



The Adolescent Girls Initiative

An Alliance for Economic Empowerment

PROGRAMS PROMOTING YOUNG WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT: WHAT WORKS?

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Executive Summary

The World Bank is launching an initiative aimed at addressing the economic needs of adolescent girls and young women in poor or post-conflict countries. As a part of background research for this initiative, this paper undertakes a review of existing policies and programs designed to promote labor force participation of young women in developing countries. The goal of this paper is to unpack and assess what elements of program design are essential to promoting young women's transition to the labor market.

For developing countries as a whole, 34% of young women are estimated to be “jobless” – unemployed, out of the labor force, and not in school. There are several gender-specific supply- and demand-side determinants of low employment rates and earnings among young women, including girls' disproportionate share of unpaid domestic labor, lack of productive skills and contacts to help with a job search, limited life skills, opposition from family or male partners, and employer preference for hiring young men over young women in a range of industries and occupations.

In Latin America, a number of youth employment programs contract with decentralized training entities to organize and offer vocational courses in which beneficiaries can enroll. The courses, which contain both classroom and on-the-job experiences, match local firms' needs with the content of the training curriculum. These programs' documented success in promoting young women's employment can be attributed to the fact that they are exceptionally well-targeted, demand-driven, and linked with private sector labor demand. The promotion of women's equal access, especially to training in non-traditional skills, combined with the provision of additional stipends to cover childcare, most likely also plays a role in enhancing the benefits of these programs for female youth. By offering a wide range of skill training to young women and men on an equitable basis, providing additional support to young mothers in the form of a childcare stipend, and delivering the programs through decentralized mechanisms that can better capture the skills

needs and work opportunities of local communities, the new “Latin American” model of vocational education has succeeded in increasing young women’s employment and earnings in a number of countries. The replicability of these types of programs to other regions might be limited, however, by several factors, including the pre-existing institutional infrastructure (vocational training centers and formal private sector) and a socio-cultural environment in which women’s mobility and access to education and employment is relatively equal, compared to other low-and middle-income regions.

An alternative approach to enhancing young women’s economic opportunities comes largely out of the population and reproductive health field, where programming targeted specifically to adolescent girls has only relatively recently recognized the economic dimension of the developmental transition from childhood to adulthood. Assessments of the “livelihoods” approach to adolescent programming, in which employment and/or business skills are imparted as part of a package of services addressing girls’ needs for social capital, mentoring, and access to health information and services, suggest that while such programs are extremely promising, there is much to be done in the way of strengthening the ability of NGOs and other implementing organizations to effectively integrate and appropriately sequence the diverse range of activities that these kinds of programs encompass. This would imply that piloting of relatively modest projects that are flexible in design and include technical assistance to allow providers to be as effective as possible across the areas of intervention may be the best course of action at present.

There is no straightforward answer to the question of whether the promotion of young women’s employment and economic empowerment in developing countries is better served by programs that limit themselves to high quality vocational training along the lines of the Latin American model, or by programs that simultaneously address multiple constraints limiting young women’s labor market participation, as with the “livelihoods” approach. The ability of “minimalist” programs to dramatically improve young women’s prospects in the labor market implies that –

in the socioeconomic context in which they were implemented – relevant skills acquisition, coupled with links to local employers, is enough to get many of these youth into the workforce with decent earnings. In the countries in which the vocational training were particularly effective for young women, other potential barriers to female youth employment, such as social isolation and domestic responsibilities, are not strong enough to prevent a narrowly-focused set of activities from achieving their objectives – which were also narrowly-focused on labor market outcomes for participants.

It is unlikely that a pure vocational training program could be optimally effective at addressing the constraints on young women’s economic activity in most of the low-income and post-conflict countries under consideration for inclusion in the World Bank’s Adolescent Girls Initiative. In these countries, it is likely that the constraints on young women’s employment are much more complex than simply lack of relevant vocational skills. The model proposed for the Liberian pilot program Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls in Liberia, in which job skills, life skills, and entrepreneurship training with linkages to microfinance are being combined with ancillary interventions addressing gender-based violence and reproductive health, seems a reasonable starting place to assess the effectiveness of a more integrated approach.

1. Introduction

The World Bank is launching an initiative aimed at addressing the economic needs of adolescent girls and young women in poor or post-conflict countries. Working together with governments, donors, foundations, and private sector partners, the Bank proposes to develop and test a core set of promising interventions to promote the economic empowerment of adolescent girls and young women. The menu of interventions, based on emerging good practices around the world, includes: i) business development skills training and services; ii) technical and vocational training, combined with job placement assistance; iii) access to micro finance; iv) life skills training; v) mentoring; and vi) apprenticeship programs. As a part of background research for this initiative, this paper undertakes a review of existing policies and programs designed to promote labor force participation of young women in developing countries.

It is well known that in developing countries, young women's labor force participation is influenced by a number of factors, including human capital constraints, socio-cultural barriers to entry, demographic factors such as early marriage and high fertility, and gender-based hiring preferences on the part of employers. While programs that directly address marriage or fertility could influence young women's labor force participation, the focus of this paper is on programs primarily addressing employment. Some programs for promoting young people's transition into the labor market take a minimalistic approach (eg. concentrating on skills training alone). Other employment programs, particularly those targeted to young women, simultaneously address multiple constraints limiting participation (eg. lack of skills, limited mobility, child care needs, and lack of sexual and reproductive health information). The goal of this paper is to unpack and assess what elements of program design are essential to promoting young women's transition to the labor market.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides an overview of some of the major trends and issues facing young women in the labor market in an international context. Section 3 describes a selection of “best practice” programs, some of which are focused exclusively on employment training and others of which take a more integrated approach to providing gender-targeted adolescent services. Section 4 details the lessons learned from the implementation and evaluation of these programs, and considers the circumstances under which a “minimalist” versus comprehensive/integrated approach might be most effective. Section 5 concludes and summarizes the policy and program recommendations.

2. Issues: Gender and Youth Employment in Developing Countries

This section reviews the international data on youth labor markets, with special attention to gender differences. It also considers some gender-specific challenges facing young women with respect to both the supply of labor and demand for paid employment.

2.1 International Labor Market Trends for Young Women

2.1.1. Labor Force Participation

Young people¹ reduced their labor force participation rates (LFPR) in every region of the world except the Middle East and North Africa between 1995 and 2005 (see Table 1). The only countertrend was among young women in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the Middle East and North Africa, who joined the labor force at higher rates in 2005 than in 1995. As is the case for adults, female youth LFPR is everywhere lower than male youth LFPR, with the exception of East Asia, where more than 68% of young women are in the labor force.

Table 1**Youth labour force participation rates, by sex, 1995 and 2005**

	Total		Males		Females	
	1995	2005	1995	2005	1995	2005
World	58.9	54.7	67.2	63.0	50.1	45.9
Developed Economies and European Union	53.6	51.8	56.9	54.0	50.1	49.6
Central and Eastern Europe (non-EU) and CIS	47.2	41.8	52.8	48.4	41.5	35.0
East Asia	75.2	67.3	74.6	66.3	75.7	68.4
South East Asia and the Pacific	58.1	56.5	64.5	64.2	51.6	48.5
South Asia	50.6	47.2	68.0	64.2	31.7	29.1
Latin America and the Caribbean	56.4	54.2	70.4	63.8	42.3	44.5
Middle East and North Africa	40.0	40.0	56.2	54.3	23.2	25.1
Sub-Saharan Africa	68.2	65.5	76.1	73.7	60.2	57.3

Source: ILO (2006)

2.1.2. Unemployment

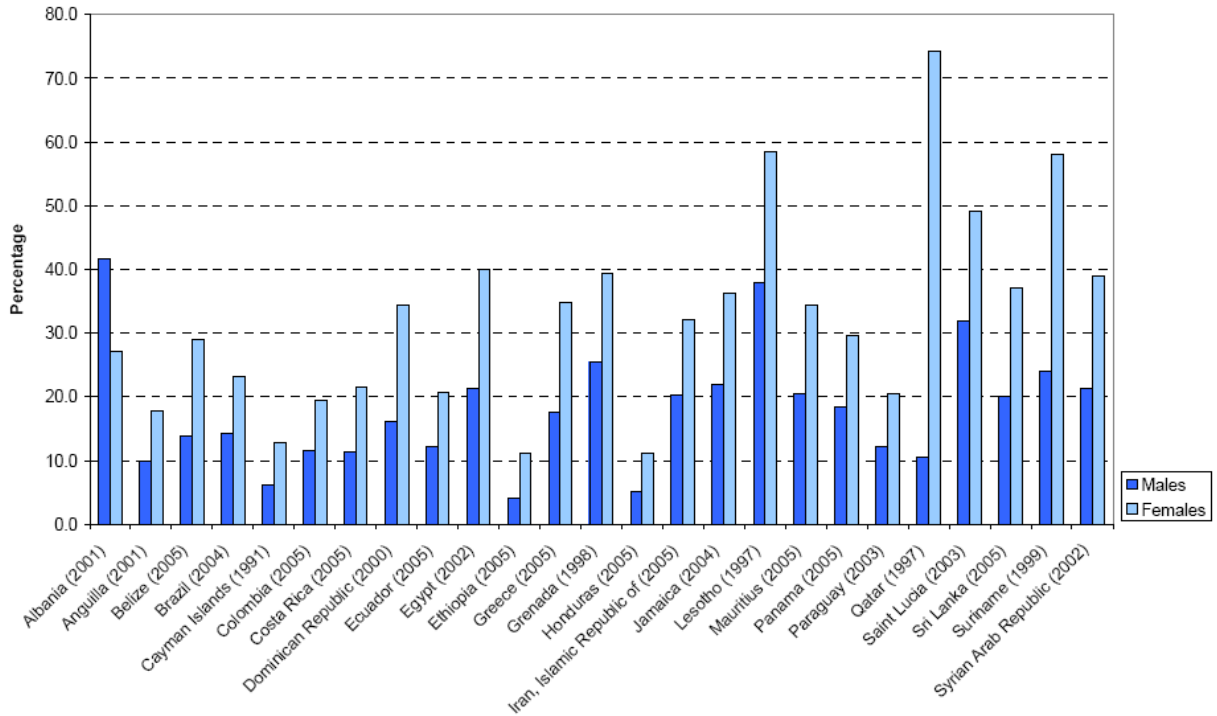
Conventional measures of unemployment (youth who are in the labor force but not currently employed) indicate rates of between 7.5% for East Asia to 25% for the Middle East and North Africa. In 2006, unemployment was significantly higher for young women than for young men in the same regions that have experienced increases in female youth labor force participation rates: Latin American and the Caribbean and the Middle East and North Africa. In LAC, almost 22% of young women are unemployed, compared to 14% of young men, and in MENA, close to one-third of women in the 15-to-24 age group are unemployed, compared to less than one-quarter of young men (see Table 2). In some countries, such as Lesotho, Saint Lucia, and Suriname, female youth unemployment exceeds 40% (see Figure 1).

Table 2
Youth Unemployment Rates by Gender and Region, 1996-2006

Youth unemployment rate (%) - both sexes	1996	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006*
WORLD	12.4	13.9	13.8	13.7	13.3	13.2
Developed Economies & European Union	15.3	14.4	14.6	14.2	13.8	12.7
Central & South-Eastern Europe (non-EU) & CIS	19.5	19.7	19.2	18.8	18.2	18.5
East Asia	7.6	8.0	7.8	7.7	7.6	7.5
South-East Asia & the Pacific	9.6	16.2	16.7	17.3	15.9	16.5
South Asia	10.1	10.7	10.4	10.6	10.2	9.9
Latin America & the Caribbean	14.6	17.0	16.9	16.8	16.7	17.2
North Africa	28.6	29.0	28.8	27.5	25.6	25.7
Sub-Saharan Africa	17.6	18.7	18.6	17.8	17.8	17.8
Middle East	25.0	25.5	24.5	23.5	24.5	24.6
Youth unemployment rate (%) - males	1996	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006*
WORLD	12.5	13.9	13.7	13.6	13.2	13.1
Developed Economies & European Union	15.1	14.9	15.3	14.6	14.5	13.0
Central & South-Eastern Europe (non-EU) & CIS	19.4	19.6	19.0	18.5	17.9	18.6
East Asia	8.9	9.3	9.0	8.9	8.8	8.7
South-East Asia & the Pacific	9.4	15.9	16.3	17.0	15.2	16.1
South Asia	9.8	10.3	10.1	10.3	10.0	9.7
Latin America & the Caribbean	12.0	13.8	13.6	13.5	13.6	14.0
North Africa	26.3	26.8	25.7	24.3	22.4	22.5
Sub-Saharan Africa	18.0	19.0	18.9	18.3	18.2	18.3
Middle East	22.4	22.6	21.7	20.9	21.7	21.7
Youth unemployment rate (%) - females	1996	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006*
WORLD	12.4	14.1	14.0	13.8	13.5	13.4
Developed Economies & European Union	15.6	13.7	13.9	13.7	13.1	12.4
Central & South-Eastern Europe (non-EU) & CIS	19.7	19.9	19.5	19.2	18.7	18.3
East Asia	6.3	6.7	6.5	6.4	6.3	6.3
South-East Asia & the Pacific	9.9	16.7	17.3	17.8	16.9	17.0
South Asia	10.7	11.6	11.0	11.4	10.7	10.3
Latin America & the Caribbean	18.9	21.8	21.9	21.7	21.1	21.7
North Africa	34.2	34.4	36.4	35.3	33.4	33.6
Sub-Saharan Africa	17.1	18.2	18.1	17.2	17.3	17.3
Middle East	31.9	32.2	31.0	29.3	30.7	30.7

Source: ILO (2007)

Figure 1
Youth Unemployment by Gender, Selected Countries



Source: ILO (2007)

2.1.3. Idleness and Joblessness

Perhaps a more useful measure of the strength of the youth labor market is the proportion of the population that is neither in the labor force nor in school; that is, the group that has left school but does not appear to be transiting into the world of market work. Fares et al. (2006) define the “home status rate” (which is also sometimes referred to as the “idleness rate”) as

$$HR = \{N - [S\&N]\} / P$$

Where P = population

N = not in labor force = (P – L), where L = Unemployed + Employed

S&N = in school and not in the labor force

They further define the jobless rate as the home status rate plus the unemployment rate:

$$JR = HR + [U/P] = [P - E - S\&N] / P$$

Where E = employed.

As Table 3 indicates, joblessness and home status are much more highly correlated for young women than for young men, suggesting that variation in female joblessness across countries is more closely tied to variation across countries in female home time.²

Table 3
Youth Home Status and Jobless Rates by Region and Gender

<i>Region</i>	<i>Home Status ("Idleness") Rate</i>		<i>Jobless Rate</i>	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
EAP	27	9	32	22
ECA	10	7	26	22
HIC	6	2	17	14
LAC	27	7	35	16
MENA	26	3	36	22
OHIC	3	1	12	10
SA	39	10	57	18
SSA	24	14	34	20
All Developing Countries	23	8	34	21

Source: Fares et al. (2006), Appendix Table 1

2.2 Gender-specific Challenges to Youth Employment

The *World Development Report 2007: Development and the Next Generation* identifies four principal factors contributing to the vulnerability of youth in the labor market (World Bank 2007a):

- (1) Large cohorts of new entrants and higher female participation rates, driving up labor supply and placing downward pressure on youth employment and wages;
- (2) Poor access to information and credit markets, leading to premature exit from school and perpetuating skill mismatches;

- (3) Restrictive labor market institutions, such as unemployment insurance, employment protection laws, and the minimum wage, some of which have a disproportionate effect on youth;
- (4) Social institutions and norms, including religious beliefs and limitations on mobility, which hinder the full participation of girls in particular in skill acquisition and work.

In addition to these factors, there are several gender-specific determinants of low employment rates and earnings among young women. On the supply side, girls are responsible for a disproportionate share of unpaid domestic labor, either in their parents' or their own home (Ritchie et al 2004). In countries with early marriage and/or childbearing, this may include primary responsibility for childcare (Okojie 2003). Other constraints on young women's labor market participation might include a lack of productive skills and contacts to help with a job search; limited life skills; and opposition from family or male partners (Ruiz Abril 2008).

An often under-recognized barrier to young women's employment is their relative lack of the kind of social capital that can help them gain information about and access to jobs. As discussed in a recent publication from the Center for Global Development entitled "Girls Count," research in Sri Lanka and Thailand suggests that young men and women have access to very different social networks for information about jobs and job training opportunities; these social networks may be critical to their success in the labor market. In Thailand, where both parents and youth have high expectations that out-of-school youth of both sexes will earn money, girls consult their parents about work issues, while boys and young men cite colleagues as their primary sources of information. Because young men rely on broader social networks to advance their employment interests, they have more information to improve their job prospects (Levine et al. 2008).

Data from three of the International Labor Organization's School-to-Work Surveys (STWS) give an indication of the cross-country and gender differences for the

reasons young people are not in the labor force. In China, half of all female youth surveyed cited housework and/or childcare responsibilities as the primary reason for not working for pay; in Kosovo, almost a third of young women were out of the labor force due to ill health or disability; while in Syria, one third were denied permission to work by their families.

Table 4

Distribution of youth outside of the labour force by reason for inactivity, by sex

	Bad health/disability (%)		Housework and/or childcare responsibilities (%)		Family does not give permission to work (%)		Discouraged (%)		Other (%)	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
China	39.0	21.0	6.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	33.0	19.0	22.0	10.0
Kosovo	66.1	32.3	0.0	27.3	0.0	2.6	22.2	21.3	11.7	16.5
Syria	28.8	2.9	19.3	43.7	13.5	33.3	19.2	10.1	19.2	10.0

Source: ILO (2006)

On the demand side, employers in a range of countries reveal a striking preference to hire young men rather than young women (ILO 2008). For formal sector employers, this may be related to concerns regarding the likelihood of early marriage and/or pregnancy on the part of young female workers, which could generate high turnover rates or costly maternity leaves (Brewer 2004).

Findings from the STWS are revealing of employer perspectives on hiring youth in general, and young women in particular. In Egypt, for example, 34 percent of a sample of almost 350 employers reported a preference for hiring men for professional and managerial occupations, and 69% expressed a similar gender preference for production and manual occupations. In the Egyptian case, male bias in hiring preferences is present both the industrial and service sectors of the economy (see Table 5).

Table 5
Egypt: Preferred Hiring by Sex, Industry and Occupation

Industry	Professional/administration				Production/manual				Number
	Male	Female	No pre-ference	NA	Male	Female	No pre-ference	NA	
Economic activity									
Agriculture/Fishing	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	66.7	33.3	0.0	0.0	3
Petroleum/Mining	42.9	0.0	42.9	14.3	71.4	0.0	28.6	0.0	7
Manufacturing	39.6	3.2	23.0	34.1	70.5	5.5	20.3	3.7	217
Construction	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1
Commercial/Marketing/Retail	28.6	1.8	14.3	55.4	66.1	3.6	5.4	25.0	56
Brokerage/Real estate	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	1
Transportation/Telecommunication	0.0	0.0	50.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	2
Tourism/Hotels/Restaurants	30.8	7.7	7.7	53.8	84.6	0.0	7.7	7.7	13
Personal/Social services	9.1	0.0	20.5	70.5	68.2	0.0	4.5	27.3	44
Computers/information	50.0	0.0	50.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	50.0	50.0	2
Education	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	1
Total	33.7	2.6	21.6	42.1	68.9	4.3	15.3	11.5	347

Source: El Zanaty and Associates (2007)

Another recent employer survey in Sierra Leone found that employers were biased against females, and the bias increases with age of employees (World Bank 2007b). More than twenty percent of the 668 employers surveyed stated that they perceived 18-to-24 year-old men as more skilled than young women, and 36 percent perceived male youth as harder working than females. On the other hand, female workers were considered slightly more reliable, trustworthy, and cooperative.

It is important to note that employer preference for young female workers does exist in some countries and in some industries. Women tend to be concentrated in electronics, textiles and garments, where low labor costs are a crucial part of international competitiveness. Women's wages are typically lower than men's, and employers perceive women as more productive in the types of jobs available in the export sector. Reasons that employers cite for the latter include: women's putative "nimble fingers;" their obedience and being less prone to worker unrest; their being suited to tedious work; and their reliability and trainability relative to men (Braunstein 2000). Specific examples include the garment industry in Bangladesh (Amin et al. 1998), export agribusiness in Mexico (Arizpe and Aranda 1981), coffee

and tobacco farmers in Honduras (Buvinic 1998); the cut flower industry in Ecuador (Newman 2002), and the export processing zone in Madagascar (Glick and Roubaud 2006).

3. Programs: Which Youth Employment Initiatives Work Best for Young Women?

3.1 Youth Employment Inventory

The World Bank's Youth Employment Inventory (YEI) identifies forty-five out of 291 youth employment programs around the world which a ranking of "1" ("positive") for women's access. (Two hundred and thirty programs reported having "gender-neutral" access; the remaining 14 are considered to have "negative" gender access practices, or the equality of access on the basis of gender is not known.) Relatively few of these gender "best practice" programs have had impact evaluations that would allow for reliable measurement of the degree to which they have achieved their objectives: fifteen (one-third) have no evaluation information available at all on outcomes or impact; 20 (44%) have evaluations which include basic information on the gross outcomes of the intervention (e.g. number of participants who found a job after the intervention, improvement in earnings of participants) without considering net effects (i.e., there is no control group). The YEI does include ten programs with the highest gender equality access ranking for which estimates of net impact on labor market outcomes such as employment and earnings in the labor market (using control groups to measure impact); six of these also have been subject to some kind of cost-benefit analysis.

3.2 Review of Selected "Best Practice" Programs

As indicated in the YEI, it is a challenge to identify youth employment programs targeting women which have had sufficiently rigorous impact evaluations to be able to draw lessons for future work. This section focuses on a small number of projects

for which good impact evaluations have been conducted, and which appear to have had quite positive outcomes for the young women who participated.

3.2.1. The “Latin American” Model

Two projects from Latin America – ProJoven (Peru) and Jóvenes en Acción (Colombia) – followed the earlier models of youth employment programs in Chile and Argentina by contracting with decentralized training entities to organize and offer training courses in which beneficiaries could enroll. The courses, which contained both classroom and on-the-job experiences, matched local firms’ needs with the content of the training curriculum.

In the case of ProJoven, which provided vocational training to approximately 42,000 sixteen-to-twenty-four year olds in ten major cities between 1996 and 2003, equal participation of women in its training courses was strongly encouraged, especially for traditionally male-dominated occupations. Over the eight years of the program’s operation, women made up over half (52-56%) of the beneficiaries (Diaz and Jaramillo 2006). Women with children under the age of five received a double monthly stipend to cover transportation, meals and medical insurance. Expenditures for mothers’ subsidies represented 6.6% of total stipends, or less than 1.5% of ProJoven’s total budget (Ñopo et al. 2007). After three months of training, beneficiaries who passed competency tests graduated to a three-month internship with a local firm.

Using a matched control group methodology, a gender evaluation of ProJoven found no substantial differences between women and men from training on hourly wages, but important gender differences in outcomes for employment rates and occupational segregation (Ñopo et al. 2007). The program’s impact on employment rates was much greater for women than for men: twelve months after completing their internships, employment rates for female beneficiaries were almost 6% higher than for a matched control group, and after 18 months, the difference grew to

15.2%. For young men who participated in the program, average employment rates were actually 11% lower than the control group of non-beneficiaries.

The impact on hours worked also varied significantly by gender, with male participants working almost 15 more hours per week than the control group, and women increasing their average number of hours worked per week by almost 6. The impact on hourly earnings was very similar for men and women: both earned an average of 20% higher than the control group 18 months after program participation. Perhaps the most striking difference of program impact between men and women was in total monthly earnings, which combines the employment and labor income effects: 18 months after completing the program, female participants had increased their monthly earnings by nearly 93% relative to the control group, while men's earnings were only 11% higher.

Another important finding for ProJoven was that the program reduced occupational segregation among its targeted population. The value of the Duncan Index, which can be interpreted as the percentage of working women that would have to switch from female-dominated to male-dominated jobs to achieve an equal distribution of men and women across occupations, fell from .63 at baseline to .46 eighteen months after the program. The comparable indicators for the control group were .68 at baseline and .73 eighteen months later. The authors of the impact evaluation conclude that "labor-training programs that promote equal gender participation have disproportionately positive effects on outcomes for women trainees in a labor market with substantial gender differences" (Ñopo et al. 2007).

The second Latin American youth employment training program, Jóvenes en Acción, was introduced in Colombia between 2002 and 2005. It provided 3 months of in-classroom training and 3 months of on-the-job training to 80,000 young people between the ages of 18 and 25 in the two lowest socio-economic strata of the population. The total cost of the program was US\$70 million, or US\$875 per person. The training courses provided vocational skills in a diverse number of

occupations, including taxi and bus drivers, office assistants, call center operators, medical assistants, preschool teacher assistants, cashiers, textile operators, and carpentry, plumber, and electricians' assistants. On-the-job training was provided by legally registered (formal sector) companies, which provided unpaid internships to the participants. Trainees received a daily stipend of \$2.20, which was eventually raised to \$3 for women with children under 7 (Attanasio et al. 2008).

A randomized experimental design was used to evaluate the impacts of Jóvenes en Acción on employment and earnings. Labor supply effects for women were large and significant: controlling for both training institution fixed effects and pre-treatment characteristics, female trainees' probability of paid employment 19-21 months after completing the program increased by five percentage points relative to the control group, and they worked an average of 1.1 more days per month and 2.5 more hours per week than women in the control group. (Young men trainees' employment probabilities and quantity of labor supplied were not statistically significantly different than those of the control group.) Women who participated in Jóvenes en Acción earned approximately 18% more than women who didn't receive the training, while men realized earnings gains of eight percent relative to the control group (Attanasio et al. 2008).

The results for Jóvenes en Acción imply that training has had positive labor market impacts for both men and women, but possibly through different mechanisms. For women, there is a clear effect on employment, days, and hours, as well as wage and salary earnings. For men, the picture is different; the estimates imply an increase in the average wage and salary earnings among treated employed workers, but no effect on employment rates. For women, a third of the earnings increase can be attributed to increased employment.

Cost-benefit analysis of Jóvenes en Acción suggests a large net gain, especially for women. The internal rate of return is estimated to be 25% for women and 16% for

men, if gains are assumed to be permanent and constant over the remaining working life of the participant (Attanasio et al. 2008).

The authors of the Jóvenes en Acción impact evaluation study speculate that there are three possible reasons for the differential returns to training for women relative to men. First, the higher return could result from the fact that women have lower levels of formal education to begin with. However, baseline gender differences in years of education were very small: 9.9 for women compared to 10.1 for men (Attanasio et al. 2008, Table 2). Second, women with children received an additional stipend for child care, which may have freed up additional time for women to devote to training. Indeed, women did tend to enroll in courses requiring longer hours. Third, women were more motivated and were more responsible during the classroom and internship phases of the program; dropout and expulsion rates were both lower for women than for men.

Part of the success of the Jóvenes en Acción program for female youth in particular may also be attributable to the fact that it was run by known NGOs and located in the young person's neighborhood. This might have been especially important for girls with small children at home and who had little experience or confidence to venture far from their homes. The NGOs spent a lot of informal time in general counseling, and a lot of effort on discipline. Thus, while Jóvenes was an employment program, it also provided social work services for the students. According to World Bank staff affiliated with the project, the life skills component, which comprised 20% of training time at some sites, was highly praised by the participants, and the internship component was particularly important to women than men since they are less linked to labor markets (Wendy Cunningham, personal communication).

Both ProJoven and Jóvenes en Acción – along with similar projects in other Latin American countries – could be considered traditional vocational education programs in the sense that their objectives were largely limited to labor market outcomes,

without consideration of other aspects of youth welfare. Their success in promoting young women's employment can be attributed to the fact that they were exceptionally well-targeted, demand-driven, and linked with private sector labor demand. The promotion of women's equal access, especially to training in non-traditional skills, combined with the provision of additional stipends to cover childcare, most likely also played a role in enhancing the benefits of these programs for female youth.

The replicability of these types of programs to other regions might be limited, however, by several factors. First, the decentralized nature of these programs relied on a pre-existing, well-developed national network of private and not-for-profit vocational training centers, as well as community-based non-governmental organizations, with which to contract. While the quality of the individual training institutes varied, the basic infrastructure was already in place with respect to facilities, personnel, and links to local employers. Even where participating NGOs may not have had prior experience in offering vocational training, the selection criteria of the program helped to assure that met certain quality standards. Many developing countries lack such vocational training infrastructure. Second, the formal private sector in these middle-income countries is large and vibrant enough to be interested in participating in such a scheme; none of the evaluation reports mentioned lack of private firm participation as a limiting factor. In countries where the formal sector is small, creating such linkages to provide on-the-job training may present more of a challenge. A third set of factors limiting replicability of the Latin American youth employment training model are more social in nature, related to the relative lack of restrictions on young women's mobility and their ability to interact with men in public. The gender-integrated, training center-based approach that has had so much success in Latin America would be unfeasible to implement in societies where young women are largely confined to their parents' or husband's home, and/or where prohibitions exist on the intermingling of unrelated men and women in the public sphere.

3.2.2. Adolescent Livelihoods Programs

An alternative approach to enhancing young women's economic opportunities comes largely out of the population and reproductive health field, where programming targeted specifically to adolescent girls has only relatively recently recognized the economic dimension of the developmental transition from childhood to adulthood. The rationale for integrating "livelihoods training" into population work is summarized by Mensch et al. (2004):

Broadly conceived, the "livelihoods approach" to adolescent programming attempts to develop technical and life skills while influencing social networks and improving access to savings, loans, and markets. In settings where young women's movements are restricted to the domestic arena, providing safe spaces outside the home is expected to promote mobility and independence and give girls greater visibility in the community. By increasing contact with others outside the family, including both female peers and adults who can function as mentors, social and interpersonal capacities may be advanced and communication skills developed. Finally, livelihood programs offer acceptable settings for supplying information about reproductive health.

A report by the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) also makes the case for integrating reproductive health and livelihood programs:

Increasingly, donors and governmental and non-governmental organizations faced with the challenge of addressing and prioritizing adolescent needs are recognizing that various aspects of young people's lives are intricately connected and may benefit from simultaneous attention. In particular, there is increased understanding that reproductive and sexual behavior for adolescents is closely linked with their educational and economic options. Teen pregnancy, abortion, and exposure to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) have enormous social and personal impact in terms of educational and work opportunities. Conversely, entry into the labor force and economic options during the teen years are critical in determining not only future opportunities for social and economic mobility, but also exposure to health risks, fertility outcomes, and overall well-being (Esim et al. 2001).

The ICRW report distinguishes between linked reproductive health/livelihood programs which are implemented by "sector-specific" organizations and those

carried out by “multi-service organizations.” Sector-specific organizations are those with expertise and experience in either reproductive health or economic empowerment, which might incorporate interventions outside of their usual domain for specific target groups of adolescents. For example, an NGO in the reproductive health field might implement a skills development programs for teenage mothers, or a labor rights organization might initiate a sexual health program with outreach to a specific workplace, such as garment factory workers. Alternatively, sector-specific organizations interested in meeting the multiple needs of youth might establish linkages through referral systems, drawing on other organizations’ complementary skills and experience. In contrast, multi-service or community-based organizations provide multiple programs and activities for their target population, but these programs are often not explicitly linked, or even offered to the same group of beneficiaries (Esim et al. 2001).

The Population Council, which has been at the forefront of the “livelihoods approach” to adolescent programming, has evaluated several programs in South Asia and Africa that have successfully combined vocational training with reproductive health and other interventions. The best documented of these are:

1. The “Action for Slum Dwellers’ Reproductive Health, Allahabad” (ASRHA), which offered vocational training and savings opportunities for girls 14-19 in Allahabad, India (Mensch et al 2004);
2. “Adolescent Girls’ Adventure” (Kishori Abhijan), a program in rural Bangladesh which offered livelihood skills (life-skills lessons, savings account options, access to credit, and vocational training) to 15,000 adolescent girls in three districts (Amin and Suran 2005); and
3. Tap and Reposition Youth (TRY), a Kenyan savings and microcredit project targeted to urban out-of-school adolescent girls and young women aged 16-22 (Erulkar and Chong 2006).

ASRHA was a project conducted in the slum areas of Allahabad in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh in 2001-2002, which integrated livelihood activities

for adolescent girls aged 14-19 into CARE's reproductive health program. Literate girls with their parents' permission were identified as peer educators, who attended a 6-day reproductive health training course followed by a 2-day peer-education training course. These peer educators then recruited eligible girls into 27 groups of approximately 20 each (total N = 525), which received reproductive health training, vocational counseling, savings formation information, and follow-up support. Vocational training, which focused on handicrafts skills such as sewing, weaving, and jewelry making, was provided by the project, and also by NGOs and government agencies. In addition, the girls received counseling and assistance for creating savings accounts at banks or post offices.

An unmatched control group of adolescent girls in another slum ward participated in the ASRHA reproductive health activities, but not the livelihood components.³ This allowed the evaluation team to determine the marginal effects of vocational and financial training on the outcomes of interest, which included gender-role attitudes, mobility, self-efficacy, reproductive health knowledge, work expectations, and time use. Labor market outcomes such as employment and wages were not considered. The impacts of the program were found to be limited to those variables that measured skills directly or for issues addressed directly by the intervention. Only 10% of beneficiaries reported earning income from selling products they'd made. Perhaps the most significant outcome was that intervention participants showed a considerable increase in reproductive health knowledge, relative to control respondents who attended the reproductive health classes that lacked the additional livelihoods component (Mensch et al. 2004).

Kishori Abhijan, a UNICEF-funded initiative on adolescent girls' livelihoods, was implemented in 2001-2002 by two Bangladeshi development NGOs: the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and the Center for Mass Education and Science (CMES). The program had three components: (1) mentoring to develop self-esteem and leadership skills; (2) training in gender and gender discrimination, health and nutrition, and legislation and legal rights; and (3) acquisition of

livelihood skills, including links with existing facilities for establishing savings accounts and obtaining credit. Using a propensity score matching methodology to evaluate the difference-in-differences impact of the program, Amin and Suran (2005) found that program participants had significantly increased their labor market participation relative to matched non-participants during the two years that the program was active in the communities. Logistic regression analysis of changes in paid work status between 2001 and 2003 suggests that the odds ratio of working for pay increased by between 1.9 and 3.2, controlling for district, age, wealth, education, credit history, and marital status.⁴ Put differently, matched participants increased their paid employment from about 11% before program implementation to between 27.7 and 53.9% ex post, compared to the matched control group's rise in paid work from 10% to 20.3%.

The Kenyan Tap and Reposition Youth program is an example of a livelihoods intervention with a highly vulnerable population. In the slums of Nairobi, 78% of girls aged 15-17 are not in school and 58% do not live with their parents. Twenty-one percent of sexually active girls aged 15-19 reported exchanging sex for money or gifts, and the HIV infection rate for girls aged 15-24 was eight percent (Erulkar et al. 2006). The K-Rep Development Agency, which is the oldest and largest microfinance institution in Kenya, decided in 1998 to work in collaboration with the Population Council to expand its services to adolescent girls and young women. The TRY model evolved over the life of the program, growing from a minimalist savings and credit model to one that also provided its clientele with social support and an individual, voluntary savings option.

During the first phase of the project (1998-2000), K-Rep essentially replicated its Asian microcredit model for the urban teen girls it was targeting: groups of 25 received training, contributed to group savings, and applied for microloans for small business undertakings. As repayment rates dropped and groups began to dissolve, modifications were made in the second phase (2001-2004). Specifically, TRY expanded on its social support aspect by adding adult mentors to work with the

groups in parallel with credit officers. But high dropout rates continued due to the demands of the savings and lending program. Most recently, beginning in 2004, the program has further evolved to include a “Young Savers Club,” which allows for voluntary individual savings and maintains group activities.

The high rate of program attrition from TRY, combined with significant residential mobility of poor young urban women, compounded the usual challenges of selection bias for the impact evaluation of this project. Baseline data were collected from 326 matched pairs of young women; by the time the evaluation survey was administered one to three years later, only 68% of those pairs (n=222) could be located. Moreover, attrition from the sample is perfectly correlated with attrition from the program; all girls lost to follow-up were TRY dropouts. Keeping in mind the upward bias this non-random attrition creates for the program impact assessment, Eralkar and Chong (2005) find statistically significant differences in household assets, earnings from paid work, and savings between TRY participants and the matched control group. Interestingly, the asset and earnings effects were only significant for the older group of beneficiaries (aged 20-22), while savings rates increased only for the younger group (aged 16-19).

The experience of TRY over a 10-year period offers an unusual opportunity to learn lessons about how to adapt program models to the specific needs and constraints of adolescent girls and young women. (In this sense, it is a “best practice” not because of reliably measured outcomes, but because it is an example of responsive programming in an emerging field.) In urban Kenya, for the majority of young women, entrepreneurship and repeated borrowing were not primary concerns. Rather, their fundamental needs were related to acquiring social capital (including accessing support groups and mentors), maintaining physical safety, and having the opportunity to save their money in a safe, accessible place. When these needs are met, entrepreneurship and use of credit opportunities may follow (Erulkar et al. 2006).

4. Lessons: What can new youth employment initiatives learn about how best to meet the needs and challenges specific to young women?

Considering the very different approaches to employment programming for young women reviewed above, it may be useful to distinguish between lessons learned from narrower vocational education programs, such as those that have been carried out in Latin America, and recommendations coming out of experiences that combine employment skills development with other interventions.

4.1 Gender Issues in Vocational Education and Training Programs

A new generation of youth employment skills training programs, particularly in Latin America, has largely addressed some of the criticism of earlier vocational education and training programs, many of which lacked attention to gender inequities. The large, centralized training institutions of the past focused exclusively on male skill areas and few girls went on to study vocational subjects, other than those “feminine” skills for lower paid jobs, such as childcare, secretarial or domestic work (Brewer 2004). By offering a wide range of skill training to young women and men on an equitable basis, providing additional support to young mothers in the form of a childcare stipend, and delivering the programs through decentralized mechanisms that can better capture the skills needs and work opportunities of local communities, the new “Latin American” model of vocational education has succeeded in increasing young women’s employment and earnings in a number of countries.

What more could these youth training programs do to enhance the benefits for women? Throughout the project cycle, the following five sets of activities are likely to increase the marginal benefit of vocational education for female youth:

4.1.1. Gender-sensitive, Participatory Needs Assessment

Depending on resources, programs can make use of existing demographic, labor market, and/or micro level living standards data, or implement special data

collection efforts focused on understanding the issues and obstacles facing youth. An excellent template for such a needs assessment is the International Labor Organization's School-to-Work Transition Survey (SWTS). The SWTS is a statistical tool designed by the ILO to assist countries in improving the design of youth employment policies and programs. Specifically, the survey allows for analysis of both quantitative and qualitative variables that define the relative ease or difficulty of young people's transition from school-to work-life. Among such variables are young people's education and training experience; their perceptions and aspirations in terms of employment; the job search process, barriers to and supports for entry into the labor market; the preference for wage employment or self-employment; attitudes of employers towards hiring young workers; and working conditions and earnings. As of 2008, surveys have been conducted and reports issued for Indonesia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Kosovo, Syria and Egypt (ILO 2008). The World Bank's Girls' Vulnerability Assessment for Liberia and Youth Employment Study for Sierra Leone are other excellent examples of baseline data collection and analysis that allow program planners to identify potential areas of productive intervention, as well as potential gender-specific challenges to implementing youth employment programs in a particular context (World Bank 2007b and 2007c).

4.1.2. Targeting and Outreach

In the design of an information and communication campaign for a youth employment program, special attention should be given to materials and outreach/dissemination methods that will reach young women where they are. In Brazil, promotional materials for a technical training program in Bahia and Pernambuco in 1991-92 made use of explicit gender equity language and images of women in non-traditional fields to promote women's participation in the project. The number of female applications doubled, and there was a largely successful job placement after training (Fawcett and Howden 1998). Programs that are open to both men and women should also set gender-specific targets regarding the desired number of female participants, which can be monitored as the program is rolled out.

4.1.3. Adapting Curricula to the Needs and Skills of Young Women

In the Latin American demand-driven youth training programs, the decentralized training institutes are generally given a great deal of autonomy with respect to the development and delivery of actual course content. While this is consistent with the idea of matching training to local labor market conditions, more could be done to address the particular training needs of young women. In the case of traditionally female occupations, increasing the technical level of training has the potential to improve women's productivity and the applicability of the training to labor market needs in such areas as textiles, tourism, office work and health care. One innovative approach is what has been called the "stepwise" method of relating similarities in the occupational background and existing skills of participants with the skill needs in more productive sectors in order to identify possible new training areas. With this approach, training programs can identify and incorporate more technical skills into traditional women's training curricula. An example of the stepwise method comes from the national training institute in Colombia (SENA), which identified the growth-oriented, export sectors of graphic arts and jewelry manufacturing, and provided technical assistance to women already skilled in related areas of sewing, handicrafts, and garment manufacturing to establish small manufacturing operations.

With respect to promoting women's inclusion in training for traditionally male occupations, one option is to offer "pre-training" courses to women in order to familiarize them with the basic concepts, terminology and tools of the specialized training. For example, a metalworking training program for women in Brazil and a plumbing and electronic appliance repair training program in the Dominican Republic both provided courses in math, measurements, and design to women who were interested in enrolling (Fawcett and Howden 1998).

Another important issue related to curriculum relates to the degree to which youth programs should be training participants for paid employment or for self-

employment. One of the uses to which a good needs assessment can be put is to help determine the relative opportunities and growth potential for women in the local labor market, and whether the returns are likely to be higher for preparing girls to become employees or entrepreneurs. In the latter case, an independent microcredit component and/or other follow-on support may be important to helping young women get their small businesses off the ground. For example, Project Baobab in Kenya, which targets low-income rural young women, provides free business skills training (entrepreneurship training along with a life-skills training program) and small grants for business start-ups for some of those who are trained in secondary schools and vocational centers. As part of the training, students create individual business plans that focus on enterprises like selling second-hand clothes, raising bees or chickens, or tailoring. These business plans are submitted to a committee from the local business community, who evaluate them and recommend the most promising to receive US \$100 grants from Project Baobab (<http://www.projectbaobab.org/>).

In addition to technical skills, youth training programs that want to help young women find and keep jobs should include both *job readiness skills* (eg. effective workplace communication and interpersonal skills, including conflict resolution, active listening, negotiation, and getting along with co-workers; occupational stereotyping; assertiveness; managing stress and discrimination; and childcare issues) as well as *job search skills* (eg. information on how to find job openings and opportunities, writing a resume and cover letter, interview skills, and networking with employers) as part of the course curriculum.

4.1.4. Helping Young Women Balance Domestic Responsibilities with Job Training

In the implementation phase of the project cycle, it is important that provisions be made to recognize many young women's high opportunity cost of time and their duties with respect to unpaid household labor. For example, the duration of the

training program is an important factor for women's participation; shorter courses and/or financial assistance for longer training programs should be made available. Similarly, course schedules and locations should be available that are compatible with young women's household responsibilities, such as preparing the mid-day meal. Finally, for young mothers who want to take part in employment training, it is essential that provisions be made to help them with childcare.

Several different models of childcare support have been tried in Latin America and the Caribbean. These include:

- Provision of stipends to young mothers for home- or center- based care – including credits for use of community programs like *hogares comunitarios* in Colombia, or securing enrollment spots for trainees in government childcare program in Chile;
- Offering the vocational training in community centers with on-site childcare – this was the model used in an Uruguayan program; and
- Combining early childhood education with adolescent programming, which is the approach taken by the NGO SERVOL in Trinidad and Tobago. This latter model is particularly innovative, because it uses the onsite preschool as a training site for the adolescents in the jobs program (Griffith 2002).

4.1.5. Gender Sensitive Labor Market and Social Support Services

A further set of recommendations for improving the gender outcomes of youth employment programs concerns the incorporation of post-training services to help trainees actually find jobs that match their new skills set. These outplacement and support services might be particularly important for young women with no previous labor market experience and weak social networks to help them get started. Examples of these kinds of services include career counseling, guidance, job placement, mentoring/coaching, technical assistance, and provision of market information. Two youth employment programs in rural India offer examples of how this can be accomplished. The Baatchit Project complemented its labor market and

entrepreneurial skills training with a career guidance component, which created awareness among jobseekers about available career options, job vacancies and facing interviews, and offered assistance with suitable job placements. The Bharatiya Yuva Shakti Trust, a microenterprise program targeted to un- and underemployed youth, works with a mentoring system whereby beneficiaries receive one-on-one guidance, counseling, and monitoring and supervision as they establish their small business (Brewer 2004).

4.1.6. Gender-disaggregated Impact Assessment

As with the baseline needs assessment, it is important that all monitoring and evaluation activities, as well as impact assessment efforts, collect data that allow for analysis of how well the program is working for both women and men. Reflecting on some of the unexpected findings in the Latin American impact evaluations, this means not only keeping track of individuals' employment status and earnings after they complete the program, but also of sector and occupation (to test the impact on labor market segregation, for example). Deeper analysis of program impact on gender-specific outcomes such as time use, decision-making power in the home, expenditure patterns (including investments in children's human capital), and domestic violence would necessitate both baseline and ex post data collection on these variables as well.

Ideally, the impact evaluation will be designed early in the project cycle, and incorporate some aspect of randomization or matched control group selection. Where possible, treatment differentiation (for example, inclusion or exclusion of a life skills component) can help distinguish between the marginal impacts of program components. A good example of this is the proposed impact assessment plan for the World Bank's Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls project in Liberia, which incorporates a rolling enrollment design such that the control group will consist of those girls who are selected into the program, but for whom the training courses do not yet have a space available (World Bank 2007c).

4.2. Lessons Learned from Adolescent Livelihoods Programs

In her summary of the lessons learned from the Population Council livelihoods initiatives, Amin (2008) notes the four following common features that have contributed to positive outcomes:

1. Participants are organized into small groups that meet frequently;
2. Peer educators provide skills training and group leadership;
3. There exists a strong social support/mentoring component; and
4. A phased approach, which begins with entry-level programs that provide a safe and supportive space where young people can gather; offer opportunities for individual, voluntary savings; and impart training in life skills, financial literacy, and health education. Later phases of the program can include more demanding options such as goal-oriented savings, vocational and business-skills training, and micro-credit.

Based on qualitative case studies of nine integrated adolescent reproductive health and livelihood programs in Colombia, India, and Kenya, researchers from the International Center for Research on Women concluded that, while client demand for these types of programs is evident across diverse socioeconomic settings,

The field of linked programming is clearly in its own adolescence, with a mixture of commitment, missteps, risk-taking, and optimism. Currently, most programs are not implementing linked strategies in an optimal fashion, often achieving only marginal effectiveness in meeting both the reproductive health and livelihoods needs of young people (Esim et al. 2001).

The ICRW report makes several useful recommendations for strengthening programs that seek to address both young women's economic and reproductive health needs. Among these are: (1) Develop institutional and technical capacity of implementing organizations, including staff training in new areas of intervention and impact evaluation techniques; and (2) Integrate market assessment and outreach as an essential component of livelihoods interventions. With respect to the

second recommendation, the ICRW team makes the important observation that translating livelihoods interventions into income-earning opportunities for youth requires a thorough evaluation of and interaction with market needs, contacts, and networks. As indicated by the evaluations reviewed above, many livelihood programs have limited success with respect to employment outcomes due to lack of information and knowledge about the skills and products that are most viable in the local and national economies. Program personnel are also limited in their understanding of how to best commercialize and market the training, skills and products that youth develop. ICRW identifies the lack of a sufficient pool of qualified experts with an overlap of programmatic experience and an understanding of labor markets as a major constraint in incorporating such market assessments and links in program design (Esim et al. 2001). In this aspect, livelihood programs could look to the Latin American experiences for successful methods of linking vocational training with private sector labor demand.

Taken together, these assessments of the livelihoods approach to adolescent programming, in which employment and/or business skills are imparted as part of a package of services addressing girls' needs for social capital, mentoring, and access to health information and services, suggest that while such programs are extremely promising, there is much to be done in the way of strengthening the ability of NGOs and other implementing organizations to effectively integrate and appropriately sequence the diverse range of activities that these kinds of programs encompass. This would imply that piloting of relatively modest projects that are flexible in design and include technical assistance to allow providers to be as effective as possible across the areas of intervention may be the best course of action at present.

4.3. Minimalist Approach or Integrated Adolescent Services?

There is no straightforward answer to the question of whether the promotion of young women's employment and economic empowerment in developing countries is better served by programs that limit themselves to high quality vocational training

– such as the recent Latin American experiences reviewed above – or by programs that simultaneously address multiple constraints limiting young women’s labor market participation, as with the “livelihoods” approach. As discussed earlier, the documented successes of the Latin American programs may be in part attributable to the pre-existing institutional infrastructure (vocational training centers and formal private sector) and a sociocultural environment in which women’s mobility and access to education and employment is relatively equal, compared to other low- and middle-income regions. That is to say, the ability of those “minimalist” programs to dramatically improve young women’s prospects in the labor market implies that – in the socioeconomic context in which they were implemented – relevant skills acquisition, coupled with links to local employers, is enough to get many of these youth into the workforce with decent earnings. It also implies that, in the countries in which the vocational training were particularly effective for young women, other potential barriers to female youth employment, such as social isolation and domestic responsibilities, were not strong enough to prevent a narrowly-focused set of activities from achieving their objectives – which were also narrowly-focused on labor market outcomes for participants.

The choice between minimalist and integrated approaches also depends on the goals of the intervention. Vocational training programs are usually motivated solely by the objective of enhancing the employability of participants, as measured by ex post employment and earnings. Livelihoods programs tend to be much broader in scope, with “fuzzier” objectives like “gender role attitudes” and “self-efficacy” (Mensch et al. 2004). Practically speaking, many livelihoods programs have been added onto existing reproductive health interventions, and the economic component is seen principally as a means to enhancing young women’s empowerment with respect to demographic decisions such as marriage and childbearing. Conversely, when social networking and/or reproductive health training are integrated into vocational or microenterprise programs, these new components are often treated as instrumental to achieving the economic objectives, as opposed to worthwhile interventions in and of themselves.

It is unlikely that a pure vocational training program – even one as well-designed as the Latin American examples discussed in this paper – could be as effective at addressing the constraints on young women’s economic activity, in most of the countries under consideration for inclusion in the World Bank’s Adolescent Girls Initiative. These are low-income and post-conflict societies with limited institutional capacities, weak private sectors, challenging health environments, and highly vulnerable youth populations. It is therefore likely that the constraints on young women’s employment are much more complex than simply lack of relevant vocational skills – although this is certainly one of the constraints that individual country-level programs within the Initiative should address. The model proposed for the pilot program in Liberia (Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls), in which job skills, life skills, and entrepreneurship training with linkages to microfinance are being combined with ancillary interventions addressing gender-based violence and reproductive health, seems a reasonable starting place to assess the effectiveness of a more integrated approach.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

High rates of female youth joblessness across the developing world are partly attributable to gender-specific barriers to young women’s labor force participation. While demand-side constraints, such as employer discrimination, are a factor in many labor markets, this paper focuses on programs which address the multiple obstacles facing young women with respect to labor supply: inadequate skills, lack of knowledge of job search techniques, unpaid domestic labor responsibilities, and, in some places, social isolation and restrictions on mobility.

Two different programmatic approaches to addressing these constraints on young women’s employment have been discussed in some detail: the “Latin American” model, which focuses on decentralized, gender-equitable vocational training with strong linkages to the local private sector, and the “livelihoods approach,” which

places more emphasis on peer group formation and the integration of sexual and reproductive health education with vocational and/or microenterprise training. While the generally positive employment and earnings effects of the Latin American programs are well-documented, evaluations of livelihood programs suggest more modest labor market outcomes.

The paper argues that the impact of the narrow vocational training programs could be even further enhanced by the use of gender-aware needs assessments, improved targeting and outreach to girls, adaptation of training curricula to the specific needs and skills of young women, provisions for girls' "double duty" as students and unpaid household workers, incorporation of post-training outplacement and support services, and high quality, gender-disaggregated monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessment. Livelihood programs, for their part, could benefit from adopting a phased approach to participation, investing in the technical capacity of project staff to be able to carry out multidisciplinary activities, and strengthening knowledge of and links with local labor market conditions.

In practice, the choice between minimalist and integrated female youth employment programs depends on the social, economic, and institutional context in which the program is going to be implemented. The importance of field-based assessment of labor market conditions, life circumstances of adolescent girls and young women, employer attitudes towards youth and women, and the existing institutional infrastructure for program implementation, cannot be overstated. It is only through such an assessment that the actual barriers to young women's labor force participation can be identified, and the strengths and weaknesses of youth and labor organizations evaluated. Based on analysis of this context-specific information, program planners can then design an initial intervention somewhere sensible on the minimalist – integrated services spectrum. Keeping in mind that employment programs in developing countries targeting adolescent girls and young women are still in their infancy, any program should remain highly flexible and responsive to feedback and experience as the various components are carried out.

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Endnotes

¹ The International Labor Organization defines youth as the 15 to 24 age group, as this is the widely accepted statistical convention. Differences continue to exist, however, in the way many national statistics programs define and measure youth (ILO 2006).

² Fares et al. (2006; Appendix Table II) calculate a statistically significant correlation coefficient in a cross-country sample of .81 for female home status and jobless rates; for young men, the comparable correlation coefficient is .63.

³ Baseline values for some characteristics, such as parents' literacy, own age and education, and household assets, are comparable across the control and experimental sites. Because of residential segregation, differences are evident in the religious make up of the samples (the experimental sites having a higher percentage of Muslims and the control sites a larger percentage of Hindus) and caste status of households (a higher percentage of schedule caste households in the control sites) (Mensch et al. 2004, Table 3).

⁴ It is unclear if the definition of "working for pay" includes self-employment.