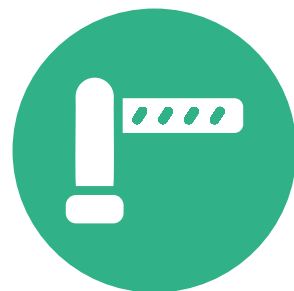


Common Challenges across the Four Countries

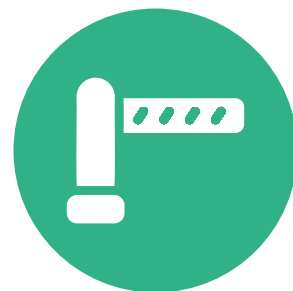
Employment is a crucial driver of **stability** and **economic recovery** in conflict-affected areas. When youth, especially young women, have access to **meaningful work**, they contribute to **rebuilding economies**, **strengthening communities**, and **reducing the risk of further instability**. However, conflict severely disrupts employment opportunities, limiting access to skills development, financial resources, and secure job markets. This research examines the key challenges that women and youth face in securing employment in fragile contexts of **Burkina Faso**, **Ethiopia**, **Jordan**, and **Sudan**, identifying structural barriers and opportunities for sustainable 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**.

Conflict and political instability have severely disrupted business operations, creating market instability and economic unpredictability. Many businesses face continuous disruptions due to **supply chain breakdowns**, **forced displacement**, **infrastructure damage**, and **market instability**, forcing them to delay or cancel initiatives. Additionally, **government policies** are often inconsistent and unreliable, with **excessive fees**, **fluctuating regulations**, and **corruption** further hindering business growth.

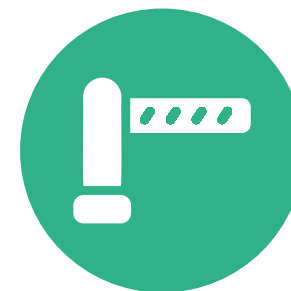
Youth, especially young women, encounter **multiple barriers to workforce participation**.



Cultural norms and gender expectations restrict women's mobility and limit access to job opportunities, particularly in rural areas.



High transportation costs and unsafe travel conditions prevent many from seeking employment in urban centers.



Security concerns and psychological trauma from prolonged conflict reduce productivity and motivation among young job seekers, exacerbating existing employment challenges.

In conflict-affected areas like Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Jordan, and Sudan, there is a significant education and skills mismatch, leaving **many women and youth without the qualifications needed for available jobs**. In these regions, vocational training and technical education opportunities are limited, particularly in rural and conflict-impacted areas, further widening the gap between employer needs and job seeker capabilities.

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Many **educational institutions** in these contexts fail to provide **market-relevant training**, **reducing employability** and **increasing reliance on informal work**, which is often unstable and less resilient in fragile settings.

Financial constraints further limit economic participation. **Access to credit** and **financial services** remains a major barrier, preventing women and youth from starting or expanding businesses. **High inflation** and **fluctuating exchange rates** make business operations unpredictable, while the **instability of local banks** has worsened financial struggles for SMEs. **Investors are often reluctant to fund businesses in conflict zones**, making it difficult for local entrepreneurs to sustain or grow their operations, and in turn hire staff.

For youth and women in conflict-affected areas, the unique challenges faced by different economic sectors directly impact their employment opportunities and prospects. In **agriculture**, which is a primary source of employment for rural women and youth, conflict-related disruptions can make it difficult to maintain stable livelihoods, as **infrastructure and resources are often damaged or inaccessible**. However, agriculture remains a resilient sector because communities still need access to food and nutrition during conflict, offering some degree of stability. On the other hand, **emerging industries like digital services and renewable energy** show potential for job creation, but they **require significant upskilling and financial investment** that many women and youth in these regions may not have access to. As a result, while there are opportunities in these new sectors, the lack of skills, training, and financial support creates barriers for women and youth to transition into these growing fields.

Retaining qualified staff remains difficult for businesses, as many skilled workers leave due to conflict and economic instability. Employers have adapted by **offering flexible work arrangements and higher salaries** to counter inflation. Some businesses have successfully incorporated remote work and digital platforms, though poor infrastructure limits these opportunities.

Policy and institutional barriers further complicate the employment landscape. **Bureaucratic inefficiencies and weak regulatory frameworks** discourage SME growth and employment expansion. Government-backed employment programs exist, but many businesses and job seekers are unaware of them due to **poor outreach and complex application processes**. Additionally, shifting donor priorities often divert funding from long-term employment initiatives to immediate relief efforts, leaving sustainable job creation underfunded.

Addressing these challenges requires a multi-stakeholder approach, involving **targeted financial investments**, **skill development programs**, and **policies that enhance market access** for women and youth. **Strengthening digital infrastructure**, **improving security**, and **fostering private sector resilience** will be crucial in creating sustainable employment opportunities in conflict-affected areas.