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BUILDING BRIGHTER FUTURES: TACKLING NEET YOUTH CHALLENGES GLOBALLY WITH INCLUSIVE STRATEGIES

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The challenge of young people not in employment, education, or training (NEET) has become a defining global issue in recent years. The International Labour Organization's 2024 report highlights an alarming rate of NEETs worldwide, with 20.4% of young people aged 15-24 falling into this category. This statistic reveals deep-rooted inequalities and underscores the need for targeted strategies to address barriers to employment and education.

REGIONAL AND GENDER DISPARITIES IN NEET RATES

NEET rates vary widely across regions, mirroring local economic and social conditions. In high-income countries, 76% of young adults (aged 25-29) secure regular paid jobs, compared to only 20% in low-income countries.

Youth in sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, are often forced into informal work due to limited options; nearly 75% of young workers in this region lack job security. In contrast, youth in high-income countries enjoy greater access to stable work, but still face an increase in temporary contracts and part-time roles, which can hinder long-term financial stability

Gender differences further complicate this landscape. Globally, women account for two-thirds of NEETs—a statistic that reflects significant gender barriers in employment and education.

In regions such as the Middle East and North Africa, the employment ratio for young women is strikingly low, with less than 10% of young women employed. This trend illustrates how socio-cultural factors, coupled with economic constraints, limit young women's access to work and exacerbate NEET disparities.

The Education-Employment Disconnect

While 48% of global youth are now engaged in some form of education or training—a marked increase from previous decades—the value of educational attainment is uneven across regions and income groups

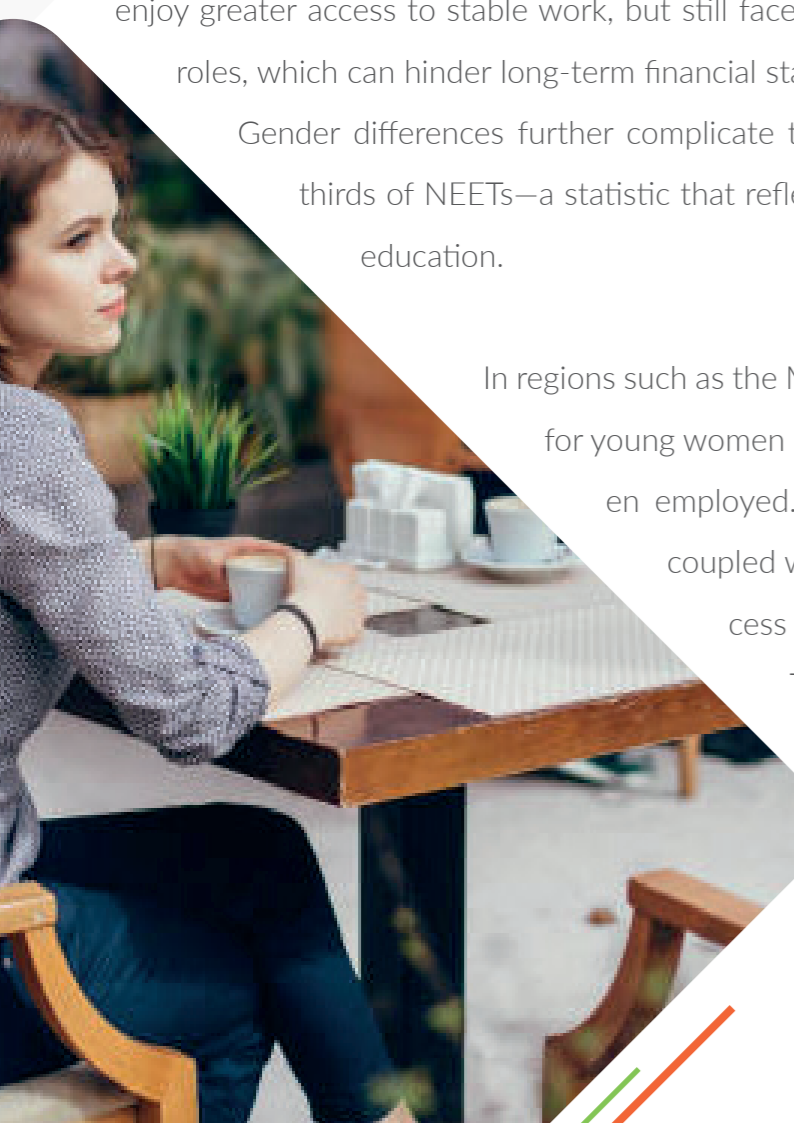
In middle-income countries, young adults are more educated than ever, yet the supply of skilled jobs has not kept pace with educational growth. This disconnect leads to an “educational mismatch,” with many young people working in roles that do not utilize their full qualifications.

Low-income regions face a different set of challenges. Here, economic instability often prevents youth from completing their education. For example, only 40% of young people in low-income countries were enrolled in school or training programs in 2023. This lack of educational access reduces their chances of finding decent work and perpetuates cycles of poverty. By contrast, youth in higher-income countries often remain in education longer, buffering themselves from immediate labor market pressures but risking delayed career entry and mounting educational costs



YOUTH ANXIETY AND THE NEED FOR DECENT WORK

This precarious situation is contributing to a rise in youth anxiety and uncertainty. The ILO report notes that two out of three young people worry about job loss or job insecurity. This sentiment is especially pronounced among young people engaged in temporary or informal work, which lacks the protections and benefits associated with formal employment. As economies face increased demand for flexible, short-term labor, young people are finding it harder to secure steady, well-paying roles



STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE: INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION POLICIES

The ILO emphasizes the importance of building inclusive policies that prioritize decent work opportunities and educational access for all young people. For example, investment in mentorship programs, skills training, and job matching can help bridge the gap between education and employment. Additionally, gender-specific policies are essential to support young women in their transition to the workforce. Strengthening pathways from school to work is another key focus. Apprenticeships, internships, and technical training can provide practical experience and reduce educational mismatches. In low-income countries, integrating skill development programs within the education system can help young people build employable skills even before they enter the job market. Digital education and remote work training are also increasingly valuable as technology reshapes job opportunities

CONCLUSION

Addressing global NEET challenges requires comprehensive, region-specific approaches that consider economic, educational, and cultural contexts. By investing in inclusive employment strategies, countries can foster a generation of youth who feel secure in their future, empowered to contribute, and equipped to succeed. Such efforts not only benefit individuals but also create more resilient and equitable societies. For those interested, the full ILO report offers a detailed look at these pressing global trends and can be accessed [here](#).



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