

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT FORUM 2017

CONFERENCE REPORT

“PUTTING GEORGIAN YOUTH TO WORK THROUGH EDUCATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP”



პროექტი ზრდა სტრატეგიისთვის
ZRDA ACTIVITY IN GEORGIA



YOUTH EMPLOYMENT FORUM, 2017

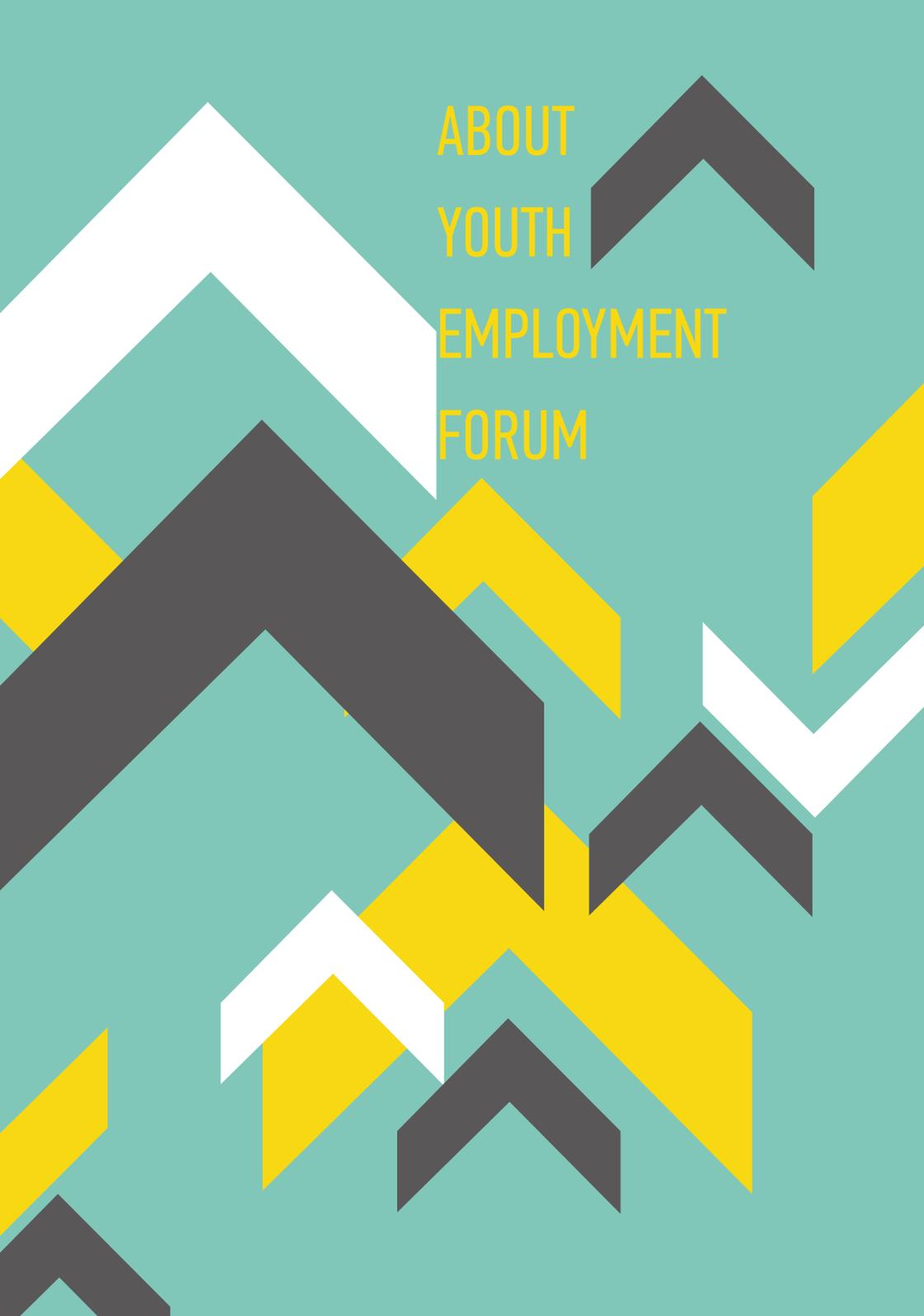
CONFERENCE REPORT

“PUTTING GEORGIAN YOUTH TO WORK THROUGH EDUCATION
AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP”

*“Youth Entrepreneurial Skills Program for Advancing Employability and
Income Generation in Georgia” (YES-Georgia)*

*in partnership with USAID projects: Governing for Growth (G4G) in Georgia
and ZRDA*

Tbilisi, July 2017



ABOUT YOUTH EMPLOYMENT FORUM

“Youth Entrepreneurial Skills Program for Advancing Employability and Income Generation in Georgia” (YES-Georgia) in partnership with other USAID projects - G4G and ZRDA organized Youth Employment Forum on June 5, 2017 in Tbilisi, Georgia.

The objective of the Forum was to provide a platform for reflection and discussion in order to assess the achievements and challenges and revise current practices and strategies for youth employment. The Youth aged 15-29 represents 22.5% of Georgian population out of which almost 1/3rd is unemployed and the recent studies suggest that considerable positive growth will not be observed in near future. Youth employment thus is a pressing issue and major challenge faced by policy and development actors in Georgia.

The Forum was organized in order to ensure that the employment issue of Georgian youth was put on the policy agenda. The Forum agenda consisted of a number of keynote session and panels that reflected on current opportunities and challenges of youth employment and explored potential policy options. The panels reviewed the gaps and lessons learned as well as discussed progress made towards ensuring youth employment. The panels underlined the importance of entrepreneurship and education for youth employment and that the equal access to education, financial and technical resources were crucial to ensure that both young women and men were economically empowered and engaged in economic activities and contributed to economic growth of their country in general.

The Forum brought together over 130 participants from governmental, non-governmental and international organizations, business representatives and education experts and what is most important - the youth of Georgia, students and young entrepreneurs to discuss solutions and strategies to increase the employability of Youth of Georgia. Feedback from the forum was very positive – participants greatly enjoyed the chance to meet like-minded people from so many institutions and fields, the opportunity to discuss and explore ideas, to network and to learn from one another. Everyone who attended the forum made it a memorable and successful occasion and contributed largely to the development of the topic under discussion.

The Forum was organized by USAID funded YES-Georgia project and contributed to project's key goals of advancing and advocating for youth employment issues through entrepreneurship and education. The co-organizers of the event were other USAID projects - G4G and ZRDA which are also actively working on youth programs. Par-

allel to the Forum, Yes-Georgia, G4G and ZRDA organized the Expo of their projects and the beneficiary companies/organizations that presented their ongoing activities and results.

The outcome of the event is a Forum Report with the keynote speakers' speeches and major findings and recommendations to the Government and all stakeholders working towards youth policy development and implementation in Georgia. The Forum may lay the foundation for the annual event that will help coordinate and advance youth employment issues in Georgia.

The Report is prepared by Nino Lagvilava, CoP, Yes-Georgia; Nino Mamaishvili, Program Officer, Yes-Georgia; Nino Gurgenidze, Project Coordinator, PH International. Special thanks go to Tamar Julakidze and Maya Eristavi from G4G, Ucha Varamashvili - Networking/Youth Engagement Advisor, USAID ZRDA, Yes-Georgia intern Lina Dolize and G4G interns: Ani Beroshvili, Ana Kitiashvili and Alexandre Amiridze.

ABOUT THE FORUM ORGANIZERS:

"Youth Entrepreneurial Skills for Advancing Employability and Income Generation in Georgia" (YES – Georgia) is USAID supported program implemented by Crystal Fund in partnership with PH International and JSC MFO Crystal. The goal of the Program is to increase opportunities for self- or waged employment of Georgia's youth through enabling youth-led enterprises, innovative delivering of relevant skills and new discourse.

Governing for Growth (G4G) in Georgia is a 5-year project funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by Deloitte Consulting LLP. G4G aims to support the Georgian government to create a better business enabling environment in which legal and regulatory reforms are fairly and transparently conceived, implemented and enforced through consultative process.

The USAID-funded project ZRDA is also a five-year program aimed at promoting sustainable economic development in the target regions. In order to achieve the abovementioned, the project will implement the following initiatives: Development of micro, small and medium enterprises; Promoting the growth of rural population incomes; Establishment and development of market relations between entrepreneurs and buyers; Promote local economic development through establishment and strengthening of business connections.

SUMMARY

Summarized below are the key points that were outlined and agreed at the conference. The most important point was the recognition that the youth employment issue was essential for advancing youth participation and economic empowerment and that we all needed to talk about it frequently to analyse and plan for improvement.

The Forum consisted of two major panels:

The 1st Panel brought together representatives of governmental, non-governmental and private sector and discussed current youth employment status in Georgia, challenges and perspectives and youth employment state policies and mechanisms. The role of the state, private sector and civil society was also examined for achieving higher employment rate among the youth of Georgia and facilitating their economic empowerment.

The 2nd Panel was dedicated to education for employment and youth employment opportunities through entrepreneurship. The goal of the panel was to discuss youth entrepreneurship opportunities, access to information, knowledge, financial and technical resources. In addition, training and skills development for employment, VET and Dual education opportunities were discussed as mechanisms for the youth career development.

The panel members exchanged experiences and questions dealing with the employment policies and practices. They discussed topics such as: data and survey analyses; mobilisation of knowledge and resources to eliminate problem of youth unemployment, importance of experience sharing and exchange of examples of successful and less successful work in different institutions and areas.

The first panel led to the following conclusions:

1. Coordinated work is an important and all aspects of that cooperation and coordination need to be explored and developed further; Ministry of Youth and Sport's Affairs is ready to lead the role in this coordination business;

2. Employment strategy is important to be developed in nearest future to cope with youth unemployment issues steadily and comprehensively.

The second panel led to the following conclusions:

1. The role of education is important for youth employment. High quality of vocational education is reflected on the employment rate of young people
2. Internship is a prerequisite for the successful employment of young people.

FORUM OPENING AND REMARKS

The Forum started with the welcome speeches from USAID representative -Mr. Brent Edelman, Senior Economic Growth Advisor; Mariam Jashi, Member of the Parliament of Georgia (MP) and Revaz Javelidze - Deputy Minister of Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia.

BRENT EDELMAN

Senior Economic Advisor, United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

Investing in the development of youth entrepreneurial skills is important for the economic advancement of Georgia. To this effect, the US state and other partner organizations are closely cooperating with the Georgian state office. "YES-Georgia" is a successful evidence of it, as it holds trainings to the youth for developing their entrepreneurial skills. As a result, there were 10 diverse start-ups financed, ranging from donuts to hydroponics. The projects G4G and "Zrda" (Growth) permanently cooperate for enhancing the prospects for the youth employment.

I am happy to be here with you today at this very important youth employment forum. It is important because I have an opportunity to hear from each of you, including the young entrepreneurs, about current challenges, plans and prospects.

MS. MARIAM JASHI

MP, Chair of the Committee on Education, Science and Culture

Employment, obviously, is not the ultimate goal of the educational system. For this, competent human resources need to be developed. The youth unemployment rate was reported low in 2014-2015, but nowadays 1/3 of the youth under-30 is unemployed. Of course, employment should not take place at the expense of studies. It is important to have these two components harmonized. Besides, it is necessary to develop the competencies among the youth that are adapted to the labor market requirements, to ensure that they meet employer demands. Currently, only 15-20% of graduates work with their profession. It is also important to share information, to better understand the challenges and problems of the youth, offer them solutions and favorable conditions. Such forums enable us to share as much information as possible among ourselves. I personally go throughout the whole country and get familiar with the activities of institutes of higher education, also those of colleges both in the public and private sectors, and I think that there is an abundance of opportunities for youth employment in Georgia.

We will anticipate recommendations on how the issues raised at this forum can be addressed, and we will join efforts to take our part in addressing these issues.

MR. REVAZ JAVELIDZE

Deputy Minister, Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia

Despite the number of university graduates in Georgia, the number of unemployed individuals is still high. 75% of professionals get education at institutes of higher education, and 25% prioritize vocational colleges, whereas there is a big gap between this number and the current market demand. There is an increased demand on technical professions. The Ministry actively tries to encourage vocational schools to train more professionals and offer them to the labor market. Besides, the Ministry tries to be more focused on informal education and on the development of social entrepreneurship. Active communication and cooperation with NGO and private sectors is important to achieve this.

Our Ministry, as one of the state agencies, is directly interested and engaged in youth employment, so, it will support initiatives and be your partner. We should join efforts to address the problem of youth employment in our country.

1ST PANEL**SITUATION IN REGARDS TO YOUTH EMPLOYMENT
IN GEORGIA, CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS;
STATE YOUTH EMPLOYMENT POLICY AND MECHANISMS****MODERATOR: ARCHIL BAKURADZE**

Crystal Fund, CEO

The youth have very good ideas and I think they should communicate their opinions to the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs, so that we can work on it in the future and discuss some issues together behind closed doors. Besides, the Ministry has offered the NGO sector to conduct performance evaluation, which is very important to let them see the ways for addressing the problem.

SPEAKERS: SOPHO OMANADZE AND ANA LEBANIDZE

Researchers, ACT, Presentation of data from the survey: "Generation in Transition- Youth Study 2016 Georgia"

With the initiative of Friedrich Ebert Foundation South Caucasus Regional Office, there was a large-scale study conducted in Georgia, which encompasses the issues raised at this forum. According to our survey results, 4 out of 10 youth are engaged in studies, but only 26% of the entire youth is employed. The youth unemployment rate is 32%. It is also worth mentioning that employment opportunities are much bigger in the capital city than in the regions.

Only one third of the employed youth in Georgia (31%) work completely or partially with their profession. There is almost the same rate (34%) in regards to the youth who are employed without professional qualification, and also the remaining one third (35%) is employed in a field which is different from their profession. The majority of the surveyed youth think that friends/acquaintances represent the most important factor for getting a job in Georgia (75%), and the majority of the respondent ranks this factor as number one (41%). The second most important factor is knowledge and experience (74%).

Only one fourth (19%) of the youth residing in Georgia have an experience of participating in practical or internship programs. For the majority of surveyed individuals (42%), public service is a preferred employment sector. There is a high interest also in the private sector (37%). When asked if they try to start up a new business on their own or with others, or be self-employed, also be engaged in trade or service areas, only a small portion of the youth (13%), who were surveyed within the frameworks of the quantitative research, gave a positive answer.

SPEAKER: RATI CHEISHVILI

Youth Policy Expert - Expert Analysis, challenges in youth employment

Currently, the system of shifting from educational institutions to the job and employment is one of the most burning problems that the youth are facing. More than one fourth (25.8%) of economically active youth (i.e. the youth who are jobseekers) is unemployed and this rate is 2.5 times more than the unemployment rate among other age groups of the population.

The unemployment rate has decreased in recent years, although slightly, still, the difference between the unemployment rates of the youth and other parts of the population remains the same, which proves that the youth need more support in regards to education and employment. It is also noteworthy that the number of so-called NEET youth is especially high in Georgia. These are the youth who neither study, nor work or attend any training. The number of such youth is almost one third (32.4%) and this rate is much higher than in Europe.

The youth face many challenges and difficulties in various areas of life. In these conditions, the competencies that the youth need for decent and successful life, have become more complex and require more from the youth, than just being specialized in a certain narrow area. Consequently, traditional approaches towards education and employment are no longer enough and it is necessary to introduce new developments.

The youth need much more opportunities and experience for becoming successful in life and for decent employment, than they get at institutes of formal education. Keeping this in mind, the youth activity and informal education play a special role in the youth development as it fills in the gaps that are created in the environment of formal education.

Youth activity is an educational activity, which is carried out beyond the formal education, family and work context, and it enables the youth to develop competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes), which are necessary for the full engagement in public life, for maximum realization of one's potential and employment. Informal education has a special significance in youth activities. It is noteworthy that currently the youth field is not recognized by the state and therefore, it lacks support. Correspondingly, it is necessary to take certain steps for developing this field.

The Government of Georgia approved the State Youth Policy Document in 2014, with goals and objectives that have to be reached by state institutions at the central level, covering all the important issues for the youth: youth activity, education, employment, etc. The Action Plan for the policy was also drafted, but it is important to ensure more effective implementation of the policy document and its action plan. The local governments play a crucial role in this process, as far as they are the most closely standing institutions to the youth, who have direct contact with the youth and offer or can offer many programs and services to them. However, the performance of local governments regarding the youth affairs is beyond any criticism. It is necessary to expand competencies and capabilities of local governments in regards to the development of the local (municipal) youth policy in general, also for supporting youth activities at the local level.

SPEAKER: REVAZ JAVELIDZE

Deputy Minister, Ministry of Sport

Dear friends, let me greet you once again. I would not repeat myself about the things that I have mentioned in my welcoming notes. The previous speaker also addressed it very correctly and pointed out the key problems we have.

The Ministry of Sports and Youth has been developing the portal myprofession.gov.ge for several years already, but many youth are not familiar with it yet. To address this, we need to cooperate with foreign partners who can support us develop our services and to reach out to more youth, so that they can spread the message to their peers in their regions, municipalities and various cities about all the things to be posted on this website. Besides, there is another website developed by the same ministry – youth.gov.ge, which contains main studies and analysis pertinent to the youth.

I have a big desire and I am offering you to hold an international job forum next year. If there were a team who can represent Georgia at this forum and speak about its problems and challenges, I would support them with great pleasure. Besides, I do want to invite colleagues from various agencies of partner countries and to hold an interesting forum, where many other interesting topics will be discussed.

Let me also offer you another way to cooperate. I would like you to evaluate the projects financed by the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs, and say how effective they are for us to identify and address the gaps.

SPEAKER: TEO BABUNASHVILI

Program Manager, Enterprise Georgia (presented the program “Produce in Georgia”)

The program started in 2015. This is an initiative to finance micro enterprises, where the youth engagement is a priority. Its goal is to develop micro and small entrepreneurship in the regions. The youth tend to move to Tbilisi from the regions, so, it was decided to support businesses right in the regions in order to reduce the youth drain from the regions. There is no limitation on economic activities within the frameworks of the program. Any young person over 18 can participate, and the successful one will get 5,000 GEL for implementing the grant. If there are several entrepreneurs joined, they will get 10 thousand, and if there are three – 15,000. There is also business counseling provided, which is targeted to a particular business: there are monitoring and continuous consultations. The program goal is to attain long-term results and expand it further. As for statistics, there were 3,205 business projects financed based on the results of 2 years; involving 4,009 participants. In total, more than 8,000 individuals were trained, including those, who did not receive funding, but still attended the trainings and therefore got this education. There was 15 million GEL allocated from the state budget for this program. 11 thousand out of 20 thousand applicants were young individuals, which is more than 47 percent of the total number. It is planned to update this program again, to ensure the involvement of more youth.

SPEAKER: AVTANDIL KASRADZE

Acting Chairperson – Georgia’s Innovation and Technology Agency

I would like to touch upon the modern challenges and opportunities that the youth have. You live in unique times. No young person has ever had such a good period and epoch for development. Despite there is an employment problem as we have talked today, the youth used to have much more problems in regards to development in the past. Many of you who wanted to start working, have entered the job platforms and seen that the employers always ask for experience and you start to have a question: if you are not given an opportunity to get a job, how can you gain experience to take first steps? Let me tell you that this is rather an opportunity and not a problem for you in the 21st century, an opportunity to get revenues through non-traditional ways, and develop yourselves in a non-traditional way. This is an innovative entrepreneurship, which the local economy needs so much today. We will not be able to develop our economy without it, because the intellectual capabilities, which every Georgian has, should be utilized as much as possible. You might not come across with any requirement about experience on the jobs website; you could have sent your CV, started working, followed the routine slowly and advanced on your career ladder after some time. However, currently the innovative technologies, the internet give us an opportunity to have a broader look at the world. I am not talking about scientific innovations only. It applies to non-scientific innovations as well, even with the usage of internet-technologies. Here the global thinking matters the most. You need to foresee that the goods or services that you create should be focused on addressing the global problems. This is not very difficult, but not easy either. For example, Zuckerberg, who created Facebook, was able to see that there was something missing in this world and decided to create a platform, which would make it easier for the people to communicate. Or, to take a less global example: two young Belorussian boys, who are 18-19 years old, created a mobile application called Masquerade, which changes a person’s face with the help of a camera. Facebook purchased this application with one hundred million dollars and brought huge revenues to this 18-19 year-old guys. You, the youth have huge opportunities. When we are talking about up-to-date technologies, there are no boundaries in this sphere. The entire world is your client. As soon as you elaborate a mobile application, the whole world will become your users, any person in any part of the world, whoever has a smartphone. So, do not wait for the government to take steps, or for the creation of any job platform, etc. You are more risky, more courageous, and more open-minded and you should be thinking about the development of your intellect and business.

SPEAKER: GOGI CHIKOVANI**Head of the Municipal Department of Education, Sport and Youth Affairs of the Tbilisi City Hall**

Youth Employment Forum is a very important event. The City Hall of Tbilisi performs various activities in several directions for the youth employment. The first one is to support students in getting education. Namely, since 2015 more than 2,000 vulnerable youth get financial support for bachelor-level education annually; 600 young people have been financed already and 6 million GEL was spent. It is important to raise the motivation among the youth: the City Hall has developed a scholarship program for financing the studies at master's program for students with high academic performance. The number of financed individuals doubled in recent years. The second direction is a development of job-oriented municipal services. Namely, one of them is vocational education: The City Hall has opened short-term training courses based on the professions demanded in the capital city, and the enrolled youth have prospects for employment. Message of the City Hall is that the vocational education for youth should become an additional source of revenue, so that vocational education becomes prestigious. In regards to general education, the older generation is also trained to let them acquire new professions and find jobs successfully. As for the issue of internship: as far as the majority of employers demands experience, the City Hall opened an internship program on the basis of non-commercial entities, where the students can undergo internship. For example, there is a free internship program for the students of law.

The third direction is focused on supporting the initiatives: there are programs financed, where the youth will get assistance in preparing business plans in various topics, with the prospects of further funding.

SPEAKER: SERGO NOZADZE**Human Resources Expert, Human and Institutional Capacity Development Center, CEO**

The key motivation for the new generation is development, access to novelties, constant interest and change. The new generation is more progressive and ambitious; currently the youth employment is a burning issue. However, it is im-

portant what the private sector is offering to the youth; we should listen to those young people about how to employ them. The recruitment process should be transparent and the local government has a big role in this respect.

I have the following recommendations:

Labor Market Research - to conduct a high-level labor market research, with real cooperation with employers and their active engagement. To study and analyze the needs and trends at the labor market, with the purpose of studying the employment prospects for university graduates, also the employment opportunities of those youth who have completed vocational programs. To analyze the needs in this respect, study the required qualifications, competencies and demanded professions at the market, potential of anticipated employment at private and public sectors / to study and analyze expectations;

Study the Youth Employment Trends (Expectations) - to study the expectations among the youth regarding employment, stigmas and difficulties and challenges related to employment as seen by them. Considering the study results, to present the results to the employers and elaborate a package of special recommendations for overcoming these difficulties with joint efforts;

Implement a youth motivation project, for promoting the acquisition of basic competencies_- develop motivational project for building employment skills among the youth (especially in the regions), also for studying and mastering the basic labor competencies and professions, which will enable the youth to:

- a) Get information about current challenges and needs at the labor market;
- b) Get information about the ways and opportunities to develop required competencies in response to these challenges, among them, in various educational programs and projects with the support of the state, also independently;
- c) Get involved in the targeted short-term employment projects, with the purpose to: get familiar with the internal organizational cultures at workplace, promotion of profession and industries, also initiate primary cooperation between the youth and their potential long-term employers, and support the development of this cooperation.

Support Awareness Raising about State Services - conduct targeted information meetings, presentations, workshops and trainings for raising awareness among the youth in the regions; present the results of labor market research and raise awareness on possibilities to develop employment skills. Special focus to be laid on: providing information about state services that enable the interested youth:

- a) Get involved in state programs;
- b) Undergo short-term employment programs;
- c) Get involved in vocational education programs;
- d) Enjoy the job coaching and career planning services.

Implementation of networking project - ensure involvement of employers and human resources management specialists in youth projects, which include organizing active consultations and primary introduction meetings among them, in order to develop networking.

DISCUSSION/QUESTIONS TO PANEL PARTICIPANTS

IRAKLI GIORBELIDZE

Technical Coordinator of Youth Programs, World Vision Georgia

37 percent of the projects submitted within the frameworks of Produce in Georgia were prepared by the youth, and only one third of the youth are among the ones who were financed. The initiatives submitted by the youth are less than one third. Why is this so? Maybe more attention needs to be paid to the youth? Why do they lag behind the older generation? World Vision is implementing many projects in municipalities, but there is no uniform strategy regarding the youth affairs. The state should be more committed and motivated towards the youth in order to use the resources of young people. The Minister of Education is coordinating the youth affairs, but he has never initiated such meetings; the Parliament is also passive in this respect. The youth service works well, but there is no overall strategy for youth employment. It is desirable to have a representative in the area of youth employment at the legislative power to work on the youth affairs; it is desirable to exchange information between the government and the youth.

RESPONSE FROM TEA BABUNASHVILI:

Indeed, the youth submits few applications and their participation is low. Many of them were not able to submit full documentation. The first two years were quite new for the program, but the NGOs worked hard in regards to financing the youth initiatives. We hope that the future years will be more productive.

RESPONSE FROM REVAZ JAVELIDZE:

We accept your comment about the communication, but this and similar forums are a good opportunity to continue talking about this issue in the future in order to see practical outcomes.

If the result of this meeting is to form an initiative group to work on the elaboration of this strategy, I will initiate the implementation of this strategy. I will provide information to Alexander Jejelava, Minister of Education as well.

EKA GEGESHIDZE

Junior Achievement:

As we know, funding for education ranges between 2-3 per cent. Besides, per capita spending for education is smaller than in other countries. There is a significant problem, which hinders the development of informal education sector: in accordance to the Tax Code of Georgia, the informal education is taxed with VAT. Exemption articles are listed and it clearly shows: "education provided by an educational institution," but the Ministry of Education does not have such an accreditation. They have a university, vocational colleges, etc. When a question was asked to a particular department about what they are guided by during the audit, I answered that if they have accreditation then they are not taxed, and if they don't – they are even fined. It is very important not to have an informal education market taxed.

GIORGI AGIRBAIA**Founder of a Local Youth Organization:**

Youth employment is an important issue. This topic should not develop at the expense of individual trainings and projects, and it is much more important to elaborate a policy.

RESPONSE FROM AVTANDIL KASRADZE:

When I am talking about the development of initiatives, I mean that there is no progress without developing the ideas. Although many people in Georgia are willing to get a job, interesting ideas are important for them to achieve something. Creative thinking should be taught at school and its development should be supported since then. It is necessary to support the startups; the youth should understand the significance of innovations. At the same time, the needs and interests of the youth should be taken into account.

STUDENT'S COMMENT:

Employer priorities should be identified and study programs should be adequate.

RESPONSE FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE OF MINISTRY OF EDUCATION:

Entrepreneurship component was identified and introduced into the training curricula. Entrepreneurship has already been added as a crosscutting competency in the national curriculum. The USAID supports teaching of entrepreneurship among young schoolchildren, and entrepreneurship is a mandatory module at the vocational level. However, there are many questions about the contents of entrepreneurship module, who will teach this subject at vocational colleges.

2ND PANEL**ROLE OF EDUCATION IN EMPLOYMENT AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN THE AREA OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP****PANEL MODERATOR: BERDIA NATSVLISHVILI****Director, PH International**

Topic of the second panel is the role of education for the youth employment. Some part of this panel will be dedicated to the role of vocational education, which is also a very important part of formal education. Besides, we will talk about internship programs, as an employment and career development opportunity. Besides, it will be very interesting to discuss entrepreneurial skills and startups and the role of various sectors; how it is possible to support entrepreneurship as self-employment and as an instrument for employing others.

SPEAKER: ARCHIL BAKURADZE**Chairman of the Crystal Fund**

The Crystal Fund, together with PH International, is implementing a project YES-Georgia with the funding of USAID and MFO Crystal. This project lays special emphasis on the method of teaching. The main focus is laid on entrepreneurial skills and practical activities, which incites a desire for entrepreneurship among the youth. We teach them how to translate their ideas into business plans and present them to investors. This program is implemented in Tbilisi and 15 cities of Georgia. Despite there is much less activity in the regions, the program is more effectively implemented in the cities with universities. Last year we eventually got up to 40 applications from 600 participants and 10 of them were financed. We will try to finance more youth startups this year.

SPEAKER: IRINE TSERODZE**Head of Vocational Education Development Department**

We conducted a survey, which identified some problems in regards to teaching, for example, the lack of practical component, to inspire them more for develop-

ing entrepreneurial activities. Besides, the teachers of entrepreneurship are also a big problem. These are current problems that need to be addressed. Teacher competencies, therefore the quality of studies, needs to be improved. In regards to improving the activities we actively cooperate with Technopark and Innovations Agency to reach joint results and institute innovative approaches.

You will not find any vocational education program today without an integrated entrepreneurship development module, although there are many problems still remaining. Despite it exists formally and studies are going on, we evaluated it with the support of ISET. The results indicate that there are gaps and we have developed some recommendations as well.

The problem with studies is that the module may be acceptable, but it lacks practical components. We may teach entrepreneurship and develop entrepreneurial skills, but there should be some inspiration with all this, if we want to shift a person onto an entrepreneurship track. Besides, one of the biggest problems is related to entrepreneurship teachers. These are the problems that we are facing today and these are the results we got after the evaluation. Quality of studies should be improved by building the capacity of teachers and, obviously, we also think that we may need to revise the policy and content as well at some stages. With the purpose of improving the activities, we are actively cooperating with Technopark and the Innovations Agency.

SPEAKER: TAMTA MARIDASHVILI
Researcher, ISET (International School of Economics)

We are presenting a research that was implemented about a year ago by the ISET research institute. A few days ago we had focus groups at ISET with the students of vocational colleges. When asked about “what do you plan in the nearest future” half of them answered that they wanted to start up their own small business very much. Despite such a promising answer, the statistical picture is not that optimistic: only 5% of vocational college graduates managed self-employment in 2015, whereas 35% remained unemployed based on the results of the survey in 2016.

What can be the causes of such low rates? There are many reasons of course, but I will draw your attention to only two factors now. On one hand, low rate of self-employment can be explained by the fact that quite a low share of students

studies the professions that are more self-employable (e.g. 18% of students study arts and agriculture, whereas 32% of students study engineering). On the other hand, low self-employment is supposedly caused by the fact that the entrepreneurship module was integrated in vocational programs just recently and the quality of studies is not good yet.

Within the frameworks of the project we visited 12 colleges throughout Georgia and talked to college representatives. We found out that there are problems in regards to the qualification of teachers, teaching methodology, literature and engagement of private sector. The entrepreneurship teachers do not have business experience, besides, they often do not know anything about the professions of their students (e.g. agriculture); as for their teaching methods, the teaching process is often limited to a teacher’s lecture. The students are passive listeners: there is a limited interaction, practical exercises and group work, which demotivates the students and limits their creativity; besides, neither is the private sector engaged in providing entrepreneurial education: practices that the students undergo are mostly focused on mastering a profession. Moreover, there are no extracurricular activities to support entrepreneurial education at colleges.

SPEAKER: UCHA VARAMASHVILI
Networking/Youth Engagement Advisor, USAID ZRDA

I have the honor to greet you on behalf of the USAID project “Zrda”. I am happy to have this opportunity to participate in this forum today, as far as it deals with an important issue such as youth employment. It is possible to say based on various surveys that the unemployment is a number one problem, especially among the youth. About one third of the youth is unemployed and this data have not changed in recent years. Obviously, we need to take cross-sectorial, consolidated interventions and active steps.

I was glad to hear from the speakers of the first panel, as they talked about structural unemployment and related problems and solutions, also about self-employment. Based on the practice of various European countries, self-employment is one of the effective weapons to combat unemployment through entrepreneurship, also social entrepreneurship as well.

With its meaning, entrepreneurship implies not only doing a business, but also initiatives, creativity, idea generation and elaboration, risk assessment and prevention, time management and activeness. All these are united by the entrepreneurial competency. Possession of these competencies opens up many ways for the youth at the labor market, also in regards to self-employment as well.

While talking about self-employment, it should be mentioned that often the youth face a problem of access to information and scarcity of adequate financial resources. However, often various government institutions, NGOs or international organizations provide good opportunities to the youth in the form of the grants, but unfortunately, the youth do not possess adequate competencies to be competitive during selection processes.

It is necessary to work in both directions in a consistent and crosscutting manner and to implement respective approaches. I hope that today's meeting will be one of the important mechanisms for implementing of such approach.

On behalf of the USAID's "Zrda" project, I would like to thank the organizers and guests. Zrda project is always ready to support all the efforts focused on youth welfare and economic empowerment in our target locations.

SPEAKER: MAYA ERISTAVI
USAID Governing for Growth (G4G), Project Advocacy and Civil Society Strengthening Component Lead

Internship is one step ahead towards employment. It is important to acknowledge the essence of internship and its role in the student's career development. Internship enables the student to gain experience through developing practical corporate skills before they get a permanent job. Internship is equal to work experience and occupies the respective place while building one's CV. Besides, the received reference letter may play an important role in finding a job. Some universities consider internship as an academic credit, which also supports the involvement of students in internship programs.

One of the important directions of the USAID G4G is an internship program, where the employment rate for the students, who completed internship, is 47%. G4G enables the distinguished seniors with various academic qualifications to

get an idea about how the USAID project works, about its goals, principles and activities.

There is a diverse field of activities on the list. The interns are involved in all the parts of the programs and projects supported by the G4G. G4G aims at giving work experience to the students that they will use for further employment. Notably, G4G does not cease its contact with the trained students after the completion of the internship program, and recommends them for employment at partner organizations or private sector.

There are other private and non-governmental organizations involved in the project, which serves as internship motivation for students as well. Internship is a win-win game for employers and interns. We would like to see more organizations in our country that are engaged in student employment, incentives and development. It is possible to overcome the youth unemployment if the internship program is done right.

SPEAKER: ANI NAVDARASHVILI
Founder of Studentjob.ge

In regards to the topic of youth employment and related challenges and opportunities, it is necessary to have concerted efforts of various organizations / companies / universities, which facilitates solving the employment problem.

Here are my recommendations:

1. Tight cooperation of universities with potential employers;
2. Research: analysis of programs and employer demands/market – more practical programs and more involvement of HR managers;
3. Assist the students with professional orientation to make right choices;
4. Writing a CV and a cover letter, and preparing the youth for interviews remain to be a problem. It is necessary to work in this direction as well;
5. Relevance of study programs with employer requirements.

SPEAKER: TAMTA KIPIANI**Student**

When we enter the university, we soon realize that we mostly get theoretical knowledge about our profession. We also analyze quite soon that the university does not care for our practical skills, and if we want to act instead of talking, we need to find jobs ourselves.

Does anyone starts a job “without having someone to call from the top” – asks a friend of mine from the university and goes on looking through the vacancies. Higher education, 4 years of work experience, probation period, etc.; then you think about where from a sophomore or a junior can accumulate such experience. One needs to start from a certain point, right?!

Internship – internship seems to be a good solution to gaining experience, but internships are usually seldom announced, or they still require some experience. Unfortunately, internships are announced basically in the companies, which do not have money to hire employees, and they often shut down in a few months. Experience gained in such failure companies does no good for the student.

Students – students should always be concerned about development. This is why they need to find jobs and internship programs in the area where they can accumulate knowledge and are given a chance to develop. I think it is wrong to work only for money at a place where you cannot gain anything professionally.

State – the state hardly does anything to employ students. There were summer job programs announced several times, which may be good, but does not help a student in professional growth. Even the ones employed through the state internship programs often have to gain experience in another field.

In order to eliminate the shortage on professional human resources in the country and to ensure that the job seeker students meet the employer requirements, companies and the state too should give them a chance. At the first stage internship is the best solution – a realistic internship, which gives necessary knowledge and skills to a student, the skills that will make them competitive in the labor market. Therefore, a solution is one chance, the chance that employers should give to a student.

SUMMARY COMMENTS OF THE 1ST AND THE 2ND PANELS:

SUMMARY COMMENTS OF THE FIRST PANEL:

1. Coordinated work is important, and all the aspects of this cooperation and coordination should be studied and developed further; The Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs is ready to lead the coordination activities;
2. Employment strategy should be drafted in the nearest future, to ensure that the youth unemployment issues are addressed consistently and comprehensively.

SUMMARY COMMENTS OF THE SECOND PANEL:

3. Education plays an important role in the youth self-employment. High quality of vocational education has a positive impact on the youth employment rate;
4. Internship is a significant precondition for youth career advancement and development.

KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ELABORATED AT THE FORUM

The Forum participants unanimously agreed that we had started the process that we wanted, the process should be continued and the results should be regularly informed and experience exchanged.

The areas that were identified to focus on:

- Systems approaches is required to change the status quo of youth's employability;
- Having a unique policy and a strategy document for youth employment advancement is crucial and both need to be developed thoroughly with precise calculations;
- Coordinated work on planning and implementation is required to involve all stakeholders: the most important thing is to stay in touch and keep learning from each other;
- Evaluation of the work that has been already done will be very useful to identify gaps and analyse lessons learned that will allow for better planning;
- A framework for mapping will be helpful to know who is doing what in order not to overlap and manage coordination for better planning and implementation.

THE FORUM PARTICIPANTS AGREED UPON A NUMBER OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS:

1. Conduct international employment forums every year. Set up a group that speaks about current problems and challenges. Besides, invite colleagues from various agencies of partner states and talk about the significant issues of youth employment.
2. Create an overall strategy on youth affairs, which should become a state prerogative, to effectively use the resources of the youth.

3. The Ministry of Education, which is a state body in charge of youth affairs coordination, should become more active and committed in regards to youth employment. To provide information to the Minister of Education for elaborating an overall policy on youth affairs, because the youth employment is an important subject and it should not develop only at the expense of individual trainings and projects. It requires elaboration of an important policy.
4. It is necessary to develop a motivational project for developing employability skills among the youth (especially in the regions), focused on acquiring-mastering labor market competencies and professions, which enables the youth to get information about the needs and challenges at the labor market; also to get information about the ways and opportunities for developing required competencies from their side, through state educational programs and projects, also independently.
5. The youth should get involved in the targeted short-term employment projects, with the purpose to: get familiar with the internal organizational culture at workplace, promotion of profession and industries, also initiate primary cooperation between the youth and their potential long-term employers, and support the development of this cooperation.
6. To conduct targeted information meetings, presentations, workshops and trainings for raising awareness among the youth in the regions, with the purpose of presenting the results of labor market research and raising awareness on possibilities to develop employment skills. Special focus to be laid on: providing information about state services that enable the interested youth to get involved in special state programs; undergo short-term employment programs, get involved in vocational education programs, enjoy the job coaching and career advancement services.
7. In regards to the topic of youth employment and related challenges and opportunities, it is necessary to have concerted efforts of various organizations / companies / universities, which facilitates solving the employment problem. Namely, it is important to have a tight cooperation of universities with potential employers; analyze programs and employer demands/market – more practical programs and more involvement of HR managers; assist the students in making the right choices through professional orientation; it is still a problem to write a CV and a cover letter, and to prepare the youth for interviews.

- It is necessary to work in this direction as well; it is important that study programs meet the employer requirements.
8. It is very important to evaluate the performance of organizations that are working in the area of youth employment, so that they can see what ways to follow for addressing the problems.
 9. It is important to ensure consistent and coordinated work among the sectors and to introduce respective approaches in the field of youth employment.
 10. Various sectors should play an important role in discussing entrepreneurial skills and startups, about how they can support the development of entrepreneurship as an instrument of self-employment and employment of others. The local governments play a crucial role in this process, as far as they are the most closely standing state institutions to the youth, who have direct contact with the youth and offer, or can offer many programs and services to them.
 11. To plan more engagement of the youth in the program Produce in Georgia than in previous years, when their number was 47% of total applicants.
 12. We should listen to these young people about how to employ them; the recruitment process should be as transparent as possible.
 13. Youth activities and informal education play a special role in the youth development, as it fills in the gaps that are created in the environment of formal education.
 14. Regulate the issues that hinder the development of an informal educational sector. For example, to have the informal educational sector exempt from VAT.
 15. Creative thinking should be taught and promoted at schools. The youth should be aware of the significance of innovations and therefore, we need to support their startups;
 16. Although entrepreneurship has already been added as a competency in the national curriculum, namely, entrepreneurship is a mandatory module at the level of vocational education; still, there are many issues to be improved, such

as the contents of entrepreneurship module, level of knowledge of teachers at vocational colleges, etc. There are problems in regards to teaching entrepreneurship. For example, the lack of practical component, to inspire the youth more for developing entrepreneurial activities; entrepreneurship teachers are also a big problem. Teacher competencies, therefore the quality of studies needs to be improved. Teachers of various vocational programs should be involved in teaching of the entrepreneurship module, as far as the entrepreneurship teachers do not possess knowledge of a particular profession; it is necessary to attract new young teachers with business experience; it is important to include assignments in the curriculum, which requires field work, real market research, teamwork and projects.

17. It is important to find and commercialize mini-companies; there are several mini-companies already functioning at some colleges, but not at full extent, and the reason behind is, that the goods/services produced at mini-companies are not intended for the market. As a result, the students cannot acquire knowledge and skills that are required for entrepreneurship, such as: market analysis, pricing principles, branding, product differentiation at the market, etc. Neither do they possess information about how competitive they are at the market nor they can learn from their mistakes.
18. It is important to hold inter-college contests and to support horizontal studies, introduce new approaches, actively promote and support novelties. Presently, we do not have a mechanism in the Georgian vocational education system for identifying interested and talented future entrepreneurs. It is possible to create such an instrument through organizing the contest of business-projects at the college and intercollege levels, in order to give incentives to the students of vocational colleges and their teachers.

APPENDIX 1 FORUM AGENDA



AGENDA

Venue: Fabrika, 8 Egnate Ninoshvili str., Tbilisi, Georgia

Working Language: Georgian

Date: 5 June, 2017

Time: 09:30-15:30

Facilitator: Maya Kobalia

09:30 – 10:00 Registration and EXPO opening

10:00 - 10:05 **Mr. Brent Edelman** - Senior Economic Growth Advisor, USAID

10:05 - 10:10 **Ms. Mariam Jashi** - MP, Chair of the Committee on Education, Science and Culture

10:10 - 10:15 **Mr. Revaz Javelidze** - Deputy Minister, Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs of Georgia

10:15 - 10:20 **Mr. Irakli Gvilava** - Head of Municipal Department of Education, Sport and Youth, Tbilisi City Hall

I PANEL

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT STATUS, CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES IN GEORGIA AND YOUTH EMPLOYMENT STATE POLICY AND MECHANISMS

Goal of the panel: This panel will bring together representatives of governmental, non-governmental and private sector to discuss current youth employment status, challenges and perspectives and employment policies and will examine the role of the state, private sector and civil society for the youth empowerment and achieving higher employment rate among the youth of Georgia.

Moderator of the Panel: Archil Bakuradze, Crystal Fund, Chairman

PANELISTS:

10:20-10:30	Ana Lebanidze –Project Manager/ Researcher, ACT	Youth Employment Research and Analysis; Presentation of data from “Generation in Transition”
10:30-10:40	Rati Cheishvili - Youth Policy Expert	Expert Analysis, challenges in youth employment
10:40-10:50	Revaz Javelidze - Deputy Minister, Ministry of sport and youth affairs of Georgia	Youth State Policy implementation status and perspectives in regards with youth employment
10:50-11:00	Teo Babunashvili – Program Manager, Enterprise Georgia	Government Entrepreneurship Services for Youth
11:00-11:10	Avtandil Kasradze - Acting Chairman at GITA-Georgia’s Innovation and Technology Agency	State Services for encouraging youth innovative and technological projects
11:10-11:20	Elza Jgerenaia -Department of Labour and Employment, Ministry of health and Labor	State Labour and Employment Policy for Youth
11:20-11:30	Irakli Gvilava - Head of Municipal Department of Education, Sport and Youth, Tbilisi City Hall	Youth Policy and programs of Tbilisi Municipality
11:30-11:40	Sergo Nozadze -HR expert, Human and Institutional Capacity Development Center, Executive Director	Expert Analysis, challenges in youth employment
11:40-12:00	Panel Discussion / Problem Analyses	

12:00-12:30 Coffee Break

Expo of Young Entrepreneurs

II PANEL

EDUCATION FOR EMPLOYMENT AND YOUTH EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Goal of the panel: This panel will bring together governmental, private and development programs to discuss youth entrepreneurship opportunities, access to financial and technical resources. In addition, training and skills development for employment, VET and Dual education opportunities will be discussed as mechanisms for the youth career development.

Moderator of the Panel: Berdia Natsvlshvili, PH Inetrnational

PANELISTS:

12:30-12:40	Archil Bakuradze - Chairman of Crystal Fund	Importance of Youth Entrepreneurship through micro-financing- best practices from Yes-Georgia
12:40-12:50	Tamta Maridashvili -Researcher, ISET (International School of Economics)	Entrepreneurial education in Georgia's Vocational educational system, current situation and future perspectives
12:50-13:00	Irine Tserodze - Head of Vocational Education Development Department	Vocational education and dual education perspectives in Georgia
13:00-13:10	Ucha Varamashvili - Networking/Youth Engagement Advisor, USAID ZRDA	ZRDA activity presentation on Youth Programs
13:10-13:20	Maya Eristavi - USAID Governing for Growth (G4G) project Advocacy and Civil Society Strengthening Component Lead	Youth Internship advantages and internship Project best practices in G4G
13:20-13:30	Ani Navdarashvili - founder of Student-job.ge	Expert analysis, education policies to improve youth employability
13:30-13:40	Tamta Kipiani - a Student	Career development and Internship challenges - student's point of view
13:40-13:50	Ana Sabakhtarishvili - Executive Director of Infrastructure construction Companies Association	Successful internship programs and employment opportunities after internship
13:50-14:20	Panel Discussion / Problem Analysis	
14:20-14:30	Summing up and conclusions; End of the meeting	

14:30-15:30 Networking Lunch

PHOTOS

