

implementation of the Samoa National Youth Employment Action Plan (SNAP, and specifically in the development of the Youth Employment Network/YEN or E-Youth Hub<sup>2</sup>, also needs to be further synchronised in a manner that enables joint planning, implementation and monitoring of the YEP with a view to spreading ownership and accountability, in an effective way, to all the participating UN agencies<sup>3</sup>.

Programme design has also not reflected the changes that have occurred through the restructuring of the MWCSD, which 'put on hold' the National Youth Policy process, in favour of the Community Sector Development Plan. The YEP was still heavily anchored on original programme design though changes to implementation modalities have occurred, with restructuring of the MWCSD, which made youth employment, gender equality and disability cross-cutting issues. This being said, it is acknowledged that key meetings with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of MWCSD were held to discuss the anticipated changes and the consensus was to continue the YEP as it was, that is, without changing or modifying it to align to said changes, up until the end of the project in 2017. Unexpectedly, however, high staff mobility in the former Youth Development Division of the Ministry, now referred to as the Economic Development Division under the restructured organisation plan, did impact upon the implementation rate of the YEP to a high degree<sup>4</sup>.

There is also no clear mechanism (lack of proper M & E system) developed in the MWCSD to monitor the implementation of the CSD plan as it relates to carrying forward youth employment agenda; and linkages with other policy development processes, advocacy, policy and legislative reforms.

### **2.3 Implementation/Efficiency**

Implementation progressed at a much slower pace than was planned in AWP, with YEP being over 15 months behind, though activities have been fast-tracked during the last 12 months up to September 2017. This has resulted in the emergence of opportunities as well as challenges, or problems because in some cases processes requiring more time to consult stakeholders have been short-circuited, affecting the quality of the outcomes. For example, the selection of internship beneficiaries planned to undergo the 10 weeks programme, though the process was progressive, tended to be done in a somewhat rushed manner, especially in the case of Savaii. Discussions with the Chamber of Commerce and other private sector representatives in Savaii pointed to the need for more time to notify the potential beneficiaries, improved sensitisation of potential beneficiaries and screening. In particular, there was need to ensure adequate representation and distribution amongst internship beneficiaries which needed to reflect more strongly sectors prioritized within the context of the national development plan as well as in the YEP project document. There have been

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<sup>2</sup> It is understood that the E-Youth Hub was developed and commenced implementation before the YEP project document was signed in July 2015, under a Direct Implementation Modality (DIM) arrangement with ILO in the lead.

<sup>3</sup> The need for improved joint planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation is key to delivering as One-UN. This is an area requiring more interrogation in the context of the implementation of the One-UN Youth Employment Programme.

<sup>4</sup> The first head of the Division resigned before the end of the first year (2015) and it took at least 6 months for the new ACEO to be appointed. The Principal Officer also resigned early 2017 and a number of key staff of the Division also left including YEP programme officers.

cases where youth beneficiaries representing ‘minor sectors’ ended up benefiting from the internship programme, for example, at the expense of youth engaged in agricultural value chains. This situation ought to be reviewed in future selection processes to reflect more the strategic thrust of the internship programme.

**E-Youth Platform:** Work has been initiated with the SNYC taking leadership of this sub-component. As part of the plan to provide technical support, UNDP stepped in and completed a technical analysis of the e-hub and this has been used by SNYC to improve its usability. UNDP also instigated and led the planning process for a Youth Expo 2017 to stimulate uptake of e-hub users. However, overall, minimal progress was realised with the e-youth hub, with indications of limited demonstrated progress, at practical levels. This has been marked with incomplete provision of specific technical support services required to make the e-platform fully functional and user-friendly<sup>5</sup>.

**Special youth internship training and decent job placement:** YEP, within the framework of public private partnerships, has mounted and completed 2 Internship programmes, both 10 weeks each; 20 youth for the first and 49 youth in the second. The internship scheme that covered 49 out-of-school youth, roughly 25 percent of the 200 unemployed out-of-school youth targeted for the 2016 and 2017 AWP. Out of the 69 youth trained, 45 women (65 percent), and 24 men (35 percent), 51, (85 percent) successfully completed the programme, the vast majority of them since employed. At least 30 out of the 51 (59 percent) that graduated the internship programme, are employed on full-time basis, especially in hotels, restaurants, catering, tourism industry, and much less in other sectors, including agri-business value chains, where a less than desirable number of youth were identified and supported.

### **Post-school education training: (PSET)**

With an identification of substantial career establishment gaps for the youth, the YEP sought establish a foundation to strengthen career development for post-secondary school, technical vocational education training (TVET) and out of school youths. At a practical level, emphasis was placed at TVET beneficiaries and out of school youth with potential to be mentored through career development services provided through the YEP. This was designed to broaden coverage of youth in various categories<sup>6</sup>. Consultations with PSET stakeholders provided information that they provide ‘work placements’ for all final year students which varies from 4 weeks for some PSETs and 6 weeks for some. YEP has provided assistance with student work placements<sup>7</sup>. The

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<sup>5</sup> The company identified to provide the specialist technical inputs was reportedly unable to provide the services as was prescribed, resulting in stalling of progress. Furthermore, the TA support, comprising additional personnel housed at the SNYC was unable to deliver on what they had been hired to do, due to a number of reasons, among them, inadequate supervision and lack of accountability. A turnaround strategy to rescue the situation that evolved at the SNYC demanded additional financial resources which were either not available or could not be re-scheduled in time.

<sup>6</sup> In the end, due to design and implementation constraints, there was an absence of proper targeting criteria and a clear outreach mechanism, especially to different groups of out of school youth. This was also accounted for by the human and financial resources gaps in the YEP as well as the organizational challenges within the MWCSD.

<sup>7</sup> There are no figures available on how many youths YEP actually paid for to go back to trade school and finish their trade certificates, based on the original aim of PSET. This was expected to contribute to improving chances by the youth to acquire skills to match the demands of the labour market.

YEP plans were to place '40 secondary/PSET beneficiaries and 60 unemployed youth under internship programme in the public and private sector in the 2016/17 AWP. During the reference period, 69 unemployed youth (49 percent of the target for the period) were placed under the internship programme, in both Upolu and Savaii. Out of these, there were 24 young men and 45 young women placed under internship.

**Micro and small enterprise development; small business incubator:** The preparatory phase was completed but remained somewhat over-ambitious in terms of time allocated to complete key tasks to achieve specific outputs. The SBI roll-out phase now hinges on successful fundraising efforts. It is also noted that many of the planned outputs would have been achievable, to a large extent. The preparatory phase would have been completed in time had the government been more prepared to take more decisive leadership through the use of agreed implementation modalities with the support of the UN, and government resources available at the time. The unforeseen reform process in the MWCSO did impact on progress by scaling down progress which could otherwise have been achieved. Within the short time-frame of the YEP, more substantial progress could have been possible had it not been for the restructuring which predominated everything, including staff morale, staff turnover, resulting in impeding progress, not only for the YEP but for other projects in the MWCSO.

**Resource allocation and timeliness of provision of inputs:** Partly due to the challenges associated with the restructuring encountered at the MWCSO, resulting in lack of readiness to drive the programme at the hosting Ministry, the Programme Management Unit (PMU) staff was also not fully constituted with only the Programme Manager in place for much of the implementation period; the M & E officer was in place but left mid-2017, without a replacement. The reviewed programme design also envisaged the need for an Economic Empowerment Officer, a position which was not been filled up to the Midterm Evaluation<sup>8</sup>. Although financial resources have been largely availed on time by the UN, because of human resources capacity gaps in the PMU at the MWCSO, during much of the implementation period, from 2015, the budget resources of US\$150,000 per annum have not been utilised as effectively as would have been desirable. Although the rate of utilisation of funds was relatively high overall, above 70 percent, between 2016 – 2017, there was need for more strategic deployment of the financial resources, overall, with a more established PMU. YEP implementation between 2016 – 2017, which is the effective period of YEP implementation has been fair to good, but somewhat rushed due to earlier delayed implementation challenges. This resulted in some processes being unable to observe due diligence at implementation and monitoring levels, including the selection of beneficiaries and, at times, in the supply of some of the key services<sup>9</sup>.

Support by the UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC) has been noted as outstanding through budget support to communications and programmatic activities, for

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<sup>8</sup> This was undertaken jointly between the UN and the MWCSO, presumably with inputs from other key stakeholders..

<sup>9</sup> This has been the case in the situation at the SNYC, where the TA placed at the organization was unable to deliver on the E-Youth Hub; with externally sourced technical support also being unable to deliver on the purpose for which the support was sought.

example, the Youth Expo 2017, to name one case. The UNRC has been a significant driving force in galvanizing political support at the highest levels and amongst development partners and the UN system for the YEP. Despite existence of challenges as reported, the One UN YEP has been widely touted as a good example of UN collaboration.

The role of the Samoan National Youth Council was below expectation, with the need for rapid turnaround of the SNYC to take more ownership and leadership of the youth development agenda. There was organisational ineptitude at the SNYC, which resulted in organisational under-performance, a situation which also contributed to the under-achievement of the technical support team placed there by the UNDP.

The Mid-term Evaluation recommends an extension of at least another year, from first quarter 2018, if financial resources permit, to enable proper planning of a follow up YEP phase.

## **2.4 Effectiveness**

The involvement of a large number of partners, Government, MWCSD, MCIL, SBEC, CoC, SNYC and others, reflects the wide variety of stakeholders required to take the youth employment development agenda forward.

Policy advocacy, legislative reforms, dialogue, on youth employment, transformation of the informal sector, for example, sector level, macro level reforms, including issues of Financial Inclusion, which are key to employment creation have not been factored in the YEP development and implementation mechanism – with more focus downstream at project level and much less upstream – creating some policy development gaps upstream.

## **2.5 Sustainability**

At the time of the Midterm Evaluation, the National Youth Policy (2016 – 2020) was still in draft form, and unfinished business due to the SNYC not being fully functional. The SNYC was dogged by human resources capacity gaps and organisational challenges in the implementation arrangements; making the organisation largely ineffective to achieve its mandate.

The alignment of the National Youth Development Agenda, SNYC, SNAP, CSP was not clear due to the absence of a coherent financial resource mobilisation strategy and implementation arrangements which were linked effectively to delivery of the outcomes.

Linkages between the YEP and National Youth Service Volunteer Scheme, and Youth Employment Fund, stated in the programme document has not been articulated well, posing a sustainability constraint, especially in the post-YEP phase. There was an opportunity which was not taken advantage of to anchor financing of the YEP in the government institutional structure for civil society support and youth. This is an area of opportunity for future YEP design, within the context of a reviewed CSSP.