

SAKSHAM India Programme Evaluative Review Report and Annexes – 437 Ev PLAN

Report Title: *Meta-Evaluation: Youth Economic
Empowerment Programme Portfolio – SAKSHAM
EVALUATIVE REVIEW (Final Report)*

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This report is the result of desk work, consultations, data analysis and on-site observations (Delhi and Uttarakhand, India) conducted during the months of October to December 2018. The understanding of SAKSHAM which was derived from desk research, consultations and observations was mainly based on the review of documents and information shared by Plan International, and interactions with staff in the Delhi office.

The views and recommendations expressed in this report are the consultant's owns, 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. These views and recommendations reflect feedback received from both Plan International France and Plan India.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AoGD	Area of Global Distinctiveness
BPO	Business Process Outsourcing
CEDAW	Convention to Eliminate all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CFW	Cash for Work
DRA	Debt Recovery Agent
EU	European Union
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOM	International Organisation for Migrations
ITeS	IT-enabled services
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
OBC	Other Backward Class
OECD-DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
SC	Scheduled Caste
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SOYEE	Skills and Opportunities for Youth Economic Empowerment
SRHR	Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights
ST	Scheduled Tribe
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
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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PROJECT SUMMARY

PROJECT TITLE	SAKSHAM
TIMEFRAME	Phase I: May 2010 – June 2013 Phase II: July 2013 – April 2017 Phase III : August 2017 – July 2020
LOCATIONS ¹	Job-Oriented Vocational Training (JOVT) : Delhi, Lucknow (State of Uttar Pradesh), Dehradun (State of Uttarakhand) Vocational Training for Entrepreneurship Promotion (VTEP) : districts of Gairsain and Uttarkashi (State of Uttarakhand), Lucknow
BUDGET & FUNDING	The total Phase III budget of EUR 755,584 is supported by grants and contributions channelled through Plan International France (28%), Plan International Netherlands (41%) and Plan India (remainder)
OBJECTIVES (Phase 3)	<p>GOAL Young women and men from disadvantaged youth living in urban and rural areas have gained market oriented vocational employment and entrepreneurship skills to be economically empowered</p> <p>SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To enable 2,500 youth in the age of 18-29 years (60% women) from disadvantaged communities of target areas to secure decent employment 2. To enable 750 youth in the age of 18-35 years (60% women) from disadvantaged communities of target areas to access entrepreneurship training to become self-employed 3. To demonstrate increase in the economic participation of young women from targeted communities having participated in Saksham demonstrated through most significant change

¹ Saksham is now a model which has been replicated in other urban hubs across India such as Jaipur or Mumbai. For the purpose of this study, only the locations supported under the grant channelled by Plan International France are reported.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project background

Over the last decade, rapid transformation of the Indian economy and steady growth have led to a widening gap between the employability skills amongst the workforce, and the demands from the private sector. The Government of India has now fully embraced the challenge, focusing important policy and investments efforts to skills development. Vocational education is one of the strategic levers of government policies and strategies, but remains challenged by the lack of availability and quality of existing infrastructure, and subsequent lack of attractiveness of technical and vocational education amongst young people in India as compared to other countries. Young people in particular are a primary target of such efforts, not only due to their demographic importance in the Indian workforce now and going forward (it is estimated that at least 10 million young people will be joining the workforce every year for at least another decade), but also because they face specific challenges in transitioning to employment and decent work.

Leading civil society organisations such as Plan India are also rising up to the challenge. With their 30+ years' experience in child-centred community mobilisation, local development and poverty reduction, Plan India has a commendable track record in advocating for children to realise their rights to protection, education, health and participation, ensuring that they grow to realise their full potential. Amongst the vulnerable children and young people supported through Plan India's work in partnership with other organisations, girls and young women receive priority attention. Indeed, the organisation aims to radically transform gender dynamics and equality, fostering the rights and equitable chances for girls because of the persistent discrimination they face.

Although the organisation had for long invested in promoting dignified livelihoods for children, young people and their families, it is in 2010 that Plan India specifically started their work on youth employability and more broadly youth economic empowerment through the SAKSHAM project. In Hindi, the term 'Saksham' (सक्षम) can equally mean competent, capable, skilful but also empower or enable. It encapsulates the ambitions of the project to support those young people particularly disenfranchised vis-à-vis the job market to receive the soft and technical skills training and mentoring they need to make successful transitions to the world of work. The project focuses on young women and young men aged 18 to 29 in underserved urban areas, and young women and young men aged 18 to 35 in remote rural areas. The approach is dual, as young people are supported to transition to waged-employment as well as self-employment and entrepreneurship.

Since 2010, when the programme was launched in only a few slum clusters of Delhi, at least 5,700 young people², including 62% girls and young women, have graduated from the programme. They have transitioned to 'new economy' jobs in sectors such as hospitality, retail, marketing and IT-enabled services. The Phase II evaluation even indicated that as a result of the project, 75% of the targeted youth had found employment, of which 70% continued to be employed 6 months after the initial placement. Economic returns were clearly visible as the average starting salary would be in line with national minimum wage level, but to double within 3 years of graduation for the majority of SAKSHAM graduates.

The actual phase of the project SAKSHAM 3.0: "Young women and men from disadvantaged youth living in urban and rural areas have gained market-oriented vocational employment and entrepreneurship skills to be economically empowered", intends:

1. To enable 2,500 youths aged 18 – 29 years (of whom 60% women) from disadvantaged communities from target areas to secure decent employment
2. To enable 750 youths aged 18 – 35 years (of whom 60% women) from disadvantaged communities from target areas to access entrepreneurship training to become self-employed
3. To demonstrate increase in economic participation of young women from targeted communities having participated in SAKSHAM, demonstrated through the most significant change technique

² The project has most likely reached out to ca. 8,000 young people since inception in 2010. However, for this review, data was reviewed and confirmed for only ca. 5,700 young people, hence a more conservative estimate being presented here.

Purpose and scope of the review

This review is commissioned by Plan International France (key sponsor of SAKSHAM since inception) and France-based network F3E.

The cumulative and rich experience of nearly a decade, through three cycles of programming and long-standing collaboration with Plan International France were the main reasons for SAKSHAM to receive early and substantial attention in the wider meta-evaluation which Plan International France is conducting on their global YEE portfolio. Central to Plan International France's engagement in YEE, SAKSHAM has been a flagship intervention, whereby several innovations tested (e.g. M&E tools, gender mainstreaming) have the potential to inform or influence other YEE projects, which makes SAKSHAM an essential starting point to inform the wider meta-evaluation.

This review, although evaluative in nature, is not however a summative evaluation in the classic sense of the term. Indeed, an evaluation was completed in 2017 on Phase II of the project, and the new project cycle has not yet reached its mid-term. The primary purpose was thus and rather to conduct a learning review tracing back the programme journey and developments over time and since inception, highlighting lessons learned and good practices and capturing, in essence, the components and key results of the YEE model as implemented in India.

The review was tasked with evaluating SAKSHAM's experience and performance across 5 key domains:

- **RELEVANCE AND STRATEGIC COHERENCE** of the project vis-a-vis Plan International strategic frameworks, internal strategic plans and in the wider Indian context
- **EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACTS ON SKILLS ACQUISITION AND TRANSITIONS TO EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUTH**, exploring the profile of SAKSHAM beneficiaries over time, key results and unique benefits
- **MODELLING** the approach, exploring project components, evolution, partnerships and sustainability
- **EQUITY AND GENDER EQUALITY**
- **APPROPRIATENESS AND EFFECTIVENESS of the M&E SYSTEMS**

The main findings and conclusions are presented in relation to these 5 domains.

Main findings and conclusions

Relevance and strategic coherence

This review found that SAKSHAM was highly coherent with internal strategic plans existing within Plan India, as well as across the Plan International Federation. In particular, (i) the project focus on gender equality and gender transformative programming, (ii) the strong ethos around market-relevance of interventions and empowerment processes and (iii) community-wide engagement in support of project objectives are evident. Dimensions which are insufficiently addressed in SAKSHAM's project design include (i) the underlying notion of choice and career pathways between and across waged- and self-employment, (ii) the overarching goals of poverty reduction and individual resilience, as well as (iii) the necessary policy engagement to influence, in India, compliance with international standards governing youth employment and policy dialogue around gender transformative, inclusive and youth-friendly labour market policies. There is on this last point a missed opportunity for SAKSHAM to build on 8 years of programming experience to inform policy making, which should be integrated into future phases of programming.

This is all the more important as SAKSHAM's objectives and approaches, even nearly a decade after the project start, remain highly pertinent in the India context. The conjunction of a large skills gap (in spite of evident and drastic improvements in education systems and outcomes) and the forecasted entry to the labour market of at least 10 million youth every year for at least another decade implies that youth employment and economic empowerment will remain high on the national priority agenda in the foreseeable future. The skills development policy area is rich and dense in India, with consistent political will, plans in place and to a large extent, resourcing prioritised too. There are gaps however in the effectiveness of these policies and plans, and their usually admitted inadequacy in (i) coordinating with the private sector, (ii) reverting the deficit image of technical education and vocational training and (iii) effectively target vulnerable groups (including and particularly young women, who are, in India, amongst the most excluded from the labour market) with long-lasting and sustainable employment outcomes. It is precisely on these gaps that SAKSHAM has pertinent experience and responses to share.

Skills acquisition, employment outcomes and profile of SAKSHAM graduates

Despite a number of methodological limitations generated by gaps and challenges in datasets, the secondary data analysis conducted as part of this review led to a number of key findings, including:

- There is a close correlation between the actual profile of beneficiaries (aged 20 to 22 for the most part, educated beyond secondary level) and the intended project criteria which confirms the **strict observance of selection and targeting criteria**, and thus the effectiveness and efficacy of the project approach in reaching its core age group of 18 to 25
- **A 'typical' SAKSHAM beneficiary is a female JOVT graduate living in urban areas, of approximately 21 years of age and working in retail or customer service**; there has been a clear trend towards the feminisation of the target group over time, as gender equality targets and objectives were made more explicitly and girls-focused particularly from the second phase of the project
- SAKSHAM's performance in relation to supporting young people's transition to employment has increased over time (particularly for young women), exceeds project objectives and is high as nearly 8 out of 10 JOVT trainees effectively access entry-level positions
- If formal employment and fair remuneration are to be taken as proxy indications of "decent employment", it is then clear that SAKSHAM performs well on both criteria in urban settings, where salaries at first employment fare well in comparison to recommended minimum wages, and rapidly progressing over time, without any discriminatory effect noticed on grounds of young age
- There are **stark differences between JOVT and VTEP beneficiaries**, which is concerning. The fact that JOVT has to date been implemented in urban areas and VTEP in rural areas means that these differences depict a strong rural / urban divide. The socio-demographic profile of the target group is different (more women, higher average age, different marital status, lower educational level for VTEP) and the tremendous efforts to proactively champion gender equality in urban areas are not observed in comparable ways in rural settings, where gender stereotyping was clear even in the choice of trades on offer, which also interrelates with gender gaps in income. The economic outcomes measured are also vastly different, as the income generated through self-employment in VTEP is not substantial enough to meaningfully contribute to economic empowerment. As such, VTEP is not quite the success story that JOVT undoubtedly is
- The underlying issue of the rural to urban **migration of young men** for work is known to project actors, and observable both in the field and in data, but has not translated into specific responses brought by the project to the employability skills and needs of these young men.

The 'Model'

The SAKSHAM model is, in essence, a tried-and-tested approach combining skills development and employment services (whether waged- or self-employment) to young people aged 18 to 29 in waged-employment, and 18 to 35 in self-employment. This review concluded that SAKSHAM is a stable, effective model of youth employment, particularly in its urban, waged-employment component (JOVT), which has been perfected over time.

Standardisation of project procedures and adequate degrees of control on the part of Plan India indicate that the project is overall, effective in achieving its objectives. In particular, consistent and repeated efforts to mainstream gender and equality into the project cycle and approaches has resulted in significant gains for young women in urban areas in particular, many of whom acknowledged the transformative effect of the project on their life and the horizons opened by their facilitated entry to the world of work. Overall, the project was found to be gender aware, with genuine potential and commitment to become gender transformative. Gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation is insufficiently developed to provide the evidence base for project achievements in this area, but improvements are within reach.

After more than 8 years of implementation, improvements to suggest with regards to project approach and model would only be marginal. This may include breaking the general association (albeit with minor exceptions) JOVT = urban, VTEP = rural. Instead, efforts as currently undertaken to develop VTEP in urban and peri-urban settings should be further redoubled, as the self-employment approach is a viable option for certain categories of young people in such contexts, too, and would increase the ability of young people to engage in the work of their choosing with a wider set of options. Diversifying the trades options offered in training is also important and a demand from young people themselves not only to more closely follow market trends, but also to continuously identify viable options to serve the most vulnerable young

people. In particular, including more options accessible to young people with lower qualifications and education levels would be essential as they face specific disadvantages in accessing formal employment. In relation to vulnerability and marginalisation, this review concluded that these terms have specific and unique meaning in the context of employment programme, as socio-economic criteria are not sufficient to define them. Instead, intersectional perspectives are required as vulnerability and marginalisation can be at the junction of several factors including gender, place of residence, educational background and personal circumstances. At present, the project must be mindful of a deep, intrinsic trend moving away from the most excluded from the labour market, as the education targeting criteria in particular can act in effect as an exclusion factor. The claim that the majority of project beneficiaries are amongst the most vulnerable and marginalised is questionable, as is the argument that gender in itself is a vulnerability factor – it is only so in conjunction with other elements.

A major critique of the model remains that the juxtaposition of rural and urban components does not do justice to the specific requirements of rural employability and livelihoods promotion. Profiles, objectives, resources and approaches are different and there is thus little rationale for both components to coexist into one single project.

For young people benefitting from the project more generally, the economic results induced by the project – particularly in relation to skills acquisition (the majority of young people mobilised and selected into the project do indeed complete the vocational training course) and effective transitions to employment (demonstrated by satisfactory retention at least 6 months after training completion) – are visible. Non-economic results are however insufficiently demonstrated and documented – they range from positive effects on the personality of young people, to positive changes in their status at home and in the community. To achieve this, SAKSHAM has developed effective, pertinent and strong operational partnerships with NGOs and training institutions. The longer-term sustainability and scale of SAKSHAM's results is however hindered by under-developed ties and relationships with more strategic partners in the public (e.g. government agencies) as well as the private (e.g. key corporates/employers) sectors.

Monitoring and evaluation

Finally, in spite of undeniable improvements and refinement brought over time to the program logic, particularly around gender mainstreaming, there are a number of limitations observed with the overall M&E architecture, including a mostly inadequate suite of indicators and data systems insufficiently perfected to suit the project requirements in terms of reporting and demonstration of results beyond output level.

Summary of key recommendations

Recommendations	Level of priority	Plan India	NO	Plan International	Partners
Review of data collection, storing, management and analysis	High	✓	✓		✓
Separate rural and urban components into distinct projects, and adopt a programme approach	Medium	✓	✓		
Conduct a specific, in-depth evaluation of the VTEP component	Medium	✓	✓	✓	✓
Undertake a qualitative study of the rural-to-urban migration of young men with a view to adapt project approaches	Low	✓	✓	✓	✓
Systematically produce half-yearly data report in support of the narrative reporting to promote accountability vis-à-vis programme logic and objectives	High	✓			✓
Urgently progress with the digitalisation of data systems	High	✓	✓	✓	✓
Allocate dedicated M&E capacity and resources (staffing in particular) to the project	High	✓	✓		
Undertake a political economy analysis of the project exploring value for money and returns on investments	Low	✓	✓		
Develop an Advocacy, policy and Influencing Strategy for the project	High	✓	✓		✓
Undertake a detailed, complete stakeholder mapping	Medium	✓			✓
Undertake a participatory vulnerability assessment	High	✓	✓	✓	✓
Increase the coherence of programme logic in future phases of programming, through outcome-oriented phrasing and measurement of progress in particular	High	✓	✓		✓
Review the existing suite of indicators to make the necessary improvements	High	✓	✓		✓
Conduct a gender review of the M&E framework at all levels to improve the level of evidence of gender equality results	Medium	✓	✓	✓	✓
Commission a qualitative study on the long-term effects and outcomes for female graduates in SAKSHAM	Medium	✓	✓	✓	✓

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW OF BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

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

- Franklin Delano ROOSEVELT

The pace and depth of economic transformations in India over the last two decades has been tremendous. In the first three decades after independence, per capita income had only increased at about 1% annualised rate. Fundamental reforms and transformations in the 1980s and 1990s boosted macro-economic performance to the point that in their latest India Country Assessment published in 2018, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) acknowledges that the country is *"one of the world's fastest-growing economies – accounting for about 15% of global growth"* and its sustained economic performance has helped lifting millions out of poverty. The economic growth is expected to stand at 7.3% for the fiscal year 2018/2019, up from previous years, on par with the average rate since the late 2000s and ahead of the performance of other economic powerhouses such as China. At the macro-economic level, India is ranked 6th largest economy in the world, and possibly even the 3rd if adjustments are made for exchange rates (purchasing power parity). In 2018, there was a much-celebrated drastic improvement of India's ranking in the World Bank's *Ease of Doing Business* classification, an illustration of the structural reforms currently at play.

This rapid growth, which has seen the emergence of services and manufacturing sectors competitive on the international market (and acting as main drivers of economic growth), and gradually declining shares of primary sectors such as agriculture, **is however insufficiently equitable to significantly raise incomes for the country nearly 1.3 billion people and harness the demographic dividend resulted from a young and growing working-age population.** The challenge is enormous as India is experiencing a 'youth bulge', an effect of the demographic transition it had started in the 1970s: nearly two-thirds of its population are under the age of 35, half under the age of 25. These ratios have increased in the last decades, and are likely to remain so for the foreseeable future, when in other countries the concern might be on the declining share of the working-age population and subsequent impacts. In only a few years, by 2020, it is believed that India will be home to the largest youth cohort in the world due to the sheer number of Indian youth: almost 230 million Indians (17.9% of the population) today are aged between 15 and 24³. The median age is projected to be around 28 years⁴ by 2020, below the world average, below the average of many of India's Asian peers such as China (37.4) or Vietnam (30.5)⁵, and far below the average for most European or, more broadly, Western countries. For many, this large cohort of working-age population is a blessing, as it may transform India into the biggest consumer market in the world. On the flip side, this also means that India needs to confront the largest youth transition challenge ever to absorb those millions of youth into the labour force and "keep the jobs engine running" as the IMF mentioned.

To date, economic growth alone has not been a sufficient condition to achieve successful economic transitions for youth. In fact, **at the individual level, and in spite of undeniable progress particularly in the reduction of extreme poverty, the effects of macro-economic growth are yet to be harnessed.** Indeed, the per capita income in India, although it has doubled in the last decade, still only stands at around \$ 2,000 US dollars per annum, far below that of other large, emerging, peer countries. India is for example the worst-performer in terms of per capita income amongst the BRICS countries⁶. This slower progression of per capita income is also combined with higher inflation (particularly for basic commodities), which negatively impacts levels of disposable income.

³ According to 2017 world population data, there are 1.281 billion people living in India. 17.9% of them (i.e. 229,463,223 individuals) are aged 15 to 24, including 121,879,786 boys and young men, and 107,583,437 girls and young women.

⁴ There are slight gender differences, as the male median age is 27.2 and the female median age 28.9 – this might be explained by increasing disparities in sex ratio at birth in recent decades, in some parts of the country.

⁵ Data is compiled from various World Bank and UN sources. The worldwide median age projections range between 30.8 and 31.2 depending on varied scenario of fertility rates. The median age for Germany is one of the highest in Europe at 46.7.

⁶ According to World Bank data from 2017, GDP per capita in China and South Africa approach \$ 7,000 per annum, and are around the \$ 11,000 mark in Brazil and Russia.

A number of non-economic dimensions of development also remain preoccupying, as they particularly and disproportionately affect children and young people. Child malnutrition for example remains at persistently high levels, varying between 35-45% depending on sources and degrees of malnutrition considered. Key factors hampering harmonious and equitable development chances for youth include:

- India's model of economic growth does not create enough jobs to absorb large cohorts of young people into the workforce: the services and manufacturing sectors, primarily concentrated in or around urban megalopolis, have been the main drivers of growth, but more than 60% of the Indian workforce still live in rural areas or depend on agriculture and allied sectors for their livelihoods. However, these services and sectors are not creating enough jobs to absorb cohorts of youth into the labour force. Indeed, India's labour force is growing by 2.5% every year with more than 10 million new, mostly young, 'net' entrants into the labour force every year (estimates vary). This trend is apparently set to continue for at least another two decades. These are net entries, which means that new jobs are required to absorb this cohort in addition to jobs already existing. The challenge is enormous as even at the peak of economic growth a few years ago, this level of job creation had not been achieved. In fact, with employment growing only at 2.3% p.a., it mechanically implies that growing numbers of youth in age of entering the labour force every year already cannot find employment. As a result, recent data (World Bank's World Development report) shows that unemployment is disproportionately affecting young people, with youth unemployment at approximately 10% (higher rates for young women) against a fast-rising national average around 6.5% (unprobed estimates⁷). Youth in general can thus be considered to be a particularly vulnerable group in relation to accessing employment in India, although nuances exist between different sub-groups of youth and an intersectional perspective is required to understand the phenomenon
- The education system remains highly inequalitarian, leaving millions of children and youth without the skills and education they need to aspire to better standards of living. Structural, large-scale investments in the education system are only recent in India. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2009) has in this regard been a major milestone in enforcing the principle of school enrolment for all children aged 6 to 14. Concerns remain however about the quality of education as teacher training and absenteeism is a recurrent issue, and the poor infrastructure in government-run schools (e.g. large class sizes, poor material conditions) continues to accentuate the escapeeism towards fee-paying institutions and as a result widening inequalities in access and quality of education amongst various socio-economic groups. Civil society as well as government reports both report challenges in the acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy skills for primary school pupils, with clear lines of divide between girls and boys for example in numeracy and arithmetics. These facts are an illustration of the necessity to focus on skills development in relation to youth access to employment in the current Indian context, as the education system is not yet geared to do so
- As a result, productivity is not always competitive and human capital is perceived as insufficient or inadapted to meet the demands of the current job market. Indeed, high proportions of workers are low-skilled and work in small-scale businesses or informal sectors, or have not undergone formal vocational training at all. It is estimated that only 2.3 percent of India's workforce has received some formal skills training. To address the issue, skill development has emerged as a priority sector, and the recently-launched National Skill Development Mission aims to train approximately 400 million people across the country by 2022, with the backing of large multilateral agencies such as the World Bank. The most recent Skill Gap Analysis produced by the Government of India concludes that by 2022, around 110 million or so skilled workers will be needed in the 24 key sectors of the economy.
- Gaps and inefficiencies in the regulation of the labour market have resulted in the informalisation and flexibilisation of employment, with large proportions of workers (up to 90% according to various estimates) engaged in the informal economy (e.g. daily wages, seasonal work, precarious self-employment). Realising rights and development objectives around decent work is thus a major challenge today in India. Persistent poverty and other structural factors also mean that children below the age of 14 also are part of the labour force (often in hazardous or exploitative conditions) in spite of legislative and regulatory bans, and their economic

⁷ Exact, periodic estimates of unemployment in India are challenging to obtain as the statistical processes required are not all necessarily in place (and in particular, the absence of a national department or agency exclusively focused on job seeking and employment). Statistics issued by the government are often debated or even refuted by research institutes and think tanks. Although an average of fewer than 6.5% may seem low as compared to Western and other countries, what is of concern is the fact that it has already doubled in only a few years.

transitions or empowerment requires specific efforts and dedicated investments, making them a particularly vulnerable sub-group of youth

- Girls and young women are placed at a clear and disproportionate advantage even compared to their male peers. They are less likely to be literate (60.6% versus 81.3% of men), they are more likely to marry or have children at a young age with at best delays their entry into the labour force, and at worst hinders their chances of economic advancement. Growth has not been inclusive in India: female labour participation is amongst the lowest in Asia (less than half of that of China for example) and has even fallen further in recent years according to the IMF. 51% of girls and young women fall in the 'NEET' category (not employed, not in education or training) versus only 10% of boys and young men, which goes to show the stark gender imbalances at play and the need to tackle the youth economic empowerment issue with ambitious and proactive gender interventions.

Background and rationale for the review

Project background and features: a summary

SAKSHAM is Plan International France and Plan International India's response to the youth economic empowerment challenge in India. The initiative aims to support youth from disadvantaged communities, especially young women, with the essential life and market-oriented vocational skills they need to make successful economic transitions, access decent work and lay sustainable foundations towards economic security. SAKSHAM has been operating in India since 2010, and has entered its third phase of programming in 2017. Project sites now spread across urban, peri-urban and rural areas in Delhi, Lucknow and Dehradun with the support of Plan International France and Plan International Netherlands, and to other locations across India with support from other national offices and donors.

The project acknowledges the multiple layers of challenges facing the Indian youth in relation to employment: widening inequalities leaving the most vulnerable at a disadvantage (young women in particular), persisting poverty, 'jobless economic growth', insufficient educational attainment are some of the challenges. Today, millions of youth in India do not make successful transitions to the world of work, lacking the skills, systems and services to remove the barriers hindering their socio-economic empowerment. In this regard, the situation for girls and young women is particularly striking, with persistent norms and practices obstructing the realisation of their full potential. The challenge is immense: India is set to become the youngest nation in the world by 2020 only, but currently only 2.3% of the total workforce has undergone formal skills training, and in rural and urban areas alike, the mismatch between demands for skilled personnel from the industry and the supply of qualified youth is widening.

To date, the project has mainly focused on developing market/job-oriented vocational training pathways. The project adopted a three-party model, wherein field partners (NGO partners responsible for youth mobilization and follow-up) and training partners (training partners responsible for training and placement) were engaged for mobilization and training processes respectively, Plan International being engaged with 6 local level grassroots organizations as field partners and 3 training partners.

More recently, in the second phase of the project, efforts have been made to diversify the options proposed to youth in the YEE pathways, including support to entrepreneurship and enterprise development, which required new partnerships and new ways of working. This was also a time of consolidation of project documentation and operating procedures, with a number of innovative initiatives taken such as gender mainstreaming, market scan, and a revamped model of alumni engagement to name just a few.

Since 2010, when the programme was launched in only a few slum clusters of Delhi, at least 5,700 young people⁸, including 62% girls and young women, have graduated from the programme. They have transitioned to 'new economy' job such as hospitality, retail, marketing and IT-enabled services. The Phase II evaluation even indicated that as a result of the project, 75% of the targeted youth had found employment, of which 70% continued to be employed 6 months after the initial placement. Economic returns were clearly visible as the average starting salary would be in line with national minimum wage level, but to double within 3 years of graduation for the majority of SAKSHAM alumni.

The actual phase of the project SAKSHAM 3.0: "Young women and men from disadvantaged youth living in urban and rural areas have gained market-oriented vocational employment and entrepreneurship skills to be economically empowered", intends:

⁸ See previous remarks about the total number of beneficiaries being ca. 8,000.

4. To enable 2,500 youths aged 18 – 29 years (of whom 60% women) from disadvantaged communities from target areas to secure decent employment
5. To enable 750 youths aged 18 – 35 years (of whom 60% women) from disadvantaged communities from target areas to access entrepreneurship training to become self-employed
6. To demonstrate increase in economic participation of young women from targeted communities having participated in SAKSHAM, demonstrated through the most significant change technique

Purpose and rationale for this review

The cumulative and rich experience of nearly a decade, through three cycles of programming and long-standing collaboration with Plan International France were the main reasons for SAKSHAM to receive early and substantial attention in the wider meta-evaluation which Plan International France is conducting on their wider YEE portfolio. Central to Plan International France's engagement in YEE, SAKSHAM has been a flagship intervention, whereby several innovations tested (e.g. M&E tools, gender mainstreaming) have the potential to inform or influence other YEE projects, which makes SAKSHAM an essential starting point to inform the wider meta-evaluation.

This review, although evaluative in nature, is not however a summative evaluation in the classic sense of the term. Indeed, an evaluation was completed in 2017 on Phase II of the project, and the new project cycle has not yet reached its mid-term. The primary purpose was thus and rather to conduct a learning review tracing back the programme journey and developments over time and since inception, highlighting lessons learned and good practices and capturing, in essence, the components and key results of the YEE model as implemented in India. The term 'evaluative review' was preferred to capture the fact that the general objective pertains both to an 'evaluation' (see herewith definitions from the OECD DAC Glossary) and a 'review'.

This evaluative review is commissioned by Plan International France who provided strategic stewardship, support and decision-making for this review (through the Programme Department unit, under the coordination of Ms. Charlotte de PONCINS and Charlotte LEBAS, in charge of Asia and East Africa at Plan International France) independently from the wider Plan International federation⁹.

Plan International France commissioned this review jointly with the F3E, 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 review as one of the deliverables of the YEE portfolio meta-evaluation. The F3E had a technical and methodological role in the oversight of the study.

Plan International India has been involved in the definition of the scope of work (TORs and mission planning) for this review and the wider meta-evaluation, and have been closely associated to the review of earlier drafts of this reports.

Evaluation? Monitoring? Review? What the OECD DAC Glossary says

Evaluation: *The systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project or programme, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfillment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.*

Monitoring: *A continuing function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds.*

Review: *An assessment of the performance of an intervention, periodically or on an ad hoc basis. Reviews are usually less comprehensive and/or in-depth than evaluations. They tend to emphasize operational aspects.*

⁹ Members of the Plan International Federation are referred to as "national organisations" or NOs. 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. National Organisations are also responsible for fundraising and perform a vital role in development education and advocacy in their jurisdictions. In addition, the National Organisations work together with Plan International, Inc. to ensure the effective management and implementation of major grant-funded projects they have originated. National Organisations are accountable to their donors through their national regulators and directly through their individual own feedback mechanisms. They appoint delegates to the Members' Assembly. 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). Plan International France may be referred to as FNO (France National Office) in this report.

Evaluative questions and objectives

Evaluative framework

The terms of reference for the meta-evaluation (Appendix A) had outlined a number of themes and objectives for the SAKSHAM evaluative review. Upon preliminary discussions involving Plan International France and F3E in September 2018, these objectives were reworked to develop a more focused scope of work to be led by the consultant.

Evaluative questions were grouped to broadly align with commonly-used evaluation frameworks and in particular the OECD DAC criteria of Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact and Sustainability. However, considering the wider purpose of the evaluative review as well as time constraints and the fact that an external, comprehensive evaluation was rather recently completed, some of the criteria were purposefully given less prominence in shaping the evaluative framework (in particular: efficiency and to a lesser extent, Sustainability).

Acknowledging the limitations of the DAC criteria cross-cutting issues were also included an in particular equity (to reflect on gender, inclusion, vulnerability and other similar themes). Other criteria often used in conjunction with the OECD DAC criteria, such as Participation and Responsibility, have not been reflected in the scope of work for the same reasons as listed above. And finally, the intervention logic of the programme (in the form of the 3 logical frameworks, each focusing on each phase of the project) was analysed.

Key learning areas and lines of inquiry for the SAKSHAM review (the 'evaluative framework') thus stood as follows:

EVALUATIVE CRITERIA	DEFINITIONS	SPECIFIC QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES
RELEVANCE AND STRATEGIC COHERENCE	The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are and remain over time appropriate and consistent with evolving beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, local and national requirements or priorities, global priorities and partners' and donors' policies	How coherent is the programme with Plan International new strategic framework (including and in particular in relation to gender equality and partnerships)? How consistent is the programme with Plan International India and Plan International France's country strategic plans? How significant is the programme in the context of India?
	A measure of the extent to which the project attains its objectives or is likely to achieve them by its completion date	What has been the reach over 8 years (indirect and direct reach, disaggregation by sex, age, area and situation), and what is the profile of beneficiaries? How has this changed over time, if at all? How do these results compare with other approaches in the sector, and to what is known about effective approaches towards YEE?
EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT: SKILLS ACQUISITION AND TRANSITIONS TO EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUTH	A discussion of the programme's contribution to higher-level development objectives, and potential effects to the overall situation of the target group	Are beneficiaries and stakeholders satisfied with the project? Are the content and objectives of the training courses adapted to the targets and objectives? What are the key skills we provide or should improve?
		Is the project efficient in leading youth to decent employment? What are the employability rates of the project per sex, age, area, orientation and time-lapse after training completion? How could the project be improved both for job-oriented and entrepreneurship training? What is the added-value of the project compared to other projects covering job-oriented training and youth employability?

<p>YEE MODELING</p>	<p>Simplified or abstract representation of a system or process, including the entities and relationships it comprises of and their interaction, and aimed at understanding, communicating, explaining or designing aspects of a system or process</p>	<p>what does the SAKSHAM YEE pathway or model currently look like? How has it changed over time, and what were the key step change moments and turning points? What are the most effective components, and which ones would require improvements? How have changes in the approach also changed the role played by Plan International, and its engagement with stakeholders? What can be learned about the specificity of Plan International's approach in India in contrast with other initiatives led by peers or others in the country? What can be learned about the programme's progress, strengths/weaknesses, process and impact? What gaps can be identified in this existing evidence, and what can be done to address them?</p>
<p>EQUITY INCLUDING GENDER TRANSFORMATION</p>	<p>An approach that promotes interventions/actions that reduce or have the potential to reduce and/or eliminate unfair and avoidable circumstances that deprive some sub-segments of a population – across gender, geographical, economic and social spectrum - of their rights and access to services</p>	<p>What are the successes in partnerships and challenges? What is their added-value? How do partners provide sustainability to the project? What can be learned from existing partnership arrangements?</p> <p>To what extent is the programme inclusive of significantly-deprived adolescents and youth, including girls and young women? What has been the impact for them (both self-reported and observed impacts)? To what extent does the project reduce or eliminate unfair and avoidable circumstances facing certain sub-segments of the youth population (consideration of intersectionality)? How are the differentiated experiences reported and monitored (e.g. gender, rural, etc.)?</p>
<p>APPROPRIATENESS AND EFFECTIVENESS: M&E SYSTEMS</p>	<p>A discussion of the suitability of monitoring and evaluation approaches, tools and processes in supporting the operationalisation of the programme logic</p>	<p>Is the M&E system overall fit for purpose? Does it allow for an accurate and appropriate assessment of the project over 8 years of implementation? In particular, are the indicators set for the project relevant and sufficient, especially regarding gender transformation and impacts? What recommendations can be made to improve the project and its M&E systems?</p>

Key definitions and concepts

This review draws from a number of concepts and terms, including key ones as discussed below¹⁰:

YOUTH

"Youth" is often understood and defined as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence and awareness of one's interdependence with other members of the community at large. Youth is a more fluid category than a fixed age-group, although specific age bands are frequently associated with "youth". Other definitions may link youth to education and employment, youth being the individuals who have completed compulsory education but have not yet secured stable employment, thus remaining in a situation of dependency vis-à-vis adults. There are a number of issues with this approach, particularly in developing countries and/or in the wider context of persistent and high unemployment levels. This review adopts the United Nations Secretariat's universal definition of youth which, for statistical consistency, defines youth as those individuals between the ages of **15 and 24 years** (age

¹⁰ Other definitions relevant for the assignment were presented and discussed in the Inception Report for the Meta-Evaluation to which this review is connected. The Inception Report is available on request.

cohort of 15-24). When the term “youth” or “young people” / “young women” / “young men” are used in this report, they refer to this age group. When this review refers to young people served by the project, phrases such as “young beneficiaries” or “SAKSHAM trainees”, etc.

However, it is also acknowledged that such definitions vary depending on countries and context. In India, the current National Youth Policy has narrowed the definition of youth as individuals aged between 18 and 29 (13-35 in the previous strategy). This report specifically mentions this age group when referring to the Indian context.

Furthermore, for the purpose of this review and the ease of reading, the terms “youth” and “young people”, “young women” and “young men” may be used interchangeably contrary to the distinction applied by some agencies (e.g. UNICEF/WHO/UNFPA define young people as the 10-24 age cohort, youth as the 15-24 cohort and adolescents as the 10-19 cohort). When there is a risk of confusion, explicit mentions of age groups will be made in the report; when no mention is made, it is to be assumed that the term “youth” refers to the 15-24 age group and the expression “children under 15 years of age” will be used if necessary to distinguish this sub-group.

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. (definition adapted from Plan International position paper, upcoming).

Guiding principles and standards

In observance of international evaluation principles¹¹ as well as standards set by Plan International in their evaluation guidelines, this evaluative review followed the following principles:

- **Maximum level of objectivity and impartiality:** this review, in its conception and implementation was led by this consultant independently. This review strives to present facts and objective, comprehensible observations supported by evidence, and clearly distinguish those from assessments when necessary. To this end, different perspectives from various individuals, groups and organisations were taken into account (see below) in an effort to triangulate results and findings, as well as a balanced view of strengths and weaknesses. And finally, although communication loops were at all points maintained particularly with Plan International France, F3E and staff at Plan International India, this consultant was not influenced by neither of these stakeholders, and maintained independence throughout the process.
- **Meaningful levels of participation:** it is acknowledged by this consultant that the utility and quality of an evaluation process is highly dependent on the participation of all groups and stakeholders, in meaningful and appropriate ways. With the exception mentioned below (see “limitations”), the review process involved consultation and regular dialogue with key groups of beneficiaries and project personnel (Plan India and partners). Young women and young men, as well as members of the community at large, were involved in appropriate ways during field visits with the usage of tools deemed suitable in the local context (taking into consideration the characteristics of each group and potential barriers such as age or literacy). Efforts were also made to promote participation beyond data collection, particularly with debriefing sessions in Uttarkashi, Dehradun and Delhi with key staff and partner representatives where preliminary findings were shared and opportunities given to discuss them and contribute to priority setting and the formulation of recommendations. The review of draft versions of this report involved the commissioning authorities as well as Plan International India
- **Coherence with and adherence to Plan International’s evaluation standards:** this review strives to be useful, feasible in scope, proper, reliable in its approach and findings, and accountable, as expected in Plan International’s Evaluation Standards.

Prior to finalisation, this consultant conducted a self-assessment of the quality of the report, ensuring as much as possible the reliability and credibility of findings and conclusions, as well as their completeness and clarity.

¹¹ In particular the DAC Evaluation Standards, OECD, March 2007

Lines of communication, roles and responsibilities

The following communication lines and principles have been established between the consultant and the key contact persons at Plan International France and F3E for this review and more widely for the meta-evaluation:

- The project lead at Plan International France (defined as the lead contact person for the assignment on the part of Plan International France) supported the consultant in accessing and unpacking information and facilitating contacts and introductions. Close communication was maintained between the consultant and the project lead through e-mail correspondence and weekly or bimonthly catch-up calls to inform of any progress made or challenges faced, and validate findings and observations as they emerge. This regular communication did not involve F3E
- Tools, emerging findings and approaches have been jointly discussed between the consultant, Plan International France and Plan International India although the consultant remained independent in their validation. This was done in order to create an open dialogue which helps lifting possible misunderstandings and misguided interpretations of projects or events, as well as create a feedback loop to continuously refine and improve the quality and methodology of the review
- F3E played a key role in the methodological oversight of the review, particularly through feedback on the inception report which had outlined a roadmap for the SAKSHAM Evaluative Review, and participation in a debriefing about initial findings in November 2018.

Ethics, child safeguarding and risks

This consultant is contractually obliged to adhere to Plan International France's Child Protection Charter. The concern and high degree of importance given to the protection and safeguarding of children by Plan International is understood and shared by this consultant. It is also understood that the duty of care and the duty of protection to which Plan International adhere vis-à-vis children and young people equally and fully apply to non-permanent members of staff and temporary collaborators such as consultants.

More broadly, this consultant refrained from any action, comment or intervention which may have caused harm to a child or young person, or place this child or young person in a situation of increased vulnerability or immediate danger or infringe on their dignity and rights.

One of the key ethics and safeguarding risk identified was around the indirect usage of personal information and secondary data (e.g. project database, project monitoring documents including data on beneficiaries, case stories) pertaining to or related to children and young people associated with the project. In order to protect the confidentiality and dignity of children and young people, this consultant followed these measures:

- Request that data and information transferred to her for the purpose of the review is anonymised and that any marker which may lead to the identification of the child or young person is removed from the document or data source (e.g. name, full address, telephone number, national identification document reference, photograph, etc.)
- Verify what consent procedures exist in the country and that usage of data does not contradict the consent which had been given by the child or young person, or their caregivers if that is the case; in the case of India, it was confirmed by project staff that consent had been obtained for the young people and beneficiaries who took part in interviews and group discussions. Additional precautions were taken during each interview or group discussion, particularly a reminder of (i) the right to interrupt and terminate discussion at any time (withdrawal), (ii) the right not to answer questions which may cause discomfort, (iii) the right to refuse that photographs were taken. None of the youth or persons consulted exercised these rights.
- Remove all markers which may lead to clear identification of a child or young person, from any output or point of analysis
- Data or information shared by Plan International (France, India or others) for the purpose of this study is stored electronically by the consultant on password-protected devices or platforms accessible only through a password known to this consultant alone; it is not foreseen that Plan International would have access to transcripts of field work or primary data collected
- This consultant refrained from taking or using photographs of children, young people, their families and communities and when it was the case for the purpose of this review, it was understood that photographs should follow principles of ethical imagery (not portray or depict children and young people in humiliating, degrading or perilous situations, and their usage should respect the principles of confidentiality explained above). Photographs taken were so for the purpose of transparency, accountability and visualisation/illustration of work accomplished for this review

With regards to the protection of children and vulnerable adults, this consultant took note, in each of the offices visited (training centres, Plan offices, partner offices) of the procedure applicable (as displayed in the respective offices) to report concerns over the safety, protection, safeguarding or integrity of a child or young person. Guidance from the security briefing document was also adhered to. No incident was reported by this consultant through these channels during or after the visit to India in October 2018.

Timeline

This review took place between October and December 2018. This report was finalised in March 2019 following an exchange of feedback and commentary from both Plan International France and Plan India. An evaluation mission in India was completed on 14-25 October 2018, with visits and interactions in various project locations (refer to Annexes for details about the mission planned).

Methodology and tools

Evaluation Matrix

The Evaluation Matrix below is a visual aid summarising the relation between each of the review tool or methods, and the evaluation criteria as discussed above, and based on the TORs.

EVALUATIVE CRITERIA	Desk review	Beneficiary profiling (analysis of secondary data)	Observation	Participatory Learning Workshop	Participatory & qualitative research tools	Kits	Logframe analysis	Gender assessment	DATA SOURCE(S)
RELEVANCE AND STRATEGIC COHERENCE	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		Project actors and informants Evaluation reports Project documents External documents and methodological guides for benchmarking
EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT: SKILLS ACQUISITION AND TRANSITIONS TO EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUTH	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Project actors and informants Evaluation reports Project documents External documents and methodological guides for benchmarking PRA tools Project actors and informants
YEE MODELING	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		Evaluation reports Project documents External documents and methodological guides for benchmarking PRA tools Project actors and informants
EQUITY INCLUDING GENDER TRANSFORMATION	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Evaluation reports Project documents External documents and methodological guides for benchmarking PRA tools Project actors and informants
APPROPRIATENESS AND EFFECTIVENESS: M&E SYSTEMS	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	Project actors and informants Evaluation reports Project documents External documents and

Brief overview of tools and methods

All tools and methods used for the meta-evaluation, including the SAKSHAM Evaluative Review, are presented in detail in the Inception Report (available on request) including approaches to analysis, triangulation, as well as key risks and limitations. The following is only a brief overview of the tools and methods applied for the review, as well as critical discussion of their use and appropriateness when relevant.

Quantitative methods

Analysis of various sub-sets of data was conducted in order to quantify profile and characteristics of young beneficiaries (total reach, age, education, family background etc.), and key outcomes of the programme (transition to employment, earnings, etc.). Datasets were shared by Plan India with this consultant. They were extracted from the project MIS databases existing since inception. From the 4 Excel-based datasets submitted (VTEP prior and after 2016; JOVT prior and after 2017), this consultant controlled the overall quality of data (completeness, reliability, consistency) on (i) one merged, single dataset for VTEP and (i) one merged, single dataset for JOVT. As specifically requested that data shared do not include personal information about the beneficiary (e.g. address, telephone, ID number, etc.) in order to preserve confidentiality. Descriptive analysis was done using Excel. Gender was systematically used for cross-analysis of data, in order to compare profiles and outcomes for young men and young women, and identify potential differences over the 3 phases of the project. Findings were checked for consistency with project reports and staff interviews during the visit to India.

Plan India and partners, in the shared MIS system, encode and maintain data in relation to the Most Significant Change Tracker. However, due to time constraints, this review did not include analysis on these datasets, which is acknowledged as a limitation of the quantitative analysis provided by the review. It is also noticed that narrative reports for Phase II and Phase III to which this tracker relate, do not include analysis of MSC data collected.

Qualitative methods

Desk review

A review of project documents shared by Plan International or requested by this consultant (proposals, logical frameworks, project reports, baseline study, evaluations, presentations, publications, curriculum, tools etc.) was conducted, and contrasted with sector / grey literature. This review linked and fed into some of the other data collection methods such as the Logframe Analysis, the Gender Assessment and the Learning Workshop. A list of key documents and resources consulted is presented in Annex 1.

Observation

This consulted consigned observations in a field diary, with record of participant observation data (gender, age, other relevant information such as trade or sector of employment) and responses. Spontaneous conclusions or hypothesis were also recorded in the field diary by the consultant, usually straight upon completion of the visit, interview or discussion so as to maintain data accuracy. Observations were also made of non-verbal data such as community setting, presence of services, distances and some visual elements (e.g. habitat structure, etc.). These notes have not been shared with any third party for the purpose of confidentiality.

Participatory Learning Workshop

An all-day workshop was held in Delhi on 17 October 2018, gathering 18 participants from 4 SAKSHAM partner organisations (ALAMB, CAP Foundation, CASP, CWS) as well as 2 key project staff from Plan International India (1 F, 1 M). The objective of the workshop was, through the use of participatory techniques of facilitation, to collate from field staff experiences and views about the SAKSHAM model, journey and results. The workshop was purposefully held after the consultant had conducted field visits in Delhi in order to ensure more productive, dynamic discussions with the various teams.



Key informant interviews (KIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Individual or group interviews were conducted with 42 individuals, mainly Plan International India staff, SAKSHAM partner representatives and external informants. The interviews were supported by a semi-structured interview guide developed by this consultant albeit adapted depending on the experience and role of the interlocutor. Questions were specifically asked to gather opinions and experience on some or all of the evaluative criteria. They drew from After-Action Review (AAR) and Retrospect Methods. A non-probability, non-random sampling approach was taken in informant selection. With the exception of interviews with NLNO staff, all other interviews took place face-to-face in India. The duration of interviews varied from 45 minutes to several hours depending on the seniority, experience and willingness of the participant to contribute to the study.

Logframe analysis

In order to assess both the strategic coherence of the project vis-à-vis its external environment, as well as the strength and suitability of M&E systems, a specific 15-point Logframe Review Checklist was developed by this consultant to provide observations and recommendations about potential revisions and amendments in M&E systems. The tool is based on commonly acknowledged best practices in logframe development in the sector, as well as other existing checklist of logframe quality (e.g. USAID, DfID). Assessment was made by this consultant with a “Traffic Light” (Red-Amber-Green) marking system, upon returning from India. Annex B presents the tool as well as the detailed analysis which was conducted.

Rapid Gender Assessment tool

To respond to the specific requirement from the ToR to reflect on achievements to date with regards to gender equality and transformative programming, a 15-point gender assessment checklist tool was used¹². The tool aligned with generic gender equality programme criteria also used by Plan International (a scale from gender-unaware to gender-transformative), and scored the project engagement with gender equality from 3 perspectives: (i) design and foundations; (ii) monitoring, evaluation and reporting; (iii) experience and implementation.

Methodological resources will include

- (i) Plan International (France and global) key documentation and guidelines (some of which have already been outlined in the TORs), including and in particular in relation to evaluations, gender and youth participation;
- (ii) commonly admitted best practices with regards to key evaluation tools (e.g. key informant interviews, participatory methods);
- (iii) external robust and defensible reviews existing on the subject of youth economic empowerment, including literature reviews, systematic reviews or programme impact evaluations conducted by others in the sector (such documents exist at Save the Children, BRAC, the Population Council, or the World Bank to name just a few). The purpose of this body of external documents would be to contrast findings about Plan International's YEE portfolio, and present a “proxy” counterfactual element in the meta-evaluation or elements of “benchmarking”. Such documentation can be collated with the support of technical/subject-matter experts at Plan International (France or other countries) and through key informant interviews.
- (iv) Finally and logically, resources to be used will also include programme-related and programme-generated documentation, primarily external evaluation reports when they exist, but if possible and pertinent, other core programme documents as well (e.g. proposal, logical framework or theory of change or MEL programme strategy, studies, tools, learning outputs etc.).

Challenges and limitations

This consultant acknowledges a number of challenges and limitations in relation to this review, including:

- The SAKSHAM evaluative review is part of a wider exercise of meta-evaluation, as explained in the background section of this report. However, the terms of reference for this exercise were ambitious in relation to the overall timeframe envisaged, hence limitations introduced to the methodology and scope of work
- The absence of a consolidated database of project beneficiaries across the three project phases and locations has presented specific challenges for data analysis and for the findings around profiles of beneficiaries; these limitations are explained in further details in following sections

¹² The tool was developed by this consultant with reference to existing gender assessment guidance and frameworks currently available, including Plan International GESA toolkit, OECD-DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker, WHO Gender Assessment Tool, etc. Refer to Inception Report for further details, as well as Annex 5.

- Prioritisation in the scope of work led to under-representation of certain stakeholders' groups (for example, parents and employers were not met, and only secondary data was considered in relation to these groups) to focus primarily on the experiences and views of young people themselves. This is a limitation in capturing the various outcomes as well as indirect or unintended effects generated by the project

Description of project locations visited

This evaluative review was conducted across two of the three main project locations targeted in Phase 3 of the SAKSHAM project, namely New Delhi and Uttarakhand (city of Dehradun and district of Uttarkashi) in Northern India (see map below). Project sites in and around Lucknow (State of Uttar Pradesh) could not be visited due to time constraints.



Sayed Gaon and Mohan Garden (Delhi)

SAKSHAM Centres were visited in the sectors of Sayed Gaon (Paschim Vihar, West Delhi) and Mohan Garden (Dwarka, South West Delhi).

Both areas have significantly developed in the 1980s and are now very populous (the population in Paschim Vihar could be up to 800,000 and the population in Dwarka in excess of 1 million). They benefit from numerous transport links (bus and metro in particular) and Dwarka is being developed under the smart sub-city project of Delhi Development Authority (DDA) which will further strengthen the presence of public services. Sanitation and security remains key issues, particularly in Dwarka.

- **Sayed Gaon** is one of the relocation camps (also called 'resettlement colonies') built after the India-Pakistan partition to host refugees. The area



is not as developed and affluent as other parts of Paschim Vihar; information from Plan International India suggests that the majority of households are low-income, engaging in casual or informal labour (petty commerce, rickshaw driving, tailoring, etc.). It is reported that the household income would not on average exceed 15 to 20,000 INR (equivalent to ca. 240 euros monthly for a family of 5 to 6 individuals). SAKSHAM has only recently started work in the area (2017)

- **Mohan Garden** presents similar characteristics. However both Plan India and the local partner CASP have long-standing presence in the area, with noticeable strong rapport with youth and the community at large.

Uttarkashi and Uttarkashi district (Uttarakhand)

The district of Uttarkashi is composed of six 'blocks' (sub-districts), and is bordered by the State of Himachal Pradesh to the North, and the Tibet plateau to the North-East. Two of India's largest and sacred rivers, the Ganga and the Yamuna originate from Uttarkashi district. This rugged Himalayan area is assumed to have been inhabited by hill tribes for centuries, with references in the Mahabharata being an indication of the long-standing religious significance of the area.

With a population of around 330,086 at the last census (2011)¹³ spread across just over 8,000 km², Uttarkashi is sparsely populated. In fact, with only 41 inhabitants per km², the district has the lowest population density of the State of Uttarakhand. Access is mainly through narrow motor roads through mountain ridges, which adds to the remoteness of the area. As a result, economic development and growth has been slow and the majority of households still rely on subsistence agriculture (e.g. paddy, cereals, potato) and livestock rearing (goat and sheep). Agricultural development is however challenged by the context and terrains, with shorter seasons, low temperatures, altitude, soil erosion and patterns of land tenure (small land holding mainly) negatively impacting on land fertility and productivity. The potential however exists to develop further cottage industries (e.g. wool and woollen products, basketry, weaving, dairy) and horticulture but poor communications and transportation infrastructure hinder such potential. It takes on average six hours to reach the state capital Dehradun from Uttarkashi town, for example, through one main road which is often made impracticable by landslides or heavy monsoon rains.

The district counted 694 inhabited villages or cluster of villages at the last census, and 67,602 households. In other terms, **the typical dwelling pattern across the district is one of scattered, small villages counting on average less than 100 households each**. Furthermore, with only three statutory towns (Uttarkashi, Barkot and Gangotri), Uttarkashi is predominantly rural (93% of the population lives in rural areas). At around 4.88, the household average size across the district is on par with the national average¹⁴.



Figure 1 - Village of Pahi, Uttarkashi

¹³ Data and statistical information for this section is mainly taken from the Primary Census Abstract available for the district from the last available census conducted in 2011: *Census of India 2011. Uttarakhand series-06 part xii-b. District Census Handbook. Uttarkashi village and town wise Primary Census Abstract (PCA)* directorate of census operations Uttarakhand, 2014, 180 pages. Data was collected early in 2011 although complete results and datasets were only published and made available in subsequent years.

¹⁴ Estimated at 4.9

Populations in the district can be classified as highly vulnerable, as illustrated by the following data and facts in particular:

- *Marginalised groups*: There is a higher-than-average proportion of persons from scheduled castes or tribes (approximately 1 in 4 individuals)
- *Exodus*: The lower decadal growth rate (defining population growth over a ten-year period period two censuses) in Uttarkashi (11.9%) as compared to the Uttarakhand state more widely (18.8%) may be an indication of rural-to-urban exodus and a longer term trend of depopulation of the villages. This was also reported by several persons interviewed during the review
- *High exposure to natural and climate-induced hazards*: Uttarkashi has suffered over the years from regular and severe disasters including flashfloods, landslides and forest fires. Located at the boundary of the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates, the district (and the state more generally) is also particularly exposed to quakes and tremors of various intensity¹⁵
- *Subsistence livelihoods*: the vast majority of the population in the district is engaged in agriculture as cultivators; the low productivity, challenging terrain and other factors (see above) imply that it is mainly a form of subsistence which does not generate substantial income.

With regards to **gender disparities**, the following should be noted:

- At only 958 females per 1,000 males, the sex ratio in the district is below the state average; it is even lower in the 3 urban areas of the district (858) suggesting that internal migratory movements towards the towns are predominantly male
- There are vast disparities in education and literacy levels: indeed, although overall the literary ratio is of 75.8% (vs. 78.8% for the whole of Uttarakhand at the time of the 2011 Census) and seems on par with the national average, the **wide gender disparity in literacy rate** observed across India also exists in Uttarkashi district. 88.8% of males are literate, but only 62.4% of females, well below the State average and comparable to the national average. The gap is even wider in some villages
- Women are economically active and productive, as 85.8% of them are found to be cultivators, whether as main or marginal worker in the household. Men are also found primarily to be cultivators although data shows they also engage in other sectors, which is not significantly the case for women

The **municipality of Uttarkashi** is the namesake capital of the district. It is situated in the north-west of the state of Uttarakhand, approximately 200 kilometres from state Capital Dehradun. The town is situated on the bank of the Bhagirathi river (known as the Ganga in the plains) at an altitude of around 1,100 m above sea level. Uttarkashi is the starting point of four large pilgrimage routes reaching holy sites which used to attract several hundreds of thousands of visitors from across India every year, until recent natural and climate-induced disasters damaged infrastructure. Uttarkashi is also increasingly becoming a hub for 'adventure' tourism (trekking, mountaineering) supported by ambitious tourism development plans. Its population was estimated to be under 18,000 in the 2011 census.

The table below presents an overview of key socio-demographic features of the villages where project beneficiaries were met on 21 and 22 October. It should be noted that illiteracy is higher than state and national averages, and particularly so amongst women. Indeed, there are twice as many illiterate women as compared to illiterate men. This is a major factor hindering women's empowerment and access to opportunities.

Village	Estimated population (2011)	Male / Female proportion	# illiterates (M/F)	Population under 6 years of age	SC, ST and OBC populations
Pahi	77 households 388 individuals	51.8 / 48.2	93 (24 / 69)	9.8%	n/a
Netala	270 households 1,311 individuals	51.9 / 48.1	360 (106 / 254)	11.1%	20.8%
Heena (Hina)	147 households 735 individuals	51.0 / 49	219 (69 / 150)	9.8%	32.1%
Gangori	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

¹⁵ Uttarakhand was the most affected state during the 2012 and 2013 flash floods and landslides which destroyed hundreds of homes, bridges and roads and killed more than 30 people. In 2016 the state suffered from forest fires. In October 1991, a severe earthquake killed more than 800 people, destroyed or damaged at least 15,000 homes and is said to have impacted 300,000 people across Uttarakhand and neighbouring states.

Dehradun (state of Uttarakhand)

Dehradun has been instated as the interim capital of the State of Uttarakhand when it was created in 2000 following the reorganisation of the State of Uttar Pradesh¹⁶. Dehradun is situated in the Doon Valley, at the foothills of the Himalayans in a region which has been inhabited continuously for at least 2,000 years. At approximately 240 kilometres from Delhi, the city is also one of the “counter magnets” hubs, i.e. alternative centres of growth designated by a 1985 Act as cities which can potentially be developed to absorb migration flows and thus contain the demographic expansion of Delhi.

And indeed, Dehradun has experienced **exponential demographic and economic growth** in the last two decades and in particular since its installation as state capital. The investments brought to the city in terms of infrastructure, public services headquarters, administration, businesses and manufacturing units have transformed the landscape and scale of the city. In 2011 at the time of the last census, its population stood at 578,420¹⁷, but high decadal growth rates in excess of 30% bring current population estimates closer to 700,000¹⁸. It is widely asserted that Dehradun attracts intra-state migration from hilly districts due to the absence of coordinated and well-resourced development and employment plans in those remote areas.

The strong economic growth also translates in boosting the per capita income which in 2012 was of US\$ 2,400, three times the estimated national average of US\$ 800. Dehradun is an important education hub, reputed across India for its boarding schools, universities, research centres and training institutions, some of which are of national importance (e.g. Indian Military Academy, National Forest Academy). As in other urban centres in this lower Himalayan region, tourism infrastructure has boomed in Dehradun, presenting a host of opportunities for employment in hospitality broadly speaking.

Description and profile of persons met

In addition to conversations with key staff at Plan International France and Plan International Netherlands who have been core sponsors of SAKSHAM since its inception, a total of 144 persons were met or consulted as part of the mission (42 men and young men, 102 women and young women) including:

- 68 SAKSHAM trainees or graduates (23 M, 45 F); “trainees” refers to those undergoing training at the time of the mission, and “graduates” refers to those who have already completed training and went on to exercise a productive activity whether through wage- or self-employment. Graduates are often referred to as “alumni” by partners and project staff. However the concept of alumni engagement still being ill-defined, the more generic term of “graduate” is used here



Figure 2 - 3 SAKSHAM graduates and a field worker, Pahi (Uttarkashi)

¹⁶ The north-western districts of Uttar Pradesh became the State of Uttarakhand under the Uttar Pradesh Reorganisation Act in 2000. The State was initially known as Uttaranchal and was later on renamed Uttarakhand.

¹⁷ Including 303,411 males (52.45%) and 275,009 females (47.54%). The sex ratio is Dehradun overall is 906 females per 1,000 males although it is particularly low for children aged 6 and under, standing at 873 only.

¹⁸ According to the Uttarakhand Directorate of Economics and Statistics (2017 report), decadal growth rate for Dehradun stands at around 32.3% and is one of the highest in the state.



Figure 3 - Group discussion with trainees in Dehradun (UK)

- 32 partners staff and representatives (13 M, 19 F) from CAP Foundation, CASP, Alamd, CWS, Empower, SBMA and ABVT (currently not a SAKSHAM partner)
- 8 Plan India staff and representatives (4 M, 4F) including 1 person based in Uttarakhand
- 36 other persons which included 2 external informants (2 M) from RSETI in Uttarkashi and Save the Children in New Delhi, as well as women of various ages in a community of Delhi currently phased out of Saksham. 15 of them were young girls attending a vocational training course run in the community, and 16 were mothers who previously were beneficiaries of the Plan-led “Banking on Change” women economic empowerment programme. This group is not homogeneous as it combines only for the purpose of simplification all stakeholders who do not have a direct part in Saksham, ranging from informants to community members in the different locations visited.

Beneficiaries across all groups met were primarily female, reflecting project efforts to enroll, support and empower young women to make successful transitions to the world of work. However, as the approach to sampling was purposeful and not based on exact representation of the various sub-groups (by age and gender), there is an over-representation of female beneficiaries in the group of persons met, as well as an over-representation of beneficiaries outside of Delhi (comparatively to project size and reach in the respective areas) due to large attendance for one of the focus groups organized in Dehradun.

The majority of the beneficiaries met had a profile similar to the profile typically expected of a SAKSHAM trainee or graduate: the average age was of 21.38 years (the average age of female beneficiaries met was slightly higher due to beneficiaries met in Uttarkashi district (rural visits) being exclusively female and from older age group (for some of them above the 35 age limit of the project). For graduates, the age mentioned is the age at the time of the mission, and not the age at the time of graduation (for some beneficiaries, graduation dates back several months if not years). The youngest beneficiaries met were 18 years of age, and the oldest was 38 or 39 (exact age unknown by the person) at the time of the meeting.

Further details and groups of persons met are presented in Annex 2.

Structure of this report

Chapters

Following this introductory chapter, the report is organised in the following sections:

- Section 1 presents a summary of SAKSHAM, its journey, key milestones and key current characteristics
- Section 2 to 6 each explore one of the evaluative themes: Relevance and Strategic Coherence (Section 2), Effectiveness and Impacts in relation to skills acquisitions and transitions to employment for youth (Section 3), YEE modelling (Section 4), Appropriateness and Effectiveness in M&E Systems (Section 5)
- Recommendations are presented at the end of each section; a summary of recommendations is presented in the Executive Summary

Annexes are included as a separate document adjoined to this main report. Appendices are adjoined to this main report including Appendix A (Terms of Reference for the meta-evaluation which includes the scope of work for the SAKSHAM evaluation), and Appendix B (Logframe detailed assessment).

Ranking 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.

Most of the recommendations, as well as preliminary findings and conclusions have been presented in October and November 2018 to Plan International India, some of their partners, Plan International France and the F3E.

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

Section 1: The SAKSHAM Journey

Starting point

Skills development was not new to Plan International and Plan International India before SAKSHAM was designed and started being implemented. A wider focus on the economic security of households had for long been envisaged as one of the ways to ensure that the environment in which children grow is more nurturing and more protective. However, skills enhancement with this context was limited to traditional trades (e.g. carpentry, stitching and tailoring) and to an objective of generating minimal or additional income within the household (income generating activities, IGAs). Approaches were therefore not high-impact as they did not aim for economic empowerment, and they were not particularly sustainable. It is the concomitant combination of several factors which led to the idea of a project like SAKSHAM:

- Economic development in India was booming, rapidly transforming the labour market with the expansion of the formal sector through services and manufacturing in particular. Reports of skills gaps started to appear, highlighting the need for a workforce equipped with different competences and skills. Rapid urbanisation both in megalopolis such as Delhi, Mumbai or Bangalore as well as in urban hubs of secondary importance (such as Dehradun) added to the concentration of entry-level, semi-skilled jobs in large numbers
- At the same time, concern was rising about the increasing phenomenon of unemployed and under-employed youth, a novelty in the Indian context, as well as the visibility of the “youth bulge” demographic trend
- Finally, there was a realisation at Plan International (as in other NGOs) that decades of investments and empowerment of children could be jeopardised or undermined if these children simply because or when they turn 18, were not accompanied to make successful transitions into adulthood and the world of work in particular. Globally, youth had been a neglected group in development programmes and policies until then.

SAKSHAM therefore originates in the need to provide a continuum of interventions from childhood to early adulthood, when the macro-economic context started to provide an alignment of favourable conditions to boost youth employability and more broadly, youth economic empowerment.

The unique strengths of Plan International were carefully considered and guided from the start some project features which still characterise SAKSHAM to this day:

- Plan International is a connector, a convenor with a role to coordinate and influence more effective and well-targeted service provision and rights entitlements, rather than directly delivering such services. Plan India has long-standing history of working in partnership with others, and this inspired the 3-partner approach for SAKSHAM (see further)
- Plan International has the strategic intent to become the go-to organisation for girls rights; SAKSHAM has been particularly in tune with this organisation-wide priority, attempting to mainstream gender and equality since inception

Evolution and phases

SAKSHAM's aims and model have in fact not significantly changed since inception in 2010. Although improvements were introduced and procedures formalised and refined, the focus on (i) being market-relevant so that young people can overcome the ‘skills gap’ which excludes them or keeps them at the margin of the current Indian job market, and (ii) contributing more widely to household economic security, has remained strong. Along a continuum of community-level mobilisation of young people > individual screening > soft and technical skills training > employment transition and support services and > post-placement counselling and follow-up, the model (see following section for further presentation and analysis) has been in place since Phase I. In particular, the strategic intent to respond to gender barriers and inequities has characterised the project since the beginning, albeit with amendments and deepening towards transformative approaches over time.

SAKSHAM has been implemented in nearly-continuous 3 phases: Phase I ran from early 2010 to June 2013, Phase II from July 2013 to April 2017. A gap between funding cycles meant that preparations were only completed in the last quarter of 2017 for Phase III to start, with the project fully operational at the beginning of 2018.

The main transformation of the approach was the introduction in the latter part of Phase II of a self-employment component targeted at rural areas (Vocational Training for Entrepreneurship Promotion, VTEP), mainly to date two mountainous districts of the State of Uttarakhand, to be expanded in 2019 to urban settings in Lucknow on a pilot basis.

Geographically, Delhi has been the main centre of operation since inception. Over time however, expansion to other urban centres such as Lucknow and Dehradun took place, a pertinent choice considering the need to focus on secondary urban centres. Indeed, as shown in most recent urbanisation research, these “second-tier cities” “Tier-II” as they are also referred to in the literature¹⁹, are the ones most likely to experience high demographic and economic growth in the years to come including in India. Where megalopolis such as Delhi, Mumbai or Chennai struggle with congestion, pollution, overcrowding and affordability, Tier II cities in India are growing in competitiveness, attracting both investors and citizens seeking better life opportunities. Lucknow for examples tops the ranking of fastest growing job-creating cities in India. India had at the last census 40 cities with a population between 1 and 5 million residents, and demographic growth is already outpacing that of primary cities – a trend expected to continue over the following decades.

Phase III, building from the lessons and achievements of previous cycles, brings in the additional improvement around digitalisation (in equipment, skills and management).

Aggregate results show that **out of more than 5,761 young people enrolled²⁰ in training sessions in either urban or rural locations since 2010 (and the thousands more screened and mobilised prior to enrolment), more than 9 out of 10 complete the training. Nearly 65% (at least 3,388 young people) effectively transition to either waged- or self-employment as a result of the training and employment services offered. This places SAKSHAM in the group of well-performing youth employment programmes, with results comparable to those of peers in the sector.** The majority of the trainees are now young women, and there has been over time improvements in their own transitions to employment, particularly in JOVT, where the barriers and challenges faced in the early stages of the project have been addressed to reach higher numbers and proportion of young women placed in formal employment.

¹⁹ UN-Habitat defines secondary cities as urban hubs with a population between 100,000 and 500,000. This definition is however challenged by the fact that reference figures are dated, and what is of “secondary” demographic importance is highly contextual. In India or China, it is not uncommon for tier II cities to count several millions residents. Two thirds of secondary cities in the world are located in Africa or Asia.

²⁰ This is taken as a minimum value as based on data up to July 2018 presented in narrative reports and evaluations.

Summary of project development over time

Sources: interviews, project proposals, logical frameworks, narrative reports, evaluations

	Phase I (2010-2013)	Phase II (2013-2016)	Phase III (2017-2020)
TITLE	A Youth Employment initiative: Skill Development & Livelihood promotion in resettlement colonies in Delhi		Saksham 3 – livelihoods support initiative for youth from disadvantaged communities in India
GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS	Delhi (urban, JOVT)	Delhi (urban, JOVT)	Delhi (urban, JOVT) Dehradun (UK, urban JOVT) Lucknow (UP, urban JOVT and peri-urban VTEP**) Uttarkashi, Gairsain (UK, rural, VTEP)
TARGET GROUP	Young women and young men aged 18 to 29, with a core focus on those aged 18 to 25	Uttarkashi, Gairsain (UK, rural, VTEP) Young women and young men aged 18 to 29 for JOVT, with a core focus on those aged 18 to 25 Young women and young men aged 18 to 35 for VTEP	Young women and young men aged 18 to 29 for JOVT, with a core focus on those aged 18 to 25 Young women and young men aged 18 to 35 for VTEP
PRINCIPAL OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 2,402 youth completed training [JOVT] out of 2,426 enrolled (i.e. 99% or less than 1% drop-out²¹) 1,187 M (49.4%), 1,215 F (50.6%) ✓ 1,464 in waged employment or 60.9% 768 M (52.5% of youth placed; 64.7% of young men trained), 696 F (47.5% of youth placed; 57.3% of young women trained) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 1,315 youth completed training [JOVT] out of 1,405 enrolled (i.e. 93.6% or around 6.4% drop-out²²) 546 M (41.5%), 759 F (58.5%) slightly under the 60F:40M targets although not in significant proportion, and in progress as compared to Phase I ✓ 953 in waged employment or 72.5% transition ratio [JOVT] 473 M (49.6% of youth placed; 86.6% of young men trained); 480 F (50.4% of youth trained, 62.4% of young women trained) on par with gender objectives ✓ 1,272 youth trained on technical VT [VTEP] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ **2,500 youth targeted for training [JOVT] with at least 60% women ✓ 287 youth completed training [JOVT] out of 484 enrolled²³; 118 M (41.1%), 169 F (58.9%) i.e. nearly on par with gender targets ▪ 155 in waged employment or 54% transition ratio [JOVT]²⁴ ▪ **750 youth targeted for training [VTEP] 102 youth trained on EDP technical VT [VTEP] out of 102 enrolled (29 M, 73 f) 71 youth trained on technical VT [VTEP] out of 71 enrolled (21 M, 50 F)

✓ Above target
✗ Below target

²¹ 2 young men and 22 young women dropped out of the training. Although more young women than young men dropped out, these numbers and proportions out of the total number of young people enrolled are not significant, thus not reported here.

²² Although higher than in Phase I, the drop-out ratio remains low, which indicates appropriate screening and targeting, and appropriate efforts to ensure retention in training. This is also due to timing issues, as some batches had yet to conclude at the time of reporting and these youth were not categorised as “training completed” yet. There are no gender differences in terms of drop-out between enrolment and training completion in Phase II: 93.8% of male trainees completed the course, and a similar proportion of 93.4% of female trainees.

²³ Data taken from Period 1 narrative report for Phase III (February-July 2018). At the time of reporting, some batches had not yet concluded and thus the variance between the number of enrolments and training completion. For this reason, the ratio is not included here as it would unfairly suggest a higher drop-out ratio.

²⁴ No gender disaggregation of data provided in narrative reporting; the transition ratio may seem low. It is due to the fact that some batches for which training was completed but placement not yet finalised were not yet reported as placed in waged employment.

PARTNERS	Alamb, AV Baliga Trust, CASP, Navrishti, EMPOWER		
	<p>1,157 F (91% of youth trained), 115 M (9% of youth trained)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 816 in self-employment or 64.1% conversion rate [VTEP] on par with targets <p>75 M (9.2%, conversion rate 65.2%), 741 F (90.8%, conversion rate 64%) exceeding gender targets</p>		
	Alamb, AV Baliga Trust, CASP, Navrishti, EMPOWER		
KEY MODEL FEATURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Centre-based training via partners ❖ 45-day JOVT curriculum, concept and process ❖ Market scan ❖ Alumni network ❖ Key trades: hospitality, retail, Customer Relations and Sales (CRS) ❖ Initiation of gender mainstreaming 		
	Same as Phase I +:		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ VTEP curriculum, concept and process 		
AMENDMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Transition away from household economic security & IGA-only approaches towards youth-focused employment ☑ Development of SOPs and project tools/documentation (e.g. forms) 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Entry into rural areas (UK districts) ☑ Financial literacy modules added to training curriculum ☑ M&E framework ☑ Stronger focus on staff and partners capacity development 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ Planned piloting of ICT-enabled interventions** ☑ Planned piloting of apprenticeships** ☑ Planned piloting of green skills** 		

Items marked with ** are only targets or plans for Phase II

Section 2: Relevance and Strategic Coherence

Evaluative questions explored in this section

RELEVANCE AND STRATEGIC COHERENCE: to what extent the objectives of the intervention are and remain over time appropriate and consistent with evolving beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donors' policies? How coherent is the programme with Plan International new strategic framework (including and in particular in relation to gender equality and partnerships)? How consistent is the programme with Plan International India and Plan International France's country strategic plans?

Internal coherence

Resonance with country strategic plans and the global strategy

Plan India's current strategic plan (Country Strategic Plan IV, or CSP IV, 2016-2020) strongly reflects Plan International's 100 Million Reasons global strategy, by adopting the 4 outcome areas of LEARN, LEAD, DECIDE and THRIVE and a core strategic focus on girls and "the excluded". Seven thematic areas are stated in the CSP, in the following order:

- Adolescent and Maternal Health
- Child survival and optimal development
- Water, sanitation and Hygiene
- Quality and Holistic Education
- Employability and Economic Empowerment
- Child Protection
- Disaster Risk Reduction

A strong onus on poverty reduction, equality, participation and empowerment is explicit in the CSP IV. SAKSHAM directly and coherently relates to the Employability and Economic Empowerment thematic area. In fact, it is precisely the experience through SAKSHAM which led to shifting paradigms within Plan India from a household economic security perspective (prevalent in previous strategy cycles) to a rights-based, empowerment approach to employment and economic programming. There is complete alignment and coherence between the project and the strategic plans with regards to priority age groups (18-24 generally speaking, and 18-29 for job-oriented employment programmes), priority target groups (girls and the excluded). Key elements which are however missing from SAKSHAM's programme theory (refer to other sections for details) to be fully coherent with the CSP are (i) an overarching goal around poverty reduction, and (ii) a strategic intent to work both at the micro-level (empowering young people) and at community or national level through influencing and policy dialogue (see figure below).

In spite of being a flagship programme both for Plan India and Plan International (including FNO and NLNO), SAKSHAM is far from operating at the scale targeted by the CSP. Although there are of course numerous other employability and economic empowerment initiatives run by Plan India in addition to SAKSHAM, it is also clear that the ca. 6,000 female and male SAKSHAM graduates 2010-2018 are only a comparatively minor portion of the wider target to reach 100,000 young women by 2020.

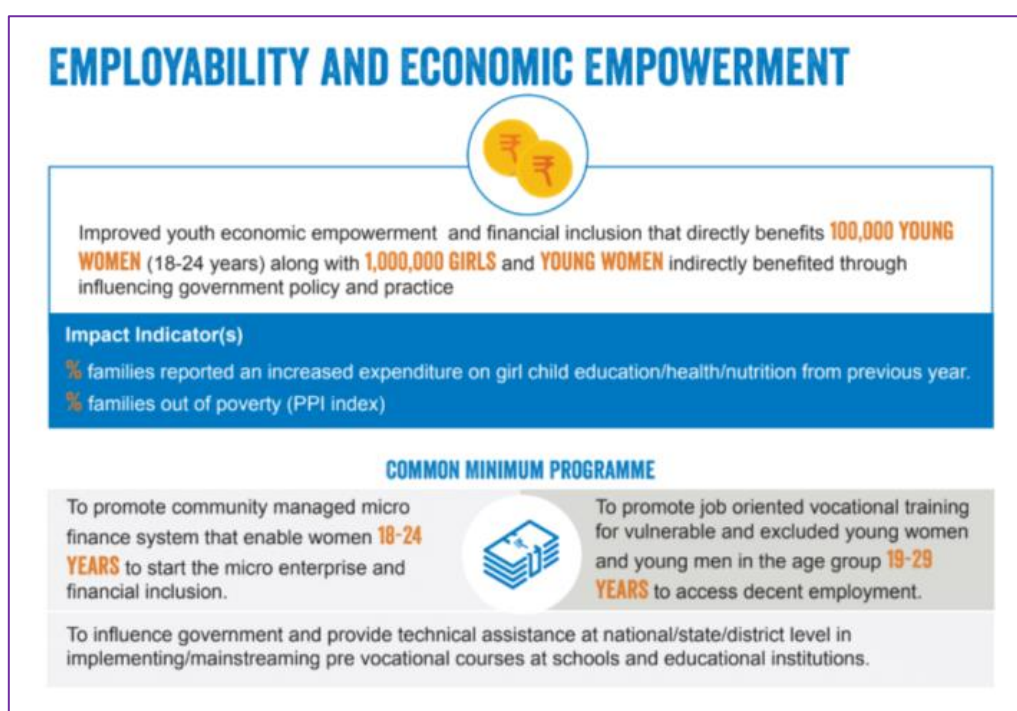


Figure 4 - CSP IV YEE objectives and targets

Coherence with global YEE frameworks across Plan International

In furtherance to previous remarks, SAKSHAM is also coherent with global YEE frameworks which have now been formally documented across Plan International with the creation of Areas of Global Distinctiveness. In particular, **SAKSHAM exemplifies (i) the intended focus on the vulnerable, the excluded and women as core target groups; (ii) an approach based on demand-driven training development in collaboration with private sector actors and (iii) the necessity of adopting community-wide approaches to genuinely transform the landscape for youth economic empowerment, including and in particular, around gender equality and gender transformative objectives. (iv) SAKSHAM is also a classic illustration of Plan International's economic empowerment pathway and programmatic components (see subsequent sections and discussions on the model).**

This review however found that a number of dimensions promoted by global YEE frameworks were missing or insufficiently developed within SAKSHAM. These include:

- The notion of **resilience**, which is absent from programme design and thinking within SAKSHAM
- The notion of **choice**, for young people to be "*actively engaged in decent work of their choosing*", is also limited in SAKSHAM. At present, the fact that there is a complete separation between wage employment options and self-employment options in SAKSHAM (the former existing only in urban areas and logically so, and the latter implemented only in rural settings even though demand and plans exist for entrepreneurship components to be implemented in urban settings) means that the capacity of young people to opt for career pathways of their choosing is constrained
- The notion of **savings and financial inclusion**, as even though training modules exist in the curriculum to raise awareness and build knowledge of financial literacy, there are no specific activities in place to promote youth savings groups as recommended by global strategic frameworks. Experience and previous evaluations in SAKSHAM have shown however that the degree of formal financial inclusion is rather good in SAKSHAM, with a majority of beneficiaries having formal relationships with banking institutions and declaring to save part of their earning.
- As also highlighted in other sections of this report, SAKSHAM does not have a **policy and influencing** component and as a result, the global objective to influence country-level compliance with international standards governing youth employment (e.g. CEDAW, ILO Conventions guiding the decent work agenda) is not adhered to. There is thus a missed opportunity to drive, in India, wider policy discussions around gender transformative, inclusive and youth-friendly labour market policies.

APPENDIX 2: RESULTS FRAMEWORK FOR SKILLS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Global Objective: Vulnerable and excluded young people, particularly young women, are resilient and are actively engaged in decent work of their choosing, be it waged or self-employed.

Global level key results: International institutions (UN bodies; multilateral financial institutions; regional bodies)

- Establish and promote gender and youth-responsive policies and standards, including regulations for financial instruments, related to decent work
- Incorporate gender and youth-responsive mechanisms into minimum economic recovery standards
- Systematically involve young people, and particularly young women, in decision-making processes related to decent work

Country level key results:



Figure 5 - Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship global results framework (Plan International, 2018)

Strategic coherence

SAKSHAM in context: trends and evolution in youth and skills development policies in India

As presented in the background section of this report, India faces a double challenge in terms of skills development for youth: (i) approaching the end of a demographic cycle, the country is faced with the tremendous challenge of mainstreaming unprecedented numbers of young people into its labour force (demographic dividend). Concomitantly, (ii) rapid economic transformations both in India and globally have urged for drastic transformations and investments in the education sector, including vocational education, in order to meet the increasing demand for skilled workers, particularly in the tertiary sector (services) which has led the economic boom. This is further heightened by India's integration in the globalised economy, the expansion of foreign trade and ambitious aims to attract foreign direct investments (FDI) in order to competitively position the country as a prominent economic powerhouse. The persisting mismatch and tensions between both these supply and demand sides in the workforce have led to rising youth unemployment, underemployment and economic marginalisation.

In response to this challenge, significant and consistent political priorities have been placed on education in India, particularly since the adoption and resourcing of the 2009 Right to Education Act (RTE, 2009). The Act guarantees free and compulsory schooling for children up to age 14. Near-universal enrolment and automatic promotion through the elementary stage (Grades 1 to 8) have resulted in more and more children successfully completing elementary schooling. According to official figures from the District Information System for Education (DISE), enrolment in Standard VIII (last year of primary education) almost doubled in the decade between 2004-5 and 2014-15, from 11 million to almost 22 million, with significant gender gains towards parity in primary education (Pratham Annual State of Education Report, 2018). Substantial progress in widening access to lower secondary (grades 9 and 10) has also been made.

Challenges however remain, which negatively impact youth employability:

- **Quality of education:** the expansion of the education sector has not yet translated into drastic changes in quality. An indirect measurement of this is the slow pace of progress in literacy levels (ca. 74% at the last census). Civil society as well as official government data report that basic skills acquisition remains a challenge,

and in particular foundational reading and numeracy skills. A preoccupying finding, linked to the post-primary gender gap, is that girls are less likely than boys to perform well on daily life skills such as reading time, counting money, measuring length, solving simple arithmetic problems or basic financial literacy

- *High drop-out rates beyond lower secondary:* investments in education have also included a sharp increase in upper secondary (Grades 11 and 12) and vocational education institutions (e.g. polytechnic institutes, technical / industrial / arts & craft schools). Enrolments at these levels, although they have increased and continue to do so, remain insufficient. All things considered, about **53% of a given age cohort still drops out before completing lower secondary education. This figure is even higher for disadvantaged groups** (UNESCO, 2012). Levels of completion in upper secondary and tertiary levels remain low. And **it is at this level, after age 14, that the gender divide starts widening**, with girls less likely to continue or even remain in education beyond the lower secondary level (Pratham ASER 2017). To be meaningful and contextually relevant, skills development and youth employment programmes must therefore pay priority and specific attention to the needs of school dropouts and those youth who have not completed secondary education, or at least the minimum primary education cycle.
- *Persisting inequalities between rural and urban areas:* educational attainment in rural areas has not been on par with that in urban settings. This means that **youth from rural areas, which are still where the majority of Indians live, are even less likely to be equipped with basic employability competencies** such as literacy, numeracy, digital fluency (including the use of modern computer-based technology) or English. Drop-out rates are higher and aggregate improvements in literacy mask the vast disparities between rural (under 69% literacy on average, with sharp gender variations) and urban locations (literacy levels in excess of 85% i.e. more than 15 percentage points as compared to rural areas)
- *Limited uptake for vocational education:* in spite of national plans to increase the number of secondary-level students opting for vocational education, or even to introduce some vocational streams into general secondary education with a view to increase youth employability, results have not met expectations. This could be due to deep-rooted social stratification norms, whereby workers in craft or manual trades would traditionally be undervalued. Upward mobility still means, for many Indian families, general education and 'white-collar jobs'. Low demand for vocational education and training is a key challenge in the wider skills development debate.

However, and in line with a more global shift in focus from access to and quality of basic education to market-relevant technical education and vocational training (TVET)²⁵, India has more recently adopted or reformed a number of policies, strategies and programmes for youth and skills development. Until then, coordination and linkages between formal education and TVET was minimal, and the responsibility for TVET was scattered across numerous ministries and departments/related agencies, each tasked with providing VT programmes for specific target groups or in the technical fields falling under their remit. This led to disparities, overlaps and fragmentation in the type of TVET offered, duration, targeting, 'market value' of certification obtained. More recently, the Skills India national agenda has pulled human and financial resources into boosting and unifying responses to the youth skilling challenge. Agencies such as NSDC have started to play a leading role, and the policy environment can be described as information-rich.

The generation of productive and gainful employment on a sufficient scale has been a long-standing objective of India's national five-year plans, and have also been integrated into other sectoral policies such as the National Gender Strategy or the national Youth Policy.

This policy-rich environment does however present a number of gaps, limitations and challenges including excessively centralised policy-making (although a process towards devolution of power to national States is taking place, with an increasing number of them taking a stand with state-wide initiatives for youth and/or rural employment for example, such as Rajasthan, Jharkhand, etc.), ineffective or insufficient coordination with the private sector, and insufficient efforts to revert the deficit image of technical education and VT. The effectiveness of national and state programmes with regards to targeting, outcomes and efficiency has been questioned by specialists, multilateral agencies and others.

It is important to highlight that the private sector has only had marginal direct role in the provision of formal vocational training. Only few large companies (e.g. Tata Motors, engineering or mechanical industries) have their own training

²⁵ Multilateral organisations such as the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, the EU and UNESCO have all substantially increased their focus on TVET in the last decade.

programmes and facilities. In recent years, private training institutes have opportunistically been set up to respond to the demands of the Skills India Mission; however the quality of training they offer, their linkages with the private sector, and thus results in terms of placement of trainees have been questioned.

This policy-rich context is well-known by Plan India, SAKSHAM project team and local partners. On principle, the project is directly relevant and coherent with national plans, policies and strategies. However, the absence of a policy and advocacy component in SAKSHAM, there is a missed opportunity to monitor, analyse, challenge, input/contribute to and influence these policies, plans and strategies to more effectively address the youth employment crisis in the same way that Plan International in India has effectively engaged at policy level on education or child protection issues. This limitation is a critical dent in what is overall, a relevant and pertinent project.

Decent employment and the labour market structure in India

The labour market environment in which SAKSHAM operates is complex. First of all, the aim to support the transition of targeted youth towards decent employment is laudable but extremely challenging in the Indian context. Indeed, in spite of economic transformations as engaged since 1991, the vast majority of the Indian workforce (around 90%²⁶) remains in the informal or 'unorganized' sector defined as employment in agriculture, private enterprises with under 10 employees, self-employment, casual labour or (paid and unpaid) employment in family businesses. This informal or unorganised sector still represents (estimates vary) up to half of the national income²⁷. The organised sector which employs only 1 in 10 workers, is comprised of private sector companies with 10 or more workers and a large - although declining in size and proportion - public sector.

On the other hand, multiple and converging reports have emerged to specifically highlight that (i) employment is one of if not *the* major economic issue(s) in India in the medium and long term with the figure of 100 million jobs needed in the next decade being consensually mentioned (PwC, NSDC Skills Gap Report). This implies that the focus needs to be on job creation as opposed to the "jobless growth" observed in the past decade (ILO, IMF), but also that (ii) job creation and employment need to be thought of *at scale*. A precondition to that is that the *scalable* solutions exist and are rolled-out to absorb the "skills gap" and "skills mismatch" (see previously) in order to provide meaningful responses to the issue.

Finally, a key trend in the Indian employment and labour market is that it is particularly dynamic and fast-changing. Sectors which boomed up until a few years ago, such as large-scale retail, are now experience a slowdown and resources (including new entrants to the labour market) must be redirected elsewhere. Emerging sectors are appearing, such as professional health and care, wellness, global logistics and to a lesser extent, the "green economy". In this context, it is important to work on core competencies required not only to enter the labour market, but also to navigate and adapt to changing job requirements and workplaces. A key focus on transferable life and social skills is thus essential, as well as longer-term vision of employment, beyond entry into the workforce.

Sectoral growth and evolution is well documented in India with a number of industry councils and statutory agencies (e.g. NSDC) publishing on a regular basis forecasts about job creation requirements, sectoral trends in recruitment and the changing nature of jobs and roles. In addition, global private actors (e.g. Accenture, PwC, Deloitte) also contribute with expert knowledge on those issues. The consequence of this fast-paced environment is that employment and skills development programmes need to be particularly nimble, agile, and adaptive to respond to the evolutions of the labour market.

Targeting

Socio-economic targeting: notions of vulnerability

SAKSHAM operates on the basis of a number of selection criteria, a number of which are socio-economic (e.g. youth from poor households, youth experience specific protection risks such as being orphans or engaged in exploitative labour, etc.). As evidenced in subsequent sections of this report, language around vulnerability has evolved in SAKSHAM since Phase I, to move away from a purely economic perspective ("the poorest households") to a more composite definition around the core concept of "marginalisation". Subsequent sections of this report discuss the gaps and contradictions between project intent and project reality in relation to vulnerability profiles.

²⁶ Report of the Committee on Unorganised Sector Statistics, Indian National Statistical Commission, February 2012

²⁷ A 2013 estimate from the World Bank is that the informal sector represents 60% of the Indian economy.

Geographic targeting

Over time, Plan International India have refocused their footprint in India to concentrate efforts in States and districts where children and young people were particularly vulnerable and at a disadvantage (Country Strategic Plans III and IV). This had led to refocused presence in Northern and Eastern states and gradual withdrawal from Southern India locations. Plan International India's current targeting of Northern and North-eastern States is particularly relevant in the debate around youth economic empowerment, as reports suggest it is precisely there that the majority of jobs will have to be created in the future. Indeed, research published by PwC in 2018 has shown that nearly 80% of the 100 million jobs needed by 2025 for young people entering the labour force would need to be generated in just 10 populous states of the North and North-East²⁸ where labour force participation ratios (LFPR) are particularly lagging behind. SAKSHAM's presence and experience in Uttar Pradesh in particular could prove particularly pertinent: *"nowhere is this challenge starker than in the state of Uttar Pradesh, which is home to one-sixth of India's population and has one of the youngest population in India"* (Amitabh Kant, CEO of the National Institution for Transforming India or NITI Aayog, cited by PwC in their Nagarik report 2018, see Annex 1 for reference).

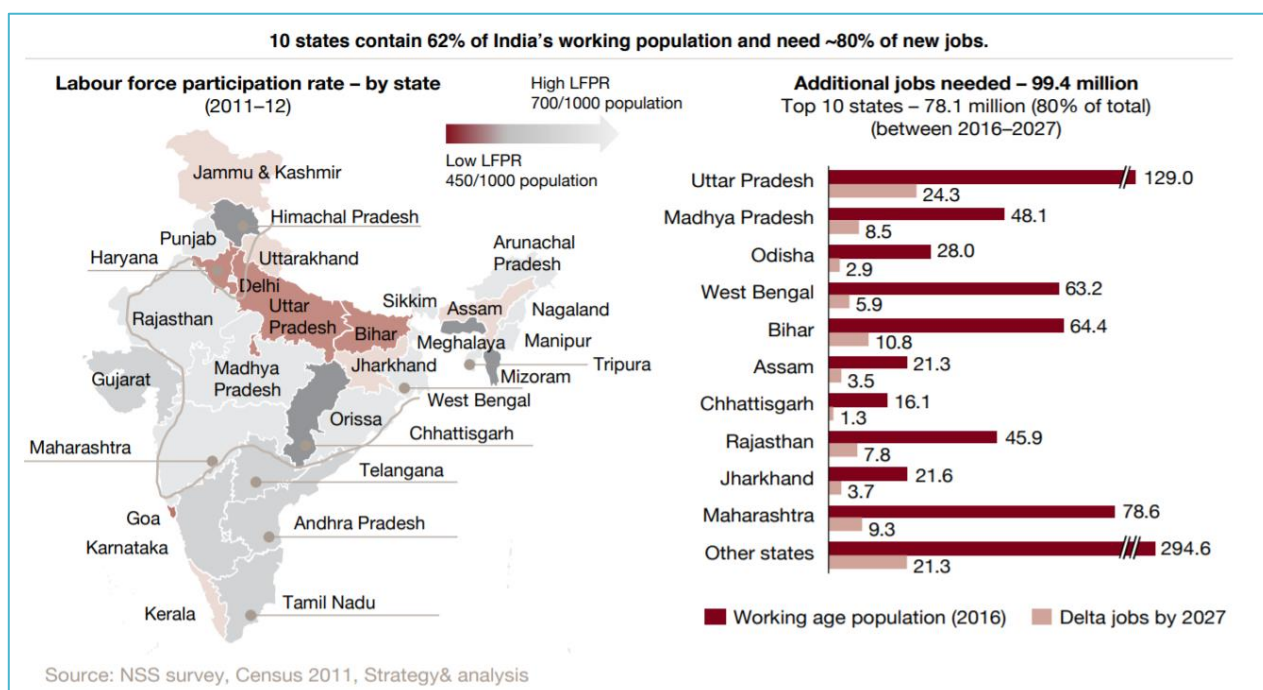


Figure 6 - PwC Nagarik report 2018

Across these 10 priority states, the report is also clear that rural and peri-urban areas should receive greater attention, in anticipation of a predictable and sharp decline in the percentage share of GDP of agriculture and increases in productivity (through automation mainly) which are likely to intensify migration movements to the south and west of the country, as already observed today. This will require specific solutions to be devised, as traditionally job-generating sectors (manufacturing, organised services, IT and IT-enabled services) are for obvious reasons not viable options in such rural contexts. Employment in rural areas is still vastly dominated by casual labour and self-employment (in the wide sense of the term, including cultivation and small-holding subsistence farming). The few non-agricultural forms of employment in rural settings (e.g. personal services, small manufacturing units, cottage/household industry units) belong by and large to the informal or unorganised sector. This combined with lower levels of education as previously described means that finding productive, decent, stable and secure forms of employment is an even greater challenge for rural youth as compared to their urban counterparts. Rural youth are therefore more likely to engage in low-productivity, low-paid occupations with limited opportunities for formal skills development. As such, they constitute a particularly disadvantaged or marginalised group in relation to accessing decent employment. In this regard, SAKSHAM's endeavour to promote economic empowerment in rural areas of Uttarakhand since Phase II is to be commended as pertinent in the wider context of changes in the labour market structure in the country and the under-addressed issue of employment for rural youth.

²⁸ Uttar Pradesh (UP), Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Odisha, West Bengal, Bihar and Assam

Gender

The project adequately places an important priority in targeting girls and young women who are indeed, when it comes to employability, education and transitions to employment, facing multiple forms of inequality, as reminded in previous sections. Of concern in particular is the fact that in the last Census of 2011, the sex ratio of India's population aged 0 to 6 years had dropped to 914 females per 1,000 males, an indication of deeply rooted and structural discrimination against girls and women.

Women and girls are also at a disadvantaged in their access to education and employment opportunities. India's LFPR of 57% in 2014 was lower than the global average by nearly 10 percentage points. One explanatory factor commonly cited is that out of nearly 400 million women in the working age group, only 29% are in the labour force (World Bank). Initiatives which specifically targets young women by improving their employability and removing the barriers hindering their access to the labour force are, in this context, particularly relevant and timely and SAKSHAM is one such initiative as it has set specific targets to reach at least 60% of young women through training, and strive towards equitable outcomes for both young men and young women in relation to employment, retention in employment, economic outcomes and social outcomes.

From an intersectional point of view, young women in rural settings are amongst the most excluded from the world of work, due to an accumulation of gender-specific barriers, rural-specific challenges (see previous section) and generally lower (and in fact, minimal) educational attainment (even more so if these young women are from marginalised groups such as SCs, STs and OBCs). Studies from the World Bank and other agencies have demonstrated that decent employment is directly correlated with education and training, particularly in the Indian context where the segmentation of the labour market means that "moving up the ladder" is extremely difficult.

Summary of key findings and conclusions

This review found that SAKSHAM was highly coherent with internal strategic plans existing within Plan India, as well as across the Plan International Federation. In particular, (i) the project focus on gender equality and gender transformative programming, (ii) the strong ethos around market-relevance of interventions and empowerment processes and (iii) community-wide engagement in support of project objectives are evident. Dimensions which are insufficiently addressed in SAKSHAM's project design include (i) the underlying notion of choice and career pathways between and across waged- and self-employment, (ii) the overarching goals of poverty reduction and individual resilience, as well as (iii) the necessary policy engagement to influence, in India, compliance with international standards governing youth employment and policy dialogue around gender transformative, inclusive and youth-friendly labour market policies. There is on this last point a missed opportunity for SAKSHAM to build on 8 years of programming experience to inform policy making, which should be integrated into future phases of programming.

This is all the more important as SAKSHAM's objectives and approaches, even nearly a decade after the project start, remain highly pertinent in the India context. The conjunction of a large skills gap (in spite of evident and drastic improvements in education systems and outcomes) and the forecasted entry to the labour market of at least 10 million youth every year for at least another decade implies that youth employment and economic empowerment will remain high on the national priority agenda in the foreseeable future. The skills development policy area is rich and dense in India, with consistent political will, plans in place and to a large extent, resourcing prioritised too. There are gaps however in the effectiveness of these policies and plans, and their usually admitted inadequacy in (i) coordinating with the private sector, (ii) reverting the deficit image of technical education and vocational training and (iii) effectively target vulnerable groups (including and particularly young women, who are, in India, amongst the most excluded from the labour market) with long-lasting and sustainable employment outcomes. It is precisely on these gaps that SAKSHAM has pertinent experience and responses to share.

Section 3: Outcomes for young people - skills acquisition and transitions to employment

Evaluative questions explored in this Section

EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT: SKILLS ACQUISITION AND TRANSITIONS TO EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUTH:

How many young people have been reached over 8 years (indirect and direct reach, disaggregation by sex, age, area and situation), and what is the profile of beneficiaries? How has this changed over time, if at all? How do these results compare with other approaches in the sector, and to what is known about effective approaches towards YEE?

Are beneficiaries and stakeholders satisfied with the project? Are the content and objectives of the training courses adapted to the targets and objectives? What are the key skills we provide or should improve?

Is the project efficient in leading youth to decent employment? What are the employability rates of the project per sex, age, area, orientation and time-lapse after training completion? How could the project be improved both for job-oriented and entrepreneurship training? What is the added-value of the project compared to other projects covering job-oriented training and youth employability?

General remarks

Appreciation of the quality of the datasets

Data shared by Plan India and observed by this consultant during the visit in Delhi demonstrate that SAKSHAM is collecting the type of information required to monitor most its activities, verify the profile of beneficiaries and measure key immediate economic outcomes for the young people concerned. A brief data dictionary is included as cover page for each of the data template, which is good practice to ensure consistency and reliability of data across multiple users. All key basic information is collected and encoded including date of birth, gender, date of entry into the project, family information, key project contact points over time. There are also visible and essential efforts to minimise errors and interpretation on key values by requesting formal proof for example in the form of birth certificates, appointment letters (for identity of employers, role, starting salary).

Several general limitations however exist:

- Raw data formats and templates are built by sequential tabs (e.g. one tab for screening, one tab for training etc.) rather than as a flat structure. Flat datasets (i.e. all information about an individual contained in one same line rather than duplicated or split in multiple tabs or even multiple files as it is currently the case) are a better practice as they facilitate the process of analysis (i) over time and (ii) between various fields more easily, and they also allow to track all interventions for all individuals in the programme, and identify patterns of drop-out.
- Only a fragment of all information collected seems to be used for the purpose of analysis and reporting. Datasets contained rich and extensive information, but narrative reports do not suggest that much use is made of most of the data collected and encoded. Reporting mainly covers descriptive numerics on training enrolment, training completion, employment status and income earned, with limited cross-analysis around key variables (e.g. cross-analysis is performed to some extent by gender, but not by educational profile, social status or family background for example, or even geographical/locations). As a result, narrative reporting is not structured to provide regular data points to feed into KPI/Logframe trackers, and results are presented and discussed primarily at output level and rarely at outcome level (see other sections hereafter for more details)

For the purpose of data analysis conducted specifically for this review, the following additional challenges were faced:

- Data management appears to be time-consuming as datasets are not necessarily formatted to easily lead to the information required for reporting, and much of the analysis process is manual. Digitalisation of data collection, data storage and data analysis should be prioritised, as it had already been flagged by previous reports and evaluations as a limitation to be addressed
- Data is encoded manually (no pre-defined fields or drop-down menu) which leads to inconsistencies in the way data is presented, and to visible mistakes (e.g. typing or encoding mistakes on dates and text fields, or inconsistency between coding fields from one phase to another). For educational background for example, records are at times presented as a class (e.g. 10th or 12th) or as a level (e.g. intermediate, graduate, etc.). Pre-defined categories are important to consider as they limit the potential for human error in encoding. While a screening form may include for example information about the highest educational level achieved (i.e. last class attended or degree/diploma received), this could be automatically converted to a level (e.g. no schooling / primary / secondary / tertiary) depending on what appears as relevant categories in the local context. Beyond this specific example, there were issues of quality with the considered datasets (e.g. inconsistencies in terminology, illogical or impossible/out-of-range values on age or gender)
- Data included in the datasets vary from information contained in narrative reports and evaluations, against which the datasets were checked for validity and consistency. When the difference was marginal, this was not mentioned in the analysis below. At times, the difference was substantial enough to suggest that (i) either the datasets shared with this consultant were incomplete or (ii) errors exist in numbers and values presented in previous reports.
- Baseline studies were mainly conducted as situation analysis rather than the collection of baseline values on key project indicators. This means, as well as the own limitation of this review (time and resource constraints meaning for example that no counterfactual data was to be collected), that in some instances (gender effects for example), it was not feasible to appreciate fully the extent of project impacts as it was not possible to assess what the situation was before the project, or what the situation is when there is no intervention.
- A specific list of data fields were due to be shared with this consultant for the purpose of analysis; however, not all this information was received. In addition, no data was received for Phase II (2013-2016) because data is spread over more than 75 separate files, as the basis of data management was a batch of trainees rather than individual trainees. It was assessed too time-consuming to compile these files into one single, flat database structure. Missing information includes: (i) screening data for JOVT (therefore mobilisation efficiency could not be investigated), (ii) consistency of fields and data across Phases (e.g. family income not systematically mentioned in all sub-sets of data received).

These challenges and limitations were observed and discussed with Plan India project team in New Delhi during the field visit.

Notes

Data analysis presented below has been performed on different sub-sets of data, which presents limitations as explained in the respective sections. The quantitative values presented and discussed are therefore only indicative of potential trends as they do not capture data across the entire population of SAKSHAM trainees since inception. When possible, they have been discussed and contrasted with other secondary data analysis available in project documentation. Cleaning and formatting of datasets has been a time-consuming exercise, and as a result has limited time available for in-depth analysis. Therefore, the analysis presented is only binary in most cases (i.e. looking at the intersection of two criteria such as gender and age or gender and education, even when cross-tabulation of more than 2 criteria would have been possible and relevant such as gender-education-trade, for example).

Profile of JOVT beneficiaries

Important methodological notes

Data analysis in support of findings and conclusions with regards to JOVT beneficiaries' profile was based on 3 distinct datasets shared by Plan India, covering the periods (i) September 2010-December 2012, (ii) September 2016 to April 2018 and (iii) April 2018 to December 2018. Two observed limitations are: (a) no data was included for Phase 2 (2013-2016); however, this limitation was mitigated by the fact that a robust and detailed evaluation was conducted at the end of Phase 2 and which provides data and facts to contrast some of the below findings. Furthermore, the outreach in Phase 2 was lower than in Phase 1 and the current Phase 3: the mass of data from Phase 2 thus has a more limited "weight" in the total database. Another limitation is that all data received and analysed focused on Delhi project locations, which implies that no comparative analysis can be presented on the basis of geographical criteria for JOVT.

Data considered was consigned in three separate datasets, which had to be analysed separately as data fields were not consistent from one dataset to the other, and pre-empting the merging of the 3 datasets into one, consolidated database. Comparison between the total number of valid entries in these datasets (3,914 individual records including 1,975 females i.e. 50.5% and 1,939 males i.e. 49.5%) and data presented in narrative reports and evaluation documents which suggest a total of 4,319 young people enrolled in JOVT between 2010 and the end of 2018 means that the considered datasets represent ca. 90.6% of the total JOVT population since inception. Therefore, although analysis is only partial, it is based on a substantial proportion of trainees, implying that findings and conclusions drawn can be taken as robust unless stated otherwise.

It is also important to notice that **gender counts and proportions have evolved over time**: the proportion of young women enrolled into SAKSHAM training cycles has increased **from under 45% in Phase 1 to nearly 63% in the latest batches of 2018**. This transcribes a purposeful and strategic focus on improving employment chances and outcomes for young women, which has become a more prominent objective for SAKSHAM and more generally Plan India over time. This also translates the achievements in removing some of the key barriers facing young women in relation to technical vocational training and employment, towards which important efforts and resources have been oriented since Phase 2 (see other sections of this report).

Age profile²⁹

Overall, **the average age³⁰ of trainees in the considered dataset was 20.7 (21.05 for young women and 20.4 for young men). This is coherent with a survey conducted in 2016-17 as part of the Phase II evaluation**, which concluded that the average age of beneficiaries (specifically for Phase II) was of 21.5 years, without significant differences between young women and young men.

There has been some variations in relation to age profile of JOVT beneficiaries, over time:

- Trainees from more recent batches and phases of the programme tend to be on average a year older than trainees who had enrolled in earlier phases of the project. However, this is not due to recruitment of older individuals overall, but to stricter compliance with programme selection criteria, as the number and proportion of trainees younger than 18 years of age has reduced over time, to be nearly inexistant in the latest batches.
- Regardless of project phases, female trainees are on average older than their male counterparts, although this trend is reducing with a narrowing of the age gap between young female and young male trainees in latest batches. The reason for this gender age gap remains to be explored
- The upper age limit is less consistently adhered to, as the maximum ages recorded vary between 38.7 and 43.8 depending on batches, far beyond the 29 years age limit set by programme criteria.

Routine reporting does not include indicators of average, minimum, maximum and median ages in spite of the importance of this criterion to gauge project coherence and consistency with targeting criteria. Only evaluations have touched on this point.

²⁹ Findings from this section are partial only: they are based on analysis of 2,735 valid records (plus 59 invalid records from Phase 1 bringing the total to 2,794 individual records) split across 2 datasets, the first one covering the 2010-2012 period (Phase 1) and the second one covering 2018 (Phase 3).

³⁰ A measure of the median age would have been more meaningful considering the broad spread of data from minimum to maximum age recorded (the youngest individual in the dataset was recorded as 15.8 and the oldest as 43.8 i.e. a span of 28 years vs. a span of 11 years in project criteria which set the age bracket as 18 to 29). However, formatting issue with the 3 sub-sets of data did not allow for such calculations in the available time.

Educational profile

Inconsistencies in data entries make it challenging to comment precisely on the educational profile of SAKSHAM beneficiaries. Indeed, the absence of a consolidated, all-phases, all-locations database means that data analysis is on the basis of partial secondary data. A number of inaccuracies were also identified in the datasets, with similar education levels recorded in different ways (e.g. “BA”, “BCom”, “Graduate” are used to describe tertiary educational levels, with manual entry errors identified by this consultant). Those errors were however fewer than in the VTEP dataset (see below) and no confusion as to the education level recorded was identified.

Education levels were analysed on the basis of a sub-set of beneficiaries, i.e. those in Delhi enrolled in training between September 2016 and February 2018. This represents 1,120 individuals including 593 young women (52.9%) and 527 young men (47.0%) as shown in the table below.

Training Count by Education Level & Gender (Sample data from 2016-2018) ³¹						
Education Level	Count			Proportions		
	F	M	Grand Total	F	M	Grand Total
Primary	0	0	0	0%	0%	0%
Lower secondary	355	312	667	59.9%	59.2%	59.5%
Higher secondary	161	141	302	27.1%	26.8%	27.0%
In tertiary education	13	9	22	2.2%	1.71%	2.0%
Tertiary completed	64	65	129	10.8%	12.33%	11.5%
Grand Total	593	527	1120	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Overall, the educational level of trainees in the considered sub-dataset was found as medium (i.e. up to higher secondary) with nearly 9 in 10 individuals in this category. The fact that no individual with an education level below 10th standard is reported suggests that selection criteria are strictly adhered to, and that there is thus strong coherence between intended targeting and actual implementation. This is corroborated by similar analysis conducted in the Phase II evaluation, which concluded that over 70% of trainees had completed secondary education (12th standard or more).

No significant variance between female and male ratios in each education category was identified, as young women and young men are represented in comparable proportions in the considered dataset. If at all, young women seem to be at an advantage at tertiary levels, although numbers are too limited to draw any conclusive remarks or confirm this hypothesis. This may reflect overall the more conducive environment for girls’ education and educational attainment in urban areas (JOVT being implemented exclusively in urban settings).

Skills acquisition

With regards to sectoral training and trades, it was found that 8 different and distinct options have been offered to young people since inception through JOVT – this is however based on partial data (ca. 72% of the estimated total of young people trained since 2010³²) lacking most of 2018 data. As a result, new trade introduced in 2018 such as Food and Beverages in Dehradun (although related to Hospitality) and Health & Care are not represented in the summary table below. There also seem to be an under-representation of young women, possibly due to the fact that the earlier cohorts of trainees from Phase 1 counted fewer than 45% of young women.

The most common trades offered and opted for through JOVT in Delhi are Customer Related Services (CRS) and Retail: together these two sectors gather nearly 9 in 10 of all trainees. At least 2,781 young people have enrolled in such courses through SAKSHAM (1,344 young women i.e. 48.3% and 1,437 young men, i.e. ca. 51.7%). It is laudable that SAKSHAM strives to offer training in sectors not traditionally targeted by vocational training offers, to some extent moving away from highly gender-marked sectors such as beauty, care and tailoring (for young women) or machine-enabled services for young men (e.g. mechanics).

³¹ This table captures data from a sub-set of the total number of young people reached through JOVT (waged employment): those in Delhi enrolled between September 2016 and February 2018. This concerns 1,120 young men and young women.

³² The dataset for 2018 as shared by Plan India did not include information on trade – this does not imply however that this information is not captured: it has (inadvertently) not been included in the dataset compiled for the purpose of this analysis.

	Sub-total (count)			Sub-total (%)		
	F	M	TOTAL	F %	M%	Total %
Retail	794	715	1509	52.62%	47.38%	48.35%
DRA	45	38	83	54.22%	45.78%	2.66%
Driving	0	63	63	0.00%	100.00%	2.02%
Hospitality / HSPT	67	58	125	53.60%	46.40%	4.01%
ITeS	22	47	69	31.88%	68.12%	2.21%
CRS	550	722	1272	43.24%	56.76%	40.76%
TOTAL	1478	1643	3121	47.36%	52.64%	100.00%
	72.3%	estimated of the total # of trainees since inception (4,319)				

The effort to place young women in the Retail sector (and Hospitality, to a lesser extent as fewer number of young people have undergone that training) in particular is noticeable and laudable, as this is traditionally a sector in the Indian context where employers have often shown a preference for male candidates³³: it is not uncommon in the shop-floor of a department store or a mall in Indian megalopolis to find that most of the assistants and retail clerks are young men. In this regard, this data would suggest that SAKSHAM is contributing to bridge the gender divide in accessing employment in the retail sector. The project has been less successful in achieving a transformative gender track record in other sectors: all young people trained to become drivers (Phase 1 experiment) were young men and the majority (68%) of those trained to access ITeS jobs³⁴ were young men too, for example. On the other hand, in the Indian context (referring to a 2018 World Bank study) are disproportionately preferred and represented in household elementary jobs (e.g. domestic employee, maids in hospitality) and caregiving jobs, as well as beautician and receptionist positions which are usually less paid. It would be interesting to observe the gender distribution of trainees in the new batches on Health & Care.

Transitions to employment

SAKSHAM's performance in relation to transition to employment is by and large positive, as nearly 8 out of 10 young people (77.2%) in the cohort of trainees considered have been placed into formal employment within the imparted period. Moreover, the transition period between training completion and start of employment is short – the 2016 evaluation calculated that this period was under 20 days on average. This was also confirmed in participatory discussions with staff, as the employment transition period was reported as 2 to 3 weeks.

This demonstrates that the project is delivering on its main objective of employment outcomes for young people, and thus that the methodology or approach used is effective and appropriate. Gender differences were found in transition ratios; however, time constraints pre-empted further analysis into the possible related factors (e.g. whether transition to employment is more determined by sector or by gender or possibly other factors not captured by the datasets such as personal and family circumstances). No gender differences were found in relation to the job designation or role. In other terms, even though differences may exist between young women and young men in terms of accessing employment, the type of employment accessed is similar without differences in job titles.

The majority of trainees placed in employment work as executives (e.g. operations executive, sales executive, tele caller, data entry operator) or assistants, accessing the entry-level jobs targeted by the project. It can thus be asserted that the project results are coherent with the approach and objectives. On this point, efforts made in the 2016 Phase II evaluation to explore longer-term employment outcomes beyond the first job provided particularly salient points of analysis including:

- On average, a trainee would stay only 8.2 months in their first, post-training job (slightly more for young women, who tend to stay longer in their roles); this is important to notice, as it also suggests that more so than technical skills, it is also general employability skills (capacity to visualise a career path, self-confidence, job seeking

³³ A study of online job postings in India published in March 2018 by the World Bank has highlighted that employers have an explicit preference of male candidates in machine-related (e.g. driving, manufacturing), sales (e.g. retail) or elementary jobs (watchmen, gardeners). The only sector which is the exception and shows dominant preference for female candidates is BPO. This study was made possible by the fact that it is legal in India to mention gender as a criterion in job postings or recruitment ads.

³⁴ ITeS stands for Information Technology Enabled Services and may include web-enabled or remote services such as tele-working (e.g. call centres, billing and coding, etc.) or back office operations (e.g. accounts, logistics).

practices, job readiness, interview skills, etc.) which are essential to secure, including for SAKSHAM trainees. In the long term, this is what helps them navigate the world of work, rather than access to a first job per se

- Pay and working conditions are the most common reasons for changing jobs
- 2 years upon training, 80% of the young people surveyed were still in employment, which is an indication of broader project impacts and sustainability of results; without counterfactual data however, it is not possible to compare this with the situation for the general population of young people

These longer-term indicators of impact are however not routinely measured and tracked by the project, and it would be advised to introduce longitudinal perspectives in project monitoring, by following a selected, representative cohort of young people beyond the mandatory 6 months post-training.

It is also interesting to note that where in Phase 1 there were fewer than 70 employers or places of employment as per project records, this has grown to over 100 for more recent batches, for Delhi only. There is therefore a widening of options for young people to access the job market.

In terms of salary at first employment and economic outcomes, the following findings can be presented:

- **The salaries paid to SAKSHAM graduates are exposed to the same salary fluctuations noticed at the macro-economic level in India over the past decade**, with a tendency for salaries to stagnate or even decline in recent years as compared to the initial period of the urban economic boom;
- the **average salary at first employment currently stands at around INR 9,305**, although there are substantial variations between locations (Delhi salaries, because of city conveyance compensations, are substantially higher than in satellite towns or other cities where the project is implemented including more recently Dehradun)
- **SAKSHAM graduates' pay checks were comparable if not higher than minimum wages standards set for the Delhi metropolitan area in initial years, but tend to lag behind or not have caught up with minimum wages standards more recently**; measuring salaries in relation to minimum wages would be an important indicator to track to ensure, in a direct rather than proxy way, that young people do indeed access employment which can be qualified as decent³⁵
- **Although there is a gender pay gap, with young women usually receiving lower salaries than their male counterparts, this gap is narrow and lower than for the general population**. Indeed, the gender pay gap in India is estimated to be of just under 8% for entry level jobs, increasing to 15 or even 25% over time³⁶ but it was found to be under 2.3% in the considered datasets, which is a positive and laudable achievement for SAKSHAM in terms of furthering gender equality in the workplace. Data from 2018 may suggest that it is increasing, but this could be due to the very limited range of data available (as the placement period was not complete by the time data was consulted and analysed). This pay gap, as suggested by the 2016 evaluation, may be due to the fact that young women and young men may not access the same type of roles. When they do, no salary variation is noticed (e.g. for the same role, no pay difference between female and male SAKSHAM graduates). Over time, young men seem to have easier access to better paying jobs such as accounting clerks or supervisors/managers (this is however a working hypothesis based on previous evaluation results and a limited number of interviews, and would need further probing)

To be complete and more insightful, these findings would need to be further cross-tabulated with other factors such as trade/sector, which was not done due to time constraints on this occasion.

Profile of VTEP beneficiaries

Important methodological notes

Data considered was consigned in two separate datasets, which were merged into one by this consultant. Comparison between the total number of valid entries in this dataset and data presented in narrative reports (Phase II report in particular) indicate that the dataset received is only a sub-set of the wider population of young people reached by the

³⁵ At present, although there is a wider objective to promote access to decent employment, SAKSHAM does not track data in this regard. Access to formal employment with a private sector company is taken as a proxy indicator of decent employment without further investigation into remuneration and other factors of decent employment.

³⁶ 2017 report for India from the Wage Indicator Foundation

project. On screening for example, the dataset included 1,518 records vs. 2,132 in the narrative report. Therefore, systematic cross-checking between the various sources of information was done in order to ensure that the findings and conclusions were in line with broader trends for the entire group. Although this is a limitation as the analysis presented below cannot claim to be exhaustive, efforts were made to understand how representative it is of the wider situation. When this could not be asserted, it has clearly been stated below.

Screening & selection

There are 1,518 record of young people screened for the programme in the considered dataset, out of which the vast majority were young women (89.3% vs. 10.7% of young men³⁷). The low proportion of men screened for the programme is of concern, as although the project has specific targets for enrolments of young women, they are not aiming for the vast majority of beneficiaries to be women. This may suggest, as discussed during the visit with Plan India staff and SBMA staff in Uttarkashi, that there are specific challenges in reaching out to young men in the selected locations. Explanations shared by these informants included the fact that very young men leave rural areas early on to go and work in the cities, in other States or sometimes overseas (e.g. Middle East and Gulf countries), often in the hospitality sector. They return several years later, when they are to get married or when they take over responsibility for the land in particular. Young men are thus difficult to engage in the critical, core age group of 18 to 25 targeted by the project.

It should be noted here that the numerical value of young male trainees (n=133) is small, which is challenging for some aspects of data analysis (see below sections about transition to employment).

In relation to gender at the screening stage, it also emerged from the analysis that males were identified in only 13 clusters of villages out of the total of 30 (females on the other hand were screened and identified in all 30 clusters), and the vast majority of them (85%) in fact were screened in only 5 clusters: Barethi, Lata, Netala, PU and Pipali. This may have implications in terms of the profile of these young men, as these clusters may have specific socio-economic characteristics. This remains to be explored further.

Overall, the selection ratio is of 76% in the considered dataset³⁸, with higher percentages of rejection for young women as compared to young men. This leads to minor and not significant corrections in the gender profile of those enrolled in training, with 11.6% male for example, as compared to 10.7% at screening stages.

The majority of rejections were due to a lack of time as well as lack of interest on the part of the young person to set-up a self-employment activity or a small business (several declared they would be interested in training, but are not interested in business development). Beyond this main reason which accounts for nearly 55% of the rejections, there are several other specific reasons which appear to be at times specific to a particular case.

The clusters with the highest rejection ratio are Kunigad, Aadibadri, Maithan and Mehalchauri.

Numbers split by Gender and Selection decision				
Selection Decision	F	M	Not mentioned	Grand Total
Rejected (n)	340	29		369
Rejected (%)	25%	18%		24%
Selected (n)	1,015	133	1	1,149
Selected (%)	75%	82%		76%
Grand Total	1,355	162	1	1,518

Age profile

The minimum age reported in the dataset was 18 and the maximum was 36. Only 1 person reported an age of 36 at the time of training which means that age selection criteria for VTEP are scrupulously adhered to in the considered sub-set of data.

The average age of VTEP trainees was 24.2 years, which is 3.5 years older than their urban JOVT counterparts. Similar findings came out of a small survey conducted in 2016 as part of the Phase II evaluation, which found that the average

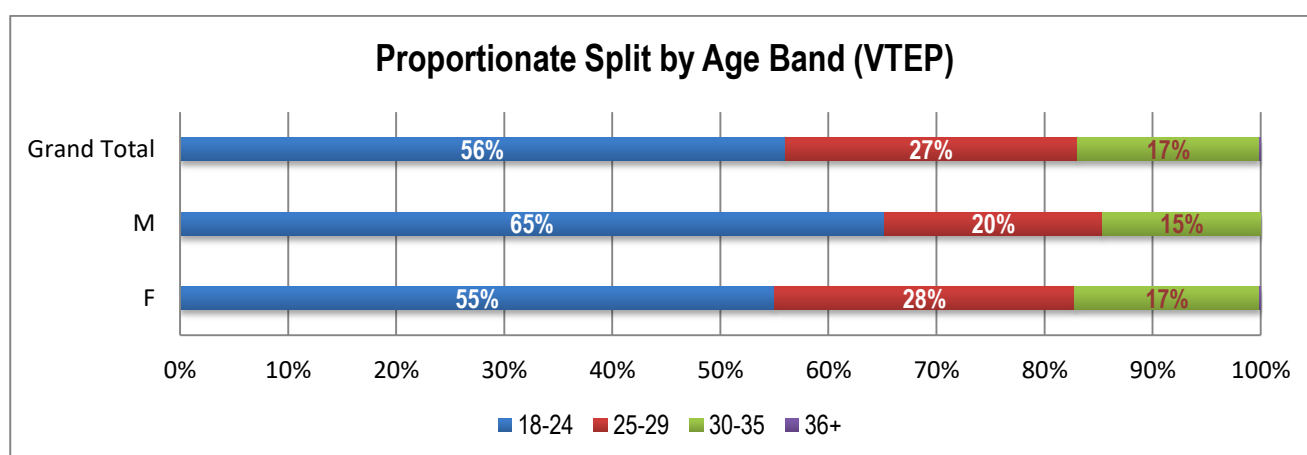
³⁷ This could not be compared with data on the total number of 2,132 mentioned in narrative reports as that number did not include data disaggregated by gender.

³⁸ This ratio is of 65% in the overall dataset (1,393 trained in EDP out of 2,132 screened)

age of trainees was 26 (as compared to 21.5 for JOVT). Male trainees tend to be on average a year younger than their female counterparts (23.3 vs. 24.3 for young women), a trend also observed in urban project locations although precise explanations remain to be explored. Closer analysis around median age³⁹ actually shows that the median age is 23, and is lower for young women than for young men. This is explained by the higher number and proportions of young women in the older age categories (30 and above), where few young men were found. In fact, the majority of young men in the dataset were aged 24 or less.

The profiles of young people in JOVT and VTEP streams are clearly different: urban beneficiaries of the JOVT programme tend to be younger, single and better educated than their VTEP counterparts.

Age Band	Numbers			Proportion		
	F	M	Grand Total	F	M	Grand Total
18-24	467	58	525	55%	65%	56%
25-29	236	18	254	28%	20%	27%
30-35	145	13	158	17%	15%	17%
36+	1	0	1	0%	0%	0%
Grand Total	849	89	938	100%	100%	100%



Educational profile

Inconsistencies in data entries make it challenging to comment precisely on the educational profile of SAKSHAM beneficiaries. Indeed, for a large proportion (over 35%) the educational level is reported as “intermediate”. It is unclear whether this would refer to primary or lower secondary education for example. Other data fields (e.g. family background, occupations etc.) are not sufficient enough proxy indications either. If intermediate is assimilated to either primary or lower secondary education (i.e. medium level), this review found that **the majority (60.4%) of SAKSHAM VTEP trainees have a low to medium level of education. This is particularly so for female trainees, as 62.1% of them fall in this category as compared to only 44.9% of their male counterparts.** This gender divide in educational background appears specifically with VTEP beneficiaries: no significant variations were identified in the sub-set of JOVT urban beneficiary data analysed (see remarks in previous sections).

Other ambiguous terms such as “literate” are also used to describe education level. Although it is assume that this refers to primary level education, it cannot be asserted with certainty and has been reported separately (see table below). This could suggest that data for “primary” levels is potentially under-estimated in the table below.

Training Count by Education Level & Gender

Count

Proportions

³⁹ When data is spread across a wide range of values, it can be interesting to look at median values in addition or instead of average values. Indeed, averages can be skewed if extreme values (in this case, trainees at the low end of the age scale or at the high end) are found. This was the case in the considered dataset, particularly for female trainees.

Education Level	F	M	Grand Total	F	M	Grand Total
Primary	57	1	58	6.7%	1.1%	6.2%
Lower secondary	147	19	166	17.3%	21.3%	17.7%
Higher secondary	146	37	183	17.2%	41.6%	19.5%
Tertiary	176	12	188	20.7%	13.5%	20.0%
Other	323	20	343	38.0%	22.5%	36.6%
Grand Total	849	89	938	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Skills acquisition

The dataset considered includes 938 valid trainees' records, which suggests that the drop-out ratio between screening and selection would stand at approximately 24%, and between selection and actual enrolment (or completion – it is unclear whether the dataset only has data for those who completed the training or all those enrolled) at and training completion would stand at approximately 18%. These are substantial proportions, particularly in terms of drop-out during training. They are also different from the proportions calculated based on numerical information given by the narrative reports and evaluation which may suggest that the considered dataset either coincidentally include higher-than-average proportion of drop-outs, or that some records between screening and training tabs of the considered dataset are missing.

Young men are more likely to not join the training as compared to young women (see table below), which is of concern considering that they already are a minority of the individuals screened and selected into the programme. Less than 90 young men completed their respective training batches, which critically limits the scope of quantitative analysis which can be done on economic outcomes for them (see below). This trend is also captured in comparable proportions (variances are not significant) in narrative reporting: indeed, from numerical information provided, it was calculated that young men represented 11.7% of those trained on EDP but they only represent 9% of those who completed the skills (technical) training.

Numbers split by Gender				
Gender	Training completion (n)	Training completion (%)	Screening Totals (recall)	Variance (in %)
F	849	83.6%	1015	-16.4%
M	89	66.9%	133	-33%
Not mentioned	1	0%		
Grand Total	939	100%	1148	-18.2%
Male prop	9.5%		11.6%	

In total, 13 different technical sectors ('trades') were availed by trainees⁴⁰. However, only 5 of these (mobile repair, tourism guide, milk production, dairy production, vegetable cultivation) attracted both female and male trainees according to the considered dataset, which suggests that there is still gender-stereotyping of gender-segregation at play. Trades which received exclusively female trainees were Beauty Parlour, Hand Knitting, Knitting and Tailoring. In fact, nearly 83% of female trainees have been trained in one or the other of these 4 trades, which can be interpreted as reinforcement of pre-existing gender stereotyping as these are, traditionally, women-dominated sectors of employment and skills. Trades which exclusively attracted male trainees included motor mechanics, plumbing, retro-fitting and poultry. These are traditionally, men-dominated sectors of employment and skills. Considering the gender-transformative ambition of SAKSHAM, these reinforced gender stereotypes would need to be addressed in the future.

Number and proportions by Trade						
Trade	F (n)	F (%)	M (n)	M (%)	TOTAL (n)	TOTAL (%)
Beauty Parlour	78	9%	0	0.0%	78	8.3%

⁴⁰ Mobile repair, Tourism Guide, Plumbing, Milk Production, Dairy production, Retro-fitting, Vegetable cultivation, Poultry, Beauty parlour, Knitting, Hand Knitting, Tailoring, Motor Mechanics.

Dairy production	35	4%	7	7.9%	42	4.5%
Hand knitting	94	11%	0	0.0%	94	10.0%
Knitting	216	25%	0	0.0%	216	23.0%
Milk production	16	2%	4	4.5%	20	2.1%
Mobile repair	2	0%	7	7.9%	9	1.0%
Motor Mechanics	0	0%	1	1.1%	1	0.1%
N/A	3	0%	0	0.0%	3	0.3%
Plumbing	0	0%	2	2.2%	2	0.2%
Poultry	0	0%	15	16.9%	15	1.6%
Retro-Fitting	0	0%	7	7.9%	7	0.7%
Tailoring	315	37%	0	0.0%	315	33.6%
Tourism Guide	11	1%	33	37.1%	44	4.7%
Vegetable cultivation	79	9%	13	14.6%	92	9.8%
Grand Total	849	100%	89	100%	938	100%

Transitions to employment and entrepreneurship

There are 498 records in the dataset of trainees who set-up an activity (self-employment or small business) upon completion of the VT course. This is much lower than the numbers reported narrative reports, which were of 816 for Phase II alone. There are also major discrepancies in relation to training-to-self-employment conversion ratio between the concerned database and information presented in narrative reports. Indeed, the reported conversion rate was of 64%, with no significant variations for young women vs. young men. But in the concerned dataset, the ratio was as low as 53.1%, with substantial differences between males (37.1%) and females (54.8%). This is most likely due to the fact that analysis for the purpose of this review is only based on a sub-set of data which does not include all records (see previous explanations). It was not possible to assess how representative this sub-set was of the wider population of young entrepreneurs in the project.

Conversion rates are particularly low for those trained in running a Beauty Parlour (around 32%), which questions the suitability of this trade in the programme as well as the pertinence of market scans approaches, as one possible explanation could be a situation of market saturation (another being the slightly higher investment costs required as compared to other trades in which young women primarily were trained).

Only 10 out of the 13 trades are represented in the productive activities set-up post-training. No business or enterprise was set-up in milk production, retro-fitting and tourism guide in the considered dataset. For the latter, it should be noted that it is a new trade offered only since 2018 and that there are specific barriers in this sector to set-up an activity, such as the capital required to either build or renovate accommodation as homestays which meet the standards of Uttarakhand State Tourism authorities, as well as the certification process with these agencies, which have been reported as being lengthy in discussion with trainees and SBMA staff in Uttarkashi.

The seed capital that beneficiaries have declared investing in setting up their activity varies greatly. The average of Rs. 7,639 in fact masks huge disparities between the Rs. 3,166 average required for vegetable cultivation and the Rs. 100,000 required in motor mechanics. Much of this initial investment is required for set-up costs such as machinery, raw material, etc. Access to capital is one of the main barriers for young people in India and elsewhere to transition to self-employment or entrepreneurship. In the range of trades offered by the project, it is thus important to consider both the need for seed capital which should be expected, and the return on investment expected (which in very basic terms can be calculated as the income or income increase vs. the amount invested). This is even more important as long as the project does not have the sufficient budgetary provision or the required partnerships (e.g. micro-finance institutions, youth entrepreneurship grants, other schemes) to support young people in meeting these costs. At present, the majority have to mobilise these resources privately, through their own networks and connections or community-based informal savings and credit structures such as Self-Help Groups (SHGs), as indicated in interviews and group discussions which took place in Uttarkashi. In this regard, sectors such as mechanics or dairy productions may be particularly challenging for young people to consider.

The 2016 evaluation had noticed a correlation between the amount of seed capital and the likelihood of the activity or business being successful: those who are still active after a year and generating an income through self-employment were it seems those who had been able to access larger capital and start-up support. It would be important to explore

this further, to understand precisely the reason for business failures. It also goes to show that the first year is highly critical, and entrepreneurship support should be extended throughout this time to ensure the viability of the activity.

It should also be noticed here that male-exclusive trades (Motor Mechanics, Plumbing, Poultry) are also those where the highest conversion rates were observed. This is to be analysed with prudence however, as the number of young men in these sectors are particularly low in the considered dataset.

Trade Trained on	Count	Average of Seed capital invested	Average of Income Declared	Income vs Investment	"Conversion rate"
Mobile Repair	1				
Motor Mechanics	1	100,000	5,000	5%	100%
Plumbing	2	10,000	3,000	30%	100%
Poultry	15	19,333	2,533	13%	100%
Beauty Parlour	25	14,103	1,222	9%	32%
Dairy production	35	32,243	3,348	10%	83%
Vegetable cultivation	56	3,166	5,585	176%	61%
Hand knitting	65	5,609	954	17%	69%
Knitting	141	5,161	1,137	22%	68%
Tailoring	157	3,947	931	24%	67%
Grand Total	498	7,639	1,735	23%	

For some trades, the very limited income generated from the activity (e.g. Rs. 931 for tailoring and Rs. 954 for Hand Knitting) suggest that it is a supplementary income generation activity (IGA) rather than a small business, and even less so an enterprise. The profitability of certain trades is questionable; they are likely providing additional income to the beneficiaries, but without further assessment of time invested in the activity, the net benefits are unclear. The issue of "profitability" had also been flagged in the 2016 evaluation as the mean annualised profit made was estimated to be ca. INR 6,000, adding a mere 5% of already meagre household income. In comparison, the economic contribution of earnings in urban settings was estimated to nearly double the pre-project household income. As a result, urban beneficiaries more frequently report drastic changes in their status within their family and communities, including more equitable participation in decision-making.

It is also clear that the trades which are female-dominated (Beauty parlour, Hand Knitting, Knitting and Tailoring), in spite of having lower access barriers (i.e. lower amount of set-up investment required) are among those with the lowest levels of generated income and the lowest return on investment. This is a limitation in terms of the type of transitions and opportunities which are presented to young women, and should be more carefully looked into for the project not to reinforce gender inequalities in terms of gainful income and type of employment. Similarly, the large number of young women trained in traditionally well-served sectors such as beauty and tailoring questions the market-relevance of trade options offered and opted for, as in the very small locations considered in this project (many villages in the 30 targeted clusters have only hundreds of dwellers), there is a clear risk of saturation in spite of precautions reported by the project in ensuring that never more than 2 young people are trained on the same trade at the same time. The following testimony given by a young woman interviewed for the evaluation of Phase 2 is telling of the tensions arising in these situations:

"Three of us (friends) went to Saksham training centre together, as we did in school and college and learnt tailoring. But when we started our business we became each other's rival. We hated the one who got clients. We don't talk anymore" (p.45)

There are noticeable gender differences in earned income, which most likely derived from the sharp gender stratification in trades – women being over-represented in lower-earning trades as explained above. The average and median income for male beneficiaries (Rs. 3,129 and Rs. 2,000 respectively) substantially outperforms the average and median for the entire considered sub-set of data (Rs. 1,740 and Rs.1,000 respectively)⁴¹. Data provided in narrative and evaluation

⁴¹ The range between minimum and maximum income also varies greatly between females and males. However, some particularly low levels of declared income (Rs. 150 or Rs. 200 for example) are questionable, and it could not be probed whether these were data entry errors.



reports do not help in probing this as they only provide a range of income earned, without specifying whether the mentioned range (Rs. 2,000 to Rs. 20,000) is exhaustive or indicative of the core range excluding extreme values.









Summary of findings and conclusions

Despite a number of methodological limitations generated by gaps and challenges in datasets, the secondary data analysis conducted as part of this review led to a number of key findings, including:

- There is a close correlation between the actual profile of beneficiaries (aged 20 to 22 for the most part, educated beyond secondary level) and the intended project criteria which confirms the **strict observance of selection and targeting criteria**, and thus the effectiveness and efficacy of the project approach
- A **'typical' SAKSHAM beneficiary is a female JOVT graduate in urban areas, of approximately 21 years of age and working in retail or customer service**; there has been a clear trend towards the feminisation of the target group over time, as gender equality targets and objectives were made more explicitly and girls-focused
- SAKSHAM's performance in relation to supporting young people's transition to employment has increased over time (particularly for young women), exceeds project objectives and is high as nearly 8 out of 10 JOVT trainees effectively access entry-level positions
- If formal employment and fair remuneration are to be taken as proxy indications of "decent employment", it is then clear that SAKSHAM performs well on both criteria in urban settings, where salaries at first employment fare well in comparison to recommended minimum wages, and rapidly evolve over time, without any discriminatory effect noticed on grounds of young age
- There are **stark differences between JOVT and VTEP beneficiaries**, which is concerning. The fact that JOVT has to date been implemented in urban areas and VTEP in rural areas means that these differences depict a strong rural / urban divide. The socio-demographic profile of the target group is different (more women, higher average age, different marital status, lower educational level for VTEP) and the tremendous efforts to proactively champion gender equality in urban areas are not observed in comparable ways in rural settings, where gender stereotyping was clear even in the choice of trades on offer, which also interrelates with gender gaps in income. The economic outcomes measured are also vastly different, as the income generated through self-employment in VTEP is not substantial enough to meaningfully contribute to economic empowerment. As such, VTEP is not quite the success story that JOVT undoubtedly is
- The underlying issue of the rural to urban **migration of young men** for work is known to project actors, and observable both in the field and in data, but has not translated into specific responses brought by the project to the employability skills and needs of these young men.

SECTION 3 Recommendations

Recommendation	Importance	Timing	Responsibilities
# 1. An urgent review of the data collection, storing, management and analysis is required to ensure that the project minimises inefficiencies and errors created by manual encoding or paper-based files. This process should be completed prior to the digitalisation of the entire monitoring	 Critical	 Immediately	Plan International India with support from FNO/NLNO and if possible of an external expert or team of experts to critically assess

sequence. It should in particular aim to:			and review the systems in place
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ensure that data collected and encoded is absolutely essential and necessary for project reporting- Ensure that all necessary information and data is collected and encoded (e.g. NEET status) to report on logframe progress in particular, including at outcome level when applicable and for non-economic objectives (e.g. personal development, social empowerment)- Formally define precautions and principles to be applied to protect data confidentiality in line with applicable regulations in India, considering that data and information transit through multiple users based in multiple organisations (e.g. password-protected views or restrictive use for encoders)			Plan International India with support from FNO/NLNO and AOGD technical advisors and specialists to critically review VTEP, and develop new models and approaches for urban youth economic empowerment
<p># 2. The differences in profiles of beneficiaries, experiences and outcomes between urban and rural settings strongly make the case for a separation between rural and urban components in SAKSHAM. Rural interventions should be stand-alone, specific projects, which should allow for deeper situational analysis, more tailored skills development approaches, and dedicated resource mobilisation. In particular, opportunities to develop more gender neutral self-employment opportunities should be explored, including through innovative piloting of green economy models (e.g. energy or agri-food transformation), acting on value chains, focusing on formal access to financing and expert, individualised and long (at least a year) entrepreneurship support and monitoring. This separation could be supported, if resources allow, by a dedicated, in-depth evaluation of the VTEP component of the project before the end of Phase III, preferably on the basis of participatory methods and formative evaluation methods.</p>	 Critical	 At the next programme design cycle	
<p># 3. Considering the irrefutable issue rural-to-urban migration of young men, it is recommended that SAKSHAM (i) undertakes a qualitative study of the phenomenon, and (ii) adapts its model to ensure young men are not left behind in the overall objective of skills development for vulnerable rural youth. Options to explore could include, for example, working with a younger age group of young men (15-20), in education, around career pathways and aims, employability skills and safe migration (including through awareness raising on labour laws and rights), or making more proactive efforts to identify meaningful employment opportunities locally for young men</p>	 Desirable	 At the next programme design cycle	Plan International India with support from FNO/NLNO and AOGD technical advisors and specialists as well as child protection specialists to provide a broader perspective on young people on the move, in an integrated programming approach
<p># 4. A Half-Yearly Data Report should be systematically produced to support the process of narrative reporting. This report should be based on logframe objectives and indicators and cover all aspects of the work, not only enrolment, training and transitions to employment. This will allow for cross-analysis to be performed (rather than only descriptive or binary analysis) and for the narrative reporting process to be stronger at outcome-level while being transparently backed-up by robust data analysis exploring causality and trends across various factors rather than presenting aggregated analysis. The process should involve partners meaningfully in an effort to build capacity and promote accountability.</p>	 Desirable	 (--) Upon completion of the Data Review	Plan International India and partners
<p># 5. An urgent digitalisation of data systems is required to</p>			Plan International India with

reduce the observed inefficiencies in relation to tasks (repetition, duplication, etc.) & time. A number of platforms and tools now exist to do so in a cost-effective but also practical way, avoiding the complications and risks associated with dedicated software packages. Such options are not appropriate for SAKSHAM, as the project is rather limited in scale (i.e. classic software packages are sufficient to manage data size satisfactorily) and has no dedicated capacity for system maintenance, which is often required for dedicated packages.



Critical

(--)

Upon
completion of
the Data
Review

support from FNO/NLNO and if possible of an external expert or team of experts

6. Dedicated M&E capacity and resources need to be allocated to SAKSHAM. In the short term, this could take the form of consultancy services to review and remodel the processes or data encoding and data analysis, and prepare template or "Zero Report" for the recommended practice of Half-Yearly Data Reports. In the medium to long term, there should be dedicated M&E staff supporting data management across all of SAKSHAM components in order to free up precious time of project managers.



Critical



Within 6
months

Plan India in discussion with FNO/NLNO

Section 4: The SAKSHAM Model

Evaluative questions explored in this Section

YEE Modelling: what does the SAKSHAM YEE pathway or model currently look like? How has it changed over time, and what were the key step change moments and turning points? What are the most effective components, and which ones would require improvements? How have changes in the approach also changed the role played by Plan International, and its engagement with stakeholders? What can be learned about the specificity of Plan International's approach in India in contrast with other initiatives led by peers or others in the country? What can be learned about the programme's progress, strengths/weaknesses, process and impact? What gaps can be identified in this existing evidence, and what can be done to address them?

What are the successes in partnerships and challenges? What is their added-value? How do partners provide sustainability to the project? What can be learned from existing partnership arrangements?

Representation of the SAKSHAM model

A comprehensive model

Multiple models and approaches towards youth economic empowerment and youth employment have been piloted and documented around the world, in high-income or low-and-middle income countries alike. These programmes or interventions have been implemented by a variety of actors, from NGOs, private sector actors, public employment agencies or other government agencies, or even by a combination of those. Whether they intend to influence the supply-side or the demand-side of the labour market in order to boost employment outcomes for youth, these programmes generally include one or the other of the following categories of interventions:

- **Skills training or skills development**, which to date is the most widely used youth employment approach around the world, although it is increasingly combined with other measures to boost employability of young people
- **Entrepreneurship promotion** targeting young people, acknowledging that formal employment opportunities are often scarce particularly in under-served areas or developing economies
- **Employment services**, through which young people may be offered intermediation services such as job counselling, job-search assistance, mentoring, job placements, job matching, etc. This generally builds on the assumption that structural barriers exist in the private sector in relation to recruiting young people, but also that young people themselves may lack the agency, credentials and knowledge to adequately market themselves in competitive labour markets
- **Subsidized employment** approaches, generally proposed by public agencies, tend to either design youth-specific employment programmes or provide wage incentives for employers to recruit young people.

Increasingly, youth employment programmes tend to combine two or more of the above-described components in order to boost the employability of young people and provide comprehensive, holistic responses to the complex issue of youth transitions to employment. **SAKSHAM is an example of this increasing number of youth employment programmes which build on multi-pronged approaches, as it combines skills training and employment services to selected trainees, as well as entrepreneurship promotion where the formal labour market is insufficiently developed to offer viable opportunities to young people. SAKSHAM's model of youth employment is thus hybrid and comprehensive, across a continuum of services aimed at guaranteeing the best employment outcomes possible to identified vulnerable youth.** It is centre-based and places strategic importance on the transformation of gender dynamics in relation to employment and economic status.

As such, the project is by and large aligned with Plan International's YEE pathway (see graph below).

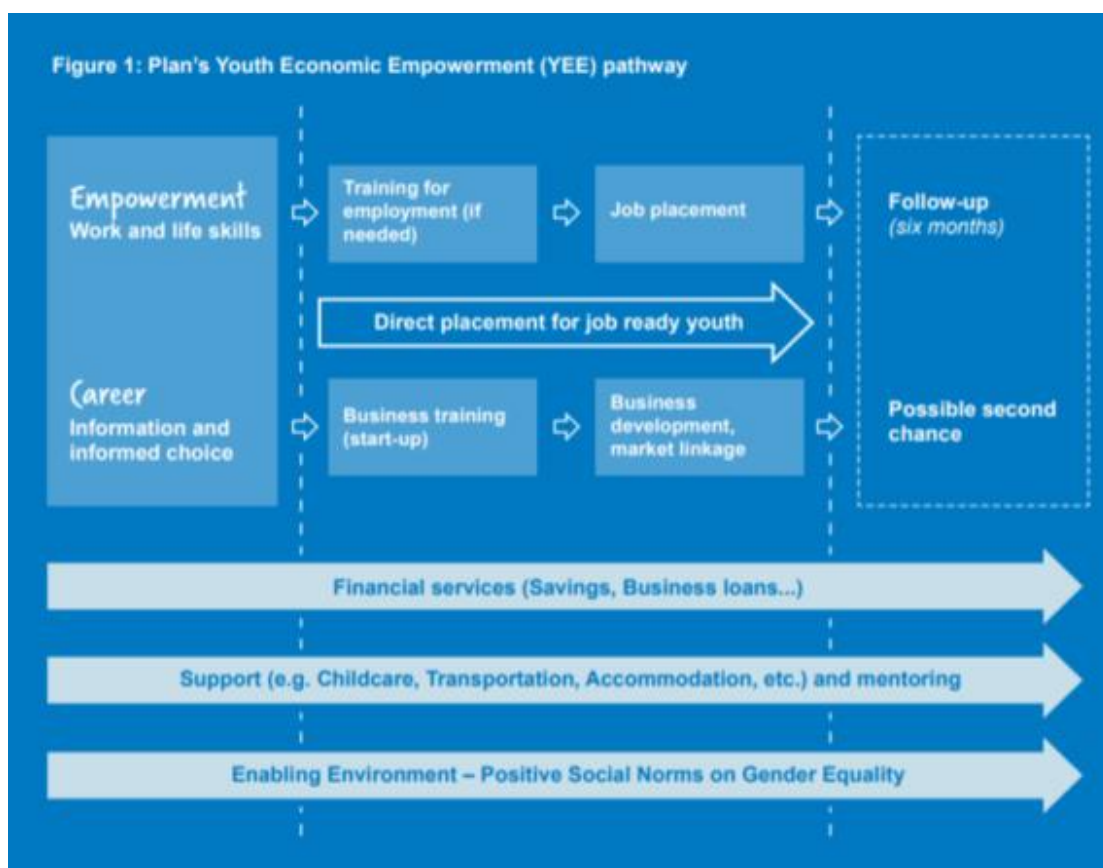


Figure 7 - Plan International YEE Pathway (Plan UK, undated)

Description of steps and stages

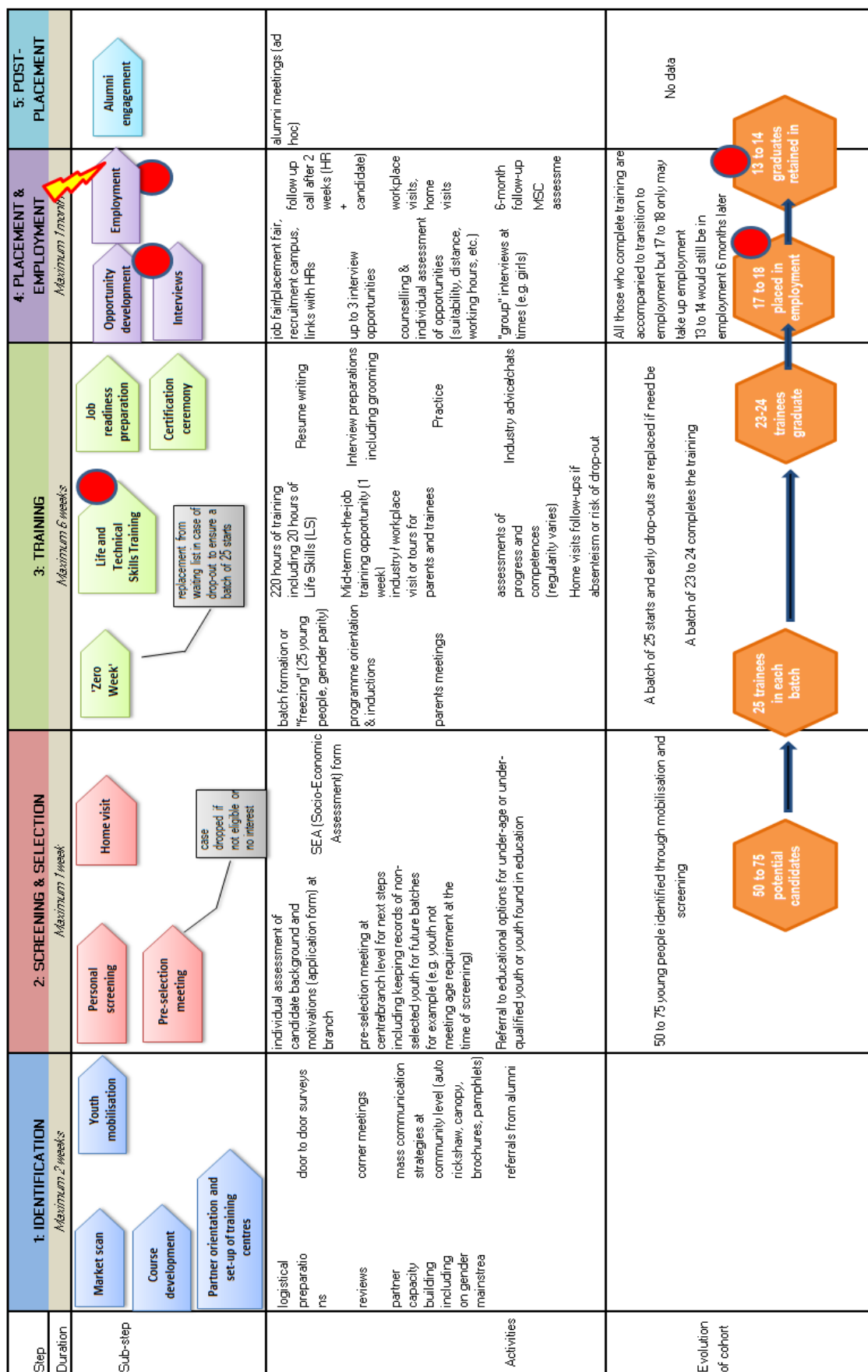
The SAKSHAM's model, as presented by Plan International India and SAKSHAM partners, and as described in the Operational Guidelines protocol and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), is in fact a sequence of 5 broad steps (see process map hereafter for visual representation based on the JOVT process):

1. IDENTIFICATION of market landscape, opportunities, trends and demands (through periodic market-scan studies) as well as identification and mobilisation of suitable potential candidates for the programme
2. SCREENING and SELECTION of candidates, through a combination of individual assessment gauging the candidate's suitability and interests (background, competencies, skills, challenges) as well as levers of support within their family
3. the TRAINING phase, which is the core element of the model, combines both life and technical skills in an integrated curriculum. This means that both types of skills are not imparted at different moments of the cycle (which is the case in other programmes where candidates may receive dedicated life skills training either before or after their technical training course), but are integral components of a unified curriculum.
4. PLACEMENT and EMPLOYMENT support is provided to all candidates who complete the training course. It includes direct facilitation in identifying employment opportunities and preparing for those (interviews but also counselling around specific job offers), as well as time-bound follow-up once the young person is in employment (follow-up up to 6 months upon placement).
5. The POST-PLACEMENT strategy is an element that has emerged later on in the journey of SAKSHAM, mainly through the concept of alumni networks. The main idea here is to leverage alumni (i.e. former trainees) as resources to identify, mobilise and motivate future cohorts of trainees. Plan International India and their partners however acknowledge that this component of the model is under-developed and that further thinking is required to clearly identify objectives and modalities of alumni engagement. It was stressed by this review that such engagement should strive to be mutual, whereby alumni are not only receiving requests to support the project, but also receive services and opportunities to further enhance their employment journey and their personal development as young adults. The engagement should be two-way.

The model has in fact only incrementally evolved since inception. Concepts have been better defined (in relation to targeting in particular) and approaches have been formally consigned into thorough project documents, including on gender mainstreaming.

The VTEP approach has been the main addition to SAKSHAM's overall design, since Phase II. VTEP and JOVT share common ambitions and concepts, as well as similar targeting strategies albeit the minor difference in target age groups (18-29 for JOVT, 18-35 for VTEP) and geographic targeting (VTEP has exclusively been implemented in remote rural areas to date, with a pilot in urban settings only to start in 2019).

The 5 steps also exist in VTEP, although tools and methods have been adapted to suit rural settings. Steps 1 (IDENTIFICATION) and 2 (SCREENING and SELECTION) are common to both JOVT and VTEP. The TRAINING phase differ in the sense that it is split in 2 sequences, first a 2-day Entrepreneurship Development Promotion (EDP) course, followed by a Technical Skills course of variable duration, depending on the sector. There is then no placement as such, as employment is in the form of self-employment. Trainees are guided to develop business plans and mobilise the required seed capital from local sources (e.g. their network, local SHGs, etc.) through the support of a local NGO partner (SBMA). A 5th step of follow-up concludes the process, although the alumni approach is not prominent.



Gender mainstreaming

Gender equality and gender mainstreaming appear to have been key priorities and focus since inception. Over time, this overarching strategic focus has been supported by gender-specific planning and documentation such as (i) a gender gap review in Phase 1, a gender action plan and strategy as well as repeated gender training at all levels (individuals, communities, partners) and in all project phases. It was observed during the Partners' Learning Workshop in Delhi that frontline partner staffs were spontaneously capable of elaborating insights about gender barriers, gender results, or gender-differentiated effects. The conclusion of this review is that these achievements and high awareness levels about the need, rationale and modalities of gender equality, gender mainstreaming and to some extent gender-transformative programming, are likely to be the results of well-implemented capacity building efforts and strategic prioritisation of gender issues in SAKSHAM.

The Gender Equality Assessment process undertaken as part of this review generated the following findings (See Annex 5 for further details):

- Overall SAKSHAM can be classified as a **Gender Aware project**, and has the potential to be truly gender transformative, as it already complies strongly with at least 4 out of 6 criteria of Gender Transformative Programming and Influencing as defined by Plan International (criteria 2, 3, 4, 6 below);

Key Elements of Gender Transformative Programming and Influencing

In Plan International, we believe that there are six elements which can help us to gradually achieve gender transformative programming and influencing. They are:

1. Addressing gender norms throughout the life-course.
2. Strengthening girls' and young women's agency.
3. Advancing both the condition and position of girls, young women, and women.
4. Working with boys, young men, and men to embrace gender equality and exercise positive and diverse masculinities.
5. Responding to the needs and interests of girls and boys in all their diversity.
6. Fostering an enabling environment for gender equality and girls' rights

Figure 8 – From: *Getting it Right. A Guidance Note for Gender Transformative Programming and Influencing*, Plan International, 2018 (p.3)

- **Gender Equality is strongly, coherently and strategically embedded in project designs and foundations.** The project strategic documents such as proposals or narrative reports contain evidence that gender analysis underlines project design, including considerations of specific conditions of boys and girls, barriers facing young women in relation to skills, training and employment and broader structural and cultural gender inequalities hindering women's economic empowerment. This was repeatedly confirmed and observed in conversations with partners and project staff. As a result, there is regular and genuine focus to continue acting on removing the practical and structural barriers affecting young women in particular – whether that is bringing the centre-based training approach as close as possible to local communities (to avoid long commuting for young women as safety and security concerns remain one of the main barriers), negotiating specific working arrangements with employers (girl-friendly shifts or group recruitment for example) or conversing with boys and men about gender roles as part of the training.

Areas for improvement noted in relation to gender equality in project design include (i) strengthening gender approaches in market scans to identify employment sectors less strongly gender-stereotyped, and (ii) pay more attention to gender analysis and gender mainstreaming in rural settings, where the transformative potential is less visible than in urban project settings (see previous sections for further details).

- **Performance is also good in terms of mainstreaming of gender equality in project experience and implementation**, albeit to a lesser extent. There is undoubtedly spontaneous, genuine and strong interest in committing to enhancing gender equality, as previously mentioned, and demonstrated capacity to do so. There are specific efforts and strategies in place to ensure young women are not at a disadvantage in accessing project benefits and over time, a more comprehensive set of activities has been put in practice (including gender awareness raising with parents and communities)
- **Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming are the weakest in Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation.** Indeed, although gender equality has been included in programme theory since Phase I and has improved over time (see subsequent sections about M&E) to be more consistent and prominent at all levels (outcomes, objectives, indicators, activities), it remains primarily focused on micro-level results. This includes for example, changes in individuals' lives and improvements in the conditions of young women through better access to training and employment. In the absence of policy and advocacy work, SAKSHAM lacks a truly transformative agenda at a systemic level. Indicators and targets are disaggregated by gender when possible and relevant, and data collection and monitoring indeed allow for gender analysis of project results. There is however a gap between these intended levels of analysis, and analysis routinely done for the purpose of reporting, where the gender focus could be more systematic (e.g. results are not presented by gender for all indicators in narrative reports and when they are, they sometimes lack analysis of differences observed). Annual reporting remains largely dominated by the training (outputs) and employment outcomes, with gender data or analysis more commonly limited to descriptive analysis at output level. Furthermore, few indicators explore the transformative effects of the project for young women, and no indicator systematically tracks changes in relation to the transformation of power relations (although this is one of the elements of the Most Significant Change Tool/questionnaire). Evidence on this point exists and is plentiful, but collated anecdotally through case stories, testimonies, experiential knowledge such as in the following example given by a project staff member from Plan India:

“something extraordinary is happening to these girls. Remember when they come here to the centre [training centre], it's the first time they interact with boys on a daily basis. This is ground-breaking. Up until now, where would they have interacted with boys? Even schools here are not co-ed in the majority of cases! It's a lot of boys-only schools or girls-only schools. And vice versa for boys, it's really here that they start interacting with girls. In fact, until they come to a workplace, then the majority of trainees haven't have much to do with the other gender and they don't know how to manage that. So this is why we have mixed groups in most cases”

Evidence of non-economic outcomes (e.g. agency, personal development, and other dimensions of empowerment) have yet to be more formally and regularly evidenced. The 2016 Phase II evaluation made some important contributions to this point, and such efforts need to become more systematic in project M&E (including through more meaningful usage of Most Significant Change data).

Discussion on overall effectiveness

After more than 8 years of experimentation and implementation, SAKSHAM was found by this review to be a stable and overall effective model of youth employment, particularly in its urban, training-for-formal employment (JOVT) component. In spite of what some project staff described as an “organic growth” process in SAKSHAM, where improvements were introduced to correct limitations or failures observed in implementation, the review of project documentation (Operational Guidelines, project description, forms, monitoring tools and systems) showed that the model is thoroughly described, justified, mapped and documented and adequate in responding to both the need of young people as well as the demands of the private sector (refer to previous sections about outcomes and key results for young people). As a result, there appears to be (i) a robust understanding of the project purpose and modalities amongst the different partners met, and (ii) coherence in implementation, whereby work and outcomes are comparable and similar across project locations regardless of which partner leads on implementation in the specific location. The stability of the model also implies that it has been possible to replicate SAKSHAM in new urban locations across India (Jaipur and Mumbai in particular). Finally, the levels of control exercised by Plan International India as coordinator and convenor of the project seem adequate, as Plan International India staff is involved in key moments and functions which guarantee the stable implementation of the approach (e.g. selection meeting, review of batch files, partner training, partner selection, partner induction)

One indication of the stability of the model is the fact that the drop-out ratio at each stage (i.e. the gap between the initial group and the group which completes the stage) is now minimal. Initial challenges in the identification of potential candidates in Phase I have been addressed, particularly through redoubled and specific efforts (e.g. home visits, community sensitisation on gender, promotion of female alumni as role models in the community, etc.) to identify young women, and work with their families and communities to remove some of the barriers these young women were facing. Amongst these, concerns over the safety and security of girls and young women have been addressed, through reducing commuting time (with centres brought as close as possible to the community, and employment options presented to girls with the criteria in mind to minimise time in public transport, avoid night-time commutes and opt for metro mode of transport when possible as metro trains have dedicated carriages for women).

The main challenges remain (i) at the time of placement and (ii) the medium-term retention in employment (see process map hereafter). Indeed, for any batch of 25 trainees formed, it is estimated by project partners that just around 6 in 10 will still be found in employment 6 months after placement. Data from the Phase II evaluation would suggest that the ratio could be slightly higher (in the region of 75%). Discussions with SAKSHAM partners and Plan International India about the motives and reasons for drop-out specifically at that stage broadly fall into 2 categories:

- **persistent gender discrimination due to barriers to girls' and women's mobility:** in spite of repeated efforts in the early stages of the project cycle (community mobilisation and candidate selection in particular) to minimise resistance of families for girls to take part in the programme, at the time of placement gender barriers resurface. Indeed, according to project partners, it is mainly girls who drop-out at this stage. The most commonly reason seems to be that parents and families in those cases agree for young girls to take part in training programmes (a common statement heard during the mission from partners and young female trainees is that training is not seen as a major threat, "*at least you will learn something and you will keep busy*", "*you will know the outside*" or "*you will learn new things*" is what is often said to girls⁴²), but refuse that the young woman goes out to work. Issues of mobility (traveling by public transport alone) and reputation (late shifts, bad image of certain professions such as call centres) are commonly highlighted. This is also highlighted as a major challenge in project documentation and some evaluations, since Phase I. Although not analysed in these terms by previous evaluations or project reports, it is to some extent expected that such concerns resurface at the time of placement: indeed, precisely to accommodate girls, SAKSHAM has devised a centre-based approach where TCs are within or near the community. Issues of mobility are thus minimised (see above).

This review also noted, through discussion with female beneficiaries and partner staff in both Delhi and Uttarkashi, that mobility is more of a barrier in urban areas, as opposed to rural areas. The outrage provoked in the past few years with repeated incidents of sexual harassment or even rape on public transport in the capital, reinforces genuine concerns for the safety and security of women in spite of specific measures since then (e.g. female-only carriages in Delhi metro, female-friendly label for rickshaws, etc.). In rural areas, it was reported that communities are small, know each other well and for this reason, the environment is usually safer for women and girls to move freely.

Female trainees consulted in one of the group discussions also spontaneously mentioned mobility as a key barrier for girls like themselves:

"A boy he can go anywhere and he can handle anything. Because he is a boy, only because of that. But a girl, she is the honour, the prestige of her family so she gets the protection. A girl here is not expected to earn, just marry and go"

- Group discussion with female trainees, Delhi

- **Mismatch between youth aspirations and the reality of the workplace:** in spite of basic orientation in the "job-readiness" step about working conditions, as well as regular industry and workplace visits (which were introduced also to minimise drop out and manage expectations), project partners and Plan International also mentioned that aspirations of some young people still clash with the reality of the job market, and that this gap often becomes visible at the time of interviews or in the initial weeks of employment. Issues around high salary expectations, dissatisfaction with commuting time or routes and general working conditions (permissions, breaks, annual leaves, dos and don'ts of the workplace, tasks, difficult relationship with the employer or with colleagues) are reasons for some young people to discontinue their work contract without necessarily looking

⁴² Statements from a female-only group discussions with trainees in Delhi

for other opportunities. This challenge has been highlighted since Phase I. Data from datasets and the Phase II evaluation survey would suggest however that this proportion is minimal – probably up to 10%. It is important to note here, as signaled by one informant, that for many of these young people, there is often no example or role model at home or in the community of what formal employment means, and what obligations come with the rights and opportunities in the formal sector. The majority of the young people come from households where older adults (parents, siblings or other) are engaged in informal self-employment or daily wages occupations, or not working at all. Although this cannot be confirmed due to lack of project data on this point, it would be an interesting point to explore and corroborate as it can demonstrate the pioneering effect of SAKSHAM in ‘breaking the glass ceiling’. This is particularly true for young women, who, as some of them have spontaneously expressed in interviews and group discussions, were the first female members of their family to go out and work in a formal setting.

It should also be noted that **drop-out is minimised at earlier stages in the process due to intense efforts by project teams to remobilise young people who may be at risk of dropping out, particularly during training.** These efforts may include telephone follow-ups, home visits, discussions with parents or community members, or individual counselling. At the selection/identification stage, the efficacy is highly dependent on the strength of the links between the local partner and the neighbouring targeted community. Indeed, in two communities visited during the mission (one in Delhi and one in Dehradun), where the training centre had only be established a year prior, the mobilisation still requires intensive efforts from the project team through systematic door-to-door surveys for examples. In this community, and in new project locations such as Dehradun the young people met during the review mention the visit from the field mobiliser as the channel through which they got to know about the project – elsewhere, the role of the field mobiliser and time consuming door-to-door approaches is less important. In another community where the local partner as well as Plan International have been present for years or several decades, community mobilisation activities to form a batch of trainees need not be very intense, and cases of self-referrals through peers are more common. Whether these different scenario impact on the profile of trainees (i.e. whether self-selection has adverse effects on the ability of the project to identify the most vulnerable young people) is not known and is not possible to establish easily through project data as it would require detailed, evolutive analysis by location which was beyond the scope and timeframe of this review. There is however the hypothesis that self-referrals or peer-referrals may lead to self-selection of more advantaged young people, as it has been the case in other projects at Plan International (in Egypt for example): self-selection would concern young people who already have career plans, an awareness of what is required to enter the world of work, but see an opportunity in going through SAKSHAM due to its short duration (2 months) and absence of cost (as opposed to other training programmes which now frequently exist, particularly in Delhi). This should be looked into, as it may impact negatively on the project intent to focus on the most marginalised or vulnerable young people.

Major strengths and challenges

Participatory process mapping and collective assessment of project strengths and weaknesses involving project partners in Delhi were the opportunity to collate key thoughts which were further explored and triangulated with interviews with Plan India staff, as well as project reporting and previous evaluations.

Strengths and Weaknesses: summary table

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
APPROACH AND MODEL	<p>Market relevance</p> <p>The links with the private sector and periodic market scan ensure that (i) young people are oriented towards suitable trades and professions and (ii) curricula and approaches develop the specific soft and technical skills required for the sectors/roles considered. As a result, feedback from employers is generally positive, highlighting that SAKSHAM candidates usually have better manners and etiquette and are adequately equipped to perform their role (secondary data in project documentation). SAKSHAM is seen by the majority of informants and teams as a successful example of linkages with the private sector at various levels (curriculum development, job posting, job-</p>	<p>New limitations are emerging: digitalisation, alumni engagement, learning by doing</p> <p>The current phase of SAKSHAM will see a specific focus placed on developing the digital skills of young people, an imperative towards employability in contemporary, urban India. The digital environment of the project however is a limitation: digitalisation has not taken place yet, although it is urgently needed particularly in upgrading training methods (more interactive, multi-channel tools) and improving the efficacy of the monitoring and data management systems (see following sections for further discussions on this point). This is well understood by Plan India and partners, and is a priority for the year to come.</p> <p>Alumni engagement has been reported as yet ill-</p>

	<p>readiness preparation, guest lecturers). It is also seen pioneering on this point in the wider YEE portfolio across Plan International, having focused on such links and yielded results well before other initiatives and models started to engage on this issue.</p> <p>defined. Objectives are not clear, and there is not structured strategy in defining the purpose and modalities of the engagement. This does not mean that alumni currently have no role in the project: all the contrary, they participate at various levels (referral, community talks, project communication, etc.). It is the purpose of such engagement which remains insufficiently precise (peer network? Mobilisation? Influencing? Advanced training?), and the benefits that alumni, as busy working adults, can in turn receive.</p> <p>Practical learning has a place in the current model within SAKSHAM. All trainees have the opportunity to go for “OJT” (on the job training) days, directly at a workplace but this is perceived as insufficient. Terminology is also confusing, as some refer to apprenticeships or internships which is clearly not what these practical training are.</p> <p>Gaps in the continuum of employment solutions</p> <p>Literature existing in the sector as well as at Plan International globally highlight that there is a continuum between the various options for employment (waged-employment, self-employment, entrepreneurship, income-generating activities, etc.). The common factor between the various options is the fact that young people require specific skills training and coaching to thrive in the option of their choosing. Within SAKSHAM however, wage-employment (JOVT) and self-employment (VTEP) have de facto been separated, with JOVT seen as viable only in urban areas, and VTEP implemented to date only in rural areas although this has recently started to change, and efforts should be redoubled to further promote ‘urban’ VTEP. This is a limitation in the approach, as it limits the range of options that young people in urban areas can avail. It was even a demand from a group of female graduates in employment for several years, to whom in the longer term self-employment options are seen as more compatible with personal responsibilities as they can more flexibly be accommodated around family responsibilities (these young women were approaching the age of marriage and child-rearing). It is recommended that the urban VTEP pilot in Lucknow is promptly undertaken.</p>
EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE	<p>Positive personal development of young people</p> <p>The importance of life/soft skills (which in SAKSHAM mainly include personal and inter-personal communication, presentation skills, English communication skills and gender awareness) is highlighted by all. As a result, and as mentioned in previous sections, young people (particularly young women) spontaneously share how the project has</p>

	helped them become more self-aware, self-confident and has increased their sense of purpose. Evidence of change in positive psychology of young trainees/graduates however remains insufficiently demonstrated by project data.
GENDER EQUALITY	<p>Priority focus on gender equality Partners and Plan India staff unanimously and spontaneously mention the project focus on gender as one of its key strengths. Although gender mainstreaming has been intentional since the beginning of SAKSHAM, it has intensified over time and a number of strategies have been put in place to (i) remove the practical and structural barriers facing young women, (ii) challenge gender stereotypes about or in the workplace, (iii) build capacity of all actors and stakeholders to understand and mainstream gender equality in their work, (iv) nurture a culture of dialogue and respect between young women and young men themselves.</p> <p>Support to young women is time-consuming As previously mentioned, mobilisation and retention of young women in training and in employment have improved over time. This comes however at a cost: it requires repeated, time-consuming engagement with the trainee and her family to prevent drop out. Partners also report that it is more challenging to place young women than young men: the nature of the work and tasks, the distance to the home and the mode of transport, the working hours, etc. Numerous practical aspects of employment can become practical challenges post-training.</p>

Overview of sustainability

For the purpose of this review, sustainability is understood as the ability of *SAKSHAM* to maintain its operations, services, results and benefits during and beyond its projected life time. This for instance can include local actions taken as a result of the project, or longer-term changes and impacts to which the project has contributed or even the generation of successor services or new initiatives taken as a result of the project. Sustainability should therefore not be envisaged purely from an economic or financial perspective; it includes multiplier effects, ripple effects, operational strength, social benefits and many other dimensions.

Sustainability was not per se one of a key evaluation question. However, it emerged spontaneously as an issue of importance in interviews and group discussions with Plan India staff. The assessment presented in this section is therefore brief, and meant to be a starting point or a contribution to discussions around sustainability which exist within the organisation. A full-fledge sustainability assessment would require more time, as such assessments are often carried out by multi-disciplinary teams, involved detailed cost and budget analysis beyond the rapid checks performed in this review. Finally, a thorough sustainability assessment would depend on a thorough policy analysis being available, which is not the case at present to the best knowledge of this consultant.

Annex 4 is a detailed account of the rapid sustainability assessment conducted. Key findings and conclusions can be summarised as follows:

- in terms of **operational sustainability**, efforts put since Phase II in documenting the project model and process through tools, SOPs, operational guidelines for example, as well as capacity building and continuous dialogue with project partners are commendable. SAKSHAM receives positive support from across Plan India, including at senior management level, and is clearly one of the flagship initiatives within the wider, global YEE area of global distinctiveness at Plan International. Partnerships are stable and for several of them, long-standing. The main risks in relation to operational sustainability are (i) the project's dependence on a small, extremely experienced team at Plan India, who have the institutional memory; (ii) reported under-resourcing of operations in rural areas (limited budget, reported insufficient staffing and competing priorities)
- in relation to **social and community sustainability**, SAKSHAM has established and nurtured what seems to be positive relationships with communities, leaders, parents, young people, alumni and local allies. In addition, albeit anecdotal because insufficiently demonstrated by clear evidence, SAKSHAM triggers a number of social benefits for young people, through increased positive psychology (e.g. self-esteem, confidence, positive outlook to the future, etc.) and the impact of this on their perception in the household and the community, as evidenced

in the 2016 Phase II evaluation. This could be further enhanced when the alumni model and engagement approach is more clearly defined

- Consistent and ambitious gender mainstreaming in the programme, increased and refined over the 3 phases, result in a rebalancing of opportunities between young men and young women which is critical in the context of India. If at all, the **equity dimension of sustainability** is limited by the dominant focus on better educated young people in urban settings (most commonly JOVT trainees are educated at least at higher secondary level), the acknowledged inadequacy of the model to serve the poorest young people who are likely to be already engaged in employment (hazardous, exploitative and highly informal most likely) and thus unable to access full-time training (more modular earn-and-learn approaches would be required to reach this more vulnerable target group), and the nearly absent focus on disability in practice (as noted in the internal mid-term evaluation in Phase II, the project model is not yet adapted to young people living with disabilities although this could be possible to achieve, following the example of the Dr. Reddy's Foundation youth employment programme which is the main inspiration for programmes such as SAKSHAM, and has extended and adapted approaches to suit young people with minor impairments such as hearing and visual disabilities).
- In terms of **policy and institutional sustainability**, much remains to be done. The policy landscape has greatly evolved since project inception in 2010, with initiatives, schemes and actors more strongly focusing on the issue of youth employability and skills development in particular. SAKSHAM would have lessons and experience to share, but insufficiently interacts with these spheres at present (see remarks on partnerships and stakeholders below). A well-targeted policy and influencing strategy could greatly contribute to ensuring the broader environment benefits from SAKSHAM's experience, for the benefit of young people across the country and not only the limited cohorts who go through SAKSHAM training centres every year.
- Finally, and because this is at present the most contentious issue and cause for concern, specific attention was paid to the **economic and financial sustainability** of SAKSHAM as a model of youth employability and economic empowerment.

SAKSHAM has mostly relied on grant funding since its inception in 2010. Nearly 70% of these resources are channelled through FNO and NLNO, which makes the project highly dependent on external funding. In the current context in India, where regulations applicable to NGOs in relation to foreign funding (FCRA regulations) are becoming tighter and more heavily controlled, such high dependency is a well-understood risk, in spite of controls and mitigations strategies being in place at Plan India, including positive dialogue and relationship with the NGO regulation authorities. In the meanwhile, endogenous resource mobilisation is proving to be particularly challenging as (i) the India donor market has yet to fully mature and understand the pace and requirements of development (no 'quick wins'); (ii) funding is not yet comparable in size to grant funding that can be mobilised from foreign donors, and would thus not suffice to cover full or substantial project costs. (iii) Large corporations have established their own charitable arm through a dedicated foundation, and most would tend to directly implement their own programmes rather than support projects through grant-funding, including for youth economic empowerment. Some are directly active in the area of skills development in their respective sector, such as TechMahindra in the automotive industry. Finally, (iv) what was thought to be an opportunity in the sector when it was introduced, i.e. the obligation introduced in 2013 for corporates to spend at least 2% of their profits on charitable activities or community development (Section 135 of the Indian Companies Act, commonly referred to as 'CSR law'), has not had to date major impacts on NGO funding because it is an obligation to report, rather than an obligation to spend (in spite of the current formulation of the law). Companies also have the choice to allocate their 2% contributions to a dedicated Prime Minister's Fund, or to local religious institutions (e.g. temples), which many choose to do for simplicity and visibility.

The training cost per beneficiary, set at Rs. 8,956 for JOVT (ca. EUR 112 or US\$ 128) and Rs. 8,200 for VTEP (ca. 102 EUR or US\$ 116) in the Phase 3 budget is reasonable and affordable. These costs cover inputs such as training materials, job orientation and placement activities (e.g. recruitment fairs), the manpower for training and follow-up as well as operational costs of TCs. These costs are exclusive of mentoring, coaching and counselling support performed by staff, as well as other operational costs (e.g. community mobilisation, research, monitoring, evaluation, administration, capacity building, etc.). All things considered, the average cost per beneficiary is a maximum of EUR 232 (ca. US\$ 265) [3,250 beneficiaries targeted for a budget of EUR 755,584]. There are obvious limitations with such aggregate calculations, but it is a broad indication and more accurate calculations would require time to determine precise costing of non-training costs benefitting SAKSHAM graduates (outside of the scope of this review). This overall cost however compares well with costs of other programmes in India and abroad. The 5 Skills Development programme of the GoI,

evaluated by the World Bank in 2015 for example was of US\$ 83 (no adjustment for inflation) but the range of services offered was limited and mainly restricted to training provision, which adversely impacted outcomes. The training costs of a similar Save the Children programme in West Bengal (similar trades) were between US\$ 67 and 93 in 2015. With adjustments for inflation, this would compare well with SAKSHAM's US\$ 116 to 128.

The issue of co-contribution towards training fees has been raised by most Plan India staff consulted. SAKSHAM services (training, placement, counselling and follow-up) are provided to young people free of charge. Unsurprisingly, this was repeatedly mentioned as a key positive characteristic by young people themselves in all focus groups which took place, both in Delhi and Dehradun. Many have said that this was a decision factor for them, and had the training not be for free, they would either have had to pay for private skills training or not undertaken training at all, lacking financial support to do so (young women in particular mentioned this). However, providing vocational training free of charge, in the previously mentioned funding scenario reinforces the need to ensure that such resources are used to yield the greatest possible results, and to support those who most need it. Maintaining clear and effective targeting approaches focusing on vulnerable youth is thus essential in this context.

Unlike some other YEE projects, there is no compensation for transportation or other costs incurred by trainees. In terms of empowerment of trainees to take responsibility for the commitment they make, and broad financial sustainability, this is a positive characteristic. Those costs are in the case of SAKSHAM probably very minimal as TCs are purposefully located within the community or as close as possible to it, and were not mentioned by staff or young people as barriers in accessing training. Travel costs to the TC (time and financial) were only mentioned as challenges by beneficiaries met in the mountainous villages of Uttarkashi district. Providing vocational education free of charge to disadvantaged populations is essential in ensuring training attendance and retention as reported in a Save the Children's research report⁴³. This is particularly the case for young women according to the same study. Experience from the Plan International FISONG project in Togo also showed that trainees were not able to meet even a minor share of training costs, an option introduced in the project design to boost cost-recovery as well as retention/motivation. These factors have to be considered with caution in the current reflection at Plan India about more financially sustainable cost-recovery options for SAKSHAM, which include the idea of a financial partner to administer what would resemble "student loans" to be repaid over time from wages when employment starts, which would require a drastic change in the project approach and partnership structure. This should be only decided after thorough research and piloting, as there is an anticipated risk of marginalisation of young women (less likely to receive family support if there are financial transactions at stake) and the poorest young people in general (due to important demands on the income they bring to the household). This may prove also more complex to administer in the case of VTEP, with lower and more irregular income levels (see above for further details of VTEP profile information).

On the other hand, in the case of JOVT considering the high level of satisfaction from employers which is reported by project staff and some project documents, it might be interesting to explore whether cost recovery could be introduced at that level without jeopardising the chances of SAKSHAM trainees to land jobs. Feedback reported from employers mention the benefit of recruiting better-trained candidates at no cost for the company, whereas without SAKSHAM they have to incur recruitment costs (ads, external agencies, etc.). In the same way that recruitment agencies receive a commission from clients when a candidate is successfully placed, such a model might be pertinent to explore ('placement fee' or a pool-fund mechanism mobilising CSR, or creation of a social enterprise arm connected to SAKSHAM, and acting as fee-paying employment bureau specialising on young people). This is however only a hypothesis, as a limitation of this review is that no employer or recruitment specialist was met and consulted. This suggestion would also imply substantial changes in the operational model, which would need to be thought of carefully.

⁴³ A randomised control trial study conducted in Indonesia on the Skills to Succeed Programme (S2S) revealed that the group who had to contribute 25% towards training costs (the other 75% being subsidised by the programme) was more likely to drop out and that amongst them, women were even more vulnerable to dropping out. Cost had in this research been identified by the targeted young people as a key barrier in accessing vocational education: "As part of the Skills to Succeed's program operational research agenda, a randomized controlled study was done in Indonesia to assess how cost influences young people's participation in vocational training. Less than half of young people in the Skills to Succeed program areas in Indonesia were confident that they had the necessary skills and experience for paid work or to start a business. A randomized controlled trial of 1,843 young people showed that paying even a small share of tuition led to lower vocational training enrollment and completion. Women were especially vulnerable to dropping out of training programs. The study findings suggest that for young people, cost is a barrier to accessing training programs. Future research will aim to clarify the underlying reasons for this result, including youth perceptions of savings and of vocational training as a good investment for the cost" (abstract). For more information, see [Money Matters: Training Young Workers of Tomorrow in Indonesia](#). Results from a Randomized Controlled Study, Skills to Succeed Research Report, Save the Children, 2015, 16 pages (PDF)

The narrative around costs and financial sustainability would benefit from a shift in perspectives, demonstrating value-for-money, return on investments (including social return on investments) and how these largely offset training costs. To this end, a political analysis study could be undertaken to quantify and measure ROI and value-for-money in a programme like SAKSHAM.

Lessons learnt

The following lessons have been gathered through desk review of project documentation, discussions with partners and staff at Plan International India and discussions with young people themselves.

- ***Direct and regular interaction with parents, families and leaders in the community are the essential levers of genuine support for young people, and young women in particular***

SAKSHAM did not start in Phase I with a clear plan for community and family engagement. It is the challenges in mobilising young people and retaining them in training and in employment which led to stronger links being purposefully sought with families and communities. This is now particularly essential in (i) supporting a process of behavioural change with regards to gender equality, and (ii) ensuring that the barriers facing young women in equitably accessing training and employment can be minimised or removed. Parents-Trainer Meetings have become an important feature of the project, appreciated by trainers as an opportunity to support and motivate trainees.

In a female-only group discussion with trainees in Delhi, with whom a Body Mapping exercise was undertaken, it also appeared that the immediate family is seen by young women as allies or support. It is the wider community that they identify as barriers for young women to pursue employment and be empowered, more generally:

“A girl she is not expected to earn, just to marry and go”

“Parents may consider their son and their daughter the same. They may not make differences. But the community does not say the same thing”

“A girl can be promoted by her family. The family is supportive, the mother may say “go, you will learn new things” or “go, you will know the outside”. But the community demotivates her. They say “your girl will be in bad company” or “she won’t listen to you” or “she will get a boyfriend if she goes outside”. That is difficult for the girl”

This is only a very small sub-set of trainees, and it would need to be probed further. However, if confirmed, this would also suggest that the gender-related mobilisation and behavioural change need to target the family as well as the community at large, but with varied approaches and objectives, not only to ensure that young women can join the project, but more widely to transform community perceptions about women and girls (status, role, entitlements).

- ***Youth employability needs to be thought of differently in rural areas***

SAKSHAM's experience in Uttarakhand since 2015-2016 started with the acknowledgement that the JOVT model as it had been implemented in urban settings was not transferable. Dynamic markets, diverse private sector and formal employment opportunities in urban areas create a more youth-friendly ecosystem where levers of employment can more easily be identified and activated. The needs and constraints of rural youth can be vastly different than their urban counterparts. Options ranging from IGAs, to self-employment to entrepreneurship in agriculture principally and other sectors depending on the local context, need to be considered. Therefore the pathways and timeframes of economic empowerment differ, requiring additional skills sets in project teams or partnership structure, and dedicated, sufficient resources. SAKSHAM has to some extent built the VTEP approach on the basis of these contextual differences between urban and rural settings. However, under-resourcing of work in rural areas (as reported during field visits: limited staffing, challenges in monitoring by Plan India due to distance⁴⁴, no budgeting for seed capital support resulting in young people at times delaying their self-employment project as shared by young people met in a focus group in Uttarkashi as well as by the partner SBMA) leads to a situation where the approach is not as thoroughly documented, effective and viable as JOVT can be in urban settings. Furthermore, the profile of beneficiaries differ, with VTEP beneficiaries often having domestic responsibilities (e.g. young children) which would not be as much the case as JOVT beneficiaries but significantly impact their availability and options. Gender dynamics are also drastically different, with a large dominance of young women in the total number of VTEP beneficiaries, well beyond the 60% F / 40% M intended. Challenges in identifying and mobilising young men have been described consistently by SBMA and Plan India. Trade options and employment outcomes are significantly gender-marked. As such, the urban and rural approaches are substantially

⁴⁴ The gradual involvement of Plan India's State staff in Uttarakhand should progressively reduce some of the monitoring challenges as reported.

different, and only have in common an objective to provide opportunities to unemployed or under-employed young people. It is therefore questionable that both approaches are made to coexist in the same programme theory. A separation into different projects would be advisable to ensure that rural approaches are given the extent of resources, focus and technical inputs into design as it has been the case for urban strategies. This would require that SAKSHAM evolves from a project to a programme approach where the 'umbrella' aim of supporting youth economic empowerment is tailored to different target groups (urban/rural, migrant youth, less educated youth, youth living with disabilities, etc.) through dedicated interventions/projects.

- ***Vulnerability or marginalisation are complex issues, more difficult to define in an employment project***

Like most projects across Plan International, SAKSHAM intends to reach the most vulnerable young women and men. On this particular point, the language used in project document has significantly evolved over time.

It was quite clear that in initial phases, these notions of vulnerability and marginalisation were essentially defined in socio-economic terms, with an explicit intended target to reach young people from the poorest households or in the "most disadvantaged communities". Several obstacles were met: first of all, those who are the poorest are not necessarily those who are excluded from or at the margins of employment. In poor households in an Indian context, it is not uncommon for young people to work from a young age, in informal, low-paying and at times hazardous or exploitative occupations, as they must contribute to household income. A model based on rapid upgrading of skills through full-time training is not necessarily appropriate for such categories of young people who need the flexibility to continue earning while learning. For them, modular approaches (e.g. evening courses, weekend courses, paid apprenticeships models) are more adequate. In addition to this, the project aiming to be market-relevant, it must bring to the job market young people who match the minimum recruitment standards required by the private. This has meant for example that the minimum educational level required to enrol in SAKSHAM has gradually evolved from 10th to 12th standards, as very few sectors offering formal, decent employment opportunities would today recruit personnel with education levels lower than 12th standard (equivalent to completion of secondary education). However, setting the bar higher in terms of education also means excluding lower-educated young people – who still, in India (see background sections), are girls, rural youth, young people from ethnic minorities (OBC, SC, ST⁴⁵). For this reason, the education criterion for selection can act, in effect, as an exclusion criteria and the project must be mindful of the risk of leaving behind specific sub-groups of young people.

The following conclusions in the Phase I narrative report is telling about the contradiction between the objectives around vulnerability and marginalisation, and the "out of scope" issue of lower educated youth:

"The students with lower education level continue to be outside Saksham's purview in spite of being the most vulnerable and most suitable target group due to lack of appropriate courses being imparted in the classes. Plan India considers it very important to reach out to the most marginalized sections of society who have not had a luxury to complete even secondary education and train them in appropriate vocations and also link them to gainful employment. However it has been a challenging task as most of the employers in the service industry insist on hiring students with at least 10/12th class education. Although there are many opportunities like housekeeping, home managers, etc. where students with less education can be absorbed, but today the youth often look down upon such jobs in spite of their low education. Therefore there is an urgent need to include courses that will also reach out to the most marginalized youth and be appreciated by them as well as the employers".

Second of all, the communities where the project is implemented are communities linked to Plan International through the sponsorship programme. Those who were visited as part of the review have tremendously evolved in recent decades, and in spite of remaining challenges (distance to employment hubs, for example), would not necessarily meet today the socio-economic criteria of "the poorest" or "most marginalised" communities, with probably the exception of rural communities where development challenges are multiple.

⁴⁵ Other Backward Class (OBC) is a collective term used by the Government of India to classify castes which are educationally or socially disadvantaged. It is one of several official classifications of the population of India, along with Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SCs and STs). The Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are officially designated groups of historically disadvantaged people in India. The terms are recognised in the Constitution of India and the groups are designated in one or other of the categories. The terms untouchables, Dalit or Harijan are also used to refer to these groups.

One specific fact about employment, as briefly mentioned in the background section of this report, is the fact that higher education attainment can at times lead to marginalisation from the world of work, particularly for young women. Indeed, female university graduates, including in India, are more likely to experience prolonged periods of unemployment or be under-employment.

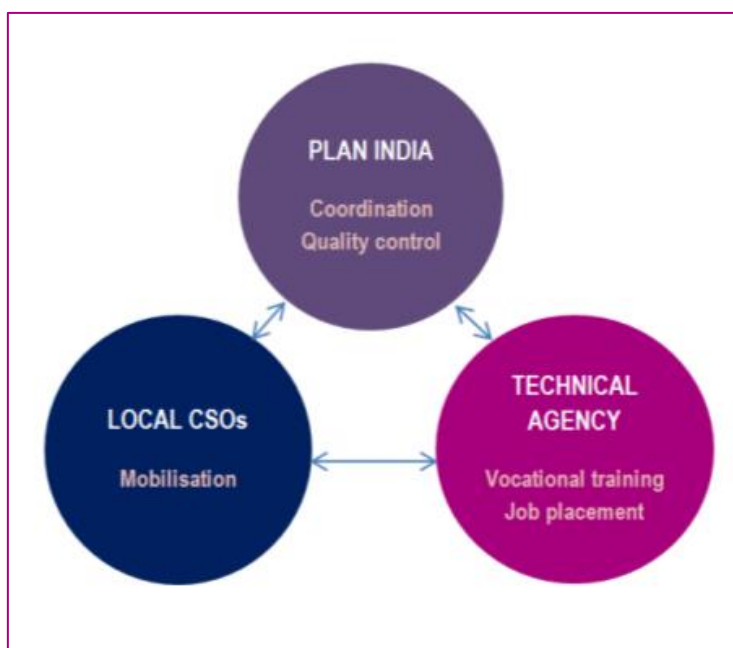
Finally, a primary intent on ensuring equitable access for girls into the programme is at times presented, in discussions, as one of the main arguments to justify that the project is targeting vulnerable and marginalised groups. There is great risk in the implicit equation girl = vulnerability underlying such statements. Indeed, although it cannot be denied, as stated in Plan International's strategic plans, that girls face multiple, systematic and structural discrimination, it is equally undeniable that there are vast differences amongst girls. They are not homogeneous group, including in India, and several combined factors define their vulnerability, in addition to and beyond gender.

Considering all these remarks, this review found that SAKSHAM would benefit from adopting an **intersectional perspective on vulnerability**, undertake in-depth vulnerability assessment to identify precisely those groups particularly marginalised in relation to employment, and combine criteria to determine access and enrolment to the programme.

Partnerships

Discussions on the Tripartite Partnership Model

SAKSHAM started with what is commonly referred to as the 3-party or Tripartite Model. This model is described in several documents, as well as by Plan India staff consulted for this review. It can be summarised as follows:



In Phase I, when the responsibility for training (from curriculum development to training delivery) and job placement were clearly separated and mandated to a private institute (EMPOWER) specialised in training and skills development, this model was accurately describing the reality of partnership arrangements in the project.

However, during this review, it was observed and discussed that:

- **The demarcation lines between the “3 parties” were not as clear as set out in Phase I.** Some partner agencies, because they bring this experience or expertise in the project, can actually perform 2 roles, mobilisation and VT+placement. CASP and CAP Foundation in Delhi for example fulfil both these roles in their respective project locations, with acknowledged effectiveness and quality in both training and placement outcomes. In the case of VTEP with partner SBMA in Uttarkashi, it was also clear that the unique history and expertise of SBMA leads to the organisation playing an important role in supporting trainees towards self-employment or business creation.

- **The nature of the partner organisation (i.e. whether it is a CSO or a private sector entity) may not be a decisive factor in determining which role this organisation can play in the project.** For example, EMPOWER in Dehradun and Lucknow, although being a private organisation which started initially purely as training provider, is now also in charge of community mobilisation and candidate identification in these new locations. This was mainly due to the challenge in identifying other suitable organisations suitable for the project in these areas. From discussions and on-site observations at EMPOWER training centre in Dehradun, this review did not identify differences as compared to how the project is implemented in Delhi. Operations in Dehradun have however only started and at the time of this review, the first batch of trainees was completing the course and was yet to be placed in jobs in the hotel and hospitality sector. It would be important and interesting to observe and monitor whether substantial differences are found over time in the profile and selection process of candidates. The partnership model in this case is also a novelty for Plan India, being a payment-by-result approach, where part of the contractually agreed budget depends on placement and success ratios as measured by agreed KPIs. This approach somehow is a dent in the widely admitted idea that only NGOs can effectively undertake community mobilisation.

Therefore, this review concludes that the “Tripartite Model” is not an accurate way of describing the partnership model in place in SAKSHAM. Rather, it should be referred to as a “Trifunctional Model”, where the clear and distinct functions of Coordination, Mobilisation and Skills+Employment (whether self- or waged-employment) exist but do not depend on a specific type of partner or “party”. A party can fulfil more than one of these functions. In this context, it is probably a common ethos and vision for youth employability which unites the various parties, rather than their nature (e.g. CSO or private company).

Discussions on relationships and stakeholders

A stakeholder diagram was drawn (replica hereafter) jointly with core SAKSHAM team members at Plan India. There are known limitations to the exercise, which is only a snapshot with one specific group (the exercise was not repeated with other project actors), and at a particular time. However, the seniority and experience of the group consulted would lead to think that differences, had the exercise been conducted differently (e.g. individually or post-visit via email), would only have been marginal. The output is therefore seen as an accurate and reliable depiction of the range and depth of partnerships in SAKSHAM. To some extent, this was corroborated by individual interviews with partners, desk review and observations during the visit.

The key conclusion is that SAKSHAM maintains interactions and relationships with organisations and entities in all key sectors – civil society, public and private sectors. However, the majority of these links are only sporadically active, and the close partnerships are limited to operational ones for the purpose of project implementation. There is potential and scope to further enhance and sustain SAKSHAM’s results, lessons and approaches by engaging more strategically with civil society networks (experience sharing and joint influencing efforts) as well as strategic actors both in the public (particularly at State level) and private sectors.

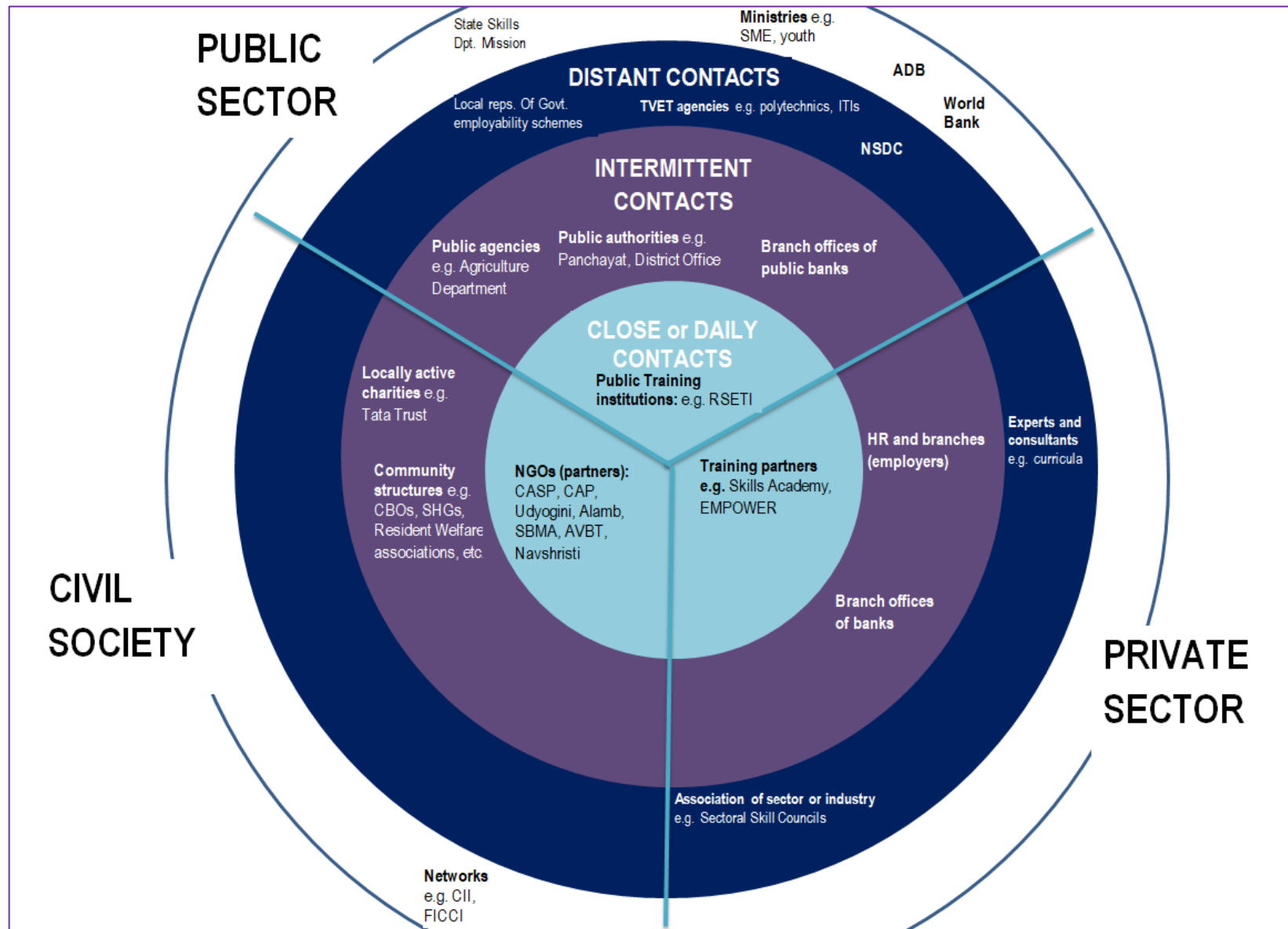
Other findings include:

- Civil society interactions appear strong for project implementation, with a number of CSOs engaged in the project since inception and some of them in fact still being partners to this day. Those organisations who are no longer associated with SAKSHAM for some remain partners of Plan India on other initiatives. The partnership for one of them lapsed when the area where SAKSHAM was operating was phased out. To a lesser extent, links with civil society organisations or groups at community level exist but mainly around community engagement, mobilisation and awareness raising. Broader links with civil society networks or alliances are scarce, which is expected considering the project has not had (at least not since Phase I) an explicit and prominent policy and influencing agenda which would require joining forces with others. This may however be a limitation as (i) a number of gender-focused and youth-focused or youth-led alliances exist today in India and may be important levers in pushing forward a pro-youth, pro-poor employment agenda; (ii) there are also education networks and alliances which may be an appropriate channel to deliver messages around the need to reform and invest in TVET targeting at the most vulnerable young people.
- Public and private sector links are numerous, but in general seem to be more distant from the project core, and activated ‘at the point of need’ i.e. when it is required at a specific stage of the project cycle (e.g. baseline survey or recruitment of trainees). Looking more closely at those links to identify opportunities for more strategic engagement would be recommended.
- It is to be noted that there are no gender-specific organisation or entity in the large group of SAKSHAM stakeholders. Forging such links may be of interest in the future to see how best to sustain and extend further

SAKSHAM's intent to transform gender dynamics in employability and employment, including through policy and influencing work.

SAKSHAM Stakeholder Diagram

Source: group discussion with Plan India staff in Delhi



SECTION 4 Recommendations

Recommendation	Importance	Timing	Responsibilities
<p># 7. A comparative detailed economic analysis could be undertaken to map more precisely the cost per beneficiary, value for money and return on investment in the short, medium and long term. This would contribute to presenting a stronger business case about SAKSHAM to sponsors and decision-makers, shifting the narrative from financial sustainability (which is a known limitation of this type of projects) to one more focused on value for money comparatively with similar initiatives led by other actors.</p>	<p>◆◆◆◆</p> <p>Moderate</p>	<p>◆◆◆◆</p> <p>When resources allow</p>	<p>Plan International India with support if required of an external expert or team of experts</p>
<p># 8. Developing an Advocacy, Policy and Influencing Strategy for the Programme would allow to identify options for Plan India to leverage SAKSHAM's experience into policy asks and recommendations and more broadly bring to the policy table the voice of young people as the organisation has successfully done so with children. This should look into advocating for youth-specific barriers in access to employment to be lifted, fully integrated gender-responsive programming in the provision of vocational education, and mainstreaming life skills components into the formal education curriculum. These are only examples of nation-wide agenda, based on SAKSHAM's experience, which could in the long-term bring results at scale for youth across the country.</p>	<p>◆◆◆◆</p> <p>Considerable</p>	<p>◆◆◆◆</p> <p>Within a year</p>	<p>Plan India, with support from YEE Policy and Influencing global advisor if required</p>
<p># 9. In support of the Advocacy, Policy and Influencing strategy, a detailed stakeholder mapping should be undertaken. This should in particular look at the current partnerships and relationships, how best to maximise them, but also which new partnerships and links, in all three sectors (civil society, public and private) would need to be forged to enhance and sustain project results. MoU with public entities or line ministries, joint collaboration with gender and/or youth-led or youth-focused alliances, MoU with private sector entities (e.g. recruitment agencies, Head Offices of large corporates where SAKSHAM trainees are placed, industry associations or State-level chambers of commerce towards prioritisation of youth, etc.)</p>	<p>◆◆◆◆</p> <p>Considerable</p>	<p>◆◆◆◆</p> <p>Within a year</p>	<p>Plan India and local partners</p>
<p># 2. A transition from project to programme approach is advised, which would lead to a separation between rural and urban work to ensure that interventions in rural areas in particular are given the adequate level of attention, expertise and resources. A design workshop for YEE in rural settings should be organised to go through the model, its strengths and weaknesses and in particular (i) adequate gender equality approaches, (ii) sustainability of livelihoods options availed.</p>	<p>◆◆◆◆</p> <p>Considerable</p>	<p>◆◆◆◆</p> <p>Prior to the next planning cycle</p>	<p>Plan India with support from SOYEE hub, FNO and/or NLNO or alternative technical expertise available at Plan International</p>
<p># 10. A participatory vulnerability assessment should be undertaken to (i) more precisely map the factors of marginalisation of young people in relation to skills development and access to employment; (ii) confirm the pertinence of selection criteria vis-à-vis programme objectives and (iii) provide a constructive critique of project models and approaches, and</p>	<p>◆◆◆◆</p> <p>Considerable</p>	<p>◆◆◆◆</p> <p>Prior to the next planning</p>	<p>Plan India with support from SOYEE hub, FNO and/or NLNO or alternative technical expertise available at Plan</p>

their appropriateness in reaching the most marginalised young people.

cycle

International

Section 5: Appropriateness and Effectiveness of M&E Systems

Evaluative questions explored in this Section

APPROPRIATENESS AND EFFECTIVENESS OF M&E SYSTEMS: Is the M&E system overall fit for purpose? Does it allow for an accurate and appropriate assessment of the project over 8 years of implementation? In particular, are the indicators set for the project relevant and sufficient, especially regarding gender transformation and impacts? What recommendations can be made to improve the project and its M&E systems?

Note: in the absence of an overarching Programme Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Strategy / Plan, the following M&E resources and systems were considered to back analysis presented in this section: programme logic documents (logical frameworks), proposals, narrative reporting, data collection tools, data management systems, data analysis processes and tools.

EVOLUTION OF PROGRAM LOGIC

The program logic guiding SAKSHAM implementation has become over time more precise, robust and coherently articulated (see table below for a summary of Goals, Specific Objectives and Expected Results over the 3 phases). The cause-to-effect sequence between the various levels of the logframe has been strengthened, and gender-responsiveness has increased over time through the formulation of indicators but most importantly result clusters specifically focused on gender equality. Phrasing has also improved, with the Goal and Specific Objectives now defined more clearly and concisely. The focus has also overtime shifted from economic strengthening to economic empowerment, which better fits with the broad scope of work of the project, which works on technical as well as soft skills, and with a broad range of actors and stakeholders. A noticeable shift in targeting has taken place, from the focus on “poor and socially excluded” young people in Phase 1 to the broader term “disadvantaged youth” in Phase 3, as discussed in previous sections.

ITEM	PHASE 1 (2010-2013)	PHASE 2 (2013-2016)	PHASE 3 (2017-2020)
LEVEL 1: OVERALL OBJECTIVE a.k.a. GOAL Definition: longer-term, broader impact to which the project, programme or action aims to contribute to, or wider problem that it aims to help resolving	To facilitate employment of girls and boys from urban poor and socially excluded families in resettlement colonies through vocational and life skills trainings	To provide employment opportunities guided by the principles of Decent Work to young girls and boys from poor and disadvantaged communities through market-led vocational training and promote self-employment among rural and urban youth	Young women and men from disadvantaged youth living in urban and rural areas have gained market-oriented vocational, employment and entrepreneurship skills to be economically empowered
LEVEL 2: SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES a.k.a. OUTCOMES or PURPOSE Definition: immediate development effects and changes induced by the end of the project, programme or action on areas and/or target groups if all outputs are achieved	SO1 To enable 3,000 girls and boys from poor and socially excluded families in 5 urban resettlement / semi-rural colonies of Delhi to access dignified employment through vocational and life skills training and job placement support SO2 In partnership with technical expert agency and existing partners of Plan, to	SO1 To enable 1,100 girls and boys from poor and disadvantaged communities in urban resettlement / semi-rural colonies of Delhi / NCR to access employment through vocational and life skills training and job placement support (JOVT) SO2 To enable 900 girls and boys from the rural target areas and from poor	SO1 To enable 2,500 youth in the age of 18-29 (60% women) from disadvantaged communities of target areas to secure decent employment SO2 To enable 750 youths in the age of 18-35 years (60% women) from disadvantaged

	develop a pilot strategy to facilitate employment of girls and boys from poor and socially excluded families in urban resettlement colonies through vocational and life skills training in order to influence government to take it up as an input to the Revised Modular Employability Scheme	families living in urban disadvantaged communities of Delhi / National Capital Region (NCR) to take up self-employment (VTEP)	communities of target areas to access entrepreneurship training to become self-employed
			SO3 To promote increased economic participation of women
LEVEL 3: EXPECTED RESULTS a.k.a. OUTPUTS	R1 – 3000 youth (at least 1,600 girls out of them) from poor and socially excluded families in 5 resettlement colonies of Delhi access and complete local market-demand-driven vocational & life skills training courses	R1 – To enable 1,100 young women and men from poor families living in urban of Delhi / NCR to access job employment amongst them at least 60% will be women	R1a – To provide job-oriented vocational training to 1,500 young girls and boys living in target disadvantaged communities of Delhi R1b – To provide job-oriented vocational training to 500 young girls and boys living in target disadvantaged communities of Uttar Pradesh R1c – To provide job-oriented vocational training to 500 young girls and boys living in target disadvantaged communities of Uttarakhand
	R2 – 70% of trained youth (70% girls and 70% boys) have access to a dignified job	R2 – To enable 400 young women and men from poor families living in urban disadvantaged communities of Delhi / NCR and 500 young women and men from poor and socially excluded families living in rural Uttarakhand to access self-employment, amongst them at least 40% will be women (360 women)	R2 – to ensure at least 80% of the youth trained will be job-placed in decent jobs (in existing target areas of Delhi, and 70% in other new target areas of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand)
	R3 – Government department would be sensitized about the market-oriented vocational training approach which they may adopt for Modular Employability Scheme	R3 – To demonstrate increase in economic participation of young women from the targeted communities having participated in JOVT as demonstrated through the MSC tracker	R3 – To demonstrate increase in economic participation of girls from targeted communities having participated in SAKSHAM Project as demonstrated through Most Significant Change
		R4 – To create replicable models for promoting economic participation of women and sharing with government, civil society in ARO region and within Plan International more widely	R4 – To provide digital skills to youth to enhance learning level outcomes (e-skills among youth)
			R5 – To insert youth in internships or apprenticeships R6 – To systematically

EFFICACY OF PROGRAM LOGIC

Logical structure

SAKSHAM Logframes have, as previously discussed, significantly improved over the 3 phases of the project to better reflect increased refinement in program logic but also more adequately capture the full scope of work of the project. Most of these changes are clearly visible in Phase 3, in which phrasing has become more concise and the sequence between goal, results and activities more logically articulated. The current logical structure of the project is less compact than previously, and the number of results in particular could be rationalised as there are too many ramifications at this level in the logframe.

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
# GOAL	1	1	1
# SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	2	2	3
# RESULTS	3	4	6
# indicators	9	18	23

The following conclusions were derived using a Logframe Rapid Assessment Tool to review the Phase 3 logframe (see the methodology section for explanations and refer to Appendix B for details):

- **Vertical logic and overall relevance:** In its current iteration, the project Goal is clearly stated, and is now distinct from subsequent specific objectives – which was not necessarily the case in phase 1 and Phase 2 logframes. The goal (economic empowerment of disadvantaged young people through employment-oriented vocational skills development) adequately expresses a purpose which goes beyond the immediate remit of SAKSHAM while still being closely and directly related to the objectives of the project. At this point in the project cycle and journey, SAKSHAM's goal remain highly relevant, considering the structural trends in unemployment in India and the fact that young people remain of the category of population the most likely to face barriers in accessing employment. The 3 Specific Objectives (SOs) logically and coherently relate to the Goal but insufficiently reflect the broader dimension of empowerment. Gaining skills, accessing employment and exercising a productive activity, whether waged or self-employment, is undoubtedly important in fostering positive and nurturing conditions of empowerment for the benefit of young men and young women who take part in the project. However, empowerment does not end with employment. The project itself, through the provision of Life Skills, opportunities for mentoring support and participation, in fact contributes to the empowerment of its young beneficiaries, as reported by them in consultations held for this review as well as on other occasions in the past (through the evaluation and project reports in particular). Examples of increased self-awareness, self-confidence, developed self-reliance, pride, positive changes in status and role in the household and the community and to some extent control over their own lives or the resources they have access to are all mentioned by beneficiaries to various degrees. These dimensions of empowerment are not explicit or tracked by the project M&E structure, where the predominant (albeit not exclusive) focus is on the provision of technical skills training, employment and its economic benefits.

SO 3 (*To promote increased economic participation of women*) is a commendable attempt to mainstream gender at strategic levels of the program logic, rather than at lower levels (results and activities) as previously. However, the vertical logic would be stronger if (i) SO 3 was phrased in more pragmatic terms more concretely relating the activities put in place (the current phrase relates to wider sectoral / national level which are more applicable to a Goal). (ii) The Goal could also be more explicit about the dimension of gender equality (through expressions such as “equitable opportunities towards employment and entrepreneurship” for example) which at

present is not the case (there is gender differentiation but this is not sufficient to equate to gender equality; explicit goal towards equal chances and equitable benefits would be necessary). The cause-to-effect linkage between SO 3 and the Goal is thus weaker.

One final observation should be made with regards to the geographic scope of SAKSHAM: since Phase 2, rural and peri-urban areas have been included in the projects, through VTEP in the Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand. The rural dimension of the project is however far less referenced in the program logic as compared to the urban work which is larger in scope and depth of intervention. Most of the objectives and results refer to the urban work, and only few indicators are currently applicable to the rural work. The juxtaposition of both rural and urban dimensions in one single logframe does not strike as strongly coherent. The results chain and logic of intervention for the rural work thus appears to be under-developed in the Phase 3 logframe; the situation analysis presented in the proposal itself is heavily dominated by the needs and challenges facing urban youth.

- **Objectives and Results:** The 3 SOs are phrased clearly, and their number seems appropriate in relation to the various components of the Goal. Key attributes are consistent throughout (focus on young people, gender differentiation, rural and urban focus, employment and entrepreneurship). The target groups in particular are well defined, and the changes in economic status are the clear benefits aimed for. It is however debatable whether the phrasing is entirely adequate for SO 1 and SO 2 where the focus is on shorter-term outcomes rather than longer-term outcomes which would usually be expected at this level in a logframe. The dimension of retention in work should be added to SO 1 to reflect this, and the viability / stability of self-employment for SO 2 (instead of the existing focus on access to entrepreneurship training).

At results level, concision and coherence could be strengthened. There are as many as 8 Expected Results which are not presented in clear or logical order and for some of them could be merged to simplify the results chain. Language used to describe the target group is not systematically coherent with SO and Goal levels.

- **Perspectives, assumptions and risks:** strategic objectives (SO and R) and their indicators do not sufficiently include the perspectives (opinions, perceptions, judgements) of the project beneficiaries and the wide range of actors whose participation is critical to ensure the success of the project (parents, community members, private sector and employers, decision-makers and duty-bearers). In fact, assumptions about their role and attributes are insufficiently represented in the project assumptions and risks too. Indeed, at SO and R levels, assumptions are repeated and mainly focus on (i) willingness in taking up training (specific focus on young women) and (ii) willingness from parents to support girls' access to employment. These are essential key assumptions but a range of other ones could and should also be considered: (i) capacity of the training offered by the project to remain relevant to the needs of both young people and the private sector; (ii) relevance of training and support offered should also be considered as well as private sector links; (iii) continuous willingness from the private sector to engage in the project; (iv) evolution of the macro-economic environment; (v) wider policy development particularly in support of women-friendly workplaces or specific incentives for gender equality in relation to employment; (vi) willingness of decision-makers and duty bearers to engage with the issue (this dimension is entirely absent from the logframe but quite critical and should thus be paid attention to).

Remarks and observations about appropriateness and effectiveness of the set of indicators and gender-mainstreaming are discussed in more detailed in subsequent sections.

Discussion on SAKSHAM suite of indicators

Indicators now exist at each of the strategic levels of the logframe i.e. Goal, Specific Objectives and Results (it was not systematically the case in Phase 1). They are more diverse (exploring more than only economic dimensions of project effects and results) and more comprehensively reflect the actual scope of work of the project (although gaps remain on this point). Bar some exceptions which could be easily corrected, they account for data disaggregation by sex when it would be pertinent and required to do so. Several indicators in the phase 3 logframe are gender-specific which means there is greater cohesion between the aims around gender equality and the measurement of project progress. However, the set of indicators currently in place for the project is not entirely appropriate, relevant and sufficient.

A specific and detailed analysis of SAKSHAM goal, specific objective and result-levels indicators (refer to Appendix B) leads to the following conclusions:

- **Repetition and duplication:** 23 separate indicators are listed in the logframe at Goal, SO and Results levels (there are also indicators at activity level, although these have not been assessed in this review as they are not at a strategic level of the program logic), but closer analysis revealed that in fact there are only 13 distinct indicators, but the majority of these are repeated (at times in exact same words) throughout the logframe, and sometimes at different levels (it was found for example that one indicator measuring and tracking training completion was repeated in similar terms at Goal, SO and R levels).
- **Positioning:** the fact that indicators are repeated at different levels of the logframe is of concern, as it suggests an issue of positioning (i.e. what is measured and tracked is not done at the appropriate level of expected change) as one same indicator is unlikely to relate adequately to various levels of change at the same time, i.e. immediate or short-term effects (Results), medium to long-term effects (Specific Objective) and contribution to wider impacts (Goal).
- **Formulation:** a number of indicators are expressed in a way that can be confusing, whereby it is unclear what exactly they aim to measure and track. This could be resolved either by reformulating indicators to make them clearer and more precise (although this is not necessarily the best option for a project already well engaged in its cycle) or by drafting an Indicator Tracker which will specify the definition / meaning of each indicator; methods of data collection and tools; responsibilities in terms of data collection / analysis / quality control; targets and milestones (i.e. yearly or quarterly targets); levels of disaggregation; frequency of data collection and baseline values a minima
- **Coherence:** minor errors exist in the logframe but could be easily resolved. This includes for example contradictions on some indicators including absolute numbers (e.g. “number of youth”) but with targets expressed as percentages. As mentioned in other sections of this chapter, it is important to be consistent with the formulation of the target group, with the terms “young people”, “youth”, “young women”, “young men”, “young women and men aged 18-29” to be preferred to the terms “girls”, “boys”, “young girls”, “young boys” and the terms “women” and “men” not accompanied by an age qualification. At present several formulations coexist in the logframe. It is also advisable for the ease of reading and for consistency to opt for only one pattern of expressing indicators, rather than using different patterns in the same logframe. For example, some indicators are phrased to include a target (e.g. “3,000 young women and men complete vocational training courses”), others do not (e.g. “Number of girls job-placed 6 months after completing training”). The following model is suggested (fictitious examples):

(Phrase)	<i>Proportion of young women and men retained in waged-employment at least 6 months post-training</i>
(Target)	<u>Year 1:</u> 80% in Delhi, 70% in new project locations <u>Year 2, Year 3:</u> 80% in all project locations
(Baseline value)	n/a
(Data disagg.)	By sex, location, sector of employment

(Phrase)	<i>Female labour force participation in target areas</i>
(Target)	<u>Year 1:</u> 20 percentage points increase on baseline value <u>Year 2, Year 3:</u> 30 percentage points increase on baseline value
(Baseline value)	to be confirmed by baseline study
(Data disagg.)	By sex, location, sector of employment

- **Balance:** almost all the indicators (only 1 exception) are quantitative. The majority of them measure reach (i.e. population served by a particular activity), a few measure conversion and proportion (in percentage). It is however good practice to seek a balance of both quantitative and qualitative. There is indeed a consensus in most recent standards and sectoral literature to promote that qualitative indicators are particularly important and relevant when dealing with underprivileged categories of population who are often characterised by their marginalisation and disenfranchisement. Feminist evaluation theories advocate for qualitative indicators in particular, and in combination with quantitative indicators, precisely because notions such as empowerment, imbalance of power, relationships and societal status – all at the heart of gender-responsive programming – require that perspectives, opinions and perceptions from women be explicitly sought.
- **Perspectives:** all indicators at Goal, SO and R levels measure and track results and changes from the perspective of the project. None of the indicators represent the perspective of beneficiaries or stakeholders (e.g. no indicator measuring “self-reported” changes or effects), which is a limitation. It is best practice to ensure that multiple perspectives (e.g. beneficiaries, stakeholders, etc.) are reflected in indicators, and not solely observations made from the project point of view.

- **Timeframes:** a strength of the logframe is that the vast majority of indicators can be monitored internally and at regular intervals by the project team, and can simply be administered. A mistake of many projects especially when devising outcome and goal-level indicators is to rely on a suite of indicators which can only be measured externally at the time of the final evaluation for example, which is an enormous risk avoided by SAKSHAM. The regularity of monitoring throughout the project is important to ensure that key intended changes can be measured, tracked and analysed, and adjustments made to the project approach should challenges be highlighted by monitoring data.

Reviewing indicators appears to be an urgent and highly important priority for SAKSHAM. The current set of indicators, although they provide clear information on project outputs, are not fully appropriate or effective in measuring and tracking results beyond outputs and thus would not provide sufficient information and data to express and report the medium and long-term impacts of the project. In the short term, some small urgent fixes are required (data disaggregation items, phrasing, coherence, avoidance of repetitions, include and test at least 1 qualitative indicator). In the longer-term, when designing future interventions or phases, specialist support should be sought to improve the quality of indicators at SO and Goal levels in particular. This may imply dedicating resources for continuous M&E capacity within the project.

Gender-responsiveness in programme logic

Using an adaptation of the “Gender in M&E” guidance document developed by Plan International⁴⁶, an assessment was made of SAKSHAM program logic across all three phases. 5 key attributes of gender-responsiveness in M&E were considered, directly adapted from the Plan International guidance document. Detailed findings and conclusions are presented in Appendix B. Each category was assessed as gender-unaware, gender-neutral, gender-aware or gender-transformative and colour coding applied (see below) for the purpose of visualising findings. To more easily assess gender mainstreaming in the respective logframes, gender components were highlighted in a different colour.

The following table summarises the assessment:

Unaware
Neutral
Aware
Transformative

KEY ATTRIBUTES	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3
Gender in Goal, objectives and indicators	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT AWARE	SOMEWHAT AWARE
Data disaggregation by sex	NEUTRAL	NEUTRAL	NEUTRAL
Explicit promotion of gender equality	AWARE	AWARE	AWARE
Level of gender change aimed at	AWARE	AWARE	AWARE
Women or girl-friendly M&E tools, methods or approaches	NEUTRAL	NEUTRAL	NEUTRAL

The following conclusions are derived from the above findings and the detailed assessment which supports them (refer to Appendix B):

- **SAKSHAM program logic implicitly reflects a good understanding of the practical and cultural barriers facing young women in relation to employment:** a comparative analysis of the 3 logframes clearly shows that amendments have been made to the project approach over time to more specifically address the barriers facing young women (e.g. working with employers towards women-friendly workplaces, working with parents to

⁴⁶ “Gender-Aware M&E” in *Gender and Rights in PALS*, Handout 9A, Plan International, undated, 1 page

remove pressures and resistance towards training and employment, working with both young women and young men in the programme through a dedicated Life Skills session to raise awareness of gender equality etc.) and to promote gender equality. The consistent efforts around gender capacity building of staff, partners, beneficiaries, communities and other stakeholders is clear, and consistent over time. This may explain the spontaneous and articulate prioritisation and rich reflection on gender equality and gender issues more broadly, particularly among Plan India staff and partners interviewed or consulted for this review.

- **There are clearly consistent efforts and improved approaches towards gender mainstreaming in program logic over the 3 phases:** over time, SAKSHAM has evolved from a project approach which was mainly gender-neutral (albeit with already some robust elements of thinking around gender inequalities, gender-responsiveness and gender mainstreaming) to a predominantly gender-aware approach. Gender equality is now more strongly reflected at the strategic levels of Goal, Objectives and Indicators; it is also more explicitly reflected in the Logframe and the level of change is approaching gender transformation as change is targeted at all 3 levels (individual, community and to a lesser extent, institutional). Taking stock of progress made before designing future phases of programming would be important, and such discussions should look at the critical steps to take to achieve a level of gender transformation in SAKSHAM, which is clearly attainable and within reach
- **Phase 2 was a key turning point in strengthening gender-responsiveness in M&E:** most of the important and strategic improvements in relation to gender and M&E were introduced in Phase 2. Good practices such as specific gender results, dedicated gender indicators, more regular data disaggregation by sex, higher level of change aimed at and innovative gender-friendly M&E tool were introduced in Phase 2. These efforts were maintained in Phase 3, although the gender improvements made were only marginal and the chance to reach a gender-transformative level of programming was missed, in particular because of inadequacy of indicators, inconsistencies in data disaggregation by sex and limitations in the efforts to reach various levels of change (individual, community, institutional) as well as adequately measure and track broader dimensions of equality (identity, agency, empowerment)
- **Simple fixes would greatly strengthen gender-responsiveness in the M&E architecture:** data disaggregation, although greatly improved since Phase 1, remains inconsistent. It would be pertinent to consider for a number of indicators to include disaggregation by sex in addition to other criteria (to nuance the intersectionality of gender issues with other key factors such as location for example). The good practice of referring to gender in key M&E moments done in Phase 1 (“gender-sensitive baseline”) should be more systematically highlighted focusing on gender-responsive evaluations for example. It is also observed that all the knowledge and learning around gender only derives from the monitoring of data and indicators, and no gender-specific study or research outputs seems to have been included in any of the 3 SAKSHAM logframes. Of importance in particular, considering gaps in the choice of indicators (and in particular the exclusive use of quantitative indicators including on tracking gender results or effects, the predominant focus on output-level data and the predominant focus on the measurement of economic benefits or assets of young women), would be to undertake at least one qualitative study on the long-term effect of SAKSHAM on female graduates.
- **SAKSHAM would benefit from gender-specific methods of data collection and M&E:** efforts have already been made to place “girls-specific” indicators and targets in the logframe, particularly since Phase 2. An innovative tool, the Most Significant Change Tracker (MSC Tracker) was also introduced at that point and although it is not exclusively focused on young women, it does explore in more depths the changes reported by young women through the questionnaire, and of importance is the fact that the changes explored are not limited to economic gains and assets (e.g. income, skills, employment status etc.) but also look into criteria of empowerment, agency and identity (e.g. confidence levels, perception of decision-making power, etc.). Considering the long-standing and vast experiential knowledge of gender in SAKSHAM, it would be opportune to include (i) more qualitative (see remarks above about the importance of qualitative indicators in gender-responsive programming) and (ii) gender-specific M&E tools. The strong gender expertise available across the Plan International Federation as well as ample literature available on what is now referred to as ‘feminist M&E’ or women-friendly M&E (including practical tools and exercises as available for example on www.includegender.com or UN Women online resource platform) provides the supportive context to do so. A number of guides on gender-sensitive indicators also exist (e.g. OXFAM, CIDA, ILO).

- **Concerns can be expressed about the fact that program logic documents may not reflect the entire scope of work on gender equality:** Some of the gender work done is not mentioned in the activity plan section of the logframes which raises concerns about how comprehensive these plans are; gender reviews and gender action plans have been conducted for example but do not seem to be reflected in the Logframes. Engagement with parents in relation to female trainees/graduates seem to be under-documented in logframes.

Minor limitations to this assessment should be noted:

- The assessment was static: it considered the logframes as shared by Plan International with this consultant and time constraints did not allow for extensive cross-checking with project reporting document to analyse how these M&E provisions were brought to life in practice. In some instances, conversations with project staff gave indications that there could be variations (e.g. refer to remarks above on gender scope of work)
- Logframes in Phase 2 and Phase 3 although they introduce the dimension of VTEP, place an insufficient level of attention and detail on (i) self-employment pathways (it seems to be that monitoring is mainly focused on the output level: training completion, provision of seed capital) and (ii) rural settings in conjunction with gender.

SECTION 5 Recommendations

Recommendation	Importance	Timing	Responsibilities
# 11. Future phases of programme development should pay attention to enhancing the coherence of program logic, building on current strength (level of gender mainstreaming in particular) and improving the quality of the logframe. These efforts should prioritise outcome-oriented phrasing and measurement of progress, and closer alignment to global YEE frameworks adopted by Plan International (in particular, focus beyond skills acquisition and employment, to include stronger references to supportive environment, services and actors).	◆◆◆◆ Critical	◆◆◆◆ When resources allow	Plan International India with support M&E specialist (global or SOYEE) and FNO/NLNO
# 12. A thorough review of indicators should be urgently prioritised. In the short term, some small urgent fixes should be done (data disaggregation items, phrasing, consistency, avoidance of repetitions, include and test at least 1 qualitative indicator). In the longer-term, when designing future interventions or phases, specialist support should be sought to improve the quality of indicators at SO and Goal levels in particular. This may imply dedicating resources for continuous M&E capacity within the project.	◆◆◆◆ Critical	◆◆◆◆ Within 6 months	Plan International India with support M&E specialist (global or SOYEE) and FNO/NLNO
# 13. A gender review of the M&E framework looking into program logic, monitoring processes, data collection and evaluation provisions should be considered in 2019. This should aim to:	◆◆◆◆ Considerable	◆◆◆◆ Within 6 months	Plan International India with support from gender specialist (global or ARO), M&E specialist (global or SOYEE) and FNO/NLNO
(i) <u>in the short term</u> : remove inconsistencies and gaps in data disaggregation by sex in the Logframe, introduce and test at least 1 outcome-level qualitative gender indicator, ensure that the activity plan explicitly mentions gender-responsiveness for evaluations			
(ii) <u>in the longer-term</u> (prior to future project design): research and consider introducing women-friendly M&E tools and approaches, strengthen measurements of non-economic/non-asset changes for female			

beneficiaries (e.g. identity, agency, dimensions of empowerment); identify steps and actions required for SAKSHAM to become a gender-transformative project (from an M&E point of view)

14. A qualitative study on the long-term effects of SAKSHAM on female graduates, highlighting not only the well-documented project results in changes brought to the daily condition of female beneficiaries, but also potential changes in their social status and how the project addresses their strategic interests as women, is recommended to supplement experiential learning anecdotally gathered to date.



Desirable



When
resources
allow

Plan International India with support from gender specialist (global or ARO), FNO/NLNO, and possibly an external expert or team of experts