The Youth and Trade initiative at ITC has had a busy period over the past months. In this first issue of the Youth and Trade Initiative newsletter we will provide you with an update on our activities and a short briefing on what's happening elsewhere.

One of the highlights has been the Trade Accelerator pilot project for young Moroccan entrepreneurs that was launched in January 2015 in Rabat with the signing of a cooperation agreement. The momentum from this launch has already led to establishment of contacts with local partners active in contributing to the youth employment and entrepreneurship agenda in Morocco. The design of the related Trade Accelerator has started and the first young entrepreneurs to benefit from this project will be on board by April 2015.

With this encouraging event as one example of what we do, we aim to work towards developing innovative solutions to improve youth economic empowerment and position ITC as an active player in this field. Bonne lecture!

David Cordobés
Youth and Trade Programme Manager

Youth Group@ITC

The ITC Youth Group is led by the Youth and Trade Programme Manager David Cordobés (DMD/TIS) and also includes Saskia Marx (DBIS/TSC), Valeriu Stoian (DBIS/TSC), Fernanda Leite (DCP/OD), Karla Solis (DCP/ES) and Madhu Fernando (DMD/TIS).

What is the Youth and Trade Initiative?

The Youth and Trade initiative is one of the 16 programmes under ITC Strategic Plan 2015-2017 contributing to the Focus Area No.5 “Promoting and mainstreaming inclusive and green trade”.

The key components of ITC’s engagement on youth include:

- Design and implementation of Trade Accelerators providing young entrepreneurs with access to business support services
- Development of strategies at the national/sector level to bolster youth employment through trade whilst raising the export potential of countries
- Entrepreneurship skills training for youth
- Mainstreaming youth into ITC’s TRTA, including youth disaggregated reporting and youth-tailored indicators

See more details on ITC Youth and Trade Initiative brochure.

Why Youth?

Young people are instrumental to a country’s competitiveness and growth. Yet, today’s generation of youth are faced with limited opportunities to engage productively in the economy. Globally, almost 74 million young people are estimated to be unemployed in 2014.

The ITC Youth and Trade Initiative is a meaningful response to this ongoing youth employment challenge by fostering the inclusion of young entrepreneurs into international markets.

Entrepreneurship can empower young people to improve their financial independence and shift from job seeker to job creator. Young entrepreneurs have today the opportunity to look beyond their local economy and aspire to become global entrepreneurs who view the world as their marketplace.

Pilot “Trade Accelerator” launched in Morocco

The pilot phase of the “Trade Accelerator” for young Moroccan entrepreneurs was launched in January 2015 by Mohammed Abbou, Minister of Foreign Trade of Morocco and Arancha González, Executive Director of ITC. These Moroccan youth-owned enterprises
will be able to “accelerate” their potential to internationalize through an innovative network of business support service providers.

See More on ITC’s website

In the MENA region, marriage age is the primary mark of reaching independence. However, rising youth unemployment in the region delays this “age of independence” as young people have to wait years to get their first job. Reducing the youth unemployment rate in MENA by half would help to grow the region’s GDP by more than $25 billion by 2018.

**Energizing the gears of trade: Integrating youth into National Export Strategies**

As part of its suite of trade strategy solutions, ITC provides technical assistance in the design of Youth and Trade Strategies. These strategies provide a policy framework and a realistic roadmap that achieve the following objectives:

- To identify opportunities for young people’s engagement in decent and productive employment opportunities through trade
- To attract youth to sectors and economic activities that leverage the country’s comparative and competitive advantages
- To stimulate diversification of production and exports by providing a business environment that encourages youth entrepreneurship

For further information, please contact Karla Solis (solis@intracen.org)

**Partnerships**

For ITC’s Youth & Trade Programme, partnerships are at the core of responding to global youth employment challenges.

In addition to having been recognized by the UN Youth Envoy who visited ITC in October 2014, contacts have been formed with the Global Coalition on Solutions for Youth Employment led by the World Bank.

Other partners we are in communication with include:

- Association of the Mediterranean Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASCAME)
- Union for the Mediterranean (UfM)
- Sharjah Chamber of Commerce
- Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF)

Discussions with ASCAME and UfM explore the expansion of the “Trade Accelerator” in Morocco to Algeria and Tunisia.
OIF is also interested in finding synergies with the Youth and Trade initiative, particularly in accelerator development and its replication in Francophonie developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

The need to support youth in the Francophonie countries resonates with the Dakar Declaration adopted at the 15th Francophonie Summit in Senegal in November 2014 which had youth as the key agenda, alongside women. The theme of this recent summit focused on “Women and young people of La Francophonie, actors for peace, vectors for sustainable development”.

ITC Youth and Trade in the Media – recent articles:

ITC lance un incubateur pour les jeunes entrepreneurs, 14 January 2015 - lematin.ma

"Jeunesse et Commerce" : Un programme pour jeunes entrepreneurs avec des projets potentiels, 14 January 2015 - aufait.ma

Implantation au Maroc du programme "Jeunesse et Commerce" pour soutenir l’indépendance économique des jeunes et la création d’emploi, 14 January 2015 - menara.ma

Key Publications and Upcoming Events

Youth in Tunisia

Generation Entrepreneur? The state of global youth entrepreneurship

United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth

Arab Youth Employment Conference, April 2015 in Jordan – organized by Silatech

Web: www.intracen.org/youth Contact us for comments and suggestions: youth&trade@intracen.org