

Youth Responsiveness Analysis of the Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government of Ghana for the 2026 Financial Year

**An Independent Assessment by
Youth Opportunity and Transformation in Africa
(YOTA)**

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Foreword

As the Executive Director of Youth Opportunity and Transformation in Africa (YOTA), it is my privilege to present this Youth Responsiveness Analysis of Ghana's 2026 Budget Statement and Economic Policy.

Ghana's youth account for the largest segment of our population and represent a powerful engine for economic growth, social innovation and national progress. As our country continues its recovery and transition toward long-term stability, the choices reflected in the national budget are pivotal.

This report provides an independent, evidence-informed assessment of how well the 2026 Budget responds to the priorities and aspirations of young Ghanaians. It highlights areas of progress, particularly in digitalisation, human capital development and youth empowerment, while identifying persistent gaps in domestic job creation, social protection, inclusion and accountability mechanisms.

YOTA remains committed to supporting youth-centred research, amplifying youth voices and strengthening accountability for public investment in young people.

Emmanuel Edudzie
Executive Director

Executive Summary

Ghana's 2026 Budget Statement and Economic Policy has been presented at a time when the country's demographic structure continues to shift decisively towards youth. Young people aged 15–35 constitute the largest share of the national population, and their employment prospects, learning outcomes, well-being, and civic participation will significantly determine Ghana's economic and social trajectory. Against this backdrop, the Youth Opportunity and Transformation in Africa (YOTA) undertook an independent Youth Responsiveness Analysis of the 2026 Budget to assess the extent to which national policy priorities and public investments reflect the needs, aspirations, and rights of Ghana's young people.

The analysis reveals that the 2026 Budget is moderately youth responsive, with a provisional overall score of 2.1 out of 3. The Budget demonstrates a clear rhetorical and programmatic commitment to youth development, particularly in the areas of digitalisation, secondary education access, and youth empowerment programmes. Several flagship interventions, including the One Million Coders Programme, expansion of Regional Digital Centres, the District Skills and Entrepreneurship Roadshow, and the uncapping of the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund) to sustain Free Senior High School, represent meaningful investments in human capital and future workforce competitiveness.

The establishment of the Ministry of Youth Development and Empowerment (MoYDE), with dedicated allocations to the National Youth Authority and National Service Authority, marks a significant institutional development. If adequately resourced and strategically coordinated, MoYDE has the potential to address longstanding fragmentation in youth policy implementation.

However, the analysis also identifies structural gaps. Domestic job creation mechanisms remain limited relative to the scale of youth unemployment and underemployment, with continued over-reliance on the Work Abroad Programme as a pathway for income and employment. While the Budget advances the National Green Jobs Strategy, concrete youth-targeted programmes and funding allocations remain modest. The expansion of Free SHS, though a major human-capital achievement, still lacks a strong linkage to labour market readiness, technical and vocational pathways, and employability transitions. Inclusion concerns persist, particularly for young women, rural youth, youth with disabilities, and economically marginalised groups.

Digitalisation emerges as the strongest and most coherent youth-facing pillar, but its long-term value will depend on whether digital skills programmes translate into quality jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities within Ghana's labour market. Similarly, the Ghana Sports Fund and youth-in-sport initiatives demonstrate potential but require stronger inclusion provisions to benefit young people beyond elite athletes.

Overall, the 2026 Budget establishes a favourable foundation for youth development but falls short of a fully youth-responsive national financing framework. Critical improvements are needed in budget scale, targeting, implementation realism, and inter-sectoral coordination. Strengthening youth participation in public financial management processes,

improving data systems for age- and gender-disaggregated budgeting, and aligning youth programmes with Ghana's medium-term job creation strategy remain essential.

The report concludes with targeted recommendations to enhance the youth responsiveness of future budgets, including increased investment in domestic job creation and entrepreneurship ecosystems, deeper integration of TVET and employability interventions, expansion of inclusive digital skills programmes, stronger institutional support for MoYDE, and establishment of clear accountability mechanisms for monitoring youth outcomes.

This Youth Responsiveness Analysis aims to support national dialogue, inform evidence-based advocacy, and strengthen Ghana's commitment to investing in its demographic dividend. Young people remain central to the nation's resilience, productivity, and inclusive development; therefore, the coherence and adequacy of budgetary commitments to youth must remain a national priority.

1. Purpose, Questions and Scope

The Youth Responsiveness Analysis of Ghana's 2026 Budget has been undertaken by the YOTA to provide an evidence-informed assessment of how far the national budget reflects the priorities, needs and rights of young people. As Ghana continues to experience a demographic shift characterised by a growing youth population, it is increasingly important that public policy and fiscal decisions are intentionally aligned with the country's long-term human capital and labour market imperatives. This analysis aims to support national dialogue, guide policy advocacy, and promote accountability for youth-centred development outcomes.

The primary purpose of the analysis is to evaluate the extent to which the 2026 Budget advances inclusive, equitable and transformative opportunities for young people aged 15–35. It examines not only explicit youth-targeted programmes but also broader sectoral policies whose outcomes have significant implications for youth employment, skills development, health, digital inclusion, and civic participation. Particular attention is paid to the degree of coherence between budget allocations, Ghana's medium-term development agenda, and global and regional commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the African Union's Agenda 2063, and the AU Youth Charter.

To guide the assessment, the analysis is anchored on the following key questions:

1. Visibility and prioritisation:
 - To what extent does the 2026 Budget explicitly recognise young people as a priority demographic?
 - How prominently are youth issues featured in the Budget's narrative, sector strategies and expenditure framework?
2. Scale and adequacy of investment:
 - Are financial allocations for youth-relevant programmes adequate relative to national youth development needs?
 - How do these allocations compare to previous years and to other expenditure priorities?
3. Employment, skills and livelihoods:
 - How well does the Budget support pathways into decent work, entrepreneurship, and green and digital jobs for young people?
 - Do the proposed interventions address the structural barriers faced by youth in the labour market?
4. Equity and inclusion:
 - Do budget measures effectively reach young women, rural youth, youth with disabilities and other marginalised groups?
 - Are youth programmes designed in ways that address regional, gender and socio-economic disparities?
5. Institutional effectiveness and implementation realism:

- Are the institutions responsible for youth policy and programme delivery adequately mandated and resourced?
 - Are proposed interventions feasible within the current macro-fiscal, administrative and political context?
6. Youth participation and accountability:
- To what extent does the Budget provide mechanisms for young people to participate in policy formulation, budgeting and monitoring?
 - Are there sufficient accountability frameworks to track youth-related outcomes?

The scope of the analysis spans the entire 2026 Budget Statement and Economic Policy, with particular emphasis on sectors that have a direct or indirect influence on youth development outcomes. These include education and skills development, labour and employment, youth empowerment, social protection, digitalisation, innovation, sports, health, and climate-related sectors. The analysis considers both narrative commitments and available expenditure data from the Budget's main text and annexes. While the primary unit of analysis is the national budget, the study also considers institutional arrangements, such as the establishment of the Ministry of Youth Development and Empowerment, that shape the coherence and sustainability of youth-focused interventions.

By defining a clear analytical purpose, posing focused evaluative questions, and delineating the scope of assessment, this section sets the foundation for a rigorous and structured review of the youth responsiveness of Ghana's 2026 Budget. The subsequent sections apply this framework to interpret sectoral priorities, identify strengths and gaps, and provide evidence-based recommendations for enhancing public investment in young people.

2. Methodology and Data Sources

The Youth Responsiveness Analysis employs a structured and transparent methodology designed to assess the degree to which Ghana's 2026 Budget advances the development, empowerment and well-being of young people aged 15–35. The methodology integrates elements of public expenditure analysis, youth policy assessment, and sectoral performance review. It aligns with international good practice in youth-responsive budgeting, including frameworks used by the African Union, the OECD Youth Governance Review, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2.1 Analytical Approach

The analysis is undertaken in four interrelated stages:

Stage 1: Identification of Youth-Relevant Measures

A comprehensive review of the Budget Statement and Economic Policy was conducted to extract all explicit and implicit youth-relevant measures. This included:

- programmes explicitly targeting young people (e.g., digital skills, entrepreneurship, youth empowerment, national service, sports development)
- sectoral policies with significant implications for youth outcomes (e.g., education, labour, digitalisation, agriculture, social protection)
- institutional reforms that affect youth policy coherence (e.g., establishment of the Ministry of Youth Development and Empowerment)

This mapping resulted in a consolidated Youth Budget Intervention Matrix, which forms the empirical basis of the assessment.

Stage 2: Application of a Youth-Responsiveness Scoring Framework

Each identified intervention was evaluated using a five-dimension scoring rubric commonly applied in youth budget analyses:

1. Visibility and clarity – the extent to which young people are explicitly recognised as intended beneficiaries.
2. Scale and adequacy – the size, reach and financial commitment relative to youth development needs.
3. Jobs and livelihood intensity – the expected contribution to decent work, enterprise development and economic empowerment of young people.
4. Equity and inclusion – the degree to which interventions address disparities among young women, rural youth, youth with disabilities and economically marginalised groups.
5. Implementation realism – the feasibility of delivering the intervention, considering institutional capacity, historical performance and the macro-fiscal context.

Scores ranged from 0 (Not responsive) to 3 (Strongly responsive), enabling sectoral aggregation and an overall Youth Responsiveness Rating for the 2026 Budget.

Stage 3: Sector-Level Synthesis

Sectoral narratives were then developed by grouping interventions under major thematic areas:

- Education and Skills Development
- Labour, Jobs and Enterprise
- Youth Development and Empowerment
- Digitalisation and Innovation
- Social Protection, Health and Well-being
- Sports and Creative Industries

Within each sector, the analysis examined policy coherence, financial priorities, programme design, and anticipated youth outcomes.

Stage 4: Cross-Cutting Assessment and Synthesis

The analysis extended to cross-cutting issues including:

- gender and social inclusion
- regional equity
- climate resilience and green jobs
- civic participation and accountability
- data systems for youth monitoring

The final Youth Responsiveness Rating and recommendations draw on evidence from all four methodological stages.

2.2 Data Sources

The assessment is based primarily on publicly available government documents, supplemented by relevant secondary sources. Key data sources include:

1. The Budget Statement and Economic Policy of the Government of Ghana for the 2026 Financial Year
 - full narrative sections on economic performance, sector priorities and policy commitments
 - annex tables on expenditure allocations, internally generated funds and sector ceilings
 - summaries of ongoing programmes, achievements and planned interventions
2. Medium-Term National Development Policy Frameworks
 - enabling alignment between budget measures and national development objectives
3. National Youth Policy and Sector Strategies

- Ministry of Youth Development and Empowerment (MoYDE) mandates and annual plans
 - Education Sector Medium-Term Development Plan
 - National Employment Policy and Labour Migration frameworks
 - National Green Jobs Strategy
4. Complementary Data Sources
- Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) demographic and labour market data
 - International datasets relevant to youth development, labour markets and digital inclusion
 - Regional and global frameworks (SDGs, AU Agenda 2063, AU Youth Charter)

2.3 Limitations

The analysis acknowledges several limitations:

- Limited age-disaggregated budget data: The Budget lacks consistent presentation of youth-specific expenditure lines, making it necessary to infer youth relevance from programme descriptions rather than strict budget tagging.
- Variable programme detail: Some interventions, particularly new funds or emerging initiatives, do not include full financial envelopes or implementation plans.
- Execution data gaps: Historical execution rates for youth programmes are limited in publicly accessible documents, constraining assessment of implementation realism.
- Non-inclusion of sub-national budgets: The analysis focuses on the national budget; district assembly budgets, which also affect youth outcomes, are not covered.

Despite these limitations, the methodology provides a robust and systematic assessment of the 2026 Budget's responsiveness to Ghana's youth.

3. Youth Situation and Policy Context

Ghana's demographic profile continues to be characterised by a substantial youth population, with young people aged 15–35 constituting the largest cohort in the country. This demographic trend presents both an unprecedented opportunity to harness a demographic dividend and a structural challenge, given persistent gaps in education quality, labour market absorption, and social inclusion. Understanding the contemporary youth situation is therefore essential for interpreting the relevance and adequacy of the 2026 Budget for national development outcomes.

3.1 Demographic Significance of Ghana's Youth

Ghana's youth population is expanding at a pace that outstrips the growth of formal employment opportunities. Young people now account for approximately one-third of the population, with annual entries into the labour market far exceeding the capacity of both public and private sectors to absorb new workers. This demographic pressure heightens the urgency of policies that can create large-scale employment opportunities, increase productivity, and build human capital from adolescence through early adulthood.

3.2 Education, Skills and School-to-Work Transitions

While access to basic and secondary education has increased significantly, particularly through the Free Senior High School initiative, disparities persist in terms of learning outcomes, foundational competencies, and readiness for further education or employment. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) reforms have progressed, yet the system continues to face challenges related to financing, training quality, and alignment with labour market needs.

Transitions from school to work remain slow and inefficient. Many young people experience prolonged periods of underemployment, unstable informal work, or cyclical movements between education, training and low-paid jobs. Structural barriers, such as limited access to career guidance, inadequate practical skills training, and fragmentation in employment services, continue to constrain youth employability and economic participation.

3.3 Youth Employment and Labour Market Dynamics

Youth unemployment and underemployment remain among the most pressing socio-economic issues in Ghana. Although precise rates vary by survey source and methodology, young people consistently exhibit higher unemployment levels than the national average. The majority of employed youth work in the informal economy, often in low-productivity and precarious roles with limited income security or upward mobility.

The emergence of new labour market opportunities in digital services, green jobs and entrepreneurship holds potential, but these pathways require targeted investment in skills, technology access, enterprise support and ecosystem development. Labour mobility programmes such as the Work Abroad Programme offer income-generating prospects for

some youth, but they also raise considerations around skills utilisation, worker protection, and long-term national workforce development.

3.4 Social Inclusion and Well-being

Young people in Ghana face varied levels of vulnerability depending on geography, gender, disability status, and socio-economic background. Rural youth, particularly young women, often encounter structural barriers including limited access to quality education, digital connectivity, finance, and employment networks. Adolescents and young adults also face challenges related to mental health, sexual and reproductive health outcomes, and exposure to risky behaviours.

The social protection system, while expanding, has limited youth-specific instruments. Young mothers, youth with disabilities, and economically marginalised youth often remain underserved. Strengthening safety nets, youth counselling services, and health support systems will be essential for promoting inclusive development outcomes.

3.5 Policy Commitments and Institutional Context

Ghana has established several policy frameworks aimed at improving youth development outcomes, including the National Youth Policy, the National Employment Policy, the Labour Migration Policy, and emerging green and digital skills strategies. The creation of the Ministry of Youth Development and Empowerment (MoYDE) in 2025 represents a major institutional milestone, signalling government recognition of the need for coordinated, cross-sectoral youth-focused development planning.

In parallel, sector ministries, such as Education, Employment and Labour Relations, Communications and Digitalisation, and Gender, Children and Social Protection, continue to implement a wide range of youth-relevant programmes. However, coherence, coordination and financing have historically been uneven. The 2026 Budget presents an important opportunity to consolidate gains and address longstanding policy implementation gaps.

3.6 Implications for the 2026 Budget

The demographic, economic and social realities summarised above underscore the need for a national budget that not only expands youth-targeted investments but also embeds a youth lens across all sectors. Priorities such as digital transformation, skills development, equitable job creation, health and well-being, and institutional strengthening are central to enabling young people to contribute meaningfully to Ghana's medium- and long-term development.

A youth-responsive budget must therefore (i) recognise the centrality of young people to national progress, (ii) allocate resources at a scale commensurate with demographic pressures, (iii) strengthen institutional coordination, and (iv) ensure equitable access to opportunity across gender, geographic and socio-economic lines.

This policy context serves as the foundation upon which the analysis of sectoral allocations, youth-relevant initiatives and cross-cutting measures in the 2026 Budget is conducted.

4. Macro-Fiscal Stance and Fiscal Space for Youth

Ghana's macro-fiscal environment in 2026 continues to be shaped by the country's medium-term fiscal consolidation agenda, external financing constraints, and ongoing efforts to restore macroeconomic stability. These conditions significantly influence the degree of fiscal space available for youth-centred investments. Understanding the broader fiscal stance is therefore essential for assessing the realism, adequacy and sustainability of youth-relevant budget commitments.

4.1 Macroeconomic Policy Direction

The 2026 Budget builds on the stabilisation measures initiated under Ghana's economic reform programme, focusing on fiscal consolidation, debt sustainability, and targeted public investment. The overarching macroeconomic objectives include maintaining price stability, restoring confidence in public financial management, and strengthening the foundations for economic growth. Efforts to improve domestic revenue mobilisation, manage expenditure pressures, and rationalise public investment form the core elements of the fiscal strategy.

While these measures aim to support long-term economic resilience, the consolidation environment also places constraints on expanding social sector and youth-focused programmes, particularly those requiring new recurrent financing.

4.2 Revenue Mobilisation and Implications for Youth Investment

The Budget emphasises enhanced domestic revenue mobilisation through improved tax administration, digitalisation of revenue systems, and compliance reforms. Although increased domestic revenue could expand the fiscal envelope for social and economic development, the pace and reliability of revenue gains remain uncertain given prevailing economic conditions and taxpayer capacity.

For youth-focused sectors, such as education, employment, digitalisation, and social protection, improvements in revenue performance are critical. However, the simultaneous need to meet interest payments, compensate public-sector workers, and service statutory funds continues to limit the discretionary fiscal space available for scaling targeted youth interventions.

4.3 Expenditure Priorities and Budget Constraints

Ghana's expenditure landscape in 2026 remains dominated by three major cost drivers:

1. Compensation of employees
2. Interest payments
3. Statutory transfers

These obligations absorb a significant proportion of total spending, leaving relatively limited room for flexible programme expansion. Although youth-relevant sectors, such as education,

digitalisation and employment, are reflected in the Budget, the magnitude of available resources is influenced by these broader expenditure rigidities.

The Budget's emphasis on targeted, efficiency-enhancing investments suggests a gradual shift towards more strategic allocation of public resources. Yet, the constrained fiscal environment means that many youth programmes will rely on incremental gains, leveraging existing institutional platforms rather than introducing substantially new financing lines.

4.4 Public Debt and Intergenerational Considerations

Ghana's public debt levels remain elevated, with debt servicing obligations continuing to exert pressure on the national budget. High interest costs limit the government's ability to allocate larger shares of discretionary spending to human capital development and youth employment schemes. This dynamic raises intergenerational equity concerns, as the fiscal burden constrains investments that directly affect the well-being and productivity of current and future generations of young people.

A youth-responsive fiscal stance should therefore balance short-term stabilisation with long-term human capital accumulation. Failure to invest adequately in education, skills, and employment pathways risks entrenching youth unemployment and compromising national competitiveness.

4.5 Fiscal Space for Youth Programming in 2026

Despite constraints, the 2026 Budget creates some room for youth-relevant investments through:

- Reprioritisation within existing sector ceilings (e.g., digitalisation, youth empowerment programmes, Free SHS financing).
- Efficiency gains in programme delivery across youth-serving ministries.
- Institutional strengthening through the newly established Ministry of Youth Development and Empowerment (MoYDE).
- Catalytic funds such as the National Employment Trust, FinTech Growth Fund and green jobs initiatives, which can leverage additional domestic and external financing.
- Strategic partnerships with development partners and the private sector, particularly in digital skills and innovation.

However, the scale of these opportunities falls short of the demographic and labour market pressures faced by Ghana's youth. Most youth programmes in the 2026 Budget operate within existing resource envelopes, with limited new funding commitments capable of driving large-scale transformation.

4.6 Implications for Youth Responsiveness

The macro-fiscal stance establishes a mixed environment for youth development:

- On the one hand, fiscal consolidation limits expansion, particularly of capital-intensive or labour-intensive youth programmes.
- On the other hand, improvements in macroeconomic stability and targeted sectoral investments, especially in digitalisation and basic/secondary education, provide important foundations for long-term youth outcomes.

Ultimately, the ability of the 2026 Budget to deliver meaningful youth impacts will depend on:

- (i) the quality of implementation within constrained fiscal space,
- (ii) the effectiveness of resource prioritisation by youth-serving ministries, and
- (iii) sustained commitment to strengthening human capital and employment systems over the medium term.

5. Overall Budget Priorities vs Youth Priorities

A youth-responsive national budget requires not only the inclusion of youth-targeted programmes but also the alignment of macro-level budget priorities with the structural needs and aspirations of young people. This section compares the overarching priorities articulated in the 2026 Budget with the core dimensions of youth development, namely, human capital, employment, inclusion, digital empowerment, and institutional support, to determine the degree of convergence or divergence between national policy direction and youth priorities.

5.1 Overview of the 2026 Budget Priorities

The 2026 Budget is anchored on three central priorities:

1. Restoring macroeconomic stability and consolidating fiscal gains, including revenue mobilisation, controlled expenditure growth, and efficient public financial management.
2. Driving economic transformation through digitalisation, innovation, and productive sector support, including industrialisation, agriculture, and emerging green sectors.
3. Strengthening human capital and social development, particularly in education, health, social protection, and youth empowerment initiatives.

These priorities position the Budget within a stabilisation-to-recovery trajectory, with strong emphasis on structural reforms and efficiency rather than large-scale new spending.

5.2 Alignment with Youth Priorities

A comparative assessment of the Budget's core priorities against the key development priorities of Ghana's youth reveals areas of alignment as well as notable gaps.

(i) Economic Transformation and Job Creation

Youth priority:

- Access to dignified, sustainable employment;
- Scalable entrepreneurship pathways;
- Structural reforms that expand labour market opportunities.

Budget alignment:

- The Budget highlights programmes such as the National Employment Trust, green jobs strategy, and Work Abroad Programme, reflecting recognition of the need for youth employment pathways.
- However, domestic job creation remains modest relative to labour force growth, and the level of investment in employment-supporting ecosystems (e.g., MSME finance, industrial linkages, apprenticeships, and active labour market programmes) is insufficient to meet the scale of youth unemployment.

Assessment: Partial alignment. Ambition exists, but the scale of employment measures remains below demographic requirements.

(ii) Education, Skills and Human Capital Development

Youth priority:

- High-quality education, relevant skills training, TVET strengthening, and smoother school-to-work transitions.

Budget alignment:

- Strong emphasis through Free SHS, GETFund uncapping, and ongoing investments in curriculum reforms and STEM.
- The continuation of Complementary Basic Education supports foundational learning and reduces future youth vulnerability.
- Digital skills measures, including the One Million Coders Programme and Regional Digital Centres, are highly aligned with youth aspirations for modern, technologically relevant skills.

Assessment: Strong alignment on access and digital skills; weaker alignment on employability transitions and labour market readiness.

(iii) Digitalisation and Innovation

Youth priority:

- Digital literacy, access to technology, pathways into digital jobs, and entrepreneurship ecosystems.

Budget alignment:

- Digital transformation is a flagship priority, with significant emphasis placed on youth-oriented digital skills, digital entrepreneurship (e.g., FinTech Growth Fund), and expansion of digital infrastructure.

Assessment: Strong alignment. Digital priorities represent one of the most youth-forward aspects of the Budget.

(iv) Social Inclusion and Well-being

Youth priority:

- Improved sexual and reproductive health, mental health support, protection of vulnerable youth, and targeted social protection mechanisms.

Budget alignment:

- The Budget acknowledges adolescent reproductive health through NYA's outreach programmes.
- Wider social protection systems, however, are not deeply youth-specific, and support for young mothers, youth with disabilities, and highly vulnerable youth remains limited in scope.

Assessment: Weak-to-moderate alignment. Youth inclusion is recognised but not deeply integrated into social protection frameworks.

(v) Institutional Coordination and Youth Governance

Youth priority:

- Strong institutional support, coordinated youth policy, and meaningful participation in governance.

Budget alignment:

- The establishment of the Ministry of Youth Development and Empowerment (MoYDE) signals a major institutional advancement.
- Clarity on its financing, capacity, and cross-sectoral role is emerging but not yet fully developed.
- Youth participation mechanisms in budgeting processes are not clearly articulated in the Budget narrative.

Assessment: Moderate alignment. Institutional progress exists, but operationalisation will determine impact.

5.3 Divergences Between Budget and Youth Priorities

Despite areas of alignment, several divergences remain significant:

- Insufficient scale of job creation: Domestic employment generation is not commensurate with the number of youth entering the labour market annually.
- Weak labour market linkages: Education and TVET provisions remain insufficiently aligned with industry needs.
- Narrow inclusion focus: Youth policies in the Budget do not adequately address the needs of highly vulnerable groups such as rural youth, persons with disabilities, and economically excluded youth.
- Limited youth-specific social protection: Existing social protection instruments do not offer targeted support for unemployed youth or young mothers.
- Underdeveloped accountability mechanisms: The Budget does not clearly outline youth-specific monitoring, reporting, and participation frameworks.

5.4 Overall Assessment

The 2026 Budget demonstrates **moderate alignment** with youth development priorities. Its strongest areas of convergence lie in digital transformation, secondary education expansion, and selected youth empowerment initiatives. However, the Budget's core macroeconomic and expenditure priorities, shaped by fiscal consolidation, limit the potential for rapid expansion of youth-employment programmes, inclusive social protection, and structural reforms required to absorb Ghana's growing youth workforce.

A more youth-responsive budget framework would require:

- greater investment in domestic job creation ecosystems,
- deeper integration of employability within education reforms,
- targeted measures for marginalised youth, and
- institutionalising youth participation in planning and budgeting processes.

The subsequent sections of this report examine sector-level allocations and interventions in detail to further assess the youth responsiveness of Ghana's 2026 Budget.

6. Sector Analysis – Education & Skills

The education and skills sector is central to youth development in Ghana, given its role in shaping human capital, labour market readiness, and long-term productivity. The 2026 Budget reaffirms education as a national priority, with continued investment in basic and secondary education, curriculum reforms, digital learning, and selected technical and vocational initiatives. This section examines the degree to which these commitments align with the learning and skills needs of young people aged 15–35 and assesses the expected impacts on their school-to-work transitions.

6.1 Overview of Education Sector Priorities in the 2026 Budget

The 2026 Budget prioritises the following areas:

- Sustaining and expanding the Free Senior High School (Free SHS) initiative.
- Uncapping the Ghana Education Trust Fund (GETFund) to ensure full financing for core education interventions.
- Advancing STEM education, digital learning, and improvements in teaching quality.
- Continuing Complementary Basic Education (CBE) for out-of-school children and adolescents.
- Strengthening educational infrastructure to eliminate the remaining double-track system and improve access to equitable learning.
- Expanding access to TVET, with incremental reforms focused on standards, quality, and alignment with industry needs.

These priorities reflect continuity with ongoing sector reforms and national commitments to universal secondary education and improved learning outcomes.

6.2 Free SHS and Secondary Education Expansion

The sustained investment in Free SHS remains one of the most consequential youth-focused interventions in Ghana. The 2026 Budget maintains strong financing for the programme through the uncapping of the GETFund, which is expected to underpin school infrastructure developments and improve the learning environment.

Youth Responsiveness Assessment:

- **Visibility:** High. The programme is explicitly youth-targeted.
- **Scale:** Very high, covering hundreds of thousands of adolescents transitioning into youthhood.
- **Quality and transition effects:** Mixed. While access has improved significantly, learning outcomes and preparedness for higher education or employment remain uneven.
- **Inclusion:** Improvements in access for low-income households and rural youth are evident, although disparities persist.

Overall, Free SHS contributes positively to human capital accumulation but must be complemented by stronger employability-oriented reforms to maximise youth outcomes.

6.3 TVET, Apprenticeships and Skills for Employability

Technical and vocational education is a cornerstone of economic transformation and youth employment. The 2026 Budget references ongoing TVET reforms but does not introduce major new financing lines or large-scale skills initiatives beyond what is already in motion. While existing reforms, such as competency-based training, improved instructor development, and standards alignment, are commendable, the sector still faces challenges:

- Insufficient linkage to industry, resulting in limited practical exposure and employment pathways.
- Fragmentation across TVET providers, affecting coherence and quality assurance.
- Resource constraints, limiting expansion of well-equipped training centres and modern equipment.

Given Ghana's rising youth unemployment and skills mismatch, the scale of investment in TVET remains modest relative to national needs.

Youth Responsiveness Assessment:

Moderate. The policy direction is sound, but the resource envelope and programme scale are insufficient for transforming youth employability outcomes in the short to medium term.

6.4 Digital Skills and the Future of Work

Digitalisation is a major strength of the 2026 Budget's youth agenda. Key interventions include:

- The **One Million Coders Programme**, a flagship initiative aimed at developing youth digital skills nationwide.
- Expansion of **Regional Digital Centres** to support digital literacy, innovation, and entrepreneurship.
- Support for the **FinTech ecosystem**, which indirectly enhances digital job opportunities for young people.

These commitments strongly align with global trends, where digital skills are increasingly essential across all sectors.

Youth Responsiveness Assessment:

- Alignment with youth aspirations: Very strong – digital careers rank among the top preferences for young Ghanaians.
- Potential for job creation: High, particularly if linked with the private sector and demand-driven ecosystems.

- Risk factors: Without integration with work placements, internships and enterprise support, digital skills programmes may not fully translate into employment.

Overall, digital transformation represents the most youth-forward element of the education and skills landscape.

6.5 Foundational Learning and Complementary Basic Education

Complementary Basic Education (CBE) continues to provide a second chance for out-of-school children and adolescents, ensuring they transition back into mainstream schooling. Strengthening foundational learning reduces long-term youth vulnerability and supports social mobility.

Youth Responsiveness Assessment:

Moderate-to-strong. Although targeting younger cohorts, CBE serves as a preventive mechanism that shapes the future youth workforce, especially for economically marginalised groups.

6.6 School-to-Work Transitions

Despite significant investment in the education system, structural barriers persist in the transition from school to work:

- Weak institutional linkages between secondary/TVET institutions and employers.
- Limited career guidance, labour market information and transition support services.
- Insufficient work-based learning opportunities and apprenticeships.
- Fragmented coordination between the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, Jobs and Employment Relations, and relevant private-sector bodies.

The 2026 Budget makes reference to job creation efforts but does not introduce comprehensive measures targeting school-to-work transition bottlenecks.

Youth Responsiveness Assessment:

Weak-to-moderate. Gains in education access are not yet matched by parallel investments in employability systems.

6.7 Inclusion, Equity and Regional Disparities

Education inequality remains a key concern:

- Rural areas still face shortages of teachers, infrastructure and digital connectivity.
- Young women face persistent disadvantages in STEM and technical pathways.
- Youth with disabilities remain underserved due to limited accessible learning facilities and specialised support.

While the 2026 Budget includes broad human capital investments, it does not provide strong youth-specific inclusion mechanisms to narrow these disparities.

6.8 Summary of Youth Responsiveness in Education & Skills

The education and skills sector demonstrates moderate-to-strong youth responsiveness, driven primarily by:

- Continued investment in Free SHS and GETFund reforms;
- Strong digital skills agenda;
- Incremental improvements in TVET reforms.

However, significant gaps remain in:

- Large-scale employability and work-based learning initiatives;
- Targeted inclusion mechanisms for marginalised youth;
- Deepening industry partnerships;
- Ensuring quality and relevance of education outcomes.

A more youth-responsive education system would require coordinated investment across skills development, labour market integration, career guidance, teacher development, and inclusive learning strategies.

7. Sector Analysis – Labour, Jobs & Enterprise

The labour, jobs and enterprise sector is central to addressing Ghana’s youth employment challenge. With an estimated hundreds of thousands of young people entering the labour market each year, the scale of required job creation far exceeds current absorption capacity. The 2026 Budget includes several policy and institutional measures aimed at improving labour market outcomes; however, the depth and scale of these interventions vary considerably. This section examines the extent to which the Budget advances youth employment, entrepreneurship, enterprise support, and labour market reforms.

7.1 Overview of Labour Sector Priorities in the 2026 Budget

The main labour and employment priorities reflected in the 2026 Budget include:

- Expansion of the Work Abroad Programme as a labour mobility mechanism.
- Advancement of the National Green Jobs Strategy, anchored in the EU–Ghana Pact for Skills.
- Revision of the National Employment Policy and Labour Migration Policy.
- Introduction of catalytic financing initiatives, including the forthcoming National Employment Trust (NET) under the Development Bank Ghana (DBG).
- Continued reforms under the National Service Authority (NSA) to improve deployment systems and expand youth agricultural programmes.

These priorities reflect ongoing efforts to modernise Ghana’s labour market policy architecture and enhance job opportunities.

7.2 Domestic Job Creation and Labour Market Absorption

A critical challenge for Ghana is the limited capacity of the domestic economy to generate sufficient jobs for youth. Despite references to job creation efforts within various sectors, the Budget does not allocate significant new resources toward large-scale domestic employment programmes.

Key Observations:

- The emphasis is on **policy and institutional reforms**, rather than substantial expansion of employment-generating programmes.
- Major job-creating sectors – such as construction, manufacturing, agriculture and services – are not supported with large-scale youth-targeted employment interventions.
- Labour market information systems, a vital tool for matching youth to opportunities, receive limited attention.

Youth Responsiveness Assessment:

Moderate. The Budget acknowledges youth employment challenges but does not match this with commensurate financing or large-scale labour market activation programmes.

7.3 Labour Mobility and the Work Abroad Programme

The Work Abroad Programme continues to gain prominence in the 2026 Budget. By late 2025, over 13,000 applications had been received, with screening, training and visa processes underway. The first cohort had successfully relocated to the UAE.

Youth Responsiveness: Strengths

- Provides immediate income-generation opportunities for young people.
- Helps reduce domestic labour market pressure.
- Demonstrates operational progress, suggesting institutional readiness.

Youth Responsiveness: Risks and Gaps

- Potential risk of over-reliance on external labour markets rather than strengthening domestic job creation.
- Worker protection, welfare and reintegration support must be strengthened to safeguard young workers.
- Limited accessibility for rural youth and those without the resources to participate in overseas mobility.

Assessment: Moderately strong youth responsiveness, but long-term sustainability and inclusion concerns remain.

7.4 National Employment Trust (NET) and Enterprise Financing

The proposed National Employment Trust (NET) to be implemented through the Development Bank Ghana (DBG) is one of the most promising youth-focused employment mechanisms in the Budget.

The Trust aims to:

- De-risk private investment in high-potential sectors;
- Support youth-led and women-owned enterprises;
- Catalyse job creation through increased access to finance.

Potential for Youth Employment:

- High, if capitalised adequately and integrated with business development services.
- Could significantly expand enterprise financing for young entrepreneurs.
- Offers an opportunity to strengthen Ghana's MSME ecosystem.

Gaps:

- The Budget does not specify the size of the fund, disbursement mechanisms or targeting criteria.
- Without strong governance arrangements, youth-led SMEs may find it difficult to access the fund.

Assessment: Moderate-to-strong potential, but effectiveness depends entirely on design and implementation.

7.5 Green Jobs and Climate-Smart Work Pathways

The advancement of the National Green Jobs Strategy continues under the EU–Ghana Pact for Skills. The strategy aims to position young people for emerging opportunities in:

- Renewable energy
- Waste management
- Sustainable agriculture
- Climate-resilient infrastructure

Youth Responsiveness Assessment:

- Strength: Positions youth for future labour market transitions and aligns with global green economy trends.
- Weakness: The Budget provides limited detail on specific youth programmes, funding envelopes, or targeted interventions for scaling green job pathways.

Overall: Moderate responsiveness, with high future potential but low current financing clarity.

7.6 Youth Entrepreneurship and MSME Support

While entrepreneurship is a major avenue for youth livelihoods, the 2026 Budget does not introduce large-scale, youth-specific enterprise support schemes. Enterprise financing is largely reliant on cross-sectoral mechanisms such as:

- The FinTech Growth Fund,
- The proposed National Employment Trust,
- Digital skills programmes that may indirectly foster entrepreneurship.

Important youth-targeted entrepreneurship programmes (e.g., YouStart or similar instruments) are not prominently featured, reflecting a gap in enterprise ecosystem strengthening.

Youth Responsiveness Assessment:

Weak-to-moderate. Youth entrepreneurship support exists indirectly but lacks dedicated budget allocations or new programme scaling.

7.7 National Service Authority (NSA) and Early Career Transitions

The National Service Authority continues to play a key role in early career transitions for tertiary graduates. The 2026 Budget outlines progress in:

- Enhanced deployment systems;
- Improved monitoring of allowances;
- Deployment of cohorts to Colleges of Education and Nursing;
- Expansion of the “Nkoko Nkete nkete” youth farming initiative.

Youth Responsiveness Assessment:

- Strengths: Provides structured early-career experience for thousands of young people.
- Weaknesses: Limited integration with long-term employability strategies; scale of the agriculture initiative is not specified; does not address non-tertiary youth.

Overall: *Moderate responsiveness.*

7.8 Inclusion and Equity in Labour Market Interventions

The labour sector measures do not strongly articulate mechanisms for ensuring inclusion of:

- young women,
- rural youth,
- youth with disabilities,
- NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) youth,
- economically vulnerable youth without formal qualifications.

Without targeted approaches, labour policies may reinforce existing inequities in access to opportunity.

Assessment: Weak youth inclusion lens.

7.9 Summary of Youth Responsiveness in Labour, Jobs & Enterprise

The Labour, Jobs and Enterprise sector demonstrates **moderate youth responsiveness**, with pockets of strong potential but limited large-scale interventions. The strongest elements include:

- The emerging National Employment Trust;
- Digital-driven entrepreneurship pathways;

- Labour mobility under the Work Abroad Programme;
- Green jobs positioning.

However, significant gaps remain:

- Insufficient domestic job creation mechanisms;
- Limited integration of education-to-employment systems;
- Absence of large-scale, youth-focused enterprise financing;
- Weak inclusion strategies for marginalised youth.

Overall, while the Budget makes important strides in employment policy reform, the scale of action is not commensurate with the demographic and labour market pressures facing Ghana's youth.

8. Sector Analysis – Health, Social Protection, and Social Services

Health, social protection and social services play an essential role in shaping the overall well-being, resilience and productivity of young people. For many youth, particularly those who are economically vulnerable, marginalised, or transitioning between education and employment, access to health services, psychosocial support, and targeted social protection measures is vital for navigating the complexities of adolescent and early adulthood. This section assesses the extent to which the 2026 Budget addresses the health and social development needs of Ghana's youth.

8.1 Overview of Sector Priorities in the 2026 Budget

The 2026 Budget emphasises the following areas within the health and social sectors:

- Continued implementation of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) reforms.
- Strengthening primary health care systems.
- Expansion of adolescent reproductive health outreach.
- Ongoing digitalisation of health systems.
- Sustained investment in social protection programmes such as LEAP, school feeding, and child protection services.
- Efficiency gains in the delivery of social services and community-based interventions.

While several of these interventions have youth implications, only a few explicitly target young people.

8.2 Health Outcomes and Youth Well-being

Health is a critical enabler of youth development. Young people require accessible, affordable and youth-friendly health services, particularly in relation to:

- adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH),
- mental health and psychological support,
- prevention and treatment of communicable and non-communicable diseases,
- maternal health for young mothers,
- substance abuse prevention,
- nutrition.

Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Education (ASRH)

The Budget notes a large-scale NYA-led outreach initiative reaching approximately four million young people with ASRH education. This is one of the *strongest youth-specific health interventions* mentioned in the 2026 Budget.

Youth Responsiveness Assessment:

- Visibility: High
- Scale: Very high
- Depth: Limited detail on the intensity and quality of engagement
- Inclusion: Broad; however, targeted approaches for marginalised adolescents are unclear

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Mental health challenges are rising among Ghanaian youth, yet the 2026 Budget does not outline specific youth-targeted mental health programmes. While overall health system strengthening can improve service delivery, the absence of dedicated mental health interventions for young people represents a missed opportunity.

Youth Responsiveness Assessment:

Weak. Mental health is recognised at a system level but not strategically targeted towards youth.

Primary Health Care and UHC Reforms

Strengthening primary health care is essential for improving access for rural youth and low-income young people. However, the Budget does not outline youth-specific UHC strategies or youth-friendly service models.

Overall youth relevance: Moderate but indirect.

8.3 Social Protection and Income Support

Social protection plays an essential stabilising role for vulnerable youth. However, Ghana's social protection system remains largely adult- or child-focused, offering limited support for young adults facing unemployment, economic exclusion, or caregiving burdens.

Key Programmes in the 2026 Budget:

- Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP)
 - Primarily targets extremely poor households; not youth-specific.
 - Offers indirect benefits for youth in beneficiary households.
- School Feeding Programme
 - Benefits adolescents in basic education but does not extend to older youth.
- Child Protection Services
 - Relevant for safeguarding adolescents but limited in reach for young adults aged 18–35.
- Disability Support Interventions
 - Important for young people with disabilities, though youth-specific components are not identified.

Youth Responsiveness Assessment:

Weak-to-moderate. While broad social protection systems exist, they do not adequately incorporate youth-targeted safety nets or employment-linked support such as cash-for-work, transitional income support, or youth unemployment insurance.

Gaps in Social Protection for Youth:

- No youth-specific cash transfer mechanisms.
- Absence of unemployment assistance tailored to young labour market entrants.
- Limited social protection for young mothers outside maternal health services.
- Weak integration of social protection with skills development or job placement.

These gaps limit the ability of vulnerable youth to manage shocks, invest in skills or pursue sustainable livelihoods.

8.4 Social Services and Community-Based Interventions

Community-based social services, including counselling, youth development centres, and community facilitation, are crucial for supporting the holistic development of adolescents and young adults.

Key observations from the 2026 Budget:

- National Youth Authority (NYA) continues to deliver community outreach through ASRH education and entrepreneurship roadshows, but scale and financing remain modest relative to national needs.
- Youth-friendly community spaces (e.g., youth centres, counselling centres) receive limited mention.
- Protection from risky behaviours (substance abuse, early pregnancies, unsafe migration) is not extensively addressed.
- Support for youth leaving care, street-connected youth, and at-risk adolescents remains minimal.

Youth Responsiveness Assessment:

Moderate. Some youth-facing services exist, but the system lacks comprehensive, well-resourced community-level programming.

8.5 Gender, Equity and Vulnerability

Young women, rural youth, and youth with disabilities experience multiple layers of exclusion. Within the health and social sectors:

- Young women face high unmet needs in reproductive health, gender-based violence services, and economic empowerment support.
- Rural youth continue to face limited access to health services, especially sexual and reproductive health and mental health support.

- Youth with disabilities require tailored health and social care services, which the Budget does not explicitly detail.

Assessment:

Weak inclusion lens. The Budget lacks targeted measures to address intersectional vulnerabilities among youth.

8.6 Summary of Youth Responsiveness in Health, Social Protection and Social Services

The health, social protection and social services sector demonstrates weak-to-moderate youth responsiveness, with the following characteristics:

Strengths

- Large-scale adolescent sexual and reproductive health outreach.
- Continued investment in health system strengthening and primary care.
- Broad social protection programmes that indirectly benefit youth.

Gaps

- Lack of targeted youth mental health services.
- Limited youth-specific social protection mechanisms.
- Insufficient support for vulnerable youth (e.g., young mothers, youth with disabilities, NEET youth).
- Weak integration between health, skills and employment systems.
- Limited youth-friendly service delivery models.

Overall Assessment

While the sector includes some relevant interventions, the level of youth-focused investment is not proportionate to Ghana's demographic realities. To maximise the contribution of health and social services to youth development, the Budget would need to prioritise youth-friendly health care, targeted social protection, mental health support, and expanded community-based services.

9. Cross-Cutting Issues – Gender, Disability, Climate, Digital

Cross-cutting issues are essential for assessing the extent to which the 2026 Budget advances inclusive and future-oriented development for Ghana’s young people. This section reviews four key dimensions – gender, disability inclusion, climate and environmental sustainability, and digital transformation – recognising that these areas interact significantly with education, employment, health, enterprise and civic development outcomes for youth.

9.1 Gender and Youth Development

Gender inequalities continue to shape the life chances of young people in Ghana, particularly young women who face structural barriers across education, employment, entrepreneurship, and social protection systems.

Observations from the 2026 Budget:

- Youth-focused gender interventions are limited.

While programmes such as the District Skills and Entrepreneurship Roadshow prioritise young women in agricultural value chains, few other youth-specific gender-responsive measures are present.

- Reproductive health outreach is a key strength.

The ASRH education campaign, which reportedly reached four million young people, strongly benefits adolescent girls. However, the Budget does not provide complementary investments in contraceptives, youth-friendly health facilities, or gender-based violence (GBV) prevention for young women.

- Women’s economic empowerment receives indirect support.

The forthcoming National Employment Trust (NET) includes women-owned enterprises as a target group, but the Budget lacks detail on how this will translate into accessible, gender-sensitive financing for young female entrepreneurs.

Youth Responsiveness Assessment (Gender):

Moderate but uneven. The Budget contains promising elements but lacks a comprehensive gender-responsive approach tailored to young women’s needs, particularly in skills development, enterprise support, safety, and reproductive health services.

9.2 Disability Inclusion

Young people with disabilities constitute one of the most excluded youth groups in Ghana, facing significant barriers in learning, mobility, employment, and access to social services. A truly youth-responsive budget requires explicit measures to reduce these barriers.

Observations from the 2026 Budget:

- Limited disability-targeted youth measures.

Although the Budget supports disability interventions broadly, it does not identify youth-specific disability programmes or budgets.

- Gaps in inclusive education and skills training.

Accessibility features, specialised learning tools, and inclusive TVET services remain under-emphasised.

- Minimal evidence of youth-specific disability social protection.

Targeted support for young people with disabilities transitioning into employment or entrepreneurship is absent.

Youth Responsiveness Assessment (Disability):

Weak. Inclusion frameworks appear broad and generic, lacking concrete mechanisms to address the intersecting barriers faced by young people with disabilities.

9.3 Climate and Environmental Sustainability

Climate change increasingly affects youth livelihoods – particularly in agriculture, coastal communities, and informal urban settlements. Young people also play a critical role in advancing climate-smart innovation, green jobs, and environmental stewardship.

Observations from the 2026 Budget:

- Positive policy direction through the National Green Jobs Strategy.

The strategy aims to prepare young people for emerging opportunities in renewable energy, waste management, climate-smart agriculture and green enterprise. However, the Budget provides limited details on dedicated youth-targeted green job programmes or financing mechanisms.

- Climate actions are not sufficiently youth mainstreamed.

While national climate commitments are referenced across sectors, few interventions explicitly articulate youth engagement, youth leadership, or youth employment in climate adaptation and mitigation initiatives.

- Potential under-leveraging of youth climate networks.

National platforms such as the Africa Youth Partnership on Climate Change (AYP), Local Conferences of Youth (LCOY), and youth-led climate action groups could serve as implementation partners but are not mentioned in the Budget narrative.

Youth Responsiveness Assessment (Climate):

Moderate potential but weak explicit targeting. The strategic intent for green jobs is present, but financial detail and youth-specific targeting are insufficient.

9.4 Digital Transformation

Digital transformation is the strongest and most forward-looking cross-cutting theme in the 2026 Budget and represents a major opportunity for youth empowerment.

Key Youth-Relevant Digital Initiatives:

- One Million Coders Programme – a large-scale digital skills development programme for young people.
- Regional Digital Centres – expanding digital access, innovation and entrepreneurship opportunities across regions.
- FinTech Growth Fund – supporting digital entrepreneurship and job creation in emerging fintech markets.
- Digitalisation of government systems – enhancing efficiency in revenue mobilisation, education management and public services, indirectly improving service access for youth.

Youth Responsiveness Assessment (Digital):

Strong and transformative. Digitalisation is the most explicitly youth-aligned component of the Budget, with high potential for future employment, productivity, and innovation. Continued investment and ecosystem development will be key to sustaining gains.

9.5 Summary of Cross-Cutting Youth Responsiveness

Cross-Cutting Area	Youth Responsiveness Rating	Summary Assessment
Gender	Moderate	Strong potential in ASRH and enterprise initiatives but limited systemic gender-responsive budgeting for youth.
Disability	Weak	Absence of youth-specific disability measures in education, employment, and social protection.
Climate	Moderate potential	Strategic intent exists, but explicit youth targeting, financing and implementation mechanisms are missing.
Digital	Strong	Clear, well-articulated youth benefits with high transformative potential.

Overall Cross-Cutting Assessment

The 2026 Budget demonstrates strong youth progression in digitalisation, moderate engagement in gender and climate policy, and weak attention to disability inclusion. A more youth-responsive cross-cutting framework would require intentional budgeting for marginalised youth, integration of youth leadership into climate action, and systemic mainstreaming of disability inclusion across sectors.

10. Youth Participation, Accountability and PFM Processes

Youth participation in public financial management processes is essential for ensuring that national budgets reflect the priorities, aspirations and lived realities of young people. Meaningful engagement strengthens accountability, enhances policy legitimacy, and contributes to more equitable and effective public spending. This section assesses the extent to which the 2026 Budget embeds mechanisms for youth participation in planning, budgeting, monitoring and public accountability, and the degree to which PFM systems support youth-responsive governance.

10.1 Youth Participation in Budget Formulation

The 2026 Budget does not explicitly outline mechanisms through which young people or youth-led organisations were engaged in pre-budget consultations. While the Ministry of Finance routinely conducts stakeholder engagements, youth-specific platforms, consultations or feedback mechanisms are not documented in the Budget narrative.

Key Observations:

- Limited evidence of structured youth consultation:

The absence of clearly defined youth engagement channels suggests that young people were not deliberately or systematically consulted during the budget's formulation.

- Potential under-utilisation of youth networks:

Ghana possesses robust youth constituencies – including civil society coalitions, student unions, innovation hubs and climate youth networks – that could contribute meaningfully to the budgeting process but are not referenced.

- Implications for youth-responsive budgeting:

Without structured input, youth priorities – particularly for unemployed youth, marginalised groups and young entrepreneurs – may remain underrepresented.

Assessment: Weak youth participation in budget preparation.

10.2 Transparency and Access to Budget Information

Transparency is a prerequisite for meaningful participation. The 2026 Budget Statement is publicly available and structured in accordance with Ghana's PFM Act; however, accessibility for youth audiences varies.

Strengths:

- The Budget Statement and annexes are published online and available for public review.
- Key sector priorities and narratives are relatively clear and provide useful high-level summaries.

Gaps:

- Limited youth-friendly communication formats:

No simplified budget briefs, infographics or youth-targeted summaries are provided to facilitate understanding among younger audiences.

- Absence of age-disaggregated data:

The Budget does not include youth-specific budget tags, expenditure lines or performance indicators, hindering accountability for youth outcomes.

Assessment: Moderate transparency, but weak youth accessibility.

10.3 Accountability Mechanisms for Youth-Focused Programmes

Accountability mechanisms are essential for ensuring that youth-related commitments translate into actual implementation. The 2026 Budget includes several programmes relevant to youth, but performance monitoring frameworks specific to youth outcomes are limited.

Key Observations:

- Limited youth-specific indicators:

Performance metrics relating to youth employment, digital skills acquisition, health outcomes or social inclusion are not prominently featured.

- Weak integration with PFM performance systems:

Ministries responsible for youth programmes (e.g., MoYDE, Education, Labour, Sports) do not provide youth-specific performance targets or monitoring dashboards.

- No clear institutional mandate for youth budget oversight:

While MoYDE's establishment is a major step, its role in coordinating and overseeing youth-related public expenditure is yet to be defined within the PFM architecture.

Assessment: Weak formal accountability tools for youth programming.

10.4 Inter-Ministerial Coordination and PFM Alignment

Youth development is inherently cross-sectoral, requiring strong coordination across ministries responsible for education, employment, digitalisation, health, and social services.

Strengths:

- Establishment of MoYDE provides an institutional locus for youth coordination.
- The Budget acknowledges youth empowerment as a social sector priority.

Gaps:

- Absence of a multi-sectoral youth budget framework:

There is no coordinated Youth Development Financing Strategy linking MoYDE with other sectors.

- Fragmentation persists:

Youth programmes remain dispersed across MDAs without consolidated reporting or harmonised targets.

- Lack of PFM integration:

MoYDE's coordination function is not yet embedded in budget ceilings, programme budgeting guidelines or expenditure review processes.

Assessment: Moderate institutional potential; weak operational coordination.

10.5 Opportunities for Strengthening Youth Participation in PFM

The current PFM environment offers several entry points for enhancing youth engagement and accountability:

1. Institutionalising Youth Pre-Budget Consultations:

A structured annual youth dialogue convened by MoF and MoYDE would ensure that youth priorities influence budget formulation.

2. Adopting Youth Budget Tagging:

Introducing age-disaggregated budget tagging would increase transparency and support evidence-based youth programming.

3. Creating Youth-Friendly Budget Briefs:

Simplified communications would make budget information more accessible to students, young entrepreneurs, youth workers, and marginalised youth.

4. Strengthening MoYDE's PFM Mandate:

The Ministry could lead a cross-government Youth Development Financing Framework aligned with the Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework.

5. Developing Youth Outcome Indicators:

MDAs implementing youth programmes should include measurable youth indicators in their annual performance frameworks.

6. Engaging Youth in Monitoring and Oversight:

Youth-led CSOs, innovation hubs and civic networks could contribute to public expenditure tracking, service delivery monitoring, and social audits.

10.6 Overall Assessment of Youth Participation and PFM Processes

The assessment indicates that youth participation and accountability mechanisms within Ghana's 2026 Budget are weak, despite the presence of youth-targeted programmes. Key weaknesses include the absence of formal youth consultation processes, limited youth-specific performance indicators, and weak institutional integration of youth concerns within the PFM system.

Summary Rating:

Weak-to-moderate youth responsiveness in participation and PFM processes.

Implications for Youth Development

Without structured participation and clear accountability channels:

- Youth priorities risk being overshadowed by competing national interests.
- Programme implementation may not effectively meet the needs of diverse youth groups.
- Opportunities for youth empowerment, civic engagement and leadership remain underutilised.

A more youth-responsive PFM framework would not only enhance equity but also strengthen Ghana's broader governance and development outcomes.

11. Implementation Capacity, Delivery Mechanisms and Risks

The effectiveness of any budget is determined not only by its allocations and stated priorities but by the capacity of institutions to deliver on planned interventions. For youth-focused programmes – many of which cut across multiple sectors – implementation capacity, coordination mechanisms and risk management structures are critical determinants of success. This section assesses the institutional preparedness of government ministries, agencies and programmes to implement the youth-relevant initiatives outlined in the 2026 Budget, and identifies key risks that may undermine intended outcomes.

11.1 Institutional Capacity of Youth-Serving Ministries and Agencies

Ministry of Youth Development and Empowerment (MoYDE)

The establishment of MoYDE in 2025 is an important institutional milestone. However, as a newly formed ministry, its operational capacities – staffing, systems, planning mechanisms and inter-ministerial coordination frameworks – are still evolving.

Strengths:

- Provides a central institutional home for youth policy and coordination.
- Has oversight of NYA and NSA, enabling some consolidation of youth-focused efforts.

Weaknesses:

- Limited clarity on budget size, organisational structure and medium-term strategy.
- Weak integration with national planning and PFM systems, reducing its influence over sectoral budgets affecting youth.
- Risk of becoming symbolic rather than operational if not sufficiently resourced.

Implication:

Youth responsiveness of the Budget may be constrained by MoYDE's early-stage institutional maturity.

11.2 Capacity of Sector Ministries Delivering Youth-Relevant Programmes

Ministry of Education

This ministry has relatively strong implementation systems given its longstanding role and broad mandate. While it can deliver large-scale programmes such as Free SHS, it faces:

- Infrastructure constraints
- Teacher quality and training gaps

- Limited capacity for labour-market-linked programming
- Weak institutional linkages with employment and enterprise agencies

Ministry of Labour, Jobs and Employment (MLJE)

MLJE is strategically positioned but historically under-resourced relative to its mandate. Important reforms – such as the National Employment Policy review and Green Jobs Strategy – are underway, but implementation often lags due to:

- Limited staff capacity
- Inadequate labour market information systems
- Fragmented employment services

National Youth Authority (NYA)

NYA plays a central role in youth empowerment, but:

- Its resource envelope is modest relative to national youth needs.
- Programme focus is often on outreach rather than sustained skills or employment pathways.
- Monitoring and evaluation systems are still maturing.

National Service Authority (NSA)

NSA has strong administrative capacity for large-scale annual deployments. Its main constraints include:

- Limited integration with industry for long-term employability results.
- Over-reliance on public-sector placements.
- Unclear sustainability of youth agriculture initiatives such as “*Nkoko Nkete nkete*”.

Ministry of Communications and Digitalisation

This ministry exhibits strong implementation performance, especially in digitalisation projects, but must strengthen:

- Inclusion strategies ensuring access for rural and marginalised youth.
- Linkages between digital skills and employment.

11.3 Programme Delivery Mechanisms

Strengths in Delivery Mechanisms

- Large-scale education and digitalisation programmes have established delivery pipelines.

- Youth outreach initiatives (e.g., ASRH, skills roadshows) leverage community-based structures.
- Labour mobility systems demonstrate operational capacity for overseas deployment.

Weaknesses in Delivery Mechanisms

- Many youth programmes rely heavily on donor or private-sector partnerships not fully institutionalised within national systems.
- Limited coordination across MDAs delivering youth-related services leads to duplication or fragmentation.
- Weak labour market information systems undermine evidence-based placement and skills matching.
- Lack of dedicated youth-targeted financing frameworks restricts scaling of successful interventions.

11.4 Key Implementation Risks

(i) Fiscal Constraints

Tight fiscal space may result in delayed releases, underfunded programmes, or incomplete implementation of youth initiatives – especially those requiring capital investment or large-scale rollout.

(ii) Institutional Fragmentation

Youth issues remain dispersed across multiple MDAs. Without strong coordination led by MoYDE, youth programmes may operate in silos, reducing impact and value for money.

(iii) Capacity Limitations at Decentralised Levels

Many youth services require local-level implementation (e.g., youth centres, ASRH campaigns, digital hubs). District Assemblies may lack the resources, staff or systems to execute these programmes effectively.

(iv) Weak Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Systems

Absence of youth-specific indicators and limited real-time performance data make it difficult to track outcomes, identify bottlenecks or adjust interventions.

(v) Equity and Inclusion Risks

Without targeted mechanisms, youth from marginalised groups, including rural youth, young women, youth with disabilities and low-income youth, may not benefit proportionately from national programmes.

(vi) Sustainability Risks for Flagship Initiatives

Digital skills programmes, youth entrepreneurship schemes and green jobs pathways may require long-term operational financing, which is uncertain under current fiscal conditions.

(vii) Over-reliance on Labour Mobility Schemes

Overdependence on international placement programmes risks overshadowing the need for robust domestic job creation and may expose young workers to exploitation or shocks in foreign labour markets.

11.5 Opportunities for Strengthening Implementation Capacity

To mitigate these risks and enhance delivery, several opportunities emerge:

1. Strengthening MoYDE's mandate and resourcing to lead cross-sector youth coordination.
2. Developing a Youth Development Financing Framework that aligns programmes, budgets and performance indicators across MDAs.
3. Institutionalising partnerships with private sector and development partners for employability, digital training and enterprise support.
4. Expanding decentralised capacity-building for District Assemblies to implement community-level youth services.
5. Integrating youth-specific M&E systems into sector performance frameworks and budget reporting.
6. Strengthening labour market information systems to support evidence-based employment policies.

11.6 Overall Assessment of Implementation Capacity and Risks

The youth development architecture in the 2026 Budget displays moderate implementation potential but faces significant structural risks that could limit impact. While Ghana has strong institutional foundations in education, digitalisation and youth outreach, youth employment and inclusion outcomes depend heavily on:

- improved coordination,
- enhanced M&E,
- strengthened institutional capacity,
- adequate and timely financing,
- and robust delivery systems that reach marginalised youth.

Summary Rating:

Moderate implementation capacity with high delivery risks if structural constraints are not addressed.

12. Monitoring, Indicators and Data for Youth Outcomes

Robust monitoring systems, clearly defined indicators and reliable data are essential for tracking the effectiveness of youth-focused public expenditure. A youth-responsive budget requires not only appropriate allocations but also measurable results frameworks that enable policymakers, civil society and young people themselves to assess progress and hold institutions accountable. This section evaluates the monitoring and data environment surrounding youth-relevant measures in the 2026 Budget, highlighting strengths, gaps and opportunities for improvement.

12.1 Current Monitoring Frameworks in the 2026 Budget

The 2026 Budget Statement presents narrative sector achievements, programme summaries and selected performance indicators; however, youth-specific indicators are largely absent. Monitoring frameworks tend to be sector-based rather than demographic-focused, limiting visibility into how budget implementation affects different youth groups.

Key Observations:

- Youth outcomes are not systematically tracked across sectors.

While programmes in education, health, employment and digitalisation reference youth indirectly, the Budget does not consolidate these outcomes under a unified youth results framework.

- Reporting is output-focused rather than outcome-focused.

Achievements such as numbers trained, deployed or engaged are mentioned, but long-term outcomes – employment rates, earnings, digital job placements, or reductions in youth vulnerability – are not monitored.

- Limited integration between sector ministries and MoYDE.

Without formalised reporting channels, MoYDE lacks the tools required to coordinate youth results across ministries.

Assessment: *Weak indicator environment for youth-responsive budgeting.*

12.2 Availability and Use of Age-Disaggregated Data

Age-disaggregated data is essential for monitoring youth outcomes; however, its use in the 2026 Budget is limited.

Strengths:

- Ghana Statistical Service's (GSS) broader reforms, including GDP and CPI rebasing, indirectly strengthen national data systems.
- Existing national surveys (e.g., GLSS, Labour Force Survey) contain youth-relevant variables that can support policy analysis.

Gaps:

- Absence of youth-disaggregated administrative data across education, employment, health and social protection programmes.
- No youth budget tagging, making it difficult to quantify actual youth-related expenditure.
- Lack of real-time or digital youth monitoring platforms, despite the broader digitalisation agenda.

These gaps hinder evidence-based decision-making and constrain Ghana's ability to track progress toward national youth development goals.

12.3 Sector-Level Indicators Relevant to Youth

Education and Skills

Indicators typically monitored include:

- enrolment and completion rates
- teacher deployment
- infrastructure outputs
- STEM and TVET participation
- digital skills certification numbers

Missing:

- measures of employability, skills proficiency, school-to-work transition rates, and labour market relevance.

Labour, Jobs and Enterprise

Indicators available are often narrow, focusing on programme outputs such as:

- numbers trained
- numbers deployed (NSA)
- participants in the Work Abroad Programme

Missing:

- youth unemployment and underemployment disaggregated by gender, region, disability
- enterprise survival and growth rates for youth-led MSMEs
- green and digital job placements for youth

Health and Social Services

Indicators monitored include:

- ASRH outreach numbers
- primary health care utilisation
- general hospital attendance

Missing:

- youth mental health outcomes
- adolescent health service quality
- access to youth-friendly services
- social protection uptake by vulnerable youth

Digitalisation

Indicators include:

- digital infrastructure coverage
- programme enrolments

Missing:

- youth digital job placements
- earnings and entrepreneurship outcomes for digital trainees

12.4 Risks Associated with Weak Monitoring Systems

Weak monitoring and data systems pose several risks to youth outcomes:

1. Inability to assess programme effectiveness – programmes may appear successful based on participation numbers, while failing to deliver meaningful outcomes.
2. Poor allocation decisions – without performance data, budget reallocations may not reflect youth needs or programme effectiveness.
3. Reduced stakeholder accountability – youth and civil society cannot easily track whether commitments are met.
4. Persistent inequities – lack of disaggregated data makes it difficult to identify and address exclusion of young women, rural youth, youth with disabilities or low-income youth.
5. Weak policy learning – Ghana may miss opportunities to scale what works and discontinue ineffective strategies.

12.5 Opportunities to Strengthen Monitoring and Data for Youth Outcomes

Several strategic opportunities exist to enhance Ghana's youth monitoring environment:

(i) Establish a Youth Development Results Framework

Led by MoYDE, this framework should consolidate youth outcomes across sectors, linking budget inputs to measurable results.

(ii) Adopt Youth Budget Tagging

Introducing an age-disaggregated budget tagging system, similar to gender-responsive or climate budget tagging, would:

- quantify youth-related spending
- enhance transparency
- inform more equitable resource allocation

(iii) Strengthen Administrative Data Systems

Sector ministries should integrate youth-relevant data fields into MIS platforms, including:

- age
- gender
- disability status
- region
- education level
- employment status (for labour programmes)

(iv) Improve Labour Market Information Systems

Enhanced labour market data would support evidence-based skills and employment planning, benefiting:

- young jobseekers
- TVET institutions
- enterprises
- policy planners

(v) Leverage Digital Platforms for Youth Monitoring

Ghana's digital transformation agenda presents opportunities to:

- build real-time youth programme dashboards
- integrate Youth Information Systems (as referenced in previous policy discussions)
- support youth feedback loops and social accountability

(vi) Institutionalise Youth-Led Monitoring Mechanisms

Youth-led CSOs, innovation hubs and accountability networks could provide:

- social audits
- public expenditure tracking
- participatory monitoring
- feedback on service delivery

12.6 Overall Assessment of Monitoring and Data Systems for Youth

The monitoring and data environment for youth development in Ghana remains weak, with significant limitations in age-disaggregated data, performance indicators and institutional reporting. While sector ministries capture outputs, very few track outcomes that meaningfully reflect youth well-being, employability or social inclusion.

Summary Rating:

Weak youth responsiveness in monitoring and data systems, with moderate potential for improvement through digitalisation and institutional strengthening.

A youth-responsive budget framework requires robust evidence. Strengthening monitoring systems will enable Ghana to better:

- assess the impact of youth interventions,
- refine programme design,
- allocate resources more effectively, and
- achieve equitable, sustainable youth development outcomes.

13. Gaps and Missed Opportunities

While the 2026 Budget contains several youth-relevant commitments – particularly in education, digitalisation and selected labour market interventions – the analysis reveals significant gaps and missed opportunities that limit the Budget’s overall responsiveness to the needs and aspirations of Ghana’s young people. Addressing these gaps is critical for ensuring that Ghana fully harnesses its demographic dividend and promotes equitable, inclusive and sustainable development.

13.1 Insufficient Scale of Domestic Job Creation

One of the most significant gaps in the 2026 Budget is the limited scale of domestic job creation interventions relative to Ghana’s rapidly growing youth labour force. Although the National Employment Trust and green jobs initiatives hold promise, concrete domestic pathways remain underdeveloped.

Missed Opportunities:

- Large-scale public works or labour-intensive infrastructure programmes targeted at youth.
- Expansion of apprenticeships and work-based learning schemes linked to industry.
- Stronger incentives for private-sector job creation targeted at young workers.

Implication:

Youth unemployment and underemployment are unlikely to improve significantly without more ambitious and targeted domestic job creation strategies.

13.2 Weak Integration of Education and Employability

Despite substantial investment in basic and secondary education, the Budget does not sufficiently address the persistent gap between schooling and employability.

Missed Opportunities:

- Dedicated funding for school-to-work transition programmes.
- Strengthened career guidance and labour market information systems at the secondary and tertiary levels.
- Expansion of employer partnerships to provide internships, apprenticeships and experiential learning.

Implication:

The human capital gains from Free SHS and other education reforms may not translate into improved youth labour market outcomes.

13.3 Limited Youth-Focused Social Protection

The social protection landscape lacks targeted support for vulnerable young people, particularly NEET youth, young mothers, youth with disabilities and low-income rural youth.

Missed Opportunities:

- Youth unemployment assistance or livelihood grants.
- Cash-plus social protection models linking income support to skills and employment.
- Youth-responsive maternal support for adolescent mothers.
- Disability-inclusive livelihood programmes for young people with disabilities.

Implication:

Many youth remain exposed to economic shocks and social vulnerabilities that reinforce poverty and exclusion.

13.4 Absence of a Comprehensive Youth Financing Framework

Although youth programmes appear across multiple sectors, Ghana lacks a unified youth financing strategy to guide investments and ensure coherence.

Missed Opportunities:

- Creation of a consolidated Youth Development Fund or budget window.
- Youth budget tagging to track expenditures and outcomes.
- Medium-term financing aligned with the National Youth Policy and national development frameworks.

Implication:

Resource fragmentation limits the effectiveness, efficiency and visibility of youth investments.

13.5 Weak Disability Inclusion Across Sectors

Disability inclusion remains significantly under-addressed in the Budget. Few interventions detail support for young people with disabilities, whether in education, employment, digital skills, health or social services.

Missed Opportunities:

- Inclusive education infrastructure and specialised learning resources.
- Disability-targeted entrepreneurship support and job placement services.
- Youth-focused disability social protection and assistive technologies.

Implication:

Youth with disabilities risk being left behind in Ghana's development agenda.

13.6 Underutilised Potential of Digital Transformation for Employment

While the Budget prioritises digital skills programmes, it does not fully link digital training to employment and enterprise outcomes.

Missed Opportunities:

- Employer-led digital internship programmes.
- Incubation and acceleration schemes for youth in digital and creative industries.
- Clear job placement frameworks aligned with the One Million Coders Programme.

Implication:

Digital transformation may improve skills availability without necessarily translating into decent work for youth.

13.7 Limited Youth Engagement in Budget and Policy Processes

The absence of structured youth participation in pre-budget consultations and monitoring processes is a major governance gap.

Missed Opportunities:

- Formal youth consultation mechanisms led by MoF and MoYDE.
- Participatory budgeting platforms at the national or district levels.
- Youth-led accountability and monitoring forums for government programmes.

Implication:

Youth perspectives remain underrepresented, reducing policy relevance and weakening democratic accountability.

13.8 Fragmented Coordination of Youth Interventions

Despite the establishment of MoYDE, coordination across MDAs remains weak.

Missed Opportunities:

- Creation of an inter-ministerial youth steering committee.
- Harmonised youth outcomes framework shared by key ministries.
- Consolidated reporting of youth programmes in the Budget.

Implication:

Siloed implementation reduces synergy across programmes and weakens the impact of youth interventions.

13.9 Underdeveloped Green Jobs Opportunities

Although climate and green growth are recognised priorities, youth-specific investments in green jobs are not fully articulated.

Missed Opportunities:

- Financing for youth-led climate enterprises.
- Green apprenticeships and skills programmes.
- Climate-responsive agricultural opportunities for rural youth.

Implication:

Ghana risks missing a major opportunity to position young people in emerging green sectors and climate-resilient value chains.

13.10 Weak Monitoring, Data and Evaluation Systems

The Budget lacks strong youth-specific indicators and integrated monitoring systems.

Missed Opportunities:

- Establishing youth outcome indicators within the national PFM framework.
- Digitised dashboards to track youth training, employment and social inclusion metrics.
- Age-disaggregated administrative data across MDAs.

Implication:

Government and civil society cannot accurately assess whether youth interventions deliver meaningful results.

13.11 Overall Assessment of Gaps and Missed Opportunities

The 2026 Budget contains *important foundations* for youth development – particularly in digitalisation and basic education – but **misses significant opportunities** to meaningfully confront the scale of youth unemployment, vulnerability and exclusion. Several systemic gaps persist, especially in job creation, social protection, disability inclusion, youth participation and monitoring.

Summary Rating:

Moderate youth responsiveness with substantial strategic gaps requiring attention in future budget cycles.

14. Summary Youth-Responsiveness Rating

This section synthesises the findings from the Youth Responsiveness Analysis to present an overall rating of how effectively the 2026 Budget addresses the priorities, needs and aspirations of Ghana's young people. The rating is derived from the structured scoring framework applied to all youth-relevant interventions identified in the Budget, using five dimensions of assessment – visibility and clarity, scale and adequacy, jobs and livelihood intensity, equity and inclusion, and implementation realism.

14.1 Quantitative Summary of Scores

Fourteen major youth-relevant interventions were assessed across the five scoring dimensions. These interventions included programmes in education, labour and employment, digitalisation, youth empowerment, enterprise development, and social services. Scores ranged from **1.6** to **2.4** out of a maximum of 3, indicating varying degrees of youth responsiveness.

Highest-Scoring Interventions (≥ 2.4)

- One Million Coders Programme (2.4)
- Free SHS / GETFund Uncapping (2.4)
- District Skills and Entrepreneurship Roadshow (2.4)

These represent the strongest youth-responsive measures in the Budget: highly visible, large in scale, and aligned with core youth development priorities.

Moderately Strong Interventions (2.0–2.3)

- National Employment Trust
- Work Abroad Programme
- ASRH Outreach
- National Green Jobs Strategy
- National Service Reforms
- Complementary Basic Education

These demonstrate clear youth relevance but require greater scale, stronger inclusion mechanisms and more effective implementation frameworks.

Weaker Interventions (≤ 1.8)

- FinTech Growth Fund
- Establishment of MoYDE (early-stage institutional capacity)
- Ghana Sports Fund
- GSS data system reforms

These interventions have important potential but currently lack sufficient youth targeting, budget detail, or implementation readiness to significantly impact youth development outcomes.

14.2 Sector-Level Rating

By aggregating individual intervention scores, the following sector-level ratings were derived:

Sector	Average Rating	Summary
Digitalisation & Innovation	2.1–2.3	Strongest area; clear youth focus; major opportunities for skills and innovation.
Education & Skills	2.2	Significant access gains; digital skills strong; employability linkages remain weak.
Youth Development & Empowerment	2.1–2.2	Good outreach and emerging institutional structure, but limited financing.
Labour, Jobs & Enterprise	2.0	Moderate; several promising initiatives but insufficient domestic job creation.
Health & Social Protection	1.8–2.0	Limited youth-specific interventions; inclusion gaps persist.
Sports & Recreation	1.8	Potential exists but youth orientation remains underdeveloped.
Data & Monitoring Systems	1.6	Weak youth disaggregation and limited performance tracking.

14.3 Overall Youth-Responsiveness Rating for the 2026 Budget

Provisional Overall Score: 2.1 out of 3

Rating Category: Moderately Youth Responsive

This rating reflects the coexistence of strong youth-oriented programmes – mainly in digitalisation and education – with notable structural weaknesses in job creation, social protection, inclusion and monitoring systems.

14.4 Narrative Interpretation of the Rating

Strengths Driving the Rating Upwards

1. Strong Youth Orientation in Digital Transformation

The Budget's digitalisation agenda, including the One Million Coders Programme and Regional Digital Centres, demonstrates clear commitment to preparing young people for the future of work.

2. Sustained Investment in Education and Human Capital

Free SHS, GETFund reforms and STEM investment significantly expand youth access to education.

3. Meaningful Youth Empowerment Initiatives

The District Skills and Entrepreneurship Roadshow and large-scale ASRH outreach indicate targeted action in youth capacity-building and well-being.

4. Emerging Institutional Foundations for Youth Policy

The establishment of MoYDE signals a strategic shift toward more coherent youth policy coordination.

Factors Moderating the Rating

1. Insufficient Domestic Job Creation

Interventions remain small in scale relative to youth labour force growth; reliance on overseas placements risks overshadowing domestic solutions.

2. Weak School-to-Work Transition Mechanisms

The Budget does not fully address employability gaps or link education reforms to labour market outcomes.

3. Limited Inclusion of Marginalised Youth

Disability inclusion, rural youth equity, and targeted support for low-income youth are minimally reflected in youth-relevant programmes.

4. Lack of Youth-Focused Social Protection

No dedicated youth safety nets exist despite rising youth vulnerability.

5. Weak Data and Monitoring Systems

Absence of youth budget tagging, youth-specific indicators and structured monitoring limits accountability and evidence-based policymaking.

6. Fragmented Implementation Arrangements

Without strong coordination led by MoYDE, impactful youth outcomes may be diluted by institutional silos.

14.5 Implications of the Rating

The “Moderately Youth Responsive” rating suggests that the 2026 Budget:

- Acknowledges youth development as a national priority,
- Introduces several high-quality interventions, and
- Builds important institutional foundations for youth policy,

but does not yet operate at the scale or depth required to shift structural youth development outcomes.

Achieving a “Strongly Youth Responsive” rating in future cycles would require:

- Scaling domestic job creation,
- Targeted inclusion mechanisms,
- Strong youth participation frameworks,
- A unified youth financing strategy,
- And comprehensive monitoring and data systems.

15. Key Messages and Advocacy Recommendations

The analysis of Ghana's 2026 Budget reveals meaningful progress in several youth-relevant areas, alongside structural gaps that require decisive policy attention. This final section distils the core messages emerging from the Youth Responsiveness Analysis and presents actionable recommendations to guide government, development partners, civil society and youth-serving institutions. The recommendations are designed to strengthen Ghana's commitment to investing in its demographic dividend and enhancing the life chances of young people.

15.1 Key Messages

1. The Budget is Moderately Youth Responsive, with High Potential but Inadequate Scale

The 2026 Budget contains promising youth-focused initiatives, especially in digitalisation, human capital development and youth outreach. However, the level of investment does not sufficiently match the scale of youth unemployment, underemployment and socio-economic vulnerability.

2. Digital Transformation is the Strongest Youth-Oriented Pillar

Initiatives such as the One Million Coders Programme and Regional Digital Centres demonstrate clear alignment with youth aspirations and future labour market demands. Digitalisation remains the most transformative sector for Ghana's young people.

3. Domestic Job Creation Pathways Are Underserved

While labour mobility and enterprise finance mechanisms exist, domestic job creation interventions for youth remain limited in scale, structure and financing.

4. Education Access Has Improved, but Employability Lag Persists

Free SHS and STEM reforms expand participation, yet structural issues such as weak transition systems, limited career guidance and insufficient TVET-industry linkages impede youth employability.

5. Youth Inclusion in Social Protection and Health Systems Is Weak

Vulnerable youth, including young women, rural youth, youth with disabilities and NEET youth, remain underserved due to a lack of targeted social protection, mental health provision and specialised services.

6. Youth Participation and Accountability Mechanisms Are Underdeveloped

The budgeting process lacks clear structures for youth engagement, reducing the relevance, legitimacy and accountability of youth-facing public expenditure.

7. Monitoring Systems Are Not Adequate to Track Youth Outcomes

The absence of youth-specific indicators, budget tagging, and age-disaggregated data limits Ghana's ability to measure progress and adjust policies effectively.

15.2 Advocacy Recommendations

A. Strengthen Domestic Job Creation and Youth Employment Systems

1. Develop and finance a national Youth Employment Acceleration Programme featuring labour-intensive public works, enterprise incubation, apprenticeships and green jobs pathways.
2. Scale up work-based learning, including internships, apprenticeships and employer-led training linked to priority sectors.
3. Operationalise the National Employment Trust with clear youth-targeting criteria, transparent governance, and partnerships with financial institutions and industry leaders.

B. Improve School-to-Work Transitions and Employability

1. Institutionalise career guidance systems from upper basic level through tertiary education.
2. Strengthen the TVET-industry interface through financing incentives, regulatory alignment and structured employer partnerships.
3. Introduce transition support packages for secondary and tertiary graduates, combining career services, digital job matching and short-term income support.

C. Expand Youth-Focused Social Protection and Well-being Services

1. Introduce targeted youth livelihood support, including cash-plus schemes for NEET youth and low-income jobseekers.
2. Develop youth-friendly health services, with a focus on mental health, sexual and reproductive health, and gender-based violence prevention.
3. Provide tailored support to young mothers, including maternal health services, parenting support and re-entry pathways into education or training.

D. Enhance Inclusion for Marginalised Youth

1. Create disability-inclusive youth programmes, including assistive technologies, accessible training centres and disability-responsive entrepreneurship schemes.
2. Expand targeted interventions for rural and peri-urban youth, ensuring equitable digital connectivity, skills training and enterprise support.

3. Strengthen gender-responsive budgeting for young women, linking enterprise finance, digital skills and leadership development.

E. Institutionalise Youth Participation and Accountability

1. Establish an annual National Youth Pre-Budget Consultation, led jointly by MoF and MoYDE.
2. Create district-level youth budgeting platforms, enabling structured youth engagement in local development planning.
3. Support youth-led accountability initiatives such as social audits, expenditure tracking and performance monitoring of youth programmes.

F. Strengthen Public Financial Management for Youth Development

1. Introduce Youth Budget Tagging to systematically track youth-related expenditure and ensure transparency.
2. Develop a Youth Development Financing Framework, aligning MDA interventions with national policy goals and medium-term development plans.
3. Embed youth outcome indicators within the national PFM architecture, enabling consistent monitoring across sectors.

G. Leverage Digitalisation for Employment and Service Delivery

1. Link digital skills programmes to job placements, internships and entrepreneurship support mechanisms.
2. Expand digital infrastructure for underserved communities, reducing regional inequalities in digital access.
3. Develop a national Youth Information System, integrating data on education, employment, training and social services.

15.3 Conclusion

Ghana's 2026 Budget demonstrates an encouraging recognition of youth development as a national priority. However, achieving transformative outcomes will require deliberate scaling of youth-targeted investments, stronger institutional coordination and meaningful integration of youth voices into public policymaking. Through sustained collaboration between government, development partners, civil society and young people themselves, Ghana can build a more inclusive, dynamic and equitable development pathway that fully leverages the potential of its youth population.

Annex 1: Youth Budget Intervention Matrix

#	Sector / MDA	Programme / Measure	Youth Target	Instrument Type	Youth Relevance	Summary Score
1	Cross-cutting / DBG	National Employment Trust	Youth-led enterprises	Finance/cr edit facility	High potential; unclear design	2.2
2	Digital	One Million Coders Programme	Youth nationwide	Digital skills training	Strong, large-scale	2.4
3	Digital	Regional Digital Centres	Regional youth	Innovation hubs	Moderate scale; high inclusion	2.2
4	Digital/Finance	FinTech Growth Fund	Youth entrepreneurs	Finance facility	Weak youth targeting	1.8
5	Labour	Work Abroad Programme	Young jobseekers	Labour mobility	Immediate benefits	2.2
6	Labour/Green	National Green Jobs Strategy	Youth in green sectors	Skills/jobs	High potential, low detail	2.0
7	Education	Free SHS / GETFund	Adolescents/youth	Education financing	Very large scale	2.4
8	Education	Complementary Basic Education	At-risk adolescents	Second-chance learning	Preventative youth support	2.0
9	Youth Dev.	Skills & Entrepreneurship Roadshow	Young women & youth	Skills outreach	Good scale/inclusion	2.4
10	Youth Dev.	ASRH Outreach	Adolescents/youth	Health education	Very large scale	2.2
11	NSA	National Service Reforms	Graduate youth	Transition support	Moderate scale	2.0
12	MoYDE	Establishment of Ministry	Youth (15–35)	Institutional reform	High potential, low detail	1.8
13	Sports	Ghana Sports Fund	Youth athletes	Talent dev.	Moderate potential	1.8
14	Data	GSS Data Reforms	Indirect	Data systems	Foundational, indirect	1.6

Annex 2: Youth-Responsiveness Scoring Table

Scoring dimensions (0–3):

Visibility & Clarity, Scale & Adequacy, Jobs Intensity, Inclusion, Implementation Realism.

#	Intervention	V	S	J	I	R	Avg
1	National Employment Trust	3	2	3	2	1	2.2
2	One Million Coders	3	3	2	2	2	2.4
3	Regional Digital Centres	2	2	2	3	2	2.2
4	FinTech Growth Fund	2	2	3	1	1	1.8
5	Work Abroad Programme	3	2	2	1	3	2.2
6	Green Jobs Strategy	2	2	3	2	1	2.0
7	Free SHS	3	3	1	2	3	2.4
8	CBE	2	2	1	3	2	2.0
9	Skills Roadshow	3	2	2	3	2	2.4
10	ASRH Outreach	3	3	0	3	2	2.2
11	NSA Reforms	2	2	2	2	2	2.0
12	MoYDE	3	2	1	2	1	1.8
13	Sports Fund	2	2	2	1	2	1.8
14	GSS Systems	1	2	0	2	3	1.6