



Youth and Trade

IN BRIEF

The ITC Youth and Trade Programme aims to enable young entrepreneurs to internationalize their businesses and increase income opportunities. Through 'roadmaps' to identify constraints and opportunities, e-learning programmes and an 'accelerator' offering a range of trade-facilitating services to youth-owned start-ups, the programme helps connect young entrepreneurs to international markets.

THE PROBLEM AND ITC SOLUTION

Of the estimated 200 million people unemployed globally in 2014, nearly 40% were between the ages of 15 and 24. It is critical to support young entrepreneurs during the growth phase of their businesses and to strengthen their capacity to take advantage of international trade opportunities.

The Youth and Trade programme is a pragmatic response to this challenge. The programme coordinates with relevant policymakers, trade and investment support institutions (TISIs), chambers of commerce, the private sector, universities, financial institutions, impact investors and existing incubators, among others.

As part of its suite of trade strategy solutions, ITC facilitates the design of Youth and Trade Roadmaps (YTR). Typically delivered over three months, YTRs rapidly identify constraints to trade competitiveness, as well as opportunities for the participation of youth in high-potential value chains. The result of the YTR design process is a high-level national outlook and framework, with youth-centred strategic directions and priorities for trade and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The programme's 'Trade Accelerator' model focuses on the internationalization and export growth of youth-owned start-ups by providing a full spectrum of 'acceleration' services, including training, coaching/mentoring, institutional support and facilitating access to finance. It creates an ecosystem of institutions, advisers, mentors and impact investors to support youth-owned SMEs with tailored services as springboards to access international markets.

It also aims to improve the capacity of TISIs to provide services and facilities tailored to the needs of youth. This helps form a workforce with the appropriate skills and helps enterprises acquire employees with the capacities required to enhance their competitiveness.

Finally, it includes specific e-learning programmes through the ITC SME Trade Academy, with courses on entrepreneurship, export readiness, market analysis, marketing strategy for exports and export business generation, and accessing finance for exports.

IMPACT

ITC's interventions include the following examples.

A trade accelerator project is underway in Morocco. At the end of this pilot process, 30 young entrepreneurs will pitch their export business projects to impact investors, who are investors seeking a beneficial social and/or environmental impact alongside a financial return. The project should result in young Moroccan entrepreneurs gaining better access to international markets.

A proposal to develop a monitoring system for the Trade Accelerator, based on the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) Standard, has been shortlisted for consideration by the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Fund for Evaluation in Employment 2015.

The programme has developed two e-learning courses specifically targeted at young entrepreneurs – 'Taking the Entrepreneurship Route' and 'Considering Export Markets'. The courses cover the major features of international trade, describing an international customer and highlighting opportunities and challenges in the export business so that young entrepreneurs can make informed decisions when considering whether to export or not.

ITC's Youth and Trade programme has signed a memorandum of understanding with the global network Child and Youth Finance International to access coaches and jointly organize 'Pitch to Impact Investors' events for young entrepreneurs. ITC is a core member of the United Nations Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, a multi-stakeholder alliance supporting global goals in the area of youth employment.