End of Project Evaluation of the Youth Connekt Zimbabwe Project

2019-2023

FINAL REPORT

24 August 2023

Prepared by

Barbara Vitoria
Barbara.Vitoria@iccafrica.net

+263772309211

Table of Contents

Acronyms

AfTCA	African Continental Free Trade Area
BDS	Business Development Services
C2C	Classroom to Career
DIM	Direct Implementation Model
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (UK)
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoZ	Government of Zimbabwe
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IP	Implementing partner
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
MoYSAR	Ministry of Youth Sports Arts and Recreation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NDS	National Development Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
PEPFAR	U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PA	Project assurance
PRECC	Poverty, Reduction, Environment and Climate Change (PRECC) Unit in UNDP
RTGS	Real Time Gross Settlement
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TA	Technical Assistance

ToC	Theory of Change
TNA	Training Needs Assessment
TOR	Terms of reference
TSP	Transitional Stabilisation Plan
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Fund
UNRCO	United Nations Residents Coordinator's Office
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
YCP	Youth Connekt Project
YCBGP	Youth Connekt Business Growth Programme
ZRBF	Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund
ZUNDAF	Zimbabwe United Nations Development Assistance Framework
ZYEP	Zimbabwe Youth Empowerment Programme

Figures

Figure 1: The evaluation was carried out in three stages.
Figure 2: Summary of how the OECD-DAC criteria work.
Figure 3: The Youth Connekt Project structure
Figure 4: Zimbabwe GDP per Capital 2019 -2021
Figure 5: The extreme poverty rate was estimated to have reached 49 percent in 2020 according to the Rapid PICES second round survey
Figure 6: Youth, especially young women, are the most likely population group to be unemployed.
Figure 7: Youth unemployment rates have risen sharply since 2014, and are currently between 12% -13%.
Figure 8: The relationship between project outcomes, outputs, activities and inputs generally provide a clear causal pathway to achieve the project's overall objectives. However, implementation level links are not always certain.

Tables

Table 1: The table below provides a summary of data sources for the evaluation.
Table 2: Theory of Change Outcomes Framework.
Table 3: Summary of results for Outputs.
Table 4: For Output 1 the project spend per youth reached was US$ 326.
Table 5: For Output 2 the project spend per youth reached was US$ 1,344.
Table 6: For Output 3 the project spend per youth reached was a few US cents.

1. Executive Summary

Background to the Evaluation

The Youth Connekt Zimbabwe Project (YCP) operated from January 2019 and ended in 2021 after three years. The two main partners, United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) and the Ministry of Youth Sports Arts and Recreation (MoYSAR), want an end of project evaluation done to assess the project's performance and impact.

The main purpose of the evaluation is to:

a) Assess the progress of the project across the three project outcomes which are:

> Output 1: Youth connected to entrepreneurship: Increased entrepreneurial skills for youth.
> Output 2: Youth connected to employment, skills and other opportunities.
> Output 3: Youth connected to youth: Networking platform for young people, and.

b) Provide recommendations for future programming.

An Evaluation Framework was developed based on the evaluation questions in the Terms of Reference (ToR) which are structured around the OECD-DAC criteria. This was used as the basis to gather data for the evaluation.

Data was collected from a review of policy and project documents, interviews with Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ), UNDP and other UN agency staff, implementing partners, young women and men and site visits to youth businesses and implementing partners.

Findings

Relevance

The Youth Connekt project is very relevant to the high levels of youth unemployment, poverty, the lack of access to economic opportunities, especially amongst young women and the post Covid-19 response. The project had several positive features which contributed to its relevance and its success. It is directly relevant to several national, UN and international development policies such as the National Youth Policy 2020-2025, the National Development Strategy 1 (January 2022– December 2025), UNDP's Country Programme Document (CPD) for Zimbabwe (2022–2026), the Sustainable Development Goals, UNDP's Country Programme Document (CPD) for Zimbabwe (2022–2026), the African Youth Charter[1] amongst others.

The relevance of the project was enhanced by the design having input from a diverse mix of stakeholders which allowed for a wide range of ideas and networks to be brought to the design. In addition, the project evolved and adapted to changing national priorities and the competitions reached all 10 provinces. These indicate that, on the whole, the project was strongly relevant and well-designed to address the issues that youth face in Zimbabwe.

---

[1] https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7789-treaty-0033_-_african_youth_charter_e.pdf

Design weaknesses included that the training and mentoring follow up was too short to be really effective, cross-cutting issues were not included as strongly as they could have been and the details of some aspects of the implementation were not sufficiently well thought through. On the whole the project's Theory of Change had plausible casual links, but the logic to achieve intermediate results through implementation methods was not as robust.

Effectiveness

The project has made significant contributions to achieving its objectives in all three output areas of supporting entrepreneurship development, promoting employment, skills development and other opportunities and facilitating networking and dialogue. The Start-Up Tour Bus was highly effective as an advertising and mobilisation method. Men participated and benefited from the project more than women because of gender based barriers such as lower levels of personal confidence. There were many positive results from the project including positive benefits to youth business performance and skills development as well as several unintended positive results. These included youth gaining access to wider opportunities such as scholarships, jobs and investment opportunities, lasting relationships were formed amongst both youth and implementing partners that endured well after the project officially ended and more recognition for youth in business by local communities. Whilst the competitions reached all 10 provinces, rural youth found it difficult to access some post competition services, such as some mentoring services, as these were sometimes offered in Harare only. However, other mentoring and support services continued to be offered to some participants through free lifetime memberships in some partner organisations. Mentoring support was provided over too short a period to be effective. Some unexpected negative results included an incident of sexual harassment by a senior NGO staff member which negatively affected a young woman participating in a community placement with an NGO partner under the UN Volunteer Covid-19 activities. Another unexpected negative result was jealousy amongst Masawara Holdings staff over the high UN Volunteer intern salaries compared to their own. On the whole, however, the project responded very well to the needs of youth, e.g. for finance, for business skills, for support and for managing risks.

The Start-Up Tour Bus competition was a very successful model in contributing the project's results, the Covid-19 Competition was successful in linking with other organisations to enhance the country's response to the pandemic and the agricultural value chains and food security competition successfully supported enterprises in the food supply chains to strengthen the resilience of MSMEs in the food supply chain.

The project seems to have had positive results on youth businesses in terms of sales, profit and job creation, although the economic environment has made this challenging.

The project demonstrated remarkable adaptability in changing country contexts and this indicates that decision processes have been well informed by contextual issues and nimble in execution. Project M&E systems did not, however, support learning and adaptation sufficiently through disaggregating data by gender and by socially included and excluded groups. This made it difficult to see how results were being achieved for different groups. The M&E frameworks were variable in their capacity to quantify and verify results and do not seem to have been integrated with each other sufficiently. Neither was there provision for disaggregating results by target groups, e.g. rural, women, etc.

The project's results were negatively affected by the political and economic and social environments, especially the depressed economic conditions. In addition, project funds were

sometimes seen as a threat to political structures and this complicated implementation. In addition, the culture of jealousy sometimes prevented access to opportunities, e.g. youth with certain political views being excluded by mobilising partners, private sector companies not participating in YC for fear of being targeted by licencing authorities unless some of the benefits were shared. Very high staff turnover at UNDP and in GoZ and resulting loss of institutional memory has also had negative impacts on project.

Efficiency

On the whole resources available to the project were adequate for achieving results, although UNDP staff did not have enough time to build and maintain the necessary relationships and make the follow ups with youth that were needed. Creating and using an alumni group was an efficient way to pass on skills to new cohorts of youth. Greater value for money could have been achieved taking advantage of scaling opportunities, e.g. social media and by greater use of online training, as well as designing training based on Training Needs Analysis rather than delivering generic training and by customising training to specific groups and greater use of alumni to pass on skills.

Sustainability

The project has contributed to sustainability but given the scale of the project, its contribution to the demographic dividend and employment opportunities is very small. The ongoing economic and political challenges besetting the country is the major challenge for sustaining the project's results and outcomes. The project was not intended to end when it did; rather it was intended to scale to project into a youth portfolio under UNDP Zimbabwe. However, this plan did not materialise due to staff turn over and erratic funding and this meant that the project could not transition to scale and eventually was concluded. Thus, there was no plan for an exit strategy and the project's conclusion was abrupt. Efforts to enhance sustainability should focus on scaling the benefits, especially by aligning more closely to GoZ and the private sector supply chains. Whilst an alumni platform and a WhatsApp group existed for the pilot year in 2019, in other years the project lacked such platforms for ongoing networking. This would be useful to enable youths in later years to have the means to continue to network with each other.

Opportunities for Future Programming

The main opportunities identified by the evaluation for future programming focus on ways to scale the benefits of the project, namely though business linkage arrangements with GoZ institutions and private companies, and though a more localised approach to the delivery of capacity building services. This is described in detail in the Concept Note in the Annex section.

Recommendations

The evaluation makes the following recommendations:

- Keep the project model that enables nimbleness of direction and form and which includes design inputs and involvement of a wide variety of stakeholders, including youth.
- Widen funding bases through strategic partnership with other multilateral's and bilateral's youth programmes.
- Include stronger provisions for Leave No One Behind and the specific risks that these groups face.
- Link youth businesses to the supply chains of GoZ and the private sector.
- Look for ways to create economies of scale.

- Identify risks during the project design and manage risks throughout the project to support youth through risky situations.
- Use technology to enhance scale and reach.
- Enhance the ToC to include casual logic and assumptions at intervention level.
- Localise the provision of BDS and mentoring services.
- Provide mentoring and training support over a much longer period of time.
- M&E frameworks should disaggregate data and results so results for different groups can be measured.
- Engage with GoZ to mitigate and manage risks from the political, economic and cultural environments.
- Follow up regularly with youth and provide ongoing support and use alumni for support to the next cohort of youth.
- Enhance Value for Money by exploiting opportunities for scaling.
- Develop a robust exit strategy.

2. Introduction

The Youth Connekt Zimbabwe Project (YCP) operated from January 2019 and ended in 2021. The first year focussed on developing entrepreneurship, the second on the Covid-19 response and the third year on agricultural food chains, as national priorities shifted. The two main partners, United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) and the Ministry of Youth Sports Arts and Recreation (MoYSAR), want an end of project evaluation done to assess the project's progress and impact.
.

The main aim of the evaluation is to understand the reasons for results, identify challenges, lessons learnt, good practices, conclusions and recommendations that will help to strengthen existing projects, improve future joint programming, identify opportunities for new initiatives and strengthen organisational learning and accountability.

2.1   The evaluation is intended to: Provide an independent assessment of the progress of the project across the three project outcomes which are:
Output 1: Youth connected to entrepreneurship: Increased entrepreneurial skills for youth.
Output 2: Youth connected to employment, skills and other opportunities.
Output 3: Youth connected to youth: Networking platform for young people.

The evaluation is being done to understand how and why project results have happened; assess performance as per planned targets and indicators of achievements at output, outcome and impact levels both intended and unintended; assess chosen strategies and implementation modalities; assess partnership arrangements, constraints and opportunities.

b) Provide recommendations for future programming based on the needs and aspirations of Zimbabwean youth while taking into account the aspirations of the UNDP Country Office to rationalize its portfolio.

The specific objectives of the evaluation are as follows:
- Assess whether, and to what extent, project outcomes and outputs have been achieved;
- Assess UNDP's contribution and its partners to the achievement of project outcomes;
- Determine the impact, both positive and negative, as well as intended and non-intended from contribution of the project to the achievement of the outcomes;
- Assess the extent that YCP's outputs and non-project assistance contributed to United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and Country Project outcomes, as well as their contribution to the Transitional Stabilisation Plan (TSP) and National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1) national frameworks;
- Examine the extent to which gender equality and women empowerment and human rights targets as cross-cutting issues were integrated and achieved;
- Document achievements, lessons and best practices during the course of implementation to inform future decisions in project design, implementation and management of similar interventions;
- Provide a framework for a large and coherent project encompassing priority interventions in the areas of youth empowerment, innovation and entrepreneurship;
- Identify complementary initiatives for potential partnerships.

The evaluation is to achieve these objectives through answering evaluation questions framed around the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance: relevance (including
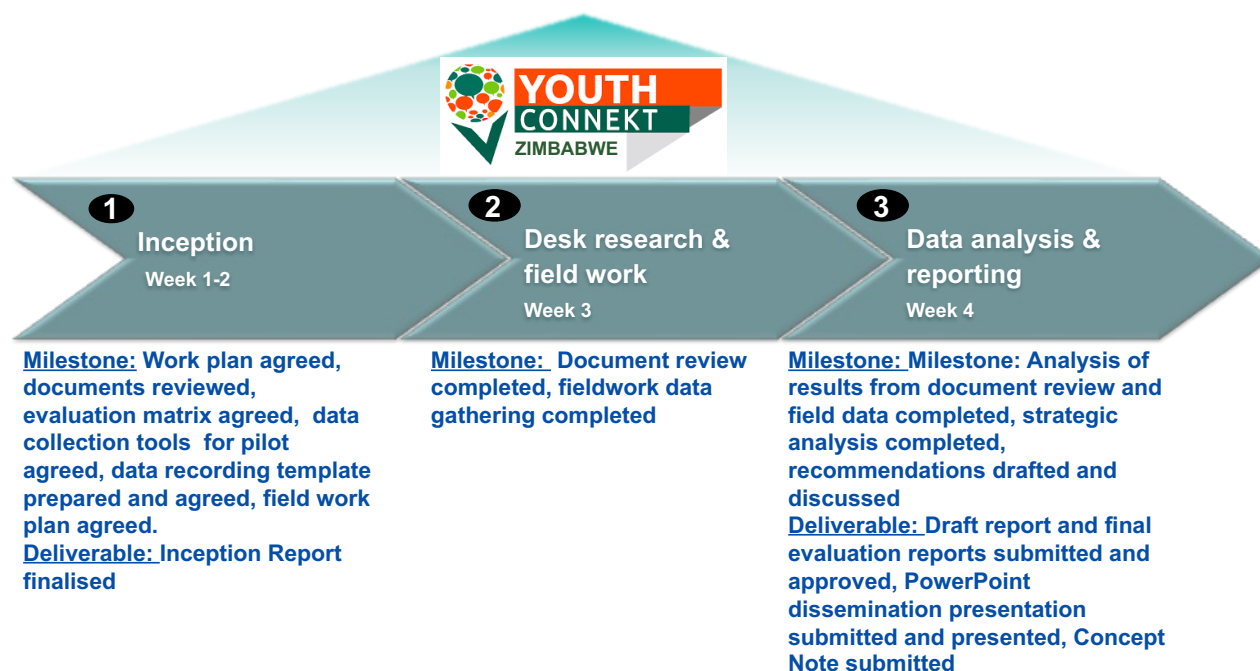
GESI and climate change issues), effectiveness, efficiency, impact, quality, sustainability with a view to assessing the project's added value and value for money.

3. Methodology

This section describes the approach and methodology that was used to carry out the assignment.

3.1   Stages of the Evaluation

Figure 1: *The evaluation was carried out in three stages.*

Milestone: Work plan agreed, documents reviewed, evaluation matrix agreed, data collection tools for pilot agreed, data recording template prepared and agreed, field work plan agreed.
Deliverable: Inception Report finalised

Milestone: Document review completed, fieldwork data gathering completed

Milestone: Milestone: Analysis of results from document review and field data completed, strategic analysis completed, recommendations drafted and discussed
Deliverable: Draft report and final evaluation reports submitted and approved, PowerPoint dissemination presentation submitted and presented, Concept Note submitted

3.2 Evaluation Framework

An Evaluation Framework was developed during the inception stage structured around the evaluation questions and issues outlined in the Terms of Reference (ToR) which were based on the OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, quality, sustainability. This formed the basis for gathering data from the document review and developing the data collection tools. Please see Annex for details for the Evaluation Framework.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

A stakeholder mapping was done at the beginning of the evaluation to identify a variety of data sources for the evaluation to provide for an understanding of how data could be triangulated. Data was collected from 5 July till 31 July 2023. Data was gathered from reviewing documents (see Annex for a list of documents consulted), from interviews with current and former UNDP staff, staff from ILO and UNFPA, Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) and implementing partners. Data was collected from interviews and Focus Group Discussions with youth who had participated in the project. Site visits were made to selected businesses operated by youth competition winners and other youth participants in the project as well as BDS service providers.

The interviews with UN staff and with GoZ focussed more on relevance, effectiveness and sustainability issues, while interviews with implementing partners focussed more on effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability issues and interviews with youth focused on the relevance of the project to meet their needs and the results of the project on their business. All types of stakeholders were asked about their views on the features of future youth projects.

The variety of data sources has provided for robust data triangulation of the findings.

Table 1: The table below provides a summary of data sources for the evaluation.

Data sources	Numbers	Total
Documents	13 project documents 5 policy documents	18
Interviews – partners	1 Ministry of MoYSAR staff 5 current UNDP staff 2 former UNDP staff, former Project Coordinators who were responsible for the implementation of the project 3 other UN agency staff 7 implementing partners 1 company	19
Interviews – youth	19 individual (7 women, 12 men), (12 Harare, 7 other) 5 Focus Group Discussions (33 women, 17 men = 50) (all outside Harare)	69
Site visits to youth businesses	4 visits (1 woman, 3 men)	4
Site visits to implementing partners	3 visits	3
Total data sources		**113**

Data from interviews was recorded on data recording templates, see Annex , which allowed for easy analysis of the data by each question area.

3.4 Quality and Ethical Provisions

Sampling: The interview sample was divided into three categories: strategic level (UN, GoZ), implementing partners and youth. This ensured that data was collected from all relevant stakeholders.

The sample for the youth interviews and FGDs was drawn from a list of 102 youth provided by UNDP. The consultant tried as much as possible to ensure the sample comprised half women and half men, that at least half were drawn from outside of Harare and also that there was a spread amongst the different project activities: Classroom to Career (C2C), Start-up tour bus competition, Business Growth Programme, Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund (ZRBF) competition. Youth that were available within these categories were then randomly selected. This ensured that data was collected from women and men, in and outside of Harare, and from different project activities so the evaluation data would reflect the whole picture of the project.

Data collection best practice: The evaluation ensured a best practice and ethical approach in data collection through ensuring questions were designed so as not to direct respondents to a particular

answer. In addition, all interviews began with an introduction that made it clear that respondents were free to participate, or not, that they were free to express their views, positive or negative, and that all views were useful for the evaluation. The interview introduction also addressed possible stakeholder concerns around confidentiality and highlighted that data collected would not be attributable to any individual and data would be pooled to identify issues not individuals. Online conversations were not recorded to protect confidentiality.

Transparency: The evaluation approach was done in a consultative and inclusive manner and included consultations with key UNDP staff throughout the assignment to plan and manage the evaluation, in finalising the methodological approach and the data collection tools, the approach for developing a Concept Note for the project's next steps, in agreeing how the evaluation implementation would be done, in planning the format of the final report and in communicating the evaluation findings to wider stakeholders. This ensured that the consultant worked closely with UNDP to work around various constraints and to ensure the final evaluation product meets expectations.

3.5 Limitations of the Evaluation Methodology

Comments on the time frame
- The timeframe of one month was very tight, a month, to accomplish the intended evaluation activities. This has not been realistic. What has been achieved is the production of a draft report, or about three quarters of the work. Whilst the evaluation draft report has been completed, the evaluation process has been extremely rushed which has affected some aspects of the evaluation. For example, there was no time to reflect on the quality of the data collected from the data collection tools during the pilot, which resulted in some overlaps in the Evaluation Matrix questions; there was no time to discuss with UNDP possible trimming the evaluation questions when it became clear that the number of questions was too many to fit into an hour long interview which resulted in not all questions being covered by all respondents. In addition, some of the analysis was also extremely rushed, and the quality of some of the findings, especially the findings from the youth interviews, were affected to some extent as the turnaround time on data in from the field and the report was just three days when the consultant was also finalising the draft report.

Comments on availability
- Out of the 102 youth contacts provided for the sample, of which 65 were actually contactable. This limited the options for sampling as the contactable list was dominated by men and by Harare based youth.
- The intended visits to the districts to interview youth and district level GoZ officials as well as make site visits did not take place because insufficient youth could be located in particular areas to make field visits to out of town locations worthwhile, and no GoZ officials could be contacted. Thus, the data collection for youth relied largely on phone interviews and field visits in Harare and only one GoZ official was interviewed.
- Some UNDP staff were not always able to do a fast turnaround on queries as they had other project and travel commitments. They did their best in the circumstances to provide everything asked for by the consultant.
- Some UNDP staff, implementing partners and youth had been involved in the early years of the project, and recall about what happened on the project was not always clear.

- There has been very high turnover of project staff both within UNDP and GoZ. This meant that institutional memory and some documents were not always available.

Comments on data collection method

- Whilst the ToR makes reference to gathering quantitative data, the number of youth available as well as the level of effort budget of 25 days makes this type of data collection unrealistic, e.g. to obtain statistically robust results for quantitative analysis a 10% sample (or 120 interviews) with youth beneficiaries would be needed. Therefore, the focus was on qualitative data collection.

3.6 Concepts and tools for the evaluation

The consultant was guided by several concepts and principles that ensured the evaluation yielded results that will be useful for planning future programming.

Theory of Change (ToC)
The assignment required an assessment of YCP's existing Theory of Change, its fitness for purpose and contribution towards impacts. This concept was used to evaluate causal pathways for the existing ToC and to develop a new one for the Concept Note for possible new approaches to youth programming.

The OECD-DAC evaluation criteria
This was a central tool for the evaluation. OECD-DAC questions for the evaluation have been outlined in the ToR.

Figure 2: *Summary of how the OECD-DAC criteria work.*
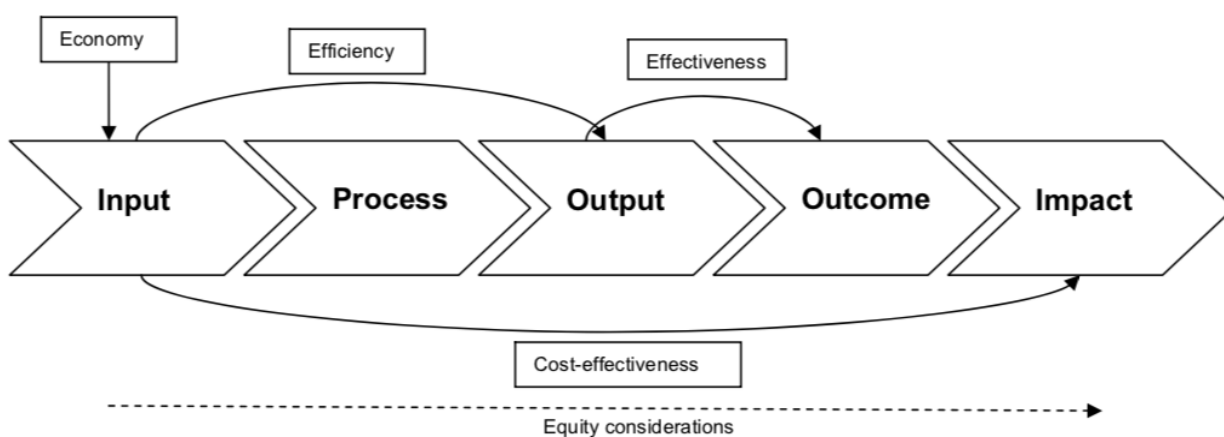
4.   Situational Analysis

4.1 Project Context

One of the underlying causes of poverty in Zimbabwe is the slowdown in economic growth, which has resulted in rising unemployment and informalization. Young people are particularly affected by the lack of formal employment opportunities as they lack the experience and diversity of skills to compete for the few available jobs. In addition, young people in Zimbabwe have limited opportunities for education and training leading to low levels of employability and the highest age-based unemployment rate (16 per cent). Unemployment is perceived to be the biggest challenge faced by young people and the issue that, if addressed through skills development, employment opportunities and sustainable livelihoods, would give hope for the future and also allow Zimbabwe to realise a demographic dividend of 3.5 per cent GDP growth. However, the environment for developing youth entrepreneurship is often not supportive to achieving this.

To respond to the challenges of COVID-19, unemployment, low youth productivity and limited opportunities for youth, the Youth Connekt Zimbabwe project was launched in 2019 and was implemented by UNDP and the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) in collaboration with partners (see Section 4.4 below). It is part of the wider Youth Connekt Africa project which seeks to provide youth with the skills, networks and information needed to scale their initiatives and gain meaningful employment and thereby enable them to make a meaningful contribution to society and to the economy.

4.2 Objectives

The overall objectives of the Youth Connekt project have been to:

- Support entrepreneurship development
- Promote employment, skills development and other opportunities, and
- Facilitate networking and dialogue.

The project's approach was demand-driven and informed by youth needs as articulated by young people themselves at the 2019 Youth Indaba. Priorities identified included: access to funds (ensuring that women have equal access); business incubation; access to markets; skills development; apprenticeships and work experience; bridging the digital divide; equal opportunities for women in the arts; information and networking; and the need to reach rural youth with youth-centred interventions. The flagship component of the Youth Connekt Project was the annual business competitions which have took place in 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022, with each competition having a different focus.

The Youth Connekt Business Growth Programme (YCBGP) was an entrepreneurial development project that aimed to: a) enhance entrepreneurship orientation and awareness among young people, b) develop competencies (skills, experiences and attitudes) necessary to recognise a market opportunity and organise the resources to develop the opportunity and c) improve business performance for growth and competitiveness.

The expected outputs for the project were:

Output 1: Youth connected to entrepreneurship: Increased entrepreneurial skills for youth.

Under this output the project assisted young people to become entrepreneurs who can create and sustain and grow enterprises that can create employment. This was done by stimulating innovation and creativity to identify ideas that, in addition to business potential, also had potential to provide solutions to development challenges and address gender inequalities. Activities included providing young entrepreneurs with the training, skills, mentorship and seed capital required to scale up their business.

Output 2: Youth connected to employment, skills and other opportunities.

This pillar focused on developing skills for employability and entrepreneurship through on the job training and job placements in partnership with the private sector. The Start-Up Tour Bus was used for this purpose, going around selected parts of the country with career mentors and company representatives on board.

Output 3: Youth connected to youth: Networking platform for young people.

This pillar focused on convening a network of partners to engage in dialogue to develop and establish practical youth empowerments tools and initiatives and influence policy for the benefit of youth. This pillar also included an online youth portal to facilitate information-sharing and engagement of wider stakeholders, including amongst youth themselves and the Connekt e-store to provide e-commerce marketing opportunities for scaling existing and future YC businesses. Youth Conversations and a Youth Summit were intended to provide platforms and opportunities for young people to network and showcase themselves and their achievements to youth peers to inspire each other.

Details of the project's Results Framework are contained in the Annex section.

4.3 Theory of Change (ToC)

The project's ToC was based on the logic that by empowering youth in the areas of job creation, entrepreneurship and income generation and providing platforms for networking whilst fostering innovation in sectors that have potential to grow, the project would contribute to addressing the challenges that Zimbabwean youths face and contribute to the realisation of the demographic dividend.[2]

The pathways for achieving this were the three outputs mentioned above and as shown in the Outcomes Framework below which is from the 2019 Project Initiation Plan. This outlines the key outputs, activities, results and expected outcomes from the project and the development challenges each sought to address.

Table 2: *Theory of Change Outcomes Framework[3]*

---

[2] Project Document, 29 May 2020.
[3] Youth Connekt Zimbabwe Initiation Plan, signed 26 March 2016

Outcomes Framework

DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE	EXPECTED OUTPUT(S)	ACTIVITY	RESULTS	OUTCOME
Limited opportunities for youth to venture into employment, job creation and entrepreneurship	**Output 1:** Youth connected to entrepreneurship: increased entrepreneurial skills for youth	• Start Up Tour Bus: Mobile business clinic to all 10 provinces • Generation Unlimited • Regional and global opportunities for youth • Support incubation and job creation (from idea to expansion stages) of youth businesses through IBUHUB	Increased entrepreneurial opportunities and job creation for youth	Contribution to the realization of the demographic dividend by providing youth with skills for employment and enterprise.
Limited employment and skills building opportunities for youth	**Output 2:** Youth connected employment, skills and opportunities	• Career guidance and expos • Sports and arts career and business development • Job-based skills building and Youth job placement	Increased employment and skills building opportunities for youth	Improved employability chances for youth
Limited networking and funding opportunities for youth	**Output 3:** Youth connected to youth: Networking platform for young people	• Connekt e-store • Youth Summit at YCA Summit • Youth conversations or dialogues held	Increased networking and funding opportunities for youth	Established network of youths for information sharing

4.4 Project Implementing Partners (IPs), beneficiaries and stakeholders

The overall leadership and oversight of the project was the responsibility of the UNDP and Ministry of Youth, Sport, Arts and Recreation (MoYSAR). The project was implemented under the Direct Implementation Modality (DIM) whereby UNDP took on the role of Implementing Partner. Other key stakeholders who played a role in the project included:

- UN Volunteers – Classroom to Careers (C2C)
- Impact Hub – BDS services to youth
- Mentor Us – BDS services to youth
- Innovators Hub Clubs – BDS services to youth
- Elevate Trust–- BDS services to youth
- IBUHUB – Business incubation support. Also developed the architectural layout and designs of workspaces, provided the working space for UNDP supported youths, provided technical expertise to support youth entrepreneurs, provided youth job placement and skills development support.
- Higher Life Foundation - youth volunteers
- Masawara Holdings – provided venues for Start-Up Tour Bus; Investor Day; business mentorship/internship.
- Steward Bank – training youth in financial skills for running a business.
- Innovation Hub, Impact Hub, Elevate Youth Zimbabwe, Higher Life Foundation, Volunteer Service Overseas, UN Volunteers – training for youth in start-up and business skills, pitch training, social media management.
- UNICEF, ILO and UNFPA – Partnership on Generation Unlimited
- Zimbabwe Youth Council – Government arm for youth mobilisation.
- Zimbabwean youths – participated in the project and benefited from project activities.

4.5 Project budget

The total budget for the project was US$ 1,500,000 funded through UNDP's TRAC Fund facility. Each year was funded separately and was not provided from a continuous funding source. Funding for each year is shown below.

2019   US$ 240,160.78
2020   US$ 276,849.38
2021   US$ 650,475.82
2022   US$ 163,383.08

4.6 Project Governance Structures

The project was implemented through a UNDP Direct Implementation Modality (DIM) with the Ministry of Youth, Sport Arts and Recreation as the key Responsible Party for the project as a whole. The Project had a Project Steering Committee and a Project Board to oversee its implementation.

The Project Board provided oversight and accountability to the project and was responsible for making all policy decisions relating to the project and it met quarterly to review the overall progress and outcomes of the project. The decisions of the Board related to the scope, extension, expansion, reduction, or continuation of the project. The Board was also responsible for mobilizing funding, providing necessary advocacy, reviewing and approving the work plans and the implementation process.

The Chair of the Board was the Permanent Secretary for 'Ministry of Youth, Sport, Arts and Recreation and members included YC partners.

The project's governance structures shifted over the life of the project. In 2019 a Project Steering Committee oversaw the project, in 2020 there was a DIM Board comprising Ministry of Youth Sport, Recreation and Culture, and UNDP staff and in 2021 there was a Project Board.

Figure 3: *The Youth Connekt Project structure in 2020.*
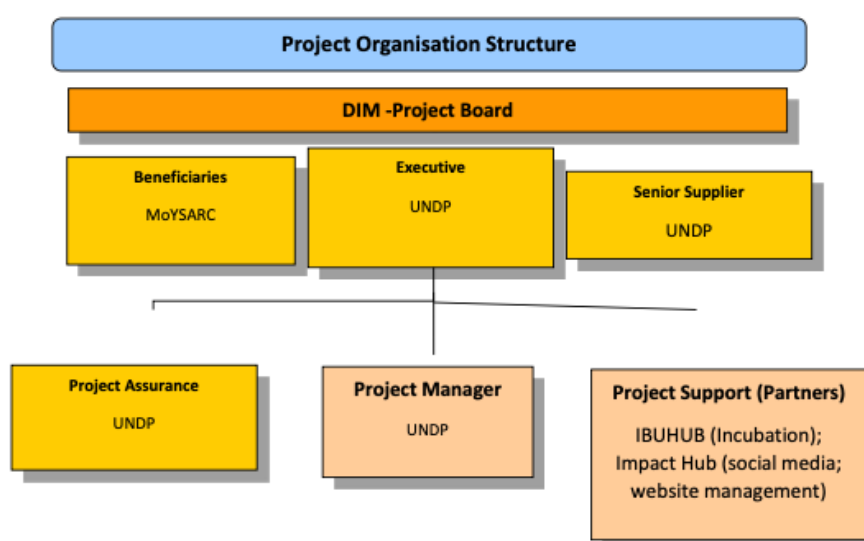
The project was managed by different UNDP staff over the course of the project. In 2019 a Project Manager together with a Project Coordinator were responsible for implementing the project; in

2020 a Project Officer assisted with the project management and who worked in close liaison with UNDP's Head of Poverty, Reduction, Environment and Climate Change (PRECC) Unit Team Leader and in 2021 there was a Project Coordinator working closely with the Inclusive Growth Officer.

The Project Officer had responsibility for the day-to-day management of project operations, including implementation of activities and accountability for the delivery of the project's outputs and preparation of quarterly and annual work plans and reports, in collaboration with the Team Leader.

Project Assurance (PA) was provided by the UNDP Country office in Zimbabwe, which oversaw programmatic and policy compliance, provided technical support to the Project Manager with regard to the preparation of quarterly and annual work plans and reports. Technical assistance (TA) provided through this project was the responsibility of UNDP.

5. Key Findings

This section provides the findings of the evaluation questions. The findings are structured according to the OECD-DAC criteria and follow the Evaluation Framework.

5.1   Design and Relevance

EQ 1.1. To what extent is the project aligned with the objectives of UNDP and GoZ's development plans?

The Youth Connekt project is well aligned with UNDP's objectives and the GoZ's development plans. YC is relevant to UNDP's Country Programme Document (CPD) for Zimbabwe (2022–2026) in that this Country Programme prioritises the most vulnerable and marginalised groups in Zimbabwe which include youth through the creation of employment opportunities and enhancing access to finance and markets. The CPD has a specific outcome focused on youth: "Youth connected to entrepreneurship: Increased entrepreneurial skills for youth" as part of the objective to improve livelihoods and reduce poverty, especially in vulnerable groups. YC is also relevant to the Zimbabwe United Nations Development Assistance Framework (ZUNDAF) 2016-2020 which has provisions for strengthening livelihoods skills among youth, women and other vulnerable groups and facilitating employment and economic empowerment for youth as part of efforts to reduce poverty, e.g. Outcome 2 of the Poverty Reduction and Value Addition component of the ZUNDAF Results Framework is: Increased access to income and decent work opportunities in key value chains and economic sectors, particularly for young people and women. It has also remained relevant under the current United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022-2026, contributing mainly to the prosperity pillar.

YC is also relevant to GoZ's policies, in that youth employment creation is provided for in the National Development Strategy 1 (January 2022–December 2025) through focus on enhancing opportunities for youth economic empowerment through support of livelihood activities. The NDS1 notes in its Youth Situational Analysis 735, however, that "most youth in Zimbabwe have not embraced the culture of hard work and the principle that hard and honest work pays." Whilst this may be true of some youth, it misrepresents young people and their aspirations for a better future. The Situational Analysis also lacks mention of some of the most urgent issues that youth face: the extremely high levels of poverty and unemployment. The National Youth Policy 2020-2025 contains more focus through its 'Strategies for Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship[4]' and an enforceable 25% quota for youth in economic activities. There are limited provisions in the NDS1 to address these issues.

The project is relevant to the SDGs: no poverty (SDG 1), gender equality (SDG 5), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8) and reduced inequalities (SDG 10).

The project is also aligned to the objective of the National Employment Policy Framework which is to promote and secure sustainable, full, productive and freely chosen decent employment for all

---

[4] E.g. "Provide entrepreneurship development support facilities such as access to business finance and start up kits for youth entrepreneurs."

under conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. The policy has provisions for promoting the employment of young women, skills development, promoting a culture of entrepreneurship, SME and cooperative development, business linkages, self-employment, programmes targeting people with disabilities.

In addition, the project is aligned to the Africa Union Agenda 2063[5], including the African Youth Charter[6], which, amongst other things, provides for youth employment, entrepreneurship, sustainable livelihoods, education and skills development.

EQ 1.2 To what extent is the project aligned with the development needs of Zimbabwe and its youth?

The project was well aligned to the development needs of young people in Zimbabwe and the country. Zimbabwe is an extremely young country, with the majority of the population, 67.7%, between the ages of 15-35 years[7]. Therefore, meeting their development needs has potential to have significant impacts on the country as a whole. Amongst the significant developmental challenges they face is limited opportunities for education and training leading to low levels of employability with young people having the highest unemployment rate of 16 per cent. Young people also experience high levels of exclusion from economic opportunities, partly because of their lack of skills, experience and employability but also because they are marginalised by groups that have more political and social means to protect their interests. As a result, when young people enter the labour market they face high levels of informality, higher rates of unemployment and are likely to be concentrated on low income and precarious conditions.

The project sought to address these youth development challenges by tackling poverty by creating employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for youth and addressing the inequalities they face to economic opportunities and realising benefits from the demographic dividend. Also, the project's focus on gender equality aimed to address the disadvantages that young women especially face in accessing employment and economic opportunities. The data below illustrates.

The country's economy was struggling before the Covid-19 pandemic, and this exacerbated an already fragile economy, as demonstrated by GDP per capital trends, with vulnerable groups such as youth being disproportionately affected. As a result, half of Zimbabweans faced extreme poverty in 2020 due to COVID-19[8]. The YC project was relevant to the economy through stimulating economic activity.

---

[5] https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36204-doc-agenda2063_popular_version_en.pdf
[6] https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7789-treaty-0033_-_african_youth_charter_e.pdf
[7] https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Youth/ZimbabweHRCommission.pdf
[8] https://reliefweb.int/report/zimbabwe/half-zimbabweans-faced-extreme-poverty-2020-due-covid-19-rapid-poverty-income

Figure 4: *Zimbabwe's GDP per Capital 2019 -2021*
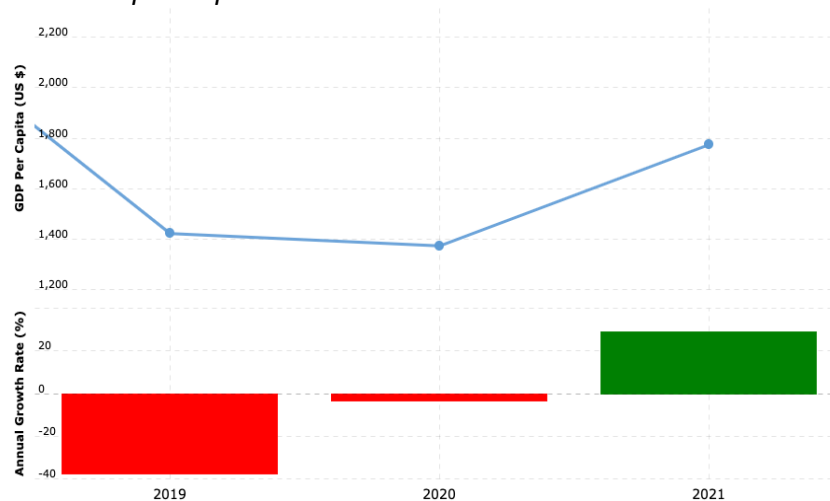
The project was also relevant to the high levels of extreme poverty in Zimbabwe through its focus on creating economic opportunities for youth.

Figure 5: *The extreme poverty rate was estimated to have reached 49 percent in 2020 according to the Rapid PICES second round survey[9].*
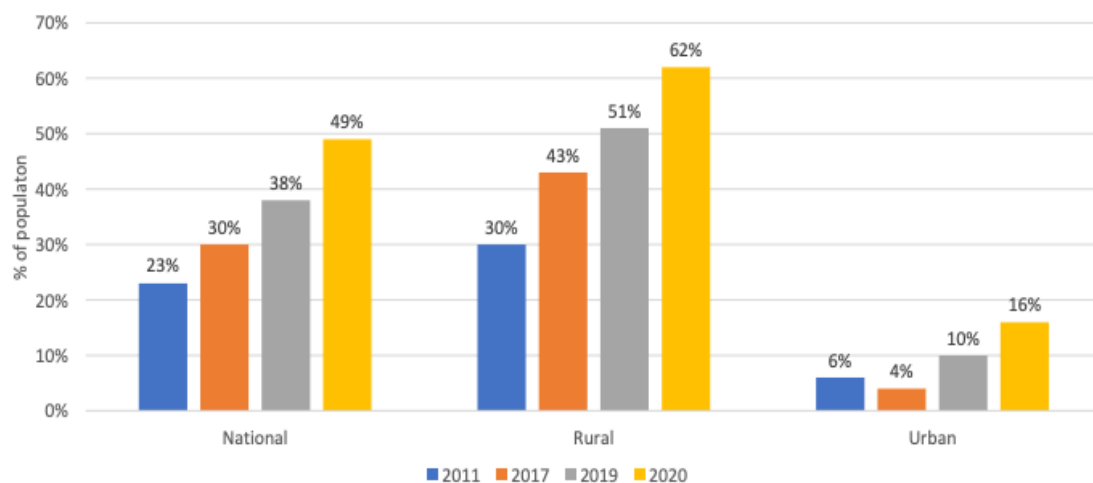
The national unemployment rate for the second quarter of 2023 was 19.7%, of which youth comprised the group with the highest rates of unemployment, and young women were more often unemployed than young men.

---

[9] Poverty and Social Impact of COVID-19: Results from the Third Round Rapid PICES Phone Survey Data, July 23rd, 2021. https://www.zimstat.co.zw/wp-content/uploads/publications/Income/Finance/Rapid_PICES_Third_Round_Presentation_Final072021.pdf

Figure 6*: Youth, especially young women, are the most likely population group to be unemployed* [10]
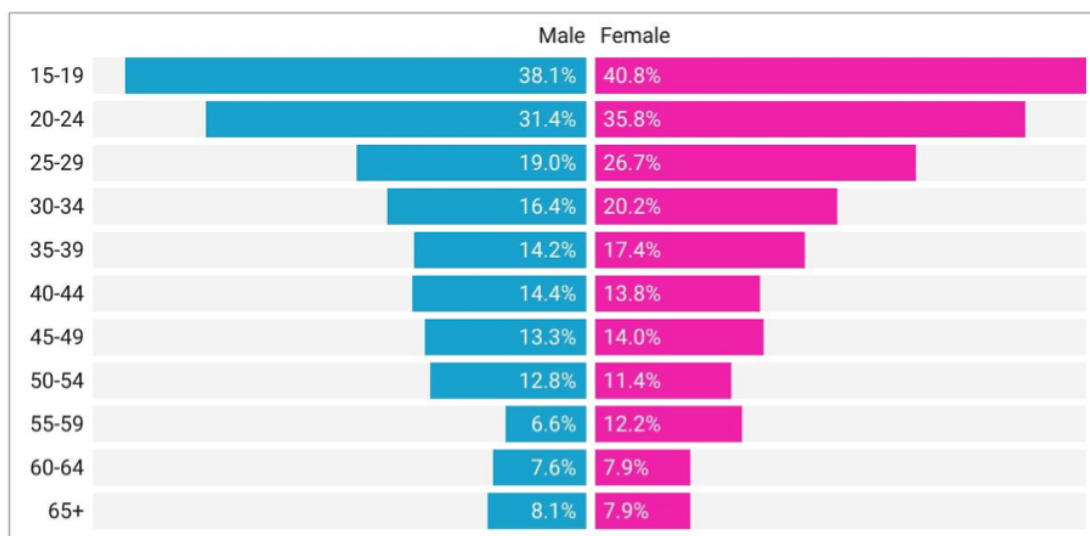
Figure 7*: Youth unemployment rates rose sharply since 2014, and are currently between 12% - 13%.* [11]
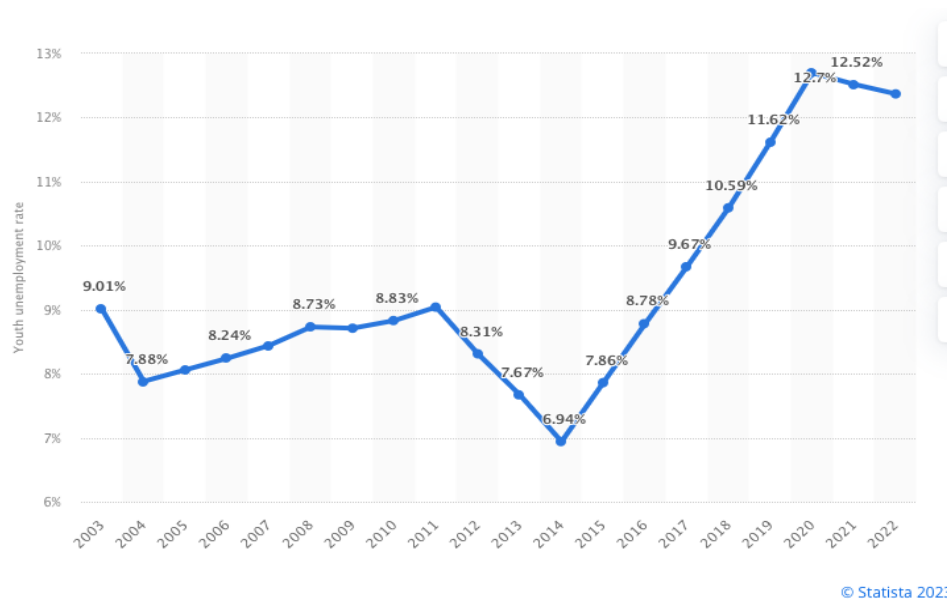
© Statista 2023

EQ 1.3. To what extent were the project's design, implementation model, tools, inputs and funding approach realistic, adequate and appropriate to the development context for achieving results?

There were many design features which supported the achievement of the project's results including:

---

[10] 2023 Second Quarter Quarterly Labour Force Survey Report, ZIMSTAT. https://www.zimstat.co.zw/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2023_Second_Quarter_QLFSReport130723.pdf

[11] The youth unemployment rate refers to the share of the economically active population aged 15 to 24 currently without work but in search of employment. https://www.statista.com/statistics/813214/youth-unemployment-rate-in-zimbabwe/

- The project evolved and adapted over the years, e.g. in 2019 it focused on entrepreneurship, in 2020 the Covid-19 response and then in 2020/21 the project focussed on agricultural food chains. This enabled the project to deliver results relevant to changing contexts and respond to priority needs.
- The project's competitions reached all 10 provinces and the ideas that were generated were relevant to local issues.

The tools and activities used to achieve the project's results, such as training, competitions, incubation support, follow ups, job placements and access to networks all supported the achievement of the main outcomes of the project, namely youth and informal sector empowerment.

The design stage included a variety of partners, including UNDP, GoZ and service providers and resulted in a co-created design that benefited from inputs from diverse viewpoints. The Start-Up Tour Bus, which brought entrepreneurship development opportunities to youth rather than requiring youth to come to the opportunities, was a particularly innovative approach that won an YC international best practice award. The idea was brought to UNDP by a young woman and the idea was developed by UNDP and innovation partners over a number of years. When the concept was eventually implemented through YC it became one of the flag ship success features of the project.

The Direct Implementation Model (DIM) proved to be appropriate as it meant that UNDP could make quick decisions about the project which enabled it to nimbly adjust to the highly changeable country context.

The project's design also had weaknesses. The one day of support after the training in 2020 was deemed to be too short and limited the value of the training. In addition, it seems that some details of the project's implementation were not sufficiently thought through, e.g. the ZRBF competition initially received competition applications by email but this was changed to accepting paper submissions when it was realised that youth did not always have access to email services or know how to use email, the virtual incubation programme initially faced challenges of low uptake of the programme until data allowances to the youths were provided to facilitate the incubation process, in 2020 most youth did not have bank accounts and this created significant delays as this had not been anticipated and the provision of work space had not been factored into the requirements of award grantees.

EQ 1.4. To what extent were the project's partnership arrangements and target beneficiaries appropriate and clearly defined to achieve results?

On the whole the project had strong support from UNDP, GoZ, youth associations and private sector. Partnership roles and responsibilities were well defined for those participating in the Start-Up Tour Bus during the Inception Meeting of Youth Connekt Partners in 2019[12]. This helped to ensure clarity from the start. Partner meetings appear to have been frequent enough to maintain project coordination, e.g. two meetings were held during 2019, which is in line with UNDP's

---

[12] Minutes of the Youth Connekt Partnership Meeting, 29 May 2019.

requirements of quarterly meetings, and after this meetings were reduced to three meetings per annum.[13]

Whilst partnership arrangements were mostly well defined, e.g. through service contracts, and partnerships supported the overall achievement of results, there were a few gaps. Notably, there was no signed agreement between UNDP and the Ministry of Youth, Sport, Arts and Recreation (MoYSAR) and as such roles and responsibilities were not as clear as they might have been between the two key partners. Despite this, other documents such as the Project Initiation Plan appear to have provided the necessary guidance on their roles. There were, however, reports of some overlaps in the deliverables of some implementing partners who were involved in the delivery of training services after 2019. Some appear to have not had a good understanding of the partnership arrangements and how they fitted into the overall picture, and the private sector was not initially sufficiently included. But these gaps seem to have worked themselves out as the project progressed and partners got to know and understand each other. This suggests that partners could have benefited from more communication about how project structures were organised.

The target beneficiaries included: unemployed youth in the start-up, incubation and business growth components of the project, selected talented university graduates under the C2C job placement component who did not see themselves as becoming entrepreneurs, youth in urban and rural areas, high school students for the career guidance component of the project. Youth were targeted to achieve gender equity. On the whole, targeting of beneficiaries was appropriate to achieve results in that unemployed young women and men in both urban and rural areas benefited from Start-up Tour Bus and the incubation activities, the university graduates participating in the project were appropriate for the job placements they were offered and high school students are an appropriate group for career guidance activities as they are at the stage of planning their post-school careers.

There were also a few gaps in targeting youth. Targeting in 2020 and 2021 did not always distinguish between youth that may have good ideas but otherwise little entrepreneurial orientation and commitment.

<div align="center">*"Not everyone is a business person." UN agency staff member*</div>

In addition, youth that received training were sometimes not sorted into groups according to the same level, e.g. some may have been at ideation stage, others at incubation stage. Training was at times delivered to mixed level groups and the training could not, therefore, offer the same level of customised benefits as it might have had youth of similar levels been trained in similar groups.

EQ 1.5. To what extent did the project incorporate cross-cutting issues such as gender, social exclusion, human rights, disability, Leave No one Behind and UNDP's Social and Environmental Standards in design, delivery, and monitoring?

It is clear from the results that the project incorporated cross-cutting issues as is evidenced by both young women and young men being targeted by project activities, e.g. in participating in the competitions, C2C fellows, etc. The project was also inclusive in that it targeted youth outside of

---

[13] Minutes for two of these meetings were reviewed for the evaluation.

the main cities through the Start-Up Tour Bus that went to all provinces in the country. In addition, interviews with youth who participated in the project indicated that selection was based on type of business and did not take into consideration gender, disability, status or background.

There were, however, some missed opportunities for more effectively incorporating cross-cutting issues. The Project Results Framework and the outputs and indicators for the 2019 and 2020 Annual Work Plans provide no mention of targets for women or any other socially excluded groups. Please see the Annex section for the Results Framework and annual plans. The 2021 Annual Work plan did provide for women in two activities and indicators, but did not provide specific targets to be reached for women.

The lack of focus and targets for including socially marginalised groups in the design of the project has almost certainly contributed to women, and other socially marginalised groups, not participating as much in the project's activities. Inclusivity could be expanded by including socially marginalised groups such as sex workers, LGBT and people with disabilities to ensure that marginalised groups benefit from project activities as well as less marginalised youth.

The project also relied extensively of social media and WhatsApp, but those without access to these, particularly rural youth, could not participate in these activities[14].

EQ 1.6. To what extent was the relationship between outcomes, outputs, activities and inputs logically articulated and provided a clear pathway for converting activities and outputs into outcomes and impacts to meet the overall project objectives? (Theory of Change)

An analysis has been made of the Outcomes Framework which provides the basis for the project's Theory of Change (ToC). Please see the Annex section for the Outcome Framework. The information in the coloured boxes is taken directly from the Outcome Framework, and the dotted line boxes have been added by the consultant in an attempt to expose the casual logic of how the project's activities and outputs lead to results and outcomes. Ticks indicate that the findings from the analysis indicate that there are plausible causal pathways between activities and outputs and the planned results and outcomes. Plus/ minus indicates uncertainty about causal link.

Figure 8: *The relationship between project outcomes, outputs, activities and inputs generally provide a clear causal pathway to achieve the project's overall objectives. However, implementation level links are not always certain.*

---

[14] Project Monthly Report October 2020
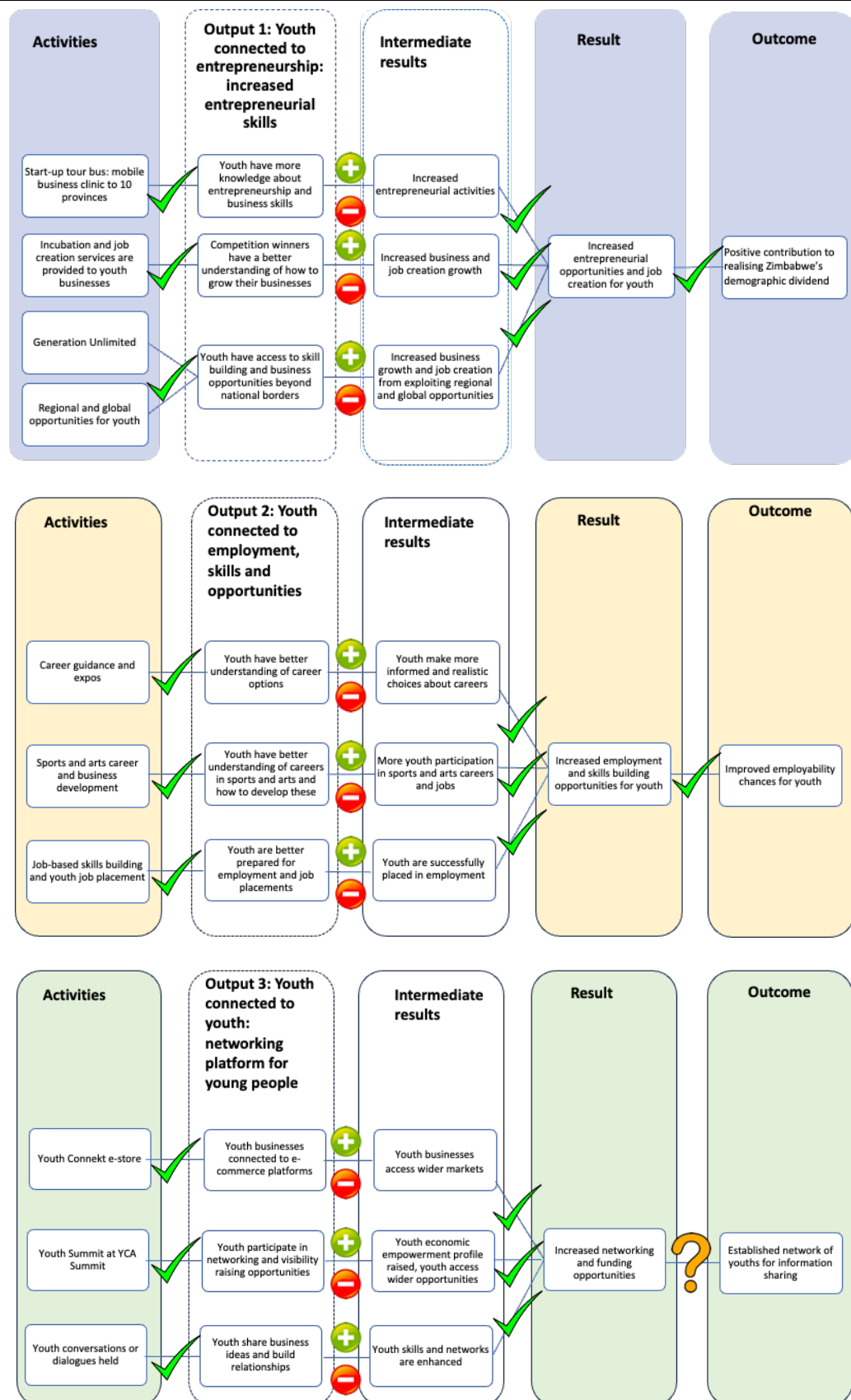
The outcomes of Outputs 1 and 2 appear to be at a higher level than the outcome of Output 3. The former focus on national and youth sectoral outcomes, whereas the latter lacks substance as an outcome.

The ToC did identify risks that could potentially affect the links in the casual chain such as project environment and context-related risks, politicisation of youth activities, market risks, energy outages, GoZ staff turnover, etc. These assumptions were realistic and relevant, and several materialised during the course of the project.

What is lacking in the ToC is articulation of the *implementation level assumptions* on which the casual links between outputs and results are based. For example, because youth have been exposed to training in entrepreneurship and business skills does not necessarily translate into increased entrepreneurial opportunities and job creation (Output 1). Not all youth exposed to the training may be able to convert the training to benefits because, for example, they may lack an entrepreneurial orientation or environmental constraints may mitigate against this or their gender or social group may be a limiting factor. The same applies to youth exposed to business growth incubation services which may, or may not, result in business growth. This applies to the other outputs: because youth receive career guidance may not result in increased employment and skills building opportunities as their gender limits choices that are available to them (Output 2); because youth are connected to e-commerce platforms may not translate into increased business income as they may not have internet access or skills (Output 3).

It would also be useful to define output and result level indicators for each output area. This will support more effective M&E.

This suggests that the ToC can be strengthened by *investigating the assumptions around implementation issues* to test how robust implementation models are for creating effective casual links between activities and results, and *including indicators*.

EQ 1.7. To what extent did the M&E framework define and use SMART indicators for measuring outcomes and outputs?

Under the overall Outcome Framework for the project, the Results Framework and the Annual Work Plans (see the Annex section) both provided frameworks for monitoring and evaluating project performance. The Results Framework links the project to UNDP's Country Programme objective of "growth and development are inclusive and sustainable, incorporating productive capacities that create employment an livelihoods for the poor and excluded." This provides a link between output results and results at outcome and country impact levels. The Results Framework has well defined output indicators, targets and time lines for targets to be reached, as well as baseline values against which to measure progress. It also provides the sources for verifying results and who will be responsible for gathering data.

The Annual Work Plans for 2019, 2020 and 2021 clearly define activity level results to be achieved, with associated targets for each year, to support the achievement of outputs. There appear to be some gaps for indicators and targets in the 2020 and 2021 Annual Work Plans which the consultant has not been able to resolve. Institutional memory on some issues has been lost due to high staff turn-over at UNDP.

5.2 Effectiveness

EQ 2.1 To what extent have objectives, outputs, outcomes, impacts and targets been achieved? (Scale, quality, inclusion of cross-cutting issues).

The project has made significant contributions to achieving its objectives as demonstrated by the achievement of outputs and targets from the project's annual reports for 2019 and 2021[15] and the 2020 progress report[16]:

Support entrepreneurship development
The project has supported this objective through successfully:

In 2019[17]:
a) Enhancing the MoYSAR's capacities to raise public awareness and implement its socio-economic policies for youth in Zimbabwe through the participating in the Start-Up Tour Bus and the 2019 YC Africa Summit
b) Building the capacity of 1,200 young entrepreneurs through the Start-Up Tour Bus.
c) Supporting 10 Provincial businesses with $5,000 start-up capital each and incubation services.
d) Signing up 10 young entrepreneurs for the Tony Elumelu Foundation programme.

In 2020[18]
a) Organising a business competition for youth businesses to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic and thereby enhancing youth's socioeconomic opportunities and livelihoods.
b) Providing business incubation support to 35 participants.

In 2021[19]
a) Through the Business Growth Programme, reaching 1 million Zimbabweans with messages to promote entrepreneurship, providing 400 youth with online entrepreneurship training, receiving 471 applications and supporting 100 youth with business development services to grow their businesses. In addition, 44 youth businesses were given support to develop bankable proposals and 15 businesses received business development services and capital to the total value of USD 120,000 and 83 started the process of formalisation. This resulted in youth demonstrating more capacity to start and run their own businesses.[20]
b) Partnering with the Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund (ZRBF), to support 117 young farmers to move up the value chain promoting small-scale processing centres, new markets or digital solutions to open up new markets, and provide a total of USD 120,000 in capital to 10 youth groups with 60 members to scale up their businesses along with incubation services.
c) Supporting 83 businesses to start the formalisation process.
d) Training 608 entrepreneurs in the development of business proposals.
e) Rolling out 67 innovative business solutions.
f) Supporting 5 market linkages to connect farmers, youth agro processors and markets.
g) Providing 212 youth businesses with incubation services.

---

[15] There is no YC annual report is available for 2020.
[16] Youth Connekt Zimbabwe 2020 Second Third Progress Report.
[17] Strengthening National Capacities for Economic Management and Development Effectiveness, 2019 Annual progress Report for the Youth Connekt Project
[18] Youth Connekt Zimbabwe 2020 Second Third Progress Report.
[19] UNDP Youth Connekt 2021 Annual Progress Report
[20] UNDP Youth Connekt 2021 Annual Progress Report

h) Providing 1 awareness raising session on SDGs.

The following planned results did not happen in 2021:
- Training women and youth in intellectual property rights.
- Awareness training for 100 youth on AfTCA.
- Supporting 3 women and youth to attend national and regional opportunities

Promote employment, skills development and other opportunities

The project has supported this objective through successfully:

In 2021 [21]

a) Placing 26 UN Volunteer graduates under the Classroom to Career (C2C) programme with Masawara Holdings, which provided youth with job skills and experience and opened opportunities thorough accessing permanent jobs after the placement was concluded, or their winning university scholarships. Eight were taken on as full time employees by the company after the placement period ended which exceeded the target of five.
b) Creating jobs, e.g. Under the Business Growth Programme, of the 44 youths who successfully pitched they employed four other young people. This means that 176 jobs were created from YC activities.
c) Deploying 12 youth volunteers to three urban food markets, schools and churches in Harare, Bulawayo and Mutare to raise awareness of Covid-19, together with the UN Volunteer programme and other partners. Through this effort 28,076 community members were reached to raise awareness of Covid-19 safety measures, GBV and hygiene.
d) Supporting youth's social and economic needs during the pandemic through training in GBV, drug abuse and how to operate ISALs.

Facilitate networking and dialogue.

The project has supported this objective though successfully:

In 2019[22]:
a) Sending eight finalists to the YCA Summit in Kigali and one winner to travel to the One Young World Summit in 2021 to provide networking and leaning opportunities
b) Creating a Youth Connekt website.

In 2020, however, the Covid-19 pandemic prevented much project work in networking and dialogue.

In 2021 [23]

---

[21] UNDP Youth Connekt 2021 Annual Progress Report
[22] Strengthening National Capacities for Economic Management and Development Effectiveness, 2019 Annual progress Report for the Youth Connekt Project
[23] UNDP Youth Connekt 2021 Annual Progress Report

a) Using social media extensively, e.g. 2,730 people had engaged with Facebook posts, Twitter had 425 profile visits, a total of 2,524 followers by October 2021 and 46,900 impressions. Overall there were 6,880 YC followers on social media platforms.

b) Reaching 1 million people via three radio stations during YCBGP's call for applications and during the campaign reached 4.9 million listeners.

c) Sending a delegation of youth to participate in the YC Africa Summit in Accra, Ghana to position African youth's participation the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA).

Apart from three planned activities that did not take place in 2021, as mentioned above, almost all the above outputs met or exceeded their targets.

Whilst the project has achieved a great deal in terms of what it set out to achieve, the scale of the challenges facing youth are huge in comparison.

Table 3: *Summary of results for Outputs.*

Output 1: Youth connected to entrepreneurship: increased entrepreneurial skills	
Result: Increased entrepreneur opportunities and job creation youth	It is clear from the above findings that YC has achieved significant results in terms of increasing entrepreneurial opportunities and job creation, especially through its competitions, entrepreneurship training and business support services. In
Outcome: Positive contribution realising Zimbabwe's demogra dividend	The YC project has contributed to realising Zimbabwe's demographic dividend. Although most of the project's outputs and results have been achieved, the scale is very limited compared to the numbers of youth to be reached really make an impact on the demographic dividend.
Output 2: Youth connected to employment, skills and opportunities	
Result: Increased employment skills building opportunities for youth	The project has contributed to increasing employment ar skills for youth especially through the Business Growth Programme and the C2C programme. There is little evide of results, however, from the career guidance activities t secondary and tertiary students, and career developmen sports and arts.
Outcome: Improved employab chances for youth	The project has undoubtedly improved employability cha for some youth, but the scale of the need for youth employment is enormous compared to what the project been able to deliver.
Output 3: Youth connected to youth: networking platform for young people	
Result: Increased networking a funding opportunities	The project has been extremely effective in using traditic media, social media and on-line methods for increasing awareness, providing training and support services and v linking youth with business and networking opportunitie
Outcome: Established network youths for information sharing	The project did establish a network of youth for informat sharing. However, it is unclear whether the networks hav been maintained and are still effective.

EQ 2.2 What factors have enabled or constrained achieving results? Could different approaches have achieved better results?

This question focusses on the internal project arrangements rather than contextual issues that have influenced the project's results which will be discussed under EQ 2.15.

There were many factors that supported the achievement of results including the innovative design feature of taking a bus with professionals with business skills to all 10 provinces in the country. The bus, and the media hype that accompanied it, was very successful in raising awareness about youth in business amongst many thousands of people in both rural and urban areas, and in mobilising youth around business activities. The concept has clearly captured the imaginations of many and has been a resounding success from these perspectives! The project supported the participation of young women and their access to project benefits through catering for their child care needs , e.g. in 2019 by having child care facilities at conference centres which freed them to participate in project activities.

The job placement activity, C2C, with Masawara Holdings worked well as the company was highly motivated to bring into its business young people with fresh ideas on their existing business models. The company clearly see young people as bringing benefits to their business that they would not otherwise be able to access as easily and this motivated them to overcome the initial challenges of setting up the placements. The project has been a "roaring success" for Masawara Holdings.

There were also issues that constrained the achievement of results. The focus of some competitions, e.g. Start-Up Tour Bus, was reported to sometimes focused too much on new technology rather than practical businesses that may provide useful, if less exciting, solutions to local challenges. However, other reports of this competition indicate that 'innovation' rather than 'technology' was a special focus. It is possible that innovation may have been interpreted as 'new technology'. Whatever the case, the project could ensure a balance between technological innovation, which may be more suited to urban youth, with focus on practical solutions to local challenges which may be more useful in rural contexts.

The gender of young people benefiting from the project is disproportionately skewed in favour of men. This is evidenced by the data on youth beneficiaries provided by UNDP for the sample for interviews for the evaluation: 30 were male and only 16 female, as well as reports that 45% of grant winners were women and that only 13% of the 35 incubation programme participants in 2020 were female[24]. In addition, there were reports that some good ideas were not selected in some competitions because the pitcher, often women, lacked confidence. The project should consider having specific performance targets and indicators for young women and also take training to women rather than women to the training since they often have more barriers to leaving home for days at a time, customise training to cater for social norms that can make women invisible and less confident in presenting themselves and their ideas, change terms like 'boot camp' to reflect a more inclusive image, include these issues in #LeaveNobodyBehind SDG competitions.

---

[24] Youth Connekt Zimbabwe 2020 Second Third Progress Report.

"Some people pitch well but don't have substance, and others have good business ideas but don't pitch well." Training provider.

Youth participating in training often comprised mixed needs, e.g. start-ups, incubation. This meant that training had to be delivered at a high and generic level rather than catering for the needs of specific business stages: start-ups and business growth. As such, the training was less than effective according to both trainers and youth. This issue could be addressed by doing a training needs analysis of groups targeted for training, and grouping those with similar capacity building needs and customising training design and delivery according to each group's needs.

Mentoring support was reported by trainers and youth as being too short and, for rural youth, difficult to access as it was mostly offered in Harare. The mentoring support needs to be over a much longer period of time.

"The young people should not be just dropped after the training." Training provider.

In addition, access to services could be improved by taking training and follow up services to rural areas rather than requiring rural youth to come to the main towns.

The ZRBF competition initially required that young people submit their proposals via email. This provided a barrier, particularly for rural youth. The application process was subsequently changed to paper.

EQ 2.3. Have there been any unintended (positive or negative) results from the project?

Data gathered from youth show that all reported some type of positive benefit from the project, mostly about effects on their business and skills but also with some unexpected results. For example, one got an scholarship to study physics engineering at a university, another picked up a contract with UNDP to do cross border logistics, two were exposed to more investment opportunities and 18 of the 25 placements at Masawara Holdings were hired on a full time basis of which 60% were women. In addition, two also won university scholarships. At least five reported that participation in the project had increased recognition by others, e.g. recognised in their communities, recognised by other business organisations.

There have been several significantly important unintended positive results from the project. At a national policy level, the project helped to re-shape to some degree the perceptions of GoZ about the importance of youth development. It was reported that Zimbabwe sent the Permanent Secretary of the MoYSAR to the annual Youth Connekt Africa regional meeting, whereas other countries sent Heads of State to attend. This resulted in GoZ officials realising that youth development receives greater priority amongst other African nations, which enhanced the credibility of Youth Connekt Zimbabwe.

Another significant positive unintended result was that lasting relationships were forged between professionals who were on the Start-Up Tour Buses. Being "stuck on the bus together for weeks" meant that people got to know each other, social distances were narrowed and friendships and business relationships developed.

"Impact Hub shared their training models/ modules with Zim Youth Council."

"We have worked many times with TagTeam since the bus."

"What I loved about the bus connecting at a personal level, egos were dropped, I got help. By the time we arrived in Masvingo they had panel beaten my business model. My life changed on that road."

The YC project also had a positive impact on community perceptions about youth in business.
"Youth got to meet local entrepreneurs who they had not been otherwise able to access."
Implementing partner.

"Youth got more recognition from their communities after being recognised by the Bus."
Implementing partner.

The bus trips also changed perceptions of Harare-based professionals about rural businesses.
"I met local entrepreneurs through the bus tour and it opened my eyes about the way businesses operate in rural areas."

The job placements at Masawara Holdings led to the company forming a parallel board comprising of young people, including the YC youth. The purpose was to shadow the main board to provide fresh ideas from a young person's perspective. Several of the YC youth are on this board. In addition, two of the youth got scholarships to the University of Cape Town on the basis of the experience they gained at Masawara Holdings.

Higher Life Foundation experienced a huge increase in the scale of their volunteer programme as a result of linking with YC in community clean ups in markets including Mbare, Harare, Bulawayo and Sakubva, Mutare during the Covid-19 response.
"Before we knew it we had 1,000 volunteers!" ex-Higher Life Foundation staff member.

Negative
There was a report of repeated sexual harassment of a young woman participating in one of the project's activities whilst she was seconded to a community level placement with an NGO partner under the UN Volunteer Covid-19 project activities. The incident involved a senior NGO staff member making advances on the young woman. When she refused his advances the supervisor started excluding her from work activities and giving her negative work ratings. The supervisor continued to give her negative ratings despite the fact that she had effectively withdrawn from the work place, feeling safer to stay at her lodgings rather than going into the NGO's offices. She participated with work on line as much as she could. The incident had a traumatising effect on the young woman and negatively affected her confidence. This was especially damaging as it was her first job. The incident was reported to UNDP to address, including UNDP's Deputy Resident Representative and UNDP's Human Resources Department. However, UNDP decided to pass responsibility back to the NGO partner to deal with internally. It appears that since the NGO partner was considered a 'high performer' there seems to have been some reluctance on UNDP's part to pursue the issue and risk unsettling a good working relationship with the NGO. In addition, since the NGO supervisor was a senior staff member any internal investigation by the NGO would have been unlikely to be impartial. The NGO staff member was never held accountable and in the end the young woman was withdrawn from the placement.

The need to support the young woman and the need to hold the senior NGO staff member accountable so that he will be less likely to repeat his behaviour in future have been sidelined in favour of maintaining partner relationships. Not only was this a failure to support the young woman, it signalled to a man who holds power over others and his organisation that sexual harassment is tolerated by UNDP. In addition, UNDP lost an important opportunity to have an impact on achieving gender equality (SDG 5), reducing inequalities (SDG 10) and Leave No one Behind.

Some positive results occurred from the incident. It resulted in changes to partner contracts to include penalties for such incidents. In addition to this, it would be useful to have a UNDP/UN Volunteer point person and a hot line for reporting and getting support for sexual harassment issues and other work placement issues . It would also be valuable for women participating in job placement opportunities to be trained on how to deal with sexual harassment, so that they are prepared in the event of it happening.

One youth interviewed was inundated by requests for money.
"Everyone knew I had won money and would come and want to borrow the money." Youth

An unanticipated negative result was that the salaries paid to youth at Masawara Holdings under the UN Volunteer programme was much higher than local market rates and this created jealousies and tensions amongst Masawara staff as salaries were higher than those of managers who were mentoring the UN Volunteers.

EQ 2.4. To what extent has the project been effective in responding to the needs of beneficiaries? What specific results stand out?

On the whole, the youth interviewed for the evaluation reported that the project responded very well to their needs. The project also effectively responded to youth needs for finance, for business skills and for support.

"The management team was a blessing, they had a love for youth entrepreneurs. They held my hand throughout the project activities." Youth.

"I learned how to operate cold-rooms through the training." Youth.

"We got a lot of information about business management and insights on how to make money and profit." Youth.

"The financial system was flexible in that it allowed participants to purchase materials they could afford at reasonable prices." Youth

"Management was transparent and the financial system was smooth, we managed to acquire funds on time and with no hassles." Youth.

"Management of the project was well organised and the financial and technical systems delivered timeously and effectively." Youth.

In addition, one youth was helped by the project to manage business risk.

"Through the trainings I became aware of intellectual property rights and this helped me in protecting my company against fake companies. For example a Chinese company approached me and promised to pay me 14,000 yuan, only to realise after I did research, which I had been taught by Youth Connekt, that the company was non-existent." Youth

There were frustrations that meant the project did not meet some expectations, however, especially around finance, networking opportunities and project management.

"The financial system was extremely frustrating as it requested a lot of information and data which was not useful since there was no follow-up after wards on how the money was used. Not everyone is a product oriented business." Youth.

"I acquired knowledge but did not get a fund like other participants." Youth.

"We didn't get time as youth business owners to interact and share business tips as well as create networks." Youth.

"The focus was to give youths the financial assistance but the project forgot that the hardest part is to keep the youths in business by encouraging youth collaboration and networking."

"Rotation from one company to another limited in-depth learning and there was no feedback on assignments, we never knew how the assignment some contributed to the overall project." C2C youth.

"During the transition period when there was change in the project staff at UNDP, there was a gap in learning and management as the previous office was more hands on and passionate to youth empowerment." Youth.

EQ 2.5. How effective has the business competition model been in contributing to results? Comment on a) the Start-up bus, b) Covid competition and c) the 2021 competition.

a) **The Start-Up Tour Bus (2019 – 2020)**
   The Start-up Tour Bus has been a very successful model in contributing the project's results. By August 2019 the bus had been to all 10 provinces and reached over 1200 youth from 33 districts with a mix of both rural and urban. In addition, 10 innovators (1 from each province) were provided with seed capital and mentorship for their startup businesses, 30 youth owned businesses were provided with mentorship, 200 youth owned businesses were provided with opportunities to showcase their businesses through the provincial and national pitching sessions during the start-up tour and seven young entrepreneurs participated in the Youth Connekt Africa Summit held in Rwanda, 10 provincial businesses were provide with start-up capital, amongst other results.[25] Social media platforms established by YC were extremely effective communication

---

[25] Strengthening National Capacities for Economic Management and Development Effectiveness, 2019 Annual progress Report for the Youth Connekt Project.

tools as demonstrated by activity levels[26]. These platforms[27] enabled sharing of information e.g. about business innovations, YC success stories, tips for businesses, social messages such as on gender based violence.

"Thank you for believing in me when I couldn't believe in myself… Thank you for all your patience, mentorship and love. I am looking forward to working with you and being a better person"
Chipo Chihunda, 2019 Mashonaland Central Winner

"Thank you UNDP and Youth Connekt. You have opened up doors and markets that I otherwise would not have been able to reach…so many clients have started calling to place orders…I now believe in myself. Makanditsveta pamafuro akanaka"
Don Bosco Masendeke, 2019 Masvingo Province Winner

The Generation Unlimited's awareness campaign, done in partnership with Unicef and Plan International, also contributed to achieving results through engaging 310 (174 male and 135 female) young innovators to solve challenges in a number of SDG themes.

b) **Covid competition (2020 competition)**
The Covid-19 competition focussed on finding innovative and practical responses to the Covid-19 pandemic and complementing GoZ's response. There were four winners from the competition:

- Ms. Junior Bakasa, owner of OV Products Ltd which manufactured hand sanitisers, PPE and detergents and provided deep cleaning services.
- Jessica Chivinge of Epione.net provided a web-based platform to connect users to COVID-19 health services such as patient symptom tracking.
- Kudakwashe Mlambo of Digital Kiota Play n Learn provided an online educational platform to provide students with educational content during the pandemic, and
- Elton Mudariki of Tippy Tap, manufactured a foot operated hand washing device.

All these competition winners contributed to supporting the Covid-19 response in Zimbabwe.

The competition was advertised effectively on social media and through the Mai Chisamba Show on national television and resulted in 182 applications being received. The competition linked with the work that UN Volunteers, Higher Life Foundation, Dan Church Aid, Oxfam and CARE International were doing to raise awareness about Covid-19.[28] These activities made significant contributions to raising awareness about Covid-19 and educating people about hygiene and other responses to the pandemic.

Other results included[29]:

---

[26] Over 430,000 tweet impressions, videos viewed over 20,000 time, over 18,800 profile visits, over 3400 followers in total. Source: Strengthening National Capacities for Economic Management and Development Effectiveness, 2019 Annual progress Report for the Youth Connekt Project. Facebook posts in 2020 reached 90,732 people and Twitter posts achieved 174,000 impressions and 1,556 profile views. Source: Youth Connekt Zimbabwe, 2020 First Third Progress Report.
[27] https://www.facebook.com/YouthConnektZim   https://www.youthconnektafrica.org/
[28] Youth Connekt Zimbabwe, 2020 First Third Progress Report
[29] Youth Connekt Project Monthly Report, October 2020

- Within a period of two weeks a total of 734 people and 317 markets had been reached with Covid-19 awareness activities.
- UNVs managed to be one of the key sources of authentic information on COVID-19 in communities they were serving in.
- The relationships built up through the UN Volunteer activity also resulted in partners collaborating with UN Volunteers to set up a volunteer network to clean up the CBD as part of a cholera outbreak response.
- The project received endorsement from the Minister of Youth, Sport, Arts and Recreation on its three-pronged approach on involving youth in tackling the pandemic through outreach and awareness, a Call for Expressions of Interest from Youth-Owned Businesses in Covid-19 Prevention and Response, and contributing to the country's efforts of contact tracing.

YC also received positive recognition in press coverage from The Herald on 27 June 2020, for its Covid-19 Prevention and Response competition.[30]

c) **Agricultural value chains and food security (2021 competition)**

The 2021 competition linked with UNDP's work under the Zimbabwe Resilience Building Fund (ZRBF) and the Building Urban Resilience project to provide entrepreneurial support, incubation services targeting enterprises in the food supply chains with a view to strengthen the resilience of MSMEs in the food supply chain and the livelihoods of women and youth. Under this partnership arrangement, 10 youth groups with 60 members were supported with USD 120,000 to scale up their businesses. It is reported that the "standard of living for the youths involved changed significantly through shared resources, linkages and mutual trust."[31]

Whilst many positive results were achieved through the competition process, there were aspects of the competition that did not work that well. Competitions often included too wide a range of entrants and the judges did not always have relevant skills to judge some businesses effectively. The competitions could be more focussed, e.g. on a specific sector or supply chain, or a specific local challenge.

The evaluation found that some respondents thought the 'winner takes all' model, where a few winners get funding for their businesses whilst others with good ideas got nothing, did not work well. Others said that the award money to winners was too little and that the funds should rather be given to fewer winners so that the larger amount enables the businesses to do something meaningful with the funds.

EQ 2.6. How effective has the project been in promoting start-ups that create jobs and meet important challenges in society?

Please see EQ 2.7 below as there is significant overlap of focus.

EQ 2.7. Did business performance change as a result of the project? (sales, profit, jobs, etc)

---

[30] https://www.undp.org/zimbabwe/press-releases/junior-bakasa-wins-youthconnektzim-covid19-prevention-and-response-competition

[31] UNDP Youth Connekt 2021 Annual Progress Report

Interviews with youth data sources confirmed the above results which indicated that 14 out of 21 entrepreneurs interviewed reported that their businesses were either surviving or thriving since the project support.

"The Charcoal Brick business has continued successfully after the completion of the project and even relocated to South Africa." Youth.

"I managed to design cartridge, gears and other water progressive carved water pumps which ultimately translated to improved scale of operation for the business." Youth.

"The business has grown beyond boarders and the project helped in branding of the business which has increased the businesses' breadth and linkages with companies like Zimplats, Freda Rebecca Mine and the interest by the President to nationalise the business idea." Youth.

"The number of customers has increased regardless of prices being lower due to replication of business on the market." Youth.

"Revenues have increased by 100% since 2020 and the business can now forecast, manage its finances which is resulting in the recording of healthy profits and the project played a role to this end." Youth.

There were also comments that suggest that the support did not benefit all youth that were involved.

"The sad part is that innovators, even those that won the competitions, nothing happened with them." Youth.
"We had only one day of training. This was too short. This was followed by pitch training. There was a lack of follow up. We should not be just dropped after the training as this negatively affected our businesses' performance." Youth.

Of the site visits done to four youth businesses the following information about changes in business performance was gathered, much of it very positive findings:

Business 1 – a design firm that does residential designs, develop websites, and develop VR games and 3 D visualisation, male owned.
The business recorded a decrease in the number of sales but at the same time the revenue or profit recorded increased significantly. This is because the business managed to secure big clients and these tend to pay more than the individual clients and the SMEs that the business used to serve as their clients. Before the YC program, the business just had an idea but now they are able to sell their services and so they now record profits.

The business is currently run by three males, two of whom are company directors and one is an employee.

Business 2 – produces and sells cosmetics such as hair and skin products, female owned.

The business is doing well and it is growing although the growth is slower than they would prefer. They now have loyal clients from both within the country and from outside the country. Growth is however slow possibly because of the economic situation where people have less disposable income. The business recorded an increase in sales and profits mainly from the export market. With the local market, the business recorded more sales but they are recording losses mainly because of the economic situation and the multicurrency system. Local shops such as Pick 'n' Pay buy products in the local Real Time Gross Settlement (RTGS) currency and so the exchange rate volatilities may see them generating losses. When comparing to the period prior to the YC project, the business recorded about 50% increase in profits and sale.

The business currently employs four full time employees and two contract employees. Of these, only one is male and the rest of the employees are females. Before the YC project, the business was employing three people so there is an increase in number of employees by three.

Business 3 – Disposal of specialised waste such as medical waste, clinical and industrial waste products that need special management, male owned.

The business is growing. The number of clients that the business is serving increased from around 20 before the YC program to more than 150 currently. The business also has expanded in terms of premises from a small place they were using before to two sites in Harare. The business has also entered into partnership with other players in the waste recycling industry. The business together with the new partners is now producing bin liners and plastic pipes from recycled waste.

The business recorded increased profits through the benefits of a financial management system that they adopted after the training. The clientele base for the business also increased significantly from around 20 before the YC program to over 150 currently. The business also entered into partnership with other players in the waste management business which allowed them to expand their product range to include production of plastic pipes and bin liners on top of the specialised waste that they used to focus on. This means an increase in the revenue sources for the business

The business is currently employing 20 employees (12 women and 8 men).

Business 4 – Engineering design of automated poultry feeders and automated incubators.

The targeted market was small scale farmers at first with the potential to scale up the project to meet the demand for large scale commercial farmers. The business is currently on hold/ not producing any product for sale. The business faced challenges with marketing their products. The owner has no marketing skills and so the business failed to penetrate the market. They only managed to sell one feeder. The business also lack financial capacity to keep the project going since the product that they were producing requires large sums of money to produce. A joint venture was therefore formed and the business then decided on producing automated incubators which require less money so that they can raise enough money to fund production of automated poultry feeders. They are currently finalising the automated incubator which has a capacity of 144 eggs.

The business is currently run by the two partners only and there are no other employees.

EQ 2.8. To what extent were the results from M&E mechanisms used for learning and meeting project results?

There is strong evidence that the project used its M&E mechanisms to change and adapt over time to changing circumstances. For example, the Start-Up Tour Bus, which in its first year in 2019 travelled throughout the country, was reshaped into a virtual implementation model to adapt to the Covid-19 restrictions[32]. The focus of the competitions also adapted, moving from a focus on innovative start-ups to business growth and from Covid-19 response to food supply chains as national challenges shifted. This demonstrates remarkable adaptability and indicates that decision processes have been well informed by contextual issues and nimble in execution. The project stakeholders, for example, noted in 2021 the challenges in achieving gender equity with the Business Growth Programme, and this helped to inform more gender appropriate intervention methods e.g. led to recognition of the need for more gender sensitive mentoring methods and in the C2C programme a more successful approach to achieving gender parity.

The composition of the Steering Committee also changed to reflect the shifting focus of the project activities to include farming organisations, those with volunteer or media experience when it was relevant to have these skills to guide the project.

The project team maintained regular contact with winners to track the progress youth were making and use this to inform project implementation decisions.[33]

An area where M&E did not support learning and adaptation sufficiently is in disaggregating data by gender and by socially included and excluded groups. This made it difficult to see how results were being achieved for different groups and to make adaptations to make progress on Leave No One Behind.

EQ 2.9. What perceptions do stakeholders have about the project (positive and negative)?

All partners who were interviewed about the project had positive perceptions about the project. The quotes below illustrate.

"Very positive. Great project, worked really well." Private sector stakeholder.
"Truly a good program at so many levels." Ex UN staff member
"YC was the pride of UNDP." UN staff member
"YC has changed lives." Implementing partner
"We miss the bus!!". Implementing partner
"We were swamped by the response by the youth. It surpassed all or plans on paper. Young people didn't want to miss the bus. They would say: 'When is the bus coming?' 'Our bus', 'the bus is here!'" Implementing partner.

There were also positive comments by implementing partners about UNDP's staff who were reported to have "bent over backwards to make sure we were well catered for".

---

[32] Minutes of the 2nd Youth Connekt 2021 Stakeholder meeting held virtually, 21 December 2021.
[33] UNDP Youth Connekt 2021 Annual Progress Report

Another interesting perception was about the link to UNDP.

"People view Youth Connekt participants as having been favoured by NGOs simply because of the fact that we got funding from UNDP." Youth.

EQ 2.10. To what extent did governance structures, management structures, partnership arrangements and financial systems support delivery of the project's activities?

The Project Steering Board was generally effective in overseeing the project's design and implementation. The composition of the board changed to some extent to adjust to the need for different skills and relationships during the course of the project and changing country contexts. This enabled the project to adapt well over time by bringing in new and relevant resources whilst at the same time preserving the committee's stability and institutional memory. The board was also diverse, including many partners outside of UNDP, such as companies, banks, youth organisations and implementing partners. This provided for diverse views and inputs into idea generation and problem solving around project challenges. The project board therefore had many features that enabled it to effectively play its role.

The project was implemented under a Direct Implementation Model (DIM) which meant that UNDP could more easily direct the project as it could make decisions without having to do wide consultations. This enabled more nimble, faster decision making.

Coordination between the partners who delivered training services was reported to have worked well with several developing ongoing business relationships.

"The project stablished an ecosystem of practitioners that we still work with." Implementing partner

Impact Hub was reported to have consistently delivered good results e.g. the provision of free membership and mentoring to the top 30 winners in the pilot year, as well as opening up their networks for access by the youth, whilst there were several reports by ex-project staff that one implementing partner, IBUHUB, did not perform as expected.

The C2C job placements with Masawara Holdings had initial teething problems in coordinating the implementation with UN Volunteers, but these were reported to have been resolved fairly quickly.

EQ 2.11. To what extent have key partners, UNDP and GoZ, contributed to achieving or limiting project results? Did collaborations with UNRCO, Government of Rwanda, Steering Committee, Project Board, national institutions, development partners, etc contribute to achieving or limiting results?

"The strength of partnerships was responsible for the great success of Youth Connekt in 2019. The project partnered with the Government of Zimbabwe through the Ministry of Youth, Sport, Arts and Recreation; Elevate from the Econet Group; Steward Bank; Zimbabwe National Chamber of Commerce; Impact Hub; HigherLife Foundation; Micah Foundation; Innovators Hub; UN

Volunteers and Zimbabwe Youth Council. The relationship between partners was complementary, ranging from technical to logistical support".[34]

Interviews with ex-UNDP staff indicated that GoZ was "fully hands on, and the Minister was fully behind the project, the awards, and ensured that high level Ministry staff were involved."
"GoZ's political leadership championed the project." Ex-UN staff member

In addition, it was reported by the same staff that UNDP's Resident Representative also used his networks effectively to promote the project.

These have all contributed to the project achieving results.

EQ 2.12. Have there been any impacts (positive and negative) from building capacities and learning?

There were several positive impacts from building capacities and learning, the most important of which has been the results achieved for youth under the project, as discussed earlier.
"The impact on youth has been immense. The project gave youth a platform that would not otherwise have been accessible. Youth Connekt has changed lives." Implementing partner.

The collaboration between UNDP and MoYSAR during the project also provided opportunities for sharing ideas with the ministry for the design of its business development strategy and for UNDP to gain better understanding of the ministry's plans and priorities. Overall, it provided for sharing of skills and the creation of a closer working relationship between the two key partners.

Implementing partners involved in building the capacity of youth through delivering training services were themselves changed from participating in the project.

"Implementing partners capacity to engage youth improved over time with experience." Ex-UN staff member.

"We learned about district protocols and how to write a concept note during the time on the bus. It solidified players in the industry and built strong relationships that have endured long after the project". Implementing partner.

EQ 2.13. Have there been any policy level impacts from the project? e.g. domestication of regional frameworks, best practice?

The networking activities of the project, e.g. the YCA Summit in Kigali and the YC Africa Summit in Accra, Ghana connected young people with policy makers and influencers and development agencies and provided opportunities for youth to shape youth empowerment policies, e.g. the youth who participated in the YC Africa Summit in Ghana played a role in positioning African youth's participation the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA).

---

[34] Strengthening National Capacities for Economic Management and Development Effectiveness, 2019 Annual progress Report for the Youth Connekt Project

The Ministry's capacities to implement socio-economic policies for youth in Zimbabwe have been enhanced due to the participation in the Start-Up Tour Bus and 2019 Youth Connekt Africa Summit. Due to the tour, the Ministry was able to access youth and raise awareness of Government's policies for little to no cost to them[35].

Eight Youth Connekt Zimbabwe Finalists and two Ministry of Youth, Sport, Arts and Recreation (MoYSAR) officials participated the YCA Summit in Kigali. This provided an opportunity for MoYSAR to exchange views on South-South and triangular cooperation approaches and methodologies, as well as creating a match-making platform for further strengthening of regional partnerships[36].

When the Permanent Secretary of the MoYSAR attended the Regional Youth Connekt meetings, Zimbabwe saw that other African countries had sent their Heads of State to the meetings. This provided a perspective on how other African countries prioritise youth in their development policies.

In addition, a mapping exercise that was done during the Covid-19 competition resulted in a more coordinated UN youth strategy and One UN approach.[37]

The success of the collaboration between YC, Higher Life Foundation and UN Volunteers during the Covid-19 volunteer activities resulted in such scaling of the volunteer activities that it led to a national volunteer strategy being developed with GoZ.

EQ 2.14. Did monitoring and evaluation frameworks enable the quantification and verification of results and measurement of progress towards results?

The M&E frameworks were variable in their capacity to quantify and verify results. The Outcomes Framework clearly defined outputs, activities, results and outcomes, but did not have any indicators to measure results. As would be expected, the Results Framework had much more detail on outputs, output indictors, data sources, baselines, targets, data collection methods and risks, and the Annual Workplans for 2019, 2020 and 2021 clearly articulate outputs and associated activities, indictors and targets. However, the consultant could not easily establish links and coherence with the above mentioned M&E documents, and they appear to be more stand alone documents. It has been difficult to establish some results from the M&E frameworks and Annual Plans because of this apparent fragmentation, and also because some M&E records were not available and staff turnover meant that UNDP staff could not always remember results.

In addition, results provided in the Annual Reports of 2019 and 2021 do not disaggregate data by gender or by rural/urban youth. It is difficult, therefore, to establish results for different target groups and whether different groups participated and benefited more or less from project activities. For example in the 2021 Annual Report, Result Area 2 for 'Capacity Building and Skills Building for Women and Youth for Employment and Enterprise' does not indicate the numbers of women placed in job placements or the number of women UN Volunteers in partnership with

---

[35] Strengthening National Capacities for Economic Management and Development Effectiveness, 2019 Annual progress Report for the Youth Connekt Project.
[36] Strengthening National Capacities for Economic Management and Development Effectiveness, 2019 Annual progress Report for the Youth Connekt Project.
[37] Youth Connekt Zimbabwe, 2020 First Third Progress Report

CSOs or the number of women interns in partnership with the private sector. It is, therefore, not possible to know whether the results for women has been achieved. M&E frameworks have therefore not been robust enough to play their role as effectively as they could have done.

EQ 2.15. Has the achievement of results been affected by contextual issues (political, economic, social)?

The project's results have been affected to a significant degree by the ongoing economic challenges that Zimbabwe is experiencing. The depressed economic conditions and currency volatility are difficult for all businesses, and more so for businesses run by young people who are often at the risky start-up stage and often lack business knowledge and experience. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the economy was significant and this exacerbated existing economic challenges for youth businesses to succeed, leading to many innovations not succeeding. This was confirmed by the interviews with youth.

"My business was affected mostly by economic factors and I had to divert the grant towards other financial needs. The dollarization resulted in the grant money also losing value." Youth.
"Economically, the devaluation of the Zimbabwean dollar has affected the exchange rates for products. Retail shops like PnP still order supplies in RTGS yet the business purchases the raw materials for the products in USD." Youth.

"My business was affected mostly by price fluctuations and inflation which makes it difficult to source materials to make products." Youth.

"I only get payment after a 30 day period when the value of the money will have become less." Youth.

"There is not a lot of disposal income in the market, people are more worried about food." Youth.

"Influx of products on the market meant lower profits and the varying exchange rates made it difficult to source materials at a lower price and to make a profit out of the sales." Youth.

"Covid made the business stop its progress towards becoming operational. Sales plunged whilst costs accrued. Covid left the business with nothing financially and I had to start over all over again after the aftermath of the pandemic." Youth.

"The long hours of load shedding have amounted to many losses in product as fish are perishable." Youth.

The political environment also presented challenges to the project. Funds given to youth participating in the project were sometimes perceived as a threat to some local political structures. This affected the agricultural value chain work that YC partnered with the ZRBF programme, making it "tricky" for the project to do the intended work. In another instance, government officials were reported to have approached a private sector company who was participating in the project asking for some of the funds for GoZ's purposes. Since the company feared losing its operating licence, it did not consider scaling its YC activities because of the

perceived threat, despite wanting to do so.[38] Unfortunately these are not uncommon occurrences[39] in the high corruption environment of the country.

"The business culture preys on others. Jealousy destroys viable businesses." Ex-UN staff member.

"Instances of politicisation were raised by participants in a number of provinces, with reports of Ministry Youth Officers in some places only availing Youth Connekt opportunity and mobilisation to young people of a particular political dispensation …. [which resulted in some] youth who refrained from engaging with Youth Connekt."[40]

The design of the project does not appear to have adequately taken into consideration other macro environment issues including insecure land tenure rights that often makes doing business in the agricultural sector politicised and creates difficulties to realise the cost benefits of economies of scale due to lack of trust when trying to bring small holder farmers together. This makes it difficult for all businesses in agricultural value chains, including youth businesses participating in the project, to be cost competitive.

Cultural attitudes towards the success of others, which often elicits jealousy rather than celebration or support, also undermined the project's results.

"The business culture preys on others. Jealousy destroys viable businesses." Ex-UN staff member.

EQ 2.16 What should future youth interventions prioritise? Where are the opportunities? What strategies should be used?

Four key issues have surfaced in terms of suggestions for the focus and strategies for future youth interventions:

Scale
As mentioned earlier, whilst the YC project has achieved some remarkable results, in terms of the urgency of the need to address the issues that Zimbabwean youth face and that people under 35 years of age account for almost 68% of the country's population the case for scaling benefits is significant. The evaluation identified a number of opportunities for scaling.

Scaling the benefits of the project is dependent on tapping into scaling opportunities, and this is not likely by focussing on community level initiatives. The most obvious opportunities for this lie with the private sector and with GoZ, the two largest economic actors in the country. Aligning with the priorities of each is at the heart of a successful engagement with these actors. Whilst the private sector may support a future YC project out of corporate social responsibility commitments, this is unlikely to create scale. This relies on identifying ways that youth businesses can link with the private sector in *commercially attractive* ways. This is what drives the private

---

[38] Whilst this was reported by one respondent, the scenario is not uncommon in Zimbabwe.
[39] https://www.chronicle.co.zw/commentwithdraw-trading-licences-of-defiant-businesses/
https://www.smeaz.org.zw/downloads/Zimbabwe%20Corruption%20in%20Business%20Survey.pdf   "Next most often, businesses face these demands [bribes] when trying to apply for a license/permit, get an inspection conducted or approved or register a business."
[40] UNDP Youth Connekt 2021 Annual Progress Report

sector. For GoZ, the buy-in to the project may come from achieving and demonstrating results from its youth development policies. However, identifying ways in which youth businesses can *add value to GoZ institutions,* such as hospital and schools, or *reduce GoZ's political vulnerabilities* may be attractive motivators for GoZ, e.g. a key political vulnerability may be ensuring that basic foodstuffs such as maize meal, bread and cooking oil are affordable.

Various business linkage models may be useful strategies to develop scaling potential for these. For example:

- Private sector companies in the mining or tourism sector may be willing to bring in youth businesses into their supply chain, e.g. running a mining camp canteen, cleaning services or vegetable supply for a hotel, growing and local processing soya for oil, craft production, agencies for services such as insurance[41], etc.
- GoZ hospitals and schools may be willing to bring in local youth businesses to supply cleaning and laundry services, repair services, vegetable supply, as part of the 25% youth quota mentioned in the National Youth Policy. GoZ polices need to support youth empowerment in more practical and direct ways and this would be a useful way to do this.

UNDP could support the linkage arrangements with Technical Assistance (TA) and nurture the businesses until they are able to function independently.

Another opportunity is to look for opportunities where youth can bring about economies of scale and thereby realise cost efficiencies, e.g. as agri aggregators, transport aggregators, etc. Tech solutions lend themselves to scaling aggregation services and E-commerce platforms also offer good potential to scale youth businesses.

> *"Most youths are on social platforms, and can sale any product on it, so interventions should invest in digital market as a way of encouraging youths to start and or market their businesses or ideas in any sector on media platforms." Youth.*

A YC project could provide business linkage support to facilitate the set-up of these business relationships and hand holding Technical Assistance (TA) over a number of years until the youth businesses are deemed to be strong enough to function independently of TA support.

Involving local entrepreneurs in each locality would be useful in providing expanded opportunities for youth, e.g. linking youth with local business opportunities. This could be done using a model similar to the Rotary Clubs which would take responsibility reaching out to young people and opening opportunities and mentoring them.

For scaling the C2C component of the project stakeholders could consider a number of options:

- Reduce the salaries of C2C participants so that more youth can benefit from job placement opportunities,
- Doing it on a cost sharing basis whereby the company pays half the young person's salary and UNDP pays the other half.

---

[41] Some insurance companies use a business model that may be suitable for youth. The company trains youth to sell insurance and who are deployed to informal retail outlets, e.g. Lafarge containers selling cement, to access clients.

- Use the budget of US$ 287,644 to provide employment preparation to the approximate 100,000 students at all 15-18 universities and link it to the universities' own job preparation trainings. This would work out to about to about US$15,000 – US$ 18,000 per university which should allow for an adequate training for all 100,000 students and scale the benefits from the funds enormously.

Leave No One Behind

The evaluation has highlighted earlier gaps in inclusivity, particularly for women, but also for other groups such as people with disabilities and youth of different political views . The issues that prevent the participation of these groups needs to be understood at the project scoping stage, and specific measures introduced into programme design that addresses the particular obstacles that each group faces. This includes making opportunities and support services as easily available to rural youth as for urban youth and internet connected/smart phone as for non-internet connected/smart phone youth. Mobilising marginalised groups could be done by partnering with organisations that represent these groups.

Capacity building approaches

The evaluation has identified that some capacity building opportunities were only available in Harare, e.g. work spaces offered by Impact Hub were only in Harare.

"There is need to customise mentorship programmes and not centralise them in Harare as was the case during this project." Youth in 2019.

This has limited access to services by rural youth and women who have more barriers to travelling to Harare because of cost, child care responsibilities or social norms that prevent their free movement. In addition, the findings also indicate that women participate less often. This could be addressed by having trainings separated by gender or rural/ urban to ensure that young women and rural youth don't limit their participation because they feel intimidated by more vocal people, who do not necessarily have better things to say, but who often take up a disproportionate amount of space in training sessions. Addressing the lack of confidence amongst women is particularly important to assure the participation of rural young women.

"Women are intimidated by men, rural people are intimidated by urban people." Implementing partner.

It makes sense, therefore, for future YC projects to decentralise capacity building services as it initially did on 2019, and thereby increase access, through building the capacity of provincial-based service providers to deliver business support services to youth businesses. This would involve identifying local service providers, including GoZ training departments, and training them and hand holding them over a number of years to be able to offer customised and quality training and support services to youth businesses. MoYSAR already has district staff who are delivering BDS services, district level business incubation hubs focussed on agricultural value chains through the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Women's Affairs, and through GoZ's access to the vocational training centres which are in all provinces. The capacity of these district level resources could be strengthened to provide more accessible and sustainable access to BDS and mentoring services.

Not only does this approach improve user access, it would also build provincial-level capacities which is a more sustainable approach as trainers are familiar with local contexts better than a Harare-based professional. In addition, enhancing skills at provincial level could enhance local economic activity.

Capacity building activities would also be more effective if they are customised to target groups, e.g. start-ups, growth stage, type of sector (manufacturing, services, etc), sole trader, etc.

"Tailor make programmes to industries and this will ensure avoidance of managing different needs." Youth.

"Future projects should customise trainings to focus on all areas that a business might encounter and not just marketing and financial management. Customise mentorship programmes and not centralise them in Harare." Youth.

This would enable more value to be gained by those receiving training. The design of capacity building activities should be based on a Training Needs Analysis[42] (TNA), which identifies the 'baseline competencies' and the 'target performance' required. By establishing realistic capacity baselines of target groups to be trained and comparing these to the level of performance needed to be competent enables fact-based gaps to be identified. Gaps can then be addressed through capacity building activities focussed on specific and performance-relevant gaps. Trainers who deliver the training should be involved in the TNAs.

The evaluation findings indicate that future projects should have a much longer period over which capacities are developed. The benefits of capacity building efforts were not always realised as competences were not supported for long enough to embed them sufficiently.

"Prioritise mentoring and close monitoring of businesses after any financial investment to assesses the growth and assistance on challenges faced by the business in an effort to strengthen its systems. Youth.

"Prioritise availability of funds and ongoing back-stopping in project management, market research, legal issues, registering a business and training." Youth.

"Prioritise detailed training that is not only theoretical but hand hold the youth business as most of them are start-up and support monitoring after the project ends to ensure gap filling on capacity or challenges." Youth.

It is also important to realise that not all youth have the ability or interest to be a business person. To avoid wasting time and resources on those who will probably not benefit from the project the selection process needs to be of a high quality. 'Selection, selection, selection' is one of the most important steps to success. Another way to enhance capacities is to create a YC alumni of youth who have benefited from the project and who are able and willing to pass on their skills to other youth and to sustain enthusiasm and support for youth businesses. This could

---

[42] https://www.aihr.com/blog/training-needs-analysis/ The consultant recommends adding 'attitudes' as a capacity to be assessed as it affects the *motivation to apply* knowledge, skills and abilities.

be linked to the UN Volunteer social responsibility training which promotes a spirit of 'giving back'.

Manage risks

The occurrence of risks from the political and cultural environments that have already described have potential to derail the best designed project. It is essential that these risks are managed. It would be the role of a Project Steering Board to monitor such risks and GoZ, who would be involved at this level, could use its influence to influence 'from the top', e.g. engage with other ministries to ensure that the localised conditions for youth businesses are not interfered with by predatory forces. The project board can manage risk 'from the bottom' by making provisions for monitoring various risks through channels where youth can report incidences which the board could turn into policies to support youth in risky situations.

The occurrence of sexual harassment mentioned earlier indicate a need to specifically address this risk in the design of the future projects which place young women into work situations. The evaluation noted that this issue resulted in changes of contracts with partners and penalties for such incidents. This is clearly a step in the right direction. Future projects should also provide young women with training on how to deal with sexual harassment, so that they are prepared and know what to do should it happen to them. A hot line for young women to report sexual harassment issues would be useful, and may also include reports by men facing work place related issues. This is particularly important support for young people who are venturing into the work place for the first time.

Modifications to existing project features

The C2C job placement should be scaled and rolled out to more companies, NGOs, embassies. However, the political risks highlighted earlier will need to be addressed if this successful aspect of the project is to be scaled. Generation Unlimited may be a useful approach to utilise in this regard.

If competitions are maintained, these should move away from the annual competition and focus more on competition themes that have been pre-identified as relevant to local needs in a specific supply chain, e.g. identifying solutions to local challenges such as the high cost of stock feed or access to renewable energy. Urban and rural communities should be involved in mapping and identifying their local needs and priorities and identifying the competition challenges. Whilst local judges for competitions were used during the 2019 pilot year, other years did not make use of these to the same extent. Some judges should come from local areas as they are best suited to evaluating local business ideas. There also needs to be much more follow up and support post award.

"The project should have enabled constant monitoring visits during the project and reviewed how the funds were used after the project in order to offer support to the gaps identified." Youth.

The funding model which links YC to other UN agencies programmes is an innovative way to ensure that YC project activities are embedded in and coordinated with other UN agencies' work. This could be expanded to link with USAID's PEPFAR programme and UNDPs' Global Fund, both of which have funding for youth development.

EQ 2.17. Has the achievement of results been affected (positively and negatively) by internal programme arrangements and organisation by UNDP, GoZ and partners?

The evidence that the project has achieved almost all the results it set out to achieve indicates that internal programming arrangements have worked well on the whole. It is clear from the minutes of the Project Steering Committee that partners participated well in the design, planning and coordinating the delivery of the project. As discussed under EQ1.4. there was strong support and commitment by partners throughout the project.

The main internal issue negatively affecting the project has been the high turnover of staff both within UNDP and in GoZ. This loss of institutional memory resulted in relationships with key partners being dropped, not because they were not performing, but because incoming staff did not have relationships with them.

"It has been a disaster for the project". UN Staff member

In addition, there was some competition between ILO, UNDP and UNICEF on Generation Unlimited activities which resulted in some duplication of activities, e.g. approaching the same bank for support.

5.3 Efficiency

EQ 3.1. Were the project resources (financial, physical, human) provided for by UNDP, GoZ and partners adequate to achieve results?

The results achieved by the project indicate that the resources available, including professional expertise, financial resources and physical resources such as the bus, to it were overall adequate to achieve results. While project resources were generally sufficient to achieve most of the project's intended results, there were also significant gaps. These included insufficient UNDP staff time to achieve results. The project needed a great deal of relationship building, particularly in the early years, but in subsequent years as well because the focus and activities of the project changed and required new partnerships to be forged. Because staff did not have enough time for relationship building, as well as high staff turnover at UNDP that resulted in existing relationships being forgotten, partner relationships often ended abruptly without realising the benefits of a longer term relationship with the project.

"There was no follow up with us and no communications from UNDP following our delivery. We had no further contact with youth." Implementing partner.

"We have lots of connections with various hubs, e.g. in technology, agriculture, but the project did not take advantage of this. We somehow got omitted from subsequent competitions. I'm not sure why." Implementing partner

The award funds were reported to be insufficient to spread amongst those competing and some good ideas were not funded. This was in part due to funding cuts in 2021 and more cuts in 2022. In addition, work space for youth businesses does not appear to have been factored into the project budget during the planning stage which meant that youth who received awards during in the first and second (virtual) competitions did not have work space to carry out their business.

EQ 3.2. Could resources (financial, physical, human) have been used differently to achieve more? Or less resources used to achieve the same results?

As noted earlier, the salaries under the UN Volunteer partnership for youth job placements at Masawara Holdings were much higher than market rates (about US$1,300/month). Respondents interviewed about this indicated that in future salaries would be halved and job placements offered to roughly double the number of youth.

Youth that have benefited from the project could strengthen existing alumni organisations whereby they supplement the project's inputs of coaching and mentorship to the next cohort of youth. This would augment mentoring services and provide the basis for greater sustainability of results.

The project could exploit the attraction and success of the bus concept. The Start-Up Tour Bus has clearly generated a great deal of excitement, captured the attention of youth and local communities and attracted much media coverage including online, on radio and television. This suggests that there are opportunities to lower the costs of project services by potentially including service providers who have their own interests in travelling with the bus to market their own services. If managed well, this could decrease the costs of services delivered to youth. For example, a business membership organisation seeking to attract more youth members may be willing to provide business training for free or at a reduced rate in exchange for gaining access to more members, GoZ may provide some free services in exchange for access to youth for gathering information for policy development or promoting policy awareness, companies who wish to develop business links with rural enterprises may be willing to deliver business training in exchange for access to rural entrepreneurs, media organisations may provide free media coverage in exchange for opportunities to advertise to rural communities, etc.

As mentioned earlier, if the capacity of local provincial service providers was enhanced so that they can offer quality training and mentoring services to locally based youth, not only would this enhance access and sustainability, but it would also increase cost efficiency. Cost efficiency can also be enhanced by use of virtual services for activities that are appropriate for the use of technology, e.g. virtual platforms could be used by alumni to reach out in monthly sessions to new youth cohorts to sustain enthusiasm and support youth businesses.

EQ 3.3. Are there any ways that greater Value for Money could be achieved?

This question focusses on were the 'right things' done in the 'right way' at the 'right price'. For background purposes to the analysis below, the total amount spent during the life of the project was US$ 1,330,869.06[43] out of a total allocated budget of US$ 1,500,000.

The project's objective to enhance youth entrepreneurship development was well supported through the Start-Up Tour Bus, the incubation support, the Generation Unlimited coordination and the regional links created for some youth by the project as demonstrated by the results achieved. As noted earlier, there were some gaps in the way in which some activities were delivered that affected results, such as the narrow focus of some competitions, insufficient

---

[43] Project disbursement records supplied by UNDP 24 July 2023.

customisation to cater for the inclusion of women and socially excluded groups, training delivered to mixed level need groups, mentoring services were too short. The bulk of project funds sent (71% or US$ 946,755) was spent on Output 1: Youth connected to entrepreneurship: increased entrepreneurial skills.

The results discussed in EQ 2.1 indicate that the number of youth reached directly numbered about 2,907. This equates to almost US$326 spend per youth reached directly[44]. This appears to be reasonable value for money for the benefits delivered.

Table 4: *For Output 1 the project spend per youth reached was US$ 326.*

Output 1: Youth connected to entrepreneurship: increased entrepreneurial skills US$ 946,755	
Building the capacity of 1,200 young entrepreneurs through the Start-Up Tour Bus.	1,200
Supporting 10 Provincial businesses with $5,000 start-up capital	10
Signing up 10 young entrepreneurs for the Tony Elumelu Foundation programme.	10
Providing business incubation support to 35 participants	35
Providing 400 youth with online entrepreneurship training	400
Supporting 100 youth with business development services	100
44 youth businesses were given support to develop bankable proposals	44
15 businesses received BDS and capital to the total value of USD 120,000	15
83 started the process of formalisation	83
Support 117 young farmers to move up the value chain	117
Training 608 entrepreneurs in the development of business proposals	608
Rolling out 67 innovative business solutions.	67
Supporting 5 market linkages to connect farmers, youth agro processors and markets.	5
Providing 212 youth businesses with incubation services.	212
Providing 1 awareness raising session on SDGs.	1
Total youth reached directly	**2,907**

As mentioned earlier, IBUHUB was reported to have not performed to expectations. An interview with IBUHUB staff and documents supplied indicate the organisation received US$185,000 in project funds to: i) set up and refurbish the hub space to provide an interactive world-class Entrepreneurial Support Organisation (ESO) space, co-working space for supporting youth (US$121,000), ii) deliver a basic Introduction to IBUHUB Incubation programme (US$ 56,000) and iii) deliver an online mentorship programme (US$ 8,000). Documents supplied by IBUHUB and the table above indicate that 35 start-ups were on boarded. This translates into a cost of US$ 5,286 per youth which is very expensive for the limited services that appear to have been provided.

In addition, the hub refurbishments were reported to have not been completed, neither is there a functioning web site for the organisation[45], and the business premises could not be located during field visits. It is unclear, therefore, how the organisation has contributed to results to justify the spend. It is further puzzling to note that Impact Hub, which was reported to have delivered well in the first year, was replaced by IBUHUB in subsequent years .

---

[44] This does not include the 1 million people reached with entrepreneurial messages via radio shows.
[45] http://www.ibuhub.com

Greater value for money could have been achieved by greater use of online training, designing training based on Training Needs Analysis rather than delivering generic training, customising training to specific groups including women, and using alumni to pass on skills to new cohorts of youth. A Business Linkage approach to involve youth in corporate and GoZ supply chains could offer opportunities for increasing scale and enhancing value for money. See EQ 2.16 for details on this.

The project's objective to promote employment, skills development and other opportunities was supported by career guidance to secondary and tertiary students, supporting youth to develop careers in sports and arts and through job placements with a company. The evaluation has not been able establish results from the career guidance activities, apart from that they did take place so it is difficult to provide a Value for Money comment on this aspect of the project. The analysis below therefore focusses on the job placements, volunteers and job creation by YC supported businesses.

The project funds spent on Output 2: Youth connected to employment, skills and opportunities amounts to US$ 287,643.87 (or 22%) of the total project budget. The results discussed in EQ 2.1 indicate that the number of youth reached directly under this component of the project numbered about 214. This equates to almost US$1,344 spend per youth reached by the project. This seems expensive.

Table 5: *For Output 2 the project spend per youth reached was US$ 1,344.*

Output 2: Youth connected to employment, skills and opportunities US$ 287,643.87	
26 UN Volunteer graduates placed under the Classroom to Career (C2C) program	26
176 jobs were created from youth businesses who employed other youth	176
12 youth volunteers deployed to three urban food markets, schools and churches	12
Total youth reached directly	**214**

Greater value for money could be achieved by reducing the salaries of C2C participants so that more youth can benefit from job placement opportunities, as well as doing a cost sharing arrangement with the company whereby the company pays half the young person's salary and UNDP pays the other half. This reflects the value that the company receives from UNDP vetting and supplying a pipeline of quality youth.

Another way to achieve much greater value for money and increase scale of benefits is to use the budget of US$ 287,644 to provide employment preparation to the approximately 100,000 students at all 15-18 universities [46] and link it to the universities' own job preparation trainings. This would work out to about to about US$15,000 – US$ 18,000 per university which should allow for an adequate training for all 100,000 students and scale the benefits from the funds enormously.

---

[46] https://borgenproject.org/higher-education-in-zimbabwe/#:~:text=In%202020%2C%20the%20population%20in,in%20higher%20education%20in%20Zimbabwe.

The project's objective to facilitate networking and dialogue was supported by sending youth to regional summits, creating a YC website, using social media tools and using traditional media (radio and television). These activities seem appropriate to the objective.

The project funds spent on Output 3: Youth connected to youth: networking platform for young people amounts to US$ 96,470.20 (or 7%) of the total project budget. The results discussed in EQ 2.1 indicate that the number of youth reached directly under this component of the project numbered about almost 5 million. This equates to almost US 2 cents spend per youth reached by the project. This seems good value for money to create awareness of entrepreneurial issues.

Table 6: For Output 3 the project spend per youth reached was a few US cents.

Output 3: Youth connected to youth: networking platform for young people US$ 96,470.20	
8 finalists to the YCA summits	8
1 winner to the One Young World Summit	1
1 YC website created	1
About 60,000 social media posts, visits, followers, impressions	60,000
4.9 million radio listeners	4,900,000
Total youth reached directly	**4,960,010**

EQ 3.4. To what extent have project organisational arrangements and systems, and those of UNDP and GoZ, helped or hindered the effective use of resources to achieve results?

There were several reports by implementing partners and ex-project staff that disbursements, including seed funding for award winners, were often slow. This sometimes created significant delays for youth in implementing their business plans and resulted in frustration and decreased motivation.

> *"It dampened youth excitement and their progress and expectations." Implementing partner.*

As highlighted earlier, UN Volunteers placed at Masawara Holdings were paid above market rates, resulting in tensions amongst the company staff, and the selection of IBUHUB which has not performed to expectations suggest that systems for project partner assessments and due diligence could be strengthened.

EQ 3.5. Did the project utilise technology effectively to enhance results?

The evaluation findings indicate that the project was exceptionally successful in using social media and traditional media to promote the project. Please see EQ 2.1 for details.

EQ 3.6. Has the project adapted to external issues and learning? Comment on a) the Start-up bus, b) Covid competition and c) the 2021 competition.

The project has shown a remarkable capacity to learn and adapt to external issues. For example, in the early stages in 2019 it focused on entrepreneurship, in 2020 on the Covid-19 response and then moved on to agricultural food chains in 2020/21 as national challenges shifted. This enabled the project to deliver results relevant to changing contexts and respond to priority needs. In

addition, the Start-Up Tour Bus, which in its first year in 2019 travelled throughout the country, was reshaped into a virtual implementation model to adapt to the Covid-19 restrictions[47].

EQ 3.7. To what extent did the project make use of synergies with other stakeholder's activities, and avoid duplication?

The strong and wide stakeholder support for the project motivated stakeholders to use their networks to support the project with useful linkages, e.g. it was reported by UN staff that UNDP's Resident Representative used his networks effectively to promote the project.

In other regards, the project has not done so well on this. The high staff turnover within UNDP made project continuity difficult and this sometimes resulted in lost opportunities for synergies.

"We have lots of connections with various hubs, e.g. in technology, agriculture, but the project did not take advantage of this. We somehow got omitted from the third bus. I'm not sure why."
Implementing partner

There were also reports of duplications by efforts by various UN agencies in respect of their youth programmes, e.g. approaching the same bank for support.

5.4 Sustainability

EQ 4.1 How likely is it that project outcomes and impacts will be sustained after the completion of the project?

The project's outcomes and impacts focussed on three issues: a) positive contribution to realising Zimbabwe's demographic dividend through increased entrepreneurial opportunities and job creation for youth b) improved employability chances for youth through increased employment and skills building opportunities for youth, and c) established network of youths for information sharing through networking and funding opportunities.

It is likely that some jobs and employment chances that were created by the YC project will be sustained and thereby continue to contribute to the demographic dividend and offer employment opportunities. But given the scale of the project, its contribution to the demographic dividend and employment opportunities is very small. The ongoing economic and political challenges besetting the country is the major challenge for sustaining the project's results and outcomes. The macro-environment makes it difficult to create a conducive environment for business and employment growth, especially for youth whose businesses are more vulnerable than long-established and experienced businesses.

It is more likely that the networks created during the project will be sustained. The results indicate that youth, as well as service providers, forged strong relationships during their involvement with the project that have endured after the project.

EQ 4.2. What factors have supported or undermined sustainability?

---

[47] Minutes of the 2nd Youth Connekt 2021 Stakeholder meeting held virtually, 21 December 2021.

The results that YC have achieved have occurred in a policy environment that is generally strongly supportive of youth economic empowerment to sustain national focus on youth, e.g. ZUNDAF, UNDP's CDP, SDGs, National Employment Policy Framework, Africa Union Agenda 2063. As mentioned earlier, the NDS1, has limited specific focus on youth economic empowerment [48] and does not adequately provide for the creation of jobs and business opportunities for youth.

Despite this, there is strong buy-in for YC and youth economic empowerment by the MoYSAR due to alignment with the National Youth Policy. There is also strong buy-in from the ecosystem of partners that was created by the project, and who were interviewed for the evaluation. They remain enthusiastic about contributing to building young people. This is encouraging for sustaining motivation and commitment to building opportunities and capacities in young people in the future.

UN agencies, notably ILO and UNICEF, have established youth programmes as does USAID's PEPFAR programme and FCDO's Zimbabwe Youth Empowerment Programme (ZYEP) that UNDP youth programmes can synergise with to support sustainability of youth empowerment efforts.

Factors that mitigate against sustainability are largely related to the political and economic environments. This includes the challenges brought about by the structural changes that have taken place over the last 20 years that have seen a move in all sectors from large scale to small scale.[49] One of the consequences has been lost economies of scale and price competitiveness which undermine business viability.

Cultural attitudes towards the success of others, which often elicits jealousy rather than celebration or support, also undermines sustainability of economic empowerment efforts, especially young people who are amongst the population groups least able to assert their rights.

"The business culture preys on others. Jealousy destroys viable businesses." Ex-UN staff member.

"A mentor of a young woman (not YC related) who had a successful business idea which was taken over by the mentor when the business started making money." GoZ official.

Sustainably has been hindered by insufficient linkages with the private sector which is one of the sectors of the economy that has the key for sustaining and scaling any future programme. Please see EQ 2.16 for details.

---

[48] Strategies include: Supporting youth participation in legislative and policy processes; Enhancing leadership development training; Enhancing youth participation in decision-making processes at national, regional and local levels; Mainstreaming youth policy across all sectors of the economy; Reconfiguring of technical vocational education; Developing and modernising the VET infrastructure, machinery and equipment; Promoting the creation and reinforcement of synergies between the youth and Youth Development Partners; Developing effective enabling legal and policy framework; and Establishing institutional mechanism with the capacity to identify and nurture youth innovations.

[49] https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/587e0056ed915d0aeb000163/Growth_and_resilience_in_Zimbabwe_FINAL.pdf

EQ 4.3. To what extent has the project contributed to building individual, institutional and national capacities to sustain the project after is completion? What factors have supported or hindered building capacities?

At a national policy level, the project helped to re-shape to some degree the perceptions of GoZ about the importance of youth development. It was reported that Zimbabwe sent the Permanent Secretary of the MoYSAR to the annual Youth Connekt Africa regional meeting, whereas other countries sent heads of state to attend. This resulted in GoZ officials realising that youth development receives greater priority amongst other African nations. This has enhanced the credibility of Youth Connekt Zimbabwe with GoZ and provided peers with whom to share ideas about youth development polies.

The collaboration between UNDP and MoYSAR during the project also provided opportunities for sharing ideas with the ministry for the design of its business development strategy and for UNDP to gain better understanding of the ministry's plans and priorities. Overall, the collaboration provided for sharing of skills and the creation of a closer working relationship between the two key institutions.

The publicity that occurred around the project, particularly the Start-Up Tour Bus, increased national awareness of the importance of youth in business. This raised the profile of youth and changed attitudes towards youth creating more appreciation of the need to include youth in economic opportunities.

The C2C placement programme has developed skills and provided job experience for 26 young people that has resulted in many being offered permanent jobs and thereby demonstrating sustainability of benefits. In addition, the entrepreneurial and business skills built in thousands of young people has realised sustainable benefits for those who were successful in growing their businesses and the jobs they created for others. It may be more difficult to see the sustainable benefits to those who received capacity building but who did not succeed in growing their businesses. The skills will not be entirely lost and are likely to be used at some future time when a business idea comes up. As mentioned earlier, skills will be embedded more deeply if training and mentoring was offered over a longer period of time and if it is customised to target groups' specific needs.

EQ 4.4. Was there an exit strategy? If yes, to what extent is it likely to result in a smooth hand over to new stakeholders and ensure project benefits are maintained?

The evaluation did not find evidence of any exit strategy. As mentioned earlier, the reason for this was that the project was not intended to end but rather the plan was to scale to project into a youth portfolio under UNDP Zimbabwe. Because this plan was not realised due to staff turn over and erratic funding, the project was eventually concluded and came to an unexpectedly sudden conclusion. Several implementing partners interviewed noted that the project came to an "abrupt end".

Youth also commented similarly.
"We felt abandoned and wondered what was the purpose of whole project supporting businesses when we were still with them but the project was not working beyond that point." Youth.

"There was no support beyond the project." Youth.

"The project should have ensured that the youths understand how to manage their businesses beyond the projects closure with minimal support." Youth.

EQ 4.5. How can the sustainability of impacts and outcomes and the chances of the project being replicated be enhanced?

As discussed in EQ 2.16 there is need to align the project more closely with the two actors that hold the keys to scale and sustainability: the private sector and GoZ, using a linkage model supported by TA.

There are opportunities to strengthen funding sustainability by expanding the existing model used with ZRBF, whereby YC activities are linked to ZRBF's programme and funding. This model could be expanded to tap into wider funding for youth projects being operated by other UN agencies, FCDO, EU, World Bank, USAID, etc.

Youth who have been trained under YC and who are running their own businesses have valuable skills and experience that they could pass on to new cohorts of youth if the alumni organisation was expanded and an associated e-platform was created to facilitate this. This could have monthly on-line meetings to encourage youth in business and to provide mentoring services. This could be linked to the UN Volunteer programme which aims to develop an ethos of 'giving back'.

"The project should have given business management coaching sessions on a quarterly basis to ensure continuity and coherence." Youth.

"The project should create a youth network that shares experiences and information and make available workshops, fares where youth business that the project has worked with come and show case their business and meet possible investors and customers." Youth.

It makes good sense from a sustainability perspective to build the capacity of local provincial based service providers to deliver training to youth businesses. Not only will this enhance access to skills and mentoring services but it will also build in-province BDS skills which can be accessed locally in the future. E.g. Impact Hub could train GoZ and Business Associations in provinces.

Key to sustainability is addressing the risks in the political, economic and cultural environments as highlighted in EQ 4.2 and EQ 2.15.

EQ 4.6. To what extent does the project compliment, synergise and harmonise with other UNDP projects, and with projects of other partners?

The project has collaborated synergistically with Generation Unlimited in an SDG awareness campaign in partnership with Unicef and Plan International and coordinated project activities with other UN agencies as well as working with UN Volunteers and Masawara Holding in the C2C job placements, with Higher Life Foundations volunteer programme, with CARE International and

UNICEF in the Covid-19 response, with ZRBF and Building Urban Resilience project to strengthen resilience in food chains as well as business membership organisations and banks to strengthen youth business and financial literacy skills.

6.Lessons and Best Practices

The following lessons and best practices have been identified during the evaluation:"

Lessons for increasing effectiveness and efficiency

- Include a wide range of stakeholders in the design of the project as this widens the pool of good ideas and networks.
- Think through the details of project implementation issues to avoid overlooking things that can impact delivery.
- Special provisions need to be made to ensure inclusivity is achieved. This includes design features as well as building in M&E indicators for gender and other Leave No One Behind groups and issues.
- Theory of Change should include the articulation of implementation level logic and assumptions as well as higher level casual links and assumptions.
- The tour bus concept worked exceptionally well to advertise the project and raise awareness about youth in business.
- Job placement internships seem to be an effective way to enhance the chances of interns being hired on a full time basis.
- Preparing young people for first time work experience is important.
- Anticipate risks and prepare for their eventuality, e.g. include preparation for risk and risk response provisions for incidences of sexual harassment and other work place related issues that interns face.
- Mentoring support needs to take place over a much longer period to be effective.
- Being together, for example on a bus journey, is an effective way to narrow social distance and build lasting relationships.
- The DIM model for implementation enabled the project to make quick and nimble decisions to adjust to changing challenges.
- Cultural values of jealousy have potential to significantly undermine project's efforts.
- It is important to set up platforms for youth to continue to network after the end of the project, e.g. alumni network, WhatsApp platform.

Best practices for scaling and replicating the project

- Social media and technology provides good opportunities for scaling reach and opportunities.
- Building local capacity at district level rather than bringing in skills from Harare offers more sustainability potential and increases accessibility of services.
- Addressing risks is important to supporting the achievement of results.
- Partnering with other development partners who have youth development programmes is a good way to expand access to funding and resources.
- The project needs to be nimble in a country like Zimbabwe were the environments are constantly and often significantly changing. Models that support nimbleness is appropriate.

- Organising an alumni organisation whereby they supplement the project's inputs of coaching and mentorship to the next cohort of youth is a useful way to scale benefits.

7. Opportunities for Future Programming

As already discussed in detail in EQ2.16 above, the main opportunities for future programming coalesce around four main themes.

Scale

The most obvious opportunities for scaling with the private sector and with GoZ so it makes sense to align with the priorities of each. Various business linkage models may be useful strategies to develop scaling potential for these. For example:

- Private sector companies in the mining or tourism sector may be willing to bring in youth businesses into their supply chain, e.g. running a mining camp canteen, cleaning services or vegetable supply for a hotel, growing and local processing soya for oil, craft production, agencies for services such as insurance[50], etc.
- GoZ hospitals and schools may be willing to bring in local youth businesses to supply cleaning and laundry services, repair services, vegetable supply, as part of the 25% youth quota mentioned in the National Youth Policy. GoZ polices need to support youth empowerment in more practical and direct ways and this would be a useful way to do this.

UNDP's role in the linkage programme would be one of supporting linkage arrangements with long-term TA and nurturing youth businesses until they are able to function independently. Please see the Concept Note in the Annex section for more details of this model.

The other opportunity is to look for ways to create economies of scale and thereby realise cost efficiencies, e.g. as agri aggregators, transport aggregators, etc. Tech solutions lend themselves to scaling aggregation services and E-commerce platforms also offer good potential to scale youth businesses.

Scaling C2C component could be done by using the budget of US$ 287,644 to provide employment preparation to the approximately 100,000 students at all 15-18 universities and link it to the universities' own job preparation trainings. This would work out to about to about US$15,000 – US$ 18,000 per university which should allow for an adequate training for all 100,000 students and scale the benefits from the funds enormously.

Capacity building approaches

It makes sense for future YC projects to decentralise capacity building services, as was done in 2019, and thereby increase access, through building the capacity of provincial-based service providers to deliver business support services to youth businesses. This would involve identifying

---

[50] Some insurance companies use a business model that may be suitable for youth. The company trains youth to sell insurance and who are deployed to informal retail outlets, e.g. Lafarge containers selling cement, to access clients.

local service providers, including GoZ training departments, and training them and hand holding them over a number of years to be able to offer customised and quality training and support services to youth businesses. MoYSAR already has district staff who are delivering BDS services, district level business incubation hubs focussed on agricultural value chains through the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Women's Affairs, and through GoZ's access to the vocational training centres which are in all provinces. The capacity of these district level resources could be strengthened to provide more accessible and sustainable access to BDS and mentoring services.

Not only will this approach improve user access, it will also build provincial-level capacities which is a more sustainable approach as trainers are familiar with local contexts better than a Harare-based professional. In addition, enhancing skills at provincial level could enhance local economic activity.

The design of capacity building activities should be based on a Training Needs Analysis[51] (TNA), which identifies the 'baseline competencies' and the 'target performance' required rather than deliver generic training and mentoring. 'Selection, selection, selection' is one of the most important steps to successful project results. Select those who can benefit from the start.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

The project has made significant contributions to achieving its objectives in all three output areas of supporting entrepreneurship development, promoting employment, skills development and other opportunities and facilitating networking and dialogue. The project appears to have had positive results on youth businesses in terms of sales, profit and job creation, although the economic and political environments have made this challenging. Efforts to enhance sustainability should focus on securing reliable and continuous sources of funding and scaling the benefits, especially by aligning more closely to GoZ and the private sector supply chains through a linkage model.

Recommendations include:

- Keep the project model that enables nimbleness of direction and form and which includes design inputs and involvement of a wide variety of stakeholders, including youth.
- Widen funding bases through strategic partnership with other multilateral's and bilateral's youth programmes.
- Include stronger provisions for Leave No One Behind and include inclusion for vulnerable and socially excluded groups, and cater for the specific risks that these groups face.
- Link youth businesses to the supply chains of GoZ and the private sector.
- Look for ways to create economies of scale.
- Identify risks during the project design and manage risks throughout the project to support youth through risky situations.
- Use technology to enhance scale and reach.

---

[51] https://www.aihr.com/blog/training-needs-analysis/ The consultant recommends adding 'attitudes' as a capacity to be assessed as it affects the *motivation to apply* knowledge, skills and abilities.

- Enhance the ToC to include casual logic and assumptions at intervention level.
- Localise the provision of BDS and mentoring services.
- Provide mentoring and training support over a much longer period of time.
- M&E frameworks should disaggregate data and results so results for different target groups can be measured and be more inclusive of socially marginalised groups.
- Engage with GoZ to mitigate and manage risks from the political, economic and cultural environments.
- Follow up regularly with youth and provide ongoing support and use alumni for support to the next cohort of youth.
- Enhance Value for Money by exploiting opportunities for scaling.
- Develop a robust exit strategy.

9. Appendices

Annex 1: Impact of Youth Connekt: a report on the state of past Youth Connekt winners

Introduction

Of the 65 contactable beneficiaries of the YouthConnekt project over the three years of its operation the consultant gathered detailed feedback on the project from 24 youth sources (19 in individual interviews and from five Focus Group Discussions) in order to obtain their responses on the impact of the project on their lives and businesses and the extent to which it responded to their needs in supporting their businesses and their sustainability.

Of these, it was only possible to carry out site visits to four of them at their business premises. The following is a summary of their responses in the areas of the project's effectiveness in responding to the needs of the beneficiaries and the effectiveness of the support in promoting viable start-ups and creating jobs, as well as on other key indicators such as levels of sales and profit. The consultant also looked at the beneficiaries' perception of the YouthConnekt project.

The summary of data provided below is based on the data collection tool devised for Youth, and is linked to the overall Evaluation Framework.

The project's effectiveness in responding to the needs of the beneficiaries

YEQ1.2 What factors about the project have enabled or constrained you being able to achieving results for your business? Could the project have done things differently to help you get better results?

In terms of the project's effectiveness in responding to their needs, all but two of the 24 sources interviewed said that the project was very effective in responding to their needs and those of their business. However, the two whose comments were less positive seem to reflect a failure to use the finance provided successfully, possibly due to poor selection of equipment / suppliers.

Positive comments included the fact that the project assisted them with accessing capital to kick-start their businesses by purchasing the necessary machinery and equipment, as well as instilling a sense of self-reliance through coaching them on how to run start-ups, as well as how to interact and network with other business owners.

It also provided a platform for youths to grow, network and get free membership in a professional working space that allowed them to link with other business players in their industry, through the Impact Hub. It also gave them access to effective mentoring and follow up, and provided a sense of self-actualization.

Several mentioned the importance of learning the technical aspects of running a business, including the creation of financial systems and market linkages, how to network and establish links with potential investors, as well as gaining knowledge on business management and encouragement to formally register their businesses. They also gained wider understanding of the economics involved in running a business, making profits, basic book keeping skills, as well as knowledge on the legal and administrative components of running a successful business. Beneficiaries learned how to navigate the business environment, as well as techniques for effective marketing and branding, customer mapping and selection and creating employment for other youth.

The project could have increased awareness and marketing of opportunities on various other channels, and not only in the media.

YEQ 1.5 Did different groups of youth participate more or less in the project's activities? E.g. a) women/men, b) different language groups, c) people with more confidence/ less confidence, d) people with disabilities/ people with no disabilities, e) people from richer families/ poorer families, f) people from different political parties, etc. How could the project have catered better to ensure that different types of people were more included?

There was consensus among virtually all respondents that YouthConnekt was very inclusive: of youths from all walks of life, from the different provinces, and that selection was not based on personal traits, educational background, literacy level, different family backgrounds and different walks of life and education levels. it also included interaction with business personnel from as far as the US.

It gave participants the platform to interact with each other using the language they were most comfortable with. However, during trainings this could have been improved as, while content was delivered in English, there was a tendency to divert into Shona, so disregarding participants who did not speak Shona. During the competition, those interviewed noted that selection was based on type of business and disregarded status, background, disability or gender. This does not appear to have been perceived as 'non-inclusionary', however.

Rather, the project was perceived by youth as being inclusive and doing very well in Leaving No One Behind and participants got equal opportunities through placement at companies the project partnered with, giving them the opportunity to see the other side and to believe in improving themselves.

Youth participating in the entrepreneurial training also appreciated interacting with businesses at similar stages as themselves and enabled interaction and networking among youth businesses from all the different provinces of Zimbabwe. A contrary opinion stated that the project should have categorised like-minded businesses together to ensure sharing of information that would be relevant to particular types of businesses.

However, not all participants started at the same level; some participants with good business ideas lost out due to lack of confidence and knowledge on how to sell their business ideas. This especially impacted on those from rural areas. Knowledge about the competition was limited and

participants should have been better prepared to make their pitches. However, the project did well in incorporating youths with diverse business ideas.

Reflection on the business competition model

YEQ 2.5. Did participating in the business competition / C2C / Business growth project result in any changes for you?

Overall, most beneficiaries reported having greater confidence in their abilities and ideas and improved business sense; networking opportunities were appreciated and social skills improved. The provision of capital was helpful in acquiring equipment, which in turn, opened doors to other business ventures. Meeting and networking with other youths and exposure to the business world, as well as the social and personal changes that resulted, had a direct impact on both personal and business growth.

The desire to prove their business worth, enhanced leadership skills, as well as exposure and access to other youth business growth projects were also noted as positive outcomes of the project. For some, social status has improved, businesses have grown and markets expanded.

"I am now marketing products at districts markets like Masvingo and Chipinge rather than just in Chinhoyi".

Participation in the project also built a sense of personal achievement and "confidence in the uniqueness of my product," although in this case, the business unfortunately ceased operations in 2020. This was in part a consequence of the COVID lockdown. Improved social status came about due to business success and this encouraged participants to invest more time and effort into it, as well as into business linkages, including engaging in ISALs for financing and peanut butter making to diversify income sources. One business that had been home-based is now occupying a business space; the client base has increased and production is now being done on a larger scale with bigger machinery, while also having greater visibility on social media platforms.

At the individual level, access to stable monthly financing was useful, while at group level, the sharing of ideas and the availability of psychosocial support in resolving problems, created a sense of unity, which "will cascade down to the whole community". Another related important gain was learning the value of networking, as well as an appreciation of the role of human resources, which "ultimately changed my career focus." Similarly, others gained a better perspective on their career, and were able to identify additional business opportunities in their field and to appreciate that time and knowledge can be as valuable investments as money.

Others are more hopeful of finding employment in the corporate world as a result of the exposure they gained through the project. 'Having been part of this fellowship I feel encouraged and hopeful in finding formal employment beyond tertiary education'.

The project enabled expansion of some businesses into additional projects such as solar energy, while participation in the project resulted in the creation of effective and stable financial systems for the business and a better business understanding, as a result of which, at least one business

now has better structured systems in place, which in turn has attracted more investment and customers for the products.

The project's effectiveness in promoting viable start-ups, creating jobs and meeting important challenges in society.

YEQ 2.2 What factors about the project have enabled or constrained you being able to achieving results for your business? Could the project have done things differently to help you get better results?

Unsurprisingly, many respondents indicated that the provision of financial capital was an enabling factor, which translated into scaling up and improved business operations. However, this was also a challenge for some, as the capital provided proved insufficient to purchase the equipment needed to expand their businesses. It was felt that capital should have been disbursed according to the business needs and not on a 'one size fits all' basis.

While the project was generally regarded as and lauded for being fair and equitable, some responses suggest that there may be a justification for providing greater guidance for those start-ups from rural areas. For instance, some respondents felt that knowledge on financial planning and advice should have been provided to assist them in using the capital wisely.

"Access to finance was an enabling factor however the major constraint was limited knowledge on financial planning was a constraint. As youth we get confused and overwhelmed when we get a large sum of money. The project should have partnered youths with professional financial advisers to give sound financial advice after giving them money." Youth ZRBF 2021.

Others s experienced challenges in transferring the money to the relevant supplier from remote areas. This suggests the need to place more emphasis on financial management for those in rural areas who may not previously been exposed to managing relatively large sums of money.

It was also suggested that competition winners should not have been restricted to only one per province, as this led to some good projects losing out because they lacked the ability to pitch their products, again due to limited experience. In effect, this may have resulted in a form of 'discrimination' against those from rural areas with less business exposure.

The various follow up trainings and knowledge provided were generally regarded as an enabling factor, though some felt that the sessions were not sufficiently adapted to fit around time needed to operate businesses which resulted in some business activities being neglected. This could be avoided by greater involvement of youth in planning sessions. Business management skills were recognised as enabling, as was gaining knowledge on the need for company registration. One respondent noted that the project allowed him to carry out more research on his innovation (in the area of lithium mining) which resulted in him being able to overcome limitations associated with his business at the time.

Mentoring was regarded as an enabling factor, but there were some challenges in the mode of communication, which was felt to limit its effectiveness.

The project's ability to give participants an appreciation of the corporate world in stable companies like Masawara Holdings, gave them the opportunity to interact with business leaders and meet other potential investors, which participants found motivating. However, some respondents appear to have been disappointed with their placements and felt they were inappropriate with regard to their interests. This suggests that the project should look more closely at both the skills and interests of participants, and make greater efforts to find placements relevant to the participant's interests.

One respondent noted having learnt how to be an effective competitor, as well as how to improve the business by making it unique.

It was noted that the project's emphasis on using particular milestones to show impact had the effect of diverting participants' time and energy from the needs of the business, in order to conform to the needs of the project. Thus the project might benefit by reviewing this aspect for future iterations.

A related issue was the suggestion that the project should tailor make the training according to business needs and how to make use of the money received, as opposed to focusing training on pitching the business. Another useful suggestion was that the project should carry out an assessment of viable business categories prior to the trainings, with an emphasis on local empowerment for youth.

In future, efforts might be made to ensure that the project runs outside of colleges times, as one respondent complained of the need to balance project time against college work.

YEQ 2.7. Has your business performance change since project? (sales, profit, jobs, etc). Has the project played any role in this
YEQ 4.1 Have the businesses that have been supported by the project been able to carry on after the completion of the project? How can future projects better prepare businesses to continue after the project ends?

These questions are dealt with together as they overlap significantly.

Of the 24 data sources, six felt unable to answer this question, without giving reasons, while other responses were unequivocal with regard to the impact of the project, such as that "sales have increased, but we mostly realise profits after diversifying" or, "Young people are appreciative of interventions like YouthConnekt, have an increased interest and some now want to venture into farming projects".

Having said that, the majority of respondents (12) stated that the project had benefited their business, giving reasons such as 'performance changes in staffing and profits due to diversification' and 'revenues have increased by 100% since 2020 and the business can now forecast, manage its finances which is resulting in the recording of healthy profits and the project played a role to this end'; and 'the project played a crucial role in instilling financial literacy and management skills, which resulted in the business meeting its target regardless of us not having enough money to procure agricultural chemicals'; 'Yes and the changes are attributed to the project, particularly the knowledge on effective marketing improved the businesses' sales'.

One respondent reported significant success after receiving a UNDP contract to facilitate cross border logistics. This resulted in his becoming "involved in African Borderline Centre initiatives which furthered both business and personal interests and expanded the business regionally to countries like Uganda, South Africa and Kenya". Another reported that "the number of customers has increased regardless of prices being lower due to replication of business on the market". Yet another noted, "business has grown beyond borders and the project helped in branding of the business which has increased its breadth and linkages with companies like Zimplats, Freda Rebecca Mine," as well as leading to interest from the President to nationalise the business idea.

Four stated that their businesses were only performing at a low level or had not improved, with some blaming the operating environment and the wider challenges of household insecurities limiting expenditure, that led to low profit margins. One business reported that the "business only went as far as giving prospective customers try outs of the product", while another reported having managed to design "water pumps which ultimately translated to improved scale of operation for the business". Others reported limited profits due to difficult operating environments including shortages of water and access to electricity, as well as to the overall economic challenges in the country.

Young people's perceptions towards the YouthConnekt project.

YEQ 1.3 What did you like about the way the project activities were designed and delivered? What did you not like?

Perceptions of the project by the beneficiaries were an interesting mix of positive, but also quite a few critical comments, which may be useful in improving future project design. Beneficiaries generally appreciated the project's professional, hands on delivery methods and communication channels, the flexible design and coordination in delivery of activities. They felt the project gave their businesses exposure, with one being recognised at a district meeting, and valued the confidence gained by all group members, along with opportunities for personal growth through the fellowship placement at the projects' partner, which allowed them to experience the corporate environment. The project also exposed them to other stakeholders and to potential investors, and they valued the opportunities offered to interact and network with fellow entrepreneurs and to share information and ideas.

There was also much appreciation of the fact that the project was open to youth from all over the country, and especially to those in the rural areas, and its helping participants to identify hidden talents. Some liked the flexibility of projects being delivered virtually, while others faced network challenges and therefore missed out on some training.

It was felt that the selection process was fair, although some youth respondents felt that they needed better preparation before having to pitch their businesses and ideas.

"I liked the transparency, flexible design and coordination in delivery of activities, but I think the project could have done better in preparing the participants on pitching by first training them on how to market your brand, product and business". Youth 2019.

It is noted, however, that in 2019 that other data sources reported that the project conducted group sessions and one on one training for each youth who pitched their business idea. .Several sources also questioned the fact that there was no standard definition of a start-up, i.e. some beneficiaries were already engaged in business and already had clients, while others were complete start-ups. They felt the project focused more on impact, while the complete start-ups were more focused on trying to make money first and felt that access to mentorship needed to be ongoing rather than once-off.

The project was also empowering on a more general level by giving participants knowledge on improving household income through both their businesses and by engaging in ISALs. However, two respondents felt the project failed to give them exposure in their line of business or to others in the same field, and that the project could have done better by linking youths with relevant stakeholders in their industry, and further enabling networking among youth-run businesses.

While the capital input was helpful, more than one respondent felt that the follow-up on the investment grant and how to best use it could have been supported in a more supportive way and that greater and more continuous guidance and mentorship was needed

YEQ 2.9. What are young people's attitudes towards the project (positive and negative)?

Most respondents opted to answer this question by referring to its wider reception by those not yet involved. Close to half were concerned that the youth were unaware of the project's existence and lacked sufficient knowledge about it and what it offered. They also felt that they would not have the opportunity to participate because they were unaware of the requirements for participation. Others believed that their businesses were not sufficiently unique to compete and win a place in the project. Overall these responses suggest that the project needs to significantly improve its visibility by improving knowledge about it and the requirements for participation, and to change the way it is marketed, with one saying they only heard about it through word of mouth.

The responses also, however, revealed quite a lot of scepticism among the respondents about the youth's responses to such opportunities; some believed that "most youth were only interested in accessing the money offered by the project and were not interested in the long term work" required to build and develop a business, for example, "young people view the project as a long shot and have no patience and time to participate in trainings". Others said that young people did not understand what business was and what it required saying, "there is misconception on the hustles involved in being a business" and that "business is a survival thing". Another noted that few youth "have the passion and lack the endurance to grow their projects so they can compete" to join the project. The respondent added, "Youths are hopeless in entrepreneurship and would rather seek formal employment to avoid risk of failure and unemployment." Another said that youth will only believe in the project's ability to deliver, "after they have seen its impact on the winner or participant", which also speaks to the need to

publicise the project and its winners to a greater degree and to somehow engage the winners in continued advertising of the project and to support them to provide ongoing mentorship to other youths.

Having said that, two respondents stated that young people were very eager to learn more about the project, while one responded that, "The project inspired many youth in the community and gave hope that funding opportunities are available through interventions like YouthConnekt." Others took the opportunity to restate their admiration for the project's ability to deliver and that most youth (who heard about it) were enthusiastic to showcase their businesses to the project. It was noted that the project gave hope to the youth and filled the employment gap given that today, most Zimbabwean graduates struggle to find employment after completing their tertiary education. Another expressed appreciation for such interventions for their role in reducing youth unemployment and yet another noted that "the project is viewed as a stepping stone for moving youths out of poverty." Others said youth were excited about the possibilities the project offered and that they "have ideas and would appreciate the services that the project has to offer" but lack the knowledge on how to expand their businesses.

YEQ 2.10 Did the management of the project, those that delivered training to youth, financial systems and other systems help you/ hinder you from getting the most from the project's activities?

One respondent noted that they "saw love for the youth entrepreneurs," from those who delivered the project and said "the team held my hand throughout the project activities." Nonetheless, another commented on the pressure involved in the project and said "the project forgot that the hardest part is to keep the youths in business" and stated that there was insufficient emphasis on encouraging youth collaboration and networking." Another commented that for the C2C project activities, the rotations were too short and limited in-depth learning and complained about the lack of feedback on assignments meant participants "never knew how the assignment contributed to the overall project".

However, there may be need to revise the project's financial framework to improve success as one respondent noted that the project set "unrealistic timelines, which made it easy to lie quarterly but the truth was that business was not as good as we made it seem". This suggests that the pressure created by the project's financial systems failed to encourage participants to seek the necessary support to find ways to make their business succeed and instead to simply conform to the project's requirements. On a similar note, another added that "the financial systems were extremely frustrating. It requested a lot of information and data, which was not useful since there was no follow-up afterwards on how the money was used". There was also critical views of the 'boot camp' approach that made the project appear as if it was more about female empowerment than youth empowerment.

YEQ 2.12. What do you most value from what you have you learned from participating in the project?

Clearly, the range of benefits from participating in the project is broad, though several respondents noted in particular, that the training in financial management and the importance of

record keeping, the proper use of business channels, and working in a professional work environment were of great value, as is self-confidence.

Several respondents noted the importance of access to finance in ensuring a business's success, "availability of funds and confidence is key". Others learned that time also has an element of cost and that, for example, they should "not waste time on small grants. There is a time value in business", and "there is always discourse between what the funder wants and what the business needs"; "funding is a hustle, you work hard to get the funding and show the effectiveness of the business." Another noted that, "one has to expect loses as well as profits as the business grows", and "training and access to finance are essential components towards business growth and success." The YouthConnekt project offered "hope for youth businesses to grow and for the youth to be empowered," and "we have to be self-sufficient and not rely on formal jobs."

The project clearly encouraged thinking on a broader front with comments such as "financial inclusion undoubtedly improves livelihoods, status of youths wellbeing, food security," and "Sustainable Development Goals are attainable through commitment."

However other more diverse responses included that, "no innovation is too small, innovators only lack the drive to continue," and "Love everyone, especially the helpless and encourage them to want to better their lives"; "there is more benefit in volunteering to make the world a better place, not just for the reward but for self-achievement."

YEQ4. 1 Have businesses that have been supported by the project ben able to carry on after the completion of the project? How can future projects better prepare businesses to continue after the project ends?

The responses to this question probably offer the most significant feedback to improve the impact of the YouthConnekt project. Only two stated that their businesses were ongoing (and one of these has relocated to South Africa), while others mentioned being aware of only couple that were still operating.

On the whole, they were fairly unanimous that the project needed to provide continued follow-up and support to the youth entrepreneurs that were mentored to ensure their success. One respondent suggested that "the project should create a youth network that shares experiences and information and make available workshops, fairs," where youth businesses that had been supported by the project could showcase their business and meet possible investors, including banks in an effort to create a space for youths to apply for credit lines to sustain their businesses and customers. This was echoed in another response.

While respondents emphasised the networking aspects during the project itself, it would seem that these connections ended once the project ended, with most respondents saying they were unaware of whether any of the other businesses initiated were still continuing as they were not in contact. This would seem to be a significant lost opportunity for both the participants and the project itself. Setting up a social media or WhatsApp group for participants to keep in touch is a simple step that could have been taken at the end of the project and might have provided important support to the young business persons. It was also suggested that visits between youth businesses should have been included "to encourage each other to stay motivated and learn how to deal with challenges" that might be encountered after the project ended.

In addition there was a sense that after an intensive period of support, the project simply ended leaving participants feeling lost. Ongoing technical and financial support would have enabled business growth and sustainability and business management coaching sessions on a quarterly basis would have ensured continuity and coherence once the project ended. One respondent stated there was, "no due diligence in following up on the progress of the businesses. We felt abandoned and wondered what was the purpose of whole project supporting businesses when we were still with them and not beyond." Another said there was "no support beyond the project, projects like YouthConnekt should look at the business abilities, economies and customise support," to help them sustain themselves once the project ends.

Many respondents commented on the need for ongoing technical support; there should be "ensured technical and financial support beyond the project," while another commented that the project should map partners in depth and follow up on investments to provide assistance in dealing with any hurdles that may be encountered after investing in the business and after project closure. One suggested that the project should "invest in the time element of support to youth businesses" after the project. The project should have "continued monitoring, addressed challenges, and linked rural and urban businesses and provide formal support in sustaining the businesses" as this would "motivate the youth to achieve more." "The project should have ensured that the youths understand how to manage their businesses beyond the project's closure with minimal support"

 Several mentioned the need for and expectation of ongoing mentorship; "mentorship, strong monitoring and support after closure," and suggested these should be customised and not centralised only in Harare. One positive suggestion was that "Sustainability could have been ensured through inclusion of private partners or stakeholders in the various business youth sectors." It was also noted that mentorship projects should not be centralised only in Harare.

There were also significant comments on the management and follow-up of the grants offered by the project – participants seemed to feel these were dealt with in a somewhat thoughtless fashion that left the youth entrepreneurs to their own devices to the detriment of their businesses, and did not take into account the reality of youth enterprises. As one respondent said, "As youths in business, we have pressure and face competition which make us end up diverting funds and not separating business and personal issues". One suggested that the grant should be provided in stages and not as a once-off, while another said that youth business should be managed with "key objectives and monitor the growth of the youth business". Another said the project should have trained the youths on how to manage, use and save the grants given.

Finally, one respondent suggested that the project should customise trainings to cover all the areas that might be encountered in running a business rather than focusing only on marketing and financial management. They also suggested that the project should assess their partners before sending their participants to them, offering as an example that the Impact hub offered "a co-working space and did not give the mentorship or business management skills as expected."

Conclusions and recommendations

a) **Responding to beneficiaries' needs**

Most beneficiaries appreciated the financial capital the project provided. While the project gave training on financial management, some beneficiaries, especially those from rural areas and/or complete start-ups felt they needed more advice in how to manage the sums of money allocated.

Most appreciated the exposure to the various trainings the project provided on the technical aspects of running a business, and developing financial systems and marketing. Participants also appreciated the opportunity to interact with each other and get exposure to existing stable businesses and their practices.

Start-ups sometimes lacked the skills and knowledge to effectively pitch their business ideas and thus lost out. At the same time, there were some differences between rural participants in terms of exposure and knowledge that might justify providing additional support to rural participants.

Recommendations

The project should distinguish between participants with existing businesses and those starting from scratch, as their needs and experiences differ and consider providing additional support to rural participants establishing start-ups.

b) **Reflection on the business competition model**

Most beneficiaries reported having greater confidence in their abilities and ideas and improved business sense. Participation in the project also built a sense of personal achievement and for some opened the doors to other business ventures, and to expansion of their businesses and purchase of necessary equipment. They also learned the value of networking.

c) **The project's effectiveness in promoting viable start-ups, creating jobs and meeting important challenges in society**

For most the provision of financial capital translated into scaling up and improved business operations. However, there were reservations regarding the fact that the same sum was given regardless of the business and what its specific needs might be as in some cases, the capital provided was insufficient to allow expansion of the business. It was also noted that some participants mentioned being more hopeful of gaining employment, so it seems that the idea of entrepreneurial development was not their main focus.

The opportunity to interact with existing business leaders and meet other potential investors was motivating for participants. However, some respondents felt their business placements did not match their interests or needs. Some participants were still studying and found there were conflicts between attending the project and completing their studies.

With regard to whether their business performance had improved due to the project, a quarter of the respondents were unable to respond, which is quite high; others also gave unequivocal responses. However, since the project ran over the period of the COVID lockdown, and in a generally challenging economic environment, this may be as much due to external factors. Nonetheless, the majority (12) stated that participating in the project had benefited their businesses and credited project participation for this. Several appear to have extended beyond Zimbabwe's borders.

Recommendations

In future projects, capital injections that are tailor made to the business's specific needs might be more effective. Consider not restricting competition winners to only one per province, in order to ensure that good projects do not lose out on the opportunity. Consider the need to 'positively discriminate' to allow those from rural areas with less business exposure to participate in the project. The project should relook at selection criteria to ensure that participants have a genuine desire to start their own businesses.

The project should also look more closely at both the skills and interests of participants and make greater efforts to find placements relevant to participants' specific interests and businesses.
It might be beneficial if the project focused less on particular milestones to show impact, as some participants' felt this diverted time and energy from the needs of their business.
Efforts might be made to ensure that the project runs outside of college times.

Young people's perceptions of the YouthConnekt project:

Beneficiaries generally appreciated the project's professional, hands on delivery methods and communication channels, the flexible design and coordination in delivery of activities and felt that the selection process was fair. They also appreciated the exposure to other stakeholders and potential investors, and they valued the opportunities offered to interact and network with fellow entrepreneurs and to share information and ideas. It was felt that the project offered opportunities for young people to step out of unemployment and poverty.

The project also needs to establish some kind of follow up group to encourage participants to keep in touch and provide ongoing encouragement to each other, as most of them were unaware of how others were faring once the program ended.

The major recommendation coming from participants was that after the intensity of participation, the program ceased too abruptly, leaving them feeling somewhat abandoned. Many participants felt that the project was too short, but all expressed concern that it should provide ongoing mentorship and financial guidance on completion to ensure business success. Notably, management and follow-up of the grants offered by the project was emphasised and consideration should be made to tailoring the sums to the businesses, as well as providing advice and follow up on managing these funds. In some cases, grants might be given in stages rather than as a once off.

Recommendations

It is suggested that the definition of a start-up be standardised for future projects and that those running existing businesses are treated separately from those who are complete start-ups. The project could ensure that youths are linked to relevant stakeholders in their industry in future, and further enable networking among youth-run businesses.

There is need for the project to re-examine its marketing and visibility strategy as many participants felt that the requirements for participation were not widely known.
There is also need to publicise the project winners and perhaps find a way to engage them in continued advertising of the project and to provide ongoing mentorship to youths in new versions of the project.

A social media or WhatsApp group should be set up on completion of the project to help participants keep in touch and provide each other with support.

Visits between youth businesses should also be encouraged to stimulate ideas and provide motivation.

The project should consider establishing workshops or fairs for youth businesses supported by the project to showcase their businesses and meet possible investors, including bank to create space for youths to apply for credit lines to sustain their businesses and customers.

Ongoing technical and financial support would enable business growth and sustainability after the project's completion. Quarterly business management coaching sessions would ensure continuity once the project ended.

Ongoing mentorship after the project throughout the country and not only in Harare. would also be of value.

Annex 2: Draft Concept Note for the next generation of the Youth Connekt project

1.   Project Title: Business Linkages for Scaling Youth Entrepreneurship Development

2.   Project summary

The project seeks to scale opportunities for youth entrepreneurship through supporting business linkages with private sector companies and public sector institutions. The private sector and GoZ are the largest economic actors in Zimbabwe and offer the best opportunities for scaling youth entrepreneurship and job creation. The project is intended to benefit youth businesses though providing them with opportunities to access and develop sustainable business relationships with established companies and GoZ institutions, and benefit these same companies and institutions through linking them with youth business suppliers who can provide the quality and quantity of products and services they require. The expected result is that both parties will benefit from the linkage and thereby build sustainable business relationships that will allow youth businesses to grow.

3.   Development context and the challenge

The project is well aligned to the development needs of young people in Zimbabwe and the country. Zimbabwe is an extremely young country, with the majority of the population, 62%, below the age of 25 years. Therefore, meeting their development needs has potential to have significant impacts on the country as a whole. Amongst the significant developmental challenges they face is limited opportunities for education and training leading to low levels of employability with young people having the highest unemployment rate of 16 per cent. Young people also experience high levels of exclusion from economic opportunities, partly because of their lack of skills, experience and employability but also because they are marginalised by groups that have more political and social means to protect their interests. As a result, when young people enter the labour market they face high levels of informality, higher rates of unemployment and are likely to be concentrated on low income and precarious conditions.

The project seeks to address these youth development challenges in by tackling poverty through creating employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for youth and addressing the inequalities they face to economic opportunities and realising the benefits from the demographic dividend. In addition, the project's focus on gender equality seeks to address the disadvantages that young women especially face in accessing employment and economic opportunities.

***Figure 1**: Youth, especially young women, are the most likely population group to be unemployed* [52]

---

[52] 2023 Second Quarter Quarterly Labour Force Survey Report, ZIMSTAT. https://www.zimstat.co.zw/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/2023_Second_Quarter_QLFSReport130723.pdf

	Male	Female
15-19	38.1%	40.8%
20-24	31.4%	35.8%
25-29	19.0%	26.7%
30-34	16.4%	20.2%
35-39	14.2%	17.4%
40-44	14.4%	13.8%
45-49	13.3%	14.0%
50-54	12.8%	11.4%
55-59	6.6%	12.2%
60-64	7.6%	7.9%
65+	8.1%	7.9%
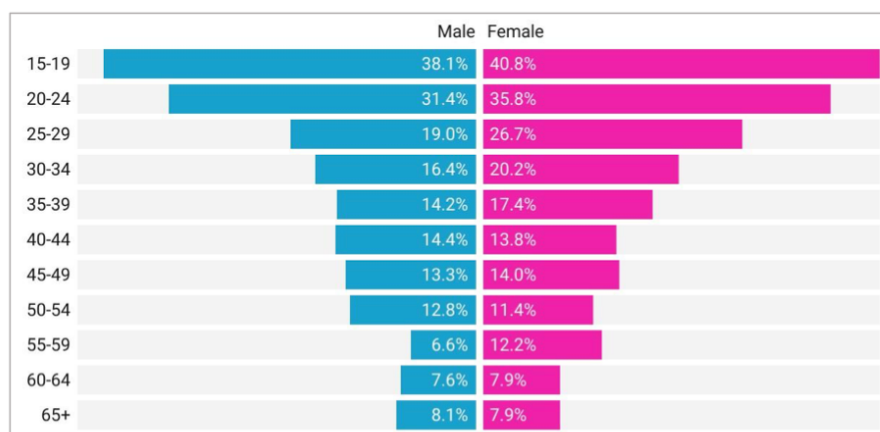
Figure 2: *Youth unemployment rates have risen sharply since 2014, and are currently between 12% -13%.*[53]

© Statista 2023
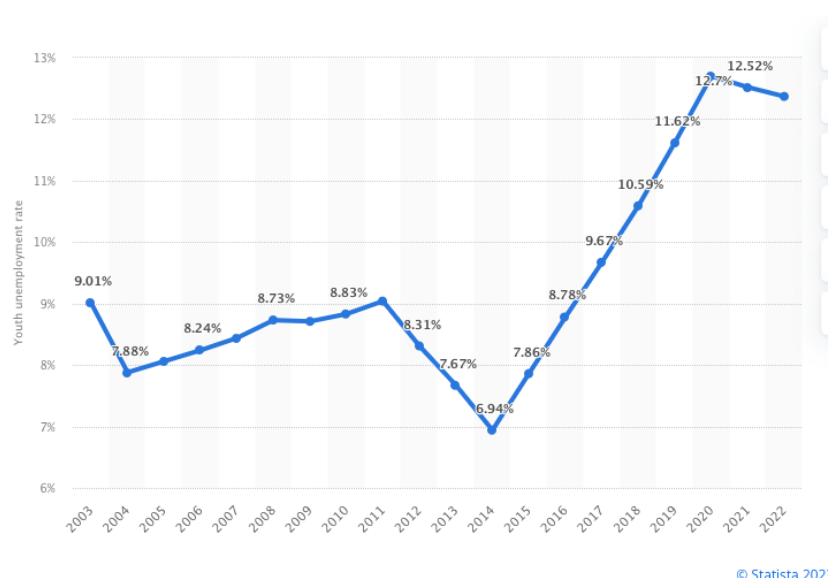
4.   Implementing entity and partners

The implementing partners include:
i)   Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) who will, together with UNDP, facilitate the project's set up and build relationships;
ii)   UNDP who will catalyse and facilitate the project's set up and bring partners together;
iii)   Youth businesses
iv)   Private sector companies and GoZ institutions e.g. hospitals and schools;
v)   Technical mentors who have practical professional experience in the type of business that the youth businesses will carry out.
vi)   Business Development Service providers who will provide business training;

---

[53] The youth unemployment rate refers to the share of the economically active population aged 15 to 24 currently without work but in search of employment. https://www.statista.com/statistics/813214/youth-unemployment-rate-in-zimbabwe/

vii)   Banks who will provide finance to youth businesses;
viii)   Business Membership Organisations (BMOs) who will support the project through offering
         linkage opportunities with the private sector and other support.

5.   Beneficiaries

Young women and young men, in both urban and rural areas, who respond to the competition
challenge call with business ideas and capabilities to develop successful business relationships with
local private sector companies or GoZ institutions.

6.   Description of the project activities

The implementation of the project involves four stages:

Preparation – Year 1
During this stage UNDP and GoZ will conduct research at provincial level to identify linkage
opportunities within both private and public sector in each province. Linkage opportunities with
identified companies and GoZ institutions will be explored for their potential to offer opportunities
for young people in business, growth potential and potential to offer both women and men
business opportunities. Discussions with potential companies and institutions will identify the best
opportunities to develop under the project. Relevant stakeholders will be mapped for the linkage
project, e.g. GoZ, UNDP, technical mentors, BDS providers, banks, BMO,s in addition to the
company or GoZ institution's staff, etc.

In addition, local BDS suppliers and mentors will be identified who will provide services to youth
businesses, as well as technical mentors who will have professional experience in for example,
manufacturing, catering, cleaning services, which may be from a main city.

A competition will be designed with the identified stakeholders to call for proposals from youth
businesses to supply a company or GoZ institution (e.g. school or hospital) in their location. GoZ,
local BMOs and private sector mobilise youth to participate in the competition. Training is given to
youth, customised by gender, to prepare proposals and to pitch them to a panel comprising
company or GoZ institution representatives, outside and local professionals with relevant technical
and professional experience, BDS providers, local BMOs, UNDP, etc. The competition will result in
the selection of youth businesses who will participate in the linkage project.

The project will mobilise governance structures in the form of an Oversight Board comprising GoZ,
UNDP, a Project Steering Committee Director, and an Implementation Steering Committee
responsible for coordinating the project's implementation, comprising of the selected youth
businesses, company representatives, mentorship coordinator, BDS coordinator, BMOs, banks,
representatives from UNDP, GOZ. These bodies will collaborate to design the linkage project's
implementation strategy, e.g. g. company/ youth business engagement strategy, roles and
responsibilities of supporting stakeholders, develop youth business plan for youth businesses,
contract between company and youth business, plans for financing mentoring and BDS,
stakeholder capacity gap assessment and development, set performance targets and indicators,
M&E, exit strategy etc.

Each actor who participates in the implementation of the project, youth business, banks, company (staff and systems), BDS providers, mentors etc will be assessed for their capacity to deliver what the project needs, and any gaps identified that will affect their successful participation in the project. A capacity development plan will be devised and delivered for each stakeholder to ensure that they have the capacities to carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively. The project will build the capacity of local BDS suppliers and mentors to ensure that these services are easily accessible throughout the course of the project and to ensure sustainability.

Start up – Year 1

During this stage the project will implement the linkage implementation strategy and build the capacity of actors to successfully implement it. This will involve intensive hand holding and coordination of all stakeholders during start-up period, close monitoring and adjustment, etc. to ensure that the youth businesses are delivering the quality and quantity of products or services they have been contracted to deliver, that company staff are satisfied and playing their role, and that mentors, BDS providers, banks etc. are playing their role to support linkage actors. Frequent monitoring by both the Oversight Board and the Implementation Steering Committee will be done during this stage.

Maintaining implementation Year 2-3

This stage will involve the implementation of many of the same activities as in the first year, but since the activities and relationships will have been established the activities may not need to be as frequent. Monthly Steering Committee meetings and quarterly Board meetings will monitor progress. Ongoing mentoring and BDS training to youth business will be done as well as ongoing monitoring of support provided by service providers. Less frequent Board and Committee meetings.

Exiting – Year 4

This stage will see the activation of the exit strategy developed at the project's initial design stage. Actors who will withdraw services and support, e.g. BDS providers, mentors, etc will determine how any needed support may be provided once they withdraw. It is assumed that by this stage of the project sustainable capacities and relationships will have been developed to allow for withdrawal of services that were in place during the start-up and maintaining implementation stages. A hand over plan will be devised to guide the exit and monitored over the exit period. Eventually, full handover will take place, with the company or GoZ institution and youth business able to continue and growing the business relationship established under the project.

Please see below for a diagrammatic summaries of the linkage model and the Theory of Change for the model.

Figure 3: *Business Linkage Model for Scaling Youth Entrepreneurial Opportunities and Job Growth.*

Preparation Year 1

- Identify potential linkage opportunities through provincial research
- Identify potential linkage partners in private sector companies and GoZ institutions
- Engage companies and institutions and map opportunities
- Map stakeholders e.g. GoZ, UNDP, technical mentors, BDS providers, banks, etc
- Design linkage competition with selected stakeholders
- Mobilise youth, hold competition, support proposal and pitching, select youth business partners

Preparation Year 1

- Design governance structures, e.g.:
  a) Oversight Board comprising UNDP, GoZ, Project Director and
  b) Implementation Steering Committee comprising youth business, company representative, mentorship coordinator, BDS coordinator, BMOs, banks, representatives from UNDP, GOZ.
- Design linkage programme implementation strategy with both oversight and implementation boards, e.g. company/ youth business engagement strategy, roles and responsibilities of supporting stakeholders, develop youth business plan for youth businesses, contract between company and youth business, plans for financing mentoring and BDS, stakeholder capacity gap assessment and development, set performance targets and indicators, M&E, exit strategy etc.
- Assess capacity of company staff and systems, youth business, mentors, BDS suppliers, banks to participate in programme. Identify gaps, risks in participating. Develop capacity development plan
- Assess gaps to identify youth business needs for finance, training, mentoring. Develop capacity development plan.

Start-up Year 1

- Build capacity of youth business, mentors, BDS suppliers, company staff, bank, etc. to implement linkage engagement strategy
- Intensive hand holding and coordination of all stakeholders during start-up period, close monitoring and adjustment, etc.
- Frequent monitoring by Oversight Board and Implementation Steering Committee

Maintaining implementation Year 2-3

- Ongoing mentoring and BDS training to youth business, and ongoing monitoring of support provided by service providers
- Monthly Steering Committee meetings and quarterly Board meetings to monitor progress

Exiting Year 4

- Activate exit strategy governance structure, implement hand over strategy
- Gradual withdrawal of mentoring services and BDS support to youth
- Gradual withdrawal of support and coordination functions
- M&E to assess hand over success
- Full handover

7.   Theory of Change

Figure 4: *Theory of Change for the Business Linkage Model*

CAUSES OF CHALLENGES	NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED	INPUTS (resources)	OUTPUTS (activities, tangible products)	OUTCOMES (results)	IMPACTS (higher level effects)
CHALLENGES THE PROJECT AIMS TO ADDRESS: • High rates of unemployment and lack of job opportunities for youth. • Perceptions that youth businesses are risky to use in private and public sector supply chains. • Lack of opportunities for youth for entrepreneurship development. • Youth businesses lack skills and experience to be a reliable supplier. • Youth lack access to access to finance for their businesses. • Culture of jealousy which often destroys successful businesses.	NEEDS ARISING FROM CHALLENGES: • More employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for youth. • Reduce risk perceptions amongst private and public sector supply chains about using youth businesses. • Youth need more access to relevant business skills. • Mitigate risks from macro and cultural environment.	RESOURCES REQUIRED TO ADDRESS NEEDS: • TA to conduct provincial research and opportunity analysis to identify linkage opportunities. • TA to design business linkage implementation strategy, including risk mitigation plan. • TA to design and implement supply chain competition. • Grants for competition prizes. • TA for capacity gap analysis and development of capacity development plans for all implementation stakeholders. • TA in the form of BDS and mentoring to youth to address capacity gaps. • TA to stakeholders during start-up stage. • Mobilise stakeholder support. • Mobilise financing for youth business finance.	ACTIVITIES THAT ADDRESS NEEDS AND LEAD TO CHANGE: • Provincial research reports and opportunity identification report. • Business linkage strategy completed, including BDS and mentoring implementation plans, resourcing plan. • Competition held and winners receive support. • Capacity gap assessments of youth and implementing partners is completed, and capacity development plans for TA support to address gaps are in place. • Participation agreements are in place for implementation partners. • Risk mitigation plan. • Exit strategy developed.	CHANGES IN ACTORS & SYSTEMS AS A RESULT OF OUTPUTS:/ACTIVITIES: • Youth businesses satisfying the needs of private and public sector supply chains. • Reduced perceptions of risk by private and public sector institutions and banks in working with youth businesses. • Youth businesses grow in terms of jobs, profits, reputation, etc. • Greater levels of trust, cooperation and confidence amongst implementation stakeholders resulting in effective support for project implementation. • Reduced levels of predatory activities of successful youth businesses.	ACHIEVMENT OF KEY INTERVENTION OBJECTIVES: • Increased youth employment, incomes. • Reduced poverty levels. • More positive attitudes towards youth in business. • Greater willingness to support rather than prey on youth businesses.

ASSUMPTIONS

• Private and public sector supply chains and banks willing and able to participate. • Financial service providers willing and able to participate. • Selected youth businesses will be able to perform. • The macro social, political and economic environments will continue to present challenges that will make it difficult for the project to succeed.	• TA to youth, BDS and mentoring, will be successful in addressing capacity gaps. • TA to implementing stakeholders will be successful in enabling them to provide effective support. • Project level risks will be manageable. • Relationships and skills built up in the course of the project will enable a smooth exit of project support.

INDICATORS

• Number of youth jobs (impact indicator) • Poverty levels (impact indicator) • Youth business profits (impact indicator) • Attitudes towards youth in business (impact indicator)	• Satisfaction levels of company with youth business (outcome indicator) • Satisfaction levels of youth business in supplying (outcome indicator) • Risk perceptions (outcome indicator) • Trust levels amongst implementation stakeholders (outcome indicator) • Quality, quantity targets of supply to company or institution (outcome indicator) • Youth business turnover, profit, etc (outcome indicator)

8.   Sustainability

The project offers strong sustainability features through building up relationships that have strong buy-in by those participating: youth businesses are motivated to succeed by an opportunity grow their businesses, the company is motivated by the attractiveness of having a reliable supplier which provide the quality and quantity of products and they want, BDS and mentors will have grown their skills and markets, and GoZ and development partners are motivated to see development impact results.

Annex 3: Outcomes Framework

Outcomes Framework

DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE	EXPECTED OUTPUT(S)	ACTIVITY	RESULTS	OUTCOME
Limited opportunities for youth to venture into employment, job creation and entrepreneurship	**Output 1:** Youth connected to entrepreneurship: increased entrepreneurial skills for youth	• Start Up Tour Bus: Mobile business clinic to all 10 provinces • Generation Unlimited • Regional and global opportunities for youth • Support incubation and job creation (from idea to expansion stages) of youth businesses through IBUHUB	Increased entrepreneurial opportunities and job creation for youth	Contribution to the realization of the demographic dividend by providing youth with skills for employment and enterprise.
Limited employment and skills building opportunities for youth	**Output 2:** Youth connected employment, skills and opportunities	• Career guidance and expos • Sports and arts career and business development • Job-based skills building and Youth job placement	Increased employment and skills building opportunities for youth	Improved employability chances for youth
Limited networking and funding opportunities for youth	**Output 3:** Youth connected to youth: Networking platform for young people	• Connekt e-store • Youth Summit at YCA Summit • Youth conversations or dialogues held	Increased networking and funding opportunities for youth	Established network of youths for information sharing

Annex 4: Results Framework

Intended Outcome as stated in the UNDAF/Country [or Global/Regional] Programme Results and Resource Framework: Key institutions are better able to formulate and implement poverty reduction strategies and programmes for improved livelihoods and reduced poverty of communities
Outcome indicators as stated in the Country Programme [or Global/Regional] Results and Resources Framework, including baseline and targets: 1. Youth empowerment; 2. Contribution to the country's GDP through empowering informal economy
Applicable Output(s) from the UNDP Strategic Plan: Growth and Development are Inclusive and Sustainable, incorporating productive capacities that create employment and livelihoods for the poor and excluded
Project title and Atlas Project Number: Youth Connekt Zimbabwe 00116065

EXPECTED OUTPUTS	OUTPUT INDICATORS[3]	DATA SOURCE	BASELINE		TARGETS (by frequency of data collection)						DATA COLLECTION METHODS & RISKS
			Value	Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	FINAL	
Output 1 Youth connected to entrepreneurship: increased entrepreneurial skills for youth	1.1 At least 4 enterprises supported with start-up capital and incubation support for the expansion of their businesses to meet national demand	Monthly reports; Quarterly Reports; Annual Reports	0	2020	4	10	10	10	10	44	Responsibility: UNDP; Ministry of Youth; Partners
	1.2 At least 50 youth businesses provided with expansion, job creation and business incubation support through IBUHUB	Monthly reports; Quarterly Reports; Annual Reports	0	2020	50	50	50	50	50	250	Responsibility: UNDP; Ministry of Youth; Partners
	1.3 Establishment of YC e-commerce site	Monthly reports; Quarterly Reports; Annual Reports	0	2020	1	0	0	0	0	1	Responsibility: UNDP; Ministry of Youth; Partners

---

[3] It is recommended that projects use output indicators from the Strategic Plan IRRF, as relevant, in addition to project-specific results indicators. Indicators should be disaggregated by sex or for other targeted groups where relevant.

	1.4 *Social media presence for Youth Connekt awareness raising and the dissemination of information to young people*	Monthly reports; Quarterly Reports; Annual Reports	0	2020	1	1	1	1	1	5	**Responsibility:** *UNDP; Ministry of Youth; Partners*
Output 2 Youth connected employment, skills and opportunities	2.1 *Establishment of youth employment services and job placements at IBUHUB, and at least two youth provided with internships*	Monthly reports; Quarterly Reports; Annual Reports	0	2020	1	0	0	0	0	1	**Responsibility:** *UNDP; Ministry of Youth; Partners*
	2.2 *Youth participation in COVID-19 community awareness*	Monthly reports; Quarterly Reports; Annual Reports	0	2020	1	0	0	0	0	1	**Responsibility:** *UNDP; Ministry of Youth; Partners*
	2.3 *Education and skills resource database established*	Monthly reports; Quarterly Reports; Annual Reports	0	2020	1	0	0	0	0	1	**Responsibility:** *UNDP; Ministry of Youth; Partners*
Output 3 Youth connected to youth: Networking platform for young people	3.1 *Establishment of digital youth portal/Connekt e-store*	Monthly reports; Quarterly Reports; Annual Reports	0	2020	1	0	0	0	0	1	**Responsibility:** *UNDP; Ministry of Youth; Partners*
	3.2 *Participation at Youth Connekt Africa Summit*	Monthly reports; Quarterly Reports; Annual Reports	0	2020	1	1	1	1	1	5	**Responsibility:** *UNDP; Ministry of Youth*

	3.3 *Participation at Regional and International conferences*	*Monthly reports; Quarterly Reports; Annual Reports*	0	2020	1	1	1	1	1	5	**Responsibility**: *UNDP; Ministry of Youth*
	3.4 *Creation of Youth Connekt social media campaign*	*Monthly reports; Quarterly Reports; Annual Reports*	0	2020	1					1	**Responsibility**: *UNDP; Ministry of Youth*

Annex 5: Evaluation Matrix

Below is the Evaluation Matrix which outlines the question areas and the sources of data for each question. This guided the development of the tools for data collection and data analysis. The structure of the evaluation matrix is in line with the recommended structure in the Terms of Reference.

Evaluation Questions	Methods	
	Desk Review	**Interviews**
1. DESIGN AND RELELVANCE		
EQ 1.1. To what extent is the project aligned with the objectives of UNDP and GoZ's development plans?	✓	• Strategic partners
EQ 1.2 To what extent is the project aligned with the development needs of Zimbabwe and its youth?	✓	• Strategic partners • Youth
EQ 1.3. To what extent were the project's design, implementation model, tools, inputs and funding approach realistic, adequate and appropriate to the development context for achieving results?	✓	• Strategic partners • Implementing partners
EQ 1.4. To what extent were the project's partnership arrangements and target beneficiaries appropriate and clearly defined to achieve results?	✓	• Strategic partners • Implementing partners
EQ 1.5. To what extent did the project incorporate cross-cutting issues such as gender, social exclusion, human rights, disability, Leave No one Behind and UNDP's Social and Environmental Standards in design, delivery, and monitoring?	✓	• Strategic partners • Implementing partners
EQ 1.6. To what extent was the relationship between outcomes, outputs, activities and inputs logically articulated and provided a clear pathway for converting activities and outputs into outcomes and impacts to meet the overall project objectives? (Theory of Change)	✓	• Strategic partners • Implementing partners
EQ 1.7. To what extent did the M&E framework define and use SMART indicators for measuring outcomes and outputs?	✓	
2. EFFECTIVENESS		
EQ 2.1 To what extent have objectives, outputs, outcomes, impacts and targets been achieved? (Scale, quality, inclusion of cross-cutting issues).	✓	• Strategic partners • Implementing partners • Youth
EQ 2.2 What factors have enabled or constrained achieving results? Could different approaches have achieved better results?		• Strategic partners • Implementing partners

Evaluation Questions	Methods	
	Desk Review	Interviews
EQ 2.3. Have there been any unintended (positive or negative) results from the project?		• Strategic partners • Implementing partners • Youth
EQ 2.4. To what extent has the project been effective in responding to the needs of beneficiaries? What specific results stand out?		• Strategic partners • Implementing partners • Youth
EQ 2.5. How effective has the business competition model been in contributing to results?		• Strategic partners • Implementing partners • Youth
EQ 2.6. How effective has the project been in promoting start-ups that create jobs and meet important challenges in society?		• Strategic partners • Implementing partners • Youth
EQ 2.7. Did business performance change as a result of the project? (sales, profit, jobs, etc)	✓	• Strategic partners • Implementing partners • Youth
EQ 2.8. To what extent were the results from M&E mechanisms used for learning and meeting project results?		• Strategic partners • Implementing partners
EQ 2.9. What perceptions do stakeholders have about the project (positive and negative)?		• Strategic partners • Implementing partners • Youth
EQ 2.10. To what extent did governance structures, management structures, partnership arrangements and financial systems support delivery of the project's activities?	✓	• Strategic partners • Implementing partners
EQ 2.11.. To what extent have key partners, UNDP and GoZ, contributed to achieving or limiting project results? Did collaborations with UNRCO, Gvt of Rwanda, Steering Committee, Project Board, national institutions, development partners, etc contribute to achieving or limiting results?		• Strategic partners • Implementing partners
EQ 2.12. Have there been any impacts (positive and negative) from building capacities and learning?		• Strategic partners • Implementing partners • Youth
EQ 2.13. Have there been any policy level impacts from the project? e.g. domestication of regional frameworks, best practice?		• Strategic partners • Implementing partners
EQ 2.14. Did monitoring and evaluation frameworks enable the quantification and verification of results and measurement of progress towards results?	✓	• Strategic partners • Implementing partners

Evaluation Questions	Methods	
	Desk Review	**Interviews**
EQ 2.15. Has the achievement of results been affected by contextual issues (political, economic, social)?		• Strategic partners • Implementing partners • Youth
EQ 2.16 What should future youth interventions prioritise? Where are the opportunities? What strategies should be used?		• Strategic partners • Implementing partners • Youth
EQ 2.7. Has the achievement of results been affected (positively and negatively) by internal programme arrangements and organisation by UNDP, GoZ and partners?	✓	• Strategic partners • Implementing partners • Youth
3. EFFICIENCY		
EQ 3.1. Were the project resources (financial, physical, human) provided for by UNDP, GoZ and partners adequate to achieve results?		• Strategic partners • Implementing partners
EQ 3.2. Could resources (financial, physical, human) have been used differently to achieve more? Or less resources used to achieve the same results?		• Strategic partners • Implementing partners
EQ 3.3. Are there any ways that greater Value for Money could be achieved?	✓	• Strategic partners • Implementing partners
EQ 3.4. To what extent have project organisational arrangements and systems, and those of UNDP and GoZ, helped or hindered the effective use of resources to achieve results?		• Strategic partners • Implementing partners
EQ 3.5. Did the project utilise technology effectively to enhance results?		• Strategic partners • Implementing partners
EQ 3.6. Has the project adapted to external issues and learning?		• Strategic partners • Implementing partners
EQ 3.7. To what extent did the project make use of synergies with other stakeholder's activities, and avoid duplication?		• Strategic partners • Implementing partners
4. SUSTAINABILITY		
EQ 4.1 How likely is it that project outcomes and impacts will be sustained after the completion of the project?		• Strategic partners • Implementing partners • Youth
EQ 4.2. What factors have supported or undermined sustainability? (e.g. levels of buy-in, credibility, trust, changes in attitudes towards youth, narrowed social distance)		• Strategic partners • Implementing partners • Youth

Evaluation Questions	Methods	
	Desk Review	**Interviews**
EQ 4.3.To what extent has the project contributed to building individual, institutional and national capacities to sustain the project after is completion? What factors have supported or hindered building capacities?		• Strategic partners • Implementing partners • Youth
EQ 4.4. Is there an exit strategy? If yes, to what extent is it likely to result in a smooth hand over to new stakeholders and ensure project benefits are maintained?		• Strategic partners
EQ 4.5. How can the sustainability of impacts and outcomes and the chances of the project being replicated be enhanced?		• Strategic partners • Implementing partners • Youth
EQ 4.6. To what extent is the project compliment, synergise and harmonise with other UNDP projects, and with projects of other partners?		• Strategic partners • Implementing partners

Annex 6: Tools for Gathering Data

STRATEGIC PARTNER

Questionnaire #: _____   **Interviewer :**
_____

Date of interview:____ JULY 2023   **Start time:_____**

NAME OF RESPONDENT:		
ORGANISATION:		
JOB TITLE:		
MOBILE NUMBER:		
REMOTE OR FACE TO FACE:		
LOCATION OF INTERVIEW		

Gender	Female	Male		
Type of project activity involved in	C2C	Business growth Programme	ZRBF competition	Start-up tour bus competition
Years the person was involved in YC	2019	2020	2021	2022

Good morning/afternoon. My name is _____. I am an independent researcher doing an evaluation of the YOUTH CONNEKT project which is a joint project being implemented by UNDP and the Government of Zimbabwe. We are conducting the evaluation to find out more about the results of the project and to gather ideas about how it may be improved in the future.

You are free to participate or not as you wish. There is no penalty for not participating.

The interview should take no more than 60 minutes and the answers we gather will be put together with all other answers from other respondents so that no person's individual answers can be identified. All of your answers will be completely confidential and will only be used by UNDP to understand the performance of the project better and improve future youth programme design. The results of the evaluation will only be shared with stakeholders who have been involved in the design and implementation of the project as well as representatives of young people.

If you would like more information about this evaluation or would like to contact UNDP you may call Ms Blessing Muchemwa on 0719720198.
Are you ready to answer the evaluation questions?
Thank you

Evaluation Questions

1. DESIGN AND RELELVANCE

EQ 1.1. To what extent is the project aligned with the objectives of UNDP and GoZ's development plans?

EQ 1.2 To what extent is the project aligned with the development needs of Zimbabwe and its youth?

EQ 1.3. To what extent were the project's design, implementation model, tools, inputs and funding approach realistic, adequate and appropriate to the development context for achieving results?

EQ 1.4. To what extent were the project's partnership arrangements and target beneficiaries appropriate and clearly defined to achieve results?

EQ 1.5. To what extent did the project incorporate cross-cutting issues such as gender, social exclusion, human rights, disability, Leave No one Behind and UNDP's Social and Environmental Standards in design, delivery, and monitoring?

EQ 1.6. To what extent was the relationship between outcomes, outputs, activities and inputs logically articulated and provided a clear pathway for converting activities and outputs into outcomes and impacts to meet the overall project objectives? (Theory of Change)

EQ 1.7. To what extent did the M&E framework define and use SMART indicators for measuring outcomes and outputs?

2. EFFECTIVENESS

EQ 2.1 **PLEASE REVIEW THE SHOWCARDS BELOW FOR A FEW MOMENTS** - To what extent have objectives, outputs, outcomes, impacts and targets been achieved? (Scale, quality, inclusion of cross-cutting issues).

EQ 2.2 What factors have enabled or constrained achieving results? Could different approaches have achieved better results?

EQ 2.3. Have there been any unintended (positive or negative) results from the project?

EQ 2.4. To what extent has the project been effective in responding to the needs of beneficiaries? What specific results stand out?

EQ 2.5. How effective has the business competition model been in contributing to results?

EQ 2.6. How effective has the project been in promoting start-ups that create jobs and meet important challenges in society?

EQ 2.7. Did business performance change as a result of the project? (sales, profit, jobs, etc)

EQ 2.8. To what extent were the results from M&E mechanisms used for learning and meeting project results?

EQ 2.9. What perceptions do stakeholders have about the project (positive and negative)?

EQ 2.10. To what extent did governance structures, management structures, partnership arrangements and financial systems support delivery of the project's activities?

EQ 2.11.. To what extent have key partners, UNDP and GoZ, contributed to achieving or limiting project results? Did collaborations with UNRCO, Gvt of Rwanda, Steering Committee, Project Board, national institutions, development partners, etc contribute to achieving or limiting results?

Evaluation Questions
EQ 2.12. Have there been any impacts (positive and negative) from building capacities and learning?
EQ 2.13. Have there been any policy level impacts from the project? e.g. domestication of regional frameworks, best practice?
EQ 2.14. Did monitoring and evaluation frameworks enable the quantification and verification of results and measurement of progress towards results?
EQ 2.15. Has the achievement of results been affected by contextual issues (political, economic, social)?
EQ 2.16 What should future youth interventions prioritise? Where are the opportunities? What strategies should be used?
EQ 2.7. Has the achievement of results been affected (positively and negatively) by internal programme arrangements and organisation by UNDP, GoZ and partners?
3. EFFICIENCY
EQ 3.1. Were the project resources (financial, physical, human) provided for by UNDP, GoZ and partners adequate to achieve results?
EQ 3.2. Could resources (financial, physical, human) have been used differently to achieve more? Or less resources used to achieve the same results?
EQ 3.3. Are there any ways that greater Value for Money could be achieved?
EQ 3.4. To what extent have project organisational arrangements and systems, and those of UNDP and GoZ, helped or hindered the effective use of resources to achieve results?
EQ 3.5. Did the project utilise technology effectively to enhance results?
EQ 3.6. Has the project adapted to external issues and learning?
EQ 3.7. To what extent did the project make use of synergies with other stakeholder's activities, and avoid duplication?
4. SUSTAINABILITY
EQ 4.1 How likely is it that project outcomes and impacts will be sustained after the completion of the project?
EQ 4.2. What factors have supported or undermined sustainability? (e.g. levels of buy-in, credibility, trust, changes in attitudes towards youth, narrowed social distance)
EQ 4.3.To what extent has the project contributed to building individual, institutional and national capacities to sustain the project after is completion? What factors have supported or hindered building capacities?
EQ 4.4. Is there an exit strategy? If yes, to what extent is it likely to result in a smooth hand over to new stakeholders and ensure project benefits are maintained?
EQ 4.5. How can the sustainability of impacts and outcomes and the chances of the project being replicated be enhanced?
EQ 4.6. To what extent is the project compliment, synergise and harmonise with other UNDP projects, and with projects of other partners?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND SHARING YOUR VIEWS. THESE WILL HELP UNDP AND GOZ IMPROVE YOUTH PROGRAMMING.
Time interview ends _____am/pm

SHOW CARDS

A. Results framework

Intended Outcome as stated in the UNDAF/Country [or Global/Regional] Programme Results and Resource Framework: Key institutions are better able to formulate and implement poverty reduction strategies and programmes for improved livelihoods and reduced poverty of communities
Outcome indicators as stated in the Country Programme [or Global/Regional] Results and Resources Framework, including baseline and targets: 1. Youth empowerment; 2. Contribution to the country's GDP through empowering informal economy
Applicable Output(s) from the UNDP Strategic Plan: Growth and Development are Inclusive and Sustainable, incorporating productive capacities that create employment and livelihoods for the poor and excluded
Project title and Atlas Project Number: Youth Connekt Zimbabwe 00116065

EXPECTED OUTPUTS	OUTPUT INDICATORS[3]	DATA SOURCE	BASELINE		TARGETS (by frequency of data collection)						DATA COLLECTION METHODS & RISKS
			Value	Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	FINAL	
Output 1 *Youth connected to entrepreneurship: increased entrepreneurial skills for youth*	*1.1 At least 4 enterprises supported with start-up capital and incubation support for the expansion of their businesses to meet national demand*	*Monthly reports; Quarterly Reports; Annual Reports*	0	2020	4	10	10	10	10	44	**Responsibility**: *UNDP; Ministry of Youth; Partners*
	1.2 At least 50 youth businesses provided with expansion, job creation and business incubation support through IBUHUB	*Monthly reports; Quarterly Reports; Annual Reports*	0	2020	50	50	50	50	50	250	**Responsibility**: *UNDP; Ministry of Youth; Partners*
	1.3 Establishment of YC e-commerce site	*Monthly reports; Quarterly Reports; Annual Reports*	0	2020	1	0	0	0	0	1	**Responsibility**: *UNDP; Ministry of Youth; Partners*

---

[3] It is recommended that projects use output indicators from the Strategic Plan IRRF, as relevant, in addition to project-specific results indicators. Indicators should be disaggregated by sex or for other targeted groups where relevant.

	1.4 Social media presence for Youth Connekt awareness raising and the dissemination of information to young people	Monthly reports; Quarterly Reports; Annual Reports	0	2020	1	1	1	1	1	5	**Responsibility**: UNDP; Ministry of Youth; Partners
Output 2 Youth connected employment, skills and opportunities	2.1 Establishment of youth employment services and job placements at IBUHUB, and at least two youth provided with internships	Monthly reports; Quarterly Reports; Annual Reports	0	2020	1	0	0	0	0	1	**Responsibility**: UNDP; Ministry of Youth; Partners
	2.2 Youth participation in COVID-19 community awareness	Monthly reports; Quarterly Reports; Annual Reports	0	2020	1	0	0	0	0	1	**Responsibility**: UNDP; Ministry of Youth; Partners
	2.3 Education and skills resource database established	Monthly reports; Quarterly Reports; Annual Reports	0	2020	1	0	0	0	0	1	**Responsibility**: UNDP; Ministry of Youth; Partners
Output 3 Youth connected to youth: Networking platform for young people	3.1 Establishment of digital youth portal/Connekt e-store	Monthly reports; Quarterly Reports; Annual Reports	0	2020	1	0	0	0	0	1	**Responsibility**: UNDP; Ministry of Youth; Partners
	3.2 Participation at Youth Connekt Africa Summit	Monthly reports; Quarterly Reports; Annual Reports	0	2020	1	1	1	1	1	5	**Responsibility**: UNDP; Ministry of Youth

	3.3 *Participation at Regional and International conferences*	*Monthly reports; Quarterly Reports; Annual Reports*	0	2020	1	1	1	1	1	5	**Responsibility**: *UNDP; Ministry of Youth*
	3.4 *Creation of Youth Connekt social media campaign*	*Monthly reports; Quarterly Reports; Annual Reports*	0	2020	1					1	**Responsibility**: *UNDP; Ministry of Youth*

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER

Questionnaire #: _____   **Interviewer : _____**

Date of interview:____ JULY 2023   **Start time:_____**

NAME OF RESPONDENT:			
ORGANISATION:			
JOB TITLE:			
MOBILE NUMBER:			
REMOTE OR FACE TO FACE:			
LOCATION OF INTERVIEW			

Gender	Female	Male		
Type of project activity involved in	C2C	Business growth Programme	ZRBF competition	Start-up tour bus competition
Years the person was involved in YC	2019	2020	2021	2022

Good morning/afternoon. My name is _____. I am an independent researcher doing an evaluation of the YOUTH CONNEKT project which is a joint project being implemented by UNDP and the Government of Zimbabwe. We are conducting the evaluation to find out more about the results of the project and to gather ideas about how it may be improved in the future.

You are free to participate or not as you wish. There is no penalty for not participating.

The interview should take no more than 60 minutes and the answers we gather will be put together with all other answers from other respondents so that no person's individual answers can be identified. All of your answers will be completely confidential and will only be used by UNDP to understand the performance of the project better and improve future youth programme design. The results of the evaluation will only be shared with stakeholders who have been involved in the design and implementation of the project as well as representatives of young people.

If you would like more information about this evaluation or would like to contact UNDP you may call Ms Blessing Muchemwa on 0719720198.
Are you ready to answer the evaluation questions?
Thank you

Evaluation Questions
1.   DESIGN AND RELELVANCE

Evaluation Questions
EQ 1.2 To what extent is the project aligned with the development needs of Zimbabwe and its youth?
EQ 1.3. To what extent were the project's design, implementation model, tools, inputs and funding approach realistic, adequate and appropriate to the development context for achieving results?
EQ 1.4. To what extent were the project's partnership arrangements and target beneficiaries appropriate and clearly defined to achieve results?
EQ 1.5. To what extent did the project incorporate cross-cutting issues such as gender, social exclusion, human rights, disability, Leave No one Behind and UNDP's Social and Environmental Standards in design, delivery, and monitoring?
2.   EFFECTIVENESS
EQ 2.2 What factors have enabled or constrained achieving results? Could different approaches have achieved better results?
EQ 2.3. Have there been any unintended (positive or negative) results from the project?
EQ 2.4. To what extent has the project been effective in responding to the needs of beneficiaries? What specific results stand out?
EQ 2.5. How effective has the business competition model/ C2C/ Start-up tour bus/ Business Growth programme been in contributing to results?
EQ 2.6. How effective has the project been in promoting start-ups that create jobs and meet important challenges in society?
EQ 2.7. Did business performance change as a result of the project? (sales, profit, jobs, etc)
EQ 2.8. To what extent were the results from M&E mechanisms used for learning and meeting project results?
EQ 2.9. What perceptions do stakeholders have about the project (positive and negative)?
EQ 2.10. To what extent did governance structures, management structures, partnership arrangements and financial systems support delivery of the project's activities?
EQ 2.12. Have there been any impacts (positive and negative) from building capacities and learning?
EQ 2.15. Has the achievement of results been affected by contextual issues (political, economic, social)?
EQ 2.16 What should future youth interventions prioritise? Where are the opportunities? What strategies should be used?
EQ 2.7. Has the achievement of results been affected (positively and negatively) by internal programme arrangements and organisation by UNDP, GoZ and partners?
3.   EFFICIENCY
EQ 3.1. Were the project resources (financial, physical, human) provided for by UNDP, GoZ and partners adequate to achieve results?
EQ 3.2. Could resources (financial, physical, human) have been used differently to achieve more? Or less resources used to achieve the same results?
EQ 3.3. Are there any ways that greater Value for Money could be achieved?

Evaluation Questions
EQ 3.4. To what extent have project organisational arrangements and systems, and those of UNDP and GoZ, helped or hindered the effective use of resources to achieve results?
EQ 3.5. Did the project utilise technology effectively to enhance results?
EQ 3.6. Has the project adapted to external issues and learning?
EQ 3.7. To what extent did the project make use of synergies with other stakeholder's activities, and avoid duplication?
4. SUSTAINABILITY
EQ 4.1 How likely is it that project outcomes and impacts will be sustained after the completion of the project?
EQ 4.2. What factors have supported or undermined sustainability? (e.g. levels of buy-in, credibility, trust, changes in attitudes towards youth, narrowed social distance)
EQ 4.3.To what extent has the project contributed to building individual, institutional and national capacities to sustain the project after is completion? What factors have supported or hindered building capacities?
EQ 4.4. Is there an exit strategy? If yes, to what extent is it likely to result in a smooth hand over to new stakeholders and ensure project benefits are maintained?
EQ 4.5. How can the sustainability of impacts and outcomes and the chances of the project being replicated be enhanced?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND SHARING YOUR VIEWS. THESE WILL HELP UNDP AND GOZ IMPROVE YOUTH PROGRAMMING.

Time interview ends _____am/pm

YOUTH

Questionnaire #: _____   **Interviewer : _____**

Date of interview:___ JULY 2023   **Start time:_____**

NAME OF RESPONDENT:		
BUSINESS NAME AND WHAT THE BUSINESS DOES:		
INDIVIDUAL INTERVEIW / BUSINESS GROUP INTERVIEW		
MOBILE NUMBER:		
REMOTE OR FACE TO FACE:		
LOCATION OF INTERVIEW		

Gender	Female	Male		
If group interview how many women, men				
Type of YC project activity involved in	C2C	Business growth Programme	ZRBF competition	Start-up tour bus competition
Years the person was involved in YC	2019	2020	2021	2022

Good morning/afternoon. My name is _____. I am an independent researcher doing an evaluation of the YOUTH CONNEKT project which is a joint project being implemented by UNDP and the Government of Zimbabwe. We are conducting the evaluation to find out more about the results of the project and to gather ideas about how it may be improved in the future.

You are free to participate or not as you wish. There is no penalty for not participating.

The interview should take no more than 60 minutes and the answers we gather will be put together with all other answers from other respondents so that no person's individual answers can be identified. All of your answers will be completely confidential and will only be used by UNDP to understand the performance of the project better and improve future youth programme design. The results of the evaluation will only be shared with stakeholders who have been involved in the design and implementation of the project as well as representatives of young people.

If you would like more information about this evaluation or would like to contact UNDP you may call Ms Blessing Muchemwa on 0719720198.
Are you ready to answer the evaluation questions?
Thank you

Evaluation Questions
1. DESIGN AND RELELVANCE
EQ 1.2 To what extent did the project fit with your needs and the needs of Zimbabwean youth?
EQ 1.3. What did you like about the way the project activities were designed and delivered? What did you not like?
EQ 1.5. Did different groups of youth participate more or less in the project's activities? E.g. a) women/men, b) different language groups, c) people with more confidence/ less confidence, d) people with disabilities/ people with no disabilities, e) people from richer families/ poorer families, f) people from different political parties, etc. How could the project have catered better to ensure that different types of people were more included?
2. EFFECTIVENESS
EQ 2.2 What factors about the project have enabled or constrained you being able to achieving results for your business? Could the project have done things differently to help you get better results?
EQ 2.3. Have there been any unintended (positive or negative) results from participating in the project?
EQ 2.5. Did participating in the business competition / C2C / Business growth programme result in any changes for you?
EQ 2.7. Has your business performance change since project? (sales, profit, jobs, etc). Has the project played any role in this?
EQ 2.9. What are young people's attitudes towards the project (positive and negative)?
EQ 2.10. Did the management of the project, those that delivered training to youth, financial systems and other systems help you/ hinder you from getting the most from the project's activities?
EQ 2.12. What do you most value from what you have you learned from participating in the project?
EQ 2.15. Has the achievement of your business results been affected by any issues (political, economic, social)?
EQ 2.16 What should future youth interventions prioritise? Where are the opportunities? What methods should be used?
3. SUSTAINABILITY
EQ 4.1 Have the businesses that have been supported by the project been able to carry on after the completion of the project? How can future projects better prepare businesses to continue after the project ends?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND SHARING YOUR VIEWS. THESE WILL HELP UNDP AND GOZ IMPROVE YOUTH PROGRAMMING.

Time interview ends _____am/pm

Annex 7: Data Recording Templates

a. Strategic Partner

DATA RECORDING TEMPLATE		
STAKEHOLDER CATEGORY		
Strategic level		
NAME	Strategic partner 1	Strategic partner 2
ORGANISATION		
JOB TITLE		
LOCATION		
GENDER		
SUB PROJECT INVOLVEMENT		
Start-up Tour Bus		
ZRBF Competition		
Business Growth Programme		
Classroom to Career		
PERIOD OF INVOLVEMENT		
ANSWERS TO EQs		
As per data collection tool		
EQ 1		
Etc		

b. Implementing partner

DATA RECORDING TEMPLATE		
STAKEHOLDER CATEGORY		
Implementing partner		
NAME	IP 1	IP 2
ORGANISATION		
JOB TITLE		
LOCATION		
GENDER		
SUB PROJECT INVOLVEMENT		
Start-up Tour Bus		
ZRBF Competition		
Business Growth Programme		
Classroom to Career		
PERIOD OF INVOLVEMENT		
ANSWERS TO EQs		
As per data collection tool		
EQ 1		
Etc		

c. Youth

DATA RECORDING TEMPLATE		
STAKEHOLDER CATEGORY		
Youth		
Business name and description		
NAME	YOUTH 1	YOUTH 2
LOCATION		
GENDER		
INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP INTERVIEW		
SUB PROJECT INVOLVEMENT		
Start-up Tour Bus		
ZRBF Competition		
Business Growth Programme		
Classroom to Career		
PERIOD OF INVOLVEMENT		
ANSWERS TO EQs		
As per data collection tool		
EQ 1		
Etc		

Annex 8: People Interviewed

- Strategic level interviews comprising:
  - Madelena Manoja, Deputy Resident Representative
  - Ethel Bangwayo National Economist, UNDP
  - Blessing Muchemwa, Monitoring and Evaluations Officer, UNDP.
  - Corra Leigh Magiya. Ex-UNDP Youth Empowerment and Livelihoods Officer, Now Poverty, Inequality and Development Specialist. UNDP Nairobi County, Kenya.
  - Shingirai Chitsike, Youth Empowerment and Livelihoods Officer, ex UNDP
  - Simba Sibanda, ex-UNDP Project YC staff
  - Solomon Mutambara, Programme Specialist and Project Manager ZRBF, UNDP
  - Blessing Nyagumbo, Programme Specialist Adolescent Youth, UNFPA
  - Caroline Majonga, Country Coordinator , UN Volunteers Zimbabwe
  - Adolphus Chimomwe, Senior Programme Officer, ILO
  - Mr Obedience Kudzurunga, Deputy Director, Business Development, Ministry of Youth Sports Arts and Recreation (MoYSAR)

- Implementing partners :
  - Tadzoka Pswayi, Impact Hub
  - Samuel Mutsa CEO, IBUHB
  - Sangano Chisina, Operations Director, Zimbabwe Youth Council
  - Sicelo Dube, Elevate Trust, STEM
  - Koster Nyanzero Maswarea Holdings
  - Patrick Maseko ZB Holdings
  - Moses Machipisa, ex-Higher Life Foundation,
  - Sika Mukwendi, Tag Team Productions,
  - Pedzizai Chimbwanda, Mentor Us/Micah Foundation

Annex 9: Documents Reviewed

The following documents were gathered from UNDP and reviewed:

1. Project document for Youth Connekt Zimbabwe, signed 6 March 2020.
2. Youth Connekt Zimbabwe Initiation Plan, signed 26 March 2016
3. 2020 Annual Work Plan
4. 2021 Annual Work Plan
5. Youth Connekt Zimbabwe, 2020 First Third Progress Report
6. UNDP Youth Connekt 2021 Annual Progress Report
7. Strengthening National Capacities for Economic Management and Development Effectiveness, 2019 Annual progress Report for the Youth Connekt Project
8. Youth Connekt Zimbabwe 2020 Second Third Progress Report
9. Project Monthly Report September 2020
10. Project Monthly Report October 2020
11. Lists of youth beneficiaries - northern region participants, Classroom to Career fellows, Start-up Tour Bus competition participants, Covid-19 Response Competition participants, YC-ZRBF Competition participants, Business Growth Programme participants, Runners Up, Winners, Gweru Mutare Masvingo participants
12. Partner lists
13. Minutes of the Youth Connekt Partnership Meeting, 29 May 2019.

Other reports reviewed include:

- o ZUNDAF 2016 – 2020, Zimbabwe United Nations Development Assistance Framework
- o Country programme document for Zimbabwe (2022–2026), Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services
- o 2021-2025 Zimbabwe National Development Strategy
- o Zimbabwe Transitional Stabilisation Programme 2018-2020
- o National Youth Policy 2020-2025.

Annex 10: Terms of Reference

DocuSign Envelope ID: B0CAC5DE-8586-4FB3-A8A7-7CE960A2AC44

TERMS OF REFERENCE

End of Project Evaluation of the Youth Connekt Zimbabwe Project

1. General information

Services Required	Expert (s) to undertake an evaluation of the Youth Connekt Zimbabwe Programme (2019-2022)
Project/Programme Tittle	Youth Connekt Zimbabwe
Type of Contract	Individual or Institutional Contract
Locations:	Travel to select locations – to interact with beneficiaries and implementing partners; online interactions (Binga, Bulawayo, Mutare, Masvingo and Gweru)
Duration	25 working days
Expected Start Date	Within 1 week after Contract Signing
Expected End Date	31 March 2023

2. Background

Young people in Zimbabwe face significant developmental challenges. Most notable among these is limited opportunities for education and training leading to low levels of employability. Young people have the highest unemployment rate of 16 per cent. When young people enter the labour market they face high levels of informality, higher rates of unemployment and are likely to be concentrated on low income and precarious conditions. According to a March 2019 UNICEF U-Report Poll, 80 per cent of young people believe that lack of employment opportunities is the major challenge being faced by young people in Zimbabwe today, with 53 per cent saying that job opportunities would give them hope for the future.

Facing these challenges, a significant portion of young people follow the route of entrepreneurship. There are generally unsupportive conditions for entrepreneurship that force young people to engage in negative coping mechanisms. The situation has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic which has affected the most vulnerable disproportionately.

A study conducted by the Government revealed that if Zimbabwe taps into youth demographic dividend, engaging them in skills development; employment, enterprise and

sustainable livelihoods, Zimbabwe stands to increase its GDP by 3.5 per cent in addition to other economic and social benefits.

3. YouthConnekt

Launched by UNDP and the Government of Rwanda in 2012, Youth Connekt Africa is a platform which brings partners together, to help empower Africa's youth in a range of thematic areas which cover a wide socio-economic and political spectrum. So far, 30 other African countries have set up Youth Connekt initiatives. Youth Connekt initiatives in these countries cover a wide range of youth empowerment themes.

Youth Connekt Zimbabwe was a pilot member of the Youth Connekt Africa initiative, which seeks to bring partners together to help empower Africa's youth in a range of thematic areas which cover a wide socioeconomic spectrum. Overall, Youth Connekt seeks to provide youth with the skills, networks and information needed to scale their initiatives and gain meaningful employment".

The Youth Connekt Zimbabwe project, launched in 2019, was piloted successfully leading to Zimbabwe's performance being hailed as "best practice" and "innovative" in the region. UNDP and the Government of Zimbabwe have been implementing the Youth Connekt Programme as part of efforts to improve outcomes for young people. The objectives of the programme were to:
- Support entrepreneurship development
- Promote employment, skills development and other opportunities - Facilitate networking and dialogue

Taking an evidence-based and demand-driven approach, the development of Youth Connekt Zimbabwe is informed by youth needs as articulated by the youth themselves at the 2019 Youth Indaba. Needs include (but are not limited to): access to funds (ensuring that women have equal access); business incubation; access to markets; skills development; apprenticeships and work experience; bridging the digital divide; equal opportunities for women in the arts; information and networking; and the need to reach rural youth with youth-centered interventions

The flagship component of the Youth Connekt Programme is the annual business competition. Two editions have already been successfully concluded, the 2019 Start Up Tour Bus and the 2020 Virtual Tour Bus with a focus on COVID-19. The 2021 edition is a continuation of this and builds on the lessons and success of the previous years. The 2021 competition is dubbed the "Business Growth Programme". The programme is in its third year of implementation, UNDP and the Ministry of Youth Sports Arts and Recreation (MoYSAR) believe it is an opportune time to reflect on the impact of the project.

In 2022, Youth Connekt programme delivered a business competition focused on creating economic opportunities for young people through innovative business ideas to strengthen the food value and supply chain.

4. Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the evaluation is to:

a) Provide an independent assessment of progress of the project across the three project outcomes outlined in the programme document; assessing performance as per the

2

foreseen targets and indicators of achievement at output, outcome and impact levels both intended and unintended; strategies and implementation modalities chosen; partnership arrangements, constraints and opportunities;

b) Provide recommendations for future programming based on the needs and aspirations of Zimbabwean youth; the results from the project while taking into account the aspirations of the Country Office to rationalize its portfolio

Evaluation Objectives

The following are the evaluation objectives

- Assess whether, and to what extent, the project's outcomes and outputs have been achieved;
- Assess UNDP's contribution and that of its partners to the achievement of project outcomes;
- Determine the impact, both positive and negative, as well as intended and nonintended from contribution of the project to the achievement of the outcomes;
- Assess the extent to which the UNDP-supported project outputs and non-project assistance contributed to the respective UNDAF and Country Programme outcomes, as well as their contribution to the TSP and NDS1 national frameworks;
- Examine the extent to which gender equality and women empowerment and human rights targets as cross-cutting issues were integrated and achieved;
- Document achievements, lessons learnt and best practices during the course of implementation to inform future decisions in project design, implementation and management of similar interventions;
- Provide a framework for a large and coherent programme encompassing priority interventions in the areas of youth empowerment, innovation and entrepreneurship
- Identify complementary initiatives for potential partnerships

5. Scope of work

The evaluation will measure progress towards all outcomes and will assess the overall level of achievement of the immediate outcomes to understand how and why these have taken place. The evaluation should include the application of the following data collection tools: document review, virtual interviews and focus groups with the past winners of the various YouthConnekt editions and a stakeholders' workshop.

The main aim of the final project evaluation is to highlight and analyse the results, identify challenges, lessons learnt, good practices, conclusions and recommendations that will help to improve future joint programming, strengthen organisational learning and accountability. This evaluation will capture evaluative evidence of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the project, which can be used to strengthen existing programmes and/or to set the stage for new initiatives.

Firstly, the evaluation will assess the effectiveness of the implementation strategy to ascertain whether the specific and overall interventions and approaches were appropriate and effective. This will include:

1. The implementation modalities, in particular the effectiveness of the funding approach.

3

2. Partnership arrangements, institutional strengthening, and beneficiary participation
   3. Scalability;
4. Cost effectiveness and efficiency as well as sustainability of the Project; and
5. Linkages, synergies and coordination with other Projects/programmes.

Secondly, the evaluation will also assess the Project design and assumptions made at the beginning of the Project and the development process. In this regard, the evaluation will place emphasis on:

1. The extent to which the Project results have been achieved, partnerships established, capacities built.
2. Whether the Project implementation strategy has been optimum and recommend areas for improvement and learning.
3. Assess the project contribution to achievement of UNDP Country Programme, UN Strategic Plan and Government of Zimbabwe development goals and results;
4. Assess the relevance and strategic positioning of this project's support to in the context of Zimbabwe as well as the overall contribution of the project to the strengthening of youth empowerment and entrepreneurial issues in Zimbabwe.
5. Draw, based on above objectives, lessons and recommendations for sustaining the project results, and providing guidance for the future strategic direction for similar projects in the context of Zimbabwe.
6. Programme accountability in as far as communication and visibility is concerned.

Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation will use standard OECD evaluation criteria to assess its performance, which includes relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

Evaluation Questions

The analysis in the evaluation report shall be guided and must respond to **ALL** the below guiding questions. This analysis however should not only be limited to the below guiding questions and the evaluator where appropriate can propose additional questions to the below in the execution of the assignment.

1) **Design and Relevance** – Assess design and focus of the project -
   To what extent did the Project achieve its overall objectives?
   - What and how much progress has been made towards achieving the overall outputs and outcomes (including contributing factors and constraints);
   - To what extent were the results (impacts, outcomes and outputs) achieved? - Were the inputs and strategies identified, and were they realistic, appropriate and adequate to achieve the results?
   - Was the project relevant to the identified needs?
   ▪ Whether the problem the project addressed is clearly identified and the approach soundly conceived;
   ▪ Whether the relationship between outcomes, outputs, activities and inputs of the project are logically articulated; Were the activities and outputs of the programme consistent with the intended outcomes and effects? Were the activities and outputs

4

of the programme consistent with the overall goal and the attainment of its objectives?

- Were the inputs and strategies identified realistic, appropriate and adequate to achieve the results? To what extent has the projects selected method of delivery been appropriate to supporting the current project and the overall development context
- Whether the outcomes and outputs of the project were stated explicitly and precisely in verifiable terms with SMART indicators;
- Whether the target beneficiaries of the project are clearly identified;
- Whether the project was relevant to the development priorities of the country; Did the outputs and outcome address the specific development challenges of the Country and the intended beneficiaries? Were there any unintended consequences (positive or negative) that have implications to the human development goals of the country?

2) **Effectiveness** - Describe the management processes and their appropriateness in supporting delivery
   - Was the project effective in delivering desired/planned results?
   - To what extent did the Project's M&E mechanism contribute in meeting project results?
   - How effective were the strategies and tools used in the implementation of the project?
   - How effective has the project been in responding to the needs of the beneficiaries, and what results were achieved? The reflection on the business competition module must be more detailed beyond conventional evaluations. how effective has been the support in promoting viable start-ups that create jobs and meet the important challenges in society. Aspects that can be examined include sustainability of the businesses (are they still operating); change in business performance across a number of key indicators (sales, profit, number of jobs) following the support; perceptions of young people towards the YouthConnekt programme.
- What are the major achievements of the project vis-à-vis its objectives, performance indicators and targets? Were the stated outputs achieved? Did they contribute to the stated outcomes? What are the key development and advisory contributions that project has made/is making towards the outcomes, if any? Please explain in detail in terms of impact, sustainability of results and contribution to capacity development and partnerships.
- Whether there is evidence of UNDP contribution to the outcomes of the project.
- What major factors affected project delivery and offer what appropriate interventions might have strengthened or addressed them.
- What are the future intervention strategies and issues to be addressed? To what extent has the project supported domestication of key regional frameworks, experiences and international best practices through the national development plans and strategies?

3) **Efficiency** – Was the process of achieving results efficient?
   - Whether the project resources (financial, physical and manpower) were adequate in terms of both quantity and quality; Has there been an economical use of financial and human resources? Have resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) been allocated strategically to achieve outcomes?

5

- Whether the project's resources were used effectively to produce planned results (Are the disbursements and project expenditures in line with expected budgetary plans)? Whether the project was cost-effective compared to similar interventions; Was the process of achieving the results efficient? Have activities supporting the strategy been cost-effective? In general, do the results achieved justify the costs? Could the same results be attained with fewer resources? Are there other efficient ways and means of delivering more and better results with available inputs?
- Whether the technologies selected (any innovations adopted, if any) were suitable; and
- The delivery of Government counterpart inputs in terms of personnel, premises and equipment.
- What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the Project's implementation process
- Did the Project activities overlap and duplicate other similar interventions (funded nationally or by other donors)?
- Could a different approach have produced better results? 3 - How was the project's collaboration with the UNRCO, UNDP, the Government of Rwanda, national institutions, development partners, and the Steering Committee - How efficient were the management and accountability structures of the project? - How did the project financial management processes and procedures affect project implementation? - What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the project's implementation process?

4) Sustainability-

To what extent are the benefits of the Project likely to be sustained by national capacities after the completion of this Project? If not why?

What are the key factors that will require attention in order to improve the prospects of sustainability of the Project outcomes and potential for replication of approach?

Has the project generated the buy- in and credibility needed for sustained impact

- What is the likelihood of continuation and sustainability of project outcomes and benefits after completion of the project?
- Is there an exit strategy to phase out the assistance provided by the Project including contributing factors and constraints?
- What is the likelihood of continuation and sustainability of the Project outcomes and benefits after the completion of the Project?
- Describe key factors that will require attention in order to improve prospects of sustainability of project outcomes and the potential for replication of the approach?
- How were capacities strengthened at the individual and organizational level (including contributing factors and constraints)?

5) Coherence

6. **Lessons** - Describe the main lessons that have emerged?

6

- What are the recommendations for similar support in future?

7. What could be the main **elements for a future intervention** – successor program for YouthConnekt. Assess whether or not the UNDP resource mobilization strategy for the project was appropriate and effective - has the partnership strategy been appropriate and effective.

6. Methodology

The evaluation should be based on the five criteria laid out in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance, as defined in the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) guidelines.

The evaluation should be based on an analysis of secondary and primary data collected from various sources, including project quarterly reports, implementing partners' (IPs) reports, minutes of project board meetings, interviews with key informants and focus group discussions (FGDs) with project beneficiaries. The evaluation will take a "theory of change'' (TOC) approach to determining causal links between the interventions that have been supported and observed progress at the country level. The evaluation exercise will be, consultative, and participatory ensuring representation of both women and men, entailing a combination of comprehensive desk reviews, analysis and interviews, as highlighted above.

The methodology should include;

a) Review of project documentation. Review of key project documents such as approved project documents, recent studies, reviews, project monitoring documents, back to office reports, annual reports, quarterly reports, disbursement reports, progress reports and other information available with implementing partners.

b) Data collection: (i) visits to selected stakeholders to carry out in depth interviews, inspection, and analysis of project activities; (ii) phone interviews and performance data surveys of institutions not visited in person; (iii) interviews with implementing partners. For each of these interviews, the consultants should first develop and present their ideas (in the inception report) for the content and format of the interview forms that will be applied to capture the information required, as well as the method to be used in administering them and tabulating the results.

c) Analysis: Data triangulation and analysis triangulation to validate evidence and arrive at findings.

d) The evaluator will be expected to develop and present detailed statement of evaluations methods/approaches in an inception report to show how each objective, evaluation question and criterion will be answered.

e) While interviews are a key instrument, all analysis must be based on observed facts, evidence and data. This precludes relying exclusively upon anecdotes, hearsay and unverified opinions. Findings should be specific, concise and supported by quantitative and/or qualitative information that is reliable and valid. The evaluation methodology must be explained in detail and be appropriate and of sufficient rigor to produce valid results. Limitations to the evaluation with particular attention to the limitations

7

associated with the evaluation methodology (selection bias, recall bias, unobservable differences between comparator groups, etc.) must be disclosed in the evaluation report.

The evaluation team will be expected to:
- Employ study techniques that ensure internal validity of study results
- Utilize social science methods and tools that reduce the need for evaluator-specific judgments.
- Employ standardized recording and maintenance of records from the evaluation (e.g., focus group transcripts).

7. Expected Deliverables

The following deliverables are expected.

a) **An inception report**, outlining the consultants understanding of the scope of the work and intended work plan of the analysis, and evaluation questions, shall be submitted after 5 days of commencing the consultancy. The evaluators will prepare an inception report which will outline their understanding of the scope of work, intended work plan and analysis, towards delivering on the defined assignment.

b) **A draft comprehensive report** of finding, submitted for comments. Once cleared the report the full word version and a presentation will be tabled to key stakeholders (workshop).

c) **The Final Report**, which will be submitted 10 days after receiving comments from the stakeholders.

d) **PowerPoint presentation** – which will summarise the findings from the evaluation report.

The contents and structure of the draft and final reports should include the following:

- Executive summary
- Introduction
- Description of the evaluation methodology
- Situational analysis with regard to the outcome, outputs, and partnership strategy
- Key findings (tailored around the evaluation questions), including best practices and lessons learned
- Analysis of opportunities to provide guidance for future programming - Conclusions and recommendations - Appendices:
    - Impact of YouthConnekt on entrepreneurship – a report on the state of past YouthConnekt winners (detailed response to research question 4 under effectiveness) -15 pages
    - Draft concept note for the next generation YouthConnekt project (including theory of change) - 5 pages
    - Charts, terms of reference, field visits, people interviewed, documents reviewed

Deliverable	%	Amount

8

a) Delivery of an evaluation inception report and acceptance by the commissioning unit	20%	
b) Delivery of a draft comprehensive report of finding to the commissioning unit. Presentations at a validation meeting.	40%	
c) Delivery of the final evaluation report and acceptance by the commissioning unit (report clearance form signed). Evaluation report meets all the evaluation questions asked and the report is drafted in-line with the report structure outlined in the terms of reference. A PowerPoint presentation is submitted and presented at a dissemination meeting. A draft concept note on the next phase of the YouthConnekt Programme is accepted by the commissioning unit.	40%	
Total		

8. Institutional Arrangements for Management of this consultancy

The principal responsibility for managing this assignment lies with the UNDP Country Office, Zimbabwe. UNDP will contract the consultant and ensure the timely provision of reimbursable costs and remuneration. UNDP will mobilise internal technical expertise to support the consultant's work. UNDP will support the consultant's engagement with stakeholders, arrange for meetings, field visits and coordinate with stakeholders and Government officials.

Under the overall supervision of the UNDP Head of PRECC and the CO M&E Specialist, the consultant will be in charge of the quality of the consultations with stakeholders, collection and analysis of data and generation of all the reports as per the TORs.

9. Experience and qualifications

Work can be undertaken by an individual.

Service provider will need to have appropriately qualifications to deliver the tasks identified above. The service provider's proposal shall demonstrate capabilities and experience in undertaking similar work. At least 3 references are mandatory.

- Minimum 10 years' experience in international development and evaluation. Experience is the areas of youth employment; enterprise development – track record with business competitions will be an added advantage; and the provision of innovative solutions to improve outcomes for young people
- At least 5 years' experience of conducting project/programme evaluations and specifically experience in conducting evaluations for UN agency, government or international aid agency projects will be an added advantage
- A Masters Degree in the fields of development, economics, entrepreneurship, business, monitoring and evaluation and other related fields
- Experience in basic research techniques with strong skills in writing analytical reports
- 3 references from previous similar projects

9

10. Expression of interest and scoring

Potential evaluators must submit technical proposals following the guidelines below:
- Technical proposal must be a maximum of 10 pages summarizing proposed approach and work plan with the expected number of working days.
- Annex 1, maximum of 1 page providing evidence of similar work done and experience to undertake the assignment.
- Annex 2, summary CV's of the proposed evaluator/s – maximum of 2 pages per team member

The technical proposal will be reviewed paying attention to
a) Quality of the methodological proposal
b) Demonstrated expertise in the area of work
c) Feasibility and cost effectiveness of proposed approach

The proposal should cover all arising costs (travel, materials, and any envisaged costs for provision of requested services for Binga, Bulawayo, Mutare, Masvingo and Gweru)

The contracted individual will be expected to travel within Zimbabwe for any relevant offline sessions. Locations of travel will include targeted urban areas, as well as will be determined further based on final screening and selection data on the participants. In line with this the service provider should provide their estimated:

- Daily Subsistence Rate (Accommodation and Food for travel/training away from Harare)
- Cost of Travel/Transport per KM