



Youth vocational education/training and migration in the Horn of Africa

Youth unemployment and migration

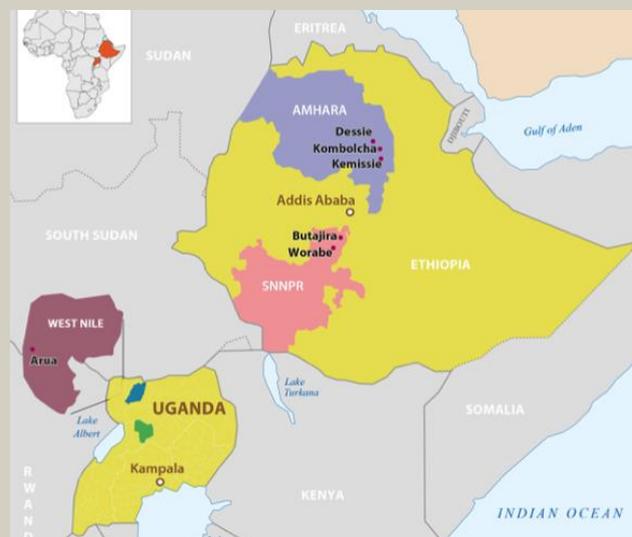
Across the Horn of Africa (HoA) young people comprise a significant majority of the work force. **Youth unemployment and underemployment, however, remain widespread and are considered to be major drivers of migration.** There are too few job opportunities for young people in the formal sector, especially for those who lack the requisite skills and competencies as a result of their incomplete or poor-quality education. The vast majority of youth who join the labour force in the HoA remain in informal employment, if they can find work at all. Unemployment rates for young women exceed that of young men due to reasons of unequal access to education and training opportunities and unequal gender roles, among others.

Interventions seeking to expand employability and entrepreneurship skills through, for example, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) aim to improve young people's skills, strengthen the labour market, and increase their chances of finding employment. Investments in these programmes are thought to reduce incentives for young people to migrate, in particular making it less likely that they will take the high risks involved in irregular migration. Economic and employment opportunities are also presumed to make an area attractive to returning refugees and internally displaced persons.

Consequently, investments in TVET and **other employability and entrepreneurship programs are sometimes interlinked with migration goals**, when it is assumed that opportunities for gainful employment will curtail risky migration decisions. There is limited empirical data to test this assumption and the REF has undertaken original research to explore this further. **This research brief presents the results of a study investigating the link between involvement in TVET programmes and potential for migration among youth in Uganda and Ethiopia.** Based on the findings, the brief makes recommendations for organizations providing TVET services.

Research locations

The study was conducted by the Research and Evidence Facility in 2018-19. Data for this study was collected in Ethiopia (Amhara and Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Regions) and Uganda (Arua District). These locations were selected based on the levels of migration among youth and investments in TVET programs by governments as well as external donors. They, thus, provided a valuable context to explore how TVET, youth employment, and migration intersect. Field research used a mixed methods approach, involving a survey of 600 respondents and over 70 key informants including TVET students and providers.



Success/failure of TVET

- Overall, TVET programming is proving successful in helping young people improve their prospects for livelihoods whether through employment or self-employment.
- Trainees are equipped with skills that allow them to earn a living, invest in their own small business, and acquire further training.
- Over two-thirds of graduates felt that their living conditions had improved since completing TVET courses, with the most positive responses in Uganda.
- There is demand among trainees for both technical and 'soft' business skills.
- Although there are clear differences in terms of courses for which men and women enrol, young women are starting to take up 'traditionally male' courses such as motor mechanics, metal fabrication, welding and carpentry.
- There remains a gap between skills provided by TVET programmes and the requirements of employers and the labour market in general.

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**The impact of youth training and
employment on migration dynamics in the
Horn of Africa**

Recommendations

- TVET interventions must be designed based on a thorough **analysis of the local job market** and should explore ways to link TVET courses with employers more systematically.
- TVET providers should seek to develop a **flexible response** to enable them to adapt rapidly as new sectors emerge (or withdraw as sectors decline). In this respect, it is likely that informal, short courses are likely to have an advantage over longer, formal courses.
- Programmes should consider offering **follow-up courses** or two-stage courses that enable graduates of one course (of the first stage) to enhance their skills or develop complementary skills (such as business training).
- TVET providers should build in **training on business skills** as a standard component of technical courses in order to equip youth for self-employment.
- TVET interventions should explore ways to **include employer and business participation** in programming to ensure trainees are receiving skills demanded in the market.
- The targets and objectives for TVET programming need to focus as much on the **quality as the quantity of jobs**. This may entail some work to devise new measures and embed them in monitoring and evaluation systems.

Link between TVET and migration

Concerning the link between TVET and migration, a **mixed picture emerges from our data**. First, young people's interest in TVET is largely motivated by aspirations of employment rather than of migration.

In addition, whereas participation in TVET appears to have increased the likelihood that youth will develop plans to migrate, they are more likely to be thinking of a move to another part of the country or to a neighbouring country rather than going outside the region or the continent.

Ideas about and aspirations for migration are influenced by the context. In Ethiopia, many respondents were anticipating moving internally to other parts of the country, especially urban areas, in search of work. In Uganda, many of the respondents were refugees from South Sudan and were looking to return there.

Similarly, whereas nearly all Ethiopian respondents listed better job opportunities as the reason for moving, in Uganda these reasons including joining family members, returning home, or simply looking for adventure of the good life. This highlights the fact that in this refugee context, there are different factors at play that will shape people's movements compared to other context.