



# HOW TO... PROMOTE AN ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSET WITHIN YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

## A Paper Series for Rural Youth Employment

In rural areas of Sub-Saharan Africa, where formal employment opportunities are scarce, entrepreneurship presents a promising path to employment and economic empowerment for young people. However, the journey from aspiring entrepreneur to successful business owner is fraught with challenges, requiring not only technical and business skills but also a resilient and future-thinking entrepreneurial mindset. This how-to-paper illustrates four innovative trainings addressing this need implemented by the Global Project 'Employment in Rural Areas with Focus on Youth'.

## THE CHALLENGE

## DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

## CONCRETE TRAININGS

## LESSONS LEARNT & RECOMMENDATIONS

### THE CHALLENGE

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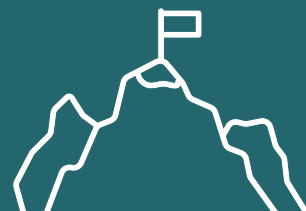
*One of the major challenges in Malawi is that we are educated to be employed. Only if we were trained to be employers, then I believe farming would have been one of the biggest sources of employment.*

This sentiment of a District Youth Officer in Malawi underscores a common issue. Formal wage employment in rural areas of many developing countries is scarce. Most of the 25 million young people entering the labour market in Sub-Saharan Africa each year have trouble finding jobs, due to a lack of offerings. This results in self-employment being the predominate way into the labour market. More than 75% of the trainees of the global project venture into self-employment.

But being an entrepreneur is no easy feat, particularly in the rural regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, where challenging macroeconomic conditions and unsupportive government policies can make running a viable business incredibly difficult. Entrepreneurs in these areas often struggle with limited access to finance and essential resources, which hampers both the initiation and growth of their ventures. Additionally, inadequate infrastructure drives up operational costs, further complicating their efforts.<sup>1</sup>

Traditional education often falls short in preparing youth for the dynamic world of entrepreneurship. While hands-on technical and business skills are crucial, the ability to innovate, adapt, and persevere in the face of challenges is equally vital. Especially in rural development, a lot of trainings focus on technical skills and Good Agricultural Practices or bookkeeping and marketing, leaving a gap in the never more important skillset and mindset to be an entrepreneur. Trainees then struggle in starting their career as an entrepreneur, seizing business opportunities, responding to business challenges, and transferring their hands-on skills into a viable business.

<sup>1</sup> Cp. Osakwe, Ada (2024), „Making entrepreneurship work for Africa's Youth“, in: Africa Growth Initiative by Brookings, Foresight Africa, p. 64, [ForesightAfrica2024.pdf \(brookings.edu\)](#) (29.05.2024).





## DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

Developing an entrepreneurial mindset is crucial, especially for youth to succeed in establishing their own businesses. Youth need a set of soft skills that allow them to identify and seize business opportunities, anticipate market changes,

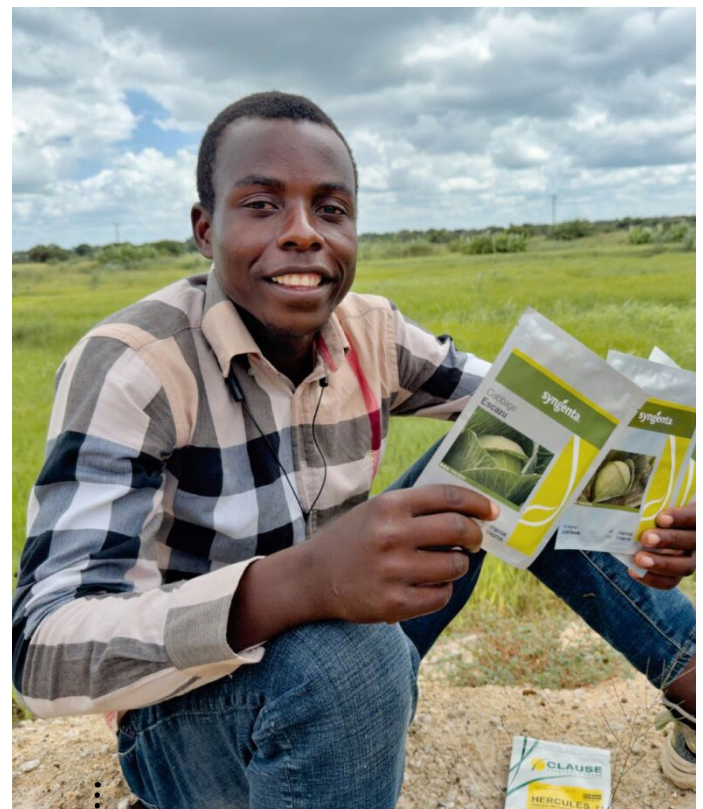
overcome barriers, and take initiative. Creativity, flexibility, resilience, communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and finance management are learnable skills to become a successful entrepreneur.

There are different ways to integrate these soft and entrepreneurial components into trainings, education programmes, MSME promotion, start-up incubation and small-holder farm support. One way is to **deliver specific trainings**, that impart skills to foster an entrepreneurial mindset. Another way is to **integrate modules of these trainings into traditional training approaches**. However, the **method of delivering** these competences is just as important. For example, living together in a training camp for a week, makes a difference. "Participants came individually, but by the end of this training, they were able to identify among themselves, the people who share the same vision and who have the same characters" as Steven Hoda from AgroBoot-Camp, "and they left starting a business, two, three or four of them together."



### STARTING WITH LIMITED RESSOURCES

Trainings always need to consider the resources available to their target group. Whether that means agricultural materials or financial institutes and their ability to aid in local access to finance, which is a significant barrier for many youths. While training cannot solve this systematic challenge, it can provide valuable lessons in overcoming financial obstacles. Maite is an entrepreneur in Mozambique attending the Personal Initiative Training (PI). He acknowledges:



“

***I always thought you need a lot of starting capital to begin your own business. But in the training, I learned that you can often start with your own resources and grow, I don't have to wait.***

More-over, using local resources in technical trainings, that are affordable and accessible to youth, fosters awareness for how to capitalize on opportunities within one's resource constraints.



## STANDING OUT OF THE COMPETITION

In rural areas, business ideas for products and services seem limited, and competition is big. Successful entrepreneurs need to know how to make a difference. For young entrepreneurs they need to have the soft skills to navigate the complicated business world, as well as the creativity and know how when it comes to customer's needs and feedback.



**Tisunge from Malawi bakes Mandazi, a local type of doughnut. The training helped to translate feedback of her customers into innovation of her product. She improved the taste and size of her mandazi. Now she makes smaller ones and sells them at a lower price that the customers can afford.**



## ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE TRENDS

When starting a business, the knowledge of the niches in local markets and how to capitalize on the opportunities is vital for entrepreneurs. Through trainings Maite identified the opportunity of converting local produce into delicious juices!



***The training inspired me to create and sell my own products, like a new drink made from banana and egg, now sold at the school canteen. I am able to identify business opportunities now.***

This anticipation and observation of future markets gives entrepreneurs the edge to navigate and embrace opportunities and the needed steps to achieve their business dreams.



## BREAKING SOCIAL NORMS

Inclusive training programmes provide a platform for young individuals to challenge societal norms and forge their own paths forward. Training camps, such as AgroBootCamp or Bee Keeping Camp, provide a supportive environment where young people can challenge traditional expectations and envision new possibilities for their futures. These camps often incorporate gender-sensitive approaches and promote inclusivity, encouraging both young men and women to participate equally and break free from stereotypes that may limit their aspirations, camps empower youth to think critically, embrace innovation and develop the confidence needed to pursue entrepreneurial ventures, thereby fostering a culture of equality and progressive change within their communities.



## THE ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM

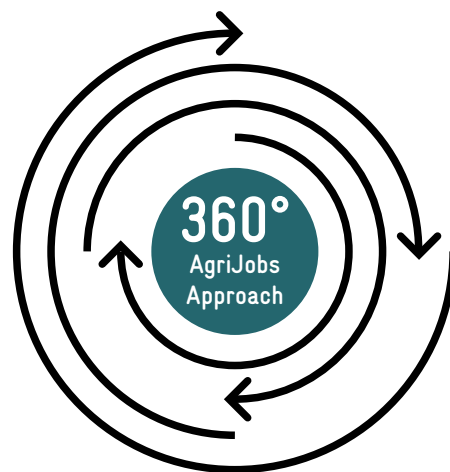
As entrepreneurial mindset training is never a stand-alone intervention, it is most effective when diverse stakeholders integrate relevant topics and methods into their support programmes. Additionally, these stakeholders need to collaborate to establish a robust and supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem. This includes local governance structures such as local political bodies, training centres and extensionists, youth organisations and entrepreneurial networks, host companies offering internships, microfinance institutions providing financial support, and specialized incubation centres offering coaching and mentoring.



For a more comprehensive perspective on the topic, see: [\*\*Guide on strengthening entrepreneurial ecosystems\*\*](#)

## The 360° Agri-Jobs Approach

The trainings to foster an entrepreneurial mindset have been rolled out as a tool of the 360° Agri-Jobs approach global project 'Employment in Rural Areas with Focus on Youth' in Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, and Burkina Faso. As such entrepreneurial mindset and incubation are embedded in a holistic approach that promotes rural youth employment. The approach considers the entire labour market in the agricultural sector. In addition to entrepreneurship promotion the approach brings labour market-relevant content into vocational education. Young jobseekers learn what kind of employment and support opportunities exist in rural areas and how to build a professional network.



More information on how to integrate entrepreneurial mindset training into a holistic approach for employment promotion, can be found in the Toolbox for Rural Youth Employment.

**Integrating Rural Youth  
Employment Promotion Into Your Project –  
It's Easy With This Toolbox**





# CONCRETE TRAININGS



## Burkina Faso AgroBootCamp

**AgroBootCamp** is an intensive training programme designed for youth, aimed at strengthening their skills in agri-food systems while also enhancing entrepreneurship abilities. It emphasizes the role of youth as a driving force for food security, providing them with the necessary tools and knowledge to thrive in the agri-food sector. The training not only focuses on **teaching skills** but also **emphasizes on social dynamics**, fostering interpersonal connections, building mental resilience, improving critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. The training is **adaptable to various contexts**, having been implemented successfully in rural villages and even with soon to be releases inmates of a prison.

First, participants engage in a **seven-day training camp** that includes intensive training sessions, group activities, and plenary events,

creating an inclusive environment that promotes cultural diversity and gender inclusivity. Participants **learn and live together**, immersing themselves in a holistic learning experience that includes, skills training and peer-learning, but also sports and communal cooking. By sharing traditionally female and male tasks equally between all genders, the **training breaks with prevalent social norms**.

In the second phase, participants embark on a **45-day internship**, allowing them to apply their theoretical knowledge in practical settings. **Local businesses** further train the interns, providing them with valuable **hands-on experience** while also potentially identify a future employee. Additionally, motivated trainees receive **further coaching in topics like networking, financing, and access to materials** for their entrepreneurial projects, aiming to empower them to become problem-solvers and forward-thinkers in their own business endeavours.

[AgrobootCamp on facebook](#)

For implementation support:  
[www.djouman.com](http://www.djouman.com)

AgroBootCamps have been developed in a consortium of West African partners, including Djouman. It was taken up in Burkina Faso by the agroecology NGO BéoNéere, with supported of Djouman and the global project. The success of these two camps and a high demand and interest from the target group led BéoNéere to mainstream the approach. The flexibility and success were cornerstone to also implement it in a prison in Ouagadougou for young inmates soon to restart life outside with new perspectives.

**AgroBootCamp has trained almost 4,000 youth in Burkina Faso. Within six months, 80% of the trained entrepreneurs start and develop their business, creating 2,4 new jobs on average.**

**2,4 new jobs**  
are **created** on average.

<b>Delivery</b>	One-week full day training camp (ca. 30 youths), followed by 45-day-internship, ongoing coaching
<b>Methods</b>	Classroom training, practical exercises, social interaction, followed by internship placement and personal coaching
<b>Main entrepreneurial skills</b>	Interpersonal connections, sense of belonging with peers, networking, mental resilience, critical thinking, problem-solving, pitching
<b>Main technical skills</b>	Agroecological practices, business creation
<b>Flexibility</b>	High potential for the adaptation to different contexts and value chains/business models, as well as partner demands
<b>Duration</b>	Medium (1-6 months)
<b>Costs</b>	Medium (100-300 EUR per participant)
<b>Replicability (ease of applying in a new context)</b>	High difficulty
<b>Support structure (trainer &amp; partner network needed)</b>	High



## Malawi

### Bee Keeping Camp

The **Bee Keeping Camp** in Malawi is a holistic training programme **designed for youth clubs** engaged in apiculture. Youth professionalize in **beekeeping, value addition and business**. It prioritises inclusivity by ensuring equal representation of all gender and **including people living with disabilities** in training sessions.

Participants engage in a **week-long immersive experience** where they live, learn, and work together fostering communication, soft skills, and technical expertise. **Living together mitigates potential absences and facilitates focused learning.** Young women can bring their children, as the training provider organized a nanny for childcare – a key factor for success in gender parity. Simultaneously, participants hone communication, critical thinking, and discipline skills through communal living and collaborative learning experiences, enriching their overall learning journey.

The training not only covers **practical technical aspects** such as building, placing and managing beehives but also emphasises the importance of interrelationships in **business growth**, encouraging participants to explore creative uses for bee-derived materials like beeswax for candle and soap production. **Using locally available and affordable materials**, it teaches youth to start a business within their resource limits.

Selection of participants occurs through youth clubs, with four representatives participating in the camp and subsequently **disseminating knowledge within their clubs**. Teamwork and communication continue post-training, as participants share knowledge and collaborate to ensure effective marketing and pricing strategies for their bee products.

The Bee Keeping Camp was initiated and implemented by the Forum for Apicultural and Agricultural Development (FAAD) with financial and capacity development support of the global project.

**The Bee Keeping Camp has skilled 200 youths in Northern Malawi.**



<b>Delivery</b>	One-week training camp (+- 25 youths)
<b>Methods</b>	Classroom training, practical technical workshops
<b>Main entrepreneurial skills</b>	Communication, critical thinking, discipline skills, overcoming financial barriers
<b>Main technical skills</b>	Beekeeping, transformation of wax, marketing, business
<b>Flexibility</b>	High potential for the adaptation to different contexts and value chains/business models, as well as partner demands
<b>Duration</b>	Short: One week
<b>Costs</b>	Low (<100 EUR per participant)
<b>Replicability (ease of applying in a new context)</b>	Low difficulty
<b>Support structure (trainer &amp; partner network needed)</b>	Medium



## Kenya

### Gigatonne

**Gigatonne** is a multifaceted initiative aimed at reducing and removing greenhouse emissions, boosting employment, and ensuring food and energy security, all while fostering an interactive and engaging experience for participants. Gigatonne is using a **disruptive learning approach to tackle complex challenges**, like climate change, and trains and funds youth to set up new green businesses.

Gigatonne is a continuous endeavour which a **youth group** can sign up for and start within their community. The **youth challenge themselves to work as a team and go through seven levels of performance**. The first two levels of Gigatonne focus on experiential training. From level three onwards, teams are funded to take climate action. At each level, teams work on **designing and testing prototypes** to meet the set targets. Targets are time-bound and include

emissions reduction and/or removal and equity targets. Prototypes are chosen based on the specific context of each tea. For example, setting up a compost service to supply farms and grow food. Teams collaborate with various local stakeholders, including the government, businesses, and community members to implement the prototypes and scale their impact. Through this **collaborative approach**, participants develop essential skills such as prototyping, collaborative action, problem-solving, stress management, storytelling, and resource mapping.

Each team has two trained coaches who support teams to **adapt and innovate according to their unique contexts**, working around any resource constraints. All in all, this gamified and hands-on approach fosters instilling a mindset shift towards tackling diverse challenges that may arise in business ventures.

Gigatonne was launched by 10-in-10 ([www.xinx.co](http://www.xinx.co)) in 2020. Gigatonne provides training, coaching and funding to teams around the world wanting to take effective climate action. In January 2022, the global project endorsed Gigatonne among youth organisations in Western Kenya. Five teams signed up to participate in Gigatonne and were funded by the global project for the initial Level 1 Gigatonne training. Following this, 10-in-10 sponsored the teams' advanced training (Levels 2 and 3) and provided direct funding to Level 3 teams.

**Over a 24-month period, Gigatonne has worked with 95 teams worldwide, involving around 1,000 individuals who have collectively reduced over 2,181 tons of CO2 emissions, benefiting 3,250 families from the bottom 20% of the socio-economic bracket.**

**1000  
participants**

<b>Delivery</b>	Level 1-3 are an ongoing process over 6-8 months, including 2 weeks training at the beginning
<b>Methods</b>	Challenge: gamified, agile sprints, hands-on, prototyping
<b>Main entrepreneurial skills</b>	Collaborative action, problem-solving, stress management, storytelling, and resource mapping
<b>Main technical skills</b>	Compost making and marketing
<b>Flexibility</b>	Open to all climate-smart topics: Youth groups decide together on the business they want to create
<b>Duration</b>	Long (> 6 months)
<b>Costs</b>	Medium (100-300€ pp)
<b>Replicability (ease of applying in a new context)</b>	Low difficulty
<b>Support structure (trainer &amp; partner network needed)</b>	High



## Malawi and Mozambique Personal Initiative (PI) Training

**Personal Initiative (PI) Training** is designed to **cultivate individuals being self-starting, future-oriented, and overcoming barriers**. Based on scientific research, PI Training equips entrepreneurs with a proactive mindset. It enables them to grow their businesses and to create jobs, thereby contributing to the reduction of poverty in their countries. Its content is always **customised to the very specific target group** and its methodology **interactive and action-oriented**.

Within the global project Rural Youth Employment, the training targets young, aspiring **entrepreneurs in youth clubs or students'**

**networks**, to foster their personal investment and ownership for their existing or future business venture. The training prioritises inclusivity, **accommodating varying literacy levels** by incorporating imagery for comprehension and peer-mentoring. PI is ideally taught over **12 weeks with one 3-hours session per week**. But it can be adapted to project, partner or target group needs, and be trained in a shorter, more intensive timespan, or, as in Malawi in a **four-sessions coaching with several self-learning sessions** in between.

The modular training programme is designed to ignite entrepreneurial spirit by covering key areas of entrepreneurial activity such as opportunity identification, goal setting, planning of activities and finances, and feedback seeking. At the heart of this training is **active participation** and interaction of participants – each brief lecture is paired with hands-on exercises, allowing entrepreneurs to **immediately apply new concepts to their business models**. Each exercise is followed by presenting their work and exchanging feedback. This dynamic approach ensures that participants continuously refine their ideas and stay focussed throughout the whole training.

More information about the training:  
[www.pi-training.org](http://www.pi-training.org)

For implementation support:  
[www.move-eti.com](http://www.move-eti.com)

[Meet Maite and Joana on YouTube](#)

PI-Master Trainer for GIZ Mozambique:  
[eduardo.lon@giz.de](mailto:eduardo.lon@giz.de) and  
[sofia.cassimo@ideialab.biz](mailto:sofia.cassimo@ideialab.biz)

Experienced Trainer in Malawi:  
[ngaba.chatata@gmail.com](mailto:ngaba.chatata@gmail.com)

PI-Training was developed at the Leuphana University of Lüneburg and, beneath other, implemented by move gGmbH Entrepreneurship Training Institute. move-eti customized the PI Training to the global project's target groups and qualified two master trainers for GIZ Mozambique and 24 trainers in Malawi and Mozambique, all from partnering institution. PI training is regularly evaluated according to the gold-standard of scientific evaluation and has been found out to be significantly more effective than traditional business training.

**Personal Initiative Training has qualified 9,000 entrepreneurs and employees throughout 20 countries. Within two years, entrepreneurs who have taken the PI training experience a 30% increase in profits, showing significant long-term training effects.**

**30% increase  
in profits**

<b>Delivery</b>	12 weekly classroom training sessions (36 hours total) or 4 coaching sessions (20-25 youths)
<b>Methods</b>	Action-based and application-oriented training, giving and receiving feedback
<b>Main entrepreneurial skills</b>	Being self-starting, future-oriented, and overcoming barriers
<b>Main technical skills</b>	No technical skills delivered
<b>Flexibility</b>	Modules can be integrated into existing (technical) trainings and coaching
<b>Duration</b>	Medium: from 1,5 months for four coaching sessions combined with self-learning to 3 months for classical training (12x3 hours per week)
<b>Costs</b>	Low (<100 EUR per participant)
<b>Replicability (ease of applying in a new context)</b>	Low difficulty
<b>Support structure (trainer &amp; partner network needed)</b>	Medium



# LESSONS LEARNT & RECOMMENDATIONS



## General

- **Combine entrepreneurial mindset trainings with technical trainings or include elements** and methods fostering these soft skills to prepare youth adequately for self-employment.
- For the technical aspects, keep an eye on the **underlying business models** to be robust and diverse enough for the participants to start and grow their business.
- **Include partners from the local ecosystem in the training of trainers**, the global project experience is that the innovative content and methods are highly convincing to them and helps strengthening collaboration.
- **Capacitate local trainers and extensionists to adopt innovative methods and content.** This makes their existing trainings more inclusive and imparts entrepreneurial soft skills – and it comes with no additional costs other than Training of Trainers. Moreover, it fosters sustainability of the trainings.
- Entrepreneurial mindset trainings can be **adjusted and integrated into various contexts** with low effort and financial resources (e.g. rural areas in different countries, fragile security situations etc.) and for various target groups (e.g. level of education, gender etc.), depending on focus areas such as value chains, but also partners involved.
- The trainings were considered as an innovation by target group and partners and created a huge interest as they seem to **close an important gap in the skillset of not only youth, but also trainers.** The results indicate that the uptake of technical knowledge through viable business creation **are more successful.**



## Training planning

- Difficulty in **finding suitable facilities** for the event, necessitating a location with adequate space and nearby businesses for internships. Proper research and engaging local communities can help find an adequate training facility. This requires sufficient time and the help of local facilitators looking to hold the training.
- **Accessibility challenges, especially for participants with disabilities** due to distant training centres. To alleviate this, ensure training centres are closer to accommodation facilities or adapt training sites specifically for those with disabilities.
- **High costs associated with transportation and training facilities**, posing financial barriers for participants. To mitigate this, encourage trainees to invest in their knowledge growth, with participants covering transportation costs while training facilities cover other expenses or vice versa. Where transport costs are too high to be covered by the participants agreements for in-kind training contributions are another option. Thereby the commitment of participants to the training increases.
- **Managing local bureaucracies** for training implementation can be difficult, as some countries have a lengthy bureaucratic process. Therefore, research before implementation is key to ensuring enough time for thorough preparatory work.
- **Initial scepticism from vendors and community members about project benefits**, requiring effective communication. To counter this, facilitate collaboration and demonstrate to the communities how the various trainings can benefit them.



### Training delivery

- **Time constraints during training**, leading to packed schedules and difficulties in accommodating rural youth's availability. To remediate this, ensure that the training is aligned with participants' daily schedules. Allow flexibility and adaptability of the training for each context, e.g., by extending it over more days with a shorter daily duration.
- **Participant adherence to training rules and staying focused during sessions**, particularly challenging without facilitators' presence. To tackle this, ensure trainings remain exciting, incorporating gamified, intensive workshops and interactive learning opportunities.
- **Provide opportunities for creativity and critical thinking** and **incorporate local knowledge** to adapt programmes for greater success.
- **Insufficient time allocated to specific topics of interest**. To rectify this, ensure that the training is relevant to the participants' overall goals and remain flexible in the training schedule to individually allocate the amount of time necessary to meet the groups' priorities and requirements.
- **Offer plenty of collaboration and socialisation opportunities** throughout the training to foster networks, encourage to standardize sales prices regionally, emphasize communication, and offer solutions.



### Follow-up after Training

- **Rigorous monitoring requirements throughout the training process**. To streamline this, maintain communication **channels post-training** to gather feedback and address challenges promptly.
- **Establish networks, e.g., through WhatsApp Groups, inviting youth to continue peer to peer exchange and support each other.**
- **Provide increased access to coaching post training**, particularly for individuals who received financial assistance, to boost motivation and provide additional assistance as they begin their entrepreneurship journey.
- **Link training participants to other existing support programmes in the ecosystem** to enhance rural youth's employment prospects.





This **series of How to Papers** has been developed by the **Global Project Rural Employment with Focus on Youth** and aims to process and systematise the project's practical experiences. Each **How to Paper** has a thematic focus and provides a brief overview of innovative approaches and inspiration for practical implementation. The series targets implementing organisations and donor agencies working in the field of youth employment.



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