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WFP's role in youth employment and inclusion programming

Kenya Case Study

February 2022

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Executive Summary

This case study is one of three commissioned by the World Food Programme (WFP) to understand how it can more effectively engage in youth employment and inclusion programming in different contexts. In many of WFP's partner countries, the youth cohort is large, not in employment, education or training and affected by conflict—which, together, can have significant effects on their food security. This has led WFP to consider how it can improve its programming to become more youth-inclusive, integrating youth into its existing programmes and strengthening collaborations with partners to develop opportunities for young men and women to realise their aspirations and find decent work (see Box 1).

Kenya was selected as a case study to explore the issue of youth employment in food systems with a significant private sector component. Youth transformation is one of WFP Kenya's priorities: the Country Office has incorporated youth employment into its programming since 2017, when it supported the government of Kenya to develop the Youth in Agribusiness Strategy. This identified three priorities: attracting young men and women to agriculture and agribusiness to replace the country's aging farming population, the high costs young people face as they attempt to start out in agriculture, and improving the enabling environment for youth who can suffer multiple forms of exclusion from the labour market in food systems. Emerging evidence suggests that for every job directly created in the Kenyan agricultural sector, in more than two jobs are indirectly created. It is therefore appropriate for WFP Kenya to strengthen

its focus on youth employment in agriculture and food systems as it contributes to improving incomes for young people, thereby reducing their food insecurity and contributing to wider economic growth.

Kenya has a significant cohort of unemployed or underemployed youth. This is both a challenge and an opportunity. The challenge is the sheer number of young men and women looking for dignified and fulfilling work, particularly in ASAL regions where most WFP beneficiaries reside, and where formal waged employment is limited. The opportunity is that young Kenyans are creative and innovative with increasingly good digital access. WFP is keen to harness this dynamism within its work to strengthen food systems, though this will be a complex process given the multifaceted nature of young people's aspirations, how they change over time and how they influence the strategies young men and women employ to find work and manage risk, cash flow and their independence.

A key concern of WFP staff and the Kenyan government is to overcome the perception that agricultural production and agribusiness is less preferable than white collar work. Food-insecure youth will develop mixed livelihood strategies to help them manage the different opportunities, responsibilities, risks and challenges they face over time. Most will combine unpaid work for their families with waged labour where it is available, group work within their communities, entrepreneurship and self-employment. Young women and young men will develop different mixes as their individual aspirations

change. This offers opportunities to show them that agribusiness can be incorporated into their livelihood strategies in different ways. Some may see it as core to their livelihoods, some may move into and out of it during periods of uncertainty, some may see it as a stepping stone to other, more attractive opportunities and some may fall back on it when other opportunities fail to materialise. WFP is beginning to decentralise its approach to innovation, bringing its support to county levels and therefore closer to youth in rural areas. This is a positive move, but needs to be done with a full understanding of how fostering particular aspects of innovation could interact with the political economy of local business ecosystems. It will need to be accompanied by strengthening skills training on food quality and food safety, complementing work FAO is doing to develop a university curriculum on food systems and strengthening county TVET institutions.

WFP can also help to develop youth-inclusive sources of finance, support youth rights to leasehold contracts and help with business registration to ensure that young men and women are not boxed into jobs defined by the preferences of older, more powerful actors, and that they can play active roles along the whole value chain. Forward-looking job market assessments could be done at county level with UN partners, the private sector and county governments, to identify future skills needs and begin planning to deliver them. Complementing these with political economy analyses will help ensure that the

benefits of work to support youth employment remain with young men and women, and are not captured by powerful elites.

Kenya is likely to make large climate-smart investments in ASALs to meet its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). These infrastructure investments will affect employment markets for young people and open up opportunities to provide for construction workers: a trend WFP could capitalise on in designing its support to training programmes. Finally, Kenya's provincial cities are growing rapidly. Actively connecting rural and urban youth and emphasising innovation and digital skills development could help them develop value chains that would further support urban economic growth.

Running through all of this, however, is the need to collect outcome-level evidence about youth employment in food systems. Work to stimulate youth employment under the agribusiness strategy has been ongoing since 2017, yet more could be done to assess the relative successes of different youth employment strategies for young men and women in different value chains and across different stages of the value chain. Evidence such as this would help develop and test theories of change about the links between different types of employment support, employment outcomes and levels of food insecurity among young men and women, helping to inform policy debates about what works to stimulate youth employment in Kenya.



1. Introduction

1.1 Research and its aims

The World Food Programme (WFP) is increasingly aligning its work with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a focus on SDG 2 to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. WFP looks to meet SDG 2 not only by providing emergency assistance, but also by building resilience for food and nutrition security—especially among smallholder farmers—in the face of challenges such as conflict, climate variability and climate extremes, and economic slowdowns and downturns. These multiple, intersecting threats to food security are exacerbated by the underlying causes of poverty and by high and persistent levels of inequality: the decade-long decline in the prevalence of undernourishment has gone into reverse since 2016.¹

The core of WFP's mandate is to ensure that everyone has access to food, that no one suffers from malnutrition, that smallholder productivity and community resilience is increased, and that food

systems are sustainable. In 2016, WFP became a signatory of the 'Peace Promise', committing itself to work across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus to 'end ... human suffering by addressing the drivers of conflict and vulnerability and reducing subsequent humanitarian needs'. This prompted WFP to extend its focus on 'saving lives' to include an agenda for 'changing lives', with a consequent emphasis on supporting the development of resilient livelihoods.

However, WFP is facing a growing cohort of economically inactive youth in many of its partner countries. Prolonged youth unemployment and underemployment (see Box 1) directly prevents young people from being able to afford nutritious food. Its effects on young men and women's well-being can be long-lasting, affecting their earnings and employment opportunities (and therefore food security) as much as 20 years later.² It also indirectly reinforces drivers of food insecurity by leading to risky behaviour, increased criminality, lack of civic engagement, and lower trust in society and formal institutions.

BOX 1: DEFINITIONS USED IN THIS REPORT

The **labour force** consists of employed and unemployed people.

Employment refers to people working in jobs to produce goods or services for pay or profit for at least one hour per week. Employment can be self- or waged (for another employer), full- or part-time, formal or informal and high- or low-skilled. The SDGs aim to improve employment by eradicating in-work poverty (SDG 1.1.1), assessed as being employed but earning less than US\$1.90 per day.

A **job** is a set of tasks and duties performed by a single person. A person can have several different jobs as part of their employment

Decent work is defined by the ILO as productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.³ This is a broader definition of formal employment as it goes beyond basic rights (e.g. freedom of association) to include opportunities for social dialogue (e.g. collective bargaining) or social security (e.g. protection against risk of sickness, unemployment, etc).

Formal employment is typically covered by temporary or permanent contracts and statutory employment legislation covering basic rights, such as the right to freedom of association.

1 FAO et al (2021) [The state of food security and nutrition in the world: transforming food systems for food security, improved nutrition and affordable healthy diets for all](#)

2 Gregg, P. and Tominey, E. (2005) [The wage scar from male youth unemployment](#)

3 <https://www.ilo.org/public/english/revue/download/pdf/ghai.pdf>

Informal employment is a key feature in less developed labour markets. It can refer to people who are (self-) employed directly in the informal sector, including unpaid family workers or caregivers. Subsistence work – producing goods or services exclusively for own final use by the household – is also included, e.g. subsistence agriculture, collecting firewood or fetching water. Finally, informal employment can refer to employees in the formal sector but who are “off the books” (e.g. not given a contract or covered by national legislation).

Unemployment occurs when a working-age person (15-74 years of age) is without work but available to work and seeking work.

People who are in **underemployment** are those who are in part-time jobs (formal or informal) but who want to and are available to work additional hours.

People who are outside the labour force are described as **economically inactive**. Amongst others, this can refer to informal workers in unpaid domestic or caregiving roles. People aged 25 or over in full-time education or training may also be included.

For young people aged 15-24, a narrower measure of economic inactivity is used known as the **NEET rate – not in education, employment or training**. This recognises that most young people are preparing for employment by being enrolled in education or training programmes. The NEET rate is used as a key indicator to track progress against SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth).

Resilient livelihoods comprise the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is resilient when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide livelihood opportunities in the long-term.⁴ Central to livelihoods are six assets, two of which (human and political capital) are emphasised in WFP’s 2022-2025 strategy:

- Human capital: amount and quality (e.g. skills and knowledge) of labour available.
- Social capital: social resources, such as networks and relationships
- Natural capital: natural resource stocks that people can draw from
- Physical capital: basic infrastructure, tools and equipment
- Financial capital: savings, liquid assets, loans or regular inflows of money
- Political capital: ability to take part in governance and decision-making.

The UN Secretary-General has elevated the issue of youth to the highest level, with a UN Youth Strategy⁵ and a Special Envoy on youth. WFP recognises the urgency of the youth employment challenge and the direct and indirect relationships to food insecurity. It is exploring options for making its programming more youth-inclusive, particularly in the rural contexts where it operates. It is debating how to further develop its youth

programming and maximise its impact on the youth employment challenge as captured under SDG 8.6.1⁶ and linking it to WFP’s core objectives under SDG 2. It is also considering how its resources can best assist young people, and whether this should be achieved by assisting human capital development, for example through cash-based transfer programmes, adding to existing social protection programmes, or other approaches entirely.

⁴ Chambers, R. and G. R. Conway (1991). Sustainable rural livelihoods: practical concepts for the 21st century, Institute of Development Studies.

⁵ UN (no date) [UN Youth Strategy](#).

⁶ Percentage of youth (aged 16-24 years) not in education, employment or training (NEET)

1.2 Defining youth

While the African Youth Charter and the Kenyan Youth Development Policy define youth as individuals between 15 and 35 years of age,⁷ 'youth' is a social construct. Not all young men and women make the transition to adulthood in the same way or at the same time, and different societies mark the transition to adulthood in different ways, including through marriage. Young men and women therefore do not form a homogeneous group: the opportunities and challenges they face in their search for dignified work will differ depending on their gender, age, marital status, whether or not they have children, their urban or rural location, education level, poverty level, and refugee or displaced status. It will also be influenced by forms of social and economic exclusion, such as disability and membership of excluded or indigenous groups.

In most societies, the end of youth is not achieved on a certain date but through the acquisition of culturally defined markers of adulthood, including parenthood, marriage and—importantly in this context—meaningful work and income.⁸ As this study seeks to inform the operational work of WFP across several countries, it uses the UN definition for youth (aged 15–24) to keep consistency across the different countries, though some literature referred to in this report will use the extended definition and considers different groups within the 'youth' category, such as 15–17-year-old adolescents, who are specifically targeted by certain programmes such as school feeding. In practice, youth employment programming should be sufficiently context-specific and culturally sensitive to take local definitions of youth into account, to best assist young men and women in their individual transitions into adulthood.

It is also worth noting that the word 'youth' has often been used pejoratively, associated with discussions about radicalism or criminality.⁹ While phrases such as 'youth employment' and 'youth labour force' are widely accepted, the preferred terminology in this report is 'young men and women' or 'young people'.

1.3 Research aims and methodology

This report is one of two case studies conducted to make operational recommendations to WFP on how it could help young people improve their food security through finding dignified and fulfilling work. The other case study covers WFP work in Jordan; an overview document outlines the global problem of youth unemployment and makes recommendations for how WFP can engage with the issue throughout its programming.

The guiding question for the research was: how can WFP effectively engage in youth employment and inclusion programming in different contexts? What works in youth capacity-building for access to employment, and youth empowerment? How are these lessons relevant for WFP's work in the case study countries? Between September 2020 and March 2021 a global literature review was undertaken of youth employment programmes and WFP programming, with a more limited review of the literature on prevention of conflict and violent extremism and disaster risk reduction programmes in conflict settings. It identified three main causes of youth unemployment: a mismatch between job growth and population growth, a mismatch between education and the job market, and structural factors that exclude young people from labour markets. The case study countries of Kenya and Jordan were selected to highlight different types of challenge and opportunity faced by young people in their search for dignified and fulfilling work. The case studies are not reviews of WFP programmes in each country; rather, the evidence they contain contributes to an overview report which draws together global insights on youth employment to highlight recommendations of wider relevance to WFP's other programmes.

The Kenya case study offers an opportunity to consider youth employment issues in rural, semi-arid areas, where most WFP beneficiaries live and work, within a programme that has a long history of building resilient food systems. Primary data was collected to triangulate the findings from the literature review. Both remote and face-to-face interviews were held with key informants (KIIs) from WFP and other youth stakeholders. These were complemented with focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs) with young men and women in two areas of Kenya. Covid-related travel restrictions severely restricted the research team's

7 Kenya Ministry of ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs (2019) [Kenya Youth Development Policy](#).

8 Boateng, E and Löwe, A (2018) [Aspirations matter: what young people in Ghana think about work](#).

9 UNFPA (2021) [Youth, peace and security: a programming handbook](#)

opportunities to travel, meaning that the team was unable to reach all regions where WFP operates. In consultation with the WFP Country Office, two sites—Baringo (as a semi-arid rural area) and Nairobi—were identified with a view to consistency with the other case study countries, aiming to capture the geographic and socio-economic differences that drive WFP’s activities. Remote interviews were conducted by the UK team between September 2020 and March 2021. In-person interviews were conducted by a Kenya-based team in

June 2021 as the UK team was unable to travel. In total, three KIIs were conducted with WFP staff from the Kenya Country Office, 11 with other youth stakeholders including UN Agencies and local and international NGOs. Four FGDs were conducted (two with young women and two with young men) and eight IDIs with other youths aged 18–35 who participated in WFP programming. The Kenya-based team also held 10 KIIs with community leaders, local NGOs and youth leaders in Baringo and Nairobi.



1.4 Report structure

The Kenya case study is in three sections. Section 1 begins with an introduction to the country context through a youth employment lens, discussing Kenya-specific contextual factors including the effects of Covid-19 and conflict on youth employment and food insecurity. It gives a broad outline of WFP’s work with young men and women in Kenya, highlighting its work with youth groups at county level. The second section describes the country context for youth employment and the government’s priorities for youth employment in agriculture and food systems. It then provides an overview of WFP’s youth employment work in Kenya,

with a particular focus on WFPs work with county governments to support youth groups, and the complex issue of young people’s aspirations. Section 3 outlines the three main causes of youth unemployment in Kenya: 1) the mismatch between job and population growth; 2) the mismatch between education and the job market; and 3) exclusion. Within each subsection it identifies opportunities for WFP to address these causes of youth unemployment through its programming. The final section concludes with a set of operational recommendations that are intended to have wider relevance for WFP programming in other countries.

2. Country context

2.1 Introduction: youth unemployment in Kenya

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, Kenya had one of the fastest-growing economies in sub-Saharan Africa with GDP growth of 5.4 per cent in 2019, equating to growth of 3.1 per cent per capita. This fell to 1.4 per cent in 2020 because of the pandemic, but is expected to rise again to 5 per cent in 2021.¹⁰ Kenya's economy is characterised by a stable macroeconomic environment, a strong private sector, progressive market policies, a stable services sector and a developed human capital base.¹¹ However, economic growth has not translated into a growth in job creation: the World Bank notes that the largest age cohort is about to enter working age (about 1 million young Kenyans per year will enter the job market over the next decade).¹²

Kenya's 2019 census revealed that 13.7 million people (28.78 per cent) of its total population of 55.2 million were aged between 15 and 30,¹³ with a median age of 19 and an annual population growth rate of 2.5 per cent.¹⁴ In 2019 19.7 per cent of young men and women were not in employment, education or training (NEET): 15 per cent male and 24.3 per cent female.¹⁵ While this overall figure has fallen slightly from 22.7 per cent in 2006 as a result of economic growth,¹⁶ it masks a considerable discrepancy between age cohorts. In Q3 2019, 6.5 per cent of 15–19-year-olds and 20.5 per cent of those aged 20–24 were NEET.¹⁷ As the effects of the pandemic began to be felt in 2020 the figure for 15–19-year-olds rose to 8.4 per cent. This was mainly due to job losses in the informal sector where many young men and women work, and where many small businesses

closed, increasing unemployment and the prevalence of poverty. The figure for 20–24-year-olds did not change, suggesting that younger women and men were more vulnerable to the economic downturn than older youth.¹⁸

Labour force participation is high among better educated (mainly urban) youth, but less well educated youth are unable to find formal employment, and their participation is concentrated in the informal sector where employment growth is significantly higher than in the formal sector (17.4 per cent vs 2 per cent).¹⁹ This in turn means that many young people, particularly in the ASAL areas where WFP works, are generally in unstable, low-wage employment²⁰ and unable to pursue a livelihoods portfolio of dignified and fulfilling work (see Box 2). While Kenyan youth are widely recognised as dynamic, innovative and creative, with high levels of technological know-how,²¹ the country faces a formidable challenge if it is to find dignified and fulfilling work for all of these young men and women.



10 AFDB (2021) [Kenya Economic Outlook](#)

11 British Council (2018) [Next Generation Kenya: Listening to the Voices of Young People](#)

12 World Bank Group (2021) [Rising above the waves: Kenya economic update June 2021](#)

13 KNBS (2019) [Kenya population and housing census results](#). Note that KNBS uses the age range 15-30 rather than the UN range (15-24) or the Kenya Youth Policy range (15-35).

14 FAO (2019) [Rural youth employment and agri-food systems in Kenya: a rapid context analysis](#)

15 ILO (2021) <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/country-profiles/>

16 World Bank (2021) [GDP growth \(annual per cent\) - Kenya](#)

17 Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2020) [Quarterly labour force report, fourth quarter, 2019](#)

18 Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2020) *ibid.*

19 Omolo, J. (2020). [How the Pandemic is affecting the informal sector in Kenya](#).

20 British Council (2018) [Next Generation Kenya: Listening to the Voices of Young People](#)

21 Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (2017) [Youth Agribusiness Strategy 2017-2021](#)

BOX 2: THE GENDERED AND TEMPORAL DIMENSIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE'S MIXED LIVELIHOODS PORTFOLIO

For young people in Africa, the distinction between 'employment' and 'unemployment' has long been blurred. Young women and men tend to develop a range of livelihood opportunities that help them manage the risks they face, allow flexibility to pursue different options, and provide them with a degree of independence. Activities may combine unpaid family work, agricultural work within their communities (such as reciprocal labour arrangements), self-employment, entrepreneurship and formal waged labour.^{22,23} Young people who are focused on meeting their survival needs tend to diversify risk by starting multiple businesses rather than growing a single one, and women tend to diversify to a greater degree than men as their family responsibilities mean that they need a steady income, and pursuing a mixed strategy enables them to manage their cash flow requirements.²⁴ In addition, young people's livelihood strategies change over time as different opportunities arise, their aspirations change and their family responsibilities develop.²⁵ This means that simple statistics about youth employment and unemployment are unlikely to recognise the richness of the strategies that young women and men adopt in the search for what they consider to be decent and fulfilling work. Youth employment programmes will require a nuanced and contextualised set of indicators to demonstrate progress over time.

The youth unemployment picture varies by region. Three-quarters of the Kenyan population live in rural areas, comprising 60 per cent of the total labour force.²⁶ Unemployment and underemployment are significant challenges for youth in rural areas: the effects of conflict, high fertility rates and low agricultural productivity (compounded by a locust infestation) in arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) have increased the challenge of creating enough productive work for young men and women in these regions. ASALs contain 38 per cent of the total population, and are primarily agricultural. Total labour force participation in 2015/16 averaged only 53 per cent in ASALs: the remainder are outside the labour force due to family responsibilities, but an increasing number are discouraged workers, willing but unable to find work.²⁷ Most people engaged in primary agricultural production in ASALs are aged between 50 and 65 and there is concern that young men and women show little interest in agriculture, particularly farming.²⁸

The effects of prolonged youth unemployment and underemployment on young men and women's well-being can be long-lasting, affecting their earnings and employment opportunities (and potentially their food security) as much as 20 years later.²⁹ There have been concerns in the past that long-term unemployment and underemployment can tempt young men and women into association with violent extremist groups. Some regions of Kenya have been affected by violent extremism from al-Shabaab, who have preyed on disillusioned, economically inactive and impoverished young people using cash incentives to join them.³⁰ But recent multi-country reviews of the evidence indicate that unemployment is only one of many contributory factors that combine in nuanced, gendered and location- and context-specific ways to attract young men and women to radical extremist groups.^{31,32}

22 Ngene, G., Pinet, M., Maclay, C. et al. (2021) [Strengthening youth livelihoods and enterprise innovation in Africa's digital era](#)

23 Mastercard Foundation (2017) [Invisible lives: understanding youth livelihoods in Ghana and Uganda](#). Toronto: Mastercard Foundation

24 Banga, K., Njambi-Szapka, S. and Phiona, S (2021) [Youth enterprise growth: evidence from Youth Forward in Uganda](#)

25 Bullock R. and Crane, T (2020) [Youth opportunity spaces in low-emission dairy development in Kenya](#)

26 FAO (2019) [Rural youth employment and agri-food systems in Kenya: a rapid context analysis](#)

27 World Bank Group (2021) [Rising above the waves: Kenya economic update June 2021](#)

28 Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (2017) [Youth Agribusiness Strategy 2017-2021](#)

29 OECD (2015) [Setting objectives for achieving better youth employment outcomes](#)

30 Bardubeen, F.A., and Goldsmith, P. (2018) [Initiatives and perceptions to counter violent extremism in the coastal region of Kenya](#)

31 Wallner, C (2021) [The contested relationship between youth and violent extremism](#)

32 Mayhew, L., McCullough, Al, El Taraboulsi-McCarthy, S., Allen, M. and Levine, S. (forthcoming, 2022) The intersection between socioeconomic conditions and youth radicalisation: implications for programming in the G5 Sahel countries. Rome: FAO

Young people who are unable to develop a livelihoods portfolio that can provide them with adequate levels of income risk falling into food insecurity. Improving long-term youth employment outcomes through a resilient livelihoods approach is compatible with a desire to improve long-term food security and nutrition outcomes. However, the links between the two sets of outcomes are complex and context-dependent.

The remainder of this report explores these links in the context of the Kenyan government's priorities for its young people, and how WFP programming could support them.

2.2 Priorities for youth employment in Kenyan agriculture and food systems

The main drivers of Kenyan policy-making are the 'big four' priorities which drive the government's Vision 2030.³³ The 3rd Medium Term Plan identifies high youth unemployment as a critical challenge to meeting its goals³⁴ and this emphasis on youth is carried through to the Agriculture Transformation Strategy which aims to stimulate agricultural production and value addition in the sector—in part through ensuring that SMEs in agriculture have a minimum participation of 33 per cent women and 30 per cent young people.³⁵ Agriculture has been identified as a sector with high potential for stimulating youth employment, and emerging research suggests that, in Kenya, it has an employment multiplier of 2.1. This means that every job directly created in agriculture indirectly creates another 2.1 jobs in agriculture or other sectors; though the rate could be higher but for political economy considerations such as the high tax rate, the complexity of starting new businesses, and costs associated with corruption, crime and violence.³⁶

The key document guiding WFP's engagement with youth in agriculture and food systems is the Kenyan government's Youth in Agribusiness Strategy.³⁷ WFP's close involvement in developing this document helped integrate youth employment into its programming. The strategy identifies three challenges that need to be overcome to improve youth employment in agriculture. The first is young people's attitudes towards agriculture, particularly farm-level production: many young Kenyans do not see primary agriculture as a career to aspire to. The concern is that unless young people can be attracted into the sector, agricultural production will fall as the farming population ages. Interviewees for this study noted that this partly reflects an education system that leaves young people with the expectation that they will find white-collar work (see section 3.2). However, it also reflects the second challenge identified in the Youth in Agribusiness Strategy: that young people also struggle to access the basic factors of production, such as land, inputs, capital and the soft skills they need to build businesses within food systems. Land rights are complex, held by adults and often only given to young people upon marriage. Interviewees noted how challenging it is to acquire sufficient good-quality land to begin a farming career. Young people, particularly young women, also struggle to access the finance they need for making initial investments in business development – funds such as the Young Enterprise Development Fund provide financial and business support services to youth-owned enterprises,³⁸ though it is not widely accessible and youth only gain limited long-term benefits from its support.³⁹ The strategy outlines the need to facilitate extension services, link young people to markets and formal financial institutions and develop Youth Savings and Loan Associations where formal finance is unavailable.

The third challenge identified in the strategy centres around formulating policies at county level to strengthen the enabling environment for young men and women to engage in agribusiness. Youth policy implementation is devolved to counties with specific youth programmes linked to other devolved functions, such as agriculture. While different counties place different emphases on specific issues, there are similarities in the types of support they provide to young men and women. Interviewees noted that county governments can

33 Government of Kenya (no date) [Kenya Vision 2030](#)

34 Government of Kenya (2018) [Third Medium Term Plan 2018-2022](#)

35 Government of Kenya (2019) [Agriculture sector transformation and growth strategy](#)

36 INCLUDE (2021) [Identifying growth sectors for youth employment in Africa: workshop update](#)

37 Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (2017) [Youth Agribusiness Strategy 2017-2021](#)

38 Ministry of ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs (2019) [Kenya Youth Development Policy 2019](#)

39 Sikenyi, M (2017) [Does Kenya's Youth Enterprise Fund serve young people?](#)

negotiate with financial institutions to support youth income-generating activities, and with private sector companies to give a percentage of tenders to youth, women and people with disability. They can also help give priority to employing young people in government-led agricultural projects, ensuring youth are represented in community-level structures such as irrigation committees, and supporting youth groups by providing grants or equipment to help youth-led SMEs scale up their activities.⁴⁰ The work WFP does with youth groups led by county governments is outlined in Section 2.4.

2.3 Overview of WFP's youth employment work in Kenya

Youth transformation is one of WFP Kenya's highest priorities. It reflects the Country Programme's long-term move away from humanitarian work into work that supports social and economic empowerment and livelihoods diversification, to help build resilience and reduce food insecurity. An equally important priority is to strengthen government capacity and systems to provide support to food-insecure populations. Together, these priorities shape the Sustainable Food Systems Programme (SFSP), the main vehicle through which WFP and its partners address youth employment. Most work under the SFSP centres on ASAL counties, supporting adaptation to climate change (through, for example, large-scale water harvesting projects), livelihood diversification and activities to improve nutrition. Within the SFSP, the R4 Rural Resilience Initiative supports 12,206 vulnerable households (with 83 per cent female participation)⁴¹ to develop an integrated climate risk management approach, working with county governments to develop strategies and guidelines on food systems and resilience.⁴² SFSP partners bring technical expertise to help introduce new crops and production techniques, such as orange-fleshed sweet potato (with CIP—the International Potat Centre), iron-fortified beans (with CIAT—the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture) or poultry and small livestock.

The SFSP is youth-focused: it identifies opportunities for young men and women to build businesses in agricultural production in youth-appropriate value chains. Given young people's limited access to agricultural land (see Box 2), these are mainly horticultural crops, small animals and fodder production. The SFSP supports transformation processes within these value chains such as processing and fortification, as well as other support processes such as transport and logistics, marketing and e-commerce. Work on post-harvest loss reduction helps smallholder farmers aggregate production at improved storage facilities, strengthening access to markets and links to buyers. For most young people, strengthening agricultural production requires access to finance. In partnership with county governments WFP addresses financial inclusion – particularly for women. This takes advantage of Counties' ability to negotiate with financial service providers to help youth groups access appropriate financial products and mobile financial services. Youth Savings and Loan Associations have been introduced to help groups learn financial literacy skills and gain access to credit, including microinsurance. The Gender Action Learning System (GALS) approach⁴³ is being explored as a tool to incorporate an increased focus on gender equality into financial inclusion programmes.

Outside of the ASAL region, in WFP partners with private sector organisations in the Farm to Market Alliance (FtMA). This consortium of six organisations (WFP, AGRA, Bayer, Rabobank, Yara and Syngenta) aims to use forward contracting—linked in part to WFP's ongoing requirement for staple products for its own programming—to create a reliable and efficient supply chain. This begins with smallholder farmers, whose entry points for engagement with FtMA are Farmer Service Centres (FSCs). FSCs act as hubs for information and create links to market off-takers, bulking and storage centres, input and equipment suppliers, training providers and financial and insurance services.⁴⁴ Historically, FtMA does not have a specific focus on youth: many of the smallholder farmers and agribusinesses it works with are older, but work is under way to develop a separate strategy focused on youth which identifies aspects of value chains that are both attractive and accessible to young men and women, and to develop youth-inclusive financial products.

40 WFP internal documentation

41 WFP (2020) R4 Rural resilience initiative: annual report 2020

42 WFP (2020) [Kenya annual country report 2020](#)

43 Reemer, T. and Makanza, M. (2014) [Gender Action Learning System: a practical guide for transforming gender and unequal power relations in value chains](#)

44 WFP (2020) [Kenya annual country report 2020](#)

Work with refugee populations centres around achieving self-reliance in refugee and host communities in the Dadaab, Kakuma and Kalobeyei camps and settlements, where the limited number of employment opportunities is associated with high food insecurity, low savings and low subjective well-being.⁴⁵ The Kenyan government restricts refugees from working outside the camps,^{46,47} and economic activities in camps and settlements are also limited by regulations and forms of harassment. However, several organisations provide support to refugees to develop the economy within the camps, and with WFP some have been involved in agricultural activities such as hydroponic vegetable production and in milling, fortifying and baking cereal products to support its school meals programme.⁴⁸ Others have participated in Food for Training (FFT) activities such as vocational training in carpentry, masonry and tailoring while a number of young refugees participated in the pilot of the EMPACT programme.⁴⁹ This trained them in a range of digital skills including advanced coding, graphic design, business development and marketing before connecting them to online, offline and remote work opportunities in global and local labour markets, including in the gig economy.⁵⁰ Hydroponic gardening has been piloted in Kakuma to support young refugees to grow vegetables for their families and for sale - the programme will be expanded to Kibera and one ASAL region in 2022/3.

These programmes are supported by WFP's East Africa-based Innovation Hub⁵¹ (part of the Munich-based Innovation Accelerator in Munich) and the wider EMPACT programme within WFP Headquarter's Asset Creation, Livelihoods and Resilience Unit. These programmatic links offer significant opportunities for scaling up successful initiatives: the Innovation Hub also works across the region with partners from UN Agencies, NGOs and the private sector to identify innovations that address hunger and food security, accelerate potential solutions through sprints and help scale successful ones. National prizes for innovation in food systems help highlight what young men and women can achieve.

2.4 WFP's work with youth groups in ASAL areas

County governments are key partners for WFP's work with young people: the Country Office works with five ASAL county governments and a range of other organisations (other UN organisations and INGOs) to support youth groups. In total, the five Counties support 223 youth groups covering 3,916 young people (52 per cent male, 48 per cent female), and there are plans to expand this support in 2022/23 to nine counties and 323 youth groups totalling 5,614 young people, 55 per cent male and 45 per cent female. Youth groups formally constitute themselves and register with county governments in order to access support services. These range from the provision of asset financing and training in financial literacy, entrepreneurship and business development through to the development of digital, leadership and networking skills. The groups are profiled in terms of their gender, skills, aspirations and specific barriers so that the support packages can be tailored to the particular value chains the groups want to work on.⁵²

Forming youth groups can help young people develop personal capital in the form of skills and psychological resilience; social capital in the form of networks and greater bargaining power; and financial capital that enables them to take out loans and expand their businesses. This can be consolidated by ensuring that they are mentored by more experienced individuals in their communities who can help them provide advice and overcome disagreements. Over time they can help young men and women build businesses, gain skills and build their confidence, develop a stronger feeling that their work matters and helping them to aspire to better through understanding how to spot opportunities, set goals, make plans and overcome setbacks.⁵³

45 Sterck, O., Rodgers, C., Siu, J., Stierna, M.F., and Betts, A. (2020) [Cash Transfer Models and Debt in the Kalobeyei Settlement](#)

46 See Norwegian Refugee Council and IHRC (2017) [Recognising Nairobi's refugees: the challenges and significance of documentation proving identity and status](#)

47 Betts, A., Omata, N., and Sterck, O. (2018) [Refugee economies in Kenya](#)

48 WFP (no date) [Refugees in Kenya: WFP factsheet](#)

49 Outside refugee camps, preparations are underway to expand the EMPACT programme within Kibera to 500 young people by the end of 2021. The overall target is to scale up to 10,000 young people across Kenya by 2023.

50 See [EMPACT](#)

51 See [WFP Innovation Hub for East Africa](#)

52 World Vision (2018) [Kenya Youth Economic Empowerment Programme](#)

53 Lowe, A., Njambi-Szapka, S., and Phiona, S. (2019) [Youth associations and co-operatives: getting young people into work](#)

Interviewees noted, however, that while young men might be keen to join youth groups they often do not stay long, moving between groups after one or two years, or giving up their involvement altogether. They observed that this can trap young men in a vicious cycle: once they are outside the groups they are unable to access the structures and resources they need to help them start their businesses – and county governments are unable to identify them to invite them to join. In contrast, women tend to be less willing to join youth groups but once they do join they remain involved with the same groups for longer. Interviewees commented

that, on balance, women's groups tend to have more realistic ('humble') aspirations than men's groups, and tend to be more focused. It is unclear how widespread this is, or whether gender differences between groups are related to different male and female aspirations and life courses (see Box 3), or to other factors. WFP could explore this issue by looking at the longer-term outcomes of involvement in youth groups to ensure that the support it provides is effectively tailored to the needs and aspirations of both genders as they change over time.



BOX 3: UNDERSTANDING YOUTH ASPIRATIONS WITHIN AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAINS

What young people aspire to – for their families and their livelihoods – is shaped by the contexts in which they grow up: their family, peer groups, communities, religious institutions, schools and (increasingly) social media.⁵⁴ Their aspirations can be set so low as to limit the opportunities they decide to pursue, or so high that they become easily frustrated at not being able to achieve them. Developing realistic aspirations comes from defining an ‘aspirations gap’ (the gap between their present and imagined future livelihoods and living standards) that is neither too big nor too small, to encourage them to invest their time and resources. The processes through which young people identify realistic aspirations and work towards them can be learned over time, as they work out for themselves what is possible within their available resources and structural constraints, what fits within their family and wider obligations, and what is socially acceptable to their families and communities. Aspirations are not static: young people who have been helped to develop realistic aspirations were able to envisage the incremental steps they could take, the investments they would need at each stage, and how these investments could be funded. Most young women and men develop a mixed portfolio of work, juggling unpaid family work, informal employment, self-employment and, where possible, formal wage labour – this is increasingly seen as a logical choice given that it allows them flexibility, independence and a way of managing risks.⁵⁵

A qualitative study of youth livelihoods in agriculture across a range of countries⁵⁶ highlighted why young people may appear to be uninterested in agriculture. Their aspirations are complex, and a negative view of agricultural production may in fact reflect their broader views that their rural community is generally an unappealing place for an energetic young person to live and work. Similarly, youth preferences for earning money quickly and continuously are sometimes dismissed as laziness or overambition, but it is more likely to represent their desire for flexible income sources that allow them to meet their financial responsibilities while juggling multiple family commitments. Different people follow different pathways into agriculture: some may see agricultural production as core to their livelihood strategy, particularly if they are able to generate small amounts of income rapidly from their choice of crops. Some may fall back on agricultural production during periods of uncertainty (after leaving school and before finding other work), some may explore agricultural production as a stepping stone to something more attractive in the value chain, and a final group may return to agriculture after long periods looking for other forms of work.⁵⁷

Finding the resources to enter agriculture can be particularly challenging for young men and women. Rights to land are influenced by complex family and wider social norms and power relations, access to finance is difficult for youth who have no collateral to take out loans, and young people can struggle to lease land or maintain leasehold contracts. WFP staff noted that, in one Kenyan county, large-scale farmers were able to override the lease contracts young people had taken out and effectively take over their land. And registering businesses to be able to access financial and other support is not always an attractive prospect for young people as it is complex and relatively costly, particularly for young women who may want to keep some of their income hidden from their husbands or other male relatives.⁵⁸

Understanding how young men and women can build expertise over time along different parts of a value chain can help them develop aspirations for mixed livelihood strategies in incremental steps, not all of which need to be enabled by new technologies. Most young people see any improvement over current agricultural practices as innovative, but those who can take advantage of new technologies are able to find niches within their communities that are ripe for exploitation, adding value to what is already being done, rather than taking work from others in their community.⁵⁹

Thus, what motivates young people to engage in agricultural production and to stay in it is complex. It depends on each person’s particular life phase, aspirations, social and ecological contexts and ability to access technologies that allow them to blend online and offline strategies for information, support and business opportunities.⁶⁰ This makes it difficult to pre-identify which activities in which value chains are likely to be attractive to youth and to suit their needs. Young women and men will be attracted to different activities along different value chains for different reasons. And they will stay in those activities for different lengths of time depending on their individual circumstances.

54 Boateng, E. and Löwe, A. (2018) [Aspirations matter: what young people in Ghana think about work](#)

55 Ngene, G., Pinet, M., Maclay, C. et al. (2021) [Strengthening youth livelihoods and enterprise innovation in Africa's digital era](#)

56 Cassinath, N and Mercer, M (2016) [Youth engagement in agricultural value chains across Feed The Future: a synthesis report](#)

57 Bullock R. and Crane, T (2020) [Youth opportunity spaces in low-emission dairy development in Kenya](#)

58 Banga, K., Njambi-Szapka, S. and Phiona, S (2021) [Youth enterprise growth: evidence from Youth Forward in Uganda](#)

59 Cassinath and Mercer, *ibid.*

60 Ngene, G., Pinet, M., Maclay, C. et al. (2021) [Strengthening youth livelihoods and enterprise innovation in Africa's digital era](#)

Youth groups applying for government support need to be formally registered at county government offices. This can make it challenging for those based in remote areas, though distance is not related to the vibrancy of the group. WFP works with county governments to support lively youth groups in rural areas with the registration process, to ensure they can access the support they need. But youth group membership does not always include the most food-insecure in a community. Each member needs a certain level of personal resources to join – such as the ability to physically attend group meetings, to contribute to the group registration fee, or to contribute to setting up a VSLA. WFP interviewees were aware of this potential dichotomy, which can result in groups not including those who are most disadvantaged, or women whose movements are restricted by social norms or childcare. Those who do have the resources to join youth groups often understand who in their communities is disadvantaged and can be open to devising ways to involve those who are excluded.⁶¹

Youth group interviewees noted how challenging it can be to involve young women suffering from poor mental health as a result of bearing children at a young age, having limited freedom or domestic violence—although those are the people who need the support a youth group can give. Evidence on long-term outcomes for youth group members, disaggregated by age, gender and vulnerability status and recognising the mixed livelihood strategies young people employ would help WFP examine in more detail how to ensure that youth groups have the membership they need to thrive, whilst still meeting the needs of the most food-insecure.

Following the format of the other case studies, the next section outlines the three main causes of youth unemployment as they play out in Kenya: (i) the mismatch between population growth and job growth; (ii) the mismatch between education and employment needs; and (iii) factors contributing to the exclusion of youth from the job market.



61 Lowe, A., Njambi-Szlapka, S., and Phiona, S. (2019) [Youth associations and co-operatives: getting young people into work](#)

3. Addressing the causes of youth unemployment in Kenya

3.1 Cause 1: The mismatch between job growth and population growth

Even before the pandemic hit, the pace of job creation in Kenya was unable to keep up with the rate at which young Kenyans entered the labour market looking for work. The World Bank estimates that 800,000 to 1 million young men and women will enter the job market each year between 2020 and 2029^{62,63} but in 2019, only 843,900 jobs were created.⁶⁴ While 80,010 of these were created in the formal private sector and 27,340 in the public sector, the remainder were jobs in the informal private sector. Most young men and women work in the informal sector, in agriculture or low-productivity services, in jobs that are generally unstable and poorly paid.⁶⁵

The pandemic increased poverty by 4 per cent, forcing an additional 2 million people below the poverty line. It increased average unemployment to 21 per cent, particularly in the informal sector, where many small businesses closed.⁶⁶ Its macro impact was disproportionately felt by micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) because of liquidity constraints and limited access to finance:⁶⁷ customers for MSMEs fell by up to 50 per cent, supply chains were disrupted and transport costs rose by 17 per cent.⁶⁸

The situation was worse for urban than for rural enterprises, which suffered average income losses of 56 per cent and 35 per cent respectively. By early September 2020, the Kenya Bureau of Statistics estimated that 1.76 million Kenyans – the majority of them young people – had lost their jobs, doubling the unemployment rate from 5.2 per cent to 10.4 per cent.⁶⁹

Real GDP growth contracted significantly and unevenly across sectors in 2020, with similarly uneven effects on young people. Although agriculture grew by over 6 per cent in Q2 and Q3 2020, the accommodation and food services sector—which employs a high proportion of young people—contracted by 83.3 per cent in Q2 2020 and a further 57.9 per cent in Q3.⁷⁰ Other sectors driving growth during the pandemic – such as mining and quarrying, construction and the public sector – offer limited employment prospects for youth. And while overall employment began to pick up in late 2020, for those returning to work jobs are likely to be less stable, with fewer hours worked for lower wages than before the pandemic.⁷¹

The government implemented tax exemptions for low-income earners, but this is unlikely to benefit most young Kenyans working in rural areas and in the informal sector, and there were calls for wage subsidy programmes to help MSMEs and informal businesses.⁷² While the National Employment Authorities and County Employment Bureaus attempt to match young men and women to jobs,⁷³ websites such as Ajira and M-Kazi are more easily reached and more popular.⁷⁴

62 World Bank Group (2021) [Rising above the waves: Kenya economic update June 2021](#)

63 Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (2017) [Youth Agribusiness Strategy 2017-2021](#)

64 Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2020) [Inequality trends and diagnostics in Kenya 2020](#)

65 Mwitia, M (2020) [Treasury says Kenya created 843,900 new jobs in 2019](#)

66 World Bank Group (2020) [Navigating the pandemic: Kenya economic update November 2020](#)

67 Boston Consulting Group (2020) [East Africa's rebound: how businesses can emerge stronger from Covid-19, and how governments can support them](#)

68 Siddiqui, D., Matibe, E., Obiero, O & Singh, A (2020) [Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on micro, small, and medium enterprises \(MSMEs\) - Kenya report](#)

69 Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2020) [Quarterly labour force report, third quarter, 2020](#)

70 FSD Kenya (2021) [State of the economy: focus on the impact of COVID on women and education](#)

71 FSD Kenya (2021) *ibid.*

72 ILO (2020) [The Federation of Kenya Employers Interventions during Covid -19](#)

73 See [National Employment Authority](#)

74 See [Ajira](#) and Iwuoha, J-P (no date) [M-Kazi](#)

In some informal settlements, public works programmes such as Kazi Mtaani were launched to help cushion the pandemic's impact on youth income where movement and thus access to work was restricted.⁷⁵ However, these were unlikely to reach the most vulnerable and food insecure in rural areas, and their long-term benefit is unclear: an evaluation of a previous youth-focused public works programme, Kazi kwa vijana, was critiqued for its lack of gender inclusion, low levels of youth ownership, low income levels and short-lived benefits for participants.⁷⁶

In Kenya, as in the rest of Africa, young women and men answered the challenges of the pandemic within their communities. Emerging evidence finds that they used both online and offline methods to respond in innovative ways to community needs.⁷⁷ Those who were familiar with digital technologies were able to pivot towards online work opportunities such as freelancing or gig work. Some changed their business models to provide pandemic information, educational or training services or PPE, and savings groups provided food and cash support to their members until the government could step in. Young volunteers often prioritised local community needs, working flexibly with local leaders to address pandemic-related challenges that supported household cohesion and helped the most vulnerable.⁷⁸ But the pandemic also highlighted effects of the digital divide. Those able to use digital technologies and afford the costs of data and devices could be flexible and resilient, far more than those for whom internet access, and access to mobile phones, was limited.⁷⁹

3.1.1 Addressing the mismatch between job growth and population growth: WFP's role

The size of Kenya's youth employment deficit is both a problem and an opportunity. The problem is the size and the urgency of the deficit and the link between unemployment, underemployment and food insecurity. The opportunity comes from young Kenyans' dynamism, their growing digital expertise and connectivity, and the

increasing availability of mobile finance in rural areas where jobs are scarce. Job creation is a challenge of economic transformation: creating high-productivity jobs within low-productivity sectors such as agriculture, and moving jobs from low-productivity to high-productivity sectors. These macro-level considerations and the implications for youth employment are beginning to be explored in detail in the East African region. Research shows the importance of paying close attention to the political economy in each sector, working to align sectoral interests around a consensus narrative of young people as dynamic entrepreneurs with important contributions to make to national development. Other priorities include providing credible commitments to investors in the sector and resolving investment coordination issues, working with the private sector to identify and address investment constraints, and carefully targeted support to build firms' capabilities – including supporting MSMEs to enter regional and global value chains .

WFP has solid experience of youth-focused programming in food systems and strong partnerships with the Kenyan government (particularly county governments), other UN Agencies and other private sector and non-government organisations. This gives it a role to play in raising the voices of young, food-insecure women and men in debates about the transformation of Kenya's agriculture sector – such as its partnership with the SUN Business Network, which has advocated for tax changes for MSMEs in food systems . However, this role comes with a caveat – that macroeconomic research on how to address the specific problem of youth employment in Kenya (and more widely across East Africa) is in its early stages. It will require data on sectoral labour market outcomes to develop the models and analysis that can inform debates and frame future research. Young men and women's strategies for searching for dignified and fulfilling work in food systems are complex and gender-differentiated, and change over time. The number of people trained or youth groups formed gives little indication of the effectiveness of programme strategies to improve longer-term employment outcomes. Being able to bring its own evidence of how to achieve labour market outcomes for young men and women will strengthen WFP's own voice, and the voices of the youth it represents, in these national and regional debates.

75 Ambani, S. (2020) [Yatani allocates Sh10bn for Kazi Mtaani](#)

76 Talbot, V. (2019) [Kazi Kwa Vijana Public Works Programme: Youth, Unemployment and Crime in Kenya](#)

77 Diepeveen, S., Phiona, S., Tant., E and Bailey-Athias, A. (2021) [Youth-led \(digital\) innovation and resilience during Covid-19: experiences from the African continent](#)

78 Honwana, A. and Honwana N. (2020) [How are youth stepping up to Covid-19 in Africa?](#)

79 Diepeveen, S., Phiona, S., Tant., E and Bailey-Athias, A. (2021) *ibid.*

80 Te Velde, D. (in press) Supporting jobs for young men and women in Africa: a framework for analysis. Forthcoming from the [INCLUDE GYSE programme](#).

81 SUN Business Network (2021) [Food system SMEs advocate for favourable tax regime in Kenya](#)

Kenya's secondary cities and provincial towns are growing rapidly. Major supermarket chains are opening stores there, which presents an opportunity to build a range of agri-food value chains that could be served by youth in rural areas, and that could include urban youth whose food insecurity has increased during the pandemic. Proximity to demand is important, particularly in regions where cold chains are needed to transport fresh produce. FtMA's expertise could be harnessed to help demonstrate to young people that agriculture is not simply about production: services such as marketing, website design, logistics and supply chain and financial management are all important, and many increasingly rely on digital technologies (see Box 4). Interviewees for this case study noted that actively connecting rural and urban youth could create a greater understanding of what is needed along value chains, taking advantage of their complementary resources, skills, expertise and connections to co-create businesses that would allow them to remain in their communities,

while being part of a larger enterprise. Developing youth-inclusive sources of finance, supporting youth rights to leasehold contracts and helping with business registration (see section 3.2.1) will be important to ensure that young men and women are not boxed into jobs defined by the preferences of older, more powerful actors, and can play active roles along the whole value chain. And through FtMA-supported value chains such as potato, loans to young men and women interested in value addition could be considered, accompanied by training in business and financial management. WFP staff noted that the Kenya Country Office is developing plans to set up a facility to increase young women's and young men's access to finance. It is also considering innovative loan financing arrangements: providing assets such as hydroponic greenhouses in the form of loans to be paid off over time, offering working capital loans to help overcome payment lags in informal local markets, and providing grants for mid-stream activities in value chains, accompanied by business mentoring.

BOX 4: KENYAN FOOD SYSTEMS' DIGITAL RESPONSES TO COVID

As the economic effects of the pandemic worsened, the Central Bank of Kenya (CBK) changed its policy to support the use of mobile money. Eighty per cent of mobile money transactions are for less than KSh1,000, and most of these are made by poor and vulnerable people. The CBK waived fees for these small transactions in February 2020: in March and June 2020, more than 1.6 million additional people used mobile money for peer-to-peer transfers and e-commerce.⁸² Kenya has always been at the forefront of mobile money, and within food systems digital platforms such as M-Farm and WeFarm are well-established agricultural service providers.⁸³ However, the pandemic had some distinct effects on other aspects of the digital economy. Companies such as DigiFarm, Soko Yetu and Twiga Foods began emphasising business-to-consumer models as well as business-to-business: Twiga Foods expanded to five major towns during the pandemic and entered a new partnership with Jumia to allow consumers to buy fresh produce as well as processed foods.⁸⁴ It is unclear how long the CBK's waiver will last or what effect it will have when it ends, but the demand-pull on food systems in provincial towns that has been created by these new business models may offer opportunities for young people to develop their own business ideas for agricultural value chains.

While access to digital technologies remains limited for the poorest and most food-insecure, and there are often last mile connectivity issues, in general mobile penetration is deep across rural Kenya. Interviewees for this study noted that approximately 80 per cent of rural households with whom WFP is working have access to mobile banking accounts or smartphones, which are frequently used for financial management. Attracting young men and women to work in agricultural value chains can be done through rebranding it as a 'frontier for growth in business opportunities',⁸⁵ emphasising the role digital technologies can play in enhancing productivity, such as developing accounting systems for goat- or chicken-rearing businesses, local cold storage solutions or the formation of buying clubs or other aggregation activities. Rural youth may be more focused on skills for agribusiness and mechanised production technologies, such as milking machines, cooling systems, fish-drying and freezing systems, or digitally enabled equipment hire such as Hello Tractor.⁸⁶ Urban young people show more interest as middlemen, purchasing and selling agricultural products (for example to supermarkets) using digital platforms, or renting or borrowing vehicles to create transport or delivery services. The Innovation Unit could explore working with the local innovation hubs springing up in provincial towns such as Meru and Nakuru.⁸⁷ And job market assessments, linked to opportunities for new value chains in provincial towns, could help the EMPACT programme highlight the opportunities for involving young refugees.

82 Mustapha, Z (2020) [The rise of agri e-commerce during Covid-19: opportunities for smallholder impact](#)

83 Krishnan, A., Banga, K., and Mendez-Parra, M., (2020) [Disruptive technologies in agricultural value chains: insights from East Africa](#)

84 Langar, W (2021) [Kenyan farmers tap apps to ride out COVID-19 and the climate storm](#)

85 Irungu, K., Mbugua, D. and Muia, J (2015) [Information and communication technologies \(ICTs\) attract youth into profitable agriculture in Kenya](#)

86 See hellotractor.com

87 See Ubunifu.io (nd) [Making technology literacy equitable](#)

A second, related role WFP can play at this macro level is to link work on youth employment and resilient livelihoods to Kenya's commitments to combating climate change through strengthening the long-term links between its resilient livelihoods work and Kenya's Nationally Determined Commitments (NDCs) against climate change.⁸⁸ Kenya has committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 30 per cent by 2030, mainstreaming low-carbon growth options into national and county government's planning processes and taking actions such as increasing geothermal electricity

3.2 Cause 2: The mismatch between young people's education and the job market

Young men and women interviewed for this study noted that Kenya's formal education system had not prepared them well for the world of work. Access to primary education is free and universal, resulting in an overall enrolment rate of 85 per cent (69 per cent in the poorest quintile). However, this drops sharply: overall, 42 per cent of school-age children are enrolled in lower secondary education (21 per cent in the poorest quintile) and 36 per cent finish secondary school (15 per cent in the poorest quintile).⁹⁰ Adolescent women are more likely than adolescent men to complete secondary school, though only 3.3 per cent of women and 4.7 per cent of men complete university education⁹¹ as both fees and entry requirements are high. There has been a concerted effort to reach remote areas and disadvantaged communities with primary education, though there are high drop-out rates in some communities because of a perceived lack of value in schooling, long distances to schools and high rates of child marriage.

Interviewees observed that, while their parents and schools emphasised white-collar jobs in the public sector or the service economy, these were difficult to find.

generation, the provision of solar lighting on a large scale, switching freight transport from road to rail, and reforestation and agroforestry.⁸⁹ This will require major green infrastructure projects, such as the extension of the Mombasa–Nairobi railway to the border with Uganda (over \$8 billion is being sought to finance these initiatives). Many of these schemes are likely to be in the ASALs where WFP works. The engineers and construction workers will need to be fed, and WFP could work with partners to help ensure that food supply chains to these major projects specifically offer opportunities for young people.

The education system did not make them aware of the range of opportunities that exist in the agricultural sector and offered no training in business or financial literacy that would help them consider entrepreneurship as part of their livelihood strategy. And they noted that what training is available from local institutions is not tailored to demand in the local labour market.

In 2018 there were 973 Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) centres with a total enrolment of 275,000 (56 per cent male, 44 per cent female) providing diplomas, specialised industrial education and artisan and craft programmes.⁹² But the National Skills Development Strategy notes that skills development systems, which include TVET, are uncoordinated and incoherent, and unable to adequately prepare young men and women for the labour market.⁹³ As a consequence, TVET is often perceived as being only for people who did not do well at school: county government interviewees stressed the dynamism and energy of the young women and men they work with, but observed that young people's frustration at not being able to access what they see as good (white-collar) jobs means that, even if they are earning income as petty traders, in industry or transport, they still do not believe they are properly 'employed'. More could be done to help young men and women understand that working in food systems can be innovative, flexible and profitable, and make a useful contribution to their communities.

88 Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (2015) [Kenya's intended Nationally Determined Contributions \(NDCs\)](#)

89 Government of Kenya and UNDP (2020) [Kenya's financing strategy for nationally determined contribution](#)

90 UNICEF (2021) [Secondary education](#)

91 British Council (2017) [Youth employment in Kenya: literature review](#)

92 UNEVOC (2018) [TVET country profile: Kenya](#)

93 Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour & Social Protection (2020): [National Skills Development Policy 2020](#)

3.2.1 Addressing the skills mismatch: WFP's role

WFP can help prepare young men and women for employment in three ways. The first is to address the image problem of work in agriculture and food systems. Young, rural Kenyans whose parents may have had limited aspirations can struggle to see an alternative image of the agri-food sector as a source of innovative, profitable, exciting businesses. Young women and men are mostly likely to take up new ideas when they can see their applicability in the local context⁹⁴ and can relate the ideas to their own livelihood strategies (Box 2). This privileges messages from family, friends and local communities, but young people need to be exposed to other messages from those who have been able to formulate different aspirations and create successful, innovative businesses.

WFP is developing significant expertise in innovation – the EMPACT programme highlights how much young people can achieve with digital skills and the work with hydroponic greenhouses shows potential for scale in areas with low water availability. With a range of partners, WFP awards significant prizes to demonstrate that agribusiness can be profitable, meaningful and exciting (such as the SUN Business Network prize).⁹⁵ It is developing the first Kenya-focused innovation challenge, focusing broadly on food systems. But messages about the benefits of innovation need to reach a much larger number of youth. WFP staff have noted the need to decentralise their approach to innovation, taking innovation programmes and relevant support systems out to Kenya's deeply rural areas and combining them with local knowledge to ensure that innovative approaches are also relevant to local contexts. A pilot programme is being scoped with selected county governments to describe and analyse the local innovation ecosystem and to partner with actors from academia and the public and private sectors, including KENIA, the Kenya National Innovation Agency.

As an organisation, WFP has considerable weight in ASAL areas and is developing its expertise in the national and international innovation systems. Forward-looking job market assessments, done in parallel with the innovation ecosystem scoping study, would help to anticipate the skills local employers might need in a few years' time,

including digital skills. But while a more decentralised approach to innovation in Kenya will bring innovative thinking skills to rural areas, care needs to be taken to understand how a large programme on innovation could influence power relations in local business and innovation ecosystems. Including a political economy analysis in the system scoping process would help WFP understand how a large and influential programme on innovation could influence relationships with locally powerful actors, and whether the regulatory environment would be strong enough to protect the interests of young entrepreneurs. The example of large-scale farmers taking over the leases of young smallholders is given elsewhere: in the tech system, entrepreneurs in a weak regulatory environment can find that, as they grow, well-connected individuals try to use their political weight for financial gain or to benefit a particular group of individuals. They can do this by forcing or buying their way onto the board of a new and innovative business, and working to change its strategy, or by 'acquire' – forcibly acquiring the company for the purpose of shutting it down while retaining the expertise brought by its staff (this is the basis of some antitrust lawsuits brought against tech companies in the US).⁹⁶ Programmes that are likely to foster large, systemic changes in innovation ecosystems need to anticipate these sorts of concerns, recognise the specific patterns of elite behaviour and how the regulatory environment enables it, translate this knowledge into their risk analysis and work through what this implies for programme design and implementation. It is also important to understand how local and national patronage networks affect the growth of innovation systems. For example, at a national level, the success of M-Pesa has played out within a particular patronage-based political context:⁹⁷ similar interest-group dynamics may well play out at county level.

Second, a decentralised approach to innovation needs better support from local skills providers. Young people who can see a link between skills development and innovation are more likely to incorporate those skills into their aspirations. EMPACT skills could help county TVET institutes develop curricula on the safe, effective and gender-responsive use of digital technologies in food systems – possibly working with local businesses to develop internship opportunities, advocating for improved internet access, and supporting local innovation hubs in provincial towns. At national level, FAO has worked with the Jomo Kenyatta University of Agricultural

94 MasterCard Foundation (2018) [Building inclusive agricultural technologies for young people: 2017-2018 Youth Think Tank Report](#)

95 SUN Business Network (2021) [Pitch competition targets Kenyan SMEs and innovations transforming local food systems](#)

96 Feldman, B. (2019) [Facebook is trying to protect itself from anti-trust action](#)

97 M-Pesa's parent company is Safaricom, whose ownership structure and strategic partnerships draw in elites from across the political spectrum. The interests of key groups within Kenya's political settlement have shielded Safaricom from competition. See Tyce, M. (2020) [Beyond the neoliberal-statist divide on the drivers of innovation: a political settlements reading of Kenya's M-Pesa success story](#)

Technology (JKUAT) to develop a curriculum around nutrition-sensitive food systems and helping SMEs adopt nutrition-sensitive approaches to business.⁹⁸ WFP could complement this by developing a curriculum in food quality and food safety – either at JKUAT, or for county-level TVET institutions, or (preferably) both, to create a system that encompasses both national and county-level needs for better training.

Finally, keeping adolescents in education for as long as possible helps them develop critical thinking skills and the maturity to navigate the challenging job market. School feeding programmes promote access to education, particularly for low-income households and for girls. It is unclear whether school feeding is more effective than

more targeted forms of nutrition and education support at delivering nutritional and educational outcomes, but it appears to help incentivise adolescent girls to remain in education, potentially reducing the risk of child marriage.⁹⁹ For many years WFP has partnered with the Kenyan government's Home Grown School Meals initiative, supporting it through capacity strengthening work. The initiative stimulates local agricultural production as schools receive a cash allocation to buy food from local markets.¹⁰⁰ In line with the recommendations above, WFP could be more purposeful about encouraging young people to think innovatively about food production and distribution specifically for school feeding programmes so that school food becomes (at least in part) 'produced by youth for youth'.

3.3 Cause 3: Exclusion from job markets

Young people can be excluded from the labour market in various ways. Hard barriers to finding work include physical constraints such as the cost and availability of transport to and from workplaces (and even youth groups), low levels of technical skills and restricted access to financial institutions. Soft barriers include poor social capital, poverty-related stigma, low skills levels and discriminatory cultural norms around issues such as gender, ethnicity, health status (particularly HIV) and disability.¹⁰¹ Examples of different barriers have been highlighted elsewhere in the report: this section provides more detail and summarises the implications for WFP.

Young men and women rely on social networks to find work and build businesses. This can be challenging for the poor and food-insecure, whose families have few connections¹⁰² and for ethnic minorities whose links to those outside their own communities can be limited by language barriers and political discrimination.¹⁰³ Young women in particular can be excluded from labour markets in several intersecting ways (Box 5).



98 FAO (2019) [Equipping students and SMEs to work on nutrition sensitive food systems](#)

99 WFP (2020) [Strategic evaluation of the contribution of school feeding activities to the Sustainable Development Goals](#)

100 WFP (2018) [Government takes over school meals in Kenya from the World Food Programme](#)

101 ILO (2020) [Global employment trends for youth 2020: youth exclusion from jobs and training on the rise](#)

102 Löwe, A., Njambi-Szapka, S. & Phiona, S. (2019) [Youth associations and co-operatives: getting young people into work](#)

103 Alcorta, L., Swedlund, H and Smits, J (2020) [Discrimination and ethnic conflict: a dyadic analysis of politically excluded groups in sub-Saharan Africa](#)

BOX 5: YOUNG WOMEN'S EXCLUSION FROM LABOUR MARKETS

Women face greater challenges in finding employment than men, regardless of the level of education and training they have achieved. Even with the same level of education as men, young Kenyan women are twice as likely to be unemployed or underemployed.¹⁰⁴ Across ethnic groups, pressure to get married and start a family, caregiving responsibilities and limited access to networks, education and training opportunities often restricts young women to low-waged employment in the informal, unskilled sector.^{105,106} And while formal legal frameworks safeguard women's rights to land, in practice land inheritance is patrilineal. When they marry, Kenyan women only have secondary rights to using land through their husbands. They may hold rights to small gardens to produce vegetables for home consumption, but on larger areas for staple crop production they are limited to farming alone and cannot use it as collateral for loans to build businesses.¹⁰⁷ Interviewees for this study noted that, even if they have their husband's permission to take out a loan, it is his name on the loan agreement. This leaves them vulnerable to poverty and destitution from divorce, widowhood or polygamy, and can make it difficult for them to leave abusive relationships. They stressed the mental health problems this causes them, and the effects this has on them and their families. And young disabled women, or women with poor health status such as HIV, may be even further marginalised, unable to access the services that could help reduce their vulnerability¹⁰⁸ (WFP's CSP notes that young Kenyans account for 51 per cent of new HIV infections, with the rate of new infections in girls and young women being approximately twice that for boys and young men).¹⁰⁹

Both in finding work and once in work, young Kenyan women can face sexual harassment and informal barriers to advancement. These multiple challenges mean that, for many, self-employment is preferable to waged work despite its precarious nature and often poor working conditions.¹¹⁰ Youth groups can provide young women with an effective way of supporting employment objectives through mentoring, skills development, access to information and financial services, psycho-social and resilience support, and taking part in asset creation. The gender balance within youth groups depends on their activities: savings groups tend to involve men and women together, and creating women-only groups does not always encourage participation if there is a cultural reluctance to let women participate on their own.¹¹¹ However, as noted earlier in Section 2.4, once young women join youth groups they appear to stick with them for longer than young men: an aspect of youth groups that WFP could explore in more detail.

Young refugees face particular barriers to finding work. Kenya hosts just over 500,000 refugees, the majority from Somalia (54 per cent), alongside South Sudan (25 per cent), DRC (9 per cent) and Ethiopia (6 per cent). Most live in Dadaab (44 per cent), with 40 per cent in Kakuma and the remainder spread throughout the country (mainly Nairobi), alongside 18,500 stateless people.¹¹² Neither UNHCR nor WFP disaggregates data by age 15–24, though 45 per cent are aged 18–59, and 18 per cent aged 12–17.¹¹³ Kenya does not grant refugees the right to work and restricts their movements outside of refugee camps.

How they navigate this to find work and earn a living depends on which country they have arrived from and where they live: those in camps may be able to find work for UNHCR, WFP and partner organisations.¹¹⁴ Those who seek work outside the camps must pay for a Movement Pass and may have to pay an informal 'business tax' and police bribes, though some nationalities seem to be less affected by this than others. While some are able to earn more than others, the median income is close to the extreme poverty line of \$1.9 per day.¹¹⁵

104 AFIDEP and University of Southampton (2018) [East African regional analysis of youth demographics](#)

105 See, for example, IFAD (2020) [Brief on gender and social inclusion: East and Southern Africa](#)

106 British Council (2018) [Next generation Kenya: listening to the voices of young people](#)

107 Anderson Djurfeldt, A (2020) [Gendered land rights, legal reform and social norms in the context of land fragmentation - A review of the literature for Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda](#)

108 ILO (2013) [HIV/AIDS: overcoming discrimination and economic inclusion](#)

109 WFP (2018) [Kenya Country Strategic Plan](#)

110 British Council (2018) [Next generation Kenya: listening to the voices of young people](#)

111 Lowe, A., Njambi-Szlapka, S., and Phiona, S. (2019) [Youth associations and co-operatives: getting young people into work](#)

112 UNHCR Kenya (2021) [Kenya: registered refugees and asylum seekers](#)

113 UNHCR (2021) [Kenya statistics package, 31 August 2021](#)

114 Betts, A., Omata, N. and Sterck, O. (2018) [Refugee economies in Kenya](#)

115 Betts, A., Omata, N., Rodgers, C., Sterck, O. and Stierna, M. (2019), [The Kalobeyei Model: Towards Self-Reliance for Refugees?](#)

3.3.1 Addressing exclusion from job markets: WFP's role

WFP's mandate requires it to be inclusionary of the most vulnerable and food-insecure. Many factors that exclude young people from job markets have been discussed above: this section highlights three issues that warrant deeper discussion.

WFP has a strong focus on overcoming discriminatory norms, particularly gender, throughout its work. The CSP notes that its resilient livelihood activities have significantly improved women's economic and social empowerment, and gender is mainstreamed through its policy and partnership dialogues. Work on financial inclusion uses the GALS methodology to help devise large-scale programmes of work on blended products that are particularly inclusive of women and youth. However, there is some detailed learning in Mercy Corp's 2021 gender impact evaluation of FtMA, DigiFarm, Arifu and Zanaco Bank.¹¹⁶ This provides valuable insights into how gender could be better incorporated into programmes strengthening youth involvement in food systems and value chains, particularly through digital technologies.

Future work will see WFP and its partners scaling up Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs). These can increasingly be managed digitally,¹¹⁷ which means that training in how to run savings groups needs to be accompanied by training in how to stay safe online. For example, young people are unlikely to be aware of the full implications of using mobile money; if they take out credit to help them through a difficult phase until another payment or income comes in,¹¹⁸ advertisements for loan apps can often sound like offers of instant free cash.¹¹⁹

Without a good understanding of the terms, conditions and repayment schedules young people could quickly develop a poor credit history which would financially exclude them later in life. Well-run VSLAs will, of course, use accredited financial services but despite understanding how the VSLA works, young members might be tempted to take out a separate loan from a less reputable organisation – either for personal reasons or to build another business – which could put them and the VSLA in credit jeopardy.

Finally, there is more to be done especially in light of the Refugee Act 2021 to reduce the exclusion of young refugees from Kenya's labour market. The presence of refugees in host communities can be politically contentious, and the costs and benefits of refugee hosting are distributed unequally across and within host communities. The evidence of their contributions to local economies is unclear, partly because of the different ways in which they are permitted to engage in different regions.¹²⁰ The EMPACT programme has helped young refugees develop their digital skills – sometimes to advanced levels – and to find work online within Kenya and internationally, though with mixed success. But those for whom digital skills are inappropriate or too advanced will need offline work outside the camps. WFP has a role to play in advocating for refugees to be able to fully participate in local economies as young Kenyans do and in monitoring the medium- and long-term effects of relationship between refugees' economic contributions and labour market outcomes.

116 Mercy Corps (2021) [The impact of digital services on women smallholder farmers](#)

117 Lowe, A., Njambi-Szlapka, S., and Phiona, S. (2019) [Youth associations and co-operatives: getting young people into work](#)

118 Ngene, G., Pinet, M., Maclay, C. et al. (2021) [Strengthening youth livelihoods and enterprise innovation in Africa's digital era](#)

119 Smertnik, H. (2020) [Early financial inclusion can lead to exclusion: experiences of Kenyan youth](#)

120 Betts, A., Omata, N. and Sterck, O. (2018) [Refugee economies in Kenya](#)

4. Conclusions and recommendations

This project was conducted to help WFP consider how a focus on youth employment could contribute to its work on reducing food insecurity. In Kenya, young men and women comprise a large proportion of the food-insecure beneficiaries WFP supports, mainly in the ASAL regions. Most are unemployed or underemployed, struggling to find the sort of dignified, fulfilling work that would allow them to provide nutritious diets for themselves and their families. Kenyan youth are widely recognised as dynamic and innovative; digitalisation is helping many of them connect with each other and to the services they need to find waged employment or self-employment, or to become entrepreneurs. However, there is still a large cohort of young people who need support to become economically active enough to make a significant dent in levels of food insecurity. Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy in ASAL regions, and WFP's long presence in Kenya means that it has been working with young people in food systems for decades. Bringing a stronger youth employment focus to its work is consistent with WFP's strategic move towards resilient livelihoods programming, self-reliance and handing over programmes to the Government of Kenya.

In support of this, the first recommendation is for WFP to **focus resources on building a gender-disaggregated evidence base of the medium-term outcomes of its work with young women and men, ensuring it is broken down in line with national indicators.**

This means understanding the pattern of employment outcomes over several years rather than a few months after projects or programmes have ended. It means differentiating between outcomes in terms of self-employment and outcomes in terms of new job creation (which contributes more to sustained economic growth). The Youth in Agribusiness Strategy forms the basis of WFP's work with young people in Kenya and the Kenyan agricultural sector looks particularly promising as a generator of jobs for young women and men. WFP's voice carries weight in policy debates about Kenyan food systems: with better evidence on the medium-term effects of its work, it could also contribute to high-level debates about the 'missing jobs' crisis and youth employment, particularly around the intersecting factors that contribute to youth exclusion from agriculture and agribusiness in the ASALs.

This emphasis on medium-term outcomes is also important at programme level, such as the work with youth groups and VSLAs. This report has highlighted interviewees' concerns that these groups do not always include the most food-insecure, and that the length and nature of young men's involvement in them may be significantly different from young women's. This needs investigating further to understand how the support provided to youth groups and VSLAs can be more effectively targeted towards job creation, within the context of young men's and women's mixed livelihood strategies.

This links to the second recommendation, to **conduct more forward-looking labour market assessments to complement ongoing work to assess** specific value chains. Broader labour market assessments will not only help identify a fuller range of opportunities for young people, they will provide a baseline against which medium-term employment outcomes could be assessed. The report highlights the complexity of young people's life paths. Without a steady supply of formal salaried jobs, young people develop a range of livelihood opportunities that help them manage risk and provide them with a degree of independence. They may combine unpaid family work, waged labour for someone else, self-employment, entrepreneurship and reciprocal group work within their communities. The combinations will change over time as different opportunities arise, and as their responsibilities and aspirations change. They will also depend on factors such as gender, access to land, finance and social networks, which can exclude young people from labour markets in intersecting ways.

There is little evidence that specific value chains or specific points along an agricultural value chain are particularly appropriate or inappropriate for young people. It is therefore important not to be too prescriptive about the routes young women and men could take out of poverty and food insecurity, setting support within a broad understanding of local opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship and self-employment. WFP could work with specialist providers to develop detailed, gender-sensitive pictures of local job markets and their likely future skills requirements. These could identify specific opportunities for connecting rural and

urban value chains, to help young people in rural areas find work and create businesses that would allow them to contribute to economic growth within their communities while remaining part of a larger enterprise. Involving young Kenyans in conducting these assessments will take advantage of their dynamism and entrepreneurship, ensuring that the opportunities that emerge are not just those prescribed by existing, older actors.

Labour market assessments which consider refugee needs can identify which skills are most likely to be needed both inside and outside the camps. Working with specialist providers such as the ILO will help WFP understand how to target its support more effectively towards labour market outcomes. These could include opportunities for refugees and those working around the camps to support the anticipated development of green infrastructure, as part of Kenya's Nationally Determined Contribution to combating climate change.

Conducting labour market assessments which consider refugee needs could help broaden understandings of where and how their particular skills could be used refugee environments could identify skills most likely to be needed both inside and outside the camps including opportunities for them to support the anticipated development of green infrastructure as part of Kenya's Nationally Determined Contribution to combating climate change.

The results of these assessments will help WFP better target its support for skills development towards those that are most likely to result in decent work for youth over the medium term. This case study highlights improved training, inclusive financing, better digital access, stronger land rights and streamlined business registration as issues that constrain opportunities for youth employment in the food systems where WFP works.

Also important are broad-based digital and financial literacy skills that—as well as helping them build businesses—help young people look after their family finances, resist scams and stay safe online.

WFP has developed an important capacity for innovation in food systems, which it proposes to decentralise to county level to bring the benefits of innovation closer to food-insecure, rural youth. Kenya's youth are dynamic and creative, and fintech solutions for entrepreneurs are developing rapidly. But WFP needs to proceed with caution as it decentralises innovation to county level. It needs to develop a good understanding of local power relationships and how they interact with business and innovation ecosystems. The third recommendation is to **conduct political economy analyses during the diagnostic phases of new programmes** to ensure that their intended effects on youth employment are sustainable in the medium term and are not at risk of capture by powerful interests. At programme level, political economy analysis can help develop nuanced risk frameworks, improved theories of change and outcome-level indicators that are sensitive to issues of long-term sustainability. At a national level, WFP can use this detailed understanding to strengthen its advocacy for youth rights to resources such as land and capital, for youth-inclusive financial systems, and for regulatory systems that do not actively disadvantage young innovators.

WFP has a long history of work in Kenya: it has built good relationships with the Government of Kenya, has a broad range of programmes that support youth employment and works with a broad range of stakeholders across the public and private sectors. These recommendations are intended to help it better align its programming with the national imperative for job creation and to ensure that the voices of young food-insecure Kenyans are well represented in debates about how to address the youth employment challenge.

Acronyms

| | |
|---------------|---|
| ASAL | Arid and semi-arid lands |
| CIAT | International Centre for Tropical Agriculture |
| CIP | International Potato Centre |
| DRR | Disaster risk reduction |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| FSC | Farmer service centre |
| FtMA | Farm to Market Alliance |
| GALS | Gender action learning system |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| IDI | In-depth interview |
| INGO | International non-government organisation |
| JKUAT | Jomo Kenyatta University of Agricultural Technology |
| KENIA | Kenya National Innovation Agency |
| KII | Key Informant Interview |
| NDC | Nationally determined contribution |
| NAJMAH | National Alliance Against Hunger and Nutrition |
| NEET | Not in employment, education or training |
| NGO | Non-Government Organisation |
| PCVE | Prevention and countering violent extremism |
| PPE | Personal protective equipment |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goal |
| SFSP | Sustainable Food Systems Programme |
| SME | Small and medium enterprise |
| TVET | Technical and vocational education and training |
| UN | United Nations |
| WFP | World Food Programme |

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