

YEMEN

A Glance at Livelihood Options and Youth Perspectives on the Labor Market in Ash Shamayatayn District, Ta'iz Gov.



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◆ Introduction

Yemen has been struggling with a multifaceted crisis for over eight years, marked by armed violence, economic instability, and disruptions to public services. According to Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) 2023, an estimated 21,6 million Yemenis will need humanitarian assistance and protection services in 2023.

This report provides an overview of livelihood options and youth labor-market perspectives in Yemen's Ash Shamayatayn district. This research aims to examine the district's youth's sources of income, employment opportunities, and barriers. It also evaluates the role of local authorities, government programs, and non-governmental organizations in creating job opportunities and empowering youth. In addition, the report examines labor market demand for services and skills, access to vocational training programs, entrepreneurship opportunities and challenges, and access to microfinance and small business loans.

Yemen Family Care Association (YFCA) conducts this study to provide insights and recommendations to help youth in Ash Shamayatayn improve their employment and livelihood opportunities.

Specific Objectives

- Explore the livelihood sources, employment opportunities, and barriers to employment faced by youth in Ash Shamayatayn district.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of government programs, non-governmental organizations, and local governments in creating job opportunities and empowering youth.
- Determine the most in-demand services and skills in the labor market, taking into account the perspectives of male and female participants, as well as key informants from the private sector and local governments.
- Assess the accessibility and availability of vocational skill training programs.
- Investigate business owners' willingness and requirements for conducting apprenticeships.
- Assess the availability of microfinance and small business loans.

■ Methodology

Using a qualitative method, the study collected data on livelihood options and youth labor-market attitudes in Ash Shamayatayn district, Ta'iz governorate. The primary data collection took place between August 20 and August 30, 2023, to capture the current situation.

Eight focus group discussions (FGDs) were held, with four FGDs comprised of male participants and four FGDs comprised of female participants. The FGDs provided an opportunity for participants to share their perspectives and labor-market experiences. The study included 41 female participants and 33 male participants, all of whom were between the ages of 18 and 29, ensuring that the target age group was represented.

Data collection was carried out in five locations within Ash Shamayatayn district, including the Turbah subdistrict. These locations were selected to capture a diverse range of perspectives and experiences related to livelihood options and the labor market.

In addition to the FGDs, interviews were conducted with various stakeholders relevant to the study. Four interviews were conducted with vocational training service providers to

gain their insights. Six interviews were conducted with business owners, including professionals in carpentry, welding, automotive and mobile engineering, electrical work, and hairdressing. These interviews aimed to gather information about the challenges and opportunities in their respective fields. Three interviews were conducted with local authorities to understand the local context and initiatives related to youth employment. Two interviews were conducted with microfinance institutions to explore the available financial support for aspiring entrepreneurs.

It should be noted that the qualitative findings are not statistically generalizable. Rather, they provide valuable insights into the situation at the time of data collection. These findings should be considered indicative of the perceptions and experiences of the participants involved in the study.

Engaging youth actively and assisting them in becoming active citizens with sustainable livelihoods will help to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and ensure that their children

Key Findings

- Daily wage labor, small businesses, private sector jobs, and agriculture are common livelihood sources in Ash Shamayatayn district.
- Livelihood sources in Ash Tagaytay district are diverse but also face many challenges. Daily wage work is the backbone of the local workforce across multiple occupations, but often limited job opportunities. Small businesses to some extent have grown due to displacement but also face constraints. Agriculture remains important culturally but is struggling with water shortages from climate/infrastructure issues.
- Unemployment and Limited Job Opportunities: The study reveals a high prevalence of unemployment among youth in Ash Shamayatayn district. Limited job opportunities and a fragile local labor market contribute to this issue. The lack of employment options leads to economic instability and hampers the livelihoods of young individuals.
- The private sector is currently the primary driver of job creation in the district, offering, to some extent, employment opportunities across various industries.
- The government's initiatives for providing employment opportunities are not well known or accessible to the participants, while NGOs have shown positive efforts in supporting youth.
- Local authorities face challenges in meeting the employment and livelihood needs of youth, including the insufficiency of private-sector enterprises, the lack of public-sector employment options, inadequate financial support, and the impact of conflict and exceptional conditions.
- The key barriers to joining the labor market for youth include insufficient job opportunities and low salaries, high competition and inadequate market demand, financial barriers, mismatched specializations/skills, lack of skills, lack of support and encouragement from families and society particularly for females, limited job opportunities and market competition, and lack of relevant experience/skills.

- Employers frequently prefer candidates with relevant experience or skills, making entry into the labor market difficult for recent graduates or job seekers.
- Local authorities recognize the value of vocational training and employment programs, but they face challenges in implementing large-scale solutions due to funding/resource constraints exacerbated by the ongoing crisis context. Authorities recognize the importance of vocational training and employment programs but face constraints in implementing large-scale solutions due to funding/resource shortages exacerbated by the ongoing crisis context.
- Limited Access to Vocational Training: The accessibility and availability of vocational training programs are major challenges faced by youth in the district. The study identifies a gap in skills development, as young individuals struggle to acquire the necessary vocational skills demanded by the labor market. This gap further exacerbates the issue of unemployment.
- The study identifies the most demanded services and skills in the labor market, considering the perspectives of male and female participants, as well as key informants from the private sector and local authorities.
- Ash Shamayatayn district, to some extent, offers vocational training choices in various industries, such as sewing, embroidery, hairdressing, automotive electricity, carpentry, and agriculture.
- The local authority in Ash Shamayatayn, theoretically, actively promotes vocational training and skill development by working together with governmental and non-governmental organizations.
- Business owners and professionals in the district are willing to provide practical training and apprenticeship programs to young individuals, understanding the importance of passing on their expertise.
- Financial constraints significantly impede self-employment initiatives and business startups due to a lack of funding support.
- While the private sector is theoretically growing, youth entrepreneurs frequently cannot access needed loans/capital from financial institutions due to strict eligibility criteria.

◆ Context and Background in Ash Shamayatyan district

Ash Shamayatayn, located in the southern region of Yemen's Ta'iz governorate, is one of the governorate's 23 districts. It borders Hayfan East and Al Wazi'iyah districts to the east and west, respectively, and Al-Ma'afer and Al-Mawaset districts to the north. As of HNO 2022, the estimated population of Ash Shamayatayn district is 257,321 individuals. The district covers 617.3 square kilometers and is divided into 33 sub-districts.

The district of Ash Shamayatayn has been a focal point for various development initiatives aimed at improving the welfare of its residents. However, the district's local labor market is limited, particularly for the younger population. In this context, the July 2018 Protection Needs Assessment

Report in Ash Shamayatayn district, emphasizes the need to reduce the prevalence of exploitation, child labor, child marriage, and recruitment into armed groups¹.

▪ Overview of Services in Ash Shamayatyan

The availability of various public services in Ash Shamayatayn district such as water, electricity, healthcare, education, transportation, and markets were examined. While water services have been relatively good, recent challenges have resulted in noticeable shortages. Most households rely on solar power due to insufficient public electricity supply. Healthcare facilities are limited to one under-resourced government hospital. Education has declined due to a shortage of teachers, textbooks, and overcrowding, though private schools have emerged. Many remote residents lack adequate transportation, while roads and transportation systems are of poor quality, making access to basic services difficult. The central Al-Turba market and several other smaller markets offer goods, though locals prefer the largest Al-Turba market. Investing in improved infrastructure and resources is needed to strengthen these key public services across the district.

▪ Livelihood Challenges

Livelihoods in Ash Shamayatayn face numerous challenges. Political conflict has exacerbated issues like widespread unemployment as jobs become scarce with growing populations and inflation. Unemployment has forced some into child labor and marriage, contributing to issues like domestic violence. Public services have declined as private options rise in cost. Climate change causes erratic rainfall, causing damage to roads, homes, and farmland. Agriculture is suffering as water supplies decline. Resilience could be boosted by job creation, skill training, and social protection reforms.

▪ Overview Livelihood Sources

The livelihood profile of Ash Shamayatayn is multifaceted, with both traditional modes of income generation and more modern, market-based activities readily available. Overall, the district benefits from its strategic location along major transportation routes, fertile agricultural lands, proximity to Ta'iz city, influx of displaced people, and recent emergence of a thriving private sector.

A range of income generation activities is available in Ash Shamayatayn, spanning casual daily wage work, small business/trade, private enterprises, agriculture, and public sector jobs.

✱ Current Livelihood Sources

- Daily Wage Labor
- Small business
- Private Sectors
- Agriculture

¹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/yemen/protection-needs-assessment-report-ash-shamayatayn-district-taizz-governorate-july-2018>

◆ Employment and Job Opportunities

■ Demographic And Labour Market Trends in Ash Shamayatayn

Participants from both the FGDs and local authority Kils acknowledged a notable dynamic in the labor market within Ash Shamayatayn district. They attributed this improvement to several key factors. Firstly, population growth was identified as a contributing factor, as the increased number of residents created a demand for various goods and services. Additionally, the influx of displaced people into the region played a significant role in stimulating employment opportunities, as the availability of a larger labor force contributed to the growth of businesses and industries.

Furthermore, the presence of NGOs and organizations in the region that used At Turbah as their operational hub was recognized as an important factor in the improvement of the labor market.

These entities not only provided direct employment opportunities but also facilitated economic growth through their initiatives and projects. The expansion of new businesses, including construction projects and trade activities, was specifically highlighted as a driving factor for the growth of employment opportunities. The establishment of such enterprises created job openings across various sectors and industries, thereby positively impacting the overall job market.

■ Perspectives on Job Opportunities and Employment Conditions in the Public and Private Sectors

According to the findings, the most prominent providers of employment opportunities in Ash Shamayatayn district are currently in the private sector rather than the government sector. These perspectives were affirmed in interviews with local authorities, who pointed out that the private sector is primarily driving job creation at present due to ongoing conflict impacts. Specifically, they note that the private sector is offering a wide variety of employment opportunities across different industries like trade, retail, services, and manufacturing. While acknowledging that some roles are available through the education and teaching sectors via private schools contracting graduates, Informants recognize private healthcare facilities and businesses as significant sources of employment. Informants also recognized the growth in private sector opportunities with support from NGOs and civil society organizations due to the location and nature of the district.

Female and male participants shared a consensus that government agencies currently do not offer job opportunities. However, participants had varying opinions regarding the private sector. Specifically, there were differing perceptions regarding the quality of employment in the private sector. Some participants expressed concerns about low wages, salaries, and the lack of attractive benefits. They emphasized the need for improvement in these areas to enhance the appeal and sustainability of private-sector employment. While participants acknowledged that certain private sector enterprises provide competitive wages that can meet basic needs, others raised concerns about low wages, especially in smaller businesses. For instance, female participants in FGDs mentioned, "*Salaries are low in universities, institutes, and schools, but they are much better in NGOs and money exchange companies.*"

Furthermore, participants highlighted that the availability of benefits such as health insurance, social insurance, training opportunities, and job security varied across private sector

entities. It was observed that larger companies or well-established businesses were perceived to offer better benefits, while smaller businesses might face resource constraints in providing comprehensive benefit packages. In the female FGDs, participants expressed their views by stating, "*The private sector does not offer job opportunities, and even if it does, the salaries are insufficient to meet the needs of individuals and their families, and there is a lack of health or social insurance.*" Following discussions among the participants, they reached a consensus that while the private sector contributes to reducing the unemployment rate, the current salary levels are inadequate. As one participant expressed, "*Currently, there are no other options available, even if the salaries are relatively low.*"

■ Livelihood and Job Opportunities in Ash Shamayatayn: Perspectives from Male and Female Participants

The livelihood and job opportunities sources in Ash Shamayatayn district, as perceived by male and female participants, encompass a range of sectors and activities. These include small business/trade and petty trade, such as selling building materials, foodstuffs, khat, stone, and clay. Additionally, participants mentioned engagement in agriculture, construction, and military sectors as viable livelihood sources. Daily wage work in various sectors like restaurants, construction, shops, agriculture, and driving was also highlighted. The private sector was recognized as a potential source of employment, with health facilities, pharmacies, schools, institutes, universities, banks, currency exchange centers, shopping centers, and malls offering job opportunities. NGOs were also mentioned as sources of employment. Finally, participants acknowledged the potential of handicrafts as a livelihood option. These varied sources demonstrate the diverse range of opportunities available to both male and female individuals in the district.

* Some main sources of livelihood and job opportunities were stated by male and female participants:

- Small business /petty trade (building materials and foodstuffs, selling khat, selling stone, clay, etc.)
- Agriculture, Construction, and Military sectors
- Daily wage work (restaurants, construction, shops, agriculture, driving, etc.)
- Private sector (Health facilities, pharmacies, schools - institutes - universities - banks - currency exchange, Shopping center and malls
- NGOs
- Handicrafts

■ Government and NGO Programs to Create Job Opportunities and Empower Youth

The FGDs shed light on the current programs initiated by the government to provide opportunities for youth. There is a significant gap between the government's initiatives and the participants' awareness and access to employment opportunities. Female and male participants unanimously expressed their disappointment with the government's support in terms of job opportunities. They highlighted a lack of knowledge regarding the government's initiatives for employment opportunities, with some participants mentioning that no employment opportunities have been created since 2011.

NGOs, on the other hand, have shown some positive efforts in supporting youth and providing job opportunities through several initiatives and programs. However, concerns have been raised about the limited incentives offered by these initiatives, such as low-paid voluntary work.

▪ Key Challenges Faced by Local Authorities in Meeting the Employment and Livelihood Needs of Youth in the District

Local authorities play a crucial role in addressing the employment and livelihood needs of youth in their respective regions. However, they face numerous challenges that hinder their ability to effectively meet these needs. Here, will explore some key challenges identified by KIs, shedding light on the obstacles faced by local authorities in supporting youth in the areas of work and livelihood.

One of the primary challenges highlighted by KIs is the insufficiency of private-sector enterprises. The lack of sufficient private businesses limits job opportunities for youth considering the rapid population growth witnessed and alumni overcrowding in the district, contributing to unemployment and placing immense pressure on local services and infrastructure.

In addition, the lack of public sector employment options further exacerbates the unemployment issue. The absence of government support and inadequate resource allocation to the district to cover projects and initiatives further compound the challenges faced by local authorities.

Ongoing conflict and exceptional conditions prevailing in the region pose significant challenges to local authorities. For example, the declining value of salaries, coupled with the absence of incentives and settlements, contributes to a continuous rise in job evasion among people; the variances in currency exchange rates among Internationally Recognized Government and De facto authority areas; and insufficient electrical infrastructure and services hamper economic activities and limit employment opportunities for people in various sectors.

✧ List of Challenges Encountered by Local Authorities Highlighted by KIs

- Limited Private Sector Enterprises
- Shortage of Government Jobs
- Inadequate Financial Support
- Lack of government Support and Resource Allocation
- Low Salary Value and variances in currency exchange rate
- Infrastructure and service limitations
- Impact of Conflict and Exceptional Conditions:

◆ Key Barriers for Youth to Join the Labor Market

In this section, we aim to shed light on the difficulties that young people encounter when looking for work. The insightful perspectives gained from FGDs provide valuable insight into the barriers impeding job opportunities in the local context.

Overall, the findings highlight the common barriers and obstacles that both males and females face when looking for work in their respective areas. The findings highlight the importance of addressing issues such as limited government job openings, financial assistance, unemployment, skill mismatches, and a lack of suitable job options for people without prior experience. To address these challenges, targeted interventions and policies should focus on

improving job prospects, supporting entrepreneurship, improving skill training, and raising awareness about available opportunities.

During FGDs, Male participants expressed dissatisfaction with the scarcity of government and private job openings in their area. The scarcity of such positions limits their employment options and decreases their likelihood of securing stable employment. Participants reported that even when job opportunities are available, they frequently come with low salaries. They noted that the local job market fails to meet demand, resulting in an excess of qualified candidates competing for a limited number of openings. This disparity between job seekers and available positions exacerbates the unemployment problem. Financial limitations are also mentioned as a significant barrier to launching their businesses. In addition, the lack of financial support and resources hinders their ability to engage in entrepreneurial endeavors and diminishes their employment opportunities. Several participants further mentioned that the available job opportunities often do not align with their educational backgrounds and skill sets. Even worse, they mentioned that their limited understanding of current industry requirements and trends hinders their ability to develop relevant skills and effectively compete for employment.

On the other hand, female participants identified a prominent barrier to accessing job opportunities: a lack of support and encouragement. They stressed the lack of support and encouragement from their families and society, especially when seeking employment, particularly in NGOs. Like their male counterparts, female participants faced financial constraints that strongly impeded their ability to start their businesses. Additionally, females expressed difficulty in finding suitable job opportunities due to few job opportunities. Moreover, the intense competition for the limited positions available further compounds this challenge. Participants also cited that some employers specifically require previous experience, making it tremendously difficult for individuals without related work experience to secure employment.

✧ Males' Key Barriers to Join the Labor Market:

- Insufficient Job Opportunities and Low Salaries
- High Competition and Inadequate Market Demand
- Financial Barriers
- Mismatched Specializations/skills
- Lack of Relevant Experience/ Skills

✧ Females' Key Barriers to Join the Labor Market:

- Lack of Support and Encouragement from families and society
- Financial Barriers
- Limited Job Opportunities and Market Competition
- Lack of Relevant Experience/ Skills

▪ Most Demanded Services in Ash Shamayatayn

This section aims to identify the services that experience a surge in demand in Ash Shamayatayn district and provide valuable insights for individuals looking to acquire new skills or considering starting a business.

Findings highlighted several areas with increased demand, including carpentry, blacksmithing, construction, mechanics, sales and marketing, mobile phone and computer maintenance and programming, transportation, healthcare,

first aid, sewing and tailoring, beauty and personal care, catering services (food), photography, and decoration. These findings offer aspiring entrepreneurs and individuals seeking training a comprehensive understanding of the market needs and potential business opportunities. **By aligning their skills and interests with these most demanded services, individuals can capitalize on the demand and contribute to the economic growth of the region.**

* **Most Demanded Services:**

- Carpentry, Blacksmithing, and Construction
- Mechanics and Repair Services
- Marketing/ Sales
- Mobile phone and computer maintenance and programming,
- Transportation
- Healthcare and First Aid
- Sewing/Tailoring
- Beauty and Personal Care: Services such as hairdressing, hand engraving
- Culinary Services: Cooking, food preparation, pastry making, etc.
- Photography and Decoration

▪ **Most Demanded Skills to Join the Labor Market: Male and Female Participants Perspective**

In Ash Shamayatayn, there is a high demand for specific skills that are valued when it comes to finding employment. These skills are beneficial for both men and women, although there may be some differences and considerations based on gender. Based on insights from male and female FGDs, the following skills are particularly important for entering the labor market in Ash Shamayatayn.

- Technical and Vocational Skills
- Language Skills
- Communication, Marketing, and Selling Skills
- Computer and Digital Literacy

Overall, in Ash Shamayatayn district, developing technical and vocational skills, language proficiency, effective communication and sales skills, and computer and digital literacy can greatly enhance job opportunities for both males and females.

The likelihood of young individuals securing and sustaining employment is higher when they can obtain jobs that align with their specific requirements and aspirations.

Acquiring the required technical skills is imperative for youth to secure jobs or start enterprises. Consultations with local authorities and the private sector highlight and provide a better understanding of the types of vocational skills currently in greatest demand in the local labor market. Insights gleaned can help guide youth seeking employment as well as those developing training programs.

For males, the vocational skills cited as most likely to lead to jobs included carpentry, blacksmithing, vehicle electricity, general electrical works, and electrical installation. Skills such as tailoring and sewing were also prominently featured. Computer skills and the ability to perform mobile phone maintenance and repairs rounded out the top vocational abilities requested by employers.

When examining required female vocational skills, a slightly different picture emerged. Top opportunities lay within personal services like hairdressing, and food preparation specifically focused on pastry-making, tailoring, and sewing. Crafting household accessories also surfaced as an in-demand job.

By gaining a clearer sense of which technical and trade proficiencies the labor market requires most, developing training programs and youth can have valuable guidance on priority areas for vocational training or obtaining on-the-job experience to boost their job prospects and livelihood opportunities within the district.

* **For males, the following vocational skills are in demand in the local market:**

- Carpentry
- Blacksmithing
- Vehicle electricity
- Electricals and electrical works
- Tailoring and sewing
- Computer skills
- Mobile phone maintenance

* **For females, the following vocational skills are in demand in the local market:**

- Hairdresser
- Pastry
- Tailoring and sewing
- Art of making accessories

Several steps can be taken to facilitate the acquisition of the previously mentioned skills suggested by KIs:

- Implement vocational training programs through educational institutions or vocational training centers and development that offer courses specifically focused on the required skills identified for both genders. These programs should be accessible and affordable, providing practical training and hands-on experience in the respective fields.
- Establish apprenticeship and internship programs where experienced professionals, industry experts, and organizations in their respective fields (for example: carpenters, blacksmiths, electrical engineers, etc.) can guide and mentor individuals in improving their skills. In fields like carpentry, blacksmithing, etc., which often involve traditional craftsmanship, mentoring relationships can help preserve and pass down valuable traditional knowledge and skills to the trainee.
- Provide financial and supply support: Support trainees, trainers, and mentors in their respective fields (for example, carpenters, blacksmiths, and electrical engineers) with financial and material assistance. In addition to training materials and supplies as needed.

- Encourage and create awareness programs for youth to inform them about the importance of acquiring vocational skills and the job opportunities available in the labor market.

By acquiring the above-mentioned skills, individuals can increase their chances of finding employment and contributing to the local economy.

The ability of young people to understand and meet the interests and needs of the private sector (as potential employers) has a significant impact on their ability to find employment or job opportunities.

◆ Access to Vocational Skills Training Programs

In Ash Shamayatayn, there are a variety of vocational training choices (see the list below) for individuals aiming to enhance their skills and pursue employment prospects.

In terms of government-affiliated establishments, there is a main technical institute situated in Al-Turba that provides vocational training opportunities. Apart from government institutions, there are private institutes and local organizations such as "New Skills Institute, Women's Union, My Message Center, Productive Families Center, Golden Fingers for Training and Development, Ta'ayush Development Association, and various Safe Spaces," that also offer vocational training programs.

✱ Some Vocational Training Offerings in the district include:

- Sewing and Embroidery
- Hairdressing
- Hand inscription
- Confectionery and Pastry Making
- Incense and Perfume Making
- Detergent Manufacturing
- Drawing
- Automotive Electricity
- Maintenance (Phones, Solar Energy, Motorcycles)
- Carpentry
- Photography
- Medical Fields (First Aid, Nursing)
- Interior Design
- Food Industries such as Dairy, Cheese, and Confectionery
- Handicrafts and Embroidery
- Training in Beekeeping, Agriculture, and Animal Husbandry
- Design Art (Accessory Making)
- Others

Although vocational training in Ash Shamayatayn has benefited some trainees, many participants have had difficulty finding work or establishing their own businesses. The main challenges reported include training programs that do not provide enough hands-on experience, financial constraints that prevent equipment purchases, geographic remoteness from markets, a scarcity of job openings, and job opportunities that do not match the skillsets gained.

Findings also highlight the diverse approaches employed by the youth in Ash Shamayatayn district to acquire skills and experiences. They combine both formal and informal methods, utilizing traditional and modern resources to

enhance their knowledge and capabilities, which can be capitalized on to offer wide vocational programs. and skills training programs offered by local authorities (this is offered by the ministry of technical and vocational institutes). On the other hand, vocational and skills training programs offered by local authorities and private institutions provide opportunities to acquire valuable skills and experiences. However, these programs can be expensive and limited, and the skills taught may not always align with labor market demands. Furthermore, limited access to these programs by youth poses a challenge. Some also self-learn online.

The duration of training programs varies in general. For instance, a short-term program might last from two weeks to three months. On the other hand, diploma training following ninth grade or secondary school could span up to a two-year period.

▪ Role of Local Authority in Promoting Vocational Training and Skill Development

The local authority in Ash Shamayatayn is actively involved in promoting vocational training and skill development among the youth. They have taken several initiatives to ensure that young people, both males and females, have access to training opportunities across various fields. This is achieved through the guidance provided by the technical institute/ vocational skills training and the organization of training workshops for small-scale projects. By catering to the diverse needs and interests of the youth, the local authority aims to cultivate a skilled workforce that can contribute effectively to the local economy.

The local authority recognizes the importance of external support in skill development. They actively engage with international and local civil society organizations as well as donor agencies to leverage their interventions and expertise in enhancing skills. By coordinating efforts between various organizations, the local authority maximizes the impact of these interventions, allowing for a more comprehensive and holistic approach to skill development.

▪ Empowering Youth Through Practical Training Programs: Insights from Business Owners and Professionals

Practical training programs are essential for giving young people the skills they need to join the labor market and successful careers. Within the district of Ash Shamayatayn district, some business owners, and professionals, including carpenters, welders, automotive engineers, electricians, and hairdressers, were approached to gauge their willingness to provide practical training to young individuals. The responses highlight the requirements, guarantees, duration, and methods of assessing the achievement of desired goals. These insights shed light on the opportunities available for youth skill development in the district.

- **Willingness to Conduct Practical, Apprenticeship, Training**

Many business owners and professionals expressed willingness to offer practical apprenticeship training programs by transferring their expertise to youth. Hands-on experience would be gained at their facilities. Requirements included basic literacy, financial coverage of costs ensuring sustainability, suitable 18–30-year-old age range, and commitment and discipline adhering to schedules and rules.

Duration ranged from one month to three days depending on the skill, with daily hours of 4-6 suggested to balance comprehensive training and trainee commitments. Achievement of goals could be evaluated through performance assessments, practical application of skills learned, and recorded indicators.

▪ Youth Willingness and Readiness to Join Apprenticeships and Vocational Training

In the FGD sessions, many male and female participants expressed their willingness and readiness to join vocational training.

In a series of discussions on vocational training, a significant number of participants expressed their interest and readiness to enroll in vocational training programs. This section summarizes their preferences for specific skills and the reasons behind their choices. Participants mentioned a wide range of skills, including carpentry, first aid, motorcycle maintenance, mobile phone repair, accounting, computer maintenance, photography, phone maintenance and programming, electrical work, beekeeping, graphics design, nursing, marketing, bicycle maintenance, professional business experiences, public relations, financial accounting, air bicycle maintenance, and automotive electrical work.

The analysis of preferences and reasons for training among males and females reveals a diverse range of interests and motivations. These preferences and choices are driven by factors such as profitability, market demand, scarcity of services, passion, continuation of previous experience, and practical relevance. Additionally, women are more likely to seek out training that could lead to the establishment of home-based businesses.

✱ Males - Analysis of Preferences and Reasons:

- Carpentry: is profitable and in high demand.
- First aid: is essential in various situations.
- Nursing: Lack of medical professionals
- Motorcycle Maintenance: Limited availability of services
- Mobile phone repair and computer maintenance: Scarcity of repair shops and market demand
- Phone Maintenance and Programming: Market Demand and Potential Benefits
- Accounting and marketing are widely adopted in businesses and have importance in the labor market.
- Bicycle Maintenance: Love for the business, scarcity of specialists
- Electrical work and automotive electrical work: Market demand
- Photography: need for further learning and skill development
- Graphics Design: High market demand
- Beekeeping: continuation of previous experience, addressing local needs
- Others

✱ Females - Analysis of Preferences and Reasons:

- Mobile phone and computer maintenance: addressing exploitation concerns, developing valuable skills, and meeting labor market demand.
- Wool Knitting: Love for knitting, seeking skill development
- Hairdressing and inscription: income potential, home-based opportunities
- Handicrafts: interest in multiple fields, enhancing skills
- Confectionery and Pastry Making: Desire for Training and Home-Based Options

- Resin Art: Starting businesses and increasing income
- Photoshop: Desire to learn Photoshop
- Photography: Participants are passionate about enhancing their skills.
- Others

▪ Youth Vocational Training Challenges

Vocational training plays a crucial role in equipping young individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary for successful careers. However, several challenges hinder and hesitate youth in vocational training programs. This section aims to summarize the key challenges faced by youth and by educational institutions and vocational training centers and explore potential solutions to make vocational training more desirable and accessible.

According to KIs, one significant challenge is the lack of some training options, as they often focus on the same professions or crafts without considering the needs of the community. This repetition can discourage youth from engaging in vocational training.

Outdated training programs pose another challenge. Many vocational training programs have not been updated to address the evolving needs of society. This results in repetitive training without considering the changing demands of the job market, which can discourage potential participants.

Additionally, the concentration of vocational training opportunities in urban areas is also a challenge. This concentration limits the access of individuals from rural areas or those with specific interests or skills to pursue their desired careers.

In addition, financial constraints pose a substantial barrier to vocational training. Many participants mentioned they cannot or struggle to afford the fees, transportation costs, tools, and materials required for practical training. Providing even minimal financial assistance can increase the accessibility and desirability of vocational training for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds.

▪ Proposed Solutions to Make Vocational Training Desirable: KIs Insights

To enhance the appeal of vocational training, several strategies can be implemented. Firstly, conducting a comprehensive study to understand the aspirations and preferences of young individuals is crucial. This study should empower them to have a voice in selecting training options aligned with their strengths and demanded professions within the labor market. Furthermore, the introduction of new and relevant training programs that cater to the evolving needs of the job market can significantly increase the attractiveness of vocational training.

Additionally, it is essential to raise awareness about the benefits of vocational training. Providing financial support to cover training expenses and ensuring post-training job opportunities or entrepreneurial assistance are also vital factors in making vocational training desirable. By offering financial assistance and support in securing employment after training completion, young individuals will view vocational training as a valuable investment in their future. Lastly, post-training support in the form of toolkits and resources can empower trainees to confidently embark on their careers. For example, trainees can benefit from a

variety of resources in post-training support. This includes guides, templates, and tips for writing effective resumes and cover letters, as well as advice on conducting job interviews. In addition, providing trainees with access to online courses, tutorials, and workshops allows them to continuously improve and expand their knowledge in their chosen field, etc.

◆ Entrepreneurship Opportunities and Challenges

Despite the difficult economic conditions, a significant number of participants have expressed a desire to start their businesses. Several obstacles were identified as significant barriers to starting their businesses by those who expressed their entrepreneurial aspirations. The following are the most prominent challenges mentioned by participants:

- Lack of Funding
- Currency Instability: The volatility of exchange rates and the depreciation of the Yemeni Rial
- Lack of Knowledge and Skills
- Transportation Costs and Delivery Services

◆ Access to Microfinance and Small Business Loans

Representatives from various microfinance institutions operating in Ash Shamayatayn recently participated in interviews to discuss their programs and support for youth business development in the district.

By providing accessible financial services and programs, these institutions aim to support young individuals in realizing their business ideas and contributing to economic growth. However, certain challenges and barriers need to be addressed to ensure the effective utilization of microfinance services by the youth. This section explores the services offered, eligibility criteria, barriers faced, and collaborative efforts to create a supportive ecosystem for youth entrepreneurship in Yemen.

▪ Services and Programs for Youth

Microfinance institutions in Ash Shamayatayn offer a range of services and programs tailored to the needs of young entrepreneurs. These include commercial financing for trades such as sewing and home-based projects, service financing for vehicle purchase and repairs, educational financing in collaboration with educational institutions, and construction financing for consumer construction projects. Additionally, there are zero-start financing options available to support graduates' youth.

▪ Eligibility Criteria and Accessing Microfinance

Certain eligibility criteria must be met to receive microfinance services. Applicants must be Yemenis between the ages of 18 and 60. They must have a viable business idea as well as a good reputation. It is also necessary to have collateral or guarantees, such as commercial endorsements, gold, or deposits. Some Microfinance institutions may have additional requirements, such as a consistent source of income and a certain amount of time spent working in the chosen field.

▪ Barriers and Challenged by Youth to Access Microfinance

Despite the availability of microfinance services, several barriers prevent young people from seeking financial assistance. Lack of understanding of microfinance

procedures. Furthermore, youth are discouraged from seeking financial assistance due to a lack of awareness about the benefits of microfinance and misconceptions about it. Furthermore, many aspiring young entrepreneurs are put off by the lack of a steady income and the inability to provide collateral or guarantees.

Conclusion and recommendations

Insightful glance

Transition From Short-term Assistance to Sustainable Livelihood Programs

In the context of humanitarian crises, where the impact on livelihoods has been severe, various humanitarian actors have been providing essential assistance to the affected populations, such as cash and food assistance. While these short-term interventions play a crucial role in meeting immediate needs, it is crucial to explore and adopt alternative approaches beyond traditional cash-for-work or food distribution programs. By shifting our focus towards sustainable livelihood programs, job creation, income generation, and youth empowerment, we can address the underlying causes of poverty and unemployment in a more comprehensive and long-lasting manner.

An effective approach entails integrating cash transfer or food distribution programs with comprehensive skill development initiatives that extend beyond immediate assistance. Rather than solely providing financial aid or food provisions, these programs should encompass training and capacity-building opportunities that empower individuals with valuable and marketable skills. By equipping youth with enhanced skills and knowledge, they can access a broader array of job opportunities and significantly improve their employability prospects.

To ensure the success of such initiatives, it is essential to gain a thorough understanding of the local economic activities, specific market opportunities, skills gaps, and requirements of the target population. Engaging with local stakeholders, including educational institutions, vocational training centers, businesses, and microfinance institutions, becomes crucial in designing and implementing skill development programs that align with the demands of the local market.

By tailoring skill development initiatives to the specific needs of the local population and aligning them with market demands, we can foster sustainable employment prospects and economic growth. These programs should prioritize practical and relevant training, offering hands-on experience and mentorship opportunities. Additionally, facilitating access to resources and support for aspiring entrepreneurs can help them establish successful businesses and contribute to the overall economic development of the community.

By combining short-term assistance with long-term skill development, we can create a transformative impact on the lives of individuals affected by humanitarian crises. This comprehensive approach not only addresses immediate needs but also empowers individuals to break the cycle of dependency, enabling them to build sustainable livelihoods and contribute to the resilience and prosperity of their communities.

◆ Key Recommendations

- Increase job opportunities for youth by providing accurate information about job market trends and skill requirements, as well as vocational and skills training.
- Increase Access to and Availability of Vocational Training Programs. It is critical to increase the accessibility and availability of vocational training programs. This can be accomplished by collaborating with local governments, non-governmental organizations, and private sector entities to establish training centers, offer a diverse range of vocational courses, and provide financial assistance to youth who participate in these programs.
- Align Skill Development with Market Needs: Skill development programs should be developed in collaboration with key stakeholders, such as employers, to ensure that the skills taught are in line with labor market demands. Regular market needs assessments should be conducted to update training programs and curricula, ensuring that youth are equipped with the necessary skills to secure employment or start successful businesses.
- Develop internships, mentoring, and apprenticeships to provide youth with practical experience. Implementing these programs will allow young individuals to gain valuable hands-on experience and knowledge in specific fields or industries.
- Develop Internship programs where individuals gain practical work experience in a specific field or industry. Efforts should be made to encourage NGOs and the private sector to provide entry-level positions that do not require prior experience or offer training programs for fresh graduates.
- Develop mentorship programs that pair experienced professionals with job seekers to provide guidance and support in gaining relevant experience.
- Develop apprenticeship programs where individuals gain practical work experience in a specific field or industry, pair experienced professionals with job seekers to provide guidance and support in gaining relevant experience and
- Encourage employers to focus on skills and potential rather than solely on previous work experience when hiring female candidates.
- Support females' employment/empowerment through awareness campaigns, tailored financing, internships, mentoring, and apprenticeship programs targeting women.
- Improve Access to Microfinance and Small Business Loans. Initiatives should be set up to make it easier for aspiring entrepreneurs to obtain microfinance and small business loans. This can be accomplished through collaborations with financial institutions and the development of tailored loan programs that are specifically designed to meet the needs of young entrepreneurs. Furthermore, providing mentorship and business development assistance can increase the success rate of youth-led ventures.
- Strengthen coordination between training providers, educational institutions, and the private sector to align programs with labor market demands.
- Collaboration between local governments, government programs, NGOs, and private sector entities is critical for creating job opportunities and empowering youth. Establishing coordination mechanisms and dialogue platforms can facilitate the exchange of ideas, resources,

and expertise, resulting in more effective initiatives and programs that address youth employment and livelihood needs.

ABOUT YFCA

YFCA is a leading, independent, and neutral non-governmental organization that works nationwide at different levels to promote equitable and sustainable development, humanitarian response, and other relevant interventions for the betterment and wellbeing of Yemeni communities and individuals. YFCA works closely with the government, local and international partners, and urban and rural Yemeni communities in an endeavor to complement the efforts of other actors and stakeholders who work towards common purposes.