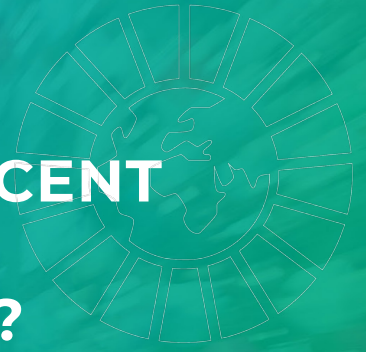




INSIGHTS SUMMARY

HOW CAN WE UNLOCK DECENT JOBS FOR UNDERSERVED YOUNG PEOPLE IN AFRICA?



GLOBAL GOALS / HYBRID WORKSHOP / 24 SEPT 2025

We would like to thank the following speakers:

Nadi Albino, Deputy Director, **UNICEF Generation Unlimited**

Andrew Dabalen, Africa Chief Economist, **World Bank**

Peter Njioka, Head of Talent Acquisition, Capability, Talent Management & HR Shared Services, **Safaricom plc**

Wilson Kamau, Disability Inclusion Facilitator, Light for the World Kenya & Youth Sounding Board Member, **European Union – Kenya**

Moderator: Natasha Kwakwa, Global Head, Community Impact, **Standard Chartered**

Each year, 12 million young people across Africa seek to enter the workforce, yet only 3 million formal jobs exist. By 2050, 42% of the global workforce will be African, underscoring the urgency of coordinated action. This workshop explored how governments, employers and youth organisations can collaborate to create pathways to decent livelihoods.

The conversation emphasised the importance of market-responsive training, enabling infrastructure, inclusive policies and entrepreneurship opportunities. Participants across New York, Nairobi and online agreed: fragmented efforts are insufficient. Only through partnerships can we scale sustainable solutions.

INSIGHT 1: CONNECT TRAINING TO EMPLOYER DEMAND

Academic qualifications alone do not prepare young people for work. Employers require practical skills, adaptability and teamwork, not just certificates. Safaricom addressed this by launching its Digital Academy and Safaricom Hook, which deliver training in technology, career readiness and workplace culture. Across the continent, curricula often take years to update, leaving graduates mismatched with employer needs. Breakout discussions reinforced that young people must gain both technical and soft skills through demand-led

We encourage youth to see opportunities everywhere. As long as you are living, there are many opportunities around you.

Peter Njioka, Head of Talent Acquisition, Capability, Talent Management & HR Shared Services, **Safaricom plc**

training. Work-readiness training should also build the communication, time-management, and financial skills to help young people to sustain employment. The outcome is clear: education systems must co-design with industry to produce job-ready graduates who can contribute immediately rather than wait years to gain workplace experience.

INSIGHT 2: REMOVE BARRIERS THAT EXCLUDE UNDERSERVED YOUTH

Young people with disabilities face systemic exclusion from jobs. Attitudes that frame disability as a burden discourage hiring, while inaccessible job adverts, buildings and online platforms block participation. Communication gaps, such as the absence of sign language interpretation, further restrict access. Rural youth are disadvantaged by weaker networks and infrastructure compared to their urban peers. Employers and policymakers must commit resources to reasonable accommodation, redesign recruitment processes, and enforce inclusive policies. The intended outcome is a labour market where diversity is a baseline requirement, not an optional add-on.

For policymakers, we need to co-create strategies with the people from underserved communities, like persons with disability.

**Wilson Kamau, Disability Inclusion Facilitator,
Light for the World Kenya & Youth Sounding
Board Member, European Union – Kenya**

INSIGHT 3: BUILD ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS FOR BUSINESS GROWTH

Decent jobs depend on the ability of businesses to grow and invest. Across Africa, firms are constrained by lack of affordable finance, unstable taxation, unreliable energy and limited market access. The World Bank highlighted that unpredictable tax regimes and frequent power outages deter firms from expansion and new hiring. Its initiative to extend electricity to 300 million Africans illustrates the scale of investment needed to unlock enterprise growth. Breakout discussions added that weak local capital markets prevent even viable youth-led businesses from scaling. By tackling these systemic constraints, governments and partners can enable enterprises to expand, attract investment, and generate sustainable employment at scale.

To allow for expansion and entry of new firms that will employ young people, we need to ensure market access and a level playing field.

**Andrew Dabalen, Africa Chief Economist,
World Bank**

INSIGHT 4: EXPAND PATHWAYS BEYOND FORMAL EMPLOYMENT

Formal jobs alone will never meet Africa's youth demand. Entrepreneurship, gig work and self-employment must be recognised as legitimate forms of decent livelihoods. Generation Unlimited's Green Entrepreneurs curriculum shows how youth enterprises can create an average of eight additional jobs each. Yet entrepreneurs face excessive red tape: in Kenya, starting a green business can require 11 to 12 licences. Such burdens suppress innovation and growth. Simplifying regulatory processes and supporting

informal work as a central part of the economy are essential. The intended outcome is a system where youth-led enterprises thrive and generate opportunities for their peers.

INSIGHT 5: STRENGTHEN MULTI- ACTOR COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION

Fragmentation across governments, NGOs, corporates and multilaterals creates duplication and weakens results. Too many initiatives compete for visibility while leaving structural gaps unaddressed. Employers such as Safaricom show that large firms can act as catalysts, setting standards, providing internships and opening supply chain opportunities for youth-owned enterprises. Breakout contributions underlined the need for ecosystems where academia, employers and youth co-create solutions instead of working in silos. Trust, shared frameworks, and mapping of existing initiatives are missing elements. The intended outcome is a coordinated system where collective action produces measurable impact rather than scattered, small-scale projects.

CONCLUSION

Three shifts stand out across the insights. First, a move from certificate-driven education to employer-linked, skills-based pathways. Second, a broadening of opportunity from scarce formal jobs to entrepreneurship and informal work, with emerging discussions also pointing to cross-border labour mobility and remote jobs. Third, a transition from fragmented initiatives to coordinated systems, where governments, businesses and youth co-create practical solutions. A major systemic barrier is the lack of functioning ecosystems, such as energy infrastructure, inclusive finance and accessible recruitment channels, that constrain both firms and workers. The next step is for governments, employers and youth platforms to convene with a shared metric for decent livelihoods, turning discussion into measurable delivery.

Young people are clear that the private sector and the public sector together will not give them all jobs, and that's why we look at entrepreneurship.

**Nadi Albino, Deputy Director,
UNICEF Generation Unlimited**

We need a cross-sector response... We have different coalitions, we have different solutions, different platforms – let's start bringing them together.

Natasha Kwakwa, Global Head, Community Impact, Standard Chartered

RESOURCES

- **Futuremakers by Standard Chartered**
Standard Chartered's global initiative supporting underserved youth with skills, employability training, and entrepreneurship opportunities, helping them access jobs and build livelihoods. <https://www.sc.com/en/about/investing-in-communities/>
- **Futuremakers Research 2022**
Research assessing outcomes of Futuremakers programmes worldwide, with insights on employability, entrepreneurship and financial inclusion for disadvantaged young people. <https://businessfightspoverty.org/report/futuremakers-research-2022/>
- **Generation Unlimited**
A UNICEF platform that connects public, private and youth actors to expand education, training and employment pathways for young people. <https://www.unicef.org/genunlimited/>
- **Light for the World Kenya**
This NGO advances disability inclusion and empowerment through education, employment and advocacy programmes, partnering with communities, governments and businesses in Kenya. <https://www.light-for-the-world.org/our-work/project-countries/kenya/>
- **Safaricom Sustainable Business Report 2024**
Safaricom outlines its commitments and progress on sustainability, including digital inclusion, youth skills programmes, supplier diversity and employment initiatives across Kenya. https://www.safaricom.co.ke/images/Downloads/2024-Sustainable-Business-Report_compressed.pdf
- **World Bank: Jobs and Growth**
World Bank's Jobs and Growth programme analyses economic policies and investments that foster private-sector expansion, improve labour markets, and support the creation of sustainable, inclusive employment. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/jobsandgrowth>