

# Innovative and Impactful Solutions Adopted in Four Countries

In conflict-affected regions such as **Burkina Faso**, **Ethiopia**, **Jordan**, and **Sudan**, innovative and impactful solutions have been implemented to enhance youth and women's economic engagement. The following insights will be collated from research within each country's unique context. The insights will be related to both Pillars A and B from the research, with Pillar A focusing on **how private sector SMEs in fragile contexts can contribute to job creation and employment ecosystems to attract and sustain women and youth employees**, while Pillar B **examines the challenges and adaptations needed for programs like CFYE to operate effectively in conflict-affected zones**.

Private sector Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have played a critical role in job creation by adapting business models to the realities of fragile settings. One effective strategy has been **flexible work arrangements**, including remote and freelance opportunities, which have particularly benefited women balancing family responsibilities. In Jordan, technology and fintech sectors have facilitated **digital employment**, while in Burkina Faso, renewable energy initiatives have created opportunities for **rural entrepreneurs**. Additionally, SMEs have employed innovative financial models, such as **microfinancing and village savings groups**, which have enabled women and youth to engage in economic activities despite the lack of traditional banking access.

Another impactful approach has been **targeted skills development programs** tailored to the needs of youth and women. In Ethiopia, partnerships between SMEs, technical institutes, and vocational training centres have helped bridge the skills gap, ensuring alignment with market demands. Similarly, **mentorship and incubation programs** have **empowered women entrepreneurs**, providing them with **business acumen** and **access to networks that facilitate SME growth**. In conflict-affected settings, these partnerships have become vital to **ensure program delivery, sustainability**, and to **provide spaces for sharing and testing new approaches**. These sector-specific training initiatives have been instrumental in overcoming traditional employment barriers, particularly in agriculture, healthcare, and digital services.

From a programmatic perspective, funds and capacity strengthening organisations such as the **Challenge Fund for Youth Employment** (CFYE) have demonstrated adaptability by modifying implementation strategies to fit conflict-affected contexts. CFYE has worked with its Implementing Partners to review their objectives, outcomes, and modes of payment to adapt to conflict in the countries. In Burkina Faso, donor-funded initiatives have promoted **community-based financial inclusion models**, reducing dependence on external funding and fostering economic sustainability.

**Governments and international stakeholders** have also played a role in promoting inclusive economic opportunities. In Jordan, **government-backed employment subsidies** have incentivised companies to hire women and youth, while in Ethiopia, **policy reforms have streamlined business registration processes** for young entrepreneurs. Despite bureaucratic challenges, these interventions have contributed to increasing formal employment participation and strengthening entrepreneurship ecosystems in conflict-prone regions.

A key takeaway from these cross-country innovations is the necessity of a **multi-stakeholder approach**. To build on this momentum, governments, donors, and the private sector should collaborate to scale up these proven strategies. This could involve:



*Expanding digital  
job platforms to  
reach more youth  
and women*



*Increasing  
investments in  
sector-specific  
training programs*



*Enhancing access to  
alternative  
financing models  
tailored for  
conflict-affected  
contexts*

Additionally, **donor-funded initiatives should prioritise flexible funding mechanisms** that allow implementing partners to adapt swiftly to evolving challenges. By actively **fostering partnerships**, **streamlining regulatory frameworks**, and **leveraging emerging sectors**, stakeholders can reinforce economic resilience and inclusion, ultimately ensuring sustainable employment opportunities for women and youth in fragile regions.