



Centre d'Alerte et de Prévention des Conflits

**CHALLENGES OF ACCESS TO THE LABOUR MARKET:
What alternatives are there for Burundian young people?**

Summary

In partnership with:



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“Challenges of access to the labour market: What alternatives are there for Burundian young people?”

1. Introduction

Following confirmation at the National Meeting held in Bujumbura, Burundi, in October 2008, of the four priority obstacles to lasting peace, the Interpeace local partner in Burundi, CENAP, has now completed the second phase of research and consultations. The working group charged with looking at the labour market has now prepared a document detailing the challenges and main possible solutions to addressing the issues surrounding youth, unemployment and underemployment.

Burundian youth are facing considerable difficulties with respect to access to the labour market

The conflict that has lasted for more than 10 years in the country, poverty and cultural barriers are all obstacles.

The field research was conducted between January 2009 and September 2009, with more than 500 people taking part in consultations at the communal and provincial level. A total of nineteen focus groups and approx. ten individual interviews were completed. Added to the data collected from the participants during the consultations, experts have added their analysis. This has been complemented by additional research to increase the understanding of the issues and a video documentary.

2. Major challenges

Challenge 1: Prevalence of underemployment in rural areas and unemployment in urban areas

The lack of jobs in Burundi is characterized by rural underemployment and urban unemployment. This situation is explained by the structure of the Burundian economy: subsistence agriculture is the main activity in rural area, while the formal labour market, the main source of income in urban areas, is plagued by an imbalance in supply and demand.

THREE CHALLENGES FOR THE LABOUR MARKET IN BURUNDI

1. Prevalence of underemployment in rural areas and unemployment in urban areas
2. Cultural constraints on the labour market
3. The structural weaknesses of the labour market

Challenge 2: Cultural constraints on the labour market

It was felt that the enthusiasm for work requiring little effort is important. Weak entrepreneurial skills and expectations on public sector jobs are also considered as limiting factors for young people and their access to the labour market. This cultural legacy resulted in debate around the aversion to effort, lack of innovation, the tendency to be bureaucratic and whose responsibility it might be.

Challenge 3: The structural weaknesses of the labour market

Clear signs of structural weakness in the labour market are seen to be:

- inadequate job training – adaptation of training to the needs of the job market is limited;
- the pressure on public jobs and the limits of this sector to create jobs; and
- the formal private sector is in an embryonic stage.

The above arise are considered to be far from meeting the labour market.

3. Conclusions

Education reform – widespread inclusion of craft skills in the syllabus

Education reform was highlighted. The introduction of new modules and extracurricular activities that includes the learning of crafts, should be made available beyond the technical schools. These types of skills should be included in general education and at the university level so young people can overcome the cultural barriers inherited from the society.

Research to drive public policies discussed

The opportunity to conduct research relating to the job market was suggested. This data and analysis would then be used to inspire public policies.

The integration of young people into the labour market is seen to be the the best solution for economic development and peace building

Young people, the main asset of any society, are the most affected by unemployment and underemployment. Their integration into the labour market is the best solution for economic development and peace building in the country.

“Jobs are also seen as a fundamental aspect in the fight against poverty.”

Loss of self-esteem, lack of creativity, impoverishment, idleness, and attraction towards shortcuts are all seen as a result of the current hostility in the labour market towards young people, their inexperience and the lack of capacity. The risk is that the frustrations that are coming out of this may be taken out on the society that created them as their hope lie in obtaining a worthy and productive occupation.

Job-related poverty due to the quasi-dependence on the informal economy

The job-related poverty in Burundi is seen to be due to the quasi-dependence on the informal economy which is dominated by agriculture. The current status quo is considered to be so important that action is needed from all angles. To start investing in the youth means rethinking their education so teaching them to take initiatives. This must be accompanied by strong and concrete actions integrating young people into working life. By taking this path

young people should be able to enjoy the conditions that allow them to be independent and be useful to themselves and society. Currently they expect the labour market to absorb them despite their inexperience and their young age.

4. Recommendations

1. Establish close relationships between education system and the corporate world

The solutions that were suggested during the consultations included the role of education to address unemployment and underemployment. Close relationships between the education system and the corporate world would:

TWO CLEAR PATHS FORWARD TO ADDRESS THE LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES

1. Establish close relationships between education system and the corporate world
2. Create the National Job Observatory

- address the socio cultural barriers that inhibit creativity and reinforce the wait-and-see policy;
- address the economic context which does not favour job creation for young people;
- encourage the spirit of creativity in young people still at school;
- prepare them for their professional future while still at school;
- maximize the employability of young people after their studies; and
- reduce the feeling of rejection.

It was suggested that the school be at the heart of education for entrepreneurship and vocational guidance. The participation of all education stakeholders was also cited as essential. This partnership should be based on the traditional organization of awareness activities in secondary schools and universities which would include: school clubs, university clubs, conferences, discussion and visits to companies.

2. Create the National Job Observatory

An ongoing dialogue should be established to translate the aspirations of young people relating to employment into concrete action. In the short term the National Job Observatory

would identify priority actions including the availability and sharing of reliable and up to date information. In the long term, the National Job Observatory would be responsible for proposing guidelines for the development and implementation of a national job policy to policy makers, their partners and influencers.

The National Job Observatory would, among other tasks:

- Establish a dialogue framework on the challenges that undermine the labour market;
- Establish an effective information system on job and professional training for youth;
- and
- Serve as support for decision-making, contributing to the definition, evaluation and improvement of job policy measures.

THE FULL REPORT OUTLINES THE AREAS OF CONSENSUS AND DIFFERENCE

The concerns of the population focus mainly on 2 aspects:

- **The weight of the cultural barriers and weaknesses of the labour market**

The cultural constraints on the labour market including the aversion to effort, lack of creativity and aspiration to have a public job; structural weaknesses of the job market combining inadequate job training, pressure on public employment and the difficulties relating to the growth in the private sector.

- **What solutions to unemployment and underemployment of young people?**

Discussions related to the proposed solutions including:

- an awareness of the challenges and opportunities;
- education for entrepreneurship;
- exploration of opportunities within the reach of rural and urban youth;
- reorganization of the labour market; and
- incentives for job creation.

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