



**CAFOR**



**AFRICAN UNION**

**AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

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**CONCEPT NOTE**

**CAFOR Project: Innovative Skills for Africa's Youths**

## **1. Project Summary**

The Innovative Skills for Africa's Youths Project will bring together the various actors in skills development initiatives for youths around the continent through the formulation, development, and implementation of a viable communication strategy for quality assurance, coherence, and adequate matching of innovative training techniques with the competency requirements in the labour market in Africa.

Africa finds itself in a developmental crisis. Countries in the continent need to seriously address the critical issues if they respond to the new policy and development frameworks' demand. Africa is the second largest and second most-populated continent globally, with an estimated population of 1.2 billion and the most youthful and fastest-growing population. Over 40% of Africans are under the age of 15, and 20% are between 15 and 24. By 2050, one-third of the world's population will live in Africa: up from about one fifth in 2012. Sub-Saharan Africa will have a higher youth-to-population ratio over the next 35 years, highlighting the need to prepare for an increasingly young labour force. Whether these young people will join the labour market successfully will have significant implications for Africa and its neighbours. It is, therefore, imperative to have a good understanding of how young job seekers engage with labour markets.

There is also a significant gender discrepancy emerging as young women tend to enter marriage early and withdraw from the labour force and focus on rearing a family. African women in most countries do not enjoy the same kind of economic, social, and political opportunities men want. When it comes to education, work, and health, women lose out. Fewer girls than boys go to school and complete the cycle of learning. Women earn less than men for paid labour, harmful practices such as child marriage and sexual and physical violence adversely affect women's health and development. Africa's widespread youth unemployment threatens to undermine social and political stability and means that young people are particularly vulnerable to radicalization.

Africa has vast, untapped economic potential, but young people struggle to gain employment opportunities - 60% of the unemployed are younger than 25 - with women being the most brutal hit. Limited access to education and the practical training needed to build skills perpetuate the cycle, and the economic prospects propel young Africans to seek a better life elsewhere. This phenomenon, in turn, further damages the local economy as significantly less developed nations are steadily being drained of their workforce.

## **2. Problem Relevance**

Africa is currently pursuing a transformation agenda under the recognition of the African Union's vision of "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena". It is, therefore, evident that success will be elusive unless we purposefully harness the potential of the continent's young people. As African leaders give credence to this view, they have identified youth development with science, technology, and innovation as the main pillars of Agenda 2063. Innovation in Africa is not a new concept. Human survival requires constant change and adaptation. For most Africans, innovation is a necessity, enabling them to navigate the daily precariousness of life. With African fortunes and prospects looking up and the continent making strides to achieve its transformation agenda, there is an urgent need to introduce or intensify the use of science and technology in traditional innovation. There is also the overarching question of how innovations in science and technology can be used to build on the momentum of economic growth in Africa and to elicit ideas on how a technology change can harness the potential of African youth to advance the African development agenda and to stem steadily rising youth unemployment rates.

African youth want to work, but they need the education, information, skills training, and opportunities necessary to get a good job. Many in Africa believe that it is now time to break away entirely from the past, look at situations from a different perspective and in a new vision, and indeed in a new world to find permanent solutions to youth employment problems on the continent. African youth want to be taught marketable skills in school and have urged African governments, in many recent forums, to revise educational policies to align with workforce demands. The youth in Africa know and feel that merely graduating from school does not guarantee jobs. African youth would like to see educational programmes revamped to better equip them with the knowledge and skills they will need to compete in the workforce. Young people have recently been talking about getting support in making career choices. They have emphasized the need for proper mentorship programmes, counselling, and career guidance centres to help students and business owners and graduates.

Others are talking about having the right mix of skills for present-day employment. These include creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making. Many agree that should develop such skills through high-quality teaching, reduced drop-out rate, improved access to higher education, quality vocational and technical training, and building bridges between the educational system –both formal and non-formal – and the labour market. We should also consider specialized on-the-job training.

Although the employment landscape in Africa today reveals that the continent's workforce is more educated and employed in a more diverse set of sectors than is commonly perceived, there are difficulties finding workers with appropriate skills and work experience. However, compared to the other issues, these are generally regarded as much lower-ranked obstacles to business growth on the continent. This remedy reflects the more fundamental nature of constraints in finance,

infrastructure, and overall macro-economic condition. Companies in Africa have complained about the lack of worker qualifications and skills as sometimes presenting an issue for hiring. Employers cite a lack of technical skills as an obstacle to hiring. In some cases, they have even gone to the extent of pointing out that job applicants commonly lack soft skills such as managing time, being punctual, and communicating effectively.

### **3. Call to Action**

First, if education is to be taken more seriously than ever before in the context of Africa, then there must be a higher emphasis on workforce skills. While we may still not consider worker skills in some quarters to be the most prominent obstacle to job creation in Africa today, there can be no doubt that all countries would benefit from new investment and reforms to raise the educational system's quality. Such investment should be aimed not only at formal primary and secondary education. Significantly more technical and vocational training and a refocusing of tertiary education on engineering, mathematics, science, and other marketable skills are necessary. Africa may also want to review the situation in the non-formal and informal sectors too.

There is no easy solution to boosting job growth in Africa today. Programmes such as worker training or entrepreneurship support, enacted alone, are unlikely to impact significantly. Barriers to job growth are the same factors that dampen Africa's overall economic growth. With targeted reform programmes, African governments can remove these barriers and unleash private sector growth.

CAFOR will identify ten reputable training institutions continent-wide, two in each region from different countries, to design a unique training programme for secondary school graduates on subject matters related to mathematics, science subjects, engineering technology, and other innovations. This programme will comprise heavy information and communication components.

#### **(a) Communication to enhance dialogue on innovative skills for Africa's youths.**

CAFOR and its partners on the continent will design specific communication messages for the public to enhance dialogue, boost awareness of the importance of these subjects, change mindsets, ensure the development of a positive attitude towards the sciences, and encourage young Africans in the continent to embrace science, technology, vocational education and training and other entrepreneurship-related disciplines. CAFOR will, through this project, enhance partnerships among the ten selected training institutions.

Through its communication and advocacy programme, CAFOR will also enhance dialogue mechanisms among a selected number of enterprises in the ten selected countries and ensure that these established institutions have been capacitated to support employment-oriented skills development. This training would ensure that access to employment-oriented skills development for young people is improved, with specific measures to address the specific needs or employment opportunities for women, youth, and vulnerable groups, including students from low-income groups, refugees, migrants, internally displaced persons, the disadvantaged and disabled.

These institutions will work in unison and more coherently to present innovativeness in innovative training design and delivery or technology-enabled learning or digitalized skills programmes and financing partnerships. In this regard, they will work together to:

- Outline the TVET sector's growth potential in the specific country, training needs, and a viable, sustainable financing strategy.
- Look into the issues of risks and how we will mitigate them and processes to sustain the investment or initiative.

**(b) Engaging the private sector and other stakeholders**

CAFOR will also engage the private sector from the start through its advocacy and communication programme to ensure that this sector contributes to improving skills development by participating in the design and the delivery of employment-oriented skills development programmes in the ten selected training institutions.

CAFOR will also ensure through its advocacy and communication programme that lessons learned and best practices are disseminated at the national, regional and continental levels.

CAFOR will engage in dialogue with stakeholders and advocate, through its mass-media programmes, for institutions to provide employment-oriented skills development initiatives that are of high quality, relevant to priority growth sectors, financially viable and ready to implement.

CAFOR will also work with governments, the donor community, and youth-led organizations to address issues bordering on this initiative's sustainability and the prospects for regional replicability and upscaling.

CAFOR will also engage with stakeholders and advocate for a positive impact on growth-oriented employment opportunities for youth, women, the disabled, disadvantaged, and vulnerable groups.

CAFOR would like to see that this initiative become showcases and best practice providers of employable skills development for each region on the continent. To this end, CAFOR will consider the following as issues of high importance:

- Fulfilling regional development goals.
- Offering access to skills training for students from the region.
- Drawing on expertise from the area.
- Potential for having one regional centre of excellence in each region.

**4. Sponsorship and Funding:**

CAFOR is seeking sponsorship from partners and multilateral and bilateral agencies, and the private sector to support the management, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of this project in the following ways:

S. No.	SUMMARY BUDGET	Per Annum	Period (Yrs)	Personnel Deployed	Total (USD)
<b>1</b>	<b>STAFF COSTS</b>				
	Internal Staff Costs- Full Time Staff (2 % of total salary costs)	68636.63	5	4	343183
	Field Based Experts Costs - Project Period & Work	30000.00	5	5	750000

	Deploying 2 local field staff per country	500	5	10	300000
2	<b>PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION COSTS</b>				
	Designing a appropriate training programme	25000.00	1		25000
	Deploying training programme by tying up with TVET institutions	50000.00	1		50000
	Youth TVET Certification	30000.00	1		30000
	Organising Mass Media Campaings for youth	30000.00	5		150000
	Engaging Stakeholders- government, youth organisation, etc	25000.00	5		125000
3	<b>Other Costs</b>				
	Communication Costs- Monthly Mobile Top-Ups, Printouts, Stationery, Shipping, Postage, etc (per annum per person)	3000	5	9	135000
	Monitoring ,Evaluation Costs & IT Costs in 5 countries	4000	5	5	100000
	Associated Costs (Supplies, Equipment Costs, etc)	50000	5	5	1250000
	Operational Costs - Office Set-up Costs, Office Equipment, Etc	40000	1	5	200000
4	<b>TRAVEL &amp; TRANSPORTATION COSTS</b>				
	Travel Insurance	1350	5	9	60750
	Per Diems per day for internal staff	260	5	9	11700
	Per Diems per day for international staff	200	5	5	5000
	Local Travel Costs per month	1000	5	9	45000
	International Travel Costs	600	5	9	27000
5	<b>TOTAL AMOUNT</b>				<b>3,607,633</b>
6	<b>MISCELLANEOUS EXPENDITURE</b>				
	Calculated at 15% of TOTAL Amount				<b>541,145</b>
7	<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>				<b>4,148,778</b>

Sponsors may expect recognition in a few ways:

- Sponsors may be included in a roll of honour, hosted on the CAFOR website [www.cafor.org](http://www.cafor.org), with the African Union's recognition.
- Sponsors will be recognized in presentations at conferences and meetings as having supported education in Africa.
- Should a sponsor wish to remain anonymous, this will be respected by CAFOR.

## 5. Conclusion

As a growing number of countries move towards achieving universal primary education, they are now developing a pipeline of young people who expect to pursue either further education or

training to improve their chances for employment and higher earnings. Structural changes in the economy, furthered by urbanization, technology, and shifting patterns of consumer demand, have created demands on adults already in or actively seeking jobs in the workforce to develop skills that enable them to compete in this new environment. Overall, the structure and interplay of work and education have changed.

It is important to note that youth and adults' preparation for employment has shifted from the concept of formal education to that of skills development. Within the policy realm, skills development, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), life skills, and livelihoods training are concepts that are often used interchangeably. In terms of gender, targeted youth livelihood programmes do not generally reach adolescent girls, especially those most in need. Unless programmes put girls at the centre initially, they do not "get" to girls.

The acquisition of employment skills constitutes a key driver for economic development and growth. Besides, among other factors, it is said that the availability of a skilled workforce is a significant pull factor for foreign direct investment. In Africa, about 10-11 million youth enter the job market annually, but only 3 million formal jobs are created every year. For this reason, the African Union developed a Continental Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Strategy. In the strategy, TVET is recognized as the most practical avenue for acquiring readily employable skills for the world of work.

Governments and development partners at the global level must invest in science, technology, and innovations for the following reasons:

- (a) To increase the relevance of schooling by imparting individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary for making the individual a productive member of society.
- (b) To reduce unemployment due to the provision of employable skills, especially to the youth.
- (c) To increase economic development since it improves the quality and skill level of the working population.
- (d) To reduce poverty by giving the individuals who participate in the programme access to higher-income occupations.
- (e) To transform the attitude of people to favour occupations where there are occupational prospects or future.

CAFOR bears all these issues in mind as it endeavours to implement its project on its Innovative Skills for Africa's Youth.