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**TECHNICAL NOTE**

# Monitoring and Evaluation for Youth Workforce Development Projects

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Printed in the United States of America.

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# About The SEEP Network

The SEEP Network[1] is an association of more than 70 international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that support micro- and small enterprise development programs around the world. SEEP's mission is to connect microenterprise practitioners in a global learning community. It brings members and other practitioners together in a peer learning environment to produce practical, innovative solutions to key challenges in the industry. SEEP then disseminates these solutions through training, publications, professional development, and technical assistance.

# About The PLP

The Practitioner Learning Program (PLP) methodology was developed by SEEP as a way to engage microenterprise practitioners in a collaborative learning process to document and share findings and to identify effective and replicable practices and innovations to benefit the industry as a whole. Practitioner Learning Programs focus on learning at three levels: the individual organization, the PLP group, and the industry at large.

The PLP for "Youth Workforce Development: Using 100% Market-Driven Programs to Achieve 100% Employment," funded by USAID through the AED FIELD-Support mechanism, aims to empower practitioners through peer learning to design and measure each element of their youth-serving workforce development programs. It intends to incorporate understanding of and response to market needs and opportunities, and develop the range of skills that youth need to achieve more success more quickly in the areas of employment or enterprise start-up and growth. The objective of this PLP is to identify, encourage, and disseminate replicable strategies for market-driven project designs to improve youth employment success and to measure the effectiveness of these strategies.

The PLP learning products are written by and for practitioners in the field of youth workforce development.[2] See these other learning products in the Youth and Workforce Development PLP:

- "Strategies for Scale-Up in Youth Workforce Development Programs"
- "Market Assessments in Youth Workforce and Livelihoods Programs"
- "Partnerships for Youth Workforce Development: Case Studies"
- "Market-Driven Youth Programs and the Bottom Line"

# Introduction

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is a challenge for most development agencies and non-profit organizations. Few organizations or donors have the capacity and resources to design a comprehensive performance-monitoring system that informs decision making about progress toward stated targets, helps managers to adjust project activities according to periodic accomplishments of activity-related outputs, and determines if and to what degree final outcomes or results were achieved. Those who design such systems often underestimate the effort organizations must make to train staff before and during implementation.

The six organizations participating in the SEEP Practitioner Learning Program (PLP) in Youth and Workforce Development have attempted to simplify and transform data collection into useful management tools. This document presents some of the basic principles and sample indicators of performance management that may help practitioners interested in M&E for youth-workforce development projects that are market driven. It also highlights experiences from three PLP partners in measuring causal-model indicators and the specific lessons they learned.

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1. www.seepnetwork.org

2. For more learning products, please visit http://seepnetwork.org/Pages/YouthandWorkforceDevelopment.aspx.

In this technical note, the reader will learn about:

- the causal-chain model, as well as different types of causal models and indicators used in youth enterprise and youth workforce development projects;
- challenges in measuring causal-model indicators from selected PLP partners and lessons learned from their experiences; and
- general recommendations and considerations for each stage of developing a monitoring and evaluation system.

## Youth and Workforce Development PLP Partners

| Organization | Project | Description of Workforce Development Activity | Country |
|---|---|---|---|
| Education Development Center (EDC) | Haitian Out-of-School Youth Livelihood Initiative (IDEJEN) | Non-formal basic education and life skills, business training, mentoring, and apprenticeship for low literate out-of-school youth | Haiti |
| Fundación Paraguaya (FP) | San Francisco Agricultural High School | Agricultural-entrepreneurial high school | Paraguay |
| Mercy Corps (MC) | Partner Microcredit Foundation (Partner MKF) | Microfinance loans coupled with business training and mentoring | Bosnia and Herzegovina |
| International Rescue Committee (IRC) | Legacy Initiative | Nationwide program to revamp technical and vocational education | Liberia |
| Partners of the Americas (POA) | *A Ganar*/Vencer | Job and life skills training for at-risk youth using sports curriculum | Brazil, Ecuador, Uruguay |
| Save the Children (SC) | Rural Youth Livelihoods (RYL) | Life skills and livelihoods training for rural adolescents, especially girls | Egypt |

# 1.   Understanding Monitoring and Evaluation: The Causal Chain

The first priority in designing a performance monitoring system for a youth workforce or enterprise development project, and deciding what results the project wants to measure, is to understand the logic underlying the program design. A youth workforce development program must show how the project activities and their related outputs (e.g. loans, training, mentoring) will eventually lead to the intended outcomes or results, and impact(s) through multiple steps. These steps are linked to each other through a series of cause-and-effect relationships that form the *causal chain*. The links in the causal chain are composed of essential project components—*activities*, *outputs*, *outcomes*, and *impacts*—as illustrated below:

## The Causal Chain

| Intermediate Links: | Program Activities | Outputs | Outcomes | Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Example: | • Provide microloans to people 18-30 | • Number of loans issued | • Number of jobs created by young entrepreneurs' businesses | • Increase youth employment |
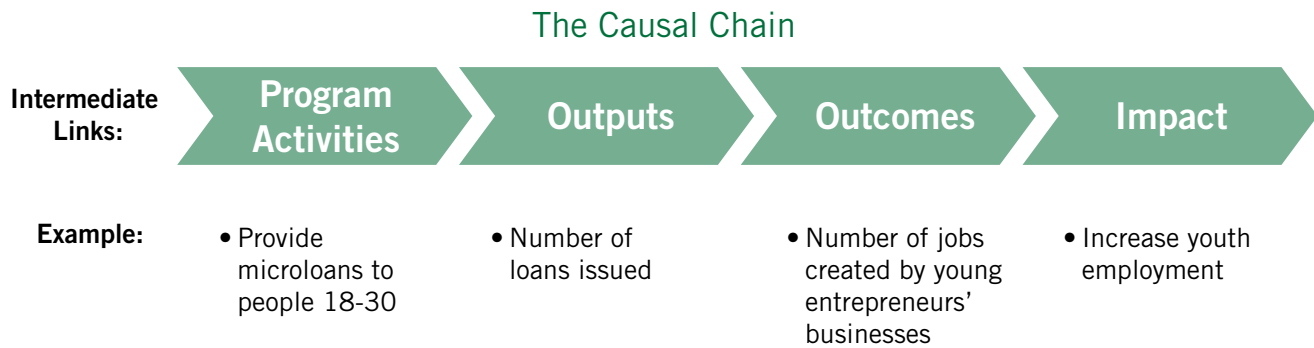
*Activities* consist of the actual program or project tasks (for example, providing life-skills training courses) that require inputs (the financial and human resources used to perform these activities) and that transform the inputs into outputs.

*Outputs* are direct products of program activities and are under the direct control of the project. For a youth workforce development project, this might include the number of people trained, number of youth engaged in conducting market research, or the number of loans issued to youth. Output indicators are typically collected by project staff during operations without difficulty and maintained in the project's management information system. A program should establish periodic targets throughout the life of the project for each activity output and then monitor these targets. If outputs are not being achieved, then program staff should determine why and make any course corrections necessary. Monitoring the accomplishment and quality of activity outputs is essential to ensure that the project produces its stated outcomes.

*Outcomes* are direct and indirect medium-to-long-term results of project activities and outputs and measure changes at the individual, institutional (household, organization), or sector (health, education) level. Outcomes are generally the joint result of multiple project activities and outputs. Direct outcomes are medium-to-long-term results that the program promised to accomplish with the inputs (funds) it received and activities (outputs) it organized and implemented. Indirect outcomes are unexpected or unforeseen results (either positive or negative) that are difficult to measure accurately or attribute as direct results of the program. Direct program outcomes are results that are considered necessary, *intermediary* conditions for final impacts to occur. In this sense, outcomes are *links* in causal-chain outputs to longer-term impacts.

- *Individual-level outcomes* indicate whether outputs have produced the anticipated benefits for youth. They might be, for example, the acquisition of new knowledge or skills from the training delivered.

- *Institutional- or sector-level outcomes* occur at the household, organizational, or sector levels and affect the relevant social, economic, or physical infrastructure. Successfully achieving these outcomes is vital for initiating and sustaining longer-term impacts. Examples include improved capacity of private-sector training providers, strengthened government institutions that serve youth, and increased access to education by marginalized youth.

These two types of intermediate outcomes are presumed to be the means to an ultimate goal, such as 100-percent youth employment. For the members of this PLP, outcomes to accomplish this goal vary from one project to another, depending on the project objectives.

*Impacts* are the longer-term effects, whether positive or negative, that can be attributed to the program—such as youth employment or self-employment, increased income, sustainable livelihoods, or improved community well-being.

The table on the next page presents the activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact indicators of all six participating organizations in the Youth and Workforce Development PLP. Other youth enterprise and workforce development programs may find these indicators useful to consider when developing their own programs. The appendix provides additional definitions and explanations of monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessment.

One of the greatest benefits of the causal model is that it simply illustrates and clarifies what needs to be done and how each activity and its related output(s) will contribute to intermediate results. Since all programs have slightly different program objectives and assumptions about the causal chain, it is difficult to define a "one-size-fits-all" causal model. Compiling all of the PLP partners' causal models here demonstrates that there is no one approach for achieving 100-percent youth employment. While some programs focus on activities and outputs, such as training or educating young people, others focus on providing financing or capacity building to local institutions, or identifying and analyzing market opportunities for youth. All these activities and outputs are valuable and, if well done, contribute to the causal chain that leads to longer-term impacts of gainful employment or self-employment.

# Overview of Causal Chain for Six Youth-Workforce Development Programs

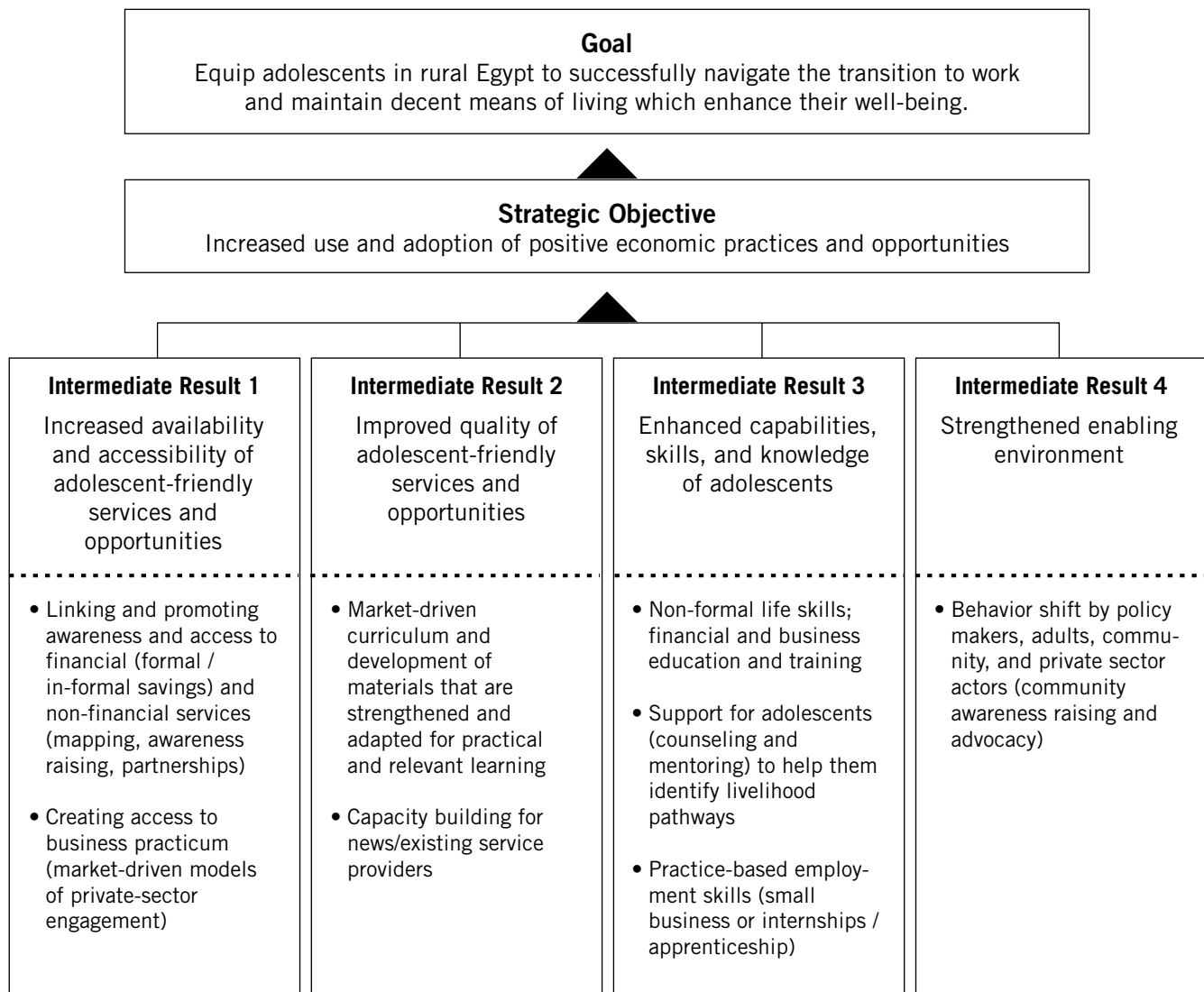| PLP Partners | Activities | Outputs | Individual outcomes | Sector outcomes | Impact |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *What activities will the program offer to foster youth employment and entrepreneurship?* | *What will the activity deliver?* | *What will these outputs do for beneficiaries?* | *What will these outputs and outcomes do for institutions or the sector?* | *Why are we doing this?* |
| EDC, SC, IRC, FP, Partner MKF | Training: market-driven vocational skills and life skills training | - No. of youth who completed the training<br>- % graduation (no. of graduates/no. of youth initially registered) | % of graduates productively engaged (employment, part-time job, formal and informal education, etc.) | Greater alignment between training (type, level, quantity) and market opportunities (training adjusted to increase placement rate) | **100% youth employment**<br><br>- % of employed youth in the community<br><br>- % of self-employed youth in the community |
| POA, Partner MKF | Mentoring | - No. of youth mentored (beneficiaries)<br>- No. of mentors | No. of youth productively engaged (employment, part-time job, formal and informal education, etc.) | Relationships established between the private sector and NGOs or training institutions (measured as % of retention of mentors) | |
| IRC, EDC | Active recruitment of girls | - % of increase in the number of applications from girls<br>- % of girls' application<br>- Use of selection criterion and special provisions for girls enrollment | - % of girl graduates<br>- % of girls productively engaged (employment, part-time job, formal and informal education, etc.) | - No. of vocational training centers that follow a code of conduct for girls' empowerment<br>- No. of girl-friendly actions or policies implement by government and NGOs | - Sustainable livelihoods<br>- Increased income<br>- Peace<br>- Justice |
| Partner MKF | Microloans | - No. of business loans<br>- % of business loans issued to young people between 18–30 | - Number of jobs created for youth by microfinance clients<br>- % of sustainable youth businesses after one year | - % of youth enterprises transferred from unregistered to registered status<br>- % of young clients who return for new business loans | |
| SC | Savings | - No. of youth saving accounts<br>- No. of youth who are part of saving clubs or have accounts | % of youth who successfully increased financial security | Increased amount of capital available for future economic growth | |
| EDC, MC, IRC, Partner MKF | Market research (labor market research to identify employment opportunities and skills needs AND/OR market development research to identify self-employment opportunities) | - No. of youth engaged in conducting market research<br>- No. of businesses interviewed<br>- No. of NGOs interviewed<br>- No. of government officials interviewed<br>- No. of consumer groups interviewed | % of youth transitioning into employment or self-employment | Education and training driven by markets demand, i.e., more aligned with needs of employers and needs for local economic growth (measured as % of placement rate) | |
| IRC, SC | Elimination of unsafe or exploitative employment and/or grey economy | - Establishment of standards<br>- No. of trainers trained<br>- No. of youth affected by training | - No. of self-reporting non-exploitative sources of income to complement household income<br>- No. of adolescents participating | No. of institutions adopting safe practices, standards or code of conduct | |
| SC, EDC, IRC | Building government capacity for youth services and policies | - Adoption of national youth policy document<br>- Number of programs expanded with government funds | % of youth engaged in government programs | Local institutions trained or given incentives to implement youth-friendly practices | |

# 2. The Challenge of Measuring: Selected PLP Experiences

This section describes the experiences of three PLP partners in measuring causal-model outcomes and impacts. Each experience highlights some difficulty in measuring or comparing activities, outcomes, or impacts, and offers the solution developed for the individual youth-workforce development program. The partners also explain the specific lessons they learned from this experience.

## Save the Children: Measuring the Intangible

Developing life skills and financial literacy are the core program components of Save the Children's Rural Youth Livelihoods program in upper Egypt. The causal model in this case reflects a causal link between life skills and financial literacy training, increased income and new knowledge, and the ultimate impact sought by all members of this PLP: 100 percent youth employment. The table below displays the Rural Youth Livelihoods program causal model.

### Rural Youth Livelihoods Program Causal Model

**Goal**
Equip adolescents in rural Egypt to successfully navigate the transition to work and maintain decent means of living which enhance their well-being.

**Strategic Objective**
Increased use and adoption of positive economic practices and opportunities

| **Intermediate Result 1**<br>Increased availability and accessibility of adolescent-friendly services and opportunities | **Intermediate Result 2**<br>Improved quality of adolescent-friendly services and opportunities | **Intermediate Result 3**<br>Enhanced capabilities, skills, and knowledge of adolescents | **Intermediate Result 4**<br>Strengthened enabling environment |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Linking and promoting awareness and access to financial (formal / in-formal savings) and non-financial services (mapping, awareness raising, partnerships)<br><br>• Creating access to business practicum (market-driven models of private-sector engagement) | • Market-driven curriculum and development of materials that are strengthened and adapted for practical and relevant learning<br><br>• Capacity building for news/existing service providers | • Non-formal life skills; financial and business education and training<br><br>• Support for adolescents (counseling and mentoring) to help them identify livelihood pathways<br><br>• Practice-based employment skills (small business or internships / apprenticeship) | • Behavior shift by policy makers, adults, community, and private sector actors (community awareness raising and advocacy) |

## Measuring Changes in Assets and Behaviors

The key question for Save the Children (SC) was to determine whether the chosen program activities and outputs led to the desired outcomes: improved financial/business management behaviors and practices. Measuring the ultimate result was possible in this program through a proxy indicator because the program included a financial support component that recorded how many young people started and maintained an income-generating activity (i.e. youth employment) between the start and end of the program. While this is not a direct measure of "the transition to work and … means of living" since existing IGAs may or may not be generating profits, it is a reasonable proxy indicator for the ultimate result sought by the program. However, measuring changes in assets accessible to youth was much more complex, given that social and human assets are largely intangible. Additionally, changes in behavior take time and may not be obvious even months after the program ends.

To address this challenge, Save the Children decided to adapt and pilot a new composite index, the Youth Livelihoods Development Index (YLDI). The index comprises three self-administered self-assessment surveys designed for youth 11–24 years of age: the Developmental Asset Profile (developed by the Search Institute), the Tangible Asset Profile, and the Livelihoods Competencies Profile. YLDI provides quantitative scores, measuring the presence or absence and degree of various developmental, livelihood, and tangible assets.

YLDI results provide program managers with overall Developmental Asset Profiles (DAP) of youth. The instrument generates an aggregate score of an individual's human, social, financial and physical livelihood asset levels, as well as more detailed profiles by relevant characteristics (e.g., gender, age, grade level, or work experience). These profiles allow project managers to design activities that support and maintain current assets and target interventions to improve those assets that are found to be inadequate. YLDI is also sensitive enough to track changes in developmental assets over time, making it useful for program design and evaluation.

The following table shares sample results and indicators from the YLDI:

| YLDI Outcome/Result | YLDI Indicator |
| --- | --- |
| Improved Youth Livelihood Development (YLDI) | % of youth with increased overall YLDI scores |
| Increased awareness of youth livelihood development approaches and responses | No. of staff from government and NGOs that participate in Save the Children engagement sessions |
| Improved financial capital among youth | % of youth with increased financial capital scores on youth livelihoods development index |
| Increased community and parent support to youth livelihood development | % of youth with increased support scale scores from the DAP |

## Lessons Learned in Measuring Intangible Outcomes

- Although measuring certain outcomes, such as behavior and attitudinal change, is difficult, there are tools that can quantify these changes over time. Save the Children worked with the Search Institute to adapt an already-existing tool. Project managers should look for existing tools before investing in a new custom-made tool.

- Measuring outcomes is a tricky endeavor, and context matters. Save the Children translated the tool, adapted it to the rural Egyptian context, and tested it with a small sample before using the index for the program. The initial test found that youth got bored with the long questionnaire and fabricated answers. After streamlining the tool, a second test of the YLDI revealed greater reliability and consistency.

- Measuring activities and outputs (number of trainings held, number of youth trained) is usually easy and well understood by staff. However, tools to measure intangible outcomes can be difficult for staff to administer. This is especially true if they do not understand what the tool is measuring or why measuring outcomes is important. Save the Children found that it had to orient staff on why collecting the data was important and how the data was used after they were collected. The training program also helped increase staff comfort with the language and questions in the YLDI tool.

# Mercy Corps and Partner Microcredit Foundation: Measuring Which Activities Matter Most

Partner Microcredit Foundation (Partner MKF) began in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1997 as an economic development program of Mercy Corps. The microfinance institution today provides financial services to more than 60,000 clients, 23 percent of whom are young people under 30. Two years ago, Partner MKF began research and development efforts to better serve the youth market. This is particularly important because national youth unemployment in Bosnia and Herzegovina is estimated at 60 percent, yet 89 percent of youth surveyed in a market study had never attended business training or engaged in economic activities.

Mercy Corps works with microfinance institutions (MFIs), such as Partner MKF, to support the integration of complementary services to youth loan clients. For example, many youth-workforce development programs combine two or more activities, such as loans, financial education, training, mentoring, or apprenticeships, to achieve the desired impact. With additional support from the World Bank, Partner MKF agreed to create a new youth loan product (to launch in 2010), including business training and mentoring, and conduct a comparative cost-benefit analysis to determine which combination gave the biggest "bang for the buck."

## Using Impact Evaluation to Compare Outcomes from Different Activities

Impact evaluation specifically assesses those changes in program outcomes that can be attributed to a particular program activity or activities. The central question for impact evaluation is what would have happened to those participants receiving the intervention had they not received it.

For example, Partner MKF knew that access to credit is an important contributor to youth employment and livelihoods outcomes. However, much less was known about the specific effect of different loan conditions, business training, and mentoring on young people's success in business. The impact evaluation will help Partner MKF, Mercy Corps, and the World Bank determine which of the following variations of activities would produce the greatest contribution to impacting young people's success in business:

1. Young people who receive the youth loan product with standard maturity and loan amount
2. Young people who receive the youth loan product with an extended loan term, if desired
3. Young people who receive an extended loan term and a larger loan size, if desired
4. Young clients who receive the original youth loan, plus free business training and mentoring

The impact evaluation methodology involves randomized treatment groups (program participants) and control groups (non-participants). It attempts to replicate as closely as possible the scientific experiment model, which measures direct contribution of activities to results by controlling for non-program influences. Each treatment group receives different program activities, and the control group does not receive any particular support aside from the loan. Partner MKF and Mercy Corps track indicators including:

- Number of employees, including of youth employees
- Who makes financial decisions
- Where business is conducted (in the home; office; street; etc.)
- Employment outside the microenterprise
- Number, type and monetary value of business assets and inventory
- Business expenditures and type, past and present
- Total sales for last three months, and last year
- Sales for the past month and last year
- Biggest challenges/problems to the business
- Financial literacy (questions about interest, credit history, investments, etc)[3]

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3. Source: Baseline study used in program (internal document).

One year after the implementation in 2010, Partner MKF and the World Bank will conduct an impact evaluation to determine whether and to what degree each of the added activities above contributed to the success of youth businesses. This is done by analyzing the "double difference," found by subtracting the achievement of the control group from the achievement of the treatment group to determine the net change.

For example, assume that both the treatment (participants) and control (non-participants) groups start out at the beginning of the project with the same level of income. At the end of the project, the youth who received a loan had a 50 percent increase in income, whereas non-participants' income increased by 25 percent over the same time period. An impact evaluation considers the double difference—that is, the increase in the control group subtracted from the increase in the treatment group, which is the net change, or impact, of the loan on income. Thus, while the loan increased participants' income by 50 percent, the real impact of the project is a 25 percent increase in youth income (50 minus 25). Subtracting the change the control group experienced helps account for factors outside the program.

In addition, if all young people, including the control group, see their income increase by 50 percent during the one-year period, one could not conclude that either the youth loan or mentoring component of the program had a positive effect on youth income. If, however, results found (with statistical significance) that young people in the group that received mentoring support in addition to the loan had greater financial success at the end than those who only received a loan, one could conclude that mentoring adds value to young entrepreneurs. The cost of implementation of the program, who will pay, and what solution would be most sustainable, must then be taken into consideration.

### Lessons Learned in Comparing Program Activities

- The scientific, experimental model is extremely difficult to replicate, particularly by organizations with limited financial and technical means. However, programs can separate youth into groups to try to reasonably observe the differential impact of different program activities on overall results. With existing successful programs, such as youth microfinance, it is often easy to multiply the impact of the program on youth by including additional program elements.

- Organizations and donors are often unsure if the investment in impact evaluation is worth it—that is, if the funds would not be better spent just providing the program to more youth. Doing this sort of comparison testing is worth the investment if the organization plans to scale up or replicate the project, and wants to make sure that the methods used produce the greatest possible impact. For example, in this case, Partner MKF may integrate the mentoring component to other, non-youth clients, if the study proves that mentored clients are more successful. Mercy Corps could also scale up these best practices to other microfinance partners around the world.

## Education Development Center (EDC): Measuring Impact beyond Employment with Limited Means

The Haitian Out-of-School Youth Livelihood Initiative (IDEJEN) is a USAID-funded workforce development program for out-of-school youth, implemented by Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC). IDEJEN provides youth with employable skills training, basic and vocational education, job placement, and small business development, as well as mentoring and job placement. Youth receive 12 months of training, followed by 6 months of livelihood accompaniment, during which they receive support as they either return to school or seek employment. The program is implemented through more than 100 community-based organizations across the country, in partnership with the private sector and government ministries.

### Defining Successful Outcomes

EDC believes that measuring success for youth-workforce development programs should go beyond tracking employment in the formal sector alone. As a result, the IDEJEN program, which targets low-literate youth in highly unstable and difficult environments, needed to redefine "employment" to better fit the realities of the country. It also recognized that continuing education is an important outcome for this population, and selected specific indicators related to youth's transitioning to both employment and continuing education or training.

### Challenges and Solutions

In countries like Haiti, where 85 percent of the jobs are in the informal economy, the relatively small formal sector lacks absorptive capacity, and employment opportunities are extremely limited. Therefore, EDC decided that traditional measures of employment are not sufficient in this context, particularly for minimally-educated and socially-marginalized youth. To get a more complete picture of the likely employment outcomes that IDEJEN youth would have, the project had to define employment more broadly and decided to look at job placement and self-employment creation in the formal and also informal sectors.

Employment was defined by the project as number or percentage of young people who had at least one income-generating opportunity during the accompaniment phase. It included various definitions, such as:

- number of youth-run small enterprises initiated during accompaniment phase;
- number and percentage of youth-run small enterprises enhanced during accompaniment phase;
- number of youth employed through internships with program partners during accompaniment phase;
- number of youth employed through internships or other employment with program partners' income-generating activities during accompaniment phase; and
- number and percentage of youth who generate income (or increase income) from non-partner employment (small-scale work opportunities).

In addition, a key outcome of a youth workforce program that targets minimally-educated youth is for these youth to return to school. Although the goal of such programs is not to have all youth return to school, if the youth choose further education, it is still considered a successful outcome because it represents an opportunity for students to acquire additional skills in specific technical fields needed in the market.

The project tracks the number of program graduates who return to the formal school system. To provide more complete information on students' completion of education, leading to greater access to employment opportunities, the project also tracks students' results in the formal school system, including success rates on the primary school exam. This exam is a major educational milestone in Haiti and is required for the youth to continue with more advanced vocational training.

### Lessons Learned on Measuring Outcomes at Multiple Levels

- In environments where the formal job sector is very small, youth workforce programs should carefully define employment. This is even more important when programs target minimally-educated, socially marginalized youth, who have even less access to formal-sector employment than other, more-educated youth. In these situations, employment outcome and related indicators should take into account employment and self-employment in the informal sector.

- The benefits of youth-workforce development programs can go beyond youth employment. Programs should consider their target group and think about different pathways to success that youth clients might have after program completion. Because IDEJEN works with minimally-educated youth, continuing education remains an important and desired outcome of the program: further education will help these youth access formal vocational training that can open more opportunities on the job market. However, the type of vocational training still needs careful consideration to ensure that the specialization is still relevant to the market opportunities.

# 3.  Recommendations and Considerations

The PLP partners learned valuable lessons while developing and implementing their own monitoring and evaluation systems. Below are some general recommendations drawn from their experiences to help similar organizations design and adopt an effective and feasible M&E system that accurately measures the outcomes and impact of their youth-workforce development programs.

## Designing the Monitoring and Evaluation System and Selecting Outcomes and Indicators

- As the IDEJEN example shows, the desired outcomes and impacts for youth-workforce development programming may include continued education as well as employment. PLP partners recommend selecting only a few (1–3) key outcome indicators and ensuring that all partners measure them well, rather than monitoring many outcomes at varying degrees of accuracy.

- Market-driven youth programming should include outcomes measured by indicators that capture macro data from the labor markets that youth clients are entering. Local training institutions and partners must measure employment placement rates upon graduation, separated into different employment sectors as relevant. This will help them respond to shifting labor and market demands.

- Because "youth" is not a homogenous group, M&E systems should disaggregate and analyze all program data and monitoring information by sex, age, and relevant socio-economic factors. This is essential for tracking the goal of "youth" employment with any meaningful accuracy. Data should be further disaggregated where other significant social inequalities persist between ethnic, religious, or other social groupings. As a result, PLP partners recommend that when designing an M&E system, organizations should make sure they understand who the youth are. This means investigating, understanding, and responding to the specific, different capabilities and constraints facing diverse young women and men, and adolescent boys and girls in their efforts to become and stay gainfully employed.

## Implementing a Monitoring and Evaluation System

- M&E is only a wise use of resources if the information gained is used to improve project design, inform decisions during the life of the program, or scale up effective methods, to ultimately achieve the desired outcomes and impact for youth. This means that M&E findings must be regularly relayed to managers and program implementers, and that time and space be made available to adjust the project accordingly. Planning for this requires resources (people and financial), at the outset but can lead to future savings and greater impact in the long term.

- Leaving M&E activities until the end of a program will not provide the necessary feedback loop described above. Integrate monitoring into daily program activities by program staff.

- Local and partner staff will likely need training to carry out effective M&E. They must understand what data to collect, when and how to collect it, why they are collecting it, how it is processed, and for what purposes.

This technical note has focused on quantifiable indicators and on program monitoring as they relate to the causal chain. However, quantitative indicators are not by themselves sufficient to evaluate and assess project performance. PLP partners recommend supplementing this information through a mixed-method approach, using qualitative and/or other types of analysis (such as desk research, individual interviews, focus-group discussions, market scanning, or rapid assessments) to understand the reasons behind the trends and results shown by the key performance indicators. Qualitative data helps triangulate and confirm quantitative data, making the quantitative figures more meaningful. It also helps an organization better understand what aspects of a program make it effective or unsuccessful. Finally, qualitative data helps to clarify *which* youth in a program are benefiting most (for example, whether young men and young women ex-

perience the program differently), or which partners or staff achieve the greatest results. Therefore, qualitative data collection is vital for answering the "how" and "why" questions that quantitative "what" and 'how many' questions cannot.

## Evaluation and Impact

Even with a robust management information system, trained partners, and investments in M&E, measuring and evaluating long-term impact remains a major challenge. The PLP partners have identified the following problems and possible solutions:

- **Long-term horizons.** Youth-workforce development programs may aim for long-term impacts, for example, a life-skills training course for adolescent girls intended to support employment for 5 or even 10 years in to the future. PLP partners recommend attempting to measure these impacts (if there is funding), especially in countries where the organization has a permanent presence. This allows organizations to test the validity of the causal model and adapt to changes in market conditions over time. When programs cannot measure long-term impact with sufficient accuracy, they can analyze outputs and outcomes along with qualitative information gathered from experiences and research findings. If the outputs and outcomes are achieved, then one can reasonably argue that the desired impact will occur in the future.

- **Difficulty in attributing direct causal effect.** There are many factors that may influence the success (final outcomes and impact) of youth-workforce development programs. For example, a program may report outstanding rates of youth employment, which might have been the result of economic growth in the region rather than of the program, or the rates might only reflect employment for boys and not girls. PLP partners recommend either trying to design an impact evaluation (as described in the Mercy Corps/Partner MKF example) or looking at similar programs across different contexts to identify factors that consistently influence the ultimate outcome and impact.

- **High cost.** Good impact evaluations are expensive, and may involve careful design *before* program implementation. PLP partners do not recommend using impact evaluations as a management tool, but rather as a way to identify cost-effective programs and activities that can be replicated to other areas.

- **High opportunity cost.** PLP partners recommend considering whether the funds invested in M&E would be better spent elsewhere (such as expanding the program to reach more beneficiaries). Investments in M&E are justified if they improve current or future program and contribute to achieving the ultimate desired impact of 100-percent youth employment. This also assumes that M&E findings are shared and understood by program decision makers. Gathering data only to fulfill a donor requirement does not improve outcomes for youth.

# 4. Conclusion

Designing and implementing an effective M&E system for a youth-workforce development program is challenging. While the theory and best practice of M&E are well established, real-world conditions and limited funding and time often make these difficult to carry out. However, the examples and recommendations above demonstrate that effective monitoring and evaluation is possible and valuable.

The difficulty of carrying out a rigorous impact evaluation may seem daunting to practitioners; specifically, a truly randomized control experiment. However, practitioners and donors should avoid thinking of M&E as either perfect or useless. Instead, M&E should be thought of as a continuum, with various tools and approaches that focus on different parts of the causal chain (inputs, outputs, outcomes, impact). These involve tradeoffs in time, cost, and the quality of data. Youth-workforce development programs should consider the resources and time they have available for M&E and what the data will be used for; and then choose among these different approaches accordingly.

# Additional Resources and References

This document has shared the M&E indicators of the PLP participants, with specific cases and lessons. For those who wish a more thorough exploration of monitoring and evaluation issues, the following additional resources may be useful to youth development practitioners in developing and implementing M&E systems.

Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC). 2007. *Monitoring and Evaluation Topic Guide.* Birmingham, UK: International Development Department, University of Birmingham. http://www.gsdrc.org/docs/open/ME3.pdf.

> General M&E synthesis guide for international development programs; includes brief and extended summaries of a wide range of resources.

International Labor Organization (ILO). ILO Library website. 2009. "Resource Guide on Youth Employment." http://www.ilo.org/public/english/support/lib/resource/subject/youth.htm

> Includes lists and links for youth employment indicators and statistics.

Making Cents International. 2009. Website of conference and conference publication. "State of the Field in Youth Enterprise, Employment, and Livelihoods Development. Market-Driven Approaches; Monitoring, Evaluation, and Impact Assessment; and Youth-Inclusive Financial Services," Washington, DC, September 29–30, 2009. www.youthenterpriseconference.org.

> See syntheses of lessons learned, promising practices, programmatic examples, and additional resources shared at Making Cents' 2008 Global Youth Enterprise Conference. Download 2008 conference publication from http://youthenterpriseconference.org/2008GYMC.asp.

Mercy Corps. 2008. Web page. "The Youth Transformation Framework."
Main site: http://www.mercycorps.org/sectors/youth/15520
Overview: http://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/ytf_overview.doc
Indicators and scores: http://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/matrix_of_interpretation.xls

> A detailed framework for measuring and monitoring youth assets, including indicators and scoring guide.

Search Institute. 1997, 2007. Web page. "Developmental Assets Tools." http://www.search-institute.org/developmental-assets-tools

> Provides lists of developmental assets for youth and additional resources.

Sustainable Measures. Web page. http://www.sustainablemeasures.com/Indicators/WhatIs.html.

> Provides indicator database, a checklist, and additional resources.

W.K. Kellogg Foundation. n.d. Web page. "Evaluation Handbook and Evaluation Toolkit." http://www.wkkf.org/Default.aspx?tabid=90&CID=281&ItemID=2810002&NID=2820002&LanguageID=0.

> Provides handbook and toolkits for evaluation for grantees and others.

World Bank. 2007. "Evaluating Youth Interventions." *Youth Development Notes* 2(5), June 2007. http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTCY/Resources/395766-1186420121500/YDNVolII5Evaluation.pdf

> Note on evaluation for youth programs.

———. 2009. Participation and Civic Engagement website. "Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation." http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/EXTPCENG/0,,contentMDK:20509352~menuPK:1278203~pagePK:148956~piPK:216618~theSitePK:410306,00.html

> Web page with numerous publications, tools, and other resources.

World Bank, Operations Evaluation Department, Knowledge Programs and Evaluation Capacity Development Group (OEDKE). 2002. *Monitoring and Evaluation: Some Tools, Methods and Approaches*. 1st ed. Washington, DC: World Bank. http://www.pnud.ne/rense/Biblioth%E8que/BM16.pdf

> Overview of major methods for monitoring and evaluation. There is also an updated second edition, http://lnweb90.worldbank.org/oed/oeddoclib.nsf/b57456d58aba40e585256ad400736404/a5efbb5d776b67d285256b1e0079c9a3/$FILE/MandE_tools_methods_approaches.pdf.

# Appendix: Monitoring and Evaluation Definitions

## Components of Monitoring and Evaluation: Performance Monitoring and Program Evaluation

| Monitoring | Evaluation |
|---|---|
| *Performance monitoring*<br>Tracking project results as indicators of project performance. Cannot attribute results to project activities. | *Project evaluation*<br>Evaluating project implementation as measured against the project's scope of work, deliverables, personnel requirements, etc. Cannot attribute results to project activities.<br>*Impact assessment*<br>Analysis of whether project objectives were achieved and can be attributed to project operations. Requires a counterfactual. |

## Monitoring

Performance monitoring is primarily a management tool. It is akin to a roadmap, indicating to the project whether it is on the right path to its intended destination (or final impact). It involves tracking project results as indicators of project outreach and effectiveness (whether the project is achieving its intermediate objectives). Performance monitoring does not (indeed, cannot) *attribute* results to project activities (or, in other words, prove that observed results were caused by project activities).

## Project Evaluation

Project evaluation means assessing project implementation, as measured against the project's scope of work, deliverables, personnel requirements, and so forth. Project evaluations may include a baseline and follow up, but typically include a single observation point, often at or near the end of the project.

Project evaluation may also include an assessment of project effectiveness. Like performance monitoring, it cannot be used to attribute results to project activities. Project evaluations can produce useful findings on operations, outputs, outcomes, processes, etc. If designed and timed appropriately, project evaluations can be used to guide management decision making. End (or near end)-of-project evaluations, however, tend to more useful to external project stakeholders.

## Impact Assessment

Impact assessment is a type of evaluation specifically intended to attribute results to project activities. It does this by establishing a *counterfactual*, which is what would have happened in the absence of the project. Establishing a counterfactual, in turn, requires the creation of a valid *treatment group*, which benefits from project activities, and a *control group*, which does not benefit from project activities.

Good impact assessments are expensive and time consuming, and thus are not well-suited as a management tool, which requires timely production of information. Impact assessments are more appropriate for external stakeholders which seek information to guide future development programming.

The large majority of youth-workforce development projects will not undertake an impact assessment, given their cost and complexity. In those cases where an impact assessment is done, it will most likely be done by external researchers at the behest of external stakeholders.