

Young Entrepreneurs in Africa

Making African cities better places to work,
to live in and to do business.

15 April 2007, United Nations, Nairobi, Kenya



Background :

Part of the Millennium Development Goal 8 is to “develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth’. Finding the means, political will and the know-how to create a billion jobs over the next ten years that not only deliver economic benefits to young people, but also maintain and build the environmental and social wealth, is perhaps one of the most important targets of the MDGs. Further, fostering entrepreneurship is vital in every part of the world, especially in urban areas, and should be considered a key mechanism for development. Supporting young entrepreneurs in the developing world with education, financing, mentorship and encouragement is a critical pathway to foster the creation of sustainable livelihoods.

Action on youth employment needs to be integrated as a central platform for achieving MDG 1 on poverty reduction. Youth employment poverty reduction strategies should especially focus on young women, indigenous populations, and rural youth as those most marginalized within the current economic system. Addressing the needs of young women and rural youth will also help to achieve MDG 3 and address pressures and problems arising from mass rural to urban migration. Many microfinance programs for instance have targeted investment to young women with great success.

UN-HABITAT, the agency for cities, is well aware that the private sector is not only part of the solution, but a vital partner that must be engaged if the world’s cities are to achieve sustainability and address the youth. The private sector and the UN share common objectives of more efficient, productive and inclusive cities. While the corporate sector needs the best conditions to run its business, the UN is engaged in improving the living conditions of young people who will later work and buy products and services from the private sector. In the overall developmental approach for sustainable cities, together with the private sector, youth should play a critical role and constitute a key target and source of entrepreneurship.

Objectives of the Young Entrepreneurs Day :

Bringing together youth groups, city level decision-makers and private sector stakeholders in order to :

- discuss the market opportunities, best practices and business models to strengthen youth entrepreneurship in urban areas;
- identify potential partnerships and projects involving the youth and addressing sustainable housing and services, especially in the most deprived urban areas.

Event setting

Held in the conducive environment of the UN compound, the event will be held one day prior to the 21st Governing Council of UN-HABITAT (16 to 20 April 2007). Participants are invited to attend the opening ceremony of the event and the evening reception organized by UN-HABITAT.

A HABITAT BUSINESS EXPO will also be organised from 13 to 20 April 2007. The Expo will provide the opportunity for business to demonstrate products, services and technologies to a wide range of partners : national government representatives, mayors and city decision-makers, non-governmental organizations, operators of development agencies in the field of human settlements.

