



Youth Economic Inclusion at Abt Associates



Half the world's population is under age 30, and youth comprise a dominant share of the workforce in low- and middle-income countries. With such strength in numbers, today's young generation is pivotal to progress and prosperity. However, the promise of their economic participation and potential growth dividend is too often undermined—not by lack of aspiration but by inadequate preparation, resources, relationships, or opportunity. Globally, young people are two to three times more likely to be unemployed than adults; and the COVID pandemic dealt youth an additional blow by ushering in school and business closures that led to catastrophic learning, employment and earning losses, further scarring a generation still impacted by the 2008 recession.

Increasing young people's capacity, access, and earnings while promoting enabling environments is core to Abt's efforts to ensure economies and markets are inclusive and equitable as we advance collective well-being. Applying Positive Youth Development principles, we work with youth as well as other pivotal actors—governments, private sector, youth organizations, education, and training providers—in ways that embrace youth intersectionality and ambitions. Our activities help increase youth skills and leadership, resources and technologies, information, and networks. At the same time, we directly engage with employers, financiers, and accelerators to boost demand and expand opportunities for—and earnings from—youth work, enterprise, agribusiness, supply chains, and social innovation.

Beyond elevating youth across economic sectors and in our agriculture and food security programs, our cross-sectoral approach to international development programming incorporates youth economic inclusion activities into health systems, climate change, and governance projects. We generate evidence to advance the state of the field and, as a member of the Alliance for International Youth Development, engage in collective learning and efforts to amplify and better support youth in U.S. foreign assistance.

Core youth economic inclusion activities

- Youth enterprise and agribusiness development
- Workforce development: technical, vocational, extension education and on-the-job training
- Intersectional GEDSI assessments, inclusive growth diagnostics, youth economic analysis
- Positive Youth Development (PYD) and economic governance policy
- Youth participation and leadership
- Evaluation and research of youth inclusion programs and practice
- Intergenerational social and behavior change communications

Inclusive Growth in Action

We work with youth, clients, private and public sector partners around the world to improve youth economic opportunities and ensure they both contribute to and benefit from inclusive growth:

Increasing Youth Engagement and Earnings in Agriculture Market Systems and Green Economy

To increase youth capacity and participation in horticulture and climate-smart agricultural sectors, the Feed the Future **Egypt** Rural Agribusiness Strengthening Project, a USAID-funded activity implemented by Abt, includes an Agribusiness Internship Program that collaborates with local universities and vocational schools to train youth in the technical and sustainable practices, marketing, management, and interpersonal skills necessary to pursue careers or start business in this profitable field. The program links graduates to thousands of job opportunities across the sector.

Our Feed the Future **Cambodia** Harvest II program built youth capabilities to capitalize on lucrative horticulture opportunities by linking young entrepreneurs with new financing, business partners and markets, increasing local sourcing efficiency, and improving operating capacity. Participating youth gained on-site processing experience, attended technical and business skills trainings, met with managers of local markets, and distributed product samples to overseas buyers. Harvest III, our new Feed the Future project in Cambodia, will continue this support for young agripreneurs.

Nurturing Youth Entrepreneurship and Innovation

The USAID **Mexico** Economic Policy Program worked with Mexico City's social development fund, Fondo de Desarrollo Social, to re-orient its lending to promote opportunities for young small businesses owners with the potential to generate growth, innovation, and job creation. As part of this collaboration, Abt supported the creation and implementation of a business development program competition that assessed the commercial viability of student entrepreneurs' innovative ideas and supported the most promising with trainings and financing.

Abt helped youth engage in the fashion and design segment of **Papua New Guinea's** burgeoning creative and cultural industries (CCIs) sector under the DFAT-

funded Partnership for Economic Governance and Inclusive Growth. Abt partnered with the the National Youth Development Association and other local groups to provide fashion and design training and is creating opportunity for youth enterprise through targeted campaigns that improve market system effectiveness and competitiveness and generate broader CCI interest and investment.

Preparing a Generation for Resilient Growth and Leadership

In the USAID-funded **Uganda** Integrated Community Agriculture and Nutrition (ICAN) Activity, youth inclusion is central to Abt's intergenerational work to increase economic security for poor households, improve family nutrition, and strengthen community and local governance. ICAN trains adolescent girls and young women in communications, managing emotions and behaviors, and financial and livelihood skills, strengthening their ability to set and keep professional and personal goals. The activity also partners to implement the Youth Leadership Curriculum training and collaborates with local universities to place new graduates in on-the-job training.

The Youth Leaders Program - Shabab Al Fursa was a participatory training program initiated with the Higher Population Council under the USAID **Jordan** Communication, Advocacy, and Policy activity. It helped youth design and execute social initiatives within their communities. Ventures promoted climate action and gender equality by introducing hydroponic agriculture to women at home, developing a hiking trail in Ma'an, creating comic sketches on women's empowerment, and installing smart recycling bins at universities.

Contact us to learn more:

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Pursuing Equity. Looking for the Intersections. Driving Real-World Impact.

Abt Associates is a global consulting and research firm that combines data and bold thinking to improve the quality of people's lives. We partner with clients and communities to advance equity and innovation—from creating scalable digital solutions and combatting infectious disease, to mitigating climate change and advancing economic growth.

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