

Dealing with a burning issue: Youth unemployment

The youth unemployment rate in Ethiopia is among the highest in the world, with 71% of those under 30 currently unemployed. The rate is even higher in rural communities where employment opportunities are few and young people lack the aptitudes, soft skills, and contacts needed. An underutilized youth population will have dire consequences for the future growth of the country and entrench households in poverty for years to come. That is why the [Feed the Future Ethiopia-Livelihoods for Resilience Activity](#) has made youth employment a main focus.

The project plans to introduce at least 10,000 youth, primarily from households that are members of [Village Economic and Social Association \(VESAs\)](#), to on-farm and off-farm livelihoods opportunities. Livelihoods for Resilience facilitates the formation of youth groups and, if possible, youth VESAs where members participate in small-scale savings and lending activities to gain financial literacy and develop sound financial management skills as a foundation for future activities. The project provides employment skills training and has adapted curricula with support from the Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC).



Youth attending “Work Ready Now” and ‘Be Your Own Boss’ training in Kobo Woreda, Amhara Region © CARE Ethiopia 2019

One such curriculum is Work Ready Now (WRN), a 15-day training package that the project provides to young men and women. WRN is comprised of modules on basic employability skills as well as knowledge and behaviors needed to be successful as entry-level workers or as

entrepreneurs. Graduates of WRN select a livelihoods pathway in off-farm self-employment or wage employment depending on their interests, skills, and personal development plans.

Youth choosing off-farm self-employment then participate in “Be Your Own Boss” (BYOB) training which builds their basic skills for entrepreneurship. The project also supports youth to receive learning and coaching at technical and vocational training centers (TVETs). So far, the project has helped more than 400 youth receive short-term TVET training, 365 youth engaged in self-employment, and another 365 youth are participating in wage employment. As a next step, the project is trying to facilitate better linkages with micro finance institutions to help youth gain access to startup capital for new businesses.

“I’ll have my own business.”

Mulunesh Belayhun, 18, from the Menz Gera Woreda of Amhara, could not find a job after completing secondary school in 2016. Her results on the national exam were not good enough for further schooling, so she worked as an adult education teacher for over a year and half, earning a meager monthly income of 425 birr (about 15 USD). *“The income was too small to cover my basic expenses, she said. “I had to look for other opportunities.”*

Fortunately, Mulunesh heard about youth support activities provided by the Livelihoods for Resilience Activity and enrolled immediately. She attended WRN training and learned about personal development, interpersonal communication, effective work habits, leadership, and teamwork. She also took the project’s BYOB training and was linked with a TVET college located in a nearby town. After attending a short training on catering she became a waitress at nearby a hotel, earning a net salary of 500 birr (18 USD) per month, also quite modest, but also receives meals and accommodation. In a few short months, she saved 1,500 birr (53 USD). *“With my earnings, I was able to buy school materials for my younger brother. I’m planning to someday start my own small business with my savings.”*



© CARE Ethiopia 2019

