

Meta-Evaluation Report and Annexes – 437 Ev PLAN

Report Title: *Meta-Evaluation: Youth Economic Empowerment Programme Portfolio*

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This report is the result of desk work, consultations, data analysis and in-country missions (India and Togo) undertaken between September 2018 and February 2019. The views and recommendations expressed in this report are the consultant's own, and are set forth in good faith and on the basis of information, documentation and assumptions provided, which were considered genuine, complete and accurate unless stated otherwise. Although these views and recommendations reflect feedback and inputs received from Plan International and F3E, they remain the result of an independent assessment distinct from Plan International and F3E's views and policies.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFD	Agence Française de Développement
AoGD	Area of Global Distinctiveness
CEDAW	Convention to Eliminate all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFW	Cash for Work
EU	European Union
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
JOVT	Job-oriented vocational training
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
NEET	Neither in Education, Employment or Training
NFLET	neither in the Labour Force, Employment or Training
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OECD-DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SOYEE	Skills and Opportunities for Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
TOT	Training of Trainers
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UN-CRC	United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child
VT	Vocational training
VTEP	Vocational and Technical Educational Programme
YEE	Youth Economic Empowerment
YES	Youth Economic Solutions programme (Plan International Colombia)
YES4U	Youth Economic Solutions for Migrant Youth

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. Context, rationale, purpose

Demographic transitions and structural socio-economic factors compound to make youth unemployment one of the key issues to today's world, and a truly worldwide issue affecting developed as well as developing nations albeit in different terms.

Drivers and triggers of youth unemployment are numerous, and need to be looked at from an intersectional perspective, as there are stark differences between sub-sections of the youth population. Vulnerability to unemployment and socio-economic marginalisation cuts across gender, ethnic, origin, disability and other factors in addition to age, with inequalities widening alongside these intersections.

In this context, youth economic empowerment has become a strategic priority for a number of international agencies in recent years, including Plan International, in acknowledgement of the short- and long-term consequences and disruptive effects of youth economic marginalisation. This engagement is also based on the need to provide a continuum of services from childhood to adulthood as ways to secure and sustain the gains obtained for childhood well-being in recent decades.

Plan International France, one of the 20 Plan International offices (NO) has adopted Youth Economic Empowerment as one of their two organisational objectives for the period 2018-2022, with a specific emphasis on those children and young people particularly vulnerable or marginalised.

Undertaking a meta-evaluation of the YEE portfolio at Plan International France serves a wider organisational objective to develop knowledge on youth economic empowerment programming, contribute to learning at the federation level and identify areas for improvement in the existing programmatic approach to YEE.

Plan International France and the F3E network have jointly commissioned this meta-evaluation, building on previous collaboration around the TAMKEEN project evaluation in Egypt in 2017, where the need to perform macro-analysis on the wider YEE portfolio of projects was highlighted, with a view to gather stronger evidence and learning, and improve programmatic effectiveness.

The objectives for the meta-evaluation have jointly been agreed by Plan International France, F3E and this consultant, as follows:

- To conduct a strategic review of the SAKSHAM project in India
- To characterise, describe and discuss Plan International France's YEE model through a meta-evaluation and meta-analysis of a portfolio of selected projects
- To analyse existing M&E framework and derive lessons and recommendations towards improvements in YEE-specific monitoring, evaluation and learning in the future

A set of 8 YEE projects supported by Plan International France was identified prior to commissioning the meta-evaluation. However, evaluation reports were only available for 7 of the pre-selected projects and it is on this body of work that the meta-evaluation was conducted. In total, 8 evaluation documents constituted the portfolio analysed in the meta-evaluation.

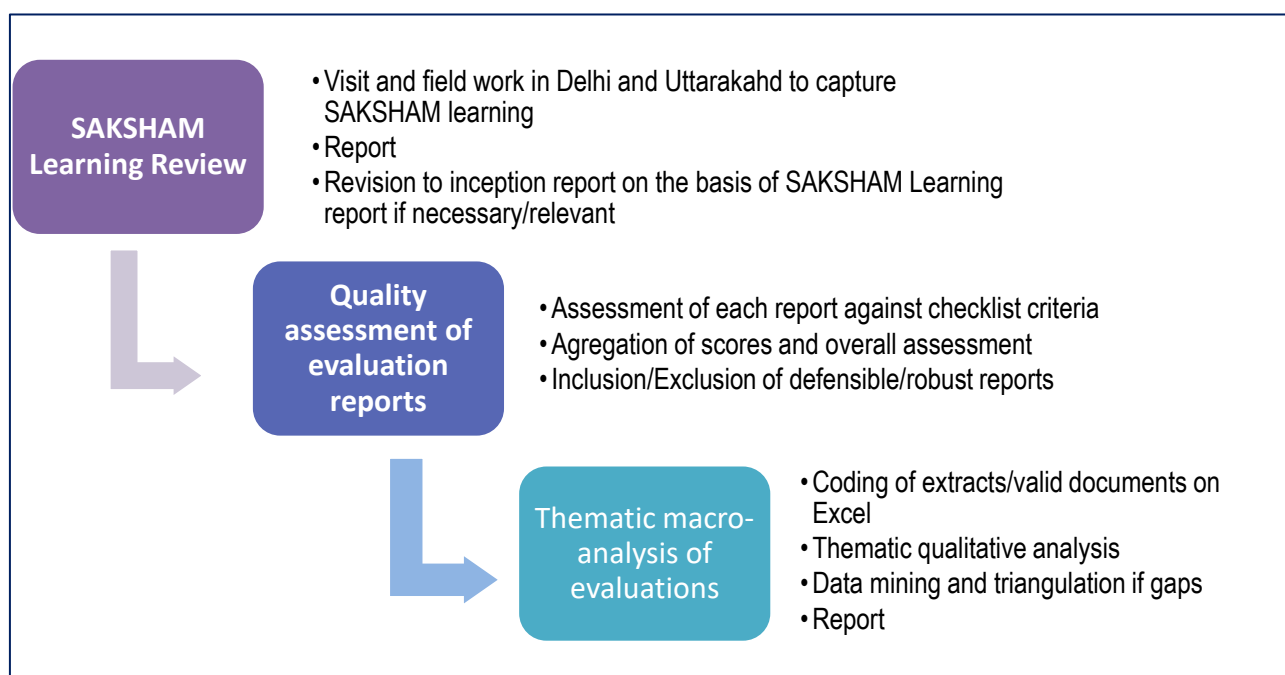
In addition to the above-mentioned objectives, 3 key thematic areas of priority were identified for the meta-evaluation and meta-analysis:

- skills acquisition and transitions to decent work (both waged and self-employment) as experienced by young people benefitting from the selected projects;
- modelling of the YEE approach
- processes of gender gains and transformation

1.2. Methodology

Although definitions vary, a meta-evaluation is usually understood as an instrument or methodological approach used to evaluate the *quality* of a series of evaluation reports, their adherence to established standards and good practice as well as to identify and aggregate findings (thematic, analytical) from the series considered. This specific meta-evaluation is an external, independent assessment aiming to identify and document learning and achievements across a range of projects and geographical contexts. It strived to comply with the highest standards of professionalism in presenting relevant, triangulated and realistic findings and recommendations.

Overall, the meta-evaluation went through 3 consecutive stages as illustrated by the graph below:



The methodology followed for the SAKSHAM evaluative review has been documented in a Review Report, which is available on request.

The meta-evaluation itself, informed by observations and findings from field missions in India and Togo in October and December 2018 respectively, was a 2-step process:

STEP 1: QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF EVALUATION REPORTS

A tool was specifically developed for this meta-evaluation to review and assess the 8 evaluation reports. Reports were independently rated across 25 criteria, grouped into 4 clusters which are commonly admitted as being core evaluation standards, including by internal guidance and norms promoted within Plan International. There was specific and additional focus on standards particularly relevant to Plan International's organisational priorities, such as gender, inclusion and participation. The clusters are (A) Designs and methods, (B) Findings and Conclusions, (C) Structure, (D) Gender and Inclusion. Each indicator was scored on a 4-point scale from "**Unsatisfactory** (0 points)" to "**Very Good** (3 points)", and automated calculations lead to a score for each cluster, and for the overall report along the same 4-point, colour-coded scale.

The purpose of this Part 1 of the Meta-Evaluation report is precisely to present findings, conclusions and recommendations in relation to the quality and reliability of the portfolio of evaluation reports. This documents is exclusively for the use of Plan International France and F3E.

STEP 2: META-ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The main expected output of this meta-evaluation is a review and synthesis of the findings and conclusions presented in the portfolio of evaluation reports. Jointly with Plan International France, a thematic coding frame was developed to

support the process of meta-analysis, with prioritization of key themes. Anticipating on a possible questionable quality of the portfolio of reports, (i) it was agreed to conduct desk research and key informant interviews to supplement findings where the evidence from evaluation reports was not sufficient or could not be used in confidence, and (ii) a simple coding system drawing from the overall quality score of the evaluation was proposed so as to inform the reader which sections of the meta-analysis drew from robust evaluation-based evidence, and which ones lacked such evidence and needed to be supplemented with additional research and information.

Findings, conclusions and recommendations in relation to the meta-analysis are the object of Part 2 of the meta-evaluation report, in a separate document to be made publicly available, widely shared and disseminated in multiple ways.

1.3. Findings and conclusions

PORTFOLIO CHARACTERISTICS

Plan International France's YEE footprint is diverse and locally pertinent

The footprint of Plan International France's support to youth economic empowerment has been limited to date (7 countries scoped for this study), but has involved **interventions in a broad range of countries**, which is an added-value for experiential learning. Although work has mainly taken place in middle income countries, local contexts varied greatly, with different poverty profiles, urbanisation rates or macro-economic and per capita wealth. China and Togo are outliers at both end of the spectrum on macro-economic indicators. In other terms, there is **no dominant country profile in Plan International France's YEE portfolio, which is a challenge for comprehensive thematic analysis**.

Young people are a dominant demographic group in the majority of these 7 projects, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, but not in all. All these countries are at different stages of their demographic transitions, which explains these disparities. Although unemployment rates vary from one country to another, with unemployment not even an issue in the case of China for example, a key feature is that **youth unemployment** is usually higher than the national average, and that **young women are at a nearly systematic disadvantage in relation to unemployment**, in line with global trends. From these two points of view, **the geographical focus of YEE interventions supported by Plan International France appears, at macro level, broadly pertinent**.

There is a case to be made for a 'smaller' member of Plan International such as Plan International France to further identify **a niche in YEE programming**, and to this end priority could be given in the future portfolio to (i) *female* access to employment in countries where female participation in the labour force is critically low, and (ii) integrate more explicitly geographical factors, taking into account the growth of secondary-importance cities, and the fact that the majority of young people still reside in rural areas. (iii) The nascent focus globally on YEE in humanitarian settings would also support strategic prioritisation of this area of intervention – under-represented in the meta-evaluation portfolio.

In spite of geographical and socio-economic diversity in the portfolio of YEE project, a common factor is the observation of systemic disadvantages affecting women

On all key macro-indicators of gender equality in relation to employability (e.g. literacy) or employment (e.g. categories of employment, labour force participation) in the considered portfolio, there is evidence of systemic disadvantages for women in general and young women in particular, confirming their unique and multi-layered vulnerabilities in relation to economic empowerment. The degree of this systemic level of discrimination, and the reasons for it vary however from context to context, with female labour force participation (to take only this example) being drastically different in countries such as India and Egypt, where it is critically low, to countries in sub-Saharan Africa where Plan International has supported YEE projects.

The observable gender gap in relation to employability and employment confirms the pertinence of Plan International France's portfolio of YEE projects from a gender perspective. However this focus would highly depend on a thorough understanding of the degrees in young women's vulnerability in the various contexts, as young women do not represent an homogenous 'group'.

QUALITY OF EVALUATION REPORTS

The quality of evaluations was measured to be greatly variable, calling for proactive and robust improvements in the future

Although evaluation reports were based on tried-and-tested approaches, and were usually sound and well-written, with less than half of the reviewed portfolio scoring as "good evaluation reports", the portfolio is not robust enough to be fully

used in confidence. The issues to be resolved are not unsurmountable and focused efforts to improve certain aspects of evaluations would lead to immediate leaps in quality in the future. These efforts should include:

- Ensuring that evaluation methodologies are comprehensive and complete, including on ethics and safeguarding, discussions of limitations, representativeness of samples and the use of more diverse, empowering data collection tools and methods
- Effectively mainstream gender and gender equality at all stages of the evaluation process, and in all aspects of the evaluation work including the report, as performance on gender-responsiveness is not on par with organisational expectations with regards to gender learning and prioritisation

DISCUSSIONS OF THE YEE MODEL

The YEE model applied combines elements recognised by international research as the most effective in yielding positive results on youth employment and earnings, namely skills training, employment support services and entrepreneurship promotion

The YEE model and pathway, as described in evaluation reports, is based on “bundled interventions” combining actions on the supply-side of the labour market (e.g. non-academic skills development, work readiness, job seeking, mentoring) and to a lesser extent on the demand-side (e.g. entrepreneurship promotion). The model is structured around a sequence of 3 core components: (i) a youth-oriented labour market survey called market scan, followed by (ii) skills-based and practical training, which leads to (iii) employment support services such as job seeking support, mentoring and individualised follow-up for a period of time after placement.

Plan International’s value-add is two-fold: its strong community-level presence and rapport with children and young people, and the organisation-wide gender transformative agenda

Although the approach is not unique to Plan International France or Plan International in general, it builds on good practices, critical success factors and robust evidence as captured in recent research. This meta-evaluation identified two elements through which Plan International adds value to the YEE sector: (i) Plan’s strong community-level presence and rapport with children and young people allows for the targeting of the most marginalised, less visible young people. In this regard (ii) strategic emphasis on gender transformative programming places Plan International in a leading position in comparison to peers in the sector.

Critical success factors in the model were identified as:

- As a tool, the **market scans** sets the foundations of the project, provided it is timely, collaborative, multi-party and gender-responsive which has not systematically been the case in the considered projects
- **Outreach, mobilisation and identification strategies** vary, and are usually illustrative of the challenge in identifying the most marginalised young people including young women, youth living in poverty, migrant youth and young people living with a disability
- A model based on condensed training cycles of 2 to 3 months duration on average (but up to 18 months in some projects) is effective in promoting **rapid transition to entry level occupations**, but generates debates about benefits for longer-term employability which are also more rarely assessed and monitored
- **Combining soft/social and technical skills in training** is overwhelmingly appreciated by participants and stakeholders alike, and evidence suggests that soft skills increase employability and positive self-concept; however, provisions to include basic literacy and numeracy, as well as digital skills and literacy are a missing piece in the model in its current form

OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The age profile of beneficiaries is coherent with organisational objectives, but experience shows the need for some flexibility in defining and targeting the categories of young people most in need of support in the local context

Age profiles of beneficiaries (18 to 22 on average) are in line with Plan International’s objectives and definitions of “youth”. However, some level of flexibility has been rightly shown to align with local contexts and cultures. In particular, the fact that transition to adulthood, including entry to the labour force, can take place earlier in life in certain parts of the world and particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. This would call for YEE interventions to **target younger cohorts of young people** including those under the age of 18 in such contexts. Simultaneously, complementary and supportive (education and health) interventions which may delay the age of marriage, family formation and entry into the labour force would in such contexts be pertinent linkages to YEE.

In relation to youth economic empowerment, vulnerability is a complex issue in which socio-economic determinants and binary gender approaches do not suffice

If vulnerability is understood purely from a socio-economic point of view, then **evaluations reveal a gap between project and organisational objectives to serve the most vulnerable children and young people, and the reality of some projects, particularly those with a dominant urban focus.** Those projects which have succeeded in reaching out to socio-economically vulnerable youth had adopted indirect targeting strategies, focusing on marginalised localities (more likely to host cohorts of vulnerable young people) rather than individual vulnerability profiling. Education in this regard, is a strong segregating factor, particularly in urban approaches. Disability is rarely explored and taken into consideration. There is an evidence gap on other possible factors of vulnerability (e.g. ethnicity).

The absence of intersectional perspectives leads to binary approaches to gender (i.e. male/female), and an implicit judgement that girls and young women, by and large, are in a situation of vulnerability. Although it cannot be denied that girls and young women are faced with systemic, entrenched and multiple factors of discrimination and marginalisation, it is equally misleading to assume (even not intentionally) their “inherent” vulnerability. Instead, vulnerability assessments could be undertaken to understand how various segments of the female youth population are differently challenged to be economically empowered.

Projects are generally highly effective in supporting transition to employment, but there is insufficient evidence on retention in employment, particularly in self-employment, and gender dimensions

Overall, **the rates of transitions to employment referenced in the evaluation reports are high:** they vary from 62% (Colombia) to 94% (Cameroon), which suggests that, broadly speaking, the projects are successful and effective in achieving their main objective around access to employment thus confirming the pertinence of the model and approaches. **Transitions to self-employment seem to be higher than transition to wage employment** although this remains a working hypothesis to be probed further, due to the limited pool of information. **Longer-term benefits and outcomes are not systematically monitored or evaluated**, a gap in M&E systems which should be remedied in the future.

Evaluations do not however systematically disaggregate and analyse data by gender, which limits the scope of analysis and is regrettable considering the transformational value of access to formal, wage employment for girls and young women, as illustrated by recent research. **Gender analysis would need to be stronger in the future** to confirm (i) equitable chances for young women, and (ii) girls and young women are not constrained to lower-paying, less productive employment pathways particularly in the informal sector.

There is an evidence gap in evaluation reports on the documentation of factors and drivers of drop-out, both in wage and self-employment. The phenomenon is not systematically researched by evaluators, which limits the understanding of the profile of young people who are most likely not to complete training, and not to enter the labour force. Partial evidence suggests that there are important gender determinants.

Beyond effective transitions to formal employment in the private sector for large numbers of beneficiaries, there is a lack of evidence in evaluation reports that employment complies with the principles and criteria of decent work

The most common practice in the projects, for those who measure and report on the issue, is to associate the formality of employment (in particular, the existence of an engagement letter or work contract) **as a proxy for decent work.** Not only does this not suffice to explore all other dimensions of decent work, but it is also challenged in practice by reports of insufficient awareness of labour rights on the part of young people, and breaches to legal obligations on the part of employers. Decent work has not been discussed by evaluation reports in settings other than urban, which is a limitation. **Strengthening evidence around outcomes on decent work is thus a key area for improvement.** This would require additional engagement with employers, the private sector at large and policy-makers, not only as resources and partners for job opportunities, but as accountable duty bearers and guarantors of rights of young workers.

In spite of indications that young people earn well, particularly those accessing formal, wage employment, findings from evaluation reports on earnings lack comparative perspectives and gender analysis

Surprisingly, economic outcomes are not systematically explored and assessed in evaluation reports. Those who do discuss income gains would tend to do so in absolute terms, reporting on average monthly salary or daily profit at first employment. By probing further and identifying relative comparison points (e.g. sectoral or national minimum wages, GDP per capita, poverty levels), it appeared difficult to assess the dimension of “fair income” referenced in the “decent

work” definition due to the lack of contextualisation. Indeed, evidence from China and India revealed that although incomes earned by project beneficiaries were substantial indeed, they did not necessarily match up with applicable minimum wages or average salaries. **In absence of counterfactual data (i.e. what similar age cohorts earn at first employment, all other factors controlled for) and gender analysis (wages gap), it is not possible to precisely quantify economic gains.**

Income generated from self-employment is in general low, with some evaluations debating the profitability of the enterprises created or supported. However, in absence of cross-tabulation with productivity (and in particular, the number of hours worked) these conclusions could themselves be challenged. Of concern however in self-employment and entrepreneurship is that the income generated by the activity is too low to create the sufficient profit margins required for recapitalisation and continuous investments.

GENDER TRANSFORMATION

Project approaches appear particularly effective in ensuring equitable access of young women to vocational education and employment support

The projects’ effectiveness in meeting their gender distributive output targets and indicators is commonly reported in evaluations, and is one of the key achievements to be highlighted through this meta-evaluation. It can reasonably be attributed to Plan International’s strategic and operational focus on gender equality, and an area where the organisation admittedly out-performs some of their peers in the sector. A number of good practices have been documented around the tactics deployed to remove or overcome barriers limiting girls’ skills development and access to employment and particularly around distance, community perceptions and occupational choices. There is however more limited evidence on retention in employment, mobility and pathways as data in evaluations reports is not systematically disaggregated and analysed by gender.

Evidence suggests that gender stereotypes in the world of work are being challenged, albeit sporadically

The projects which had strongly embedded gender equality in their design and implementation plans or practices (e.g. SAKSHAM in India, AFD-funded project in Togo) did particularly well to start challenging gender stereotypes in the world of work, commonly acknowledged as a major structural factor which perpetuates gender inequality in employment. However, these efforts are not visible across the whole portfolio, suggesting that more attention needs to be paid in project design, market scans, value chain analysis, curriculum development and employment services to avoid the limitation of female occupational choices to traditional, female-dominated, less productive sectors.

Non-economic gender outcomes, although they do exist, are insufficiently documented

In line with current evidence in international research, **those evaluations which did assess projects’ effects on girls’ agency and empowerment have highlighted positive results including increased sense of self-worth and self-awareness, increased self-confidence and self-reported improved social status and position** including vis-à-vis male members of the community. The “first timer” effect places a number of these young women as role models in their locality. Overall, these effects remain however under-researched by evaluations.

More attention needs to be paid to gender-specific limitations such as safety, mobility and caring responsibilities

The urban-focused evaluations have all reported the issue of safety and mobility as a strong barrier hindering girls’ and young women’s entry to and retention in the labour force. Additional contributions from international research suggest that this issue is a relevant lens also in rural settings, and might need to be more closely looked into to ensure equitable opportunities for young women. Similarly, **YEE approaches have yet to provide pertinent responses to the specific needs of young mothers,** who are faced with the “double burden” of learning / working, and caring.

A gender transformative agenda must be more systematically mainstreamed and pursued

Positive effects on training, promising results in combating gender stereotypes in the world of work and evidence (albeit anecdotal) of boosts in girls’ and young women’s agency and empowerment are commendable. Weaknesses in evaluation methods and approaches are likely to be the explanatory factor for such effects not to be more systematically and coherently documented at outcome-level (transformative indicators vs. distributive indicators), and they must be addressed in the future through intentionally gender-responsive evaluation design.

Elements of gender transformative programming, as defined across Plan International, have been identified including (i) responses to discriminatory gender norms through awareness raising at multiple levels (individual, community, partners and stakeholders); (ii) advancing the economic condition of young women through skills development and access to employment; (iii) responding to young women's specific needs and barriers and (iv) strengthening young women's agency and empowerment. There is however a need to strengthen this evidence base, and address the remaining evidence gaps around (v) working with boys and men around positive masculinities and (vi) fostering an enabling environment for young women in their families and communities and at the workplace. These issues are not addressed in evaluations even if work is in fact undertaken with boys, men, families and communities on gender equality and girls' rights.

1.4. Key recommendations

Recommendation cluster	Specific recommendation (R)	Level of importance
Enhance the strategic focus on the most marginalised youth	R1 Focus footprint on contexts with critical needs (female employment, secondary cities, rural areas, humanitarian settings)	Medium
	R11 Undertake more systematically participatory vulnerability assessments with an intersectional perspective	Important
Improve the quality of evaluation reports	R4 Proactively guide evaluators with broader resource packs R5 Enhance compliance with internal evaluation guidelines and monitor evaluation quality	Important
Transition to an effectively transformative gender equality agenda from project design to project evaluation	R3, R6, R7, R8, R18 Test and promote more creative, gender-responsive and diverse evaluation designs and orientations	Essential
	R16 Encourage the sharing of experience of gender good practices, particularly those identified in the SAKSHAM project	Desirable
	R17 Root project design in systematic, thorough and robust gender analysis frameworks	Essential
Make provisions for greater flexibility in the model and effective documentation of its effects and outcomes	R9 Revisit standard training duration and scope of work for life skills training to cater more specifically to the varied needs of groupings of young people	Important
	R14, R15 Strengthen indicators and evidence of decent work outcomes, counterfactual measurements of income gains	Important

PART 1

BACKGROUND AND METHODS

2. INTRODUCTION

NOTE: the elements presented in this chapter are a summary of more detailed background and methodological considerations presented in an Inception Report drafted in October 2018 and revised in December 2018. When changes have occurred either to methods, tools or workplan, they are explicitly mentioned. The Inception Report contains more detailed information about context and methods, and is available on request.

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“We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future”

Franklin DELANO ROOSEVELT
President of the United States

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2.1 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

2.1.1 Exploration of youth economic empowerment context

Demographic transitions and structural socio-economic factors compound to make youth unemployment one of the key issues to today’s world, and a truly worldwide issue affecting developed as well as developing nations albeit in different terms.

Nearly two decades into the 21st century, the “millennial generation” as they are often referred to, represent over 16% of the world’s 7.4 billion population, to stand at nearly 1.2 billion¹. In other terms, 1 out of every 6 individuals today is aged between 15 and 24, even more so in the least developed nations. These large and unprecedented numbers mean that today’s youth are “*the largest global youth population in human history*”² (UNFPA, 2015) and most demographic forecasts indicate that the number of young people will continue to rise in the next decades, posing immense challenges to social, economic and cultural ecosystems.

Overall, 612 million youth as of 2016 were unable to secure stable, satisfactory employment, a number which is expected to grow³. Globally, young people under the age of 25 experience an unemployment rate three times higher than adults (13% vs. 4.3% according to the ILO and UN Stats, 2017)⁴ and they represent 40% of the world’s unemployed according to the World Economic Forum in spite of accounting only for 18% of the world’s population.

However, for the last three decades at least, repeated economic downturns have clearly highlighted that the transition of youth into the labour force and society in general is a challenge including in the most economically performant countries. In the United States for example, there were in 2014 nearly 6 million youth neither in education, employment or training (NEET). The number of young Americans who hold college degrees but work minimum wage jobs or part-time jobs has substantially increased in the last decade. In France, more than 22.6% of youth are unemployed, which is more than twice the national unemployment rate. This figure is as high as 39.7% in Greece and

¹ Figures presented are taken from 2017 world population estimates published by the World Bank and the CIA World Factbook. The population of the 15-24 age cohort is 1.183 billion, or 16.16% of the world’s population (611.3 million males, i.e. 51.65% of the total youth population, and 572.2 females, i.e. 48.35% of the total youth population worldwide).

² UNFPA, *The State of World Population 2014 - The power of 1.8 billion: adolescents, youth and the transformation of the future*

³ S4YE 2015 baseline date quoted by Plan International in their *Global Youth Employment Entrepreneurship & Empowerment YE³ Strategic Framework 2017-2022*, p. 3

⁴ ILO, *World Social and Employment Outlook: Trends 2018*

33.4% in Spain⁵. What is alarming is that *global* youth unemployment has been stagnant at around 13% (see graph below), with no major improvements in the situation of young people with regards to employment for at least a decade, even and including when other macro-economic indicators are well-performing.

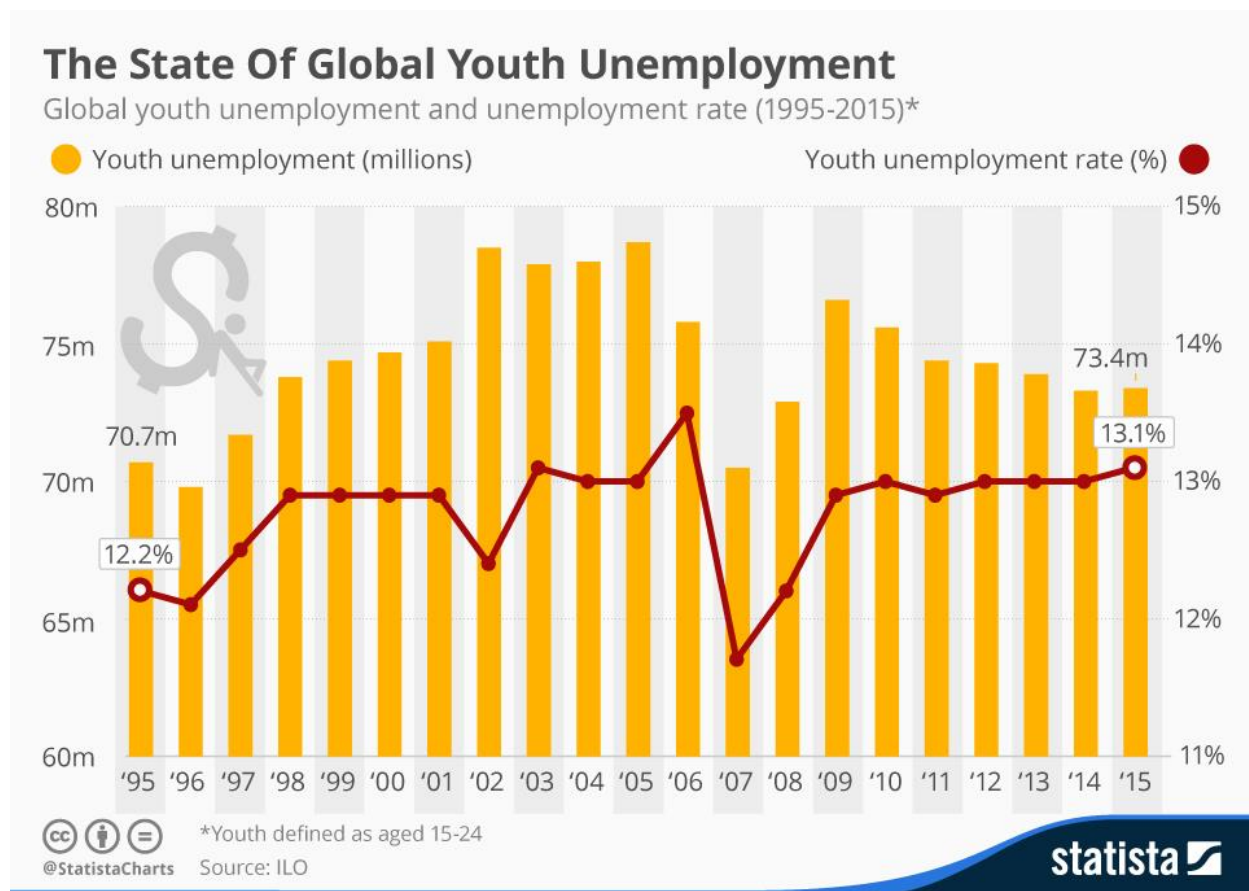


Figure 1 - Global unemployment graph (Statista)

ILO reports have shown that similar trends are at play in the developing nations, including in emerging markets where the economic growth has boosted development, such as South and South East Asia.

The developing world however faces distinct additional challenges: where in advanced economies, figures show persistent unemployment, proliferation of temporary jobs and growing youth discouragement, in the developing world, the main concerns in relation to youth employment are persistently high share of the working poor amongst employed youth, and poor-quality, informal subsistence jobs. Indeed, a large share of working youth remain employed in less secure and less protective sectors such as agriculture or the urban informal economy. More than one-third (37.8% or nearly 200 million young people, UN 2013 figures) of employed youth live on less than US\$ 2 per day; working poverty affects as many as 169 million youth in the world. In sub-Saharan Africa, the ratio of working poor is as high as 67% amongst young workers according to 2018 ILO data. Employed youth are 1.5 times more likely to be found in the extreme poverty group than adults.

Youth unemployment or under-employment, is increasingly thought to be linked to inadequate skills and readiness for the open labour market, in spite of worldwide trends towards better educational status of adolescents and young people. Indeed, lack of education and literacy, seen as proxies to indicate lack of employability skills, is closely interrelated to unemployment: in nearly all developing countries, the highest unemployment rate is found among people with a primary education level or less. However, globally 1 in 5 young people have NOT completed their

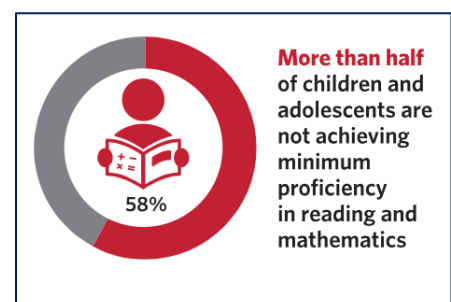


Figure 2 - Global literacy and numeracy challenge (SDG Goal 4 report, 2018)

⁵ INSEE 2017 estimates for France, Eurostat 2018 estimates for Greece and Spain.

elementary education and at least 120 million youth are illiterate. The vast majority of them are girls. Also worrying are increasing and convergent reports that show gaps in the quality of education, which results in large proportions of children and young people of primary or even secondary education levels not meeting minimum proficiency in literacy and numeracy, two core employability skills and factors.

In other words, the school-to-work transition is increasingly challenging for young people, which potentially pose an even greater threat for the poorest youth. Interventions which aim to bridge the 'skills gap' or 'skills mismatch' (ILO) and connect youth to the wider economy are crucial; skills development programmes (whether life or technical skills, or a combination of both) can be a worthwhile investment in this context as research shows that these investments can contribute to improvement in employment, increased earnings in addition to non-economic outcomes, particularly for youth from low and middle income countries.

Drivers and triggers of youth unemployment are numerous, and need to be looked at from an intersectional perspective, as there are stark differences between sub-sections of the youth population. Vulnerability to unemployment and socio-economic marginalisation cuts across gender, ethnic, origin, disability and other factors in addition to age, with inequalities widening alongside these intersections.

Globally, the situation of socio-economic exclusion for girls and young women is particularly preoccupying. **A number of barriers in accessing successful and fair transitions to the labour force are placing a disproportionate burden on girls and young women from the developing world.** Illiteracy for example disproportionately affects women from developing countries: more than three-quarters of the world's 760 million illiterates are found in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Of all illiterate adults, almost two-thirds are women. Young women are still more likely to have dropped out of school in spite of tremendous improvements in primary education enrolments and completion in the last decades, worldwide. They face practical and sometimes legal barriers in accessing finance for enterprise development. Their work is by and large less considered than the work of their male counterparts and as a result, leading not only to gender-stereotyping of jobs (with women often

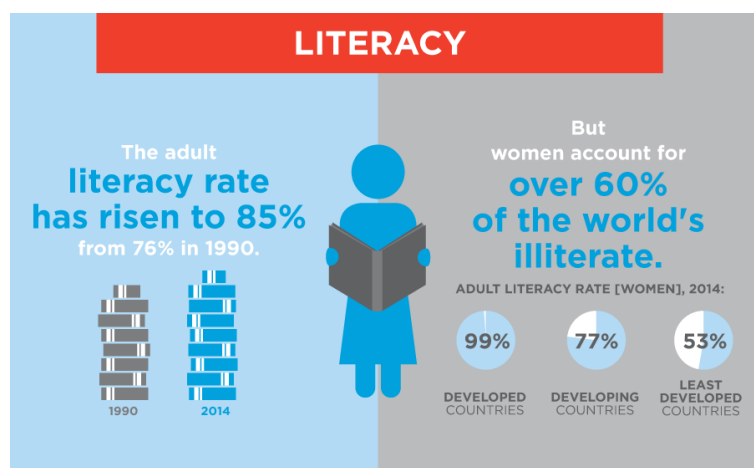


Figure 3 - Female literacy rates (UN Stats 2015)

over-represented in seasonal work, informal sectors, low-paid, poor quality jobs or engaged in non-remunerated domestic and care work), discrimination in accessing certain professions, gender pay gaps and cultural barriers in entering and remaining in the world of work. Compounded with other cultural norms and practices exacerbating gender discrimination in and outside of the home, this situation results in young women having a lower labour participation rate than young men (37% vs. 54%), and average wages up to 36% less than men's. Gender is thus a necessary lens through which to explore youth economic empowerment.

Gender however can intersect with other factors to exacerbate the marginalisation facing certain sub-sections of the young female population in relation to employment and entrepreneurship. In the United States, during the last economic downturn, youth unemployment grew faster for ethnic minorities such as African Americans and Hispanic Americans, particularly for female youth. And studies in the USA have also shown that where there exists a gender pay gap between white men and white women (18 points difference), this gap is even wider for black women (32 points lower) and Latina women (37 points). Youth unemployment thus cuts across several dividing lines in addition to gender (ethnicity, place of origin, location, disability in particular).

2.1.2 Rationale for a YEE meta-evaluation by Plan International France

Youth economic empowerment has become a strategic priority for a number of international agencies, in recent years, including Plan International, in acknowledgement of the short- and long-term consequences and disruptive effects of youth economic marginalisation but also the need to provide a continuum of services from childhood to adulthood as ways to sustain the gains obtained for childhood well-being and child rights in recent decades.

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“If progress to achieve real gender equality continues at current rates, it will take decades for girls and boys to be treated as equals. This has to change, and we have no time to lose”

Anne-Birgitte ALBRECHTSEN
CEO Plan International

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Plan International, as a global federation and one of the world’s most prominent children’s rights organisation, is placing substantial emphasis on the socio-economic empowerment of youth, and of girls and young women in particular, in their 2017-2022 Global Strategy, *100 Million Reasons*. The organisation, established in 1937, and now active in over 70 countries in Africa, Asia and the Americas, has the ambition to transform the lives of 100 million girls in the 5-year period so they can LEARN, LEAD, DECIDE and THRIVE. Organisational focus remains on supporting the most vulnerable and excluded children and youth. However, it is a sense of frustration with the slow pace of change benefitting girls and women globally that is driving an organisational prioritisation and proactive stand for girls and their rights. Indeed, in spite of major progress in education, health, rights and protection, girls still remain disproportionately disadvantaged compared to boys including in work and family life.

Under the 4 Global Outcome Areas (LEARN, LEAD, DECIDE and THRIVE), Plan International has identified 6 areas of global distinctiveness (AoGDs) including *Skills and Opportunities for Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship* (SOYEE). Global objectives have now been captured in the Global Youth Employment Entrepreneurship & Empowerment YE³ Strategy 2017-2022 and position paper, with a **high-level outcome to enable at least 1 million vulnerable and excluded young people, especially girls and young women, to engage in decent work, either waged or self-employment of their own choosing**. The YE3 Strategy as well as the SOYEE Theory of Change both strongly echo several of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)⁶.



Figure 4 - Plan International Strategy infographics (adapted)

⁶ In particular: 1. End poverty in all its forms; 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; and 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Plan International France, one of the 20 Plan International national offices⁷ (NO) has adopted Youth Economic Empowerment as one of their two organisational objectives for the period 2018-2022, with a specific emphasis on those children and young people particularly vulnerable or marginalised.

Plan International France has built over the last decade a portfolio of YEE-focused projects, starting with support from 2010 onwards for a project in collaboration with Plan International India and their local partners, called SAKSHAM. Over time, as the project grew and evolved, experiences have been documented, tools created and different methodological approaches tested to constitute what is today the 'Plan International YEE pathway'. This pathway supports selected, vulnerable youth in attaining greater economic empowerment (through technical skills development, support to enter the job market and resources to develop their own businesses) but also stronger agency in their families, communities and societies (through life skills and social skills such as self-efficacy, decision-making, self-confidence etc.). The approach was further developed in other countries, and today, Plan International France's YEE portfolio now extends all continents where Plan International has presence, and across the continuum of development work from post-crisis or humanitarian interventions⁸ to longer-term programming.

2.2 PURPOSE AND SCOPE FOR THE META-EVALUATION

2.2.1. Purpose and rationale for the meta-evaluation

Undertaking a meta-evaluation of the YEE portfolio at Plan International France serves a wider organisational objective to develop knowledge on youth economic empowerment programming, contribute to learning at the federation level and identify areas for improvement in the existing programmatic approach to YEE.

This is particularly pertinent at a critical stage of YEE capability development across the federation (with the consolidation of SOYEE programme offers and tools). In particular, the meta-evaluation, as a repository of information capturing Plan International France's programmatic journey on YEE, aims to promote an understanding of what constitutes the YEE approach in the portfolio, what core elements are required to effectively empower vulnerable youth socially and economically, what key outcome areas have emerged and what can possibly be Plan International France's unique position and value-add in YEE development.

Now is an opportune time to explore learning across the portfolio of YEE projects supported by Plan International France, as the majority have gone through at least one cycle of programming with learning, effectiveness, results and experiences formally captured in evaluation reports. The size of the portfolio, with projects spanning across continents and intervention contexts is now also substantial enough to allow for cross-project and reflexive analysis, which has not been undertaken or collated to date. At the same time, the establishment of a Plan International SOYEE 'centre of excellence' (thematic hub) at the global level placed additional emphasis on the necessity to take stock, reflect, compare and share learning, knowledge and experience, with a clear opportunity for Plan International France to contribute to a key federation-wide global priority.

However, the purpose of the meta-evaluation was not to revisit each of the individual evaluation reports related to the selected projects, nor to perform another series of in-depth evaluations. It was rather to build on existing documentation and evidence, supplemented when required by additional data, to corroborate, confirm, expand and explore further emerging learning.

⁷ National Organisations (NOs), within the Plan International Federation, contribute towards global programming, policy and influencing work through technical and financial resources. Plan International France was founded in 1993. NOs are Members of the Plan International Federation. The Members Assembly is the highest decision making body within Plan International, implying that NOs play a vital role in the global governance of the organisation. NOs are also responsible for fundraising and perform a vital role in development education and advocacy in their jurisdictions. In addition, they work together with Plan International, Inc. to ensure the effective management and implementation of major grant-funded projects they have originated. They are accountable to their donors through their national regulators and directly through their individual own feedback mechanisms. They are managed by their own executive leadership team, and are accountable to their individual governing bodies for their operations (information adapted from <https://plan-international.org/organisation/structure>, consulted on 24 September 2018).

⁸ Throughout this report, the term 'humanitarian' will be used to refer to projects which are not of longer term development: emergency, post-crisis, refugee settings, conflict and fragile States settings.

2.2.2. Commissioning authorities

Plan International France and the F3E network have jointly commissioned this meta-evaluation, building on previous collaboration around the TAMKEEN project evaluation in Egypt in 2017, where the need to perform macro-analysis on the wider YEE portfolio of projects was highlighted, with a view to gather stronger evidence and learning, and improve programmatic effectiveness.

Although there are strong and obvious inter-relations with the wider Plan International federation and other NOs, leadership, stewardship, support and decision-making in relation to this meta-evaluation laid with Plan International France exclusively, and in particular the Programmes Department's programme manager for Asia and East Africa (also YEE focal point for the organisation).

Established in 1994, the F3E network⁹ is a 100-member strong not-for-profit network dedicated to the enhancement of the quality of international solidarity interventions carried out mainly by France-based iNGOs, development actors (including the international cooperation arm of French local authorities) and health service providers. The F3E also acts as a sectoral facility where members can receive technical as well as financial support for specific quality-enhancement activities such as evaluations, studies, capacity building and innovation. It is in this context that Plan International France and F3E have partnered to commission this meta-evaluation, working together to define objectives, expectations, scope and modalities of the study, as presented in the TORs (Appendix A). The F3E provided technical and methodological oversight in the supervision of the meta-evaluation.

2.2.3. Targeted audiences

Staff, Teams and national organizations of Plan International are the key target audience for the meta-evaluation, through Plan International France. Learning collated will be shared to enhance programming approaches, build knowledge and contribute towards the achievement of organisational strategic priorities. However, through the F3E in particular, other France-based international organisations active in the YEE sector will also be targeted, as well as the distribution of documentation in French capturing key moments and lessons from the meta-evaluation.

More widely, acknowledging that YEE has become a major concern around the globe amongst donors and iNGOs, and in particular for Plan International France's strategic donors and partners (e.g. *Agence Française de Développement* [AFD], the EU, members of the iNGO platform Coordination Sud, etc.), a secondary target audience for this meta-evaluation report is this group of stakeholders. It is expected that in this context findings from the meta-evaluation will enrich Plan International's influencing and advocacy work in France, at national level in countries of intervention and globally through the Plan International federation.

Finally, young people themselves must be included in all efforts undertaken to coalesce, analyse and share learning which will result from the meta-evaluation and the meta-evaluation attempted to include them in these processes as often and as meaningfully as possible.

2.2.4. Objectives of the meta-evaluation

Discussions and preliminary work at the beginning of the meta-evaluation process led to minor rephrasing of the meta-evaluation objectives, agreed with the commissioning parties to be:

- 1. To conduct a strategic review of the SAKSHAM project in India**
- 2. To characterise, describe and discuss Plan International France's YEE model through a meta-evaluation and meta-analysis of a portfolio of selected projects**
- 3. To analyse existing M&E framework and derive lessons and recommendations towards improvements in YEE-specific monitoring, evaluation and learning in the future**

⁹ In French, the 3 "E"s stand for *Evaluer* (evaluate), *Echanger* (exchange) and *Eclairer* (guide) – the three areas at the heart of F3E's mission. See www.f3e.asso.fr for more information.

Objective 1: strategic review of the SAKSHAM project in India

This assessment and exploration marked the initial phase of the meta-evaluation, involving a mission and field work in India. The main rationale to start the meta-evaluation with field-based perspectives was to:

- (i) for the first time, analyse and gather learning from the 8-year long experience (3 programmatic cycles/phases) in what remains a pioneering endeavour for Plan International France and Plan International India, as this collaboration was the turning point towards the development of YEE expertise and of a specific YEE body of work,
- (ii) highlight specific lessons and recommendations aimed at improving effectiveness and strategic coherence of the programme going forward.

Objective 2: Meta-evaluation, meta-analysis and the YEE model

Through a formal review process of evaluation reports from 8 projects (see section below about geographic scope for further details about each of the selected projects), the objective was to understand and document key project outcomes, identify good practices, and reconstitute a “YEE model” based on programmatic experience (exploration of core elements and context-specific additional features). This formal review aims to establish linkages between programmatic experience and strategic objectives as expressed in Plan International global strategy, Plan International France strategy, the YE3 and SOYEE strategic frameworks, and should strive to identify the distinctiveness or value-add of Plan International’s approach to YEE.

Objective 3: YEE-appropriate monitoring, evaluation and learning lessons

The review of M&E frameworks adopted and used by the various projects aimed to identify trends, similarities, good practices and limitations, particularly in relation to evidence generation and learning. This review intended to be practical and operational, and be informed more widely by the SOYEE M&E framework currently being developed, with a view to provide practical recommendations if any, but also candidly analyse the coherence between existing experience and the aspirational standards set at the global level by the SOYEE guidelines.

Gender equality

Although not expressed as an objective per se, **gender equality cuts across all three objectives for the meta-evaluation and was therefore expected to be strongly reflected in each of its phases**, in accordance with organisational priorities and objectives with regards to gender-transformative programming and in particular the current Plan International’s Strategic Framework 2017-2022.

2.2.5. Scope and thematic prioritisation

Geographical scope

A set of 8 YEE projects supported by Plan International France was identified prior to commissioning the meta-evaluation. However, evaluations reports were only available for 7 of the pre-selected projects and it is on this body of work that the meta-evaluation was conducted.

Project selection was completed jointly by Plan International France and F3E prior to the publication of the TORs, on the basis of the following inclusion/exclusion criteria¹⁰: (i) existence of a formal evaluation document (mid-term review, final evaluation or equivalent)¹¹; (ii) exclusive or substantial focus on YEE in project design and intent¹²; funding originating from Plan International France exclusively or mainly as the main commissioner of this study. The starting point is 2010, date of the first YEE project supported at Plan International France.

¹⁰ Explanations and justifications with regards to inclusion/exclusion criteria provided by Plan International France appeared pertinent and genuine, leading to the reasonable assumption that the dataset of reports thus constituted a genuine, adequate and complete set for the purpose of the assignment.

¹¹ This led to the exclusion of two projects, one in Niger (vocational training focus in a humanitarian/protracted crisis setting) and one in Benin (minor YEE component in a wider programme) which had only recently started and were not the continuation of a previous phase of programming, thus having no formal evaluation document to date

¹² this led to the exclusion of a project in Benin (mentioned above), as well as Phase I of the AVENIR project in Cameroon (no YEE component) and Phase I of the Child Labour project in Tanzania (no YEE component)

Plan International France monitors its various projects and grants through a dedicated dashboard, which was used as the basis of identification of suitable projects for the meta-evaluation. The overall programming portfolio being rather modest, no grants database was used, and no thematic keyword scanning/search needed to be conducted. Discussions within the Programme Department team took place to confirm the list of selected projects and gather background information when necessary.

A mid-term review for the Phase II of the AVENIR project in Cameroon was not be available on time for the evaluation report to be included in the meta-evaluation and meta-analysis, which led to the joint decision of excluding this project from the scope of the meta-evaluation.

The table below is a brief overview of the various projects covered by this meta-evaluation; they are presented by alphabetical order of the country where they are or have been implemented. The map enclosed hereafter visually captures the geographical scope of the meta-evaluation.

PROJECT NAME AND LOCATION	PROJECT TIMEFRAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
Cohesion Sociale CAMEROON	Phase I: October 2016 - March 2018	The project is based on UNDP's "3x6 approach", which is based on a combination of immediate temporary job access through Cash for Work (CFW), and long-term impact through vocational training and entrepreneurship in the localities of Mogoza and Mokolo, in the Mayo Tsanaga district in the Extreme North region of Cameroon. The target is to achieve economic integration for 400 young (women and men) IDPs or from the host communities in the local economic environment. The project operates in a humanitarian, protracted crisis situation. The end of project evaluation was completed in November 2018.
YES4U CHINA	April 2016 - September 2019	The project is implemented in Beijing and seeks to enhance the economic security of 900 vulnerable migrant youth (of whom at least 80% of young women), aged 16-40 years (of whom at least 80% 16-35 years). The project specifically targets migrant youth, aiming to empower them with the competencies, skills and tools they need to navigate the challenges of living in Beijing, securing decent jobs and coping with the implications of migration. The YEE approach is delivered through Aged Care training, life skills training and work readiness training. An internal mid-term evaluation was completed in March 2018.
YES COLOMBIA	Phase I: January 2014 - April 2016 Phase II: April 2016 - June 2017	The YES (<i>Proyecto Soluciones de Empleo Juvenil</i>) project has been implemented over 2 phases between 2014 and 2017: (i) the first phase was mainly focused on the economic and social empowerment of vulnerable young people (particularly young women) through the identification and facilitation in accessing formal employment opportunities. (ii) In Phase II, entrepreneurship and business development support for 130 young people who had graduated from the training cycles in Phase I was included. A programme evaluation of both phases was completed at the end of 2018, and a final evaluation report made available to this consultant in January 2019.
TAMKEEN EGYPT	Phase 1: April 2014 - September 2017 Phase 2: starting	The overall objective of the TAMKEEN project in Egypt was to contribute to the empowerment and socio-economic integration of 2,000 young women and men in Egypt within an inclusive and more gender-equitable environment. In Cairo, Alexandria and Assiut goals were to ensure appropriate support for young men and women in vulnerable situations in the target areas to promote their access to decent work opportunities and to strengthen the capacity of key public and private stakeholders at local, regional and national levels to better support youth economic empowerment, particularly in relation to gender equality and inclusion. A final project evaluation was completed in November 2017 with support from F3E.
SAKSHAM INDIA	3 phases since 2010	SAKSHAM has been the first substantial endeavour of Plan International France in proactively addressing the practical and structural barriers which prevent or hinder youth's access to decent work. Over time, the approach has been refined across a comprehensive YEE pathway with a growing focus on gender equality and the empowerment of girls. To date, it is estimated that nearly 8,000 young women and young men have benefitted from the programme. A final evaluation report for Phase II (which concluded in 2016) was available and considered for the meta-evaluation as well as a Phase I evaluation. The evaluative review which took place in October 2018 as part of the meta-evaluation feeds into the meta-analysis although the quality of the report itself has not been included in the quality assessment process.
Eliminating Child Labour project	Phase 1: until end of April 2019 Phase 2: pre-	The project is not exclusively focused on YEE, but has a wider goal of eliminating child labour and other forms of violence against children in the Geita region of Northern Tanzania. The project includes an important component of capacity development of stakeholders,

TANZANIA	approved, starting ca. September 2019	particularly in the strengthening of child protection systems for the detection, prevention, response and rehabilitation of children at risk of or victims of the worst forms of child labour. Socio-economic empowerment activities are implemented with the wider objective to sustainably withdraw children from exploitative work. An internal mid-term evaluation was completed in September 2017.
FISONG Employability TOGO	May 2014 - April 2018	The project's main goal was to enhance the employability of young people in the Tchaoudjo region of Togo, with a specific target to support 400 vulnerable young people aged 15 to 25 (including 50% young women) through vocational training, job placements, stakeholder mobilisation and the development of an apprenticeship model. An external evaluation was completed in August 2018 and the final evaluation report has been shared in November 2018.

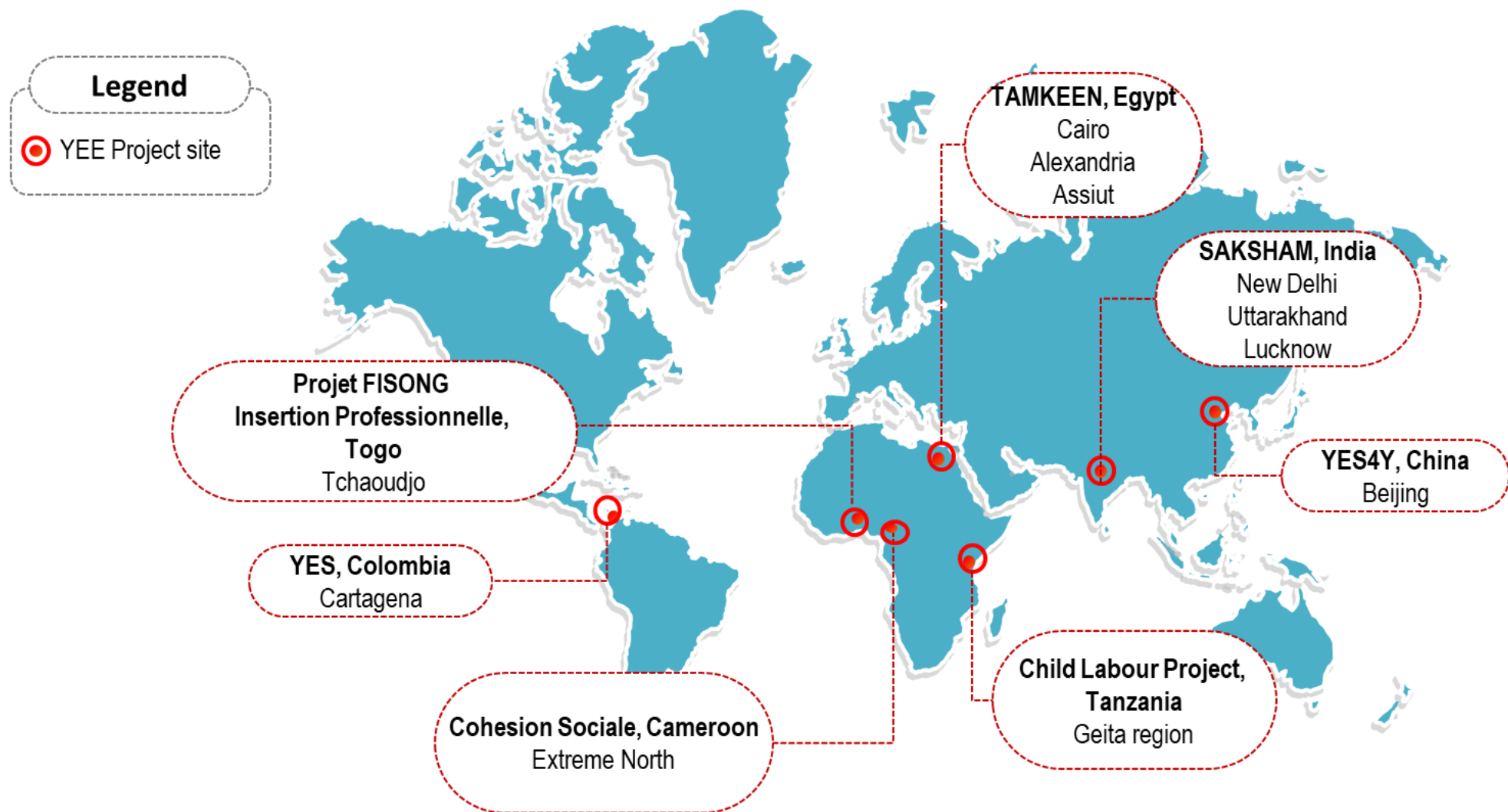


Figure 5 - Map of project name and locations for the meta-evaluation

Thematic scope and areas for investigation

The need to further question the ambition thematic scope for the meta-evaluation set in the TORs led to Plan International, F3E and this consultant to identify 3 key thematic areas of priority for the study:

- (i) **skills acquisition and transitions to decent work (both waged and self-employment) as experienced by young people benefitting from the selected projects;**
- (ii) **modelling of the YEE approach**
- (iii) **processes of gender gains and transformation**

Building from (i) the meta-evaluation TORs, (ii) the YE3 strategic framework (outcome areas and learning agenda in particular), (iii) the SOYEE programme offer narrative, (iv) the SOYEE theory of change and (v) discussions with Plan International France, a large number of themes pertaining to youth economic empowerment as approached at Plan International was collated. The themes (or “outcome areas”) overlap for the most part, but not systematically and not always in same terms. Therefore, it became necessary to sort out the various topics, harmonise terms and language and identify ways in which the themes could be more efficiently organised for the purpose of this meta-evaluation. It was also deemed important to consider all these sources of information including SOYEE strategic documents as these currently guide YEE approaches across Plan International and are the key guiding principles going forward.

From this initial categorisation, 3 outcome areas and their components ((i) skills acquisition and transition to decent work, (ii) national enablers, actors, systems and services, (iii) global enablers, actors, systems and services) and 4 cross-cutting themes (program quality, innovation, migration and partnerships) were identified. These outcome areas and sub-components were then further analysed as either being a core priority, a secondary issue or out of scope for the meta-evaluation. This prioritisation had the following methodological implications:

PRIORITY FOCUS	Macro-analysis to focus primarily on this topic/theme; additional data collection to put in place if insufficient data/evidence from the meta-evaluation (e.g. additional interviews, tools, benchmarking with literature in the sector, etc.) and to contrast findings and conclusions even when evidence exists and is robust in the portfolio of evaluations (to triangulate and enrich previous findings/conclusions)
SECONDARY	Learning and best practices on the topic/theme would be collated, narrated and highlighted as necessary; no additional data collection to confirm trends/findings or supplement them with further evidence if gaps or contradictions are identified
OUT OF SCOPE	Themes to be excluded from the meta-evaluation

Gender has not been identified as a stand-alone cross-cutting theme because gender aspects have been mainstreamed in all other categories (and in particular, the first outcome area around skills acquisition and transitions to decent work and the cross-cutting theme of Program Quality). This specific attention to including gender in all thematic components of the meta-evaluation also derives from the organisational priority placed on gender transformative programming at Plan International broadly and within the YEE thematic area in particular, as explained in previous sections of this report.

The cross-cutting issue of **youth participation** has also been factored into various sub-themes (skills acquisition, programme quality, youth representation, etc.) for similar reasons.

Details of this process were discussed in the inception report and in particular Annex 3, both available on request.

The process of thematic consolidation and prioritisation has allowed for the identification of 3 core priorities or investigation areas for the meta-evaluation (dominant themes). They are listed below with a range of key research topics to be explored by the meta-evaluation. Together, the 3 priority themes and 9 research questions form the evaluation questions for the meta-evaluation.

OUTCOME AREAS (O)	SUB-COMPONENTS
Features and drivers of successful economic transitions for youth within the considered portfolio of YEE projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. What can be learned from existing evidence and beyond about the best way to support vulnerable young people as they become independent and enter the world of work? What has been achieved in terms of technical and soft skills acquisition? What types of transition (waged employment / self-employment) have been promoted or achieved, and with what results in the long-term (retention and sustainability of the transition) and for whom (beneficiary profile from cross-country aggregated data)? How do these results differ for various sub-sections of youth (e.g. girls, rural youth, youth in emergencies)? What can be said about the specific project contributions towards the identified changes as opposed to other factors? b. What does the evidence say about the range of skills required to successfully make these economic transitions? What critical perspectives exist about required skills and about the value-add of an INGO such as Plan International in this process? How do beneficiaries themselves reflect on short, medium and long term effects, changes or benefits (intended and unintended), and how are they (or can they be) associated to documenting such effects? c. What can be learned from the YEE portfolio about how to instigate behavioural change in primary caregivers and community stakeholders in giving youth equal opportunities and a voice in pursuing skills development and decent work?
YEE Modelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> d. How does experience from the projects relate to the YEE pathway model existing at Plan International? What variations exist? What core elements need to be in place to ensure results and impacts? What elements of the approach are particularly effective and impactful, and what others have more questionable effectiveness? What sub-components may be added or altered depending on context? What is the value-add of the models and approaches evaluated, as compared to other models or approaches? e. What are the critical factors to operate at scale in YEE projects? f. What exists in relation to monitoring, evaluation and learning systems? How suitable are these systems to adequately measure and report on YEE results and changes? How coherent are they with organisational strategies and guidelines? How does learning from the portfolio of projects contribute to organisational tools and systems and in particular the SOYEE TOC and the SOYEE M&E framework?
Gender transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> g. How does the experience or evidence from the YEE meta-evaluation portfolio shed light on differentiated barriers, experiences and impacts by gender (aspirations, employability, completion, retention, enabling environment)? What matters for girls' economic empowerment? How effectively have the projects contributed to transforming the gender norms which determine girls' economic empowerment, and in particular removing the barriers facing girls and young women in YEE? h. What examples or experiences of good practices can be highlighted, and what is the potential for those to inspire other projects? i. What evidence exists of gender-mainstreaming in YEE projects and gender-related best practices other than outcome-related gender outcomes? Are there any mistakes to avoid?

2.3 STRUCTURE OF THE META-EVALUATION REPORT

In addition to the SAKSHAM Evaluative Review report, and the Togo Mission Report already shared with Plan International France and the respective country offices, this meta-evaluation comprises of:

- * Part 1: introductory overview of context, background and methods
- * Part 2: presentation of the analysis of the quality of evaluation reports
- * Part 3: presentation of the thematic analysis of evaluations findings and conclusions
- * 7 Annexes
- * 2 Appendices: TORs and a Methodological Note detailing and discussing the methodology and tools used for the meta-evaluation

2.4 Presentation of recommendations

Recommendations directly derived from findings and conclusions, are presented at the end of each section, as appropriate. Each recommendation is phrased as a paragraph which also includes suggested options to adopt the recommendation. Each recommendation is also given a level of importance and timing as per the categories below. Finally, the responsibilities in enacting the recommendation are also listed. This approach to ranking recommendations is proposed in order to facilitate the formulation of Management Responses and Action Plans.

Levels of importance

Symbol	Meaning
◆◆◆◆	Trivial or minor importance: there are benefits in considering the recommendation, but they would only marginally impact on project quality or progress
◆◆◆◆	Moderate: adopting the recommendation is desirable in order to pre-empt or prevent moderately negative effects on progress
◆◆◆◆	Considerable: adopting the recommendation is strongly advised in order to pre-empt or prevent major negative effects on progress
◆◆◆◆	Critical: adopting the recommendation is essential in order to pre-empt or prevent issues which are likely to block progress or hinder results and impacts, and overall project quality

Timing of recommendations

Symbol	Meaning
◆◆◆◆	Actions to plan as and when opportunities or resources allow
◆◆◆◆	Corrective / mitigating actions to plan within a year
◆◆◆◆	Corrective / mitigating actions to plan within 6 months
◆◆◆◆	Corrective / mitigating actions to plan immediately

3. METHODOLOGY

Note: a detailed methodological note is presented in Appendix B, with further information about the concepts, methods and tools which are only briefly summarised below. The meta-evaluation matrix, which presents how each method and tool contributes to specific research questions, is included in the Methodological Note and not repeated here for the sake of clarity and concision.

3.1. CONCEPTS AND PRINCIPLES

3.1.1. Guiding principles

This meta-evaluation is an external, independent assessment aiming to identify and document learning and achievements across a range of project and geographical contexts. It strived to comply with the highest standards of professionalism in presenting relevant, triangulated and realistic findings and recommendations.

In particular, the assignment was guided by the following key principles:

- **Maintaining meaningful levels of participation:** as a major part of the meta-evaluation was conducted remotely (desk review, qualitative portfolio analysis, coding etc.), the participation of key actors (including young people themselves when possible and pertinent) was sought and encouraged in all possible ways. The site visits presented the strongest opportunities to do so and a range of participatory research or M&E methods and tools were used.
- **Clarity and a well-defined scope of work:** the ToRs for the meta-evaluation clearly set out a scope of work which is distinct to that of a final evaluation (particularly in the case of the SAKSHAM project review). The objectives have been clearly redefined and prioritised (as explained in previous sections).
- **Compliance with Plan International's evaluation standards:** this meta-evaluation aims to be useful, feasible in scope, proper, reliable in its approach and findings, and accountable, as expected in Plan International's Evaluation Standards
- **Mixed methodological resources** have included: documentation and guidelines internal to Plan International (France and global); external robust and defensible reviews including literature reviews and systematic reviews available in the sector on youth economic empowerment as well as programme-related documents.

3.1.2. Key deliverables

This meta-evaluation produced the following deliverables as contractually agreed:

- an **inception report** and annexes (October 2018, revised December 2018)
- a **SAKSHAM evaluative review report and annexes** (March 2019)
- this **meta-evaluation report** and annexes (April 2019)

In addition, a **FISONG Togo mission report** (December 2018) was also submitted to interested and concerned parties. With the exception of the Togo report, all other deliverables were submitted as proof-read and copy-edited final copies in English.

3.1.3. Key definitions and concepts

For the purpose of this study, the following key definitions have been adopted¹³:

¹³ Other definitions relevant for the assignment are presented and discussed in Annex 2 (Glossary).

META-EVALUATION

Although definitions vary, a meta-evaluation is usually understood as an instrument or methodological approach used to evaluate the quality of a series of evaluation reports, their adherence to established standards and good practice as well as to identify and aggregate findings from the series considered.

For the purpose of this study, meta-evaluation is understood as a two-fold process involving (i) the systematic but rapid investigation and review of the quality of a defined portfolio of individual evaluation reports towards (ii) the aggregation of information, trends and learning across the considered portfolio into a macro-analysis of evidence and findings. This definition and understanding guides the methodology chosen to conduct the meta-evaluation and in particular the initial assessment of the quality of evaluation reports.

This meta-evaluation therefore consists in two parts: a *portfolio quality review* followed by an *evidence assessment or macro-analysis*. When reference is made to one or the other components, or to the study as a whole, these exact terms will be used.

YOUTH

Although numerous definitions of youth exist, some of them particularly context-specific, for the purpose of this study, 'youth' is understood as the transition period between childhood and adulthood, between the ages of 15 and 24 years.

This study adopts the United Nations Secretariat's universal definition which, for statistical consistency, defines youth as those individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 years (age cohort of 15-24). When the local context of a country, region or project within the considered portfolio for the meta-evaluation will require so, a more flexible age bracket will be considered but then explicitly mentioned (e.g. the African Youth Charter defines youth as every person between the ages of 15 and 35 years; the age cohort is defined as 15-32 by UN Habitat; some project in the portfolio include age groups until 35 or even 40 years under "youth").

For the purpose of this study, the terms "youth" and "young people", "young women" and "young men" may be used interchangeably to mean the age cohort of 15-24.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Plan International defines Economic Empowerment as both the *ability* to succeed and advance financially and the *power* to make and act on economic decisions. To succeed and advance economically, young people need the skills and resources to understand, enter and remain in, the labour market (or more widely, the 'world of work' as it is referred to), as well as fair and equal access to economic institutions such as banks, microfinance institutions or savings mechanisms. To have the power and agency to benefit from economic activities, young people need to know how to choose from various options, control resources and profits, claim their rights or seek redress when needed, etc. (adapted from Plan International position paper, upcoming).

3.1.4. Ethics, child safeguarding and risks

Ethical considerations guiding this meta-evaluation, including the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable children and young people, a duty of care, as well as key principles of human subject research, fully complied with Plan International France's Child Protection Charter, to which this consultant adhered contractually. Mitigation precautions were in place to minimise the risks possibly faced by children and young people included in this study.

The desk-based stages and tasks of the meta-evaluation only posed minimal risks to children and young people, as they there were no direct contacts or interactions then. The only key risk considered was around the indirect usage of personal information and secondary data (e.g. project database, project monitoring documents including data on beneficiaries, case stories, photographs, case stories) pertaining to or related to children and young people associated with the projects. A number of precautions were taken by this consultant in relation to data confidentiality and storage, ensuring consent during field missions, reserve and discretion, appropriate usage of imagery, and Do No Harm principles. During the course of the assignment, no concerns related to the protection of vulnerable adults and children were raised by this consultant.

3.2. METHODODS AND TOOLS¹⁴

3.2.1. Summary of meta-evaluation stages

The meta-evaluation comprised of 3 successive components:

- (i) An evaluative review of the SAKSHAM project in India
- (ii) Quality assessment of evaluation reports
- (iii) Thematic macro-analysis of evaluation findings and conclusions

3.2.2. Data collection, data entry and processing, data analysis

For the quality assessment of evaluation reports

An Excel-based tool has been developed by this consultant (Annex B of the Inception Report, available on request) to perform the quality assessment of evaluation reports, not the evaluation processes¹⁵. It was not meant to provide an indication of the quality of evaluation processes, or how useful and used findings have been, as this would fall outside of the scope of work and resource allocation for this meta-evaluation. Rather, this first step in the meta-evaluation aimed to (i) gauge the reliability of findings and conclusions presented in evaluation reports, and (ii) subsequently provide Plan International with conclusions and recommendations towards continuous improvement of quality in evaluations for the purpose of organisational learning.

Considering the limited size of the portfolio considered for the meta-evaluation, and after discussions with Plan International France and the F3E in the inception phase, it was decided not to exclude those reports which would not pass basic and minimum standards of quality as a result of the assessment. Instead, they are considered for the meta-analysis, although when the findings and conclusions they present are mentioned in the meta-analysis, a flag code is included to reflect the level of confidence and robustness of that information (see below explanations about the “level of coverage” indicator).

A limitation acknowledged by various meta-evaluations consulted for the purpose of this study, and by the consultant herself from past experience, is that this type of methodology can at times over-rate or under-rate some reports. A well-written, well-articulated report, with straightforward methodologies could score highly even though the evaluation process itself may not have felt positive to the country teams, partners or commissioning authority. And vice-versa, some reports are not well written and fail to truly capture the rich experience that the evaluation process has been, and may score lower than expected. To minimise this risk, each report was read twice for the quality assessment. However, some evaluations reports did score better than anticipated, because they were strong on the quality criteria more prominently captured in the tool. The following findings sections give such examples.

The tool included:

1. a **portfolio description tab** (see screenshot below) to capture and classify general project information which has been used to present an overall description of the portfolio (see subsequent sections) according to set criteria and key features (e.g. project title, location, costs, timing, evaluation sources etc.). Data entry was done manually, by this consultant, using information contained in the reports.
2. A **25-point report quality assessment checklist** has been developed, organised around 4 key clusters¹⁶:

¹⁴ The Inception Report also included a concise presentation of the methodology followed for the SAKSHAM Evaluative Review. The SAKSHAM review report itself includes details about approaches, tools and methods. This is not repeated here. Relevant documents are available on request.

¹⁵ It is possible however that during interviews or consultations with project staff or the evaluators themselves, the evaluation process itself is discussed. This may provide context to evaluation findings and conclusions, although it is not a primary objective of the meta-evaluation to assess evaluation processes.

¹⁶ Criteria are not evenly spread across all 4 parameters (Parameter A contains 10 assessment criteria, B=5, C=7, D=3) and no weighing was applied to criteria or parameters to keep the tool simple and user-friendly. Indirectly however, the fact that two parameters have a larger number of criteria, namely (A) Designs and Methods and (C) Structure is in itself an indirect way to give

- (A) Designs and Methods,
- (B) Findings and Conclusions,
- (C) Report Structure
- and (D) Gender and Inclusion.

The checklist was developed with reference to Plan International Evaluation Standards and in particular, expected standards of quality of evaluation reports, as well as with reference to other existing tools and in particular, the UN Women meta-evaluations tool, generic checklists (e.g. Stufflebeam, 1999), OECD DAC Quality Standards and other tools used by peer organisations and known to this consultant. A more condensed checklist (as opposed to extensive tools used by UN Women and bilateral donors, or even academic institutions), with simplified ranking and scoring options, was deemed a more appropriate method considering time and resources constraints.

Each criteria was given a score ranging from 0 (unsatisfactory compliance / performance of the report on the criterion) to 3 (very good compliance / performance of the report on the criterion), with associated colour-coding. To minimise potential misunderstandings or disagreements on the scores, the assessor (this consultant) provided for each criteria a brief commentary of factors that have been considered to justify the score. A summary of all the quality assessments for this meta-evaluation is included in Annex 6 of this report.

Scores are aggregated for each of the 4 parameters to allow for further analysis Each report can thus be categorised as either **unsatisfactory**, of **insufficient quality**, **good** or **very good** as per the following definitions:

DEFINITIONS	OVERALL SCORING CRITERIA
UNSATISFACTORY REPORT Report where a number of serious gaps and limitations are identified, which cast doubts on the representativeness, pertinence or even reliability of findings and conclusions	UNSATISFACTORY REPORT A+B+C+D= 0 to 15 points (<20% of maximum points)
REPORT OF INSUFFICIENT QUALITY This type of report meets some of the standards and quality requirements but key parameters are unaddressed or insufficiently so. This type of report can be useful although information in contains is likely to be anecdotal or not grounded in robust analysis or evidence. This type of report cannot be used in confidence.	REPORT OF INSUFFICIENT QUALITY A+B+C+D= 16 to 37 points (21-50% of maximum points)
GOOD REPORT A good evaluation report adheres satisfactorily to most quality requirements, and presents good levels and methods of analysis despite a few gaps. These gaps do not compromise the overall report, which can therefore be used in confidence.	GOOD REPORT QUALITY A+B+C+D= 38 to 60 points (51-80% of maximum points)
VERY GOOD REPORT A very good evaluation report meets all or nearly all quality requirements satisfactorily, and has the features of credibility, compliance with Plan International standards and common good practices. Analysis is evidence-based, which makes findings and recommendations reliable and to be used in confidence.	VERY GOOD REPORT QUALITY A+B+C+D= 61 to 75 points (>80% of maximum points)

For the macro-analysis or rapid evidence assessment.

The corpus of evaluation reports represents a dense, rich and important volume of information. For the macro-analysis to be valid and reliable, focusing on providing answers to the meta-evaluation questions, it was thus imperative that a robust process of analysis was followed in an organised and thorough manner, to minimise the risk of biases and omissions.

This was done through a process known as **Thematic Analysis** (definition and details in Appendix B) through coding of data points (mainly text fragments in this case). The purpose of thematic coding was not to quantify the qualitative data

prominence to these parameters as they are particularly determinant in the overall quality of an evaluation report. The Inception Report described how the tool had been tested and trialled, which only led to minor edits (precisions and terminology mainly).

available, but rather to organise large amount of information into themes, sub-themes and topics/tone in order to depict general trends, build a narrative in response to meta-evaluation questions and allow for cross-project analysis. It also allows to understand what has been particularly well-researched in evaluations (dominant or recurrent themes), and what is less known, less frequently referenced or inconclusive in the considered evaluation reports (evidence gaps).

Coding was done in Excel¹⁷, with a coding frame developed (with pre-assigned categories of themes and sub-themes) and tested by the consultant on the basis of the themes and sub-themes commonly defined with Plan International France for this assignment. Qualitative software analysis options had however been considered and assessed, but discarded due to cost or functionalities (e.g. challenges in processing documentation in multiple languages).

Each evaluation report was assigned a reference number (see below).

On the basis of the complete coding sheet / workbook (available on request), the following steps were taken to **analyse the data** thus collated:

1. Basic quality checks: the coding workbook was screened to eliminate all possible manual entry mistakes (e.g. blank cells, numbering issues, typos, etc.). The final dataset as used for the purpose of analysis was considered complete and credible
2. Sorting and collation: once the encoding was complete, the first step of data analysis was to filter and sort data points to group all those relating to the same sub-theme together (copy-paste in a new Excel worksheet), thus consolidating and condensing the data by sub-theme. For each sub-theme, data has been organised and discussed by key points. A pivot table was also created to gather global quantitative data on the workbook (e.g. total number of data points, distribution by source, etc.)
3. Thematic description: the meta-evaluation report presents a topline thematic description of the data set (dominant themes, under-represented themes, number of data points in each theme/sub-theme, unique or dissentive perspectives, etc.). Direct quotes from evaluation reports are used to illustrate this data overview when pertinent
4. Triangulation and benchmarking: findings from desk review of key literature and informant interviews (both internal and external to Plan International) have been used to contrast, contextualise or enrich the results of the thematic analysis.
5. Level of coverage indicator: it had been jointly decided (see inception report for rationale and justifications, and previous sections) that even those evaluations which do not meet minimum quality standards after assessment would be included for the macro-analysis, considering the modest size of the portfolio. In order to guide the reader about the robustness of evidence around a particular theme, and in particular flag in the analysis report these areas which may lack robust evidence due to lower quality evaluations or simply lack of evidence due to a topic being under-represented in the evaluation reports, a “level of coverage” indicator¹⁸ is included at the top of each section in the narrative analysis. Coverage is described as either:
 - **Strong** (= more than half of the evaluation reports provide evidence for the theme/sub-theme, and/or evidence provided is robust as emanating from good quality evaluations),
 - **Moderate** (=only 2 or 3 evaluation reports provide evidence for the theme/sub-theme, or evidence provided is moderate as emanating from medium quality evaluations)
 - or **Weak** (=the issue is marginally covered in the portfolio of evaluation reports or not at all, or evidence provided is emanating from particularly mediocre quality evaluation reports).

Underneath, a ribbon capturing the overall quality ranking of the evaluation reports (represented by their code) which provide evidence on the theme is included. Below is a fictitious example of what the level of coverage indicator may look like in the findings section for this report:

¹⁷ Coding inclusion and exclusion criteria are listed in Appendix B.

¹⁸ This method is employed by UN Women in their evaluation meta-analysis. It has been adapted for the purpose of this meta-evaluation, as there will be no statistical level of coverage provided but rather a colour-coded label about the strength of evidence presented.

Level of Coverage	Strong			
USA-FE-ABC-2	FRA-MTR-ABC-2	ITA-FE-ABC-1	UGA-FE-DEF-1	SPA-FE-DEF-2

3.2.5. Overview of coding results

Overall, 916 data points were encoded and included in the coding workbook, with an average of 115 text fragments encoded for each evaluation report. Less than half of these data points (48%) emanate from reports which had been assessed as “good” evaluation reports in previous phases of the meta-evaluation. However, considering that “good” reports only represented 38% of the portfolio (3 out of 8 reports), it can be said that “good” evaluation report contributed disproportionately to the total number of data points, and were particularly richer in findings and conclusions for the purpose of this macro-analysis.

Of concern however is the concentration of the encoded data, as 7 out of 10 data points came from only three projects, namely the SAKSHAM project in India, the YES project in Colombia and the TAMKEEN project in Egypt. These projects predominantly operate in urban or peri-urban contexts in middle-income countries. There is thus an inherent risk of the macro-analysis disproportionately reflecting on such contexts.

Distribution of data points by evaluation document

Document source	# data points in coding workbook	% in total
CHN-MTR-YES-1	71	7.8%
CMR-FE-CoSo-1+2	85	9.3%
COL-FE-YES1+2	163	17.8%
EGY-FE-TAM-1	171	18.7%
IND-FE-SAK-II	200	21.8%
IND-MTR-SAK-II	111	12.1%
TGO-FE-FIS-1	103	11.2%
TNZ-MTR-CLP-2	12	1.3%
Grand Total	916	100.0%
Average	115	
Median	107	
47.7%	data points from "good" evaluations	
52.3%	data points from "average" evaluations	

Top 5 information sources by order of importance

IND-FE-SAK-II	200	21.8%	70.4%
EGY-FE-TAM-1	171	18.7%	
COL-FE-YES1+2	163	17.8%	
IND-MTR-SAK-II	111	12.1%	
TGO-FE-FIS-1	103	11.2%	
TOP 5 together	748	81.7%	

In terms of the thematic focus of findings and conclusions presented in evaluation reports, (i) **skills and employment outcomes** and (ii) **programme quality** were the most commonly discussed topics – they represent 48.9% and 27.5% of data points respectively. There is, on the contrary, limited discussions and thus limited evidence on (iii) enabling factors in the environment, (iv) innovation, (v) migration and to a lesser extent, (vi) partnerships.

3.3. Challenges and limitations

The main challenges and limitations acknowledged or observed during this meta-evaluation (some of which already flagged by the TORs) include:

- **Lack of comparable processes or documents:** this meta-evaluation is the first of its kind at Plan International France, with therefore limited opportunities to challenge or contrast methods and findings with previous studies.

A desk review of summative learning reviews or even meta-evaluations conducted by peer organisations was thus a means to include comparison points in this meta-evaluation

- **Single perspective in quality assessment:** the quality assessment of evaluation reports and subsequent macro-analysis were conducted by only one person (this consultant) which limits opportunities to contrast and challenge coding and findings. However, the open dialogue established with the commissioning authorities, and the feedback loop on tools, methods and findings (including face-to-face sharing of preliminary findings) allowed for cross-checking of information, in order to minimise and avoid misinterpretations. Resource persons identified within Plan International France and the SOYEE knowledge Hub of Plan International Global were contacted and interviewed, and involved in the review of early drafts of this report.
- **Multi-linguistic environment:** reports are available in either English or French, and for the project in Colombia some information is in Spanish. This consultant is fluent in all three languages, and was confidently able to navigate between one or other language throughout the meta-evaluation. However, working in multi-linguistic environment has its own challenges, and there is a risk that some of the nuances pertained in one or the other language is not easily captured in English at the time of analysis and report writing.
- **Quality of evaluations vs. Quality of evaluation reports:** as mentioned in previous sections of this methodology chapter, step 1 of the meta-evaluation was not designed to assess the quality of evaluations as a whole, but as evaluation reports only, as key outputs of evaluations. The set of criteria was purposefully narrowed down to 25 to allow for time and resources constraints, with only one assessor involved in the quality rating. There were as a result a few instances where the overall rating may not have reflected opinions from the teams involved themselves – in the case of Togo, the evaluation report was probably perceived by the teams as not as good as the rating suggested, precisely because the process had not been satisfactory and the report ended up being associated with the process. This is an inherent risk of such assessments. Whenever possible, this assessor also drew from other documents (project reports, TORs, etc.) to contextualise the evaluation or clarify certain points, without however amending scores of the report itself.
- **Limited portfolio:** 8 evaluation documents is a very limited set of reports, which may at times limit the scope of the meta-evaluation findings. When there was lack of evidence due to an insufficient pool of information, candid observations were made in this regard, and conclusions are formulated with more precautions.
- **Limited opportunities for direct participation from young people:** distance, time and resources have been challenges in offering more opportunities for young people to take part in the meta-evaluation. Their engagement has only been through the data collection phase in the India and Togo field missions.
- **Retrospective analysis:** some of the frameworks and guidelines used for this meta-evaluation as background information (e.g. SOYEE position paper or organisational guidelines towards gender-transformative programming) have been developed when some of the projects had already partially or entirely completed a cycle. There is, to some extent, a degree of anachronism in doing so, and this was acknowledged as a limitation from the start of the process. However, these referential documents were used not to assess project performance (which would have been anachronistic) but rather to assess what in the future would need to be done for the projects to meet established standards, if need be.

PART 2

EVALUATIONS QUALITY REVIEW

4. QUALITY OF EVALUATION REPORTS: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Portfolio description and overall quality

4.1.1. Key contextual information about countries covered in the meta-evaluation

Notes:

- this section is only intended to present a broad contextual overview of the issues at the intersection of young age, employment, gender and development. It is acknowledged that more nuances are required to fully understand contexts and the multiple layers of vulnerability which can exist and vary from one country to another.
- The statements presented below draw from statistical information collated on general demographic, socio-economic and policy factors for the countries considered in the meta-evaluation. A summary table is appended to this report (Annex 5). Data has been contrasted with project experience and evaluations when required, for more appropriate contextual overview.

Economic contexts

YEE projects supported by Plan International France have taken place mainly in middle income contexts (MIC). Indeed, with the exception of Tanzania and Togo, both classified by the World Bank as low income countries and included by the UN on the list of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), projects have been implemented in lower (Cameroon, Egypt, India) or upper middle income (China, Colombia) countries reasonably well ranked on the UNDP Human Development index (2018 report, based on 2017 data)¹⁹.

A 'middle income' status however can mask a variety of macro-economic situations: in China, Colombia and Egypt, the GDP per capita ranges between US \$ 12,700 to US \$16,700. However, India and Cameroon, albeit being in the lower middle countries (LMICs) category, have much lower GDP per capita – in the case of Cameroon, it is in fact nearly comparable to the per capita income in Tanzania (US \$3,700 vs. \$3,200 respectively), although the latter falls in the low income category.

With the exception of China, where the poverty level stands low at 3.3%, in other countries a middle income status does not automatically imply low poverty rates. The proportion of the population living below the poverty line is comparable in India (21.9%), Tanzania [although not MIC] (22.8%), Egypt (27.8%) and Colombia (28%) in spite of the per capita income in these countries differing drastically (4.5 times higher in Colombia as compared to Tanzania).

Across all macro-economic indicators, Togo is the least performing country: it has the highest poverty ratio in the portfolio (55.1%), the lowest per capita income (US \$ 1,700) and the lowest HDI ranking (165).

¹⁹ China and Colombia are high human development, ranked 86th and 90th respectively out of 189 countries considered for the 2018 Human Development Report by UNDP. Egypt and India are ranked 115th and 130th, classified as medium human development. Cameroon is a borderline case: ranked 151st in the world, it is the last countries on the list of medium human development performing only marginally better than countries in the low human development group which it precedes in ranking.

Needs and pertinence of YEE interventions

Youth are the dominant demographic sub-group in Cameroun, Tanzania, Togo and to a lesser extent in Egypt, which makes interventions focusing on youth in these countries relevant from this point of view. The median age in these countries is thus expectedly in the bracket of 15-24 which defines youth for the purpose of this study, as previously explained.

Looking at the urbanisation factor, it seems this is a dimension which has not proactively been considered in Plan International France's portfolio. Projects in China, Colombia, Tanzania and Togo appear adequately targeted as project focus aligns with the urban-rural distribution in the country (e.g. urban project in Colombia, where the population is largely urban). However in India for example, in spite of the image of humongous urban metropolis, the population is still primarily rural but the SAKSHAM project only has an emergent and still minority focus on rural and remote youth. Rural interventions in India would be pertinent to consider as this is where most of the youth population still reside. This is not to say that interventions should only take place where there is the largest demographic need, but rather that the identification of needs and barriers facing young people is a complex process which must fully comprehend geographical divides as well.

Unemployment figures are more challenging to interpret, as countries have varied levels of capacity in national employment statistics reporting, and extremely diverse structural economic trends which may account for variations in unemployment ratios. Unemployment is reportedly low in China (3.9% for the general population), Cameroon (4.3) and Togo (6.9). It is the highest in Egypt (12.2%), which has for several years suffered from either recession or extremely low economic growth. The case of India, where unemployment stands at around 8.5% (estimates) in spite of sustained economic growth for nearly two decades also goes to show that economic growth is not enough to solve the unemployment issue. Growth in India is often pinned for being 'jobless', i.e. mainly driven by sectors that do not necessarily foster job creation. However, **a common factor to the majority of countries considered (except Tanzania and Togo) is that youth unemployment is usually higher than the unemployment rate in the overall working-age population:** more precisely, it is 1.2 (India) to 2.8 (Egypt, China) times higher than national average, in line with global trends presented in introduction to this report. Youth unemployment is alarmingly high in Egypt, with over 1 in 3 young person (34.4%) being unemployed. Another key feature of youth unemployment in these 7 countries is that female unemployment exceeds male unemployment, by proportions ranging from 26% (India) to 66% (Colombia) higher. Only in the cases of China and Togo is female unemployment lower than male unemployment.

Gender perspectives

Young women are at a clear and systematic disadvantage in most of the countries where Plan International France's YEE work has taken place. This is particularly so in India and China, and to a lesser extent Egypt, where there are significantly more young men and boys in the age group, as compared to young women and girls (**sex ratio** ranging between 1.06 in Egypt to 1.13 in China and 1.14 in India). This does not seem to be an issue in the sub-Saharan African countries where Plan International France has supported YEE projects, as the male to female ratio (ranging between 0.99 and 1.01) are within the commonly admitted 'normal' range. It is important to consider that this ratio is **an indication of wide and deep structural and cultural inequalities facing women and girls**, which would justify additional focus on gender issues in project design in countries where the ratio is an indication of structural and cultural discrimination, as well as differentiated messaging in the gender awareness messaging depending on context.

In all these countries, **women have their first child when they are still young – in their late teens or early twenties, which is the main age group targeted by all the projects in the portfolio** (see following sub-section). With the exception of India and China where relatively strict birth control policies have been enforced for decades, or more developed contexts such as Colombia, fertility ratios in all the countries where YEE projects have taken place remain high. This must be factored into consideration in project design, as it implies that significant proportions of women have multiple caring responsibilities (possibly implying domestic ones, too) already when they transition to adulthood i.e. when they are targeted by YEE interventions, which may hinder their availability and participation in the labour force (both entry and retention), and their status in the household (see subsequent sections of this report about the SAKSHAM project in India).

If adult literacy is taken as a proxy indicator for education, there again women are at a disadvantage. As also mentioned in the introductory background and context analysis to this report, **illiteracy or the lack of functional literacy** is a phenomenon which still primarily, predominantly disproportionately affects women. This is the case in all countries but one (Colombia) in the portfolio which would call for youth interventions to respond to possibly lower education levels in young women (in training and employment pathways) but also, from an empowerment perspective, integrate functional literacy and numeracy activities (in partnership when it is relevant and possible to do so) targeting young women into project design where this is needed. It appears as an important factor of employability and thus a means to redress one

of the key, persistent gender gaps hindering women's economic empowerment. Failing to do so, there is a risk that projects leave behind those women who are even further at the margins of employment and economic participation.

In relation to employment, a common feature across all 8 countries is that the female labour force participation is lower than the male labour force participation, even in countries where female participation is high as in the case of Tanzania (79.5%) or Togo (75.8%). In Egypt and India, the female labour force participation is critically low, at 22.2% and 27.2% respectively, which would justify increased focus on *female* access to employment in such contexts.

Taking female political representation as a proxy indicator for gender equality in leadership and representation, and more broadly as women's empowerment, one clear finding is that **all countries considered are a long way away from political gender parity**. Even the best performing of the lot (Tanzania), with 37.2% of women holding parliamentary seats, is still distant from gender parity. With only 11.6% and 14.9% of parliament seats held by women, India and Egypt, respectively, are the least performing of the lot in terms of female leadership and political representation.

With the exception of China, which ranks 36th out of 161 countries on UNDP's Gender Inequality Index, and to a lesser extent Colombia, all other countries perform relatively poorly in relation to gender equality. It is particularly the case for India (127th), Tanzania (130th), Togo (140th) and Cameroon (141st). Poor performance on maternal and reproductive health and education in low income countries continue to hinder gender equality prospects.

Broad policy environment

Albeit with specific reservations, all countries considered in the YEE meta-evaluation have ratified both the UNCRC and CEDAW with are two of the key guiding human rights instruments for the target population. In addition, they all are member of the ILO, through which most of the international regulatory environment applicable to young people and youth employment, is debated, negotiated and agreed²⁰. In other terms, this offers a **favourable policy environment for any YEE project**, as it not only ensures that national entities have committed to adhere to international standards, norms and instruments but also that mechanisms exist to take duty bearers to account, thus offering opportunities to enhance or advocate for youth-specific standards and prioritisation in relation to employment and economic empowerment.

4.1.2 Overview of documents assessed

Project locations

8 evaluation documents were included in the meta-evaluation, as explained in previous sections. They relate to 7 projects, implemented in 7 different countries.

With the exception of the Cohesion Sociale project which was implemented in a fragile and conflict-affected region of Cameroon, and is thus considered as a humanitarian project for the purpose of this study, all other projects are longer-term development interventions implemented in stable contexts, primarily in middle income countries but not only.

There is an even spread of projects along the rural-urban spectrum: 3 projects are exclusively focused on large urban centres or primary or secondary importance (e.g. Cartagena in Colombia, Beijing in China, Cairo, Alexandria and Assiut in Egypt). Projects in sub-Saharan Africa countries in the portfolio are exclusively focused on rural / semi-rural or low-population density locations, or in the case of Togo for example, quasi-rural locations scattered around a small, secondary urban centre (Sokode). The SAKSHAM project is the only one in the portfolio which intervenes both in urban (Delhi, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Dehradun) and remote (mountainous villages of Uttarakhand) locations.

Project design

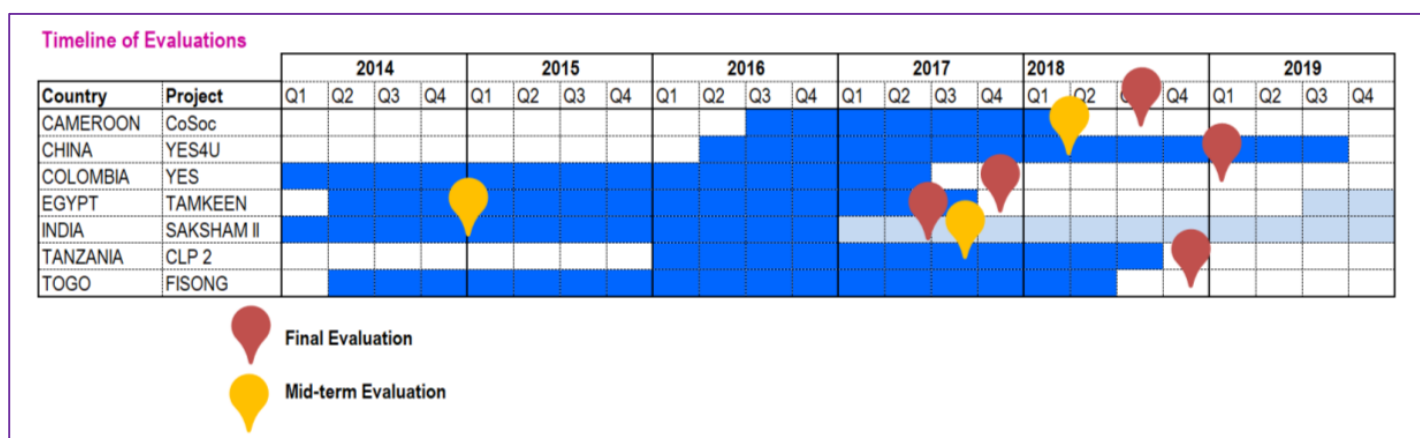
With the exception of the Child Labour Phase II project in the Geita Region of Tanzania, where YEE components are part of a wider child protection project, all other projects have either a dominant or exclusive focus on youth economic empowerment.

Evaluation moment

The portfolio of evaluation reports mainly comprised of final or ex-post evaluations conducted by external evaluators (consultants, teams of consultants or firms). Coincidentally, all 3 mid-term evaluations are all internal,

²⁰ International Labour Standards applicable to youth employment are listed by the ILO on their website <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/youth-employment/standards/lang--en/index.htm>. In addition, regional standards may also exist, as well as sector-specific regulation.

conducted by Plan International in-country staff, with or without involvement from local partners. With the exception of the mid-term report for SAKSHAM (Phase II) conducted at the end of 2014, all evaluation reports are very or relatively recent, having been finalised in the 18-month period leading to this meta-evaluation.



4.1.3 Overall quality scores of evaluation reports

3 of the assessed evaluation reports (Colombia, Egypt and Togo²¹, in descending order) out of 8 met the standards of “good” evaluation reports (see below the evaluation reports in alphabetical order of the country they relate to, with colour coding of their overall quality score)²². Interestingly, those reports which received the highest scores are either the most recent ones, for which Plan International France has acknowledged stronger and more proactive engagement with their country offices counterparts in the management and oversight of evaluation processes, including by seeking specialist support from F3E (in the case of the Egypt TAMKEEN evaluation).

The other 5 reports were of lower quality, which means that they do meet some of the standards and quality requirements, but that they insufficiently address others, or may contain information that is insufficiently grounded in robust analysis or evidence, or is at best anecdotal in some cases. Although they cannot fully be used in confidence, efforts to triangulate those with other sources of information, as well as findings from more robust evaluations on specific issues and topics, were made to mitigate this limitation.

None of the reports was assessed as unsatisfactory, which on the other hand implies that with all due precautions their findings and conclusions can reasonably support the meta-analysis process.

CMR-FE-CoSo-1+2
CHN-MTR-YES-1
COL-FE-YES1+2
EGY-FE-TAM-1
IND-MTR-SAK-II
IND-FE-SAK-II
TNZ-MTR-CLP-II
TGO-FE-FIS-1

The following sections explore in further details the issues, gaps and good practices for each of the 4 clusters of criteria included in the quality assessment tool.

²¹ In the case of the FISONG evaluation in Togo, there was a threshold effect as the overall score was just at the lower limit of the range for good reports. In light of conversations with Plan International France and Plan International Togo with regards to this evaluation report specifically, which was not perceived as neither a good process or a good output, the overall good score is mainly driven by the fact that evaluators adhered to good standards of presentation and writing, and presenting what appeared to be a sound, well-justified and robust methodological approach. It is however how this was put into practice and how findings and conclusions were derived from the methods used which were contentious points. This may suggest a limitation in the meta-evaluation quality tool itself, with possibly a bias towards methods and structure clusters which may favour those evaluations which score well on these criteria. This risk was acknowledged in the previous section describing the methodology for the report quality assessments, and discussed in Appendix B.

²² Annex 6 has further information about scores by cluster for each of the evaluation reports, as well as a narrative justification for the overall score.

4.1.4 Summary and conclusions

Finding 1 (F1). Plan International France's YEE footprint is diverse and locally pertinent

The footprint of Plan International France's support to youth economic empowerment has been limited to date (7 countries scoped for this study), but has involved interventions in a broad range of countries, which is an added-value for experiential learning. Although work has mainly taken place in middle income countries, local contexts varied greatly, with different poverty profiles, urbanisation rates or macro-economic and per capita wealth. China and Togo are outliers at both end of the spectrum on macro-economic indicators. In other terms, there is no dominant country profile in Plan International France's YEE portfolio, which is also a challenge in drawing many general conclusions from evaluations.

Young people are a dominant demographic group in the majority of these 8 countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, but not in all. All these countries are at different stages of their demographic transitions, which explains these disparities. Although unemployment rates vary from country to country, with unemployment not even an issue in the case of China for example, a key feature is that youth unemployment is usually higher than the national average, and that young women are at a nearly systematic disadvantage in relation to unemployment, in line with global trends. From these two points of view, the geographical focus of YEE interventions supported by Plan International France appears, at macro level, broadly pertinent.

Conclusion

The diversity of country profiles generates rich learning about what YEE can look like in a variety of contexts. This could be a starting point for Plan International France to further elaborate on their strategic plan in relation to YEE, by deciding on core indicators to be given priority when deciding the footprint of the organisation's YEE portfolio. As a smaller member of the global Federation, with fewer human and financial resources, Plan International France could more proactively define their YEE footprint to prioritise contexts where macro indicators suggest specific vulnerabilities for young people (see Recommendation R1 below), and thus support intersectional approaches. There is a need in particular to ensure prioritisation of (i) *female* access to employment in countries where female participation in the labour force is critically low, and (ii) integrate more explicitly geographical factors, taking into account the growth of secondary-importance cities, and the fact that the majority of young people still reside in rural areas.

F2. In spite of geographical and socio-economic diversity in the portfolio of YEE project, a common factor is the observation of systemic disadvantages affecting women

On all key macro-indicators of gender equality in relation to employability (e.g. literacy) or employment (e.g. employment, labour force participation) in the considered portfolio, there is evidence of systemic disadvantages for women in general and young women in particular, confirming their unique and multi-layered vulnerabilities in relation to economic empowerment. The degree of this systemic level of discrimination, and the reasons for it vary however from context to context, with female labour force participation (to take only this example) being drastically different in countries such as India and Egypt, where it is critically low, to countries in sub-Saharan Africa where Plan International has supported YEE projects.

Conclusions

The observable gender gap in relation to employability and employment confirms the pertinence of Plan International France's portfolio of YEE projects from a gender perspective. However this focus would highly depend on a thorough understanding of the degrees in young women's vulnerability in the various contexts, as young women are not an homogenous group. Sub-sections of the female youth population which appear to be at an even greater disadvantage include illiterate or lower educated girls and young women: lack of functional literacy and lower education levels continue to disproportionately characterise female populations in most of the countries considered and would call for adapted approaches so as not to leave these girls and young women behind employment initiatives..

F3. The policy environment in all countries considered by this study appears conducive

Adherence by all 8 countries to international standards and regulations guiding youth employment and rights (in particular, UNCRC, CEDAW, ILO), albeit with reservations implies that the policy environment is conducive, creating opportunities to engage dialogue around youth-friendly or youth-specific employment and economic integration policies.

Conclusions

Conducive policy contexts are an opportunity to enhance and broaden not only the pertinence of YEE interventions, but also their potential meso and macro levels impact, by influencing systemic or national ecosystems for employment. It is relevant to fully embrace this dimension in YEE project design.

F4. The portfolio is quasi-exclusively constituted by external evaluations of longer-term development interventions

The evaluation documents constituting the meta-evaluation portfolio emanate for the most part from longer-term, development interventions whose dominant or exclusive focus is youth economic empowerment. However beyond this common broad picture lies a wide diversity of situations. In fact, there is no “typical” setting of these YEE projects supported by Plan International France, as they cover a broad range of locations on the rural-to-urban spectrum from tiny remote Togolese villages to global metropolis like Delhi and Beijing. YEE in humanitarian settings is under-represented, with only one project (Cohesion Sociale in Cameroon)²³.

Conclusions

The diversity in project locations and profiles is a limitation for a process of meta-analysis on what remains, all things considered, a rather small portfolio for a meta-evaluation (8 documents). On the one hand it allows Plan International France to have a grip and insights into the diverse profiles, needs and challenges facing young people around the world whom, as demonstrated in previous sections, are not a homogeneous group. On the other hand, this is a challenge in identifying and articulating commonalities, or even modelling the YEE ‘approach’ as discussed in subsequent sections of this report.

F5. Less than half of the evaluation reports meet the criteria defining “good” evaluation reports

Assessing each of the evaluation report against an established set of 25 criteria grouped in 4 clusters revealed that only 3 reports met the minimum standards expected of good evaluation reports. Findings from these reports can thus be used in confidence to support thematic analysis. Across the portfolio, no clear issue stands out as to why other reports did not score as well: issues varied from one report to the other, although there is general under-performance on gender & inclusion as well as the robustness of the designs and methods used.

Conclusion

Overall, the portfolio of evaluation reports is not robust enough to be fully used in confidence. This confirmed the need to flag and mark areas in the meta-analysis which derived from insufficiently robust evidence or reports, and supplement those with additional data and information. It is reassuring to notice that the trend is towards substantial improvements in the quality of evaluation at Plan International France, as the most recent evaluations where Plan International France played a more engaged part were also the ones which received the highest scores. The lessons about how and why these evaluations performed better would need to be articulated and captured.

4.2. Methodological strength of evaluations

4.2.1. Overview of scoring and derived findings

Cluster (A) Designs and Methods was the one comprising of the largest number of criteria (10) which indirectly gave stronger importance to this aspect in the overall score of the quality of each report. This is only logical, as the quality of a report can reasonably be assumed to be correlated to the robustness and appropriateness of the methodology adopted and approach chosen. The average score of 1.44 for this cluster does not adequately reflect the range of issues at play – such is the limitation of calculating averages. Indeed, while on certain aspects all of the reports are either “good” or very “good” (for e.g. on how clearly they present the purpose of the evaluation, the key question and criteria), on others performance is alarmingly poor – with regards to ethics and safeguarding considerations for example.

Two major aspects which hinder the quality of evaluation designs are:

²³ As mentioned in the introductory chapter, other initiatives in humanitarian contexts do exist in Plan International France’s YEE portfolio. However, these projects are in the very early stages of their cycles and were excluded from the scope of this meta-evaluation precisely for this reason and the absence of a formal evaluation document.

- The **absence of discussion and considerations for ethical issues at play**²⁴: only one out of the 8 evaluation reports had explicit mention of ethics and safeguarding – see text box. The nearly complete silence of other reports on ethics and safeguarding is all the more preoccupying as (i) the majority of them do touch on sensitive topics such as gender inequalities, and (ii) use human subjects research methods, whether quantitative or qualitative.
- The **absence of discussion around limitations and challenges**: only one evaluation report (Cohesion Sociale, Cameroon) discusses in a dedicated section of the methodology chapter, a number of logistical (security issues and distances to cover between one project site and the others, which made it impossible to include all sites in the evaluation) or methodological limitations and their implications on the validity or scope of evaluation findings. However it is unclear however how mitigations measures were put in place to minimise the effects of these limitations.

Example of good practice: Discussing child protection risks and mitigating strategies in evaluations (Tanzania)

In the mid-term evaluation of the Child Labour II project in Geita, Tanzania, ethical considerations are discussed in the introductory chapter, touching for example on how issues of consent and confidentiality had been anticipated, and similarly the risks associated with taking part in the surveys and group discussions. Ethical issues are not presented as a “tick box” exercise, repeating standards applicable across Plan International, but interpreted in the context of the specific project. This was important in the local context, as the project deals with the very sensitive issue of harmful and hazardous child labour in the mining industry. Examples of good practices include (i) the fact that the Child Protection officer had a direct role in supporting the mid-term review process; (ii) enumerators who administered the surveys were trained on ethics and safeguarding issues.

It is however reassuring that both these issues can practically and easily be resolved in the future, by ensuring evaluators and evaluation managers pay due attention to ethics, safeguarding and limitations early on by undertaking risks assessments in the inception phase of evaluations.

Other methodological issues include:

- Insufficient explanations about sampling approaches used and thus representativeness of findings and conclusions**: only those evaluations which included quantitative data collection (surveys, in both cases, SAKSHAM final evaluation in India and evaluation of the FISONG project in Togo) explained their approach to sampling in sufficient details to allow for the reader to conclude on the representativeness of the samples and derived analysis. It is often the case that evaluations which primarily draw from qualitative methods (as is the case in this portfolio, see below) insufficiently document their sampling frame. In most cases some form of purposive sampling was used, although they do not clarify the extent to which the broad distribution across age, gender and locations achieved in the project was or not reflected in the sample of beneficiaries who took part in the evaluation.
- Lack of clarity or mention of evaluation criteria used**: half of the evaluation reports do not mention any evaluation criteria in their methodology, even though this is key in defining the scope and object of the evaluation. When they are mentioned, evaluation criteria usually align with the OECD DAC criteria²⁵, although when specific criteria are left out of the scope of analysis, no justification is provided²⁶. **Relevance and effectiveness are usually and broadly discussed by evaluation reports, even if it is implicitly**. On the issue of relevance, the assessment is however often partial, referring to a limited set of contextual elements (see below about insufficient gender focus in background assessments) and taking the broad assumption that if the project responds to needs and trends in the context, it is thus relevant. Only in the evaluation report of the TAMKEEN project in Egypt did the evaluators go further by demonstrating that the relevance of the project was hindered by the fact that there was no policy engagement to liaise with duty bearers, and possibly even influence them, to change the narrative for unemployed youth. Similar remarks were made in the SAKSHAM evaluative review conducted in the initial phase of this meta-evaluation (report available on request).

²⁴ Annexes to these reports are rarely used to present data collection methods or outputs, leaving an important gap on issues of ethics and representativeness.

²⁵ Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Sustainability. Impact

²⁶ The assessment of evaluation reports in this study did not score whether the DAC criteria were used or not, but whether reliable evaluation criteria, whichever they are, were used and referred to. There is an important debate in the sector about the DAC criteria themselves, and calls to amend them, which some organisations already do in their internal guidance. The SAKSHAM Final Evaluation for example did not draw from the DAC criteria but from a 4-step training evaluation suite of criteria which appeared relevant and well justified, albeit not entirely appropriate to evaluate the entire project scope.

Other criteria were less commonly discussed. The lack of focus on analysing project resourcing and spend over time (budget, human resources, effectiveness in spend or value for money) is a pattern across all but one evaluation reports, and means that no meaningful contributions are made to the issue of efficiency of the YEE projects. None of the evaluations for example costed the intervention package to compare it with similar initiatives in the sector, although this is an important discussion point in relation to sustainability and replicability.

- c. **Limited participation of children and young people in evaluation processes:** although all the evaluation designs drew from tried and tested participatory or qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews or FGDs, none explicitly addressed the issue of participation in their methodology presentation. Child and community participation is central to Plan International's ethos and CCCD framework in particular, but is insufficiently taken into account or explored by evaluators and the reports. Indeed, the involvement of young people was almost only sought with the purpose to collect data (i.e. provide information), which is commonly understood as minimal levels of participation (see below for a representation of the Ladder of Participation).

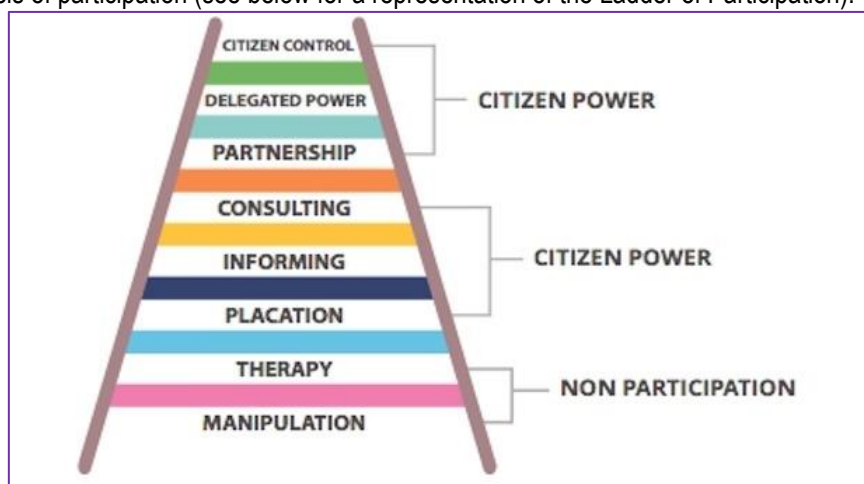


Figure 6 - The Ladder of Citizen Participation (S. ARNSTEIN, 1969)

Example of good practice: Involving young people in formulation of recommendations (Colombia)

Participatory workshops were held in Cartagena with beneficiaries of the YES project, where participants were not only “asked” about their experiences of the project and the changes which took place in their life as a result, but were also involved in discussing and respond to emerging findings including by amending the project theory of change and activities, as suggestions for future planning.

Moreover, only few evaluations sought the perspectives of community actors other than beneficiaries (e.g. parents, employers or private sector actors) but the majority ensured that the perspective of civil society partners and duty bearers was somehow included, albeit with various degrees of depth.

- d. **Designs and methods are rather uniform and overly reliant on qualitative methods:** all of the evaluations were based on classic methodology, which is reassuring, but were very similar in their designs. Indeed the majority primarily drew from qualitative methods (mainly interviews and focus group discussions) as a way to triangulate secondary quantitative data, mainly taken from project monitoring reports or MIS. Only 2 evaluations included primary quantitative data collected, as previously mentioned. All others rely mainly on one type of evidence, with its associated limitations. All of the evaluations included some level of desk review of documentation, although in all cases except the YES evaluation in Colombia, the review was limited to internal project documentation, insufficiently taking into consideration (i) other relevant literature existing across Plan International, (ii) sectoral or peer literature relevant for the subject. This considerably narrows the extent to which the various evaluation reports are able to meaningfully comment on the relevance of the projects, contrast findings or even challenge some of the assumptions made or results achieved in the interventions. None of the evaluations had the adequate methodological set-up to assess impact (e.g. lack counterfactual

element, no outcome-oriented or impact tracing techniques) even when this was reflected in the evaluation questions.

Example of good practice: Using Evaluation Matrices (Cameroon and India)

Evaluation matrices are summary tables which capture key evaluation questions and/or criteria with the corresponding methods or tools which the evaluation team envisages to apply to collect the necessary data. This was done in the Cohesion Sociale (Cameroon) and SAKSHAM (India) evaluation reports, for example. This is an example of good practice in capturing, at a glance, how tools relate to evaluation questions, and how triangulation was done. It enhances the methodology and quality of an evaluation.

Annexe 2 : Les Critères/Questions d'évaluation et points d'attention

Critères/Questions d'évaluation	Points d'attention	Références
1) La pertinence o L'intervention est-elle encore conforme aux engagements, à la politique et aux priorités de l'Etat du Cameroun ? Les objectifs de l'intervention correspondent-ils toujours aux attentes des bénéficiaires, aux besoins du pays, aux priorités internationales et aux politiques des partenaires.	o S'assurer de la complémentarité de l'intervention avec celle des autorités nationales et locales ;	• Note conceptuelle du projet ; • Proposition de projet ; • Cadre logique d'intervention ;
2) L'égalité des sexes et la non-discrimination o L'intervention promeut-elle l'égalité des sexes et non-discrimination ? Est-elle orientée « DCE » ?	o Les différents groupes y compris les enfants (filles et garçons) et autres groupes vulnérables bénéficient de l'intervention sur différents plans. o L'intervention implique les femmes et les hommes, les titulaires des droits et les débiteurs d'obligations, en particulier les plus vulnérables. o L'intervention promeut l'égalité des droits des femmes et des filles, et soutient leur pleine participation au développement politique, social et économique des communautés dans lesquelles elles vivent.	• Enquête de terrain ; • Proposition de projet ; • Cadre logique d'intervention ; • Fiche de performance des indicateurs ; • Plan de gestion des Ressources Humaines ;
3) L'efficacité (la mesure selon laquelle les objectifs ont été atteints ou sont en train de l'être, compte tenu de leur importance relative) o L'intervention a-t-elle été mise en œuvre comme prévue initialement ? Si « Non » pour quelles raisons ? Quelles mesures ont été prises pour y remédier ? Les résultats escomptés ont-ils été obtenus ? Quels sont les principaux facteurs ayant influencé l'obtention ou non des résultats ?		• Enquête de terrain ; • Proposition de projet ; Cadre logique ; • Fiche de performance des indicateurs ; • Plan de Suivi/Evaluation ; • Plan de gestion des ateliers ; Matrice RACI ; • Plan de gestion des Ressources Humaines ; • Mobilisation des ressources ;

Figure 7 - Example of evaluation matrix used in the Cohesion Sociale evaluation report

4.2.2. Summary of findings and conclusions

F6. Evaluation reports are not comprehensive enough in their methodological approach

Although all evaluation reports were clear and coherent in the way they present their scope, purpose and objectives, from a designs and methods point of view the majority are let down by insufficient attention to key methodological blocks which are essential for an evaluation report to be robust, credible and useful. Issues were noticed in relation to (i) ethics and safeguarding considerations, (ii) discussions of limitations, challenges and mitigation tactics, (iii) representation of various groups and representativeness of samples, (iv) evaluation criteria and (v) meaningful approaches to participation. Overall, only 4 out of 8 evaluation reports did not meet the standards of a good report, as per the assessment criteria used.

Conclusions

As a result of rather standard methodological patterns and dominant reliance on qualitative methods, evaluations are generally uniform from a methodological point of view, very few moving away from tried and tested methods such as interviews or focus groups to collect and collate data and information. This is a limitation for the meta-analysis as it may restrict the scope of findings to be analysed, and possibly leading to some issues being regularly unaddressed (see Part 3). The limited scope for genuine participatory processes is a contradiction with Plan International's organisational stand and objectives on participation and it probably also is an expression of the difficult balancing act that these evaluations have been trying to address competing demands (broad scope of work, and possibly limited resources considering that only few of the evaluations are conducted by more than one evaluator).

4.3. Quality of the presentation of findings and conclusions in evaluation reports

4.3.1. Overview of scoring and derived findings

Cluster (C) of the quality review tool explored how evaluation reports complied with good standards of presentation of findings and conclusions. With an overall average score of 1.40, it was observed that presenting clearly and coherently findings and conclusions was the second major weakness in the evaluation reports reviewed for this meta-evaluation.

Evaluation reports varied significantly in how they presented findings and conclusions. Some were explicit in their structure, dedicating specific sections or highlighting in different colour findings, conclusions and recommendations. In this regard, the YES evaluation report for Colombia is a good example of how findings, conclusions, lessons and recommendations can clearly be presented, articulated with one another and interdependent, in a logical sequence of analysis following the evaluation questions. In most cases, this was however not the case and it is up to the reader to implicitly identify conclusions. This is regrettable, as it greatly impacts on the quality and usability of a report.

Broadly speaking, reports have for the most part attempted to be balanced in their presentations and analysis, discussing both positive as well as negative points as they emerged from the evaluation process although the dominant focus was on the positive aspects or strengths of the respective projects. This could be due to the fact that much of the evaluations focus appeared to be on immediate results (i.e. what was achieved through project activities) rather than on strategic effects (i.e. changes induced or supported by the projects, and how the immediate results were made possible). On this point, mid-term reports conducted internally did not seem to shy away from discussing limitations and at times even negative effects of the projects, which is commendable.

Surprisingly, the majority of evaluation reports do not explicitly present recommendations – they limit their analysis to the assessment of project achievements and results, without going a step further in identifying how strengths can be sustained or possibly replicated or scaled up, or how weaknesses and challenges could be overcome. Those evaluations which included clear and explicit recommendations such as Tamkeen report or the YES Colombia report, did however meet Plan International's standard of recommendations that are plausible, actionable and realistic in scope.

Reports which scored poorly on this cluster B are also those who did not present a clear link between the data collected, the findings derived and the conclusions reached.

Finally, the majority of reports did not meaningfully address issues of attribution or contribution. It could be due to several factors, (i) if TORs themselves were not explicit on this point (a sample of TORs was consulted), (ii) or considering that the design and methods applied were in most cases not appropriate to understand impacts and strategic effects (see previous section).

4.3.2 Summary and conclusions

F7. The presentation of findings and conclusions vary significantly from one report to another, and could be improved for better utility and clarity

There is great variety in the ways evaluation reports present findings and conclusions, with commendable attempts to present a balanced account of positive as well as negative findings, although this could be more efficiently aligned with evaluation questions and programme logic. The utility and usability of evaluation reports is hindered however by the lack of *explicit* conclusions and recommendations in most cases.

Conclusions

Gaps in the presentation of findings and conclusions negatively affect the accessibility and utility of evaluation reports. Guidelines however do exist across Plan International to guide evaluators in the structure of evaluation reports, and the formulation of conclusions and recommendations. It would be beneficial for such guidelines to be more coherently and systematically enforced and adhered to.

4.4. Structure of evaluation reports

4.4.1. Overview of scoring and derived findings

Cluster C “Structure” is where evaluation reports received the highest average score (1.75 out of a possible maximum score of 3.0) and perform relatively well. Although this is not entirely satisfactory, scores would easily and drastically improve with simple fixes.

The quality of an evaluation report is linked to the clarity and logic followed to present the evaluation process, methods, findings, conclusions and recommendations. This is a prerequisite of the utility and credibility of the report. **Foundational elements of what makes a “good” evaluation report are present in most of the reports analysed for this meta-evaluation.** In particular, the cover page and overall structure were coherent and complete in most cases. However a number of issues remain, which would suggest that guidance which exists at Plan International in relation to what constitutes a ‘good’ evaluation report, and what the expectations are, is either not provided to evaluators, or not complied with. Some of the issues found, which could be easily addressed include:

- a. **Insufficient attention paid to the quality of Executive Summaries:** half of the evaluation reports do not include an Executive Summary (some only have an “introduction”, which is more limited in scope) or when they do so, not in a way for that chapter to be stand-alone i.e. summarising all aspects contained in the report and readable “on its own”, including the limitations and challenges faced
- b. **Insufficient attention to referencing sources of information:** Most evaluation reports also fail to include a bibliography or list of documents and resources consulted; references to information is almost never explicit (with the exception of the YES Colombia report, which included in brackets the source of information when it drew from academic resources or data from the Colombian National Statistics Agency or other such entities)
- c. **Incomplete background and context chapters:** The background and context sections are in most cases brief, and appear to plagiarise project background information as contained in TOR or proposal (brief comparison made for those evaluations for which this consultant had access to proposals and evaluation TORs). By doing so, not only do they miss the opportunity to present a more comprehensive contextual analysis, but they also fail to corroborate and challenge the contextual information on which the project is based, and how these may have changed or evolved during the project period.
- d. **Need for more explicit references to programme logic or theory of change:** overall, the evaluation reports do not make sufficient use and reference of project logframes or theories of change. They are never appended to the main report, and when they are referenced in the main text, it is often patchy and limited to listing project objectives and high-level targets. It is in these conditions difficult to assess whether the evaluation process itself was complete, i.e. whether the evaluation report covered the entire scope of work or was only limited to some segments of interventions. Another consequence is that evaluation reports do not make valuable contributions to analysing and reflecting on project logic and its continued relevance over time, effectiveness and efficiency.
- e. **Practices with regards to annexes vary greatly:** some reports list all their annexes (although they may be contained in a separate document) while others do not. The type of documents appended is also very different from one report to another. A minima, annexes should include the TORs, methods descriptions and data (if not adequately reflected in the main text of the report), summary of the evaluation timeline and tasks, case stories and a bibliography.

Example of good practice: Project Summary Table (Egypt)

The TAMKEEN Evaluation report (Egypt) included at the beginning of the report a summary table with details of the evaluation process (project evaluated, timeframe, key persons) as well as a map, which is a useful “at a glance” description of the evaluation and the project, and increases the accessibility of the report for any reader.

Figure 8 - Screenshot, TAMKEEN Evaluation Report: Evaluation Summary Table

FICHE DE RÉSUMÉ	
Mission	Evaluation externe finale du projet Tamkeen
Personne référente	Charlotte de Proenca, Responsable des programmes pour l'Afrique et l'Asie de l'Est de l'AFRI - Plan International en France
Consultant(e)	Rodolphe POMER, Chef de mission Nesrine ELALIM
Autre interlocuteur clé	Taysser LAMSI, Coordinateur de projet - Plan International en Egypte
Objectifs de la mission	<p>L'objectif principal de cette mission est de fournir des éléments d'analyse et des recommandations, notamment sur les axes de travail suivants :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohérence et efficacité du système de formation, d'animation professionnelle et d'insertion ; • Effets du projet sur le renforcement des capacités des partenaires et la qualité des performances ; • Efficacité à qualifier en faveur de l'égalité de genre et du travail décent ; • Questions transversales, telles que le système de suivi, la performance du projet, l'efficacité et l'efficience des mécanismes.
Durée de la mission	septembre 2017 - novembre 2017 Mission en Egypte - du 8 au 22 octobre 2017
Préambule de la mission	Réunions à Paris Evénements, réunions et ateliers au Caire et à Alexandrie

4.4.2 Summary and conclusions

F8. Evaluation reports were found to be well-written, coherent and complete although improvement can still be made to minor components of their structure

Foundational elements of what makes a “good” evaluation report are present in most of the reports analysed for this meta-evaluation, as they were found to be clearly outlined and complete. The quality of report would however be even great with more attention paid to systematically including executive summaries, referencing sources of information, and presenting more comprehensive context analysis.

Conclusions

Guidelines exist across Plan International to guide evaluators in the structure of evaluation reports, including the sequence of chapters and key expected components. It would be beneficial for such guidelines to be more coherently and systematically enforced and adhered to for quality to be optimal in reporting structures.

4.5. Gender-responsiveness of evaluation reports

Note: remarks included in this section only relate to the ways and extent to which evaluation reports have been gender-responsive from a methodology, approach and presentation point of view. Gender-specific *findings* in the meta-evaluation are discussed in Part 3 of this report.

4.5.1. Terminology, rationale and scope

Vast developments in recent years in evaluation theory, also in conjunction of more equity-focused agendas at global level such as the SDGs, have led to guidance and techniques being more widely available to approach evaluations from a gender lens.

Gender-responsive evaluations are not by essence doing different kind of evaluations: they would still look at interventions to interrogate their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability or other key criteria. However, they do so with an intentional, explicit focus on equity, human rights and gender equality by exploring structural issues, power relations and the empowerment process. It is not the purpose of the project that makes the evaluation gender-responsive: a project may focus on women's issues or address women's needs and concerns without necessarily be gender-response. The same goes for evaluations. An evaluation becomes gender-responsive when (i) it specifically looks into what has been achieved by the intervention in terms of gender equality or gender-differentiated effects / outcomes, (ii) it explores the possible causes triggering or hindering gender outcomes and (iii) it does so by specifically adopting gender-appropriate design, methods and tools.

Taking into consideration Plan International's strategic intent to transform gender relations for the benefit of women and girls, specific gender criteria were included in the quality checklist used to assess the overall quality of evaluation reports in the portfolio. It is of course understood that gender equality and gender transformation are ongoing efforts across Plan International including Plan International France and that some of the projects may have been designed prior to the organisational focus shifting so strongly towards equity and equality. As a result, it may not have been expected of evaluations to be gender-responsive. However, going forward the bar is likely to be raised higher and it is important to take stock on what the common gaps, issues but also standards are. The recommendations presented in this section have been developed with this objective in mind.

4.5.2. Overview of scoring and derived findings

Gender-responsiveness appears as the weakest point in the evaluation reports, overall. Indeed, out of the 4 clusters of criteria considered for the quality assessment of evaluation reports, gender-responsiveness is the cluster which (i) received the highest number of 0 scores (in proportion to the number of criteria in the cluster), and (ii) the lowest average scores too (0.86 on average for Cluster D Gender & Inclusions). It should be noted here that UN Women, as an agency who systematically conducts meta-evaluations on a bi-annual basis, has also acknowledged Gender and Equity as the weakest area in the evaluation reports they commission and publish (see below for references).

It is also worth mentioning that mid-term evaluations, which have all been internal processes conducted by Plan International, score lower in relation to gender and inclusion criteria even on essential criteria such as systematic, coherent and consistent data disaggregation by gender – the fact that they are usually more limited in scope should not however prevent gender to be integrated in simple, practical ways.

Key findings

Key common gaps and issues identified across most evaluation reports in relation to gender-responsiveness are:

- a. **Inconsistent mainstreaming of gender across various sections of evaluation reports:** although gender is a component featured in most background and context sections, it is often dealt with in a tokenistic way, with for example some broad facts and statements about the discrimination or inferior status of girls and women without specific reference to local context or project data. The evaluation report of the Cohesion Sociale in northern Cameroon for example, does not interrogate gender dynamics at play in the context of forced migration affecting local communities (similarly for the China YES4U mid-term evaluation, gender is not part of the background analysis even though gender is a necessary lens to explore migration movements), nor does it draw from the substantial amount of literature available on the issue of gender and cash-for-work approaches. As a result, project effects and outcomes are presented for “young people” in general, as if they are a homogenous group. Furthermore, background analysis and sections when they do integrate gender, do so in a static way, failing to possibly identify changes in the way power imbalances evolve (in positive or negative terms), particularly at policy or regulatory levels as this is where substantial gains have been obtained in recent years. None of the evaluations tests or assesses the *gender* assumptions made in programme logic or theories of change.

b. Insufficient focus on gender-responsive data collection methods and techniques:

None of the evaluation reports demonstrate that the evaluation methodology had been designed, thought and carried out to minimise power imbalances by using methods that are gender-sensitive or at least tailored to accommodate typically less included groups such as women and girls. Neither do they specifically aim to investigate power relations and gender effects resulting from the interventions. Indeed, although all evaluations include mixed methods approaches, which are usually recommended in gender-responsive evaluations, they do not report on the possible gender limitations of the methods chosen (e.g. 2 of the evaluations used extensive quantitative surveys administered by enumerators, without analysing for example the potential power imbalance that this may imply for less literate or less empowered groups – often women), or even simple precautions to minimise power imbalances such as ensuring gender balance in the evaluation team. Practical information such as the language in which interactions with beneficiaries took place, the gender distribution of focus groups (or whether gender-specific FGDs were conducted), is not at all included in evaluation reports, which is a major limitation. None of the evaluation reports referenced or used gender analysis frameworks, and as a result the majority lack the rigor of analysis and reporting on the complexity of gender and power relations (see remarks below for exceptions noticed in the SAKSHAM and YES Colombia final evaluation reports) as they solely rely on surveys, interviews and FGDs to collate gender-related findings²⁷.

Example of good practice of gender-responsive data collection: the Most Significant Change Tracker (India)

The Most Significant Change Tracker used by the SAKSHAM project in India consists of a questionnaire administered pre and post-intervention to young men and young women alike. The questionnaire derives from the well-known Most Significant Change qualitative research method, which it adapted to suit the specific requirements of a youth economic empowerment project. The tool was used as data collection method for SAKSHAM Mid-Term Evaluation in Phase 2. Although it presents a number of limitations and drawbacks as it is complex to administer, time-consuming and literacy-dependent, it is an interesting example of gender-responsive data collection as it includes questions specifically for young women and explore non-economic outcomes such as position in the community and the household, changes in perceived status, and empowerment criteria, all of which are particularly relevant from a gender point of view.

This is not a situation specific and unique to Plan International France – others across Plan International (including NOs) have acknowledged challenges in adequately embedding gender into evaluations and evaluation reports. In the sector, even agencies such as UN Women also face challenges with regards to gender-responsiveness in the methods used by evaluations²⁸.

c. Absence of an intersectionality perspective:

Intersectionality is dealt with by only one evaluation report (YES Colombia). Intersectionality is an approach to promote in relation to gender-responsive evaluations, as it allows for more accurate and refine understanding of gender issues in combination with other factors – education level, ethnic background, geographical origin or place of residence, etc. In the case of Colombia, the evaluators have consistently looked at gender from an intersectional perspective, including this notion in their methodology section, and it

What intersectionality can mean in evaluations: Example from the YES evaluation (COLOMBIA)

"Like the gender factor, the ethno-racial factor is a transversal factor that intersects with other factors and is strengthened by them, both in the sense of socio-economic exclusion and in the sense of identity and culture. Therefore, when designing, implementing and evaluating the project, it's important to take into account this intersectionality because it is not the same, especially in a context such as Cartagena, to be a "mestizo" (mixed-race) or white woman and a black-Afro-descendant woman, since, the barriers to employment for example, are not necessarily the same and, given racial discrimination and racism, they tend to be stronger and more frequent for black women. One of the examples is the work as receptionist where, as confirmed to us by some actors interviewed, employers knowingly or unknowingly refuse to put black women in these positions or require them to intervene in their aesthetics, particularly their hair". (p.25)

²⁷ For the field work conducted in the initial phase of this meta-evaluation, two participatory tools have been used with the specific intent to interrogate gender norms or barriers, and the relevance of project interventions in this regard. Body Mapping was used with a group of young female trainees in Delhi, India, and Daily Routine was used during one in-depth conversation with a project beneficiary near Sokode in Togo. While none of these tools are gender-specific by nature – they are primarily participatory tools – they have proven to be particularly relevant methods in an evaluation context to explore gender issues, and should serve as an encouragement for future evaluations to be more creative and daring in their efforts to use gender-responsive data collection methods and techniques (see below).

²⁸ See Annex 1 for reference of the UN Women 2014 and 2016 meta-evaluation reports. The 2016 report was clear that the weakest point in terms of standards for gender responsiveness across a portfolio of 36 reports was in the methods and techniques (p.10).

was beneficial in highlighting the specific and systemic disadvantage of Afro-descendants young women (see text box). Other evaluation reports were binary (i.e. only the gender dimension included, if at all, with cross-sectional analysis combining other factors) did not achieve such a precise and refined understanding of the local complexities in gender dynamics.

- d. **Variable depth of analysis of gender-differentiated data:** a positive step taken in evaluation reports is the incorporation of some level of data disaggregation by gender in the presentation and analysis of results. However, this is often limited to the output level (e.g. in most cases, gender distribution of trainees enrolled in the programmes) and even when data has been collated and presented in relation to training completion, access to employment and retention in employment, there is far less analysis conducted as to (i) differentiated achievements for young men and young women, (ii) factors and reasons explaining such differences. For example in the case of YES4U (China), which primarily targets young women (80% target of young women enrolled in training), the report presents but does not discuss the fact that results by far exceed the target (92% of trainees are female), and that possibly the sectors identified through market scan (age care, family nursing) are potentially too gender-marked to attract young men. Without appropriate discussion of gender-related trends in migration, it is thus impossible to assess whether this specific result of the project is positive and relevant in its local context.

A common positive element is the effort made to presenting gender-differentiated results, mostly in the form of gender distribution of beneficiaries or mentioning when stereotypes in the world of work have been challenged by the intervention (e.g. shoe-making trade in Togo, welding in Colombia). Although this is not done in a systematic or consistent way in all cases (e.g. sectors of employment are heavily gender-stereotyped in China although this is not highlighted or challenged by the evaluation report), it is already a positive step. The Colombia and India final evaluation reports in particular, are examples of good practice to be highlighted. In the SAKSHAM II Final Evaluation report, evaluators have looked at differentiated gender effects in multiple ways, exploring the profile of beneficiaries, their experiences of employment, the varied economic and social impacts of the project including on status and position in the household or at community level. There is a wealth of details and information contained in the report in relation to gender effects (intended or unintended, positive or negative), albeit not always complete or not always analysed to the extent it could have been. The final evaluation report of the YES project in Colombia is particularly detailed on gender impacts, looking beyond gender distribution of beneficiaries, and providing evidence of changes at play in terms of gender relations, gender roles and the importance of promoting 'new masculinities'. It is the only one which looks at some of the gender-specific negative effects in YEE such as the "earn and care" double burden facing young women (see following sections for further analysis).

4.5.3 Summary of findings and conclusions











F9. Evaluation reports insufficiently and inconsistently explore gender issues at all stages

The evaluation reports analysed for the meta-evaluation were inconsistent in the way they integrated gender across all of their sections and, it can be implied, throughout the evaluation process. In fact, performance on gender-responsiveness and inclusion was the weakest across the four clusters of criteria assessed and quite poor in absolute terms. Gender analysis is insufficiently addressed in context and background sections of the reports, and is not supported by any specific analytical framework. In addition, a lack of gender focus in the suite of data collection methods and techniques lead to project results not being sufficiently analysed from a gender point of view. At best, the reports have presented gender-distribution at output level, exploring mainly the experience of female trainees, but failed to go deeper into gender relations, gender dynamics and non-economic effects induced or not by the respective projects at outcome level. Some examples of good practices were however noticed, including a focus on intersectionality analysis in the Colombia evaluation report, and the use of the Most Significant Change tool in India.

Conclusions

Gender responsiveness is insufficiently embedded into evaluation processes and reports. This significantly undermines and limits the scope of the reporting on gender outcomes across the various evaluations as presented in the thematic analysis part of this meta-evaluation report. On a more positive note, this also means that it is an area where there is vast scope for improvements, and concrete steps to be taken towards stronger standards and approaches. In particular, more efforts are required in future evaluations to make data collection methods and techniques more gender-responsive. In view of the fact that very few evaluation reports have a comprehensive outlook at ethics, risks and equity, this appears to be particularly important. Positive examples and good practices such as the YES evaluation in Colombia and the use of a Most Significant Change Tracker in India exist and have the potential to be shared more widely across the organisation to encourage improvements.

4.6 Recommendations

Recommendation	Importance	Timing	Responsibilities
<p>R1 Identifying the specific value-add of Plan International France in the global Plan International YEE footprint would be an important exercise to undertake. In particular, making stronger use of youth demographic data trends is encouraged, to focus on (i) countries, regions or localities where female access to employment is critically low, (ii) cities of secondary importance most likely to grow in coming decades and (iii) rural as well as (iv) humanitarian settings considering the large needs in such contexts.</p>	 Moderate	 In the next year	Plan International France
<p>R2 Future meta-evaluation studies would be relevant, but should be undertaken on the basis of a larger pool of evaluation documents, possibly by joining forces with other NOs active on YEE, or with the SOYEE hub itself. This would limit the challenges posed by a limited pool of evaluations to draw from. Other options to increase the coherence future meta-evaluations would be to (i) consider longer timespans (reports over 5 years for example) or (ii) opt for specific thematic focuses and in particular those themes under-represented in the existing portfolio and thus in this meta-evaluation study such as YEE in humanitarian settings.</p>	 Moderate	 As and when opportunities or resources allow	Plan International France
<p>R3 It is recommended that Plan International France more proactively engages in the evaluation design process, to ensure that all key components are indeed addressed by the evaluators, but also that more creative, gender-responsive and diverse evaluation designs are requested in TORs, encouraged, proposed and applied. There would be a rationale for participatory evaluations to be conducted, as well as outcome-tracing evaluation designs which would greatly enhance the quality of evaluation reports, and the depth and richness of evaluation findings, away from the current uniform patterns in evaluation reports and insufficient attention to gender-responsiveness in the suite of data collection and analysis methods proposed.</p>	 Considerable	 From the next evaluation process	Plan International France in collaboration with other Plan International offices
<p>R4 For each evaluation, prepare in collaboration with the Plan International country office, a reading pack for the evaluator or evaluation teams to include project documents as it is already the case, but also strategic organisational publications on YEE as well as key external resources and general guidelines available at Plan International, including evaluation standards and gender-transformative programming standards. This would allow for the outlook on project relevance, effectiveness and effects to be more contextualised, gender-focused and broader than just project coherence with the local socio-economic context or output-level discussions.</p>	 Considerable	 From the next evaluation process	Plan International France in collaboration with other Plan International offices
<p>R5 It is recommended that the use and compliance with guidance available at Plan International about expected standards of evaluation report quality is more closely monitored. Such guidance should be appended to the evaluation TORs, and reminded to evaluators during the inception phase or prior to the report writing phase. If necessary, more prescriptive approaches can be adopted, with evaluators provided with templates, tables of checklists about specific sections of the evaluation report of particular importance to Plan International. Although this is not ideal and not the most preferable option as it limits the creativity and ownership of the</p>	 Considerable	 From the next evaluation process	Plan International France in collaboration with other Plan International offices

evaluators on their work, it would standardise and enhance the quality of report in terms of structure, utility, usability and presentation of findings, conclusions and recommendations.

R6 There would be benefit in **developing, piloting and using gender-specific evaluation tools and guides to be shared with evaluators and adhered to by them**, as a means to ensure substantial and necessary improvements in the ways and extent to which evaluation reports are gender-relevant and gender-responsive. This should include, a minima:

- e. A **gender resource pack appended to evaluation TORs**; this pack should include core global gender resources available and applicable across Plan International such as the Gender Equality policy, Gender & M&E handouts, and a revised Evaluation Quality Guidance note (How too...Evaluation Reports Note) and others as appropriate
- f. An **Evaluator Code of Conduct**, extending beyond the currently mandatory protection and safeguarding protocol, which would include specific references to how evaluations must be gender-focused and equitable, ensuring meaningful and effective participation of all parties included the most vulnerable or marginalised such as women and girls, and taking active steps to minimise risks and power imbalances and report on the same
- g. **Revised Evaluation Report Quality How To Note** to incorporate gender points throughout



Considerable



As and when
resources
allow

Plan International in in collaboration with other Plan International offices and the YEE Gender focal points, with external specialist support if required

R7 **Gender-mainstreaming should occur at all stages of the evaluation process**, and capacity must exist both locally and on the part of the evaluators to do so meaningfully and effectively. This would require that:

(i) a gender specialist or gender focal point is actively involved in guiding and managing the evaluation process from start to finish, and not only to review TORs or final drafts;

(ii) TORs are systematically gender-responsive in the way they frame evaluations' purpose, objectives and questions and the expectations with regards to the gender skills, competences and experience of the evaluator or team of evaluators;

(iii) Extending the evaluation timeframe by only a few days could ensure that evaluators can realistically be expected to produce an inception report or at least a brief methodological note to specifically address issues of ethics, safeguarding, risks and inclusion in relation to gender.



Critical



From the next
evaluation
process

Plan International in in collaboration with other Plan International offices and the YEE Gender focal points, with external specialist support if required

R8 There will be undeniable value-add in Plan International France **piloting a full gender-responsive evaluation cycle (from drafting TORs to sharing and disseminating results) and process on the occasion of an upcoming evaluation of a YEE project**. The organisation may need to be accompanied by an external gender and evaluation specialist to do so and while the objective would be to have an evaluation output that is responsive to the ambitious organisational gender ethos, it should also be a wider process aiming at building capacity and experience to embed gender good practices in all evaluations in the future.



Considerable



As and when
resources
allow

Plan International France in collaboration with country offices, and their peers included F3E

PART 3

THEMATIC META- ANALYSIS

5. Modelling the YEE approach

5.1. The YEE ‘model’ in practice

The steps, systems, tools and processes followed by the various projects (which defines for the purpose of this study what the project “model” is) is a well-researched theme in the evaluation reports reviewed for this macro-analysis. Indeed, 212 data points relate to discussions of project approaches or components, and all 8 documents contributed elements of discussions and thoughts on modelling and design. Findings and conclusions presented in this chapter can thus be interpreted and taken with confidence, as the level of coverage is strong.

Level of Coverage	Strong						
CMR-FE-CoSo-1+2	CHN-MTR-YES-1	COL-FE-YES1+2	EGY-FE-TAM-1	IND-MTR-SAK-II	IND-FE-SAK-II	TNZ-MTR-CLP-II	TGO-FE-FIS-1

5.1.1. Representation of the model: an “ecosystem” towards economic empowerment of young people

Notwithstanding specificities related to local contexts, the evaluation reports contained information which allows a representation of the YEE model (see figure below) as implemented in the various projects, around “core elements” which exist in all or nearly all projects, and variable components which might be more context-specific.

The core components include:

- **A market scan:** studying the features, trends, gaps and demands of the local labour market and economic ecosystem is the first step that all or nearly all projects have undertaken. Plan International has documented tools and processes to do so, although not all projects have necessarily based their initial market scans on these tools. The key objective of these labour market studies is to identify the gaps between the needs of the market, and the skills offered by young people available for employment. This skills mismatch is the key need which the training curricula will then seek to address and address
- **Skills-based and practical training:** training offered by the projects varies in duration and content, and is offered across a wide variety of trades and sectors of employment. However, common features include (i) the *combination of both soft* (e.g. life skills, career counselling, employability skills, entrepreneurship and business management skills, financial literacy, etc.) *and hard skills* (e.g. work-related technical competencies, IT and technology of the workplace, etc.). A second common feature is that (ii) all training courses thrive to include some (albeit variable) dose of *practical experience* either in the form of internships (e.g. Colombia), apprenticeships (e.g. Togo), or on-the-job exposure and practice (e.g. India, Cameroon).
- **Employment support services:** to address a key barrier facing young people, which is the lack of network, linkages and information about employment opportunities, all projects have included (intentionally from the project design stage, or organically throughout project implementation in the case of Tamkeen I in Egypt) elements of direct employment support services. These services can vary from context to context: employment bureau (where young people directly receive notification of available job offers), job or recruitment fairs, interview preparation, in-kind support to start a small business (start-up kits), seed capital, etc. An important feature of this employment support, although not systematically offered by all project, is the post-placement individual monitoring, follow-up and mentoring offered to graduates of the training programmes. This follow-up lasts in most cases around 6 months.

An important feature of the model is that each phase feeds into the next one in a chronological sequence: the training content is closely developed based on the market needs and demands identified, and the skills level of young people, for example. And it is only once they complete the training programme that young people access employment support services – there is no example in the portfolio of projects of young people directly supported to access employment

without having first undergone the cycle of tailor-made training. This is why the model is often referred to by staff interviewed across Plan International as an “ecosystem”.

To some extent, even the project in Cameroon, which was based on a model developed and promoted by UNDP (the 3x6 Model, see further for description), contained the 3 core elements as discussed above.

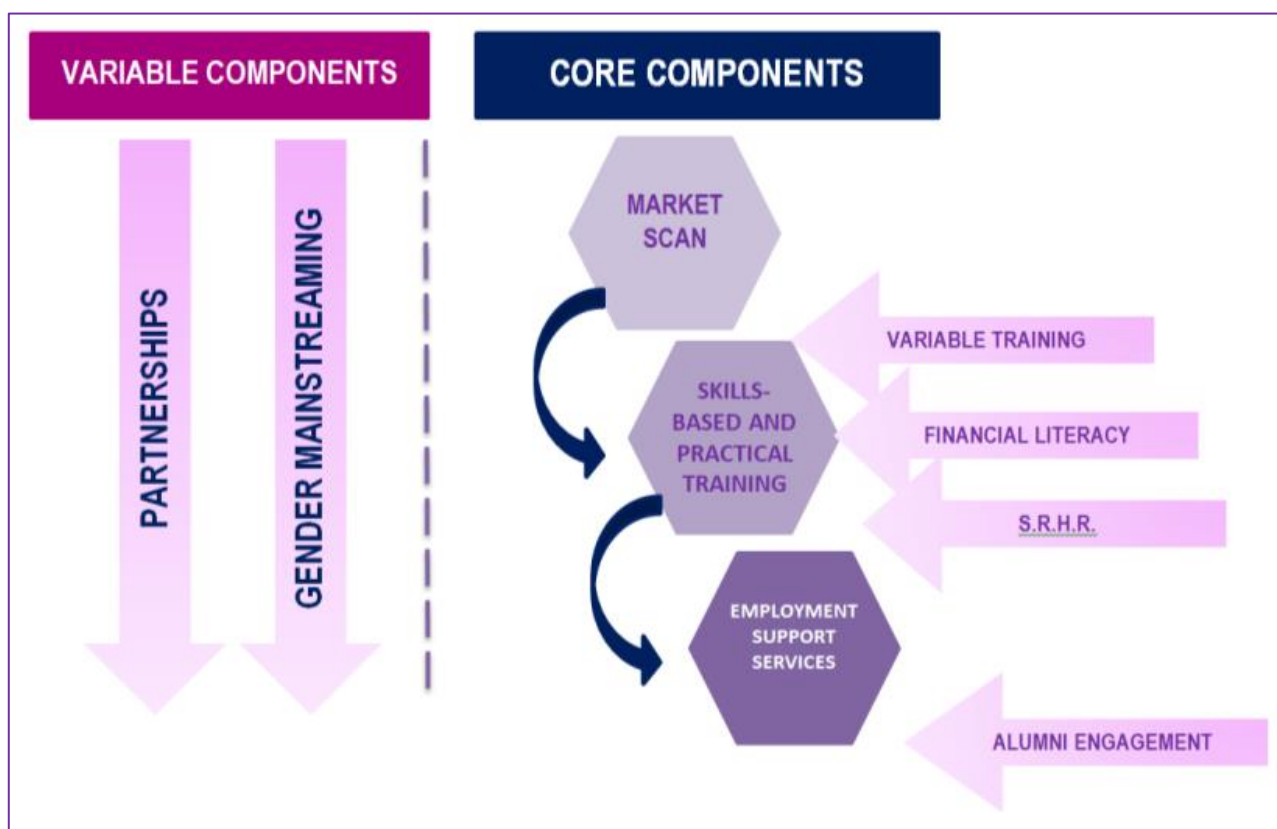


Figure 9 - Representation of the YEE model as emerging from the meta-evaluation portfolio

As expected and reassuringly, this model is not drastically different from the YEE model diagram presented in various foundational documents at Plan International. Different versions of the diagram exist, and two have been included here for reference (see below). It was found however in the macro-analysis that the projects did not necessarily comply with all the step mentioned, which suggested that the core components were fewer than the 6 steps described in the Youth Employment Solutions (YES) model diagram for example.

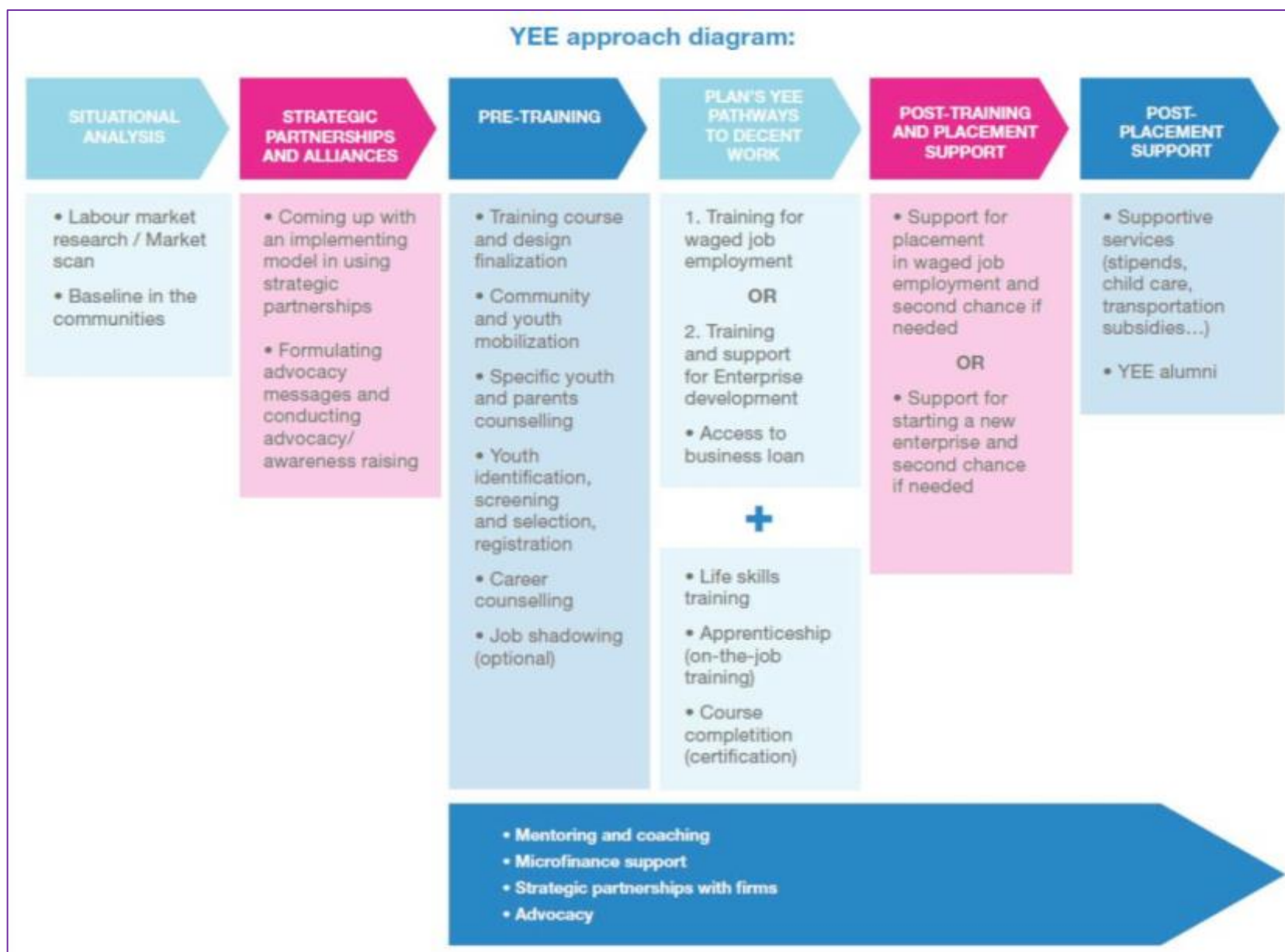


Figure 10 - YEE Diagram (Plan International)

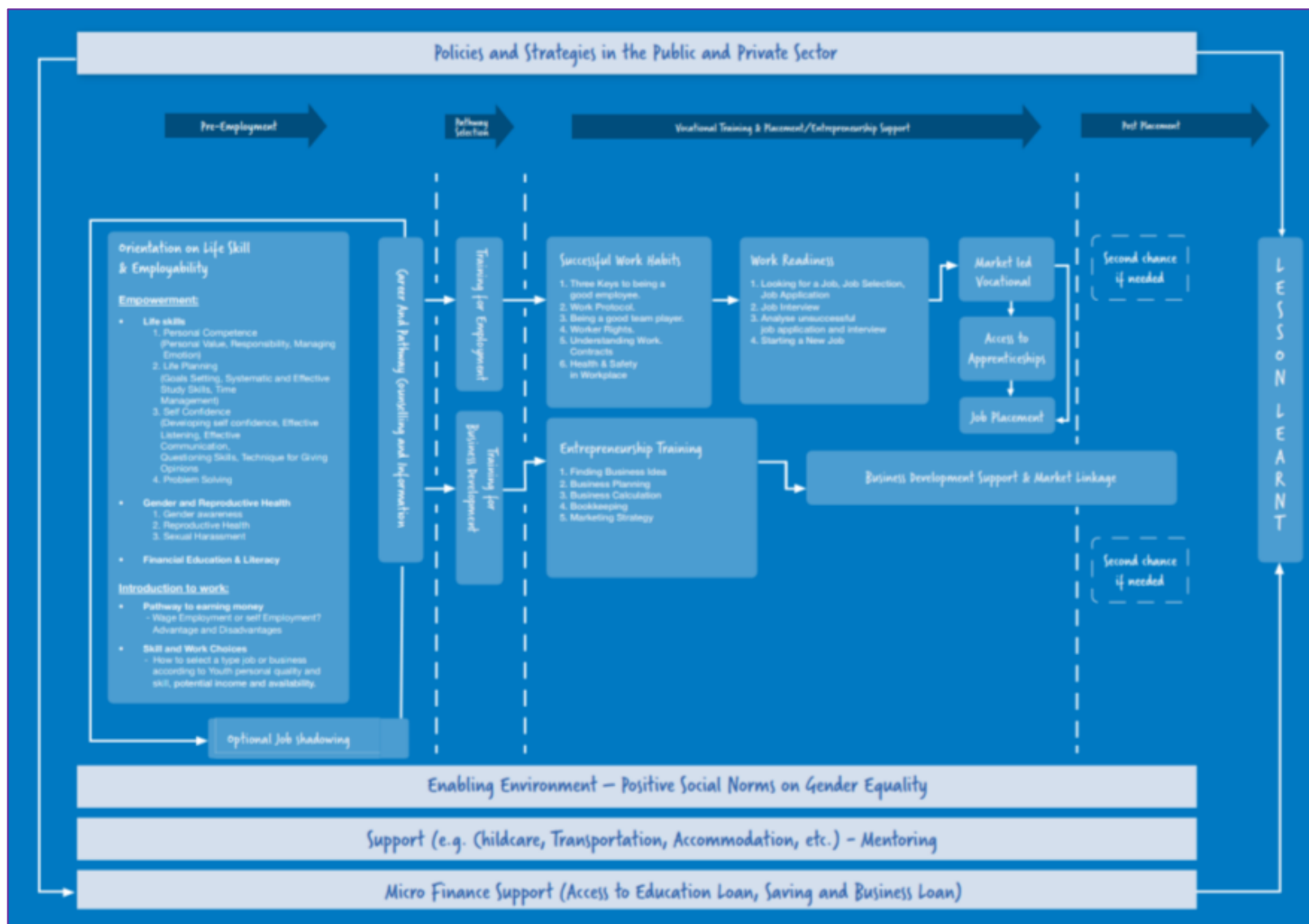


Figure 11 - Plan International's YEE Pathway (2015)

As it has been implemented to date, the YEE model mostly and logically focus on **supply-side** issues in youth employment. Indeed, the model aims to unlock and lift some of the (multiple) constraints affecting youth's access to employment or their decision to enter the labour force (see S4YE Portfolio Impact Report, 2017, for definition) including their lack of skills (non-academic skills), their limited networks, their lack of information about labour markets and regulations, their lack of workplace-experience and the restrictions they face in accessing finance and capital in the case of entrepreneurship. The demand-side in youth employment initiatives would include interventions that would fall outside and beyond Plan International's mandate and resources such as regulatory and financial support to private sector actors for job creation targeting youth, or value chain development. However, certain demand-side components could pertinently be included in Plan International's YEE model (as observed by this meta-evaluation) as they appear under-represented or absent at present. These include (i) youth-friendly labour force policies and measures through policy engagement and influencing (systemic reform); (ii) proactively linking youth enterprises or businesses to their value chain including through building collective coordination and bargaining power (e.g. youth cooperatives). Concomitant efforts on both supply and demand sides of youth employment have been presented by recent research (S4YE, 2017) as the most effective strategies to effectively contribute to youth employment.

It should also be noted here that a variety of models and approaches exist in the sector to actively promote youth employment. However, the majority of interventions would nowadays focus on either skills training, employment services, entrepreneurship promotion, subsidized employment or a combination of at least 2 of these components (which is increasingly the case, particularly in NGO-run programmes). All 4 components have been proven in robust international research to yield positive impacts on youth employment and earnings, particularly so with skills training and entrepreneurship. Focusing on the most disadvantaged youth, and young women in particular is according to research, associated with even stronger programmatic effects. **Thus, although Plan International's YEE model as implemented in the considered projects is not unique as similar initiatives exist around the world and run by other agencies, it certainly builds on the majority of good practices, critical success factors and robustly measured effectiveness as demonstrated by recent research.**

5.1.2. Specificities of the Plan International approach to YEE

Although Plan International has in recent years placed emphasis on documenting their approach to YEE, and refining their model particularly through the development of online and ICT-based resources to facilitate uptake of specific steps in the process (e.g. online market scan tool, web-based trainee monitoring tools), it is also acknowledged that the methodology is not unique and specific to Plan International. The YEE pathway presented previously for example was developed in partnership with the World Bank over a decade ago, in Indonesia and El Salvador, building on best practices documented in the sector for end-to-end, comprehensive frameworks supporting youth employment.

The YES (Youth Employment Solutions) model as it is also sometimes referred to, acknowledges links to the LABS Model developed in the late 1990s in India by the Dr Reddy's Foundation (DRF) – a model brief is included hereafter with details of the background, processes and key results of LABS (now GROW) programmes. At Plan International, the LABS model was influential in designing a number of YEE projects including the flagship REACH project in Vietnam (2004-2010) which trained 12,000 young people (45% girls) but also inspired other initiatives in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Egypt, Sudan or Kenya amongst other countries. Other organisations including Save the Children and BRAC have adopted YEE models which are similar to the LABS' sequential, end-to-end approach.

Discussion with informants, and findings from evaluation reports indicate however that in spite of a YEE model primarily built on tried-and-tested approaches not specific and unique to Plan International, there are unique elements and value-add of Plan International in YEE. Those are not in the 'what' is being done (the steps do not vary significantly from established models) but in the 'how' things are done, and they include:

- **Strong community-level presence and rapport with children and young people**, which allows Plan International to identify and reach out to less visible or more marginalised categories of young people and particularly girls and young women, and facilitate the individualised mentoring and follow-up of each trainee (particularly those at risk of dropping out of training or employment). The latter is an essential and distinctive success factor in the model as applied by Plan International, as it is often reported that the efforts to prevent desertion and drop-out and mentor young people right through to employment and beyond are one of the main driver of programme effectiveness in achieving high placement and retention ratios. Research has also shown that programmes which focus on the most marginalised young people yield the largest effects in relation to employment and earning outcomes post-programme

- **The transfer from theory to practice of the organisational gender transformative agenda in YEE**, which according to informants from peer organisations, is an element that they have yet to improve in their own practices but that Plan International already has experience and expertise on, due to more ambitious and coherent strategic intent on gender equality at the highest levels of the organisation, and across the Federation

The macro-analysis and supplementary interviews with informants did not however identify specificities of Plan International France in YEE programming as compared to the wider Plan International model. A working hypothesis is that the portfolio is still rather small and diverse, as less than 10 projects have been supported to date, all with distinct features and contexts.

FOCUS

The LABS Model



Background

Dr. Reddy's Foundation (DRF) is the non-profit arm of Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, a multinational pharmaceutical company founded in 1984 in Hyderabad, India. DRF was established with a specific focus on education and livelihoods programmes in India, including the **Livelihoods Enhancement Business School (LABS) model** designed as a short-term vocational training and skilling programme for underprivileged, semi-educated and unemployed youth. The ethos is to develop marketable, work-relevant technical skills and accompany young people to access entry-level jobs. Other programmes have since broadened the scope of DRF's Skills Development interventions with specific attention to young people with disability, young women and more generally, core employability skills (GROW programme).

The adverse impact of remedial education programmes targeting child labourers and other groups of at-risk children led to the creation of the LABS approach. Indeed, it was found that vocational education would allow low-income youth to earn and learn. The approach was piloted in a sanitation programme in Hyderabad in 1999, with waste collection and management training provided to young people towards the set-up of micro-entrepreneurship ventures.

Components and methods

The LABS model is primarily intended at skills development in urban contexts. It includes:

- Mapping of demand and supply of skills in the local context
- A 45-day skills development programme (60 days for young people with loco-motor disability or hearing impairment)
- Work readiness modules and practical learning
- Combination of trade-specific and soft skills
- Networking with the private sector for placement and employment

opportunities at entry level

- Alumni networks

To date, the programme has trained over 340,000 young people aged 18 to 30 with a minimal educational level (higher secondary usually) in over 100 centres spread across India, including nearly 8,000 young PWDs and around 40% young women. The placement rate was on average of 70% and the starting salary of around INR 10,000 according to the 2017 data from the GROW project which supplemented LABS. Strict selection and enrolment criteria and procedures exist to ensure that attrition and non-attendance to training is limited to approximately 5% for each batch of trainees.

Figure 2: DRF business process and technique



Figure 12 - LABS process and model



Sources and further information

Internet:

www.drreddysfoundation.org

Documents: JOSEPH A., GUPTA A., *The Case – Livelihood Advancement Business School*, Research Report, 2012, 18 pages

Dr. PRATAP A., CHOUDHURI S.S., *Dr. Reddy's Foundation: Livelihood Advancement Business Schools (LABS) for Inclusive and Sustainable Development*, Case Study #8 in *How the Private Sector Develops Skills: Lessons from India*, UNDP and Istanbul Center for Private Sector in Development, 2017, 25 pages

Dr Reddy's Foundation Annual Report, 2017-2018, 33 pages

FOCUS

UNDP's 3x6 Approach



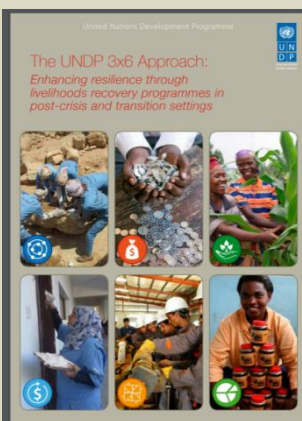
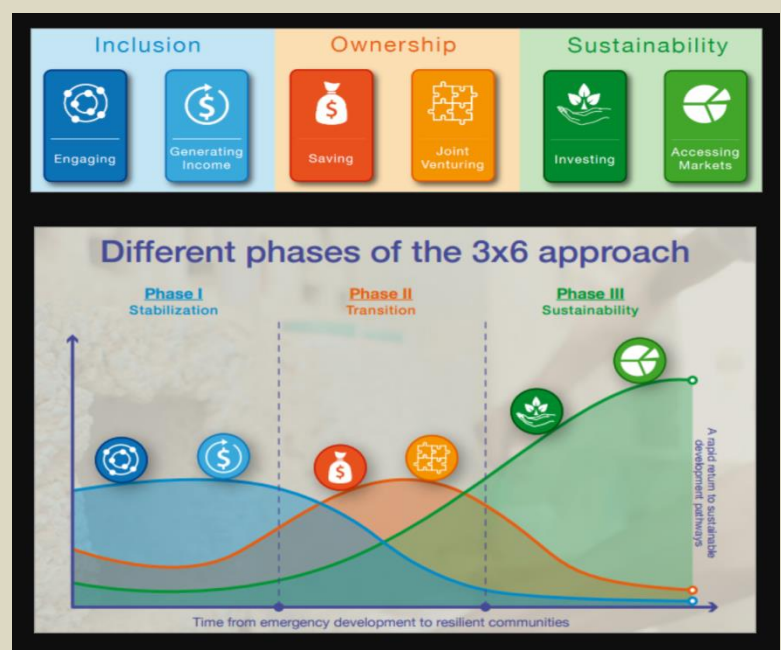
Background

The **3x6 Approach** was developed in 2010 and tested by the UNDP Burundi Country Office. It is based on the 2009 *UN Policy for post-Conflict Employment Creation, Income Generation and Reintegration*. 3x6 is designed to support vulnerable and crisis-affected groups through livelihoods stabilisation in early recovery responses. In Burundi, it focused on the reintegration of returnees, IDPs and ex-combatants. The model has since been more formally documented (see below), and has been implemented for a range of target groups (including young people) in various contexts such as Yemen, the Democratic Republic of Congo or Jordan (in the context of the Syrian refugee crisis). **3x6 is not per se a model for youth economic integration but can be adapted for this target group.**

Components and methods

In the 3x6 Approach, the **3** refers to **fundamental principles** of inclusion, ownership and sustainability. The **6** refers to the number of **steps in the model**, implemented over several distinct phases with the aim to support community long-term resilience and the transition from emergency development efforts (such as cash for work interventions) to sustainable livelihoods for vulnerable population groups. The 3x6 approach considers participants, including and in particular women, as active partners in their own socio-economic recovery and development. This sense of ownership and choice is an essential element of the model, as well as the focus on rebuilding community trust and cohesion by making individuals from various groups to work together.

Although based on more traditional approaches such as the generation of immediate income through temporary employment schemes (e.g. cash for work for the rehabilitation of community infrastructure or environment projects), capacity building (e.g. life skills and business skills), injection of capital in the local economy to revive the production and service sectors, 3x6 also includes a number of innovations such as the central role given to savings in the model. Indeed, after an initial phase of high labour intensive community works which helps the targeted group to earn and save, beneficiaries are encouraged to invest their savings into an employment project, preferably involving others (e.g. cooperatives or collective enterprises). The implementing agency provides technical (e.g. business plans supervision, training) and financial support (e.g. start-up capital, small project grants).



Sources and further information

Internet: basic description of 3x6 can be found on UNDP's dedicated [webpage](#) as well as an introductory [video](#).

Documents: a brochure and toolkit are available for free download from UNDP's website, in English. They describe the rationale, background and key features of the 3x6 model, as well as examples of its use and implementation in different countries and contexts. Country-specific documentation is available in other languages.

Evaluation: CONOIR, Yvan; BONARD, P. (2013). *Evaluation of UNDP Reintegration Programs* (New York: UNDP), 58 pages

Background

The Farmer Field School (FFS) approach (also known in French as « champs écoles des producteurs (CEP) » or “champs- écoles”) was developed over 25 years ago by the FAO in South East Asia. It was a response to more “vertical” knowledge dissemination approaches in rural areas from technicians to farmers. Since then, the model has been transferred and adapted to a wide variety of contexts, including West and Central Africa. Plan International Togo has piloted FFS as part of their youth economic empowerment innovation programme between 2014 and 2018.

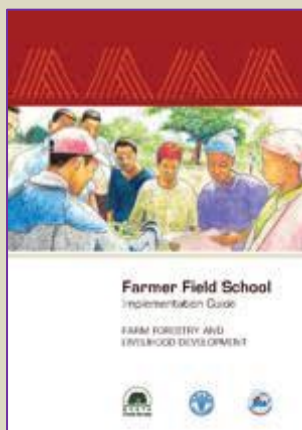
Components and methods

The FFS approach is flexible and modular, with a wide diversity of possible objectives. The model is more and more used to promote climate-adapted and resilient farming practices and food security. One FFS typically gathers 20 to 25 farmers who meet at least once a week and in the field under the supervision of a trained facilitator, who is often from the same community. The model is based on “learning by doing”, as two plots of land are cultivated simultaneously, and observed by trainees for a specific period of season. This allows trainees to observe the different yields and methods, and come to their own conclusions. The learning-by-doing approach is particularly suitable for less educated or even illiterate populations. It



is an ecosystem approach, focusing not only on crops and farming techniques, but also the management of soils and water resources, the supply and value chains and local marketing.

Although FFS do not specifically target young people, they can be an appropriate approach as demonstrated by the FISONG-funded project led by Plan International in Togo. It is empowering for young people to be imparted technical knowledge and being given the responsibility for farming a plot of land, rather than merely be used as manpower to farm other people’s land. The model is also pertinent for this category of the population who is not long established in farming, has limited experience and is not already grouped in cooperative or producers’ collectives. It can be particularly transformative for young women and women in general, who are often the majority of the rural farming manpower but do not have equal access to the knowledge, the productive assets, the technology and the decision-making authority to invest in farming as a form of employment rather than as a subsistence occupation.



Sources and further information

Internet: the FFS approach is described on a dedicated webpage of the FAO website, <http://www.fao.org/agriculture/ippm/programme/ffs-approach/fr/> .

Documents: FAO and practitioners of the FFS model have published ToT manuals, guidance documents and implementation guides adapted to a wide variety of contexts and languages. The French organisation *Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans Frontières* (AVSF) have also published in 2017 a methodological guide based on their experience of implementing the FFS model in Northern Togo.

5.1.3. Discussions on the relevance and effectiveness of the model

Market scan: value add and challenges

The importance and value-add of the market scan study as a tool and step in the process is acknowledged in evaluations, as well as by informants consulted for this meta-evaluation, both within and outside of Plan International. 6 out of 7 projects included a labour demand survey or market scan study in their project implementation cycle. However, through the macro-analysis, the following necessary conditions to be met for the market scan to be pertinent in its local context were identified:

- **The timing of the market scan is critical:** as the initial step which informs the rest of the project timeline, it is important for market scan studies to be undertaken very early on in the project, and prior to any community-level engagement with young people around career choice. In Togo, where due to delays in the finalisation of the market scan, awareness and recruitment campaigns were conducted concomitantly, it led to a situation where young people expressed career and occupational choices which were later on not confirmed by the market (e.g. tailoring and hairdressing were disregarded, as being saturated sectors, in spite of aspiration of young women for these professions), thus creating confusion and frustrations.
- **The pertinence of the market scan study depends on the collaborative implication of a range of actors, including young people themselves:** an effective, pertinent labour market study needs to build not only on the analysis of planned recruitment needs and the existing vocational training offer locally, but must also (i) involve all the partners who will have a role in the project later on, (ii) ensure that the views of young people themselves are represented to avoid a mismatch between the findings of the market scan, and the aspirations of young people (as it was the case in the project in China, with youth not demonstrating interest in the age care sector which had been identified as a niche and job-generating sector by the market scan)
- **Pertinent market scans must explore both waged and self-employment trends and opportunities, and look at barriers as well as demands and needs:** labour markets are diverse, and must be understood at micro (e.g. municipality, cluster of neighbourhoods, etc.) and meso (e.g. districts, county, sub-region) levels. Understanding the specific, local barriers to employment facing young people is essential to bridge the gap between market needs, and the potential offered by youth. The evaluation report of the YES project in Cartagena, Colombia has clearly demonstrated the limits of envisaging employment primarily in the formal sector at the beginning of the project, as there were structural barriers which had not been documented including resistance from employer to recruit young people with no or limited work experience (even after training), discriminatory practices on the basis of ethnicity or place of residence, etc. For entrepreneurship programmes, the micro-level seems to be the adequate level of analysis for a market scan, and additional considerations must be embedded into the study such as accessibility and affordability of the sector (e.g. investment levels required, possibility of financing, typical returns over time, density of the existing service offer)

One challenge identified by evaluation reports and some of the informants consulted (e.g. Togo, India) is the dynamic nature of labour markets. Market scans in a number of projects seem to become obsolete in only a few years. Peer organisations consulted in this study did not however report such challenges which may suggest that the issue might either be (i) highly contextual in the case of particularly dynamic economies or meso economic systems (e.g. urban India), or (ii) related to the scope of work defined for the market scan (too broad – missing some elements of analysis such as alternative training options in the market - or too narrow – focusing on “jobs in demand”).

There is an **evidence gap in evaluation reports around gender mainstreaming in market scans**, which is not discussed by any of the reports. This could imply that gender aspects are insufficiently reflected upon or visible in market studies: many professions, trades or sectors are strongly marked as either masculine (e.g. welding, mechanics) or feminine (e.g. tailoring, embroidery, beauty services, etc.) and the gender transformation agenda across Plan International commends that the labour market analysis is gender-responsive (e.g. analysis of gender-specific barriers such as workplace arrangements or distance, analysis of perceptions and attitudes vis-à-vis different trades and female labour participation, quantification of the gender distribution in the labour force by trade, etc.). Efforts are made to either identify trades and sectors which can be gender neutral (e.g. retail or BPO in India) or to improve gender balance amongst training, usually by promoting girls' enrolment into typically masculine trades (e.g. shoe-making in Togo, welding in Colombia). A number of tools and recommendations now exist at Plan International for greater visibility and

mainstreaming of gender considerations into market scans, and these should be more systematically used and referred to in future projects supported by Plan International France.

The fact that none of the projects have included sectors in the Green²⁹ or Circular economy in their market scan may suggest that market scans are delivered as rather static outputs (i.e. consulting with employers in existing sectors about how they plan growth in the future and the skills they would require in their workforce³⁰), insufficiently taking into considerations the potential of new sectors. This could mean that for opportunities for young people to be identified in such “new” sectors, there would need to be an explicit, intentional effort to steer the scope of work for market scans in these directions. There is here another evidence gap in evaluation reports.

Outreach and identification of trainees: strategies and implications

As revealed by evaluation reports, **there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to mobilising young people in the communities. A variety of approaches and methods have been used by the projects:** leaflets, community canvassing, door-to-door information, TV or radio announcements, point-of-contact communication (e.g. youth centres), social media campaigns, mobilisation of alumni (i.e. previous training graduates), referrals from other project teams, etc. Evaluation reports describe and mention these strategies, but only rarely discuss their relevance, effectiveness and efficacy in relation to project objectives. In particular, **only a minority of evaluation reports assessed whether the strategies carried out were the most appropriate in reaching out to, and identifying, the most vulnerable or marginalised, which is often the primary target group of the projects.**

The core challenge in relation to outreach and youth mobilisation strategies is in identifying and locating marginalised young people in the community, this being the overarching strategic ambition at Plan International, and for most of the evaluated projects. The key lessons and findings emanating from evaluation reports in this regard are:

- **Outreach and identification methods have direct and strong implications on the vulnerability profile of trainees:** methods which promote self-selection (e.g. social media) tend to give an advantage to better educated, better connected young people, and thus less marginalised, as this was demonstrated in Egypt and China:

“it is obvious that the project does not intend to reach the poorest or the most vulnerable in low-income communities, As communication is mainly channeled via social media and personal networks or contacts, there is a strong trend in terms of social replication amongst beneficiaries. Information indeed goes around in social circles connecting similar people”

Tamkeen evaluation, p.29

These methods have only been used in large urban settings where connectivity is optimal and fast increasing amongst young people. On the other hand, identifying in the community those young people who are particularly marginalised in relation to accessing employment, comes at the cost of intense and time-consuming screening and canvassing at community level which can be challenging if the project has not sufficiently resourced this part of the work. This has been highlighted by evaluation reports particularly in the case of girls and young women, who in a number of contexts are more likely to be less connected, house-bound and thus requiring direct outreach methods (e.g. door-to-door surveys) rather than indirect ones (e.g. social media, radio and TV). As the majority of projects had explicit targets towards gender equity or gender parity, most had specific strategies in

²⁹ The empirical identification of what “green jobs” or “green employment” are is challenging as the spectrum of possibilities is large. Generally speaking, for the purpose of this study, green jobs are to be understood as roles partially or entirely related to environmental sustainability (e.g. waste management, pollution reduction and prevention, renewable energies, organic or reasoned agricultural production, etc.).

³⁰ The Online Market Scan tool which has been developed in partnership with Accenture for example aims to identify where the jobs are, what kinds of jobs exist (especially the potential for entry-level jobs suitable for new entrants), who is hiring and what skills are needed to get those jobs. To a large extent, the intention is also to document which sectors approach saturation or are becoming too competitive in terms of recruitment due to an excess of labour supply as compared to market demands. It is mainly static, looking at the labour market in its current situation or near future but not necessarily being intentionally prospective with a long-term lens about how the world of work would evolve in the future, and where niche market economies exist which could provide jobs for young people in emerging sectors.

place to ensure that female enrolments targets were met (mostly in the form of direct outreach in or near the home of the targeted girls and young women).

- **Alumni and their clubs or groupings are leveraged in support of youth mobilisation in the community** in various ways: alumni report being solicited in the community by parents and other young people about their experience with the project, which often leads to other young people deciding to enrol in training (peer model). This was also confirmed during interviews and group meetings with young people in India and Togo, where the experience of a friend, relative or peer in the community who had completing the training was a deciding factor, and where former trainees acknowledge that they receive repeated demands from their peers. The bias of “social replication” (i.e. similar profiles of young people enrolling in training) flagged above also exists here. This is well documented in the evaluation reports in the case of Tamkeen (Egypt) and SAKSHAM (India). They can also be associated to mobilisation efforts by local partners, for example by sharing their experience during a community meeting aimed at promoting the project amongst potential new trainees.
- **Similarly, working with local partners who have strong presence in the community, or working in communities where Plan International has a long-standing presence, is a bonus in terms of facilitating access to young people:** a number of evaluations have highlighted the role of local partners and their knowledge of the field as a value-add for the project, especially in relation to mobilising young people. This was also directly observed in India, where the community mobilisation phase was only more resource-intensive in areas where the project was new and where previous engagement of the partner or Plan with the community had been limited.
- **Reaching to specific categories of vulnerable youth such as migrants or young people living with a disability (young PWDs) is challenging and requires intentional outreach strategies:** in China, where the project exclusively targets young people who have migrated to Beijing, outreach efforts focused on areas or community centres known to host or connect with large numbers of migrant workers (of all ages). This is also the experience of peer organisations working with young people on the move in West Africa (e.g. Save the Children, Terre des Hommes). Few evaluation reports reflect on reaching out to young PWDs as vulnerable young people, which may suggest limitations and gaps in the projects themselves in this regard. In the Togo and India evaluations which explored the issue, it was demonstrated that mobilisation did not sufficiently take into consideration young PWDs, whom as a result are critically under-represented in training and project data. In the case of India, there was an implicit self-censoring of community workers in the identification of young PWDs, knowing that curricula and training facilities are not disability-friendly:

“Saksham has provided training to youth (3) with some form of disability/impairment (largely physically ailment, as our curriculum is not geared towards meeting needs of sensory disabilities). (...) If we need more such youth (...) we then as team, can think of taking care of infrastructure related points to make centres disable friendly in next/ current phases” (SAKSHAM MTR report, p. 25).

Inclusive approaches tackling disability are probably the next frontier for YEE projects at Plan International.

- **Default targeting of “Plan-sponsored” families or “Plan communities” present both advantages and disadvantages:** in the case of Colombia, it was clearly demonstrated that the fact that 90% of the beneficiaries were to be identified amongst households known to Plan International sponsorship programme and community volunteers greatly facilitated the mobilisation and monitoring or follow-up work. It is also highly coherent with the organisational objective to offer a continuum of services from childhood to adulthood. However, it created tensions with others in the community. In the case of India, although this was observed and reported by informants rather than captured in the evaluation report, similar issues were at play, with the additional challenge that over time, communities had evolved and were probably not as vulnerable as they were decades ago when engagement with Plan International started. This approach to outreach and identification can thus lead to a bias in selecting trainees who are not amongst the most marginalised.
- **Communities largely have a passive role in the outreach and identification phase:** only in the case of Cameroon were community structures and local authorities directly leading on the identification of potential

trainees under the supervision of Plan International, which did not necessarily imply that the most vulnerable had been identified (issues of nepotism were uncovered by the evaluation). In Egypt, youth centres seem to have been focal information points to disseminate information to young people and reach out to them about the project, but in a passive way.

One of the gaps in evaluation reports is around outreach and mobilisation strategies targeting certain categories of vulnerable young people such as those already engaged in employment in the informal sector or in hazardous labour, or young people with acute protection needs (e.g. young people on the move, street-connected children and young people). Discussion with a range of informants across Plan International revealed that there is probably a self-censorship phenomenon at play here, knowing that the training content (e.g. minimum literacy levels required) or modalities (e.g. full-time training for several months) are not adapted and suitable to these categories of young people.

None of the evaluation reports conducted an assessment of the categories of young people who may have been left behind due to the mobilisation strategies chosen and carried out, or questioned the fact that the projects themselves did not appear to have conducted such assessments at the design stage.

Training duration: diverging findings

In their discussions of the project approach and steps, 7 out of 8 evaluation reports touched on the issue of the duration of the training programmes or courses. This duration varies from only a few weeks (e.g. for trades with low levels of technical skills required such as hand or machine knitting as offered in Uttarakhand in India) up to 18 months (in the case of apprenticeships in agriculture and shoe-making in Togo). **Most of the projects however operate on the logic of condensed, classroom-based and basic-level training courses of 2 to 3 months aimed at securing a sufficient level of competencies to access entry level jobs in the market.** In India for example, the course is designed to be completed within 2 months, period during which trainees gather to a nearby training centre for around 4 hours per day, 6 days per week.

The proportion of soft skills vs. technical skills within each training course also differs.

One finding which cuts across the various evaluation reports is that the duration of the training is too short. This feedback had usually been gathered from beneficiaries, partners or stakeholders. Beneficiaries in particular are in demand of (i) more opportunities for practical training through internships or on-the-job experience as part of the training course, and of (ii) advanced or additional training to help them move up the ladder and access better-paid opportunities beyond the first job. This was also expressed by beneficiaries met in India and Togo during the preparatory phases of this meta-evaluation.

It however reflects a tension between two distinct objectives insufficiently explained: access to employment vs. technical qualification.

Plan International's model of youth economic empowerment is one aiming at rapid transitions into employment, which implies a focus on basic skills set within each trade, and entry level employment options post-training (including in the case of self-employment). The intention however, as discussed by some project teams and staff of Plan International consulted for this study, is "to get the ball rolling" as was mentioned by an informant, in other terms to equip each young person with enough social competencies that they can later on build on this first employment experience to develop a career and be mobile, agile and autonomous along the pathway they chose. **This model can be particularly adapted for categories of populations with sufficient education levels, and who are not too far removed from the labour market. However, the implicit condition for this "seeds sowing" approach is that the projects work more broadly with the young people on personal plans and career pathways, on which evaluation reports provide no evidence.**

Longer training durations would often respond to other needs and objectives, primarily technical qualification and certification through a diploma, which arguably can help securing employment which requires higher skills levels and thus guarantees better remuneration. This is not to say that none of the training courses offered in the various projects is sanctioned by a recognised and accredited body: courses in India are certified by the national agency in charge of skills development, and two of the apprenticeships programmes in Togo offer the opportunity of an end-of-cycle diploma officially recognised. However, these examples seem to be the exception rather than the norm.

These discussions are also to be placed in the context of the overall project duration: most of the projects operate on relatively short cycles of 3 years or less, which when seen in light of the time and resources required to prepare and set up the training programmes (e.g. market scan, curriculum development etc.) and the requirement of running several training batches in order to meet project targets, would in effect put tremendous time pressures on the local teams to efficiently accompany and support each individual trainee.

Importance of Life Skills

The majority of evaluation reports (i) provide evidence of high levels of satisfaction regarding life skills training (from both young trainees and their employers, when those have been consulted in the evaluation process), and (ii) make positive appreciations of both the relevance and the reported *effects* of life skills training on young trainees. The evidence provided rarely includes counterfactual perspectives, which limits the appreciation of the *impact* of life skills components.

Key benefits identified include:

- **Increased employability**, with young people observed and reporting being better prepared in relation to job-seeking, and having the required set of skills to perform well in the workplace (e.g. communication skills, team work, dependability, punctuality, self-presentation or in the case of self-employment: confidence in approaching and managing relationships with financial institutions, marketing skills, customer relationship skills)
- **Increased self-esteem and self-confidence**

These findings were further confirmed by key informants, both internal and external to Plan International, and align with most recent research in the sector. Indeed, a growing evidence base shows that these qualities rival academic or technical skills in their ability to predict employment and earnings, to consider only two key economic outcomes (see LIPMANN et al., 2015). It is important to reassert here the particular value of soft skills training for young people, as they are about to enter the workforce, and particularly so if they are either marginalised, vulnerable or less educated. As the workplace modernizes, particularly in the digital era, there is also evidence that (i) soft skills are becoming increasingly essential in job profiles in recent two decades, as (ii) career paths are built in multiple roles, with multiple employers and often with alternate periods of wage and self-employment. There is consensus to assert that the 5 most critical skills most likely to boost employability and impact on workforce outcomes (e.g. employment, income, performance, entrepreneurial success):

- Social skills
- Communication
- High-order thinking skills (such as problem solving, critical thinking, decision-making)

Supported by:

- Self-control
- Positive self-concept

Field missions, informant interviews and desk research suggest that there are currently two limitations in YEE non-technical skills offering:

- For less educated young people, **basic literacy and numeracy support**, possibly as a pre-project module, would greatly increase employability. This is done by other organisations in the sector as a way to ensure that marginalised young people can still have access to vocational education, albeit with additional provisions to bring them up to speed with basic skills first.
- The changing nature of work, at least existing trends and predictions about “jobs of the future” would justify stronger emphasis on **digital skills and digital literacy** as part of YEE non-technical training. In the portfolio of projects, digital skills are only an emerging focus (e.g. SAKSHAM Phase 3, ongoing and not yet evaluated). This would not necessarily be done to open horizons and new sectors to targeted young people, but rather to ensure marginalised young people do not face additional challenges in accessing decent and secure employment going

forward. This may also have the potential to match targeted young people with more lucrative entry-level opportunities

5.1.4. Evidence gaps in evaluation reports

A number of approaches and components of YEE models as implemented in the considered projects are not at all or sufficiently explored in evaluations. They include:

- **Cost effectiveness, value for money, business case:** few evaluations reported on cost effectiveness. Those who did assessed project budgetary effectiveness (reporting on budget to actual variances, and budget components), more so than the cost effectiveness of the model itself. None of the evaluation measured indicators such as cost per beneficiary, and none provided elements of discussion about the value for money of the respective projects vis-à-vis other initiatives existing in the country or in the sector. Neither did the evaluations comment on the political economy of project approaches, or aggregated economic impacts such as reduction in local youth unemployment ratios, total net wealth generated by the projects or household level impacts. In relation to costs, the debate over fees and contributions from young people exist, without it seems consensual opinions. Experiences reported in evaluations range from co-contribution expected from trainees in Togo (up to 75% of training costs initially, which the project failed to achieved), to, on the opposite end of the spectrum, compensation, benefits or incentives given to trainees in Colombia (for transport and subsistence during training). In the case of SAKSHAM in India, reflections around a social enterprise model or student loan model have started, as a way to boost the financial sustainability of the model, and limit the over-reliance on external grant funding. This issue is also contentious in the sector. The LABS model itself has evolved to be fee-paying, albeit nominally so – but in the case of LABS, the core strategic intent is not to reach the most marginalised youth
- **Financial inclusion:** there is only limited evidence in evaluation reports of the effectiveness of financial inclusion support provided by the projects. In fact, very few reports (SAKSHAM India, Togo FISONG, Cameroon 3x6) explored the topic. Other projects did not appear to have had financial inclusion components. The limited evidence provided was mainly around increased capacity to save and exploration of savings objectives. On this last point, the findings and conclusions relied mainly on declarative information. The SAKSHAM evaluation report is the only one to have included analysis and details of (i) financial literacy and linkages to the formal financial sector (e.g. bank accounts, debit cards) and (ii) changes in reported level of access and control over financial resources. Without systematic comparison with baseline values however, it is not possible to make strong assertions about attributable effects.
- **Partnerships:** although all projects operate in partnership with a range of organisations, evaluation reports do not always explore partnerships. When they do so, it is often through descriptive analysis of the distribution of roles between the various partners during project implementation. It appears that partnership arrangements (i) are mostly limited to civil society partners (i.e. Plan International collaborating with local NGOs as project operators) and (ii) often vertical. Only two evaluation reports provide some insights into key partnership success factors (namely: the profile of partners and in particular their specific expertise and value add, and their experience of working with Plan International in the past). The FISONG project in Togo is one rare example of collective partnership arrangements involving civil society as well as private sector actors and public agencies.

Focus: Fees or no Fees? The experience from LABS

To attain sustainability in its programmes, in 2011 The Dr Reddy's Foundation (founder of the LABS model which has inspired Plan International YEE pathways) introduced a learner-paid model called the LABS–Sustainability (LABS–S) programme, under which the aspirant is charged for the course, with fees in the range of INR 1300 to INR 1800 (\$19 to \$26). Given the socio-economic constraints of its target group, the fee can be paid either completely with a 20 percent discount or in instalments during the programme. For those who are not able to pay at all, fees are waived and they are encouraged to pay a token amount from their first salary. The LABS initiative has also started to work with several employers who recompense the programme with recruitment fees in return for hiring LABS aspirants. Presently 8 percent of pan-India companies and some local employers pay an average amount of INR 500 to INR 1500 (\$7 to \$22) based on the retention of placed candidates for 45 to 60 days. This has been done to make the LABS programme financially viable and less dependent on donors and partners for its operational expenditures.

Public sector actors and policy-makers are nearly always absent from evaluation findings and conclusions, which may suggest that projects themselves do not proactively and consistently include those stakeholders as partners.

- **Voices from the community:** perspective from employers, families, communities and peers are critically under-represented in evaluation reports, with not clear evidence of project effects on these target groups.

5.1.5. Summary of findings and conclusions

F10. The YEE model applied combines elements recognised by international research as the most effective in yielding positive results on youth employment and earnings, namely skills training, employment support services and entrepreneurship promotion

The YEE model and pathway, as described in evaluation reports, is based on “bundled interventions” combining actions on the supply-side of the labour market (e.g. non-academic skills development, work readiness, job seeking, mentoring) and to a lesser extent on the demand-side (e.g. entrepreneurship promotion). The model is structured around a sequence of 3 core components: (i) a youth-oriented labour market survey called market scan, followed by (ii) skills-based and practical training, which leads to (iii) employment support services such as job seeking support, mentoring and individualised follow-up for a period of time after placement.

F11. Plan International’s value-add is two-fold: (i) a strong community-level presence and rapport with children and young people, and (ii) the organisation-wide gender transformative agenda

Although the approach is not unique to Plan International France or Plan International in general, it builds on good practices, critical success factors and robust evidence as captured in recent research. This meta-evaluation identified two elements through which Plan International adds value to the YEE sector: (i) Plan’s strong community-level presence and rapport with children and young people allows for the targeting of the most marginalised, less visible young people. In this regard (ii) strategic emphasis on gender transformative programming places Plan International in a leading position in comparison to peers in the sector.

F12. Critical success factors and lessons in the model were identified as:

- As a tool, the market scans sets the foundations of the project, provided it is timely, collaborative, multi-party and gender-responsive
- Outreach, mobilisation and identification strategies vary, and are usually illustrative of the challenge in identifying the most marginalised young people including young women, youth living in poverty, migrant youth and young people living with a disability
- A model based on condensed training cycles of 2 to 3 months duration on average (but up to 18 months in some projects) is effective in promoting rapid transition to entry level occupations, but generates debates about benefits for longer-term employability which are less coherently or pertinently monitored, assessed or documented
- Combining soft/social and technical skills in training is overwhelmingly appreciated by participants and stakeholders alike, and evidence suggests that soft skills increase employability and positive self-concept; however, provisions to include basic literacy and numeracy, as well as digital skills and literacy are a missing piece in the model in its current form

F13. Positive findings around model effectiveness are hindered by a number of gaps in evaluation reports, particularly in relation to (i) cost effectiveness, value for money and business case; (ii) financial inclusion; (iii) partnerships and (iv) voices from the community.

5.2 Recommendations

Recommendation	Importance	Timing	Responsibilities
R9 Discussions should be engaged across Plan International to revisit the standard training duration and the potential de facto exclusions it implies, as well as further enhance the	◆◆◆◆	◆◆◆◆ From the next	Plan International France in collaboration with other Plan International offices

already acclaimed **Social / Life Skills component** to better respond both to the needs of marginalised young people, and to the changing nature of work in the digital era.

R10. Future evaluations should focus in particular in providing evidence to current gaps in knowledge about the model, namely cost effectiveness and political economy, enabling environment and partnerships. These gaps should be communicated to other NOs active in SOYEE to ensure the organisation-wide body of evaluations gradually confront these issues.

Important



Important

project design
process



From the next
evaluation
process

Plan International France
in collaboration with other
Plan International offices

6. Skills acquisition and transitions to employment for young people

Note: the statements and findings in this section are not gender-specific in most cases, as gender impacts and results are discussed in a specific chapter to follow.

6.1. Profile of YEE beneficiaries

The profile, characteristics and vulnerability or marginalisation status of young people targeted by the respective projects is a well-researched aspect in the evaluation reports included in this meta-analysis, as 118 data points were recorded on this theme, across all 8 evaluation documents considered. There is therefore a certain level of coverage and confidence in using data and findings from evaluations with regards to targeting and profiling.

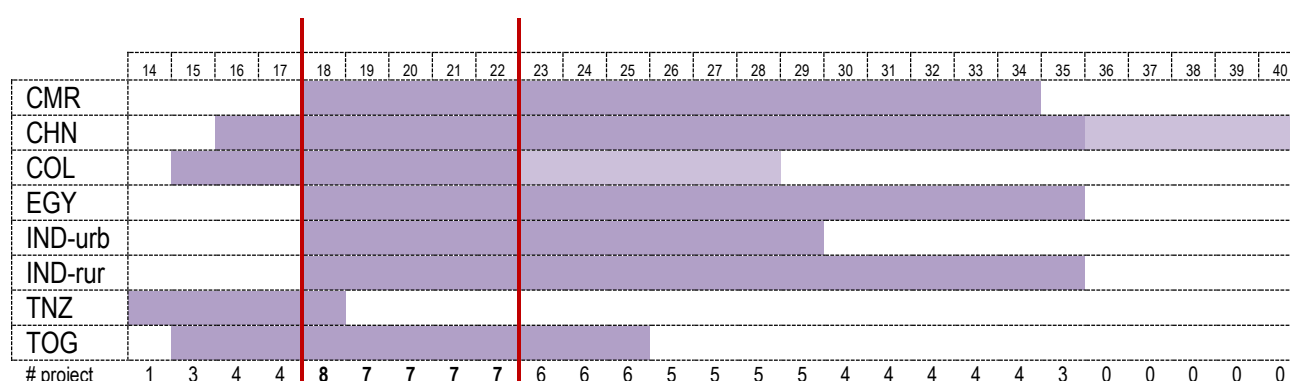
Level of Coverage	Strong						
CMR-FE-CoSo-1+2	CHN-MTR-YES-1	COL-FE-YES1+2	EGY-FE-TAM-1	IND-MTR-SAK-II	IND-FE-SAK-II	TNZ-MTR-CLP-II	TGO-FE-FIS-1

6.1.1. Age profile

Although evaluation reports do not all confirm with quantitative data the exact age brackets effectively reached by the projects (as opposed to intended objectives), they do however capture the age range targeted by the projects. As described in the methodology chapter of the meta-evaluation, the definition of the lower and upper limits of “youth” is a highly challenging and contextual issue.

Across the project, young people as young as 14 and as old as 40 have been targeted by the projects. The core targeted age group however (see graph below) is the 18 to 22 age group, common to almost all projects in the meta-evaluation. This is in line with targeting priorities followed by peers and other organisations – the national youth technical training plan supported by the GIZ in Togo targets young people aged 15 to 35, for example.

Some of the evaluation reports which went further in exploiting project data were able to confirm average age of the young people associated to the project, being 21.5 in urban India (without significant differences between male and female cohorts), 26 in rural India or 24.8 in Egypt for example.



The lower limit is often established taking into consideration (i) periods of mandatory schooling in the country (hence a 15 years lower age limit in Togo, as education is by law compulsory up until age 15) and (ii) legal provisions with regards to bans or prohibition of child labour, both these issues being of utmost importance to Plan International's programming.

During field work in Togo and conversation with peer organisations active in Sub-Saharan Africa, it was also noticed that the transition to adulthood still occurs at a younger age in SSA as compared to Asia or other parts of the world, particularly so in rural areas. Indeed, young men and young women in those countries are often expected to join the world of work and engage in relationship or marital unions at a younger age. This is often explained by informants and available data by lower educational attainment, with enrolment at secondary levels in rural SSA lagging behind what is now achieved in South or South East Asia, particularly for girls. Cohorts of young people neither in education, employment or training (NEET) are thus observed at a young age due to early interruption in schooling and education. Concomitantly, the issue of early or teenage pregnancy is more frequently highlighted in such contexts as compared to urban Asia for example, including in evaluation reports (see section 7 hereafter). In such contexts, it is thus extremely pertinent and important to offer skilling and employment opportunities to “the younger young” to ensure timely and smooth transition to the economic and productive life, with all due consideration to the priority to be given to preventing the unintended and negative effect of discouraging the pursuit of higher educational attainment³¹.

Across West Africa, where issues of internal and cross-border migration of children and young people are also at play and are particularly acute, support to key transition ages such as the 15 to 18 group is also crucial in either preventing exploitative and harmful migration, or at least accompany planned and safe migration with transferable skills.

A similar scenario (young transition into adulthood) was discussed with informants in the case of Latin America, and documented in the Colombia evaluation report.

“(...) together with the difficult and precarious living conditions aggravated by the large number of children per family and people living in the same household, leads many girls to look for a partner and commit themselves at a very early age, a way to get out of the house. However, these situations increase and deepen the vulnerability of these women because, since they do not have their own resources and in many cases become mothers at an early age, they are economically, but also socially, dependent on their partners, and this dependence in many cases leads to situations of economic, psychological, sexual and physical violence”

- YES Colombia report, p. 69

6.1.2. Vulnerability and marginalisation

As reported by evaluations, and coherently with federation-level strategic objectives, the evaluated projects explicitly aim to reach the most vulnerable or most marginalised young people through their YEE interventions. The gap between intended aims and the reality of project implementation has however been highlighted by a number of evaluation reports, particularly in urban contexts such as SAKSHAM (India) and TAMKEEN (Egypt) where the evaluators concluded that the young people associated with the projects, often better educated and not living in poverty, did not meet the commonly admitted criteria of socio-economic vulnerability:

“...young men and young women benefitting from the project (...) are not from the most marginalised segments of the Egyptian population” [translated from French by the consultant]

- TAMKEEN evaluation, p. 24

“...the core constituency we were researching were all from above poverty line families [...] 2.5 USD household income work out to be roughly Rs.58,500 per annum. All the current survey participants had a family income prior to the Saksham intervention in excess of that amount.”

SAKSHAM Final Evaluation, p. 66

³¹ None of the evaluation reports have actually touched on this issue and discussed whether the lower age limit applied by the project was causing the negative effect of attracting into professional training young people who could otherwise continue their education. In India, it was clearly observed that the lower age limit of 18 was scrupulously followed by project teams and partners, with clear and explicit encouragement for those under 18 approaching project staff to be supported to pursue their education further (through distance education in particular). The lower age limit does however act as an exclusion factor for the less educated young people, young women and rural youth in particular as discussed in the SAKSHAM evaluative review (available on request).

“...the VTEP [self-employment] initiative at the present context will not be pulling any households out of poverty as they were not in poverty to begin with”

SAKSHAM Final Evaluation, p. 68

One important lesson in this regard is that, **when it comes to YEE, vulnerability and marginalisation become even more challenging and complex concepts to comprehend, and they must be explored beyond socio-economic factors: in relation to YEE, poverty, vulnerability and marginalisation should not be used as interchangeable terms.**

Indeed:

- The segmentation of the labour market itself, and related structural barriers can add a layer of complexity to the issue of vulnerability as on numerous occasions, **young people who are not necessarily economically vulnerable can experience marginalisation from the labour market.** This is the case in particular for highly educated young people, and is a phenomenon which has been well researched and documented in Western countries for example. As documented in the TAMKEEN evaluation, and confirmed by national statistics, the highest youth unemployment rates are found amongst tertiary educated and college graduates, and amongst them female graduates in particular (a trend also observed in other MICs including India).

On the other hand, this also implies that certain categories of young people, most likely those with low or no education at all are not necessarily vulnerable to unemployment as they may already be engaged in the informal sector, but are vulnerable to exploitative and hazardous work which falls short of the decent work agenda. This category of vulnerable young people is not mentioned at all in evaluation reports, as they are not targeted by the projects, which mostly focus on NEET youth.

- There is an implicit perception in project design, and as confirmed by interviews with informants, that because of the multiple, undeniable and well-documented factors of inequalities which disproportionately and negatively affect young women, having explicit and equitable gender targets implies that the project reaches the most vulnerable. The risk with such an approach is to **indirectly view the situations of young women as if homogeneous**, and failing to understand and address the varied factors of vulnerability affecting them. In this regard, the intersectional analytical approach used in the YES Colombia evaluation (see section 4) is pertinent and to be further promoted in the future, including at the project design stage. An intersectional approach explores the multiple facets of an issue at the same time, looking for example how various factors such as gender, age, education, ethnic background or poverty are intertwined. Although it is not gender-specific, it is particularly relevant in analysing gender dynamics. In Egypt, young female graduates are the most marginalised from the world of work, suffering from particularly high unemployment rates. In other words, young women are not all equally affected by unemployment challenges, and it is important to promote non-binary approaches which reflect the complex dynamic of gender and vulnerability so as not to automatically link one term with the other. This would imply for example, looking at the specific situation of young women, and giving priority consideration to those cumulating vulnerability factors (e.g. education levels, caring responsibilities and marital status, etc.). By doing so, YEE projects would more adequately align with Plan International's objective to support children and young people in their diversity, as expressed in the internal guidelines on gender-transformative programming
- **Education levels of the targeted youth is diversely apprehended by the projects and thus by the evaluation reports.** In some cases, based on the assumption that lower education levels are a factor of marginalisation from employment in general and skilled, formal and decent work in particular, projects have intentionally recruited young people with low or medium education background. This was explicitly the case in Togo and Colombia, where being a school drop-out or illiterate was one of the selection criteria. As a result, projects had strategies and good practices in place to accommodate such needs, with more visual aids and photographs used in training manuals in Togo for example, rather than textbooks. Coincidentally, it is the projects implemented in dynamic, competitive urban settings such as SAKSHAM or TAMKEEN which have set the bar higher, requesting increasingly higher minimum education standards (usually, completion of secondary school). The LABS Model on which these projects were based, was specifically targeting such groups of young people. As documented in these two evaluations, this implies that (i) the needs of more vulnerable (because less

educated) young people cannot necessarily be addressed by these projects or that substantial changes in the approach would be required, for example through dual learning (part-time training, part-time working), bridge education approaches (e.g. literacy classes, remedial education support) and review of training manual and content. A second implication is (ii) the inherent risk of mirroring market demands for increased qualification levels, at the expense of analysing who is left behind.

Those projects whose evaluations confirmed that beneficiaries were amongst the most vulnerable from a socio-economic point of view shared some characteristics:

- Although vulnerability was not directly measured and used as a selection criterion, it is the indirect selection through the choice of project locations which meant that cohorts of trainees were indeed amongst the most vulnerable. In Colombia for example, the decision to anchor the project in the poorest neighbourhoods of Cartagena³² was an **indirect way to select particularly vulnerable trainees**. In Cameroon, a similar approach was taken as local authorities were consulted to identify 6 of the communities most affected by the displacement and IDP crisis as future project sites. For rural areas, as mentioned by one external informant, *“by default, focusing on rural areas in developing countries means we are focusing on a vulnerable target group. Rural areas combine a lot if not all vulnerability factors into one place: low income, low education levels, poor infrastructure, no electricity...There is no doubt”*. This was also observed during field work in Uttarkashi (see SAKSHAM evaluative review report, available on request) and the Region Centrale of Togo, and confirmed by external informants.
- For some of them, they specifically focus on a category of young people assessed as vulnerable such as young people withdrawn from exploitative child labour (Tanzania) or isolated migrant workers (China). The project in Tanzania is in this regard an outlier in the overall meta-evaluation portfolio, as it envisages YEE activities as part of a wider programme to combat child labour in the mining industry. Poverty being one of the key drivers of child labour, it is thus logical to report that beneficiaries come from household experiencing extreme poverty.

As discussed by the China, Cameroon and Colombia reports, **one of the core underlying issues is that projects would need to dedicate more time and resources in defining what may constitute vulnerability in their specific context**, and conduct vulnerability assessment as part of their design stage to ensure that the targeting approaches and training modalities are appropriately responding to the overall goal of reaching the most vulnerable young people.

Evaluation reports are only anecdotally exploring the issue of **disability and inclusion** – a possible explanation being that the projects themselves do not always target young people living with a disability (Young PWD). Only reports evaluating the projects in Togo, Egypt and India have (albeit in a limited way) explored the issue of disability in relation to inclusion and vulnerability. All suggest that adaptations would need to be made to project approaches (not the model itself) to more explicitly, purposefully and adequately respond to the need of young PWDs. Recommended adaptations include disability-friendly access to training facilities, training material (e.g. Braille version). In all three cases, young PWDs had been reached by the projects, but not in proportions comparable to the demographic share of this group in the overall youth population. Those PWDs who have benefitted from the projects suffered from sensory rather than physical disabilities.

6.1.3. Summary of findings and conclusions

F14. Age profiles are coherent with organisational objectives, but there is a need for flexibility in approaches

Age profiles of beneficiaries (18 to 22 on average) are in line with Plan International’s objectives and definitions of “youth”. However, some level of flexibility has been rightly shown to align with local contexts and cultures. In particular, the fact that transition to adulthood, including entry to the labour force, can take place earlier in life in certain parts of the world and particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, would call for YEE interventions to target younger cohorts of young people including those under the age of 18. Simultaneously, complementary and supportive (education and health) interventions which may delay the age of marriage, family formation and entry into the labour force would in such contexts be pertinent linkages to YEE.

³² Evaluators demonstrated that in the Colombian context, Cartagena presented one of the most vulnerable profiles as it combined some of the highest poverty rates nationwide, high rates of inequality and high levels of informal employment.

F15. When it comes to youth economic empowerment, vulnerability is a complex issue in which socio-economic determinants and binary gender approaches do not suffice

If vulnerability is understood purely from a socio-economic point of view, then evaluations reveal a gap between project and organisational objectives to serve the most vulnerable children and young people, and the reality of some projects, particularly those with a dominant urban focus. Those projects which have succeeded in reaching out to socio-economically vulnerable youth had adopted indirect targeting strategies, focusing on marginalised localities (more likely to host cohorts of vulnerable young people) rather than individual vulnerability profiling. Education in this regard, is a strong segregating factor, particularly in urban approaches. Disability is rarely explored and taken into consideration. There is an evidence gap on other possible factors of vulnerability (e.g. ethnicity).

The absence of intersectional perspectives leads to binary approaches to gender (i.e. male/female), and an implicit judgement that girls and young women, by and large, are in a situation of vulnerability. Although it cannot be denied that girls and young women are faced with systemic, entrenched and multiple factors of discrimination and marginalisation, it is equally misleading to assume (even not intentionally) their “inherent” vulnerability. Instead, vulnerability assessments could be undertaken to understand how various segments of the female youth population are differently challenged to be economically empowered.

Conclusions

Overall, YEE projects reach their intended target groups, both in terms of age and vulnerability profiles, thus aligning with Plan International’s strategic objectives. However, the challenges identified in urban-focused projects in approaching the most marginalised youth call for more systematic and thorough vulnerability assessment to be undertaken in project design. This would allow for precise mapping of vulnerability factors and vulnerable groups, and what strategies must be in place to ensure that even greater proportions of vulnerable young people (in particular, less educated ones, young PWDs, young working poor) can access vocational education and employment services on offer.

6.2. Employment and other economic outcomes for young people

The economic outcomes experienced by young people associated to the projects are overall well documented by the evaluation reports, although some go into further details and analysis on this point, particularly the evaluations in India and Colombia. In total, 97 data points relate to economic outcomes for young people (mainly pathways to employment, type of employment, retention in employment, income and earnings). 7 out of 8 evaluation reports contributed findings and conclusions to this theme. Findings and conclusions presented in this chapter can thus be interpreted and taken with confidence, as the level of coverage is strong.

Level of Coverage	Strong					
CMR-FE-CoSo-1+2	CHN-MTR-YES-1	COL-FE-YES1+2	EGY-FE-TAM-1	IND-MTR-SAK-II	IND-FE-SAK-II	TGO-FE-FIS-1

6.2.1. Transitions and retention in employment

Transitions to employment

Transitions to employment – understood as the ratio of young people graduating from the training and either placed in waged employment (formal sector) or supported to start self-employment – is one of the key objectives of the projects, and thus one of the key outcomes either measured or discussed in the evaluation reports. This is sometimes referred to in the projects as “conversion rate”. The level of coverage on this topic is relatively strong, and findings can be used with confidence to extrapolate about transitions patterns.

Level of Coverage	Strong				
CMR-FE-CoSo-1+2	CHN-MTR-YES-1	COL-FE-YES1+2	EGY-FE-TAM-1	IND-FE-SAK2	TGO-FE-FIS-1

Overall, the **rates of transitions to employment referenced in the evaluation reports are high**: they vary from 62% (Colombia) to 94% (Cameroon)³³, which suggests that, broadly speaking, the projects are successful and effective in achieving their main objective around access to employment. However, only few of the evaluation reports compare these values to the intended targets, which is a limitation in discussing the *effectiveness* of the projects and approaches. **Together these sets of results seem to confirm that the market-driven approach (through market scans and work-oriented skills development) is relevant and effective**, and out-performs other similar programmes, particularly large-scale, government-run initiatives (World Bank India, 2015). However, none of the evaluations included counterfactual analysis and as such it is not possible to conclude on the employment impacts of the projects. Discussions with young people in India and Togo, as well as with staff from across Plan International suggest that the impact is likely to be significant for young women (as the majority would not have accessed employment without support from the projects), but is more complex to map for young men (the impact likely to be on the type of work accessed, rather than access to employment in itself).

Young people supported to access wage employment would generally access entry-level jobs in the formal sector with typical job profiles mentioned in evaluations being: shop floor assistant, data entry operator, BPO officer in call centres, family nursing and care assistant, barista and waitressing in the hospitality sector, etc.

There is an important gender dimension in supporting transitions to formal, wage employment, which is not explicitly researched by evaluation reports as transition and retention data is not systematically disaggregated and analysed by gender. Indeed, when they work, women tend to be overwhelmingly over-represented in informal or agricultural sectors where pay and productivity are lower (ILO, 2012), thus hindering female economic empowerment. In itself, the objective to support girls and young women to access formal wage employment is transformational. Research has shown that the gender pay gap narrows along a continuum informal > private formal > public sector. Occupational choices presented to young women through the project must take into consideration more explicitly the *category* of employment offered to them (formal or informal, wage or self-), so as not to constrain girls and young women to the lower-paying, less productive and more unequal informal sectors.

In this regard, there are gender dimensions to be further analysed in relation to entrepreneurship development: where on the one hand, field work in India and Togo (as well as interviews with staff and key informants) identify self-employment as more suitable options for certain groups of young women, primarily because of the time flexibility it allows them to have (more compatible with their caring and reproductive roles), international research also shows that this perpetuates a certain form of gender segregation which requires purposeful remedial actions (CHARAVARTY et al., 2017).

Transitions to self-employment or entrepreneurship projects (ranging from 82-94%) seem higher than transitions to waged-employment (62-78%) although the sample is too narrow to confirm this, and there could be factors specific to the contexts or model which may explain high transition rates. In Cameroon in particular, the 3x6 UNDP Model used (see below for model brief) seems to generate particularly high transitions rates as young people are directly supported, prior to entering training, in generating the financing they need for their future enterprise through a cash-for-work programme and the obligation to save part of those earnings. **Access to finance being repeatedly reported as a barrier for young entrepreneurs** (see other sections of this report), the focus on pre-training capital savings may indirectly explain higher success ratios in the individual transitions to employment in the case of Cameroon.

Young people supported towards self-employment were in the majority of examples given in evaluation reports sole proprietors of their activity or business. There is however no indication of the time commitment of such activities and businesses (i.e. whether they are a full-time occupation or not) although field work in Uttarkashi (India) and Togo suggests that self-employment appears to be a complementary activity to supplement family/household income through seasonal/part-time work ("income generating activity", or IGA). The only examples of collective entrepreneurship are reported in Colombia and Cameroon, with little discussion on the effectiveness of the approach beyond the benefit of risk pooling and resources sharing (particularly for occupations which require the purchase of material such as hairdressing or catering).

³³ Data found in evaluation reports on transition rates (or similar indicators) were by ascendant order of success: 62% for Colombia, 75% (India), 77% (China), 78% (Egypt), 82% (Togo), 94% (Cameroon).

In the case of Colombia, where transition to waged-employment was a challenge in the first phase of the project, due to structural discriminations at play in the labour market (e.g. youth-specific and ethnic-specific discriminations as reported in other sections of this report) and more practical barriers such as distance and transportation costs associated with employment, the emphasis was placed on self-employment in the second phase of the project and improved transition rates were reported by the evaluators.

There is however insufficient focus in the evaluation reports in distinguishing conversion or transition rates from retention in employment³⁴. The first indicator measures the success in accessing employment post-training (result-level), whereas the second measures how many young people accessing employment post-training are still found in employment at the end of the monitoring or follow-up period (outcome-level), which is of 6 months post-placement on average, in the majority of projects included in the meta-evaluation. **Exploring separately and comparing ratios would however be important, as it would allow for a closer scrutiny of drop-out ratios at different stages in the project, and understand the various barriers and pathways to employment for different categories of young people.**

Indeed, direct observations in India and Togo indicated that post-training conversion or transition rates were high, although they could reflect, if looked at more closely, specific gender-related issues which can go unnoticed if transition rates are not disaggregated meaningfully (by location, by trade/sector of employment or gender for example³⁵). However, 6 months into employment, it was found and reported by project teams that the drop out was an issue, although more due to young people confronting the realities of the world of work (e.g. commute, working hours, salary misconceptions between gross and take-home remuneration, etc.) rather than specific gender factors. *“The survey data clearly suggests that the reasons cited by both men and women for leaving their first job had more to do with push factors (dissatisfaction at workplace) than pull factors or social pressures”* (SAKSHAM evaluation). **More generally, across the portfolio of evaluation reports, there is insufficient focus on documenting factors and drivers of drop-out in both wage and self-employment.**

In the long-term, retention in employment is a more pertinent indicator of economic outcomes for young people than transition rates which in effect only measure the success of placement strategies deployed by the teams and projects, and of the market-relevance of the training offer curated, but are not a sufficient predictor of economic empowerment and stable, sustained income gains for young people. It would be important in the future for the projects M&E framework to look at both indicators, and minimising the drop in retention in employment in particular. Concomitantly, all YEE evaluations undertaken in the future should be encouraged to explore and report on outcomes on both indicators, and identify which sub-groups of young people may be more likely to drop out of employment, and for what reasons.

Gender dimensions strongly impact both transition and retention in employment. However, this aspect is under-documented in evaluation reports, as data on these indicators is not systematically disaggregated by gender and analysed on that basis. Experience in long-standing projects such as SAKSHAM, other projects of Plan International, experience from peers and recent research suggest that:

- *Girls are less likely to accept a job offer and transition from training to work*
- *Girls are more likely to drop out from training and employment for a variety of reasons (marriage, pregnancy, loss of interest, fatigue due to competing time demands and responsibilities), and this is widely acknowledged across Plan International but also by peers in the sector, including those organisations consulted for this meta-evaluation*

³⁴ Caution must be exercised on the issue of transition and retention in employment, as evaluation reports do not always explain their calculations and definitions.

³⁵ In some projects, results can vary by location (e.g. employment rates are higher in Alexandria than in Cairo for example) which should encourage an exploration of possible explanatory factors (both internal and external to the project) but also identification of best practices, if any, behind high transition rates. Field work in Togo also suggested that retention can vary by trade and sector (e.g. higher number of young people reporting struggling to continue their activity in poultry and batik for example), which is not a dimension explored in evaluation reports but would be essential to probe to ensure that young people are not disproportionately impacted purely on the basis of the sector in which they chose to upskill. There is a clear evidence gap on this issue in evaluation reports.

- Girls are most likely not to meet some of the programme selection criteria such as minimal education level, availability, family support (see previous sections)

Mobility and employment pathways

One of the main objectives of the YEE model as applied by Plan International being to facilitate access to entry level jobs by vulnerable or marginalised young people, a longer-term indicator of employability and adaptability of the young people is their **mobility in employment**³⁶. These skills (individual mobility and adaptability to changing labour markets and working conditions, supported by robust social skills) are increasingly important in what is now labelled as “21st century jobs”³⁷. However, **this issue is not well mapped and explored by evaluation reports**. In the 3x6 project in Cameroon, evaluators found that up to 12% of young people had moved on to start an activity in a sector different to the one they received training on, which can be an indication of their capacity to rebound, identify opportunities and use their skills. However, this is one of the very few examples of assessment of the mobility of young people or career pathways. One explanation could be that project timelines may not always give the possibility of longitudinal studies and follow-up of training graduates beyond the 6 months monitoring and follow-up (post-placement) usually included in the projects. The projects themselves may not all have outcome-oriented results framework to include data on medium to long-term employment outcomes such as mobility.

Where this was possible, in the case of the SAKSHAM project which has been ongoing since 2010, the evaluation provided interesting and valuable analysis of upward mobility in employment over time:

- Trainees themselves were clear about the project objectives, fully cognizant that the project was supporting them to acquire basic skills and access entry-level jobs, and securing enough personal resources to then build a career and access further opportunities as and when they wished to; in fact 80% of those surveyed had aspirations and ambitions to move on to jobs offering higher pay and better opportunities
- *On average, trainees remained only 8.2 months in their first job*; after two years, only 20% of young men and 25% of young women were still working in the same job as they started, and the vast majority had climbed up the ladder
- At all stages, young men are more mobile in employment than young women, moving on to new jobs more quickly (see graph below, compiled with data from SAKSHAM Phase II Final Evaluation)

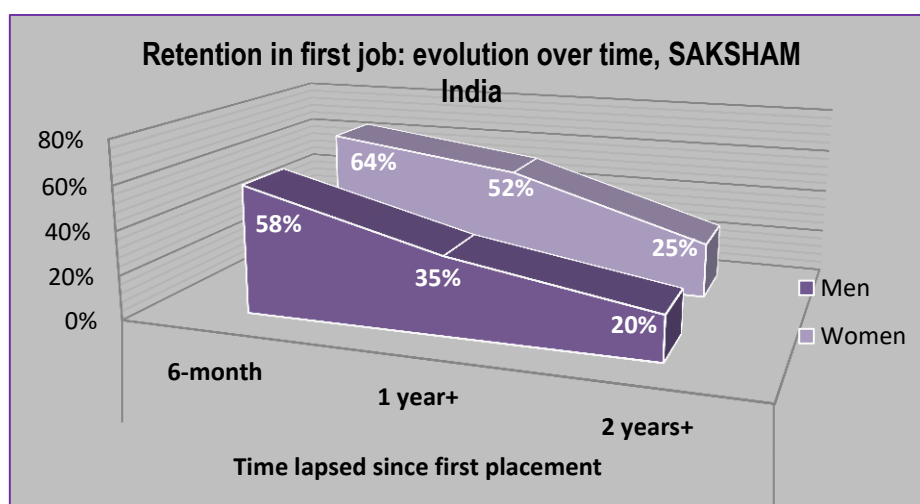


Figure 13 - Evolution in % of young people still employed in their first job 2014-2016 (SAKSHAM, India)

More systematic longitudinal reviews of effects and patterns in employment of training graduates would be essential to ensure that training content remains highly relevant in building employability skills, and equip young people to negotiate

³⁶ For the purpose of this study, mobility in employment is understood as the propensity and capacity of the young person to switch job within an organisation or change job to join another organisation. It does not relate to broader issues of job mobility and relocation.

³⁷ See references in Bibliography for Deloitte's Future of Work online resources on 21st century jobs.

their own career paths rather than only aiming for rapid access to employment. In this regard, the focus on social and soft skills is critical, or what other organisations have also started to label as “transferable skills”.

Summary of findings and conclusions

F16. Projects are generally highly effective in supporting transition to employment, but there is insufficient evidence on retention in employment, particularly in self-employment, and gender dimensions

Overall, the rates of transitions to employment referenced in the evaluation reports are high: they vary from 62% (Colombia) to 94% (Cameroon), which suggests that, broadly speaking, the projects are successful and effective in achieving their main objective around access to employment thus confirming the pertinence of the model and approaches. Transitions to self-employment seem to be higher than transition to wage employment although this remains a working hypothesis to be probed further, due to the limited pool of information.

Evaluations do not however systematically disaggregate and analyse data by gender, which limits the scope of analysis and is regrettable considering the transformational value of access to formal, wage employment for girls and young women, as illustrated by recent research. Gender analysis would need to be stronger in the future to confirm (i) equitable chances for young women, and (ii) girls and young women are not constrained to lower-paying, less productive employment pathways particularly in the informal sector.

There is an evidence gap in evaluation reports on the documentation of factors and drivers of drop-out, both in wage and self-employment. The phenomenon is not systematically researched by evaluators, which limits the understanding of the profile of young people who are most likely not to complete training, and not to enter the labour force. Partial evidence suggests that there are important gender determinants.

Conclusions

Evaluations and possibly M&E frameworks need to prioritise medium and long-term measures of change in relation to employment. Indeed, in the long-term, retention in employment is a more pertinent indicator of economic outcomes for young people than transition rates which in effect only measure the success of placement strategies deployed by the teams and projects (immediate and short-term effects), and of the market-relevance of the training offer curated, but are not a sufficient predictor of economic empowerment and stable, sustained income gains for young people (medium and long-term effects). It would be important in the future for the projects M&E framework and evaluations to look at both indicators, and critically discuss and analyse variances between access and retention in employment. Analysis should be based on data disaggregated by gender, location and trade/sector *a minima* rather than presented for the entire cohort of beneficiaries as if assumed to be a homogeneous group, as there is an evidence gap in evaluation reports about pathways to employment and predictors of retention in employment in the long-term.

Promoting transitions to “decent work”: mixed results

The ambition – explicitly or implicitly articulated – of YEE projects is to support the transition towards decent work. However, only 3 evaluations actually explored what constitutes decent work and how successful the projects were in effectively ensuring that young people had access to such opportunities. There is, thus, an evidence gap on the topic of decent work.

At the global level, Plan International adopts a definition of ‘decent work’ which is closely similar to the ILO’s (see text box and Glossary of Terms in Annexes). The projects which have a definition of decent work (e.g. SAKSHAM, YES Colombia) have aligned with the global definition. However in practice, a number of challenges emerge from evaluation reports in relation to measuring and realising “decent work”:

- Without an explicit and coherent definition adapted to the local context, **in practice the proxy indicator for ‘decent work’ was the formality of employment in the form of a work contract.** In short, it was often

Decent work: definitions

Decent work is employment that "respects the fundamental rights of the human person as well as the rights of workers in terms of conditions of work safety and remuneration. ... respect for the physical and mental integrity of the worker in the exercise of his/her employment (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 7)

Decent work involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men (ILO)

considered that those young people who accessed employment in the formal sector engage in “decent work”. Even so, in some projects the employment opportunities access by young people did not comply with this proxy criterion. In Egypt for example, the evaluators found that 50% of the surveyed young people in Alexandria declared working without a formal contract in place even if 100% of the young people who completed the training and were provided with employment opportunities had been placed in the formal sector. A similar scenario exists in the YES4U project in China and in Colombia (where only 64% of those who found employment in the formal sector had a valid work contract in place at the time of the evaluation). For some of them, this was due to the fact that their probation period was not yet completed, which in itself is of concern as probation periods should be covered by a formal, contractual relationship between employer and employee

- The evaluation reports which explored the elements constitutive of “decent work” (SAKSHAM final evaluation) found that :

(i) there were unequal levels of awareness amongst young people with regards to the benefits and legal provisions entailed in their work contracts (young women in particular seemed less knowledgeable about the benefits they were entitled to) in spite of labour rights

(ii) nearly half of the training graduates who found jobs and were surveyed during the evaluation declared not being entitled to annual leave; this situation was also reported and documented in Colombia where the existence of a work contract did not preclude that in practice employers were in breach of their obligations with regards to paid leave and bonus benefits (e.g. non-compliance with the obligation to contribute to social security and pension funds for the benefit of the employee)

(iii) the vast majority of surveyed graduates report positive atmosphere, supportive attitudes and cordial relationships in their workplace with colleagues as well as line managers

(iv) training graduates of both genders were able to confirm that their workplace had a complaints and grievances protocol in place, which they saw as fair and were able to explain

- In the specific case of Colombia, blatant and openly discriminatory practices against people of African descent (young black women in particular) existed amongst employers and were highlighted in the evaluation report for frontdesk or client-facing jobs (e.g. hospitality)
- Benefits in relation to “fair income” and gender equality, two essential dimensions of “decent work”, are discussed in other sections of this report
- There are no discussions or evidence presented by evaluation reports in relation to social protection rights and entitlements
- There are no discussions or evidence in evaluation reports about engagement with employers and the private sector at large to verify the existence and compliance with decent work norms; neither is there evidence of policy engagement to influence or advocate on this matter

Example of good practice: Working with Labour Inspectors (Togo)

Apprenticeships in the West African context including in Togo have for a long time had a negative reputations. Workshops and workplaces were often places of abusive relationships, exploitation and absence of rights. Part of the innovation devised by Plan International and their partners with FISONG funding was to formalise apprenticeships through contractual agreements, and work through Labour Inspectors to monitor compliance with existing rights and regulations. The approach led to drastic changes in attitudes and practices.

F17. Beyond effective transitions to formal employment in the private sector for large numbers of beneficiaries, there is a lack of evidence in evaluation reports that employment complies with the principles and criteria of decent work

The most common practice in the projects, for those who measure and report on the issue, is to associate the formality of employment (in particular, the existence of an engagement letter or work contract) as a proxy for decent work. Not only does this not suffice to explore all other dimensions of decent work, but it is also challenged in practice by reports of insufficient awareness of labour rights on the part of young people, and breaches to legal obligations on the part of employers. Decent work has not been discussed by evaluation reports in settings other than urban, which is a limitation.

Conclusions

Strengthening evidence around outcomes on decent work is a key area for improvement. In particular, indicators or measures of young people’s experience should be envisaged and more widely promoted, including in non-urban settings, in ways that are realistic in the local context. This would require additional engagement with employers, the private sector

at large and policy-makers, not only as resources and partners for job opportunities, but as accountable duty bearers and guarantors of rights of young workers.

6.2.2. Income, earnings and financial position

Salary and income from employment

The stability and value of the income generated from employment (whether waged or self-employment) is – surprisingly – not an issue analysed by all evaluation reports. The level of evidence and coverage on this point is in fact moderate, in spite of the critical nature of this indicator in relation to stable and sustained economic outcomes for young people.

Level of Coverage	Moderate				
CMR-FE-CoSo-1+2	CHN-MTR-YES-1	COL-FE-YES1+2	IND-MTR-SAK-II	IND-FE-SAK-II	TGO-FE-FIS-1

Only 4 reports provide quantitative details of income levels at first employment. All three measure this income in absolute terms, i.e. as average monthly salary or average daily profit³⁸, rather than relative terms (e.g. in relation to national or sectoral wages, or as a factor of poverty levels), which is a limitation to interpret data and identify comparative perspectives.

The YES4U project in China was found to have placed young people in jobs paying between RMB (or Chinese yuan) 3,000 and 6,000, i.e. US\$ 450 to 900³⁹. In absolute terms, this range of income says little about the relative value of the income generated by employment. Indeed, minimum wages vary greatly in China, as they are set by region to take into account the wide disparity of living standards and costs across the country. The more dynamic urban megalopolis such as Shanghai, Shenzhen or Beijing are where minimum hourly and monthly wages are the highest, ranging between 2,120 RMB (Beijing – US \$ 305) to 2,420 RMB (Shanghai – US\$ 348)⁴⁰. YES4U beneficiaries therefore earn incomes 1.4 to 2.8 times higher than the minimum wage, which is a more meaningful perspective on the value of this income. In Beijing however, the minimum wage is not a sufficient indicator to reflect on the value of earned income, as it only tells a small part of the story of labour costs. Indeed, in these large urban hubs like Beijing, the economy has already moved up the value chain with more innovative sectors and services booming as well as foreign-funded enterprises which tend to provide better pay packages. The average monthly salary in Beijing was in fact RMB 8,467 (US\$ 1,218) in 2018, four times higher than the minimum wage. In Beijing, obligations on employers to provide social insurance and housing benefits also mean that salary packages are particularly more comprehensive than in other parts of the country⁴¹. In comparison, YES4U beneficiaries only earn 0.35 to 0.70 times the average monthly salary. In other terms, **the gap between minimum wage and average wage can be vast, and analysis of earned income for young people associated to YEE projects must factor these contextual elements in, in order to provide more meaningful analysis.** In the case of YES4U in China, it is thus clear that in spite of earned salaries between far superior to the minimum wage, they remain also far inferior to the average salary, suggesting that young people have accessed jobs in

Example of good practice: Longitudinal perspectives on income from waged employment (India)

Attempts to provide cross-sectional and longitudinal perspectives in relation to income gains were included by the SAKSHAM evaluators. It is an example of good practice to promote, as it presents income analysis by sub-cohorts based on the year when the groups graduated from training. Admittedly, not all projects would have the scale and timespan to perform this type of analysis; but when it would be possible, it should be encouraged as cross-sectional perspectives on salaries and income earned are more meaningful than static, aggregated averages. In the case of India, it leads to particularly more precise and important findings, including increasing gender pay gap over time and female income appearing more sensitive to the macro-economic context.

³⁸ CHINA: RMB 3,000 to 6,000 per month reported; CAMEROON: daily profit of FCFA 800 to 1,200 reported; INDIA: monthly average salary of INR 7,243 reported

³⁹ Project data for 2017-2018, not adjusted for inflation or PPP for the purpose of this report.

⁴⁰ Official data from 2018 minimum wages revisions

⁴¹ See <https://www.china-briefing.com/news/minimum-wages-china-2018-19/> for further analysis and details

less remunerating sectors and remain in the bottom half of the earning pyramid. Similar findings can be derived from SAKSHAM data for New Delhi⁴², and from the YES Colombia evaluation where salaries and wages reported in the evaluation report were found to be low and not always protected by a work contract.

Although this is to some extent expected as the projects aim to place vulnerable or marginalised young people into entry-level jobs, one risk which exists is the perpetuation of social inequalities:

“the type of jobs accessed are still low-skilled, even in the formal sector. Sometimes working conditions can be difficult. Girls told me they don’t want the job offer because they were given the night shift in the restaurant and then they reach home it’s like 4 am. They would need to find a solution for their children, someone to look after them at night. All of that for such low wages. So aren’t we reproducing some of the factors of discrimination?”

External key informant, Phone Interview

Other reports have indirectly evaluated the income levels generated by employment, with young people asked for example to indicate whether the income was sufficient to cover their essential needs (65% agreed to this statement, Cameroon report), or whether it had improved (China report). Two evaluation reports (Colombia and Togo) provided comments about income levels in qualitative terms, measuring (i) the satisfaction of young people with the income they earned, and their perception of improvements or upcoming improvements in their financial situation thanks to the income earned or (ii) what evaluators have assessed as “profitable” income levels (without however stating their definition of “profitable”).

With regards to income generated from self-employment and entrepreneurship, the analysis and findings presented in evaluation reports are even more succinct, and too diverse to identify general trends and lessons. In the case of Colombia, in spite of young people being proud and satisfied with having started their own micro-enterprise or activity, the evaluation concluded that *“the generated income is not enough to escape poverty. According to the second phase survey, 66% of those surveyed who graduated from the entrepreneurship training still have an income level of less than 200,000 Colombian pesos per month, while the poverty line in Colombia stands at 250,000 pesos per month in 2016”* (YES Colombia evaluation report, p. 62). Similar observations were made during field work undertaken in India (Uttarakhand and Togo), where the stability and value of the earned income was in a number of cases, explicitly debatable (refer to SAKSHAM evaluative review, available on request).

In addition to limited income being generated from self-employment, the issue of recapitalisation and continuous investments are also discussed in the Colombia and India evaluations, and was observed during field work in Togo. Indeed, the profit generated being limited, they do not allow for continuous investments into the activity or business, which over time leads to a situation of stagnation for the activity and income and even discontinuation (India, Cameroon). The Colombia evaluation report discusses the case of young women who have established their hair salon and received start-up kits with material (e.g. hair dryer, straighteners, etc.) but were unable to replace damaged material later on due to insufficient profit margins. Examples were shared in nearly exact same terms by young people who had established a poultry or batik activity in the Tchaoudjo region of Togo. In this regard, the stability and sustainability of the enterprise is implicitly debated by evaluators.

Further limitations found in evaluation reports included:

- None of the evaluation provided analysis of the type of employment (e.g. part-time or full-time, permanent or temporary, seasonal income or not, number of hours of productive employment generated post-training) which is another limitation in analysing the stability and value of income and revenues generated by employment, whether for waged or self-employment

⁴² Minimum wages are revalorised on a yearly basis in India, and applicable by State. For Delhi, the 2017-2018 rate (although to be adjusted for inflation, as project data relate to 2014-2016) recommended a minimum wage of 13,350 INR per month for unskilled labour and 16,182 for matriculates (i.e. those who have completed secondary education) but not graduates (i.e. no tertiary or college education). Both these figures, even if lowered down in proportion to inflation, still exceed the salary values reported by the project, with the exception of the most experienced alumni (i.e. those who have graduated several years prior to the evaluation).

- Only 1 evaluation (India) disaggregated income levels to conduct cross-sectional analysis, comparing income levels of various cohorts on the basis of gender and education level, to find that (i) the education level, as expected, is a strong predictor of higher starting salaries, and that (ii) the gender pay gap observed has less to do with discriminatory practices (in fact, for similar roles and contractual conditions, the evaluation did not find variances by gender in the salaries offered) than with persisting gender stereotypes in sectors and professions, girls and young women being more likely to be employed in less remunerating sectors (e.g. call centres vs. Accounting departments) or conditions (e.g. boys and young men have more flexibility with their time and movements and are able to do paid overtime, which girls and young women cannot for example).

F18. In spite of indications that young people earn well, particularly those accessing formal, wage employment, findings from evaluation reports lack comparative perspectives and gender analysis

Surprisingly, economic outcomes are not systematically explored and assessed in evaluation reports. Those who do discuss income gains would tend to do so in absolute terms, reporting on average monthly salary or daily profit at first employment. By probing further and identifying relative comparison points (e.g. sectoral or national minimum wages, GDP per capita, poverty levels), it appeared difficult to assess the dimension of “fair income” referenced in the “decent work” definition due to the lack of contextualisation. Indeed, evidence from China and India revealed that although incomes earned by project beneficiaries were substantial indeed, they did not necessarily match up with applicable minimum wages or average salaries. In absence of counterfactual data (i.e. what similar age cohorts earn at first employment, all other factors controlled for) and gender analysis (wages gap), it is not possible to precisely quantify economic gains.

Income generated from self-employment is in general low, with some evaluations debating the profitability of the enterprises although in absence of cross-tabulation with productivity (and in particular, the number of hours worked) these conclusions could themselves be challenged. Of concern however in self-employment and entrepreneurship is that the income generated by the activity is too low to create the sufficient profit margins required for recapitalisation and continuous investments.

Conclusions

Data and informed discussions on earned income are essential to demonstrate the economic outcomes of the projects. Evaluation approaches have yet to explore this theme with the level of depth required. Cross-tabulation with key factors (trade, gender, part-time/full-time, location, type of employment) is required possibly through regular income surveys engaging beneficiaries and alumni and should be contrasted with national labour survey data or other measurements of income and wages.

Indirect gains

Indirect gains generated by employment are not widely studied and documented by evaluation reports, making this topic rather secondary and under-researched in the portfolio of evaluation reports.

Level of Coverage	Weak		
COL-FE-YES1+2	IND-MTR-SAK-II	IND-FE-SAK-II	TNZ-FE-CLP2

The indirect gains identified in relation to the employment of young people are mainly economic, with the key indicator explored by evaluation reports being an increase (and diversification, in the case of Tanzania) in household income, reported by young people themselves (in the case of India) or quantified by evaluators. Although this is logical and expected, as young people transition from a NEET status to employment, the quantification of the increase is interesting to analyse, although it is only thoroughly done by the SAKSHAM evaluation in India. The evaluators found that the salary earned by the young person represented nearly 90% of the pre-project household income reported by the head of household (screening questionnaire for background information gathering), which considering the fact that the vast majority of young people were not earning prior to joining the project, is a substantial boost. As previously mentioned however, this increase is measured in absolute monetary terms, which is a limitation. Indeed, this says little about the potential change in economic status of the household (e.g. transition from poverty to middle income) without valid and pertinent comparison points. Proxy indicators such as the family becoming debt-free or clearly debts, or the family being







able to acquire high-value assets, or moving up in the categories of income security, may be more appropriate relative measurement of household income impact. Evidence of this is scarce and anecdotal, with indications of increased financial security being the possibility to meet medical expenses in case of emergency (not quantified) or generally meet with unexpected emergencies, and self-declared increase in the consistency and value of savings.

This secondary level impact on household seems however more important in the case of waged employment as compared to self-employment, as the net income generated, as previously highlighted, is generally more limited, seasonal or unstable. This is however only a working hypothesis, as information derives from a very limited number of evaluation reports. The SAKSHAM evaluation, which had quantified the impact of young people's salaries as a +90% boost in household income, identified that in the case of self-employment the contributed impact was as low as 5%. The evaluators analysed this as possibly related to the fact that the micro-enterprises were only in their initial years, which are usually the most difficult ones in terms of generating profit.

An element which is not explored by reports but was observed during field work is also the fact that in a number of cases self-employment appears to be a supplementary income-generating activity rather than a substantial employment option, leading to the activity being undertaken on a part-time basis or being seasonal, as in the case of the women trained in hand and machine-knitting who had established home-based workshops in their homes of Uttarkashi, Northern India. A detailed typology of businesses and their economic impacts would be required to (i) report and document more precisely the economic gains, and (ii) provide evidence on what constitutes appropriate monitoring indicators, which must differ post-training for waged and self-employment.

Non-economic indirect gains are only anecdotally mentioned and include rippling effect on education levels of siblings or dependents of young beneficiaries, food security and nutritional status of the family, or increased health care access, depending on the pre-project vulnerability profile of the household. In the case of Cameroon, the evaluation concludes that youth economic integration locally led to stronger social cohesion between IDPs and host communities, by forging linkages between young people from both sides.

6.3 Recommendations

Recommendation	Importance	Timing	Responsibilities
R11. Vulnerability assessments must be an integral part of project design for YEE interventions to resorb the gap between organisational objectives and the reality in some cases, on targeting and effectively addressing the needs of "the most vulnerable" young people. Vulnerability must be understood in the specific context of YEE and employment, take into consideration legislation and regulation, but also involve all those concerned, including young people themselves, in participatory assessment. Indeed, the highly contextual and cultural perception of youth, vulnerability and marginalisation would commend rich participatory process to ensure that projects are as pertinent as possible in their context.	 Considerable	 From the next project design process	Plan International France in collaboration with other Plan International offices
R12. Vulnerability factors must be individually recorded in M&E systems for each of the trainee so as to allow results framework to (i) more adequately map the vulnerability profile of beneficiaries and thus coherence between objectives and experience, and (ii) enable more precise analysis of employment pathways, barriers and challenges.	 Important	 From the next project design process	Plan International France in collaboration with other Plan International offices
R13. Intersectional approaches should be preferred to binary ones, particularly in relation to gender. This would	 Considerable	 From the next project design process	Plan International France in collaboration with other Plan International offices

require understanding how various groups of women are differently affected by marginalisation from employment, but also how certain groups of young men face specific challenges.

Considerable

From the next
project design
process

Plan International offices

R14. Evidence of decent work outcomes must be strengthened by (i) identifying appropriate indicators and measurements, (ii) measuring that rights awareness approaches used with young people are effective in communicating key messages about labour rights, obligation and entitlements, and (ii) devising a policy and advocacy strategy which will engage employers and the private sector at large as duty bearers and not only as partners in the job seeking phase. Monitoring working conditions through the application of a charter or label approach is recommended, taking examples from the Child Rights Business Principles Movement or the Code of Conducts developed with employers of domestic workers in South Asian countries.



Important



From the next
project design
process

Plan International France
in collaboration with other
Plan International offices

R15. Conduct regular, but not continuous, studies of income earned by young people to quantify and measure the type of work (and in particular full-time/part-time, permanent or temporary/seasonal) and report on the fairness and viability of the income, moving away from the salary (or gross turnover) being the only known indicators of economic outcomes. This would also require locally pertinent comparison points to be identified, be it sectoral measurements (e.g. minimum wages, poverty levels) or counterfactual data (e.g. average income at first employment for similar age cohorts). The gender dimension must be mainstreamed and tracked. Specific efforts are necessary to report more adequately on economic gains of self-employment



Important



From the next
project design
process

Plan International France
in collaboration with other
Plan International offices

7. Gender transformation in practice: evidence and results

Note: the following chapter exclusively focus on *gender-specific results and outcomes*. Gender as a theme has also been mainstreamed into all other sections of this report, with issues of profiling, targeting and vulnerability for example discussed in previous sections, as well as good practices in relation to gender-mainstreaming in project operations and gender-responsiveness of evaluation reports.

7.1. Preliminary remarks

Before discussing the gender impacts and results documented by the evaluation reports, as a word of caution it is important to reiterate here that gender mainstreaming in evaluation methods and reports was found to be incomplete and is *overall* the main weakness of evaluation reports in spite of some examples of good practices. The lack of consistency in data disaggregation, the uniformity of data collection methods leaving in most cases little space for creative and empowering tools adapted to young women and girls and a binary (as opposed to intersectional) approach to gender effects were amongst some of the key limitations identified.

As a result, gender-specific impacts or effects are not as solidly evidenced and documented as they could have been. The vast majority of results presented in the following section in fact derive from a very small number of evaluation reports, particularly the SAKSHAM India and YES Colombia reports. The level of evidence on this theme is thus only moderate, inviting for further research and more systematic mapping of gender outcomes to be undertaken in the future. This also explains that in this section, some of the findings and conclusions were drawn from other sources such as interviews and literature review.

Level of Coverage	Moderate				
CHN-MTR-YES-1	COL-FE-YES1+2	EGY-FE-TAM-I	IND-MTR-SAK-II	IND-FE-SAK-II	TGO-FE-FIS-1

7.2. Gender impacts documented in the YEE portfolio

7.2.1. Gender parity in enrolments

A category of gender results commonly reported across evaluation reports is the effectiveness of the projects in meeting their gender ratios targets, and achieving at least parity in training enrolments, if not more. For those projects which had higher targets for young women than for young men (gender equity⁴³), evaluation reports confirm the achievement of such targets. This common thread and achievement is all the more laudable that technical and vocational education or training remains, by and large and around the world, sectors where boys and men form the vast majority of trainees (with the exception of Latin America and the Caribbean, see AFD Gender Toolkit 2015 and World Bank data, 2014). Efforts to adapt the TVET offer to girls and young women can in this sense be described as transformative.

Good results and performance across the portfolio on gender parity or gender equity in training enrolment (there is less evidence on training completion as this indicator is not systematically discussed by evaluation reports) can reasonably be attributed to Plan International's strategic and operational focus on gender equality. Indeed, several organisations in the sector, consulted as part of this meta-evaluation have acknowledged either challenges or under-performance in reaching out to young women and girls in their training programmes:

⁴³ For explanations about the differences between gender parity, gender equity and gender equality, refer to the Glossary of Key Terms in Annexes.

“as a project we don’t want the girls to be the waitresses and the boys to be the managers, so we do a lot in our community promotion to communicate equality messages and recruit both boys and girls into our programmes. But we work through partners, it’s a long journey for them and some sectors are still very stereotyped one way or another”

External Informant, Phone Interview

“as an organisation, we lag behind in relation to gender equality. There hasn’t been enough of a push until now, until donors also have prioritised gender equality. It’s not an option not to do it anymore, but we still lack the expertise to understand gender and work, and do it well so our results are not so clear on that front”

External Informant, Phone Interview

Drawing from qualitative data collected, some reports also note that these achievements are all the more laudable as promoting training uptake amongst girls in particular can be particularly challenging as it involves not only putting in place tactics and strategies to remove or overcome practical barriers (e.g. adjust timing of training to meet caring or domestic constraints, propose girls-only training session in some communities, ensure training centres are located within the community or in its immediate vicinity in order to minimise barriers related to the usage of public transport), but also working more broadly with young people, their families and their communities to change the behaviours, attitudes and practices vis-à-vis female employment.

This requires intense and repetitive efforts, as illustrated by the following extracts:

“Gender mainstreaming is about changing knowledge, attitude and practices, so it is a time-taking process. Each new batch brings different and/or same set of gender based biases and prejudices. The work around gender repeats itself, wherein youth (parents) are being guided to understand gender relations at personal, work, and community spaces”

SAKSHAM Mid-term evaluation

“In Sokode, in one of the Batik workshops, 9 pregnant young women could continue their training and were allowed maternity leave at the term of their pregnancy. One of the community leaders says: “business owners have been receptive to awareness messages. Today, young women can attend training with their baby. Before, when a woman would become pregnant during her apprenticeship, she was made to « purify » the workshop, or even worse she was expelled from the training. But capacity building and awareness raising have helped, and these harmful practices have disappeared in the FISONG Centres. Pregnant woman can peacefully complete their training” [translated from original in French by the consultant]

Togo FISONG final evaluation, p.50

Example of good practice: Training Centres as nearby, safe spaces for girls and young women

Most of the projects evaluated and included in this meta-evaluation have operated through training centres located as close as possible to the communities they targeted or in some cases within the community itself. Although in most cases this was done to practically incentivise training attendance by avoiding prohibitive transport costs but not necessarily for considerations of gender equality, in the case of the SAKSHAM project, there was an explicit understanding that distance affects young women more than young men. Literature in the sector has provided evidence on the centrality of safe spaces to girls’ economic empowerment: distance to training facilities has a direct correlation to empowerment outcomes for girls (see graph below) and must be factored in project design.

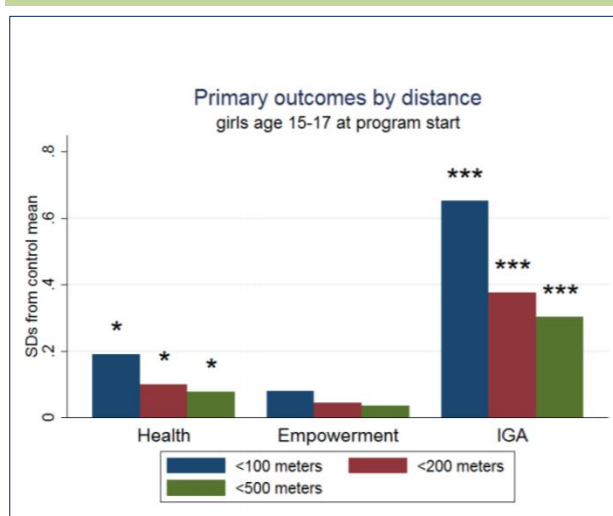


Figure 14 - Variations in girls' empowerment outcomes by distance to centre (Save the Children and BRAC YEE webinar, September 2018)

7.2.2. Gender stereotypes in the world of work: mixed results

The projects which had strongly embedded gender equality in their design and implementation plans did particularly well to start addressing gender stereotypes in the world of work, commonly acknowledged as a major structural factor which perpetuates gender inequality in employment. Indeed, as demonstrated by ample literature, despite progress on numerous facets of gender equality such as universal suffrage, global policy or primary education, employment remains a frontier in gender equality with systemic biases and entrenched stereotypes still perpetuated at all stages: hiring, work allocation, development opportunities, salary and compensation, promotion or retention. These stereotypes are profoundly internalised because they emerge already in childhood. A compelling, recent illustration of this is a 2018 study by UK charity Education and Employers: the charity launched in front of world leaders gathered at Davos the largest ever global survey of primary school children's aspirations. 20,000 children aged 7 to 11 from around the world were asked to draw a picture of the job they aspired to, and this led to understanding that even at such a young age, stereotypes were already internalised. Boys were twice as many to aspire to become scientists as compared to girls. On the opposite hand, girls were more likely to aspire to professions involving relationships, housework, beauty or fashion.

Such stereotypes exist in all countries and all cultures, and as a result the majority of jobs and professions are heavily gender-marked. Gender mainstreaming has allowed certain projects to be particularly aware of this challenge and devise strategies to (i) avoid the perpetuation of stereotype by offering a wider range of sectors and trade options to both young men and young women, beyond the more traditional vocational training sectors, and (ii) specifically advocate at community level to change behaviours and perception vis-à-vis traditionally "masculine" or "feminine" sectors. Examples of success include, in the case of Togo, the inclusion of gender considerations in the market scan, which as a result meant that sectors traditionally seen as "feminine" such as petty commerce, tailoring, or hairdressing, which were also the most saturated and oversubscribed, not to be identified as viable options. This instead encouraged the identification of non-traditional options such as shoe-making, farming and poultry:

"In our community, we had never seen before girls becoming shoe-makers. This was an occupation for men or for disabled people. Today, with all the awareness in the media, the mosque and all, the population understands that girls and boys can do the same jobs and aspire to the same professions. So many women here admire those girls who have become shoe-makers" [translated from French by this consultant]

- Testimony from a local leader in Komah, Togo, Togo evaluation report

Similar success stories were documented in Colombia (e.g. welding) or India (e.g. trekking and mountaineering). In India, project teams also make specific efforts to give priority to those sectors identified through the market scans which may be more gender neutral, such as hospitality or retail. These transformative effects and good practices are however marginal and rather anecdotal in the overall portfolio, where attention was not systematically placed on combating gender stereotypes in the world of work.

Indeed in Egypt, the evaluation clearly highlighted the perpetuation of gender stereotypes in employment. In China, similar conclusions can be made as the main sector identified through the market scan (Family Nursing) is strongly marked as feminine and, possibly as a result of this, the proportion of young women enrolled and completing the training was higher than the envisaged targets demonstrating inherent challenges to recruit young men into the programme. In the case of India, even when efforts are made to promote more gender-neutral sectors, the evaluation report reported disparities in employment, with a higher proportion of girls recruited in "back office" roles (e.g. call centres) and a higher proportion of young men recruited in better-paid, more technical or customer-facing roles (e.g. shop floor in malls, accounting services).

A gender outlook on occupational choices offered to young women is critical to include in project design from the onset, and experience from the projects mentioned above should be further encouraged. Indeed, international research has demonstrated that limitations to occupational choices are one of 5 key constraints affecting young women in their transition to employment⁴⁴: the employment choices that women can make constrain them to low-wage, low productivity industries (whether in waged or self-employment) and often in traditional sectors which do not drive economic

⁴⁴ Evidence referenced here is mainly derived from the ILO's Global Employment Trends for Women (2012) and a World Bank literature review of effective gender and youth employment approaches in Sub-Saharan Africa (see CHAKRAVARTY S., DAS S., VAILLANT J., *Gender and youth employment in Sub-Saharan Africa: a review of constraints and effective interventions* in Annex 1 for further references).

growth and opportunities. Women are over-represented in sectors that involve caring for others, which perpetuates the reproductive role they hold in the home and in society in general. Women are under-represented in most industry and manufacturing sectors. Female entrepreneurs tend to work in less-productive, female dominated sectors. In agriculture, although they form the major part of the labour force, women are allocated the less profitable activities or specialize in less-profitable crops, often low on the value chain. The ILO in fact refers to a situation of “pervasive sectoral segregation by sex”. These dimensions are not reflected upon in the evaluation reports considered so it is unclear to what extent market scans and entrepreneurship support to give only these examples, fully respond to these blatant inequalities.

It was observed during field work in India and Togo that young women themselves express continued demands for “stereotypical” female trades such as arts and crafts, tailoring or beauty salons. Probing further with some of them in group or individual conversations, it appeared that this demand was mainly driven by **information asymmetry**⁴⁵: they did not know what else could be available to them that would be safe, adapted to their educational level and compatible with (existing or future) caring responsibilities. Providing young women with more information and role models (this approach being effective in SAKSHAM through alumni) to guide their occupational choices is therefore essential to truly and deeply transform the strong gender inequalities at play. This can mean women entering male-dominated trades as explored in the various projects mentioned above, but it can and should also involve an assessment of the productivity and profitability of female occupational choices.



Figure 15 - Young women engaged in traditionally male-dominated occupations: shoe-making (Togo), poultry (Togo), barista (India)

7.2.3. Agency and empowerment

Although non-economic gender outcomes, in relation to agency and empowerment in particular, are mainly discussed by only 2 of the 8 evaluation reports, these discussions offer rich and valuable insights. By decreasing order of importance, the impacts on young women’s personal development, psychology and agency are reported as follows:

Dimension of women’s empowerment and agency identified	Illustrative quotes
Increased sense of pride, self-worth and self-awareness: awareness of one’s competencies and potential, knowledge of	“The fact that I too can go out, work and earn money is the most empowering thing for me and I thank Saksham for making me realize this.” Young woman, Hyderabad, India

⁴⁵ The issue of information asymmetry is not discussed at all in evaluations. However, focus group discussions conducted in New Delhi have given an indication that young men both have the networks and support (from family members, relatives, friends) to help them identify employment opportunities. They clearly had an idea of how they would have gone about to find work or develop skills if they had not have the opportunity to join SAKSHAM (opportunity cost). They had career choices already formulated. Young women did not make such remarks, and expressed no pre-project career aspirations. For more details, refer to the SAKSHAM evaluative review (available on request). It would be important for future projects to explore this aspect, as it is a dominant driver of occupational choices. Pre-project research or consultations, or involvement of young people in market scans could be options to address this point.

personal qualities	
Increased self-confidence and self-reliance	n/a
Increased control over resources and assets generated by employment	Over 80% of young women in the SAKSHAM evaluation reported that they had at least control over part of the salary and income they earned from employment
Increase confidence in interacting with boys and men	n/a
Improved position, perceived respect and visibility within the household and the community	<p>"We were unnoticed by people before getting the job, now people notice us, give respect and listen to what we are saying. They want their children to be like us" Young women, Delhi, India</p> <p>"There was no value in the work I used to do at home all day. Now, when I come back home I am served hot food like the male members of my house" Young woman, Delhi</p>
Increased voice in making decisions that affect their own and daily life	85% of the currently unmarried women in the evaluation sample declared not thinking of marriage at the moment as they were focusing on their career; an even larger majority declared that they would give preference to a spouse and family-in-law who respect women's right to work even after marriage or challenge the custom of dowry (a practice still prevalent in Uttarkashi for example)
Capacity to express aspirations for the future (studies, career progression)	n/a

Similar non-economic effects of "bundled interventions" such as the Plan International's model of youth economic empowerment have been identified and more strongly evidenced by recent research studies. A randomized control trial of the World Bank-supported EPAG (Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women)⁴⁶ project in Liberia showed positive, short-term effects on several empowerment measures including access to and control over financial resources, self-confidence and positive outlook on the future. Evidence was however not conclusive on all dimensions of empowerment, and not at clear and statistically significant as economic gains.

The power of example is also strongly reflected in the India and Colombia evaluations, as the young women associated to the project are for a vast majority "first timers". Field work in India revealed the powerful role model that young women become in their family and community as they were the first person to access formal employment, a "white collar job" to use the word of a member of staff. They are often first-time entrepreneurs, as indicated in the Colombia evaluation.

Plan International YEE training programmes are also for many young people, the first opportunity to coexist in a unisex and co-ed environment. In India and Egypt, primary and secondary schools are still often single-sex, and there are only limited opportunities for girls and boys to come together in the public sphere. This is also one of the reasons why the workplace is often perceived as a risk for young women from their families and communities, as there is little communication and knowledge of one gender by another. The workplace, in this regard, is often a big unknown and generates preconceptions and fears on the issue of gender cohabitation.

A few barriers however persist:

- **Usage of public transport and commuting away from home:** mega-cities such as Delhi or Cairo have infamously made headlines for incidents of sexual harassment and abuse against women and girls. In spite of initiatives such as the Safe Cities project (which includes Cairo) and dedicated areas in public transports for women only (in Delhi metro for example), negative perceptions of public transport prevail in local communities, and the work commute can still act as a barrier for a young woman (risk or perceived risk of physical harm on the way to work), constraining or hindering not only their entry to the labour force due to self-imposed or family/community pressures, but also the occupational choices they consider or allow themselves to make (e.g. conscious or internalised preference for work inside or near the home). In India, Plan International and partners

⁴⁶ The project targeted young women aged 16 to 27 in the capital city of Monrovia, with a minimal literacy and education level. EPAG provided six months of classroom-based technical and life skills training, followed by six months of follow-up support to enter wage employment or start a business. Refer to ADOHO, F., CHAKRAVARTY, S., KORKOYAH, D., LUNDBERG, M. & TASNEEM, A., *The Impact of an Adolescent Girls Employment Program: The EPAG Project in Liberia*, World Bank, 2014 for more details.

work closely with employers to encourage mitigating strategies such as women-friendly shifts (e.g. no late shift) or group recruitment (i.e. recruiting a group of young women from the same area so that they can commute together) and these are examples of good practices to be shared more widely and further encouraged. Only those evaluations of urban projects (SAKSHAM India, TAMKEEN Egypt and YES Colombia) have touched on the issue of safety and mobility as a constraint for girls and young women. There is an evidence gap on this point in rural-focused evaluations in the portfolio.

The issue of safety and mobility in relation to youth employment, and girls' employment in particular, is well researched at the global level (see CHAKRAVARTY et al., 2017 for synthesis), and has shown that although it may take different forms in rural and urban settings, it affects girls and young women in both categories. Mobility constraints are however less documented in sub-Saharan Africa. Partial evidence mentioned in a World Bank evidence review of gender and youth employment suggest that (i) female apprenticeship and vocational training participation is strongly correlated to safety and mobility issues, (ii) rural women contend with social norms that require them to walk long distances, as the use of light transport such as bicycles or motorbikes perceived as inappropriate (this was confirmed by field work in Togo), (iii) women in all settings have lower access to a household's transportation assets.

- **Conservatism:** Results can vary greatly from one community to another, and behaviours are particularly slow to change in more conservative and extremely traditional communities where gender discriminatory practices are seen as part of the community culture, as illustrated with the challenges encountered in Hyderabad, India

7.2.4. Unintended negative gender effects: discussions on the “double burden” issue and gender roles

Although evidence is only anecdotal in evaluation reports (mainly in the form of quotes and testimonies in the 2 evaluation reports which dealt with the issue), it appears that gender roles have started to be questioned, at least in relation to the division of labour between men and women at household level. However, young women's access to employment comes at a cost, as they face the double burden of committing to employment to earn, and keeping up with domestic and caring responsibilities which have in most cases not been negotiated to alleviate the time constraints facing girls and young female trainees. The YES Colombia discusses the issue at length, but similar situations were repeatedly observed in Togo during field work, where young mothers had to attend training with their babies and children, and must make self-employment compatible with their daily responsibilities. In the case of self-employment, competing demands on women's time have also been reported as one of the reasons explaining the interruption or discontinuation of the activity (India evaluation).

Childcare provisions have been suggested by one evaluation as a means to alleviate time constraints facing girls and young women (and prevent irregular attendance, attention deficit or drop-out). There seems to be evidence both in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America to suggest that pre-school programmes linked to vocational education and livelihoods programmes can have positive effects for young women. However, there are costs and cultural implications which would need to be envisaged extremely carefully.

Although the issue of the “double burden” is not discussed and evidenced across all evaluation reports, it is one which is well-known to Plan International YEE working group, and a challenge that peers in the sector have also reported. There is an acknowledgement that mitigating the risk of “double burden” would require more flexible approaches and project design, moving away from full-time, “*traditional*”, intensive training for 2 to 3 months towards more modular approaches (e.g. part-time training) and redouble efforts not only to identify and select trades or sectors (market scan stage) which are



Figure 16 - Young mother attending a group discussion in Lama Tessi (Togo). Respondents confirmed that they would bring their young children with them to training sessions

compatible with women's daily life, but also to challenge gender norms in communities which perpetuate unequal divisions of labour within the household. There is thus a need to think about women's economic empowerment in the long term from a lifecycle approach, including in the targeting of gender transformative messages around caring and domestic responsibilities, and new masculinities. Both elements are part of the 6 criteria for gender-transformative programming applicable across Plan International.

More broadly, there is also a case to be made for YEE interventions to be more closely linked, integrated or supported by other thematic work at Plan International and in particular education (promotion of female access to secondary education has been proven to significantly delay marriage and pregnancy, or reduce the occurrence of teenage/early marriage and pregnancy) and reproductive health. This point is not discussed in evaluation reports, and is only expressed as a working hypothesis.

7.2.5. Summary of findings and conclusions

F19. Project approaches appear particularly effective in ensuring equitable access of young women to vocational education and employment support

The projects' effectiveness in meeting their gender distributive targets and indicators is commonly reported in evaluations, and is one of the key achievements to be highlighted through this meta-evaluation. It can reasonably be attributed to Plan International's strategic and operational focus on gender equality, and an area where the organisation admittedly outperforms some of their peers in the sector. A number of good practices have been documented around the tactics deployed to remove or overcome barriers limiting girls' skills development and access to employment and particularly around distance, community perceptions and occupational choices. There is however more limited evidence on retention in employment, mobility and pathways as data in evaluations reports is not systematically disaggregated and analysed by gender.

F20. Evidence suggests that gender stereotypes in the world of work are being challenged, albeit sporadically

The projects which had strongly embedded gender equality in their design and implementation plans or practices (e.g. SAKSHAM in India, FISONG-funded project in Togo) did particularly well to start addressing gender stereotypes in the world of work, commonly acknowledged as a major structural factor which perpetuates gender inequality in employment. However, these efforts are not visible across the whole portfolio, suggesting that more attention needs to be paid in project design, market scans, value chain analysis, curriculum development and employment services to avoid the limitation of female occupational choices to traditional, female-dominated, less productive sectors.

F21. Non-economic gender outcomes, although they do exist, are insufficiently documented

In line with current evidence in international research, those evaluations which did assess projects' effects on girls' agency and empowerment have highlighted positive results including increased sense of self-worth and self-awareness, increased self-confidence and self-reported improved social status and position including vis-à-vis male members of the community. The "first timer" effect places a number of these young women as role models in their locality. Overall, these effects remain however under-researched by evaluations.

F22. More attention needs to be paid to gender-specific limitations such as safety, mobility and caring responsibilities

The urban-focused evaluations have all reported the issue of safety and mobility as a strong barrier hindering girls' and young women's entry to and retention in the labour force. Additional contributions from international research suggest that this issue is a relevant lens also in rural settings, and might need to be more closely looked into to ensure equitable opportunities for young women. Similarly, YEE approaches have yet to provide pertinent responses to the specific needs of young mothers, who are faced with the "double burden" of learning / working, and caring.







Conclusions – A gender transformative agenda must be more systematically mainstream and pursued

Positive effects on training, promising results in combating gender stereotypes in the world of work and evidence (albeit anecdotal) of boosts in girls' and young women's agency and empowerment are commendable. Weaknesses in evaluation methods and approaches are likely to be the explanatory factor for such effects not to be more systematically

and coherently documented at outcome-level (transformative indicators vs. distributive indicators), and they must be addressed in the future through intentionally gender-responsive evaluation design.

Elements of gender transformative programming, as defined across Plan International, have been identified including (i) responses to discriminatory gender norms through awareness raising at multiple levels (individual, community, partners and stakeholders); (ii) advancing the economic condition of young women through skills development and access to employment; (iii) responding to young women's specific needs and barriers and (iv) strengthening young women's agency and empowerment. There is however a need to strengthen this evidence base, and address the remaining evidence gaps around (v) working with boys and men around positive masculinities and (vi) fostering an enabling environment for young women in their families and communities and at the workplace. This is not to say that work is done with boys, men and communities to transform gender perceptions and gender relations; rather, these efforts seem under-reported or under-evaluated in project result frameworks and/or evaluation reports.

7.3. Recommendations

Recommendation	Importance	Timing	Responsibilities
R16. Examples of good gender practices and lessons learned from positive experiences such as SAKSHAM in India ought to be widely shared within Plan International France and beyond, as they include practical, tactical ways through which project teams and partners have built a gender transformative agenda over time.	 Desirable	 As opportunities arise	Plan International France, Plan International country offices
R17. Gender analysis frameworks should be more systematically applied, in a participatory manner, at the design stage of future projects. This would allow more coherent approaches to gender mainstreaming and gender transformative programming at all stages, from planning to implementing, monitoring and evaluating. A specific focus should be placed on gendered risk and negative effects analysis to avoid the perpetuation of inequalities in occupational choices, access and domestic roles. It is recommended that more flexible and modular approaches are envisaged to cater to the needs of specific sub-groups of young women and in particular (i) less educated girls and young women, (ii) young mothers.	 Considerable	 From the next project design process	Plan International France, Plan International country offices, Plan International gender specialists / YEE AOGD gender working group
R18. Ensuring that gender expertise, competences and skills exist in evaluation teams would be essential in increased attention paid to documenting gender effects of interventions in a robust manner, including non-economic gender effects and outcomes.	 Critical	 From the next project design process	Plan International France, Plan International country offices, Plan International gender specialists