPT

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<tr>
<th>Youth (as defined by the government)</th>
<th>National education levels</th>
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<th>Primary sectors of economy</th>
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ETHIOPIA

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### INDIA

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### Mexico

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**UNITED KINGDOM**

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<th>Youth (as defined by the Government)</th>
<th>National education levels</th>
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<td>Ages: 14-25</td>
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<td>Postal literacy: Ages 15 - 24: 81%</td>
<td>General population: 8.4%&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt; Youth: 22.2%&lt;sup&gt;4&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>No education: 15 - 19: 0.8% 20 - 24: 1% Completed Secondary: 15 - 19: 81.3% 20 - 24: 38.8%</td>
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<td>Services 78% 80%</td>
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<td>Industry 21% 18%</td>
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<td>Agriculture 1% 1%</td>
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**VIETNAM**

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<td>Ages: 14 - 25</td>
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<td>Postal literacy: Ages 14 - 25: 97%</td>
<td>General population: 5% Youth: 5%</td>
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<td>Services 39% 26%</td>
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<td>Agriculture 20% 54%</td>
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**EVIDENCE FROM GLOBESCAN’S GLOBAL PUBLIC ATTITUDES TRACKING**

The urgency of taking steps to address the problem of youth unemployment is underscored by evidence from GlobeScan’s regular tracking of global public opinion. We find that unemployment ranks among the most serious problems currently seen to be facing the world. There is also evidence that the salience of the problem, as shown by the frequency with which they talk about it, is increasing. However, while under-25s

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2 Barro Lee Dataset: United Kingdom
4 United Kingdom House of Commons: Youth Unemployment Statistics, February 2012
mirror the high level of concern over jobs seen among the national population in these countries, the data do not suggest that as an age bracket they are disproportionately concerned by unemployment as an issue.

GlobeScan asks respondents in its global polls conducted in 20+ countries around the world to identify, spontaneously, what they consider to be the ‘most important problem facing the world today’ and the ‘most important problem facing this country’.

As might be expected, a very large number of issues are named, but for each of the past three years, around one in ten respondents in the 19 tracking countries have cited unemployment as the top global problem. As the map chart also shows, India and Egypt are two countries where unemployment is in fact the problem most frequently cited in this context, by 11% and 17% respectively.

**Most Important Problem Facing World**
Unprompted, Top Mention by Country, 2011
Our data do not suggest that under-25s are more likely than the rest of the population in their countries to perceive unemployment as the preeminent global problem. However, they do confirm that joblessness features prominently among their major preoccupations in some of the countries, as the tables below illustrate, with unemployment the top-mentioned issue in Egypt, the second issue in India and the third in Mexico.

### Most Serious Global Issues
**Under 25s**
*Unprompted, By Country, 2011*

![Image of charts showing the most serious global issues among under-25s in different countries](chart_image.png)

- **Egypt**
  - Top mention: Unemployment/underemployment (27%)
  - Second mention: Economic problems (19%)
  - Third mention: Greed/corruption, Political problems (both 17%)
  - Fourth mention: Overpopulation (7%)
  - Fifth mention: Poverty/homelessness, Security (both 4%)

- **Kenya**
  - Top mention: Hunger/food problems (23%)
  - Second mention: Corruption (19%)
  - Third mention: Unemployment/underemployment, Poverty/homelessness (both 17%)
  - Fourth mention: Poverty/homelessness (11%)
  - Fifth mention: Political problems, Education (both 5%)

- **Mexico**
  - Top mention: Computers (16%)
  - Second mention: Unemployment/underemployment (19%)
  - Third mention: Unemployment/underemployment, Poverty/homelessness (both 16%)
  - Fourth mention: Poverty/homelessness (7%)
  - Fifth mention: Economic problems, Education (both 8%)

- **Spain**
  - Top mention: Unemployment/underemployment (28%)
  - Second mention: Security (16%)
  - Third mention: Unemployment/underemployment, Poverty/homelessness (both 16%)
  - Fourth mention: Unemployment/underemployment, Poverty/homelessness, Economic problems (both 8%)
  - Fifth mention: Poverty/homelessness, Security (both 8%)

- **UK**
  - Top mention: Economic problems (28%)
  - Second mention: Poverty/homelessness (14%)
  - Third mention: Unemployment/underemployment, Poverty/homelessness (both 13%)
  - Fourth mention: Poverty/homelessness (7%)
  - Fifth mention: Economic problems, Education (both 7%)
Further analysis of the data suggests that the low-income and low-education segment of the population is more preoccupied with unemployment as a problem than the rest of the population – in India, people with low income are particularly likely to be worried, while in Mexico concern is higher among those with low education. Men also tend to be somewhat more concerned about it than women, particularly in India; although in the UK females tend to be slightly more worried than men about the issue.

We can also see that the problem is becoming more evident in people’s day-to-day concerns as the consequences of the global recession unfold. As well as asking respondents to identify the ‘most important problem’ facing the world, we also ask them to identify which problems they had discussed with their friends and family over the last month.

Here, a striking trend is apparent. While unemployment was mentioned by only three per cent of respondents globally in 2009, it is now mentioned by nearly one in five (18%).

When we look at the countries covered by this study, we see that higher numbers in some of them - 26% in India, and 24% in Egypt - say they have talked about it. This may be a consequence either of the increased incidence of unemployment among people’s friends and relations, or a reflection of greater discussion of the phenomenon within the media. In these two countries, young people under 25 are even more likely to say they have discussed unemployment – 30% of young Egyptians and 34% of young Indians report that unemployment is a topic they have talked about with friends and family in the past month.

Finally, we also note that ‘education’ is mentioned spontaneously by more than one in ten respondents (11%) across our tracking countries as a problem they have discussed with family and friends over the last month. Among under-25s in the countries covered by this study – UK, Egypt, Mexico and India – this figure rises to 20%. In India, 35% of under-25s say they have recently talked about the issue of education. As the map below illustrates, education is also frequently cited as an area in which citizens want companies to be active in order to improve the local community – it is the most commonly mentioned topic in this context in India and the UK, although our data do not suggest significant differences between under-25s and the rest of the population in this regard.
EVIDENCE FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS – KEY TOP OF MIND ISSUES

The issue of employment very clearly ranked among the issues that caused respondents in these focus groups greatest concern, and was mentioned spontaneously when respondents were invited to reflect on the broader issues that most preoccupied them.

However, it was not seen as a ‘separate’ issue. The way that respondents spoke about employment issues – low-paying jobs or the simple absence of any work - made it clear that they were all part of a bigger picture that took in entrenched poverty, the high cost of living, and a poor quality education system. The interconnectedness of these issues in perpetuating the situation for young people living in poverty underscores the importance of providing resources to maximize employment and career development opportunities, particularly in impoverished communities.

More broadly, crime and drugs, as well as inadequate infrastructure, were other prominent issues seen to affect young people, mentioned among participants from several of the countries included. The following chapter details and analyses the responses of young people when asked what the pressing issues facing their country and age group were.
• Poverty and the cost of living affect an already difficult job market and constitute a barrier to completion of education

In all of the countries studied the high cost of living and worries about the inability to meet these costs in terms of housing, food, etc., was considered a key challenge by participants. Participants often mentioned that the jobs available to them were not paid enough to cover basic costs of living.

*The price of basics is just ridiculous, really. I don’t think it’s the credit crunch, I think it’s literally the cost of living*

UK, Female, 19-24, Graduate

[Moderator]: *Is there any work related issue, tell me in last 4-5 years is this problem is getting better or has it become worse?*

*It has become worse*

*On the one hand there is inflation problem and on top of it we don’t get employment, wages are less*

India, Panipat, Male

Poverty was also seen by participants in most countries to affect access to education and the possibility to secure better-paid employment in the future, as some young people are forced to leave school to help support their families.

*Poverty is a major problem, in the absence of employment the problem of poverty gets aggravated.*

India, Panipat, Female

*Finance is the most difficult issue. There are many things need money. My mother has to afford school fees, living fees…*

Vietnam, Female

• Unemployment is a serious top of mind concern across all geographies

Among this demographic, lack of jobs is a key top-of-mind issue across all the countries studied, and unemployment is seen as a major problem affecting young people.

*The major problem of the youth is unemployment. They cannot get jobs because they did not complete school education and move to the next level of education to get employment. The other problem is the young people who dropped out of school are usually not hard working one. As a result no one employs them. They also lack creativity and I would say it is only about 10% of the youths that can take responsibility.*

Ethiopia, Female

*Biggest problem is of unemployment, in the absence of employment what can poor people do for living, even educated people who have degrees don’t get jobs, in other states people get the jobs but not in this state*
As indicated by these descriptions, unemployment is not only seen in a personal context but as a major systemic problem that affects whole societies.

- **Multiple problems with the education system(s) are recognized by young people as a barrier to opportunities**

By extension, education, in terms of the low quality of state education and the lack of educational opportunities beyond expensive private options, is a major challenge facing particularly the young across most of the countries studied. Participants recognized the link between a lack of quality education and poverty, as without education there is little opportunity for people to improve their situations.

> There is lack of education so we don’t get jobs and can’t improve our life; there is no growth for us.

  — India, Delhi, Male

> Because there is no education, there’s unemployment. There’s unemployment, poverty and crime.

  — Mexico, Female

- **Crime and drugs are often seen as an alternative that young people can fall into in the absence of other opportunities**

Participants in several of the countries studies pointed to crime and insecurity, as well as the abuse of drugs and alcohol, as major problems facing their countries and young people. Crime and drugs were seen by some participants to be affecting young people in that it offered an alternative way to make a living when educational and employment opportunities were lacking. Drug and alcohol abuse in the family, or by youth themselves, also had an effect on some participants as this prevented them from getting an education.

> Because many people who have studied but don’t have a job start stealing or join a gang. That becomes a circle where everything is related.

  — Mexico, Male

> The youth might get money simply, for example, by working as a daily laborer (in construction). But this money easily gets wasted. Currently many youth are seen being addicted to drugs. This is because they do not think about the future. But if they think about the future they would have saved the money they get for future use. Rather they are currently using the money for chewing chat, cigar and other addictive drugs. Unless they...
stop spending their money for these drugs, this situation can never be better. Once anyone is into this problem it will not even be possible or easy to precede with education. So I say drug addiction is a very serious issue and big problem in this surrounding area. So, directly or indirectly, many youth are affected by this problem.

Ethiopia, Female

My father drinks a lot and does not do any work that is why I have to work to earn money for the family.

India, Delhi, Female

Because crime and drugs provide an alternative or escape from the pressures created by the other systemic problems mentioned they are inextricably linked and further emphasize the need to address other societal problems rather than simply treating it as a law enforcement issue.

- **Poor public services create both physical and psychological barriers to young people achieving their goals**

Public infrastructure in many of the countries covered by the study is poorly developed. The lack of infrastructure in terms of inadequate waste management, water, and power supply, as well as traffic lights, was another theme mentioned spontaneously by participants in several of the countries as an ongoing irritant in their lives.

- The power supply is erratic and not certain
  - India, Panipat, Female

[Moderator] I would like you to tell me about the main problems you are facing in your neighborhoods, boroughs and city.

- The streets are too dirty.
  - Public Lighting
  - Graffiti on the streets
  - Potholes in the streets
  - The traffic lights are not working
  - Mexico, Male & Female

A related concern is around the lack – and high cost of – public transport. This was seen to affect the lives of young people and – as we shall see - also their ability to access employment opportunities.

[Moderator] I would like you to tell me about the main problems you are facing in your neighborhoods, boroughs and city.

- In the State of Mexico, transportation is very expensive
  - Mexico, Male
4. WORK

Respondents were asked to reflect on their views and experiences of the world of work – what they considered to be a ‘good job’, how they, in reality, managed to earn their money, and what some of the barriers might be to establishing themselves in secure and rewarding employment.

WHAT IS A ‘GOOD JOB’?

While respondents generally agreed on the importance of finding a ‘good job’ there were differing views on what this denoted. This was generally dependent on the respondent’s level of aspiration.

- Stability/security is paramount for young people from impoverished backgrounds

Most respondents crave a level of stability and job security. When asked what jobs appealed to them their answers would often be shaped by these factors rather than ambitious aspirations. Jobs mentioned tended to be in fields that were in demand in their respective countries and would provide fairly immediate stable employment (such as teaching or computing in India or motorbike repair in Vietnam and textile/factory work in Egypt).

  *I am in favour of a teacher’s or office job. Government jobs are stable and in teaching I can teach students, I have the skill*  
  India, Delhi, Male  

  *Repairing motorbikes is easy to learn and easy to find a job, I can do it at home or go to garage*  
  Vietnam, Male

- Salary generally takes precedence over the nature of the job itself

Some respondents were unconcerned about the nature of the job itself provided it satisfied their top-level concerns about being able to support themselves and/or their families.

  *[Moderator] What are the ambitions of people around you?*  
  *We are looking for a better salary regardless of what the job is*  
  Egypt, Tanta, Male

Implicit in this finding in that many impoverished young people do not have the ‘luxury’ or having aspirations beyond simply meeting the cost of living.
Some more aspirational young people look beyond their immediate situation, craving independence and entrepreneurial opportunities

The more optimistic respondents had thoughts of starting their own business, valuing the independence that might offer - although they were aware of the difficulty in getting together the capital necessary to do so.

I am interested in having a shop and running my own business. With your business you don’t have to depend on anyone for work, but you need to have money for business.

India, Delhi, Male

If one has the financial capacity it is also possible to start one’s own small business. Money and space can be the major difficulties to start one’s own business.

Ethiopia, Female

Among those with entrepreneurial ambitions some expressed a desire to develop their creative talents.

I know a lady who is expert in her job, the clothes done by her are always in great demand, she always has crowd of customers, so I also want to be like her

India, Panipat, Female

I’d like to study something like my old man did. I really like crafts. Maybe I’d like being a craftsman or embossing something.

Mexico, Male

HOW YOUNG PEOPLE EARN MONEY

The ways in which young people aspired to make their living, and how they did in fact bring in money, were not always well aligned. They often relied on a combination of irregular or informal means to do so.

Unskilled labour/temporary work is a fallback for many

Construction and farm work (particularly in rural areas) were mentioned by a lot of males as a means to earning money for themselves and their peers.
Usually for the uneducated it is with hard work, labour work for instance in constructions or for the educated ones it is through getting hired in an offices that demand the type of skill they possess

Ethiopia, Male

While relatively common, these jobs often do not match up to respondents’ desire for stability in employment as they tend to be short-term (either seasonal or the length of a project).

I help my family do farming, we grow plums. In the rainy season we don’t grow, we only grow in sunny season

[Moderator] Do you have big farm?

Not a very big farm, just enough for my family to survive.

Vietnam, Male

Aside from the longevity of the job itself, temporary or seasonal work also lacks stability in the context of benefits and insurance. This was particularly highlighted in Mexico.

[Moderator] The jobs you find, do they offer Social Insurance?

Sometimes

When you’re a temporary worker, you don’t get any benefits.

I think you get Social Insurance for three months, but just for the basics.

Social Insurance just covers work risks. If you get injured outside, you aren’t covered. That’s what happens when you’re a temporary worker.

Social Insurance just covers work risks. If you get injured outside, you aren’t covered. That’s what happens when you’re a temporary worker.

Mexico, Female

There was a gender divide in terms of manual labour due to the physical demands of the work. Women had to pursue alternatives if they were seeking low-skill temporary work such as the hospitality industry or office work. In Ethiopia in particular it was noted that the difference in opportunities for the genders required females to be more skilled in order to find work.

[Moderator] Concerning the types of jobs or the situation of finding jobs in your area, can you tell me the situations in your area? For instance, do you think there are only part-time works are available, they payment is minimum; the work condition is poor and the like?

Usually the work environment [daily labourer] is not comfortable mostly for females. Usually it is men who can work on this because a lot of labor
is demanded. As a result of this females usually do not get the type of job they want. And to get hired in an office they always require paper and more skills. Otherwise no one will hire you and it will be very difficult. And youth like us who has dropped out of school after grade 8 or 9 can never get any paper. So we don’t even try to go to such places and apply for a job.

Ethiopia, Female

- **Hospitality/customer service is an option, particularly for women**

Respondents across regions gave example of having worked in café’s restaurants, kitchens and shops. Experiences varied but some, particularly in Mexico, young people did not feel the amount of work and the hours involved were worth the money they earned.

[Moderator] What about working conditions? Are they an issue for young people?

Well, it depends on the job, doesn’t it?

Yes. Once, I worked as an event waiter and I was being paid $100 pesos plus tips. I worked from 10 a.m to three a.m.

I made about $200 pesos or less and I had to scrub the floors and wash the dishes. I had to do a little bit of everything. I’ve also heard of jobs where you go like to serve ice and end up washing dishes.

Mexico, Male

On the other hand hospitality work is seen as respectable alternative to those tempted by crime

[Moderator] In your opinion most youth you know how do they get their money?

There are both legal and illegal ways.

[Moderator] Can you explain it more to me?

They can work legally and be an upholster like me or work in a café shop. And there is an illegal way like drugs, violence or robbery.

Egypt, Cairo, Male

Experiences of looking for this kind of work varied between males and females. Where some males mentioned that they are often passed over for waiting or cashier work, females felt that looks and style were a priority for these employers which created difficulties for them, particularly in countries where female modesty is a cultural norm (and even more so in rural areas).
[Moderator] But there could be reasons to prevent you to accept it [a job]?

If the working hours are late.
And girls don’t work in café shops.

[Moderator] What else?

They may demand that we take the veil off and wear clothes and wear makeup and our families don’t accept that.

[Moderator] So if the job does not suit the customs and traditions of the place what else make you refuse the job? What else?

They tell us they want a stylish girl to work for them. The girl is a façade because that helps sales. If the girl is beautiful and dresses well and there is a custom she can be convinced that the shop assistant will help her to be like her.

Egypt, Tanta, Female

You know, in a shop they would like to hire beautiful girls, they don’t want to hire a man.

Vietnam, Male

• A few demonstrate entrepreneurial aptitude

Some respondents displayed entrepreneurial ambitions, while others cited examples of peers whom they admired who had found their own ways of making money. However, the fact that these individuals were mentioned spontaneously suggests this self-starting approach is not the norm.

There are others who would work their minds hard to find a job, one of my friends bought a bicycle and distributed newspapers by them which is a good job

Egypt, Cairo, Male

My friend quit school one year before me. His father had problem with nervous system so he quitted school. Now he works in a rubber farm. He works there many years. He earns much money on Tet holidays. His relatives introduce him to work there and now he is team leader. And becoming team leader is the highest position he can get, because he does not have any qualifications. But it is so hard. The salary is about 7-8 million, and now he is richer than me. I admire him.

Vietnam, Male

• Temptation of drug dealing and crime is strong for those in poor areas

Drug-dealing, crime and gang activity was mentioned by young people across regions. While respondents generally did not admit that they had contemplated it themselves, they pointed out that young people from impoverished areas find it easier to resort to
crime than to find work, often taking the form of either drug-dealing (particularly reported in the UK and Mexico) and mugging (particularly in Egypt). In areas where drug and gang activity are an entrenched problem they provide a means of making immediate money without having to go through the lengthy process of finding a job or becoming more educated, this perpetuating the situation.

[When asked what young people do for work] Many don’t do, that’s why they end up as criminals and, instead of improving the country, they’re like making it worse because they take away the chance of working or stuff. Well, I imagine that they think it’s easier to commit crimes.

Mexico, Female

I think they turn to drugs, selling drugs. I think it’s easier and they’ve got the community they can sell it to and the money they probably get from it is much more than the retail.

UK, Female, 17-20, Non-Graduate

As alluded to earlier, the fact that involvement in drugs and crime are seen by many young people as a more viable and profitable path than the career options open to them stresses the need to invest in greater opportunities for young people in these situations in order to shift the balance in favour of stable and fulfilling work.

BARRIERS TO GETTING A GOOD JOB

Across all the countries studied, young people reported facing a wide array of obstacles that acted as barriers to the job market. Some of these were common to a number of countries, despite the different circumstances that respondents otherwise faced.

The barriers essentially fall into two categories – those that relate to people’s personal attributes and perceived shortcomings in the eyes of employers, which may prevent them from being offered a job in the first place, and those that relate to factors that may prevent people being able to take a job that is offered to them.

In the latter case, they were not always definitive barriers. Young people were sometimes obliged to take jobs that were unsuitable because they felt they had no option.

As with the shortcomings in education systems, these barriers form an interconnected ‘big picture’ that demands to be addressed holistically if poverty-stricken young people are to helped into employment.
Barriers relating to personal attributes

- Experience, as opposed to any particular skill, is generally top of mind

This was reported very consistently as a barrier across all the groups in the study. Typically, respondents felt trapped in a catch-22 situation whereby all available jobs required relevant experience, but without a job there was no opportunity to acquire that experience.

Employers, it was felt, were looking for the ‘finished article’ and did not want to employ someone who would need time to learn the requirements while working.

Most of the time employers will not hire someone who has no experience and require many years of experience for all types of jobs. And unless you get hired and work you can never get the experience. So I would suggest it will be better if sometimes employers hire people without experience.

Ethiopia, Male

Well, they ask for experience and you have to start somewhere but they don’t give us the chance of getting the experience that we need.

Mexico, Male

They want the one who is going to work for them to be fully experienced they are not willing to give us either the time or the chance to learn the job requirements while working.

Egypt, Tanta, Male

It’s this vicious cycle of, you need to get the job to get the experience, but they won’t take you on because you don’t have the experience. So, what are you supposed to do?

UK, Female, 19-24, Graduate

In some countries, notably the UK, respondents were aware that there was the option of unpaid internships as a way of acquiring necessary experience – but the necessity of supporting oneself while working unpaid ruled out many from pursuing this avenue.

The only thing that I haven’t got every single time I’ve gone to an interview is experience, and you can’t get that unless you work for free. I’ve been to interviews and they’ve said, ‘Oh, we can’t offer you a place but we can offer you an internship for six months for free,’ and sometimes they don’t even pay your travel. I have done internships but it, kind of, gets to the stage, like, ‘If you’re not going to employ me then you can’t take advantage.

UK, Female, 19-24, Graduate
• **Insufficient education is often cited, particularly among those who did not leave education voluntarily**

Many young people in the study were conscious that their lack of a sufficient level of formal education meant they were ruled out of consideration from a whole class of managerial and professional jobs.

But acquiring this education was not straightforward for most. Low household income, family responsibilities and resistance from spouses were all cited as reasons why returning to complete one’s education was difficult. This further emphasizes the fact that many young people, if they want to remain in education, are unable to do so without some kind of external assistance.

_I wanted to study but family responsibilities so I had to work to earn for family and I could not study_

*India, Delhi, Female*

_We don’t have any degrees, work places need degrees, and my husband does not encourage me to complete my education_

*Egypt, Cairo, Female*

• **Discrimination (in various forms depending on the national/local context) is both a barrier to finding work and a demoralizing influence on young people**

Perceptions that employers discriminated against particular ethnic, religious or socio-economic groups were widespread, particularly in more traditional societies.

How much of this discrimination actually takes place, and how much is a reflection of the low self-esteem and sense of victimization that many respondents felt, is hard to say with certainty. However, in some countries with highly stratified social hierarchies such as India, there was a sense that this influenced employers’ perceptions of what sort of jobs people were suitable for based on either caste, gender, race or religion.

_Castes play definitely great role in getting jobs, higher castes are considered for jobs and no the members of the lower caste_

*India, Panipat, Female*

_The employer prefer boys to work for them, they don’t want girls to work for them they turn away the girls and feels there could be problems by employing girls._

*India, Panipat, Female*
In some instances, female respondents faced resistance from their own spouses to them going out to work.

> Some of our husbands don’t agree that we go out a lot and so we can go out for a work twice or three times a month only  
> Egypt, Cairo, Female

Discrimination was also seen to take the form of employers having a prescriptive image of the kind of people they wanted to hire based on a number of criteria.

> [Moderator] What do you know about discrimination at work?  
> They don’t want you to be dark-skinned.  
> They say that if you are not so attractive, they won’t hire you.  
> They are very elitist. They look at you from top to toe to see if you are thin.  
> They ask what size you are.  
> You have to be a specific size to get in the uniform or they don’t hire you.  
> Mexico, Female

> In Tanta they say that we are not presentable because we are from villages and they want city people as well.  
> Egypt, Tanta, Female

• **Lack of confidence is both engendered by other barriers and a barrier in itself**

Confidence – or the lack of it - unquestionably influenced the job-seeking behavior of many of the young people in the study. A lack of confidence is often the result of a feeling of inferiority to others in the job market because of some of the factors above – lack of experience, of education, or a sense that one’s ‘face does not fit’. But after a while, in response to protracted lack of success in securing a job, or even an interview for one, the lack of confidence appears to become a barrier in itself to proactive engagement in looking for work.

> [Moderator] When you’re applying for jobs, how are you feeling when you’re applying for it? Are you feeling sort of optimistic and confident that, yes, I’ll crack it one of these days?  
> I hope for the best, really.  
> I’m quite nervous.  
> Optimistic at first, but after you’ve tried like 100 jobs and no replies there’s no real need to be optimistic anymore.
Respondents in the UK and Ethiopia (see case study: ‘Ethiopia - Pessimism in the Youth Job Market’) discussed this issue in some detail. Lack of confidence is often generated by focusing on the competition who may have either better qualifications or connections that would give them an advantage. This engenders an attitude of defeatism whereby the outcomes of job applications are already a foregone conclusion.

*I think it’s definitely that the competition is a big thing, because that creates a, sort of, defeatism. Especially when you go on Reed and are browsing through the applications, however many they have. You’re almost, kind of, obsessed with the competition. You know, you look at it and think, ‘Oh, there’s no point in going for that’*

**UK, Male, 21-24, Graduate**

[Moderator] let’s say there is a new job at some place, will you have the confidence to go there and apply?

*If I have the skills required I will go. But if I don’t have the required skill I will not go as they will not accept me.*

[Moderator] Where have you gone to apply for a job so far?

*I for example went to the customs office and after I heard that they posted a vacancy for someone who has a driving license. Then we went together with others and we were told that only two are wanted. But they already have hired others and filled the post. They only post the vacancy for formality.*

**Ethiopia, Female**

**Barriers relating to the ability to take work that is offered**

- **Restrictions exist on the type of work available**

Except in the UK groups held in London, many respondents reported that there was a dearth of stable, full-time work available. The young people complained that work was available only for short periods of time – often a week or less – or only part-time.

*It is difficult to find a job that lasts long. The longest period of work is not more than a week. And for my work I earn 30 birr per day*

**Ethiopia, Male**

In India, some Panipat respondents pointed out that much of the work was seasonal and not available in winter.
There is no guarantee of employment and also employment is season specific.

India, Panipat, Male

Some respondents in the Mexico groups, meanwhile, pointed out that the type of part-time work available was itself on an irregular schedule, making it impossible for them to organize their lives. They also observed that it came with a limited level of social protection.

Part-time with changeable schedules is what they ask for; you work in the morning and then in the afternoon. Then, what’s the point of part-time if your shift is changed?

Mexico, Male

- Transport is often a major logistical challenge

A major barrier for many of the young people in the focus groups to taking up jobs is the need to travel. This was mentioned across a number of countries.

The need to travel a long way to take up the offer of work imposes a range of problems. First, it brings significant extra expense for what may be a low-paid job. Some may even have to rent accommodation near their place of work.

[Moderator] So you have to go far away to find a job? And you have no transportation?

If I work far away, I have to rent a room, and it takes more money

Vietnam, Female

If young people do not own a car, they may be unable to take up a job because public transport is not available. Finally, the hours of many jobs also require the employee to travel early in the morning or late at night, which may pose issues of personal security, particularly for women.

One of the problems is about commuting to the place of work, there is no public buses in village for commuting to work place. I take 2-4 hours to commute to work place

[Moderator] You mean the work places are far away from your village

Yes, I take 2-4 hours to commute to work place, for girls commuting alone is also not safe, there is no security for the girls to commute safely, there is so much of crime against women folk now a days while commuting and in general.

India, Panipat, Female
When you cover the shift that is at night you have like to stay awake late and when you go out it’s dawn and it’s dangerous because you can be robbed

Mexico, Male

- Pay is often simply inadequate

There was a very wide consensus that much of the work that is available simply does not pay enough, once the cost of transport and housing had been taken into consideration. This not only renders young people unable to meet their basic needs but also contributes to their general sense of helplessness and pessimism which is a further hindrance to finding adequate employment.

With all the effort and its being tiresome, we only get 25 to 30 birr per day. So I say the amount of work and the money we get paid is not proportional. Our daily expenses are high and there will be nothing left in our pocket at the end so one has to wait for the next day work

Ethiopia, Male

Those like us will work on a daily base, an upholsterer like me will take like 30 pounds per day 15 of them would be spent on transportation and 15 on food and then I return home with nothing in my pockets

Egypt, Cairo, Male

Some reported that employers were quick to dock their wages if they were even slightly late – but others also observed that salaries were frequently not paid on time.

I was offered to work in a factory from 7 am to 6 pm for 400 pounds a month and if I am late even for a minute because I have an attendance card they deduct from my salary and so that was very difficult to do

Egypt, Cairo, Female

The problem of low pay is particularly acute because many respondents had family responsibilities to contend with. They needed in many cases to support their parents or siblings. However, despite the problems that low incomes caused, respondents were often obliged to take such low-paying jobs as they were the only ones available to them.
CASE STUDY: EGYPT – SECURITY AND COST

While transport emerged as a major issue in many countries, particularly for rural-dwellers and women, the security and cost considerations associated with it were particularly acute in Egypt, where the unstable situation meant that the transport issue was now affecting both rural and urban dwellers in different ways. In rural areas the distances involved was the source of difficulty whereas in urban areas many were fearful about the safety of the streets.

The young person may spend most of the income on transportation. They may work in another city or town and so they travel and spend money on transportation or food and so the income is lost.

Egypt, Tanta, Female

[when asked about the main issue affecting people in their area] Lack of security to the extent that it is dangerous for us to walk in the streets.

Egypt, Cairo, Female

This was even more of a concern in Egypt, however, where respondents were very aware of the current instability of their country and the potential for criminal opportunism that came with it.

I don’t agree to what they do in Tahrir they destroy the country more, everything is now destroyed, they affected us a lot. Sometimes when we go out we fear going out and not returning.

Egypt, Cairo, Female

Conditions are not secure now I cannot work in a place that is far from home.

Egypt, Cairo, Female

The logistical challenges were compounded by concerns about safety, as well as travelling at night for those who had to work long hours. This affected their willingness to take jobs that demanded certain schedules.

But it is a lot of hassle when you return home by night and especially now the conditions are bad and they make us work till night. And it is not good to return home late especially if you are woman. They don’t ask themselves why do women work they work because they need.

Egypt, Tanta, Female

The transportation issue is particularly detrimental to those from a low income background as it takes a significant portion of their wages/salary, leaving young people in a position where they may not make enough money on top of transportation costs to justify continuing with their work or seeking work in the first place that requires travel.

The young person may spend most of the income on transportation. They may work in another city or town and so they travel and spend money on transportation or food and so the income is lost.

Egypt, Tanta, Female

They don’t insure us and we don’t have transportation fees which is by the way much.

Egypt, Tanta, Male
CASE STUDY: ETHIOPIA – PESSIONISM IN THE YOUTH JOB MARKET

Ethiopia suffers from youth unemployment, and those that are employed are, more often than not, underemployed. Young people are faced with a slew of barriers to employment, at varying degrees, dependent on region and setting (urban vs. rural). Key challenges within the youth labour force include:

- lack of access to educational attainment due to a large segmentation of the population “pricing out of the (education) market”

  I for example have dropped out of school because of the increasing cost of living. But sometimes when I think of those who continued learning and completed their education but remained with no jobs, I did not regret for dropping out of school. I try to work hard as much as I can with anything I get as long as it has payment. Those who completed schools including college level education are also doing similar jobs.  
  Ethiopia, Male

- lack of focus on education in the culture/family

  I am from the countryside and as it is known education is not given that much attention in rural areas, families do not encourage their children to go to school. I started learning all by myself as I had the desire. But to be a student you need educational materials and I couldn’t afford those.  
  Ethiopia, Male

- lack of capacity (a sufficient number of schools to meet the demand of the population for education); and poor education quality.

  The other problem in this area is that while there is only one high school, there are a lot of students. There are no governmental technical and vocational schools in the area except private ones. We cannot afford to pay for the private technical and vocational schools. As a result we cannot get technical or vocational training that will help us to get a job  
  Ethiopia, Female

In addition to these challenges, Ethiopia lacks the appropriate levels of private sector development and government policies to catalyse employment opportunities and provide training programs. Moreover, Ethiopia currently lacks the capabilities and stakeholder alignment to ensure a training curriculum that matches employer needs.

Given this context, the youth in Ethiopia are pessimistic about their job outlook.

  We do not have the self-confidence. We think that unless we have some relatives in that place we know that we can never get hired. So we will be discouraged to going there and apply  
  Ethiopia, Male

The young people in the focus groups reported that most of their peers persevere, in hopes of finding a job, only to be continually disappointed. Many are aware of the skills gaps that permeate throughout the youth population and the service gaps at the macro level that need to be filled.

In spite of these challenges, the evidence of these groups suggest that young people do understand the correlation between education and employment/employability and continue to aspire toward jobs and opportunities that will meet their interests, improve their living conditions and allow them the flexibility to meet family obligations and responsibilities.
5. EDUCATION AND SKILLS
EXPERIENCES OF EDUCATION

Young people from underprivileged backgrounds generally described their experience of education within that context. This frequently involved schooling of a lower standard than the private education afforded by wealthier families or those who live in more affluent areas. The low standards of education they receive discourages young people from continuing with it or pursuing further education, essentially trapping them in a low educational bracket. Problems with schooling took a number of forms.

- **Cost of education is a primary and unavoidable barrier to continuing education for impoverished young people**

When asked what caused them to leave education, by far the most common reason given was the cost of schooling (including the materials required such as books and uniforms). Young people are compelled to leave education in order to either support their family or support themselves in cases where their parents are unable to provide them with their living expenses.

> Financial problems, I had no money for books and uniform. The financial situation of the family was bad; I had to supplement family income by working for daily wages, for the very survival of the family members, so earning money was more important than me going to school.

India, Panipat, Male

- **Family illness/infirmitiy often create a moral imperative for young people to leave education**

Young people who had elderly or ill relatives whose families could not afford to hire professional carers or top quality medical treatment found the cost of education compounded by the need to support these family members who were either unable to work themselves or simply increased household costs through their illness.

> When I was in grade 8, my younger brother was only 3 years old. One day, he was burnt by boiled water and my mother used all money we have to save him and I was at home. I told my parents that may be I stop studying, they agreed, they said that when our financial status became better, they will let me back to school.

Vietnam, Male

[Moderator] I was going to ask you this question why did you leave education?
Because my father got sick and I had to leave school and work instead of him.
My father has poor health and so I had to help him.

Because I wanted to help my father.
The same I wanted to help my father.

- **Lack of family encouragement creates low awareness and a lack of interest in education**

In some cases respondents left education out of a sense of obligation and necessity, but the needs of low-income households can also create an environment where awareness of the benefits of education is low and students are not encouraged by their parents to stay in school. This is particularly the case in rural areas.

There are some families who want their children to stop education at some level and start doing work, even though they can afford to pay for their children's education. As they have no awareness of education

- **Poor teaching standards cause young people to view education in a negative light**

The standard of teaching provided to young people from poor backgrounds was reported as a problem across the countries in the study. Teachers were often seen as uninterested in their students. This was, in some cases, attributed to the fact that teachers were underpaid at the schools in question, particularly in comparison to those working in private schooling or personal tuition.

It depends on the teacher. Mine was a slacker. You made an effort to arrive and many didn’t go, the teachers didn’t go either. It depends, because some were good but many didn’t teach you. The few friends that I had almost didn’t pass.

- Some students also reported harsh treatment from their teachers, sometimes involving physical abuse; this was particularly the case in Egypt and India where it also highlighted the inequality in standards between government and private education (also see case study: *Egypt – Private Tuition and Education inequality*)

Teachers in private schools are usually ladies who treat children with love and explain everything nicely, you are not scolded or thrashed for asking
questions, but in government schools there are male teachers who do not
treat children nicely, they thrash children for asking for having doubts,
children always have doubts so they should be treated nicely otherwise
how they will learn?

India, Delhi, Male

Poor teaching standards took, in some cases, the opposite form. Some respondents
described how teachers did not have the level of interest necessary to provide structure
and discipline which led to the students losing interest and either not paying attention or
not attending classes.

I think young kids just get a lot more leeway than before. If you look, a
couple of years ago grades were actually higher than they are now, and
they were stricter back then. Kids can just walk out of the class and tell
the teachers to shut up and stuff like that, and do what they do. If you had
some form of fear in the teacher and they told you to get to lesson, then
you would listen.

UK, Female, 17-20, Non-Graduate

• Lack of facilities in schools limit young people in gaining skills that may be
useful in the workplace

Schools in impoverished areas were often reported as having poor facilities and
outdated equipment. This was particularly the case with computers, which many
respondents recognize as an important area of skill to learn at school. One former
student in Egypt reported that they were not allowed to use the existing facilities.

There were computers at schools but they did not teach us because they
feared that we may damage them.

Egypt, Tanta, Male

The computers were really, really, really slow. If you wanted to learn, it
was easier to take out the dictionary.

Mexico. Female

• Low employment among the educated is demotivating for young people
seeking to maximize their opportunities

A number of respondents, particularly in Egypt and the UK gave examples of people
they know who are educated, even to degree level in some cases, who were still unable
either to find the work they trained for or any work at all. Cases such as these
discourage young people from trying to become more educated, especially when there is
a financial burden involved that they don’t believe they will recover in the long-term. This
is often associated with a perceived devaluation of education resulting from over-saturation of the job market.

[Moderator] What about the educational level that you reached, for you at least, does it help you to facilitate your life?

Yes, we know how to read and write and calculate.
At least we can talk with educated people in a good way.

[Moderator] What else?

It is the degree they always ask us about the degree we have.

[Moderator] But you finished up to ninth grade?

But currently that is nothing they need you to have finished university degree at least.
And this is the same case with high school diploma as well.

[Moderator] Yes, why do you think so why do people under estimate the high school diploma?

Because there are too many people who have university degrees

My sister has a high school diploma of commerce and she is trying to learn computer and English because she says that her diploma is useless.

Egypt, Cairo, Female

POSITIVE GAINS THROUGH EDUCATION

Although respondents are critical of the education systems in their respective countries they also recognize lack of education as a hindrance in finding work. A number of skills and personal attributes that education provides are seen as benefits in finding work.

• A grounding in communication and social skills

Respondents across geographies reported that the level of education they had received provided them with a grounding in communication (courtesy, language, vocabulary, social skills) which helps them to be more presentable to employers and gives them confidence approaching intimidating situations such as job interviews or interaction with superiors in the workplace.

It teaches you how to communicate with people and how a working environment would kind of be in a way with the teachers, having to be with, like, the boss or the manager and having to obey them and stuff. So, basic communications skills I would say
UK, Female, 17-20, Non-Graduate

*In school you learn how to deal with people and how to talk gracefully with others.*

Egypt, Male, Cairo

- **Numeracy and literacy – perceived as of direct use in the workplace**

  Among the skills gained in school that are valued by ex-students, numeracy and literacy are seen as important and subsequently helpful in the workplace. Some respondents who have aspirations to start their own business or pursued training (e.g. mechanical) that required mathematical skills saw particular value in this.

  [Moderator] You were trained as mechanic, so how your school education helped you in getting skills needed for your job?

  *My school education helped to learn basic accounting needed for the job, I can do calculation, addition, subtraction, division, reading… writing helped me to understand written things, as uneducated person otherwise I would not know what is written.*

  India, Panipat, Male

In the UK this manifested itself in school-leavers’ acknowledgement of the importance of passing GCSEs, which give students a foundation on which to build other skills.

*Basic reading and writing, maths, English. A lot of people have been excluded from school before their GCSEs, did not get their GCSEs. If you don’t have your basic maths and English, there’s no hope for you really.*

UK, Female, 17-20, Non-Graduate

- **Qualifications – the critical ‘piece of paper’ often needed**

  Even among those who were critical of the actual skills gained at school there was an acceptance that the school (or equivalent) qualification provides an edge when seeking work. For some respondents this gives them a limiting ceiling on what they feel they can apply for.

  [Moderator] How do sort of skills play into all of this? Do you look at what they’re looking for and then say, well, I’m not sure I’ve got that, but I’ll apply for it anyway or I don’t think I’ll bother. Do you tend to apply to stuff anyway, whether you’ve got the skills or not?

  *It depends what skills, because you can’t apply for a job if you haven’t got like an NVQ in something. So, the minute you read up on something and if it says you need an NVQ you know you haven’t got, you’re not going to bother, knowing that you’re just going to get and email back saying,*
'Sorry, you've not been accepted.' If it doesn't say anything like that then I'd go ahead and apply for it.

UK, Female, 17-20, Non-Graduate

You look for a job and they ask that you have a high school diploma but you don't.

Mexico, Female

Conversely, among those who were educated to a higher level (secondary school or university) some mentioned that this gave them a sense of confidence they would not otherwise have. In terms of finding work this was considered by some as a ‘skill’ or at least a helpful attribute gained through education

The name of a uni. I think that definitely gives me confidence, because my uni was good for my course. Therefore, knowing that I've got A-Levels from a good college, and went to a good uni. People do scoff at unis. If I know someone’s gone to a certain uni, I do think, 'Hold on, if someone’s got a degree from that uni and I've got a degree from my uni, surely, looking at it on paper, my uni looks better.'

UK, Female, 21-24, Graduate
CASE STUDY – EGYPT – PRIVATE TUITION AND EDUCATION INEQUALITY

In Egypt in particular, problems of education quality are compounded by economic inequality. The government school system alone is seen as ineffective in providing comprehensive education:

> it is not enough to go to school but you have to take private lessons as well

Egypt, Tanta, Female

The fact that teachers are better paid to teach privately can have the knock-on effect of decreasing their interest in teaching poorer students thus depriving them of high quality teaching:

> Teachers are also excused what can they do if they have little salary and at the same time not appreciated.

Egypt, Cairo, Male

There is also a perceived lack of oversight into teachers’ performance in government schools; students reported teachers engaging in misconduct with impunity, including neglect of students:

> I know teachers who slept at the class because they knew that they will get the salary at the end of the month regardless they work or not.

Egypt, Cairo, Male

> My schools did not have a fence and so I used to escape school and go to play football. No one ever asked me where am I, teachers never cared whether we attended or not.

Egypt, Tanta, Male

Physical abuse was also mentioned:

> My father wanted to educate me but I hated it because teachers used to hit us

Egypt, Cairo, Male

> I know a teacher who hit a student and the father threatened him to report the incident the teacher said don’t and I will pass him in the exams, so the parents are more keen on their children passing the exams more than anything else.

Egypt, Tanta, Female

Students see this as a problem to be addressed at the level of teacher’s salaries:

> If they increase the salaries of teachers they would explain the lessons better and would not think of giving private lessons.

By the way private lessons are also an extra effort exerted by the teacher so if he can get the money needed through working hours he would not think about giving extra lessons.

Egypt, Cairo, Male

Greater investment in public education to promote teaching as an attractive professional career, increased standards of education (and their enforcement) and the provision of more resources for those unable to afford private tuition are seen as essential in Egypt, particularly during the current turbulent political climate.
WHAT IS MISSING IN EDUCATION?

Most respondents identified shortcomings in the education system they had been exposed to, specifically in terms of areas of study and specific skills that they would have benefitted from, which were not provided to them. In other cases, skills that respondents felt would be beneficial were taught in schools - but some said they had not completed them to a high enough level to become proficient. In the context of this study, failures in education systems to either provide adequate and practically applicable skills to young people while at the same time leaving them with a negative view of education is of paramount importance to address.

- Practical skills lose out to theoretical teaching

A great many respondents commented that they felt school was too theoretical in its approach and did not provide them with ‘practical’ skills they could apply in later life and throughout their career. The skills themselves varied somewhat, but the general point was fairly consistent across countries.

*It is not enough and it is not satisfactory. But it matters if you are a hardworking and successful student. If you leave everything for them (the school) and expect to get all from them it will not be enough. Because, they do not focus on practical lessons rather they only offer theory aspects.*

Ethiopia, Male

*They should teach us more practical things rather than the theory they teach us.*

Egypt, Tanta, Female

Examples of practical skills mentioned:

1. Computing

Respondents showed a good deal of awareness about the importance of technology in the developing world and many were very keen to enhance their computer skills but did not feel this was enough a priority in schools.

*I know bit of computers, but if get proper training I can do well, I gained computer knowledge by going to cyber café, but no one teaches computer. I don’t have computer, which I need to learn.*

India, Delhi, Male
The world we are living is getting modernized day by day, but here some of us don’t even know how to operate computers. Ethiopia, Female

There weren’t any computing courses.

Private schools have that kind of courses, but not public ones.

The basics are taught because you must take the subject.

You’re not trained in how to use the software.

[Moderator] How important is the ability issue compared to other factors?

I think that’s where you acquire experience. If you learned how to use a PC, then you won’t get scared when having to deal with it.

Mexico, Male and Female

2. Language

A lack of foreign language skills (usually but not exclusively English) was seen as a serious hindrance to many young people from non-English-speaking countries.

[Moderator] You feel knowledge of English is necessary?

It is very important to know English

Even knowledge of Hindi is important

Understanding and speaking English is important

India, Delhi, Male and Female

At the moment, I am learning Korean at home but it will be better if I study in a centre. So I will register for a course. After I finish my Korean course, I will take an exam, if I pass the exam, I will go to Korea. If I fail, I can wait for the next time.

Vietnam, Male

3. Work experience

Related to the issue of practical skills, respondents who left education in order support themselves or their families financially often left school with little or no work experience which left them in a very difficult position, given the importance that most respondents reported that employers attached to employment experience when deciding who to hire.

There should be job opportunities for young people with no experience. If every employer demands experience young people who just finished their studies cannot find any job and therefore will not have any experience. So, at least those organizations that are starting work should provide the chance for those who did not have any experience.

Ethiopia, Female
Respondents acknowledged that schools did seek to provide work experience. But they generally considered it insufficient; students would have a brief period of work experience without enough time to learn the gain the skills required for the job and would therefore not derive any benefit from it when they entered the job market.

You can ask to study in a garage, and after finishing study, you can ask for a job there

Vietnam, Male

In colleges and in schools as well, they should do more, not just a day release where you go off and do a bit of work experience, they should do it like if they have two days in school, three days in placement, just balance it out. That way you’re in school, you’re learning what you need to learn and you’re out there trying to get some experience, get what you need for the job you want to go for or for anything else, and grades to just build up.

UK, Female, 17-20, Non-Graduate

With the standard of teaching experienced often felt to be poor, and with a lack of interest in students from teachers a common problem, labour market orientation was felt to be lacking.

I think it would make a big difference if I can have an education related to my interest. I would also be happy if I could find someone well educated in the area of my interest to guide and give me a better understanding of my vocation of interest. If someone can give the skills and the possibility to start work I know I can achieve my goals.

Ethiopia, Female

Many students did not feel that they received sufficient guidance about what kinds of work might be open to them, what they would like to pursue after school, and what further qualifications or training they might need. Work experience may serve as a way of bridging this gap. For some, this was the most important message to convey.

[Moderator] Each year they [UNESCO] have a report with recommendations to help youth like you find a job what do you think you can tell them?

In China they put everyone in his right place but here they don’t do so.

[Moderator] So, categorizing youth according to their degrees and qualities to work in what they know?

Yes.

I am a carpenter so I should work in this why would I go and work in painting.
[Moderator] So, let’s summarize the messages you will give to UNESCO there should be organizations responsible of helping youth and they should put each one in his own place or the job that they are good in and to guide them in the thing they know. What else?

The point is to guide the youth to the place where they can work according to their qualifications.

Egypt, Tanta, Male

4. Connections

Young people across geographies reported difficulty in getting work (or at least well-paid or stable work) without having some influence through personal or family connections to get secure jobs for them. This is sometimes related to the socioeconomic status and family background of the individual or the field in which influential family members work. This is something that education alone is unable to provide them with

If the one who has the certificate of literacy he can work but still he has to have connections.

Egypt, Tanta, Male

The socioeconomic status is also important. If I have a lot of money and stuff, and my dad has a business then he has friends with businesses and those are connections because he tells them: Hey, my daughter just graduated.’ And that’s it.

Mexico, Female

I will ask for a job in a garage.

[Moderator] Do you think it is easy?

I think it will be easy.

[Moderator] Really?

Yes, if you have connection.

[Moderator] Really?

Yes.

Vietnam, Male
Respondents in India were generally in agreement about the importance of receiving education in order to secure employment and, while some specific ideas about what constitutes a good education varied, there were a number of skills young people consistently mentioned were vital for schools to place emphasis on.

English language skills, in particular were mentioned in both Delhi and Panipat as important for career progression. Most respondents who mentioned it as an important skill were not satisfied with the priority it was given in schooling or the level to which they were taught it.

*The knowledge of English language is must these days, and as we did not study we don't know English, so that is also a problem.*

India, Delhi, Male

[Moderator] What makes finding good job difficult?

*Lack of English language, very few people who are like us know English.*

[Moderator] So is knowledge of English is a must in finding a good job?

Yes

*Working knowledge of English is a must in finding a good job.*

*These days educated people speak in English.*

*If somebody talks to you in English, and when you don't know English you cannot interact with that person.*

[Moderator] Therefore you say knowledge of English is a must in finding a good job, some say youth like you have education, personality, skills If you know English finding job gets easy.

India, Delhi, Female

Computing and IT were also mentioned fairly frequently, particularly in Delhi. Given the growth of the IT industry in India this is not surprising, and respondents seemed very aware of the growing importance of this field.

*I am looking for jobs that use computers. Computers are demanded everywhere, salaries in such computer based jobs are also good, everywhere computers are used these days.*

India, Delhi, Female

*I am interested in making computerized stickers, it is trendy and interesting and you can make good money.*

[Moderator] So using computers you can earn more

Yes

India, Delhi, Male
As with languages, respondents did not seem satisfied with the level of instruction they had received from schools in this area but are quite engaged when it comes to seeking instruction or self-teaching outside of formal education.

I know bit of computers, but if get proper training I can do well, I gained computer knowledge by going to a cyber café, but there no one teaches computer.

India, Delhi, Male

My uncle has told me that for mobile repair shop I need to do 3 months short mobile repair course and it would not cost much and there is lot of money in mobile repair work

India, Delhi, Male

While young people in India seem to value education in and of itself there are gaps in the level of teaching in the areas they consider relevant. Additionally, many reported a more general grievance with the standard of education in government schools compared to private (as has also been observed in Egypt).

Government school teachers do teach but not as teachers teach in private schools, teaching standard is very low in government schools

India, Panipat, Female

Schools were not far away but main issue was in government schools there is no good education, teachers came to school but they never taught us properly, they just while away their time

India, Delhi, Female

In government schools there is no good education, teachers came to school but they never taught properly

India, Delhi, Female

In order for young people in India, especially those from impoverished backgrounds, to take advantage of the economic development of their country it would seem to be vital that the skills gaps in schools, as well as the poor standards in public education, be addressed.
APPRENTICESHIPS AND TRAINING

The young people in the focus groups were aware that apprenticeships, which offer training possibilities outside of a fulltime education and, for early school-leavers, may offer alternative career opportunities for those with aspirations beyond unskilled work. The attitudes of young people towards training programs illustrates the perceived availability and awareness of alternative careers in their respective countries and localities and how empowered young school-leavers feel to pursue fulfilling careers despite low levels of education or an impoverished socio-economic background.

Given the perceived shortcomings of the school system across regions to provide practical skills and work experience, young people generally had a positive view of the...
potential of training programs and the varied opportunities they might offer. There was also some emphasis placed on the ability of apprenticeships to provide a direct path to work rather as opposed to schooling, this is unsurprisingly, very important to those from impoverished backgrounds who have immediate living costs to meet and cannot long term and expensive university degrees.

**[Moderator]** So you are confident that when you finish studying a skill, you can do it right away?

Yes.

**[Moderator]** What about you? Can you repair computers right away?

About repairing computers, I think I can. I will go to the centre to learn computer repair. When I study in the centre, I can practice there and after getting certificate, I can work right away. If I study hard, I also can practice at home, so I believe I am able to work right away. I not only learn theory.

**[Moderator]** You also practice?

That’s right.

**[Moderator]** In the apprenticeship centre, the place they are teaching you, the learning centre, do they allow you to practice?

They allow me to practice assembling or repairing computers. I have read books about computer: there are two things: hardware and software. If I study hardware, I will repair computer, but if I study software, I will be programmer. It depends on what I learn.

Vietnam, Male

However, there were differing views on the way in which apprenticeships complemented formal education. While apprenticeships were seen by a few as something to pursue after education has been completed, many respondents saw it as an alternative or even that the two were in some way mutually exclusive.

**Training or practical lesson that is given related to my education I say it will be very helpful. If we take chemistry for instance, the practical lesson would be very helpful. So, such training after I complete my education will be very good.**

Ethiopia, Male

**It is good but it helps those who did not complete their education they don’t think or help those who want to complete their education.**

Egypt, Tanta, Female
Furthermore, while the idea of training appealed to many respondents there was often low awareness about the specifics of what was available, and apprenticeships were sometimes seen as inaccessible. This emerged in India in particular where respondents were unaware of schemes offered by government or NGOs and did not feel they had time to research these opportunities and support themselves at the same time. This finding came across particularly strongly in developing countries, most notably India.

[Moderator] Are you aware of the schemes offered by say Delhi government which helps to develop skills so that you can find good job

We have no idea

No idea, we have no information

[Moderator] Why you don’t have any information

No one has informed us about any schemes for us, or the place where we can go and undergo training

India, Delhi, Female

We are busy working and we can’t go during our working time to find out the information about schemes for us

India, Delhi, Male

Across regions, many young people identified a potential role for government to pursue greater partnership with private companies, possibly providing subsidies or incentives to provide young people with training programs, work experience or internships.

The government should give courses that you like. In trainings, depending on how you’re doing, they help you to improve and they help you.

Mexico, Female

They [government] should fund more apprenticeships because an apprenticeship is paid work experience, so if you fund more of that then people would be more experienced and be more confident to get a job.

UK, Female, 17-19, Non-Graduate
CASE STUDY – UNITED KINGDOM – PRACTICAL SKILLS FOR SCHOOL LEAVERS

Discussions with early school-leavers in the UK revealed a sense of dissatisfaction with the skills content of the school curriculum. Some students felt that the areas of education given the most emphasis at school had little practical value in the workplace.

Lessons like history, you sit there like, ‘Why am I here?’ It didn’t interest me. Why do I need to know about Henry VIII? It’s never going to come up in the workplace, is it?

UK, Female, 17-19, Non-Graduate

Lessons that students did find useful differed in the sense that they provided specific skills as opposed to pure content.

[Moderator] Where did you feel you learnt the most relevant stuff that you’ve used since? If you think about what you were learning at school, what sort of subjects was it where you’ve actually used it since?

English

[Moderator] Why English?

Essay-writing

[Moderator] What does that help you with?

Writing reports and letters and stuff.

[Moderator] What else?

ICT. You’re always going to use a computer.

Maths as well, so if you get paid you want to know what’s going on and how much you’re getting taxed

UK, Male and Female, 17-19, Non-Graduate

When asked to suggest what might be improved, respondents generally agreed on the need for a greater emphasis on work experience. Periods of work experience offered were seen as too brief to facilitate the development of new skills and provide the experience necessary to find employment.

In colleges and in schools as well, they should do not just a day release where you go off and do a bit of work experience, they should do it like if they have two days in school, three days in placement, just balance it out. That way you’re in school, you’re learning what you need to learn and you’re out there trying to get some experience, get what you need for the job you want to go for.

UK, Male, 17-19, Non-Graduate
Greater emphasis on work experience is seen as important not only in providing experience and skills but also in giving students a clearer idea of their options. Some school-leavers reported that they did not receive enough guidance about the workplace, what was expected of them, and what their options were. Rather than being given hands-on experience of the workplace and guidance as to what different jobs might entail most of the emphasis is placed on what further academic choices to make.

I didn’t know what I wanted to do, and I didn’t have anyone to, like, advise me or guide me or try and help me narrow down what I wanted to do, or what I could do in the meantime. So I just applied for three different colleges and three different subjects, all because I didn’t know what I wanted to do.

UK, Female, 17-19, Non-Graduate

Personally, I believe that they just try to move you on as quickly as possible, like from school. It’s like apply for college, apply for college, apply for college. After you’ve finished college, it’s like go to university, go to university, go to university. When I was in college, I got made to fill out a UCAS and I didn’t know what I wanted to do, so I just applied for university, doing anything. So, it’s like they’re just trying to get rid of you, really.

UK, Female, 17-19, Non-Graduate

Additionally, school leavers perceived a need for further guidance after leaving full-time education. This was seen to take the form of government schemes, investment by the business community and more comprehensive guidance from the job center.

They [the government] should fund more apprenticeships because an apprenticeship is paid work experience, so if you fund more of that then people would be more experienced and be more confident to get a job.

UK, Female, 17-19, Non-Graduate

The business community because if someone takes you on in a business, even if it’s voluntary, to what you want to do, it gives you that confidence and experience that maybe I can do it because I have done it before.

UK, Female, 17-19, Non-Graduate

The Job Centre people. The ones I have dealt with were a bit disappointing but you know when you do Jobseeker’s Allowance? You just come in and sign it, they don’t even talk to you, they just come in and sign it and then that’s it. There’s nothing else to it.

UK, Female, 17-19, Non-Graduate
CASE STUDY – UNITED KINGDOM – DIFFICULTIES IN THE GRADUATE JOB MARKET

Although respondents in developing countries with low levels of education were envious of those educated to degree level, graduates in the UK were able to give personal accounts of their difficulties finding work even with their degree-level education. The UK examples also tended to relate to the current economic climate and respondents felt they were in a worse position than previous generations of graduates, to the extent that they were having to incrementally lower their expectations as they went about their job search.

*You’ve just got to keep going lower, because you’ve just got to get in there. Then you go to the next stage and then you still don’t get anything, so then you’ve got to go, like, to the level below. You feel like you’re, kind of, selling yourself short, a bit.*

UK, Female, 19-24, Graduate

Apprenticeships and training for graduates

There was a sense that apprenticeships were something to be done instead of university rather than in addition to it. Some relayed stories of friends of theirs who had either forgone or left university to pursue training courses and, in some cases, were now ‘better off’ reflecting the perceived difficulty of the graduate job market.

*My friend, he’d done an apprenticeship for BT, he’s doing very well right now. Well, was going to university, in second year he got offered an apprenticeship at BT and he took it and quit uni to do that. I wouldn’t consider that, myself, especially the degree that I did, I didn’t really have the opportunity.*

UK, Male, 20-24, Graduate

*I was going to say, you can’t apply if you’ve got a degree. Like, for instance, most of them will be, like, ‘Oh, there’s a graduate page and there’s an apprentice page.’*

UK, Female, 20-24, Graduate

*Yes, that’s the whole point. So, there’s not really a lot of opportunities for graduates to do apprenticeships because they’re separate for the same company.*

UK, Female, 20-24, Graduate

Graduate jobs

Although it was acknowledged that a degree allowed one to pursue jobs that would not otherwise be accessible, these jobs were generally seen as over-subscribed even by those with a background in a specific field of study.

*You have to have a degree in a certain field depending on what program you want to go into, 25,000 people apply for that job. Like, if you didn’t have a degree, you could have your own business and turn over £1 million.*

UK, Female, 20-24 UK
Over-qualification

Graduates were also concerned that a degree – perhaps in a less sought-after subject or from a less prestigious institution – could render them over-qualified and actually harm their chances of getting work. Some had reached the stage where they had to play down their qualifications.

You, kind of, play down your qualifications because sometimes your actual qualifications and your actual experiences are too much for the job that you’re applying for, but just so that they don’t think you’re too over-qualified and too over-experienced, you, kind of, playing it down and water it down.

UK, Female, 19-24, Graduate

In two more extreme cases, graduates reported that a degree in a particular field of study can actually limit your options within that field.

The first job I got after I graduated was, like, nothing to do with what I studied, and it was a starting salary that I probably won’t earn again in the next ten years, but it was a job in a hedge fund that started off at £40,000 a year. I was going up against people who had done Economics at Cambridge and Oxford, and stuff like that. I had a bit of banter with people doing the interview, and I ended up getting the job. I asked why, because I knew there was other people and I did History and Politics, and they were just, like, ‘To be honest, we want someone that’s not-, the last person we had had an Economics degree, and after a few months, you know, he thought he knew it all, and stuff, and he wanted to go up higher. If we want someone to just sit and learn the way we want to teach you, for a year.’ They want someone to start from scratch, because you can’t do a degree in the particular job that they were doing, so they want someone that’s just going to listen and learn stuff. So, it didn’t matter that they had done Economics.

UK, Male, 19-24, Graduate

Yes, I tried to apply for a job, it was actually an events coordinator. It actually said on the thing, ‘We do not want events management students.’

UK, Female, 19-24, Graduate

The combination of these factors and the options that graduates feel are closed to them having pursued a particular educational path left many of them feeling de-motivated, disappointed with the opportunities education has offered them and often having to reassess their career options.
6. RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUPPORTING AND MOTIVATING YOUNG JOB-SEEKERS

In each of the countries studied, young people’s perception on responsibility revolved around a different set of actors. Even so, in most countries, respondents identified government, parents and educational establishments as chiefly responsible for providing them with opportunities. The only case where personal responsibility for doing so was evoked strongly was with the young respondents from Ethiopia, as outlined below.

- **Responsibility of others – government, parents, educational establishments**
  
  - **Government are seen as the instrumental force to set in motion programs to help young people**

Across most countries, government’s responsibility to provide youth with work and educational opportunities was the most consistent theme. With the exception of Ethiopia, the young respondents’ expectations on government-funded training/education schemes and policies, and public-private partnerships were high as a means to enable them to access jobs.

> The government should give us a boost. It should train us and tell us what we were trained for, so we know where we can work. Training should be useful for the offered job.

  Mexico, Male

According to respondents across each of the countries, government’s responsibility primarily involves providing education policy and running schools. In the UK, young people suggested partnerships between government and businesses to fund training schemes and apprenticeships. They also suggested government subsidy schemes as a means to provide them with professional experience. In Ethiopia, respondents noted they would appreciate more interventions from the government in providing them with opportunities either through vocational training or professional experience.

> Government has all power to help us; they have all the resources to help us. They can help us get us jobs.

  India, Delhi, Male

> ...if the Government looks into experience like apprenticeships a bit more then it’s a little bit easier to get a job.

  UK, Female, 17-19, Non-Graduate

However, respondents were cynical about what government would do in reality, with politicians seen as disconnected from their electorate.
They did not do anything so far and I don’t think they will do. You elect them and then they don’t show you their face

Egypt, Tanta, Male

• Parents are key in shaping the attitudes and abilities of young people to overcome difficulties in later life

Parents were seen to have a significant role to play. Young people perceived them to be responsible for encouraging their access to education and allowing them to apply for jobs.

Parents have the responsibility for children till they finish their education and become independent.

Ethiopia, Male

...our family can help us by allowing us to work.

India, Panipat, Female

Our parents are on our side and have given us moral support. In some cases, we’re not asked to contribute. Once we can put our own business, they’ll support us.

Mexico, Male

In Ethiopia and Mexico, young people underlined that upbringing and instilling values are vitally important, even if parents are not always able to provide financial support. In India, respondents expressed the need for more support from their families with regards to housework in order to enable them to finish their studies.

My father can help me if he takes care of my responsibility at home, then I can study.

India, Delhi, Female

• Educational establishments need to provide young people with more practical skills and greater awareness

Across all countries, youth expressed the need to have more practical training, which should be in accordance with the demands of the market. Many noted a desire to join training programs which would allow them to gain appropriate skills, which employers were looking for.

Not long ago, plumbing courses were given to women, but there weren’t vacancies. It’s useless if you can’t get a job.

Mexico, Male
The role of the education system is inextricably linked with that of government and requires partnership between the two.

[Moderator] What do you see the government best offering in terms of preparation for work?

The government has to create more job opportunities.

Increase the number of government training schools in technical and vocational fields of study which can create the chance for many to acquire the skills and education. Then the provision of opportunity to be hired will come next.

Ethiopia, Male

Additionally, young people spoke of the quality of teaching that is offered to them. The role of teachers mainly consists in providing quality education and relevant training. Unfortunately, many young people indicated that the quality and relevance of public education is not comparable to that of private schools in their countries (see EDUCATION AND SKILLS). Respondents, particularly in Egypt, reported cases in which teachers resort to providing private classes for payment as a means to increase their income. They also highlighted the result around unfair access to an education, based on financial means.

...private lessons are also an extra effort exerted by the teacher so if he can get the money needed through working hours he would not think about giving extra lessons.

Egypt, Cairo, Male

- Young people acknowledge the importance of self-reliance and personal responsibility but remain pessimistic

While respondents perceive that the individual has a responsibility to do whatever is in their power to support themselves and those who depend on them, they are not convinced that they will be able to achieve this through their own efforts. This was particularly the case in Egypt, Ethiopia, India and Vietnam. In these countries, youth felt responsible for the future but pessimistic, and did not see other entities such as government supporting them. Youth from Mexico and the UK, on the other hand, put a much stronger responsibility for their future on the services provided by government and assistance from family, and appeared to have higher expectations that government could or would step into the breach.
In all countries except for Ethiopia, the respondents believe that the state at different levels (and to some extent parents) should provide them with job opportunities after providing them with the appropriate education and training.

[Moderator] What are your efforts or your responsibility to find a good job for yourself?

Once we know that there is a job, we can take up that job.

If government offers us schemes for getting an education and a job we will make the best use of the opportunity.

India, Delhi, Male
CASE STUDY: ETHIOPIA: PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Responses from the Ethiopian groups suggest that education is considered less important than work and employment. This may be why school enrollment rates are lower in rural areas than urban areas despite the government’s efforts to build more schools and raise awareness. Although primary education is free, families from poorer households still face economic challenges regarding sending their kids to school due to opportunity costs such as school materials and transportation.

However, as they grow, children learn to value education and the benefits of being educated.

I would also say that parents only focus on education. When we get out of education we find ourselves clueless about the world of work. This is because parents only try to show us only the way through formal education.

Ethiopia, Female

Unlike the other countries in the study, there is a high sense of personal responsibility among young Ethiopians. This is mainly due to their pessimism towards government and others’ inclination and means to support them. Youth believe they are fully responsible for achieving their goals and can only count on their families and communities for moral support. They believe no one is there for them except themselves.

For me I have no one to help me. I do everything by myself. And unless I plan to better myself in a way there is no one for me to help me.

Ethiopia, Male

If parents do not have the ability, they cannot bring it from anywhere to support us. They can only support us only if they have.

Ethiopia, Male

I don’t expect anyone to help me in my life. I am only relying on myself and my ability to work. I will work whenever I can and hope to succeed one day.

Ethiopia, Male

There is a general understanding that there is a lot of favoritism in companies that have the potential to hire young people. The general perception is that jobs are only provided to young people with connections or relatives in a company.

There are only few job opportunities available in this area. These opportunities are usually captured by those who have good personal connections. If you know the people who are hiring, through relatives or friends, then you will have good chance of getting the job.

Ethiopia, Female
Although they also acknowledge parental and government’s responsibility in their education and providing for a favorable environment for job opportunities, they made it clear that this support is mainly in the early stage of their lives for the parents and that the government does not do much and could not be waited upon.

_The family should raise children in such a way that the children will have good behaviour. The family is the nearest to a child to provide support in his/her education and to follow up their behavior. The support can be in material or financial terms. Therefore the family has the primary responsibility._

Ethiopia, Female

The young respondents identified areas where they require support. This includes the Government providing incentives for a fair job market, and increasing the number of vocational training offerings in line with market needs.

_For instance, young people in micro and small enterprises are employed because of the government initiative. On the other hand there are a lot of unemployed young people who have graduated from universities. The government has the responsibility to provide these young people with jobs._

Ethiopia, Female
7. ASPIRATIONS

Despite the various barriers to finding work, many young people in the groups still aspired to pursue a range of careers. This section further illustrates the aspirations and ambitions of young people, reasons behind these aspirations and examples of inspiring figures.

• Many young people have specific aspirations but are not optimistic about their chances of achieving them

Many of the young people studied are pessimistic about reaching their career aspirations. They point to the lack of government policies and programs that support supply-side job creation and small business development and demand-side training and workforce development programs. As such, they saw themselves as “alone” and did not expect support from family or other external parties.

> Currently, my education and skill level is not sufficient enough, but if I could go to training in the future, I believe I could achieve them. I know that it is only me who can support and educate myself...

  Ethiopia, Female

> ...If someone can give me the skills and the opportunity to work, I know I can achieve my goals.

  Ethiopia, Female

But in spite of the pessimism, respondents were still ambitious regarding their job and career aspirations. Young people were interested in careers that suited their interests and / or those that improved their living conditions while giving them the flexibility to meet their obligations at home. Job aspirations ranged from law and medicine, to office positions, health and beauty (beautician) and tailoring (seamstress). But the perceived barriers to educational attainment and labour market experience already explored meant that most were not pinning their hopes on breaking into elite professions.

• The need to meet immediate needs and those of family drive aspirations of stability and security

Pragmatism dominated respondents’ aspirations around employment. These centred on their desire to improve their living conditions and support their families. Many respondents were willing to take any job, as long as the salary was sufficient to fulfill their financial responsibilities.

> I want to change myself and my living conditions. If a job is going to change my living status in a short period of time, I don’t mind...be it physical labor or other.

  Ethiopia, Male
Many respondents also valued the ability to take care of and spend time at home with their families. As such, many sought defined work hours and the ability to own their own businesses. Moreover, women sought opportunities that would contribute to the household income while being able to manage their household responsibilities.

…I want to have my house and do my work; doing stitching work at my home. I want to get married and contribute to my husband’s income by working.

India, Delhi, Female

Whether it is a very small thing, I want to have something of my own. It can be a small business such as selling things on the street, but as long as I own it.

Ethiopia, Male

Respondents also aspired to find jobs that were stable and secure. In a job market where most positions are temporary or seasonal, respondents were interested in more permanent positions and companies that provided consistent pay.

[Moderator] What else is the problem, tell is it true that one takes up jobs as per the need for the job?

Yes

In the winter season there are no jobs for us

Same is true in extreme summer season

India, Panipat, Male and Female

...you always get knocked back down. You can apply for ten jobs and be rejected by all ten; and then you don’t feel as confident as you did the first time.

UK, Female, 17-19, Non-Graduate
• **Inspirational figures are usually close to home**

With some exceptions, (notably in the UK, where entrepreneur Richard Branson was cited) respondents did not generally cite public figures as inspirations for them around in the world of work. Instead, participants tended to mention family and friends as their main source of inspiration and examples of role models. Young people are inspired by persons they are close to, such as parents, friends, teachers, neighbors who are tailors, doctors, teachers, artists, entrepreneurs, to name a few. They are inspired by individuals who are successful, dedicated, and hard-working, earn a good living and have secure employment.

*My father inspires me. He does everything to perfection.*

India, Panipat, Male

*My teacher/neighbor taught me to become a beautician; I have a lot of regard for her and she teaches me well, and so I want to be like her.*

India, Panipat, Female
CASE STUDY: VIETNAM - CAREER ASPIRATIONS

Career aspirations in Vietnam tend to focus on stability and security. Respondents tended not to rely on their parents (who are generally too poor) or the government (respondents are fairly familiar with the poor levels of social welfare) to provide them with long-term support. This need for financial security manifested itself in different ways between the male and female groups.

Men tended to aspire towards practical work with fairly favourable working conditions that is in high demand, most notably computer, mobile phone and motorcycle repair. These are generally regarded as skills that have to be gained outside of school.

In order to repair a mobile phone, you must be very detail oriented, because it is so small. Of course you have to learn, learn from people around you, from other technicians. And you have to be hardworking, you also have to learn by yourself

Vietnam, Male.

I like to repair motorbikes because there are many kinds of motorbikes, people use motorbikes more, they need to repair them more, and I can earn more money. I just want to earn money.

Vietnam, Male

These jobs are both stable and do not require working in harsh conditions which is an issue some respondents had encountered through their peers.

I have a friend working there [frozen food factory], you know, the chemical they use to process fishes, it is not good for health. I heard that and I don’t want to work there. When you work there, you have to wear boot, gloves, mask but still you are affected

Vietnam, Male.

Females also aspire to financial stability and, while some do have aspirations to open their own business, many seek security through marriage, particularly to foreigners.

In Vietnam, most people cannot live with the salary, it is so low, it cannot meet our demand, so a lot of girls marry to the foreigners.

Vietnam, Female

In my neighbourhood, about seven families among ten are married to foreigners.

Vietnam, Female

This outlook is, at least partially, perpetuated by their family and home life where many of them are not encouraged to stay in school and being a housewife is a social norm for females.

My mother thought I was not good at study, so she let me quit school

Vietnam, Female

[When asked about long term aspirations] I will stay at home to take care my family. My husband will support me, I stay at home to be a housewife.

Vietnam, Female
## APPENDIX: GROUP PROFILES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Locality</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Work activities/circumstances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Cairo (urban)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Completed a maximum of lower secondary education</td>
<td>Construction, waiting, upholsterer, blacksmith,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16-18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Completed a maximum of lower secondary education</td>
<td>Needle work, sugar warehouse, household work, some married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tanta (rural)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Completed a maximum of lower secondary school (some who have not completed primary school)</td>
<td>Steelworks, plumber, gypsum, carpenter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16-18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Completed a maximum of lower secondary school (some who have not completed primary school)</td>
<td>Seasonal farm work, crate packing, some married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Mojo</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Completed a maximum of lower secondary school (some who have not completed primary school)</td>
<td>Daily labourer, house maid, receptionist, unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Completed a maximum of lower secondary school (some who have not completed primary school)</td>
<td>Assistant to mechanic, House help, daily labourers, unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Not completed upper secondary education</td>
<td>Factory packing, printing, babysitter,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15-18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Completed a maximum of lower secondary education</td>
<td>Toy factory, groceries, household work, maid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Panipat</td>
<td></td>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Completed a maximum of lower secondary education</td>
<td>Livestock, mechanic, household work, dairy sales,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16-18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Completed a maximum of lower secondary education</td>
<td>Mostly farm or household work,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Age Range</td>
<td>Completed Education</td>
<td>Work Status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Mexico City</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>15-18</td>
<td>Completed a maximum lower secondary education</td>
<td>Generally unemployed/looking for work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>London (Tottenham)</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>20-25</td>
<td>Maximum upper secondary education</td>
<td>Generally unemployed, part-time internet café work, babysitting, some married females, two with children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>London (Southgate)</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>17-20</td>
<td>Three with less than three GCSEs</td>
<td>Early school-leavers, not in full-time work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>Can Tho</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>Mainly completed a maximum of lower secondary (maximum of three who have completed upper secondary education)</td>
<td>Unemployed, seasonal farm work, abattoir</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>Mainly completed a maximum of lower secondary (maximum of three who have completed upper secondary education)</td>
<td>Unemployed, farm work, coffee shop, housework</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX: FOCUS GROUPS - CARTAGENA, COLOMBIA

UNESCO Global Youth Study
Focus Groups – REPORT

Group of indigenous youth from Latin America – Cartagena, Colombia 16-17 February, 2012

1.0 Introduction and warmup

Objective: To get the group talking and interacting with each other; making them comfortable with expressing their opinions and respecting others.

Understanding top-of-mind local/country issues then specifically about any issues impacting youth, and identifying where work fits in.

Moderator welcomed respondents, introduced himself, UNESCO and GMR. Participants introduced themselves.

List of participants

1. Mario Villazón R., Santa Marta, Colombia. Resguardo Indígena Kankuamo
   mario-80v@hotmail.com
   magda.tomastomas@hotmail.com
3. Manuel Méndez Romero, Maya administrador de empresas, docente en San Carlos, Guatemala manumendez@hotmail.com
4. Yolanda de León de Santiago, Guanajuato, México. Escuela Intercultural Nenemi, mahetsitso@hotmail.com
5. José Manuel Bacasegua Murillo indígena Yaqui, Estado de Sonora, México.
   hamblet11@hotmail.com Biólogo, maestro de educación básica y trabajo en cuestiones culturales y respeto a los pueblos indígenas
   perezze@live.com.mx
7. Rosa del Carmen Vázquez, Maya Catchique, Defensora Indígena, Consejo de Juventudes, Guatemala.
   rositavasquez11@yahoo.com
   elena-jezo@hotmail.com
   Daniela.juarez@rita.com.mx
    arceliaabril@hotmail.com
11 leaders of indigenous peoples in Latin America participated in the focus group. They belonged to the following indigenous groups: Maya, Zapoteca, Nahua, Ch’ol Tila, Yaqui, Jakatan, Kaukamon, Guaraní. Five participants were male and six female. They were from Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico and Paraguay. Their ages ranged from 21 to 27 year-old. 3 were unemployed, 5 worked for indigenous associations, 2 were teachers and 1 was an entrepreneur.

1. What do you feel are the biggest development challenges facing the area you live/ [country]? Why do you say that?

The West does not understand our culture. We have a different understanding of the nature. For us the environment is life. We live in harmony with the nature and then we transform it. Whereas the West over exploit the nature. There is a clash between our cultures. They destroy our culture. They say: “these stupid indigenous people don’t understand the benefits that progress brings to them”. That perspective led us to an environmental chaos. We don’t want alms from the government. We are fighting for our rights, because we want to preserve the environment. We do take care of the environment, but they see us as an obstacle to their interests.

Racism is the biggest challenge. They force us to wear western clothes and abandon our typical clothes. There is discrimination against indigenous people in schools and in the universities.

Language is another barrier. We cannot pronounce well the Spanish language. There are some sounds that we do not have in our original languages and when we make mistakes in pronunciation they mock of us. We are forced to learn other languages if we want to get an education and jobs.

We have no money and education is another problem. Nowadays without a degree, even a master’s degree, it is very difficult to get jobs.

Health is another problem. If the mother is undernourished then babies cannot be healthy. Malnutrition brings important learning problems.

Jails are full of indigenous people. Indigenous people are in jail for minor things but we do not have the resources to defend ourselves in the judicial system. We are excluded from society.

Human development is about living well. We do not live well. Living well is enjoying education and health and having access to basic services. In order to have access to services we are forced to migrate to cities. Infrastructure is not enough for living well. We need to make better use of our resources.

There are different approaches to development. For us it is different than industrialization. For us it is important to preserve the territory and our environment and being able to produce our food. We reject the standardization of western civilization that expects us to be all the same. They impose on us an educational model; they impose on us a health model. They do not respect the ancient knowledge of our peoples. Another problem is the religious evangelization. There is a ‘de-culturization’ process. In my culture I never felt myself as a poor. But with the culture of Adidas, of Nike and MacDonalds we get into a conflict and, they make me feel like a poor. I do not meet the standards because I do not have a refrigerator or because I sleep on the floor.

We should add the lack of relevance of the educational system. We may even finish a postgraduate degree and end up without a job. We could consider education even a waste of time. After spending 12 to 18 years there is no guarantee you will get a job.
Objective: Understanding the problems of finding secure and reliable work that helps them meet basic needs and supporting themselves and perhaps their families in greater depth, and who it impacts most, main causes, – and where the skills issue rates in the context of other challenges. Identify education and skills gaps.

2. When you think about the issues young people like you face in finding work in your local area, what issues spring to mind?

- We are cheap labor force.
- If you want to get a job you must be ready to work 12 or 18 hours a day
- Multinational companies pay less
- Women are paid even less
- We only receive low wages
- high level skills required
- poor working conditions
- low levels of education
- you have to be single
- you cannot have children
- Strong discrimination against indigenous people. They will always prefer to hire a white than an indigenous youngster.
- We are not covered against labor accidents
- State labor laws are not respected for indigenous people
- We do not have enough skills
- The economic system is made this way, we provide labor but do not have access to means of production

3. Who do you think is most affected by these issues? What do your friends or family say?

3. We are frustrated because of the lack of opportunities
4. We are losing our ancestral values
5. We were taught to cultivate the land. But we do not want to work the field any longer
6. Our grandparents were wise and knew how to make good use of resources.

4. How and where do most young people you know earn money?

- In the field, in agricultural work, the whole day or for hours
- In commercial chains but earning salaries below the minimum wage
- Recycling garbage, selecting cans and metal things from garbage to resell
- Shoe shining
- As carriers in the market and in bus terminals
- Fixing flat tires
- As domestic maids
- Prostitution
- Robbery
- Piling up or loading down in warehouses
- Selling fruits
• Selling candies at streetlights
• Selling drugs
• Singing on the street
• Begging for alms
• Migrating
• In street gangs (maras)

3.0 Barriers in finding work/jobs (20 mins)

Objective: Identifying any barriers to finding work, reaction and attitude towards current work/jobs that are available, skills/education currently required by employers/potential bosses and what is realistically available, access and ability to gain skills/education required.

5. What do you believe is the main cause that makes it difficult for young people to find suitable work? And what else?

Poverty. We do not get jobs because we are not well connected. We do not have a godfather or a good name, or a political party. When there is a job open they prefer to give it to a white person even if we have the same qualifications.

Some youngsters from indigenous peoples still work in the rural areas in agricultural work. They are less dependent on a salary. Other emigrate to the cities and do whatever they can to survive, others get jobs in the factories but are generally over exploited.

I do not have money to continue my education but I can get along because I can sell things in the market. I am an entrepreneur.

6. What skills are valued by the market?

• Being technologically savvy.
• Have technological skills
• Speaking more than one language, better if it is English
• Having availability to work for long hours
• Not having a family
• Not being pregnant
• Punctuality. If you get some minutes late they do not pay you the whole day
• Your image. This is indispensable.
• Not having an indigenous look
• Being honest

7. Where do you get these skills?

At home and on the street. If you have bad examples or role models you will follow them. In the cities youngsters from indigenous peoples lose their ancestral values and they get into crime. Education helps but is not everything. It is more important that you learn how to fight, so you can live honestly and have a good living. You cannot be successful without health, without food. You need emotional stability. It is an integral thing.
Education helps you develop analytical skills, you learn how to think, how to solve problems but then you need to apply these skills. The education system is concentrated on the economic elite. It is designed for them. The educational system is dysfunctional they prepare us to be overly specialized. We are trained to be nurses and only for that. Or they train you to be a teacher. What are the foundations of education? It is egotism. But you require a more integral approach that respects our culture, which takes into account the role of the community and respects our world vision. On the other hand we are not prepared to start our own business or for being entrepreneur. I would like to be self-starter of my own work.

4.0 Individual aspirations, inspirations and challenges (15 mins)

Objective: Identify the sort of aspirations young people have for their careers, the level of confidence they have in achieving these aspirations and the role models they have in the world of work. Identify what it is that inspires and motivates people, and the barriers to achieving their aspirations.

8. I’d now like you to think about who inspires you - When you think about the world of work, who, if anyone, is an inspirational figure for you? Why is that? What is it about this person/these people and what they do that inspires you?

I am inspired by my community, knowing where I was born. Knowing my territory with its beautiful nature and my relationship with the nature. I am committed with the rights of the indigenous people and I want to contribute to the struggle. We are eight siblings but I am the only one who is fighting.

I want to be independent. I don’t believe in luck but in good vibrations and that comes from the community, in the common good. For instance in the community we build our homes together with the help of the community. In the university we learn about individualism. That is not right for indigenous peoples.

I am inspired by the ideological change in our communities. We women need to fight for our environment; we need to fight against sexism and machismo. We need to help ourselves first.

I am motivated by my community work, my social reality and my family.

I am inspired by my mother. She was a leader in the eighties fighting for the rights of indigenous peoples after the violent conflict in Guatemala. My father died in the conflict and she raised us alone and with pride. I am inspired by her example and her strength.

5.0 Responsibility of others/institutions/organizations (15 mins)

Objective: To identify where help might come from to allow young people to achieve their professional aspirations, and how different organisations can help young people get the skills, training and education to get a good job/career.

9. Who do you think has most responsibility for helping young people be successful in getting the skills needed in the job market?

The state has a role to play. It can offer more opportunities for scholarships but we have the main responsibility. We need to help ourselves first and then we can interact with other actors in the society. I ran an intercultural school and I receive support from the private sector, but the idea of the school came from us.

Governments, political parties, trade unions are important but we need to fight for our rights.

6.0 Wrap-up (10 mins: 90 total)
Objective: To identify the key learnings and close the session.

10. Today/Tonight’s group will inform a major report being produced by UNESCO on ensuring young people have the skills needed to help them get good jobs. What one thing do you think is the most important message to emerge from tonight’s group that you want to see reflected in the report?

• We think and we feel
• We fight and we can make it
• Be the driver of your own life
• Life is an endless road, you need to build it every minute
• We are born to be happy
• Be the architect of your own life
• Education is important but your enthusiasm comes from loving what you do