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Akazi Kanoze Accelerated Learning Program

Retrospective Study

Kigali, Rwanda



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Executive Summary

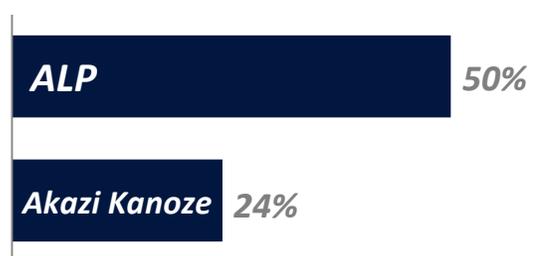
The Akazi Kanoze Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) was established with the goal of providing one year of non-formal basic education along with vocational training and livelihood accompaniment services to primary school dropouts. From 2011 to 2014, the ALP trained over 800 youth in five districts of Rwanda. In order to better understand program outcomes and the potential for alignment with the TVET results framework, the Akazi Kanoze team implemented a retrospective study.

Methodology: Akazi Kanoze (AK) collected quantitative and qualitative data in order to answer five critical research questions about youth literacy and employment outcomes, project implementation, and potential opportunities for government partnerships and scale-up. Data on ALP students' Kinyarwanda literacy was collected using EDC's out-of-school literacy assessment in 2012 and these data were analyzed and compared to data from in-school primary school learners. In order to analyze employment outcomes, the team compared project data from Akazi Kanoze and ALP youth. To gain qualitative information on students' and implementing partners' experience and the opportunities for scale-up, the team conducted individual interviews over the course of a week.

Findings: Overall, the youth interviewed were highly satisfied with the program's level of academic and on-the-job learning and facilitation. **ALP students improved their reading fluency and comprehension to surpass national standards for primary school students.** By the end of the project, youth had high levels of comprehension and were reading at an average pace of 60 words correct per minute with a grade-level text.

The youth who were largely unemployed before the start of the program were able to find at least part-time work after completion. The technical training appears to be the most attractive part of the program and graduates and partners asked for more time to be spent on this component. Female ALP participants, who had the lowest level of prior work experience, reported the highest level of employment compared to AK males and females and their ALP male colleagues.

ALP students have better employment outcomes
P6 ALP students with no prior work experience have over double employment level of similar P6 AK youth.



Although youth appear to be drawn to the program because of the vocational component, the employment data demonstrate that the combination of basic education, mentoring *and* the AK package may be more effective for preparing this group of at-risk youth for the workplace than AK training alone. **ALP youth who had no work experience were significantly more likely than AK youth with no prior work experience to have employment after the program.** More data should be collected on this topic in order to better understand the impact of the mentoring and job linkage services on employment outcomes, as these interventions were more intensive for ALP students compared to AK youth.

Implementing partners who were interviewed discussed the need for accelerated basic education programs in Rwanda, and further credentialing for this group of at-risk youth. These local NGOs noted the importance of aligning the technical training with local market demands, and one rural organization recommended a higher focus on agricultural job tracks for rural youth.

Conclusion: The continuous demand for ALPs shows that primary school dropouts are eager to learn and advance their skills. An accelerated learning program similar to this, but with additional modules could be aligned to the TVET qualifications framework in order to provide an entry point into the system for youth without a formal 9-year basic education. For this group of highly vulnerable youth, allowing them to test into the TVET system would give them the opportunity to attain a nationally recognized credential and work readiness level to be active and productive members of the Rwandan economy.

Introduction

The Akazi Kanoze Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) was a component created under the broader Akazi Kanoze project that aimed to prepare low skilled, minimally educated Rwandan youth for active engagement in economic and civic life. Running from 2011 to 2014, the seven implementing partners of the ALP trained 812 (413 male, 399 female) youth in five districts. Focusing on youth who had dropped out of school between the Primary 4 (P4) and Primary 6 (P6) grades, the program provided one year of non-formal basic education and vocational training along with six-months of livelihood accompaniment services such as coaching, mentoring and on-the-job work experience. The objectives of the ALP were as follows:

1. *Provide youth with accelerated basic education at the Primary 5-6 level*
2. *Provide youth with market relevant entry-level technical training*
3. *Provide youth with career guidance and work experience opportunities (livelihood accompaniment)*

The project was built on the fact that Rwanda's under-educated, unemployed youth population represents a current and continuing hindrance to the government's goal of becoming a leading economy in the region, since an unskilled workforce will not permit the type and productivity of industry advances envisioned in the GOR's vision 20/20 and other plans. The ALP was designed to address this challenge by providing primary school dropouts with an accelerated model that would allow them to complete their primary level education while preparing them for life and work.

This report on the Akazi Kanoze ALP provides insight into the students' experiences, literacy and employment outcomes, and lessons learned when considering implementation of catch-up programs in the future. This report combines the results of quantitative and qualitative primary research to better understand the program's outcomes and potential opportunities for aligning the ALP with Rwanda's technical and vocational education (TVET) qualifications framework.

The Akazi Kanoze Accelerated Learning Program

Like the broader Akazi Kanoze Project, the ALP aimed to enable youth to be more capable of earning a livelihood, through appropriate and relevant connections to life and work readiness training, opportunities, market actors, and skills. In order to achieve the above stated goals, Akazi Kanoze ALP provided youth with a variety of activities and trainings that were implemented by a cadre of local implementing partners:

- **Accelerated Basic Education:** This component aims at equipping primary school drop-outs (possessing a prior minimum P4 level) with the basic literacy, numeracy, life, and work readiness skills needed for entry into the labor market, and/or entry into post-primary education/training opportunities. The basic education curriculum was comprised of approximately 600 instructional hours (300 hours for literacy in Kinyarwanda, 200 hours for math and 100 hours for English) and

was taught over a 12 month period. The goal of this accelerated basic education curriculum is for youth to reach a literacy and numeracy level equivalent to P6 education.

- **Technical Training:** In EDC's experience, over-aged youth are more motivated to embark on a rigorous basic education catch-up program if technical skills training, tangibly resulting in income generation opportunities, is offered as part of the larger training program. For this reason, the Akazi Kanoze ALP provided a basic entry-level vocational training, of variable duration depending upon the technical field proposed, in addition to accelerated basic education. This component was intended to increase youths' participation in non-formal basic education training, while ensuring that the youth also gained marketable entry level skills in priority economic sectors with high growth potential, including construction related trades, the hospitality and service industry, and information technology.
- **Livelihood accompaniment:** After the 12 months training of accelerated basic education and technical training, the ALP provided mentoring and work experience. For about six months, youth had access to a mentor who assisted youth in the transition from training to work experience. Additionally, all youth were placed in at least one short-term work experience opportunity (equivalent to at least 20 days of full time work) that allowed them to put their emerging skills into practice. They were also offered additional social/economic supports such as access to saving and loans groups, or entrepreneurship training or coaching to start small businesses and/or cooperatives.

The ALP was implemented as a component of the larger Akazi Kanoze project, and the training for the ALP youth was modeled after the Akazi Kanoze project package. With this said, there are several differences between the ALP and the Akazi Kanoze intervention package, most significantly in the difference in levels of mentoring after technical training. The table below outlines the similarities and differences between the ALP and AK interventions that are studied in this report, broken down by implementing partner:

Table 1: Differences between ALP and AK Interventions (ALP broken down by implementing partner)

	AK ALP		Akazi Kanoze (no accelerated basic education)
	AVSI	CPJSP Kamonyi	
Accelerated Basic Education	600 hours	600 hours	
Work Readiness Curriculum	100 hours	100 hours	100 hours
Entrepreneurship Curriculum	35 hours	35 hours	35 hours
Technical/Vocational Training	4 months	6 months	3 months
Livelihood Accompaniment Services	6 months (includes internship, mentoring and coaching)	4 months (includes internship, mentoring and coaching)	3 months (internship)

Overall, the largest difference between the ALP and Akazi Kanoze intervention packages is the amount of support after completion. ALP youth were paired with a mentor, usually a successful youth or adult in their neighborhood, who helped them throughout the internship stage and during job placement. Mentors advised them on issues such as workplace behaviors, starting new businesses, and job search strategies. Additionally, many of the technical trainers in the ALP assisted youth in finding work or employed them directly after program completion. Due to the high level of one-on-one support of ALP youth, this may have positively affected the employment outcomes of these youth when compared to Akazi Kanoze graduates, who received less personalized support.

The Accelerated Learning Program Outcomes Overview

Participant Demographics: A total of 812 youth enrolled in the Akazi Kanoze ALP from 2011 to 2014. The program had almost gender parity with 49% female enrollees and 51% male. About two-thirds of the enrolled youth were from rural areas, and only two implementing partners of eight total worked with youth in rural Kigali (Strive and ASOFERWA).

The graduation rate for female ALP enrollees was 69% and the graduation rate for male enrollees was 76%.

Graduation Rate: Of the 812 youth who enrolled in the program, 600 completed the program. This is a 74% average completion rate. Of the 600 youth who completed the program, only 14 of them did not obtain the passing mark and subsequently did not graduate. Of the 586 program graduates, 274 were female and 312 were male. The following table shows the graduation rates by implementing partner:

Table 2: Enrollment and Graduation by Implementing Partner

	Total # enrollment	Total # Graduation	Graduation Rate
AEE	100	95	95%
ATC Kayonza	100	78	78%
CPJSP	100	56	56%
Benimpuhwe	89	73	82%
Benimpuhwe (ADPM)	101	72	71%
Strive Foundation	110	63	57%
ASOFERWA	106	60	57%
AVSI	106	89	83%

Economic Opportunities: About 58% of the ALP completers reported having economic opportunities after finishing the program. There was no difference between the percentage of male and female completers who reported having attained work after the ALP. The rate of finding work did vary by implementing partner. The following is a table of the percentage averages of youth who reported having an economic opportunity (EO) after the program by implementing organization:

58% of ALP completers reported having economic opportunities after finishing the program.

Table 3: Economic Opportunities by Implementing Organization

	Total # Graduation	Total # EO	% Accessing EO
AEE	95	53	55%
ATC Kayonza	79	51	64%
CPJSP	63	31	49%
Benimpuhwe	74	47	63%
Benimpuhwe (ADPM)	75	74	99%
Strive Foundation	64	30	47%
ASOFERWA	60	30	50%
AVSI	90	27	30%

The difference in levels of employment between implementing partners may be attributed to different labor market demands and levels of personalized support that youth received after graduation. For example, Benimpuhwe (ADPM) had a special construction project running after graduation that employed many youth, and resulted in a high level of economic opportunities for students at this IP. On the other hand, when interviewed, employees at CPJSP discussed the difficulties of placing youth in a rural area dominated by agricultural livelihood opportunities.

Methodology

The ALP aims to improve the literacy and numeracy of youth while also providing them with the necessary work-readiness and technical training to succeed in the workplace. The purpose of this retroactive study is to gather information and report on youth literacy and employment outcomes, students' and implementing partners' experience, and potential opportunities for government partnerships and scale-up. EDC combined primary quantitative data with qualitative research in order to answer the following research questions:

1. *Do ALP students meet or surpass the national reading fluency and comprehension average of in-school primary school P6 students?*
2. *How do employment outcomes of ALP students compared to those of primary school dropouts in the Akazi Kanoze program?*
3. *From the perspective of ALP youth, what are the most useful skills that they acquired during the program and how have they applied these skills?*
4. *From the perspective of the ALP youth, how has the program changed their lives and improved their employability?*
5. *For implementing partners, what were the challenges with implementing the ALP?*
6. *From the perspective of implementing partners, is there a demand and value to the ALP?*

To answer the first research question, primary data from EDC's out-of-school youth literacy assessment was used. The test, the Out-of-School Youth Literacy Assessment (OLA), was designed by literacy experts at EDC in 2011/12 to measure the literacy skills of older youth and young adults in developing countries. It builds on reading research, best practices in evidence-based literacy instruction and assessment, and on existing youth literacy assessment tools. It is unique from other literacy assessment tools in that it is designed for use with marginalized youth with limited literacy skills, living in extreme poverty or post-conflict environments. All ALP participants that started in November 2012, a total of 268 youth, were tested using the OLA. For this report, the students' fluency levels are compared to the national benchmarks and a nationally representative data set of in-school P6 students. A goal of the ALP is to provide youth with an education equivalent to a P6 education, and comparing ALP reading fluency and comprehension with those of in-school youth will shed light on whether or not the AK ALP successfully met this goal with literacy.

The second research question was answered using monitoring data that had been collected by the Akazi Kanoze M&E team over the lifetime of the project. In order to compare youth with similar educational backgrounds, the P6 dropouts from Akazi Kanoze were compared to the P6 dropouts in the second ALP group in 2013. The youth in the dataset are all from Kamonyi District in Southern Province, as this is where the P6 ALP youth were located in 2013. The quantitative data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Central tendency analysis (e.g. mean, median) were conducted for continuous demographic variables. Comparison of means statistical tests were conducted on the gains

in employment between pre-ALP and after-ALP surveys (matched pairs t-test) as well as the extent of change between the ALP youth and Akazi Kanoze youth (independent samples t-test).

The remaining research questions were answered using primary qualitative data collection. Youth case study data were collected through individual interviews. Sampling was non-random and implementing partners identified small groups of ALP graduates. The availability of youth was a limitation in data collection, as some youth did not have free time to be interviewed. In order to minimize this limitation, the researchers made arrangements to visit youth at work. Over the course of a week, the researchers used a semi-structured tool to interview 11 youth in Bugesera, Muhanga and Kamonyi Districts, where three local NGOs had implemented the ALP. Additionally, one youth that had taken the national exam in Gasabo District was interviewed over the phone. The sample size followed the concept of saturation—when the collection of new data does not shed any further light on the issue under investigation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Information on the perspectives of implementing partners was gathered using a similar semi-structured tool. The qualitative information was analyzed using thematic analysis based on the themes in the research questions.

Limitations

Retrospective Study Design: This report, written after end of the ALP relies heavily on existing program data. Because all of the information included in this report was not included in one dataset or one timeframe, datasets from various assessments and data collected throughout the project were analyzed retrospectively. To supplement existing data, primary research was conducted in early March 2015.

Sample Size: The sample size of youth analyzed for employment outcomes is small, which limits the statistical power. The project’s database was used to generate a list of ALP and AK youth with a P6 education level who graduated from Akazi Kanoze between March 2012 and October 2013. A total of 64 ALP and 637 AK youth fit these criteria. These 64 ALP youth were all from Kamonyi District. In order to minimize environmental bias, the AK youth sample was then limited to only include P6 youth from Kamonyi District. The final dataset is 64 ALP and 64 AK youth who were P6 dropouts.

Qualitative Data: Because non-probability sampling was used, no generalizations about impact can be made beyond those interviewed. Case studies can oversimplify or exaggerate the situation. EDC staff who were most familiar with the program advised the researchers on appropriate interviewees so as to accurately illustrate some nuances of the AK program. Furthermore, qualitative research is limited by the sensitivity and ethical standards of the researcher. An experienced researcher conducted the interviews and analyzed the data in order to maintain a high level quality.

Differences in Project Interventions: As mentioned in the Introduction section, the intervention packages for AK and ALP are slightly different, with ALP students receiving more mentoring and job-linkage services. This difference in services may have influence employment outcomes of ALP youth, but without an intervention level study of effect size, we cannot isolate the impact of each intervention.

The results of this research are presented in the following sections: 1) Literacy outcomes, 2) ALP student experiences with case studies, 3) Youth employment outcomes, comparing AK youth with ALP youth, and 4) Implementing partners' perspectives. The report concludes with a section on lessons learned and future opportunities for accelerated learning programming in Rwanda.

Literacy Outcomes

The Rwanda Education Board (REB) and its development partners, including Education Development Center, have set national literacy standards for Primary 3 (P3) and Primary 5 (P5) in both Kinyarwanda and English. The standards set expectations for fluency, which is the number of words read correctly from a grade-level text, and comprehension, the ability to abstract literal and inferential meaning from text. Data is still being collected in order to inform adjustments, but the current Kinyarwanda standards for P5 students are the following:¹

Table 4: National Fluency Standards for Primary 5

	Does not meet grade level expectations	Meets grade level expectations	Exceeds grade level expectations
Kinyarwanda Fluency	0-44 WCPM**	45-59 WCPM	60+ WCPM
Kinyarwanda Comprehension	0-44% correct	46-69% correct	70+% correct

**WCPM—words correct per minute

The AK ALP program had the goal of having primary school dropouts complete the program with at least a P6 level of literacy. The national benchmarks go through P5, but a nationally representative sample of P6 Rwandan students was tested in 2012 and the average fluency and reading comprehension of students at the beginning of the academic year were 48 words correct per minute and 68% correct on comprehension questions.² Girls in P6 had a higher reading fluency, averaging 51 words per minute compared to 46 words per minute for boys. Additionally, Early Grade Reading Assessment data published by the World Bank in 2011 show the Kinyarwanda oral reading fluency for P6 to be 43 WCPM.³

A census of 2012 AK ALP youth was assessed in Kinyarwanda literacy using EDC's Out-of-School Youth Literacy Assessment (OLA). **The results of this assessment show that AK ALP youth started the program with a similar average fluency level as the in-school P6 youth from the nationally representative sample.** At baseline, AK ALP youth had an average reading fluency of 52.7 WCPM on a grade-level text. Similar to the in-school children, female ALP students had a higher reading fluency, averaging 56 WCPM

¹Literacy, Language, Learning, Education Development Center Inc., <<http://l3.edc.org/our-work/national-literacy-standards>>

²Task Order 7 Early Grade Reading and Mathematics in Rwanda, Final Report. RTI International, February 2012 <www.eddataglobal.org>

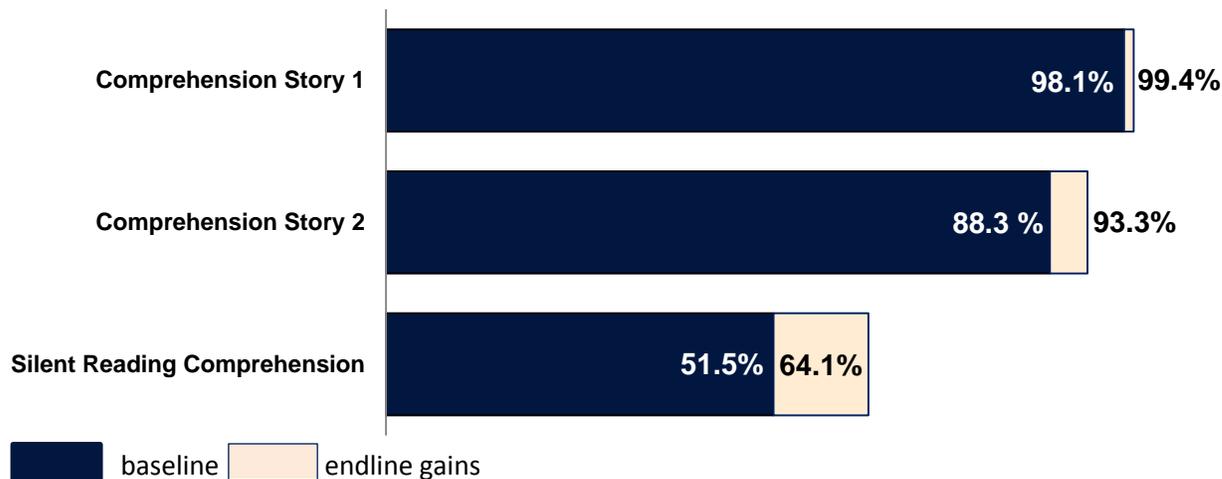
³World Bank Ed Stat, 2011 <<http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/ed-stats>>

compared to 50 WCPM for males. On an oral reading passage below grade-level, the ALP students read more quickly at 58 WCPM on average. Overall, at baseline ALP students are on-par with P6 in-school students and “meet grade level expectations” for the P5 national fluency standards (*Tables with detailed OLA results can be found in Appendix 1*).

At baseline, the ALP out-of-school youth displayed higher reading comprehension than the primary school benchmarks. This is not surprising given their older age and higher level of “functional literacy” from learning how to survive in their environment with limited literacy. At baseline, ALP youth averaged 98% and 88% correct comprehension questions on oral reading. For the more difficult silent reading passages, they averaged 51% correct.

At endline, ALP students had made significant progress in both fluency and comprehension after completing the accelerated basic education course. Fluency levels increased from 52.7 WCPM to 60 WCPM on a grade-level text, which moves them to the “exceeds grade level expectations” of P5 students. Although comprehension was already high at baseline, ALP students increased at endline on all three sets of comprehension questions. Not surprising, the largest increase was on the most difficult silent reading passage since the youth scored the lowest on this set of comprehension questions at baseline. The following graph summarizes the gains in Kinyarwanda comprehension:

Figure 1: ALP Students' Comprehension Gains



By the end of the ALP, students had surpassed national averages for P6 reading fluency and comprehension levels. Numeracy data is not available to compare the students’ math scores, but with literacy, the ALP helped the youth gain at least a P6 level in reading and comprehension, which was the goal of the project.

Student Experiences

The individual interviews were conducted in order to gain insight into the students’ experiences before, during and after the program. This information is useful for retrospective evaluation and

lessons learned as similar ALP programs continue and are expanded in Rwanda. Several themes emerged from the interviews:

- *ALP students were highly unemployed and underemployed before the start of the program;*
- *The technical and vocational training was the most attractive aspect for interested students;*
- *Youth were overall satisfied with the training and the facilitators;*
- *After the program, youth were able to find at least part-time employment;*
- *Youth are more confident in their skillset and ability to find a job;*
- *Graduates would have liked to spend more time on the vocational and technical training.*

This section goes into detail on the above points and is supplemented by three student case studies that highlight the diversity of experiences of ALP graduates.

The majority of students interviewed were unemployed before the start of the program. This was a general theme in the individual interviews, but it is also clear from the data. Youth who attended the training implemented by AVSI started the program with more work experience than the CPJSP youth, yet overall ALP students had significantly lower levels of prior work experience compared with AK youth (at the $p < .025$ level). Especially for the young women who were interviewed, finding any sort of work was a challenge before enrolling in the Akazi Kanoze ALP. Some of the young men were occasionally able to find part-time work as construction site assistants or as bicycle taxi drivers, but the work was unpredictable and the pay was low. Most youth spent their time helping their families with domestic work, agriculture and animal husbandry. Eric, aged 20, in Remera-Rukoma, Kamonyi District believes that his inability to find work before was due to employers not trusting that he had the necessary skills without qualifications or certification.

When asked why they decided to join the program, all of the youth interviewed mentioned the attractiveness of the technical training. For youth who had been out of school for several years, the combination of basic education classes and technical training and support was highly desirable. Very few youth opted to try to sit for the National Primary School Exam upon completion of the ALP. Jean deDieu in Bugesera explained that at 24 years old, he felt that he had been out of school for too long to go back to secondary school. He wanted to try to find work immediately after the program. This was echoed by almost all of the students who were interviewed. Additionally, challenges at the District government level meant that only 24 of the ALP graduates were able to sit for the primary school exit exam. Adam, a 19 year old student in Kayonza, passed the national exam, but was still not confident in his ability to study and succeed in the formal secondary school system. Instead, he chose to start looking for jobs after ALP graduation. Although Adam chose not to re-enter formal schooling, ASOFERWA, a local implementing partner said that the other youth who passed the exam at least attempted to enroll in lower secondary.

“Maybe ALP graduates don’t realize it, but they are using their new literacy and numeracy skills every day. For youth like us, the accelerated basic education goes hand in hand with Akazi Kanoze.”
-Provien, 22, Muhanga District

Overall, interviewed youth from the three different implementing partners were satisfied with the quality of trainers and the curriculum. Many youth are still in close contact with their trainers and see them as mentors. Adam in Kayonza District found the classes challenging at first, because he had been out of school for several years. Although it was not easy in the beginning, the trainers were patient and his understanding of the content increased overtime, he explained. The majority of youth thought that the vocational and technical training was the most interesting and useful. Those youth who were in carpentry or a similar trade, mentioned that math was integral to their success and wished that there had been more math in the curriculum. Honorine, aged 18, in Bugesera mentioned that the Kinyarwanda language modules were good as a refresher since they had been out of school for so long, but thought that the grammar sections were aimed at the National Exam and were less practical in their application. Overall, the interviewed youth asked for more time on the technical training, which was about four months (600 hours) of the year-long program. It appears that the technical training is the most tangibly useful skill for youth, but the quantitative data in the next section highlights the importance of pairing basic education with technical training for this at-risk youth population.

Transferable Skills

Provien, aged 22, was a youth leader in AVSI's 2013 cohort of ALP students. He is still in touch with all 97 of his peers. He said that a key to youth finding employment is their ability to adapt and be flexible in the market. Only 8 out of the 97 youth trained in carpentry, plumbing, and electricity have jobs in the trades they studied. About 40-50 youth have jobs that are outside of what they were trained in. "Youth need to use their Akazi Kanoze skills to be flexible in this place," explained Provien.

The youth we interviewed had all found at least part-time or temporary work after graduation.

Depending on the demand for their services in the areas where they live, it can be easy or challenging to find a job. In Bugesera District, 45 out of 50 youth trained in welding had at least part-time jobs when we visited. The trainer was very involved in helping them find positions at local welding shops, including at his own business. Francis, a young welder in Bugesera, found his position by going around and talking with business owners. At the shop where he now works, Francis told the owner about his experience and qualifications and was brought on for a trial period after which he was hired on full-

time. On the other hand, the youth in Muhanga District spoke about the difficulty in finding stable work since the demand for electricians and welders was relatively low in their rural area. Furthermore, the inaccessibility of materials and tools limits the size of the jobs they can take on. Youth in Kamonyi District said that it had been difficult for them to find steady employment, as the market for hairdressers and carpenters was limited. Overall, though, youth agreed that their current economic situation is much better than before the ALP. Not dependent on what type of employment they had, all the youth agreed that their employment situation was better now than before joining the program. They were now contributing to their families' incomes and could support themselves and save with their new income.

Although the youth we interviewed may only have been employed part-time, there was general agreement that they are more confident in their abilities to find a job than before. Emmanuel, aged 23, in Muhanga said that there are not as many jobs as he would like, but now he knows to go knock on

doors to tell them, “I’m your man for the job.” Clementine, aged 18, in Kamonyi District feels lucky that she has a job now, but when she didn’t have work after graduation she kept telling herself, “I have enough skills to work” in order to keep herself motivated. Provien, aged 22, an ALP student leader from Muhanga District spoke in general about the 97 students in his group. “Youth who are already working are confident and are able to advertise their skills to possible employers, but some people are still not confident enough to go look and ask for work. Those students need more training to boost their confidence.” He recommended more mentoring for the youth that are struggling to enter the workforce. Another challenge for many of the youth is their lack of capital to start their own microenterprises. Almost all of the youth talked about the desire to start their own businesses in the future, but understand their lack of resources as a constraint. Many are currently saving in order to start their own microenterprise.

When asked if the program had influenced aspects of their life other than their technical and vocational skills, the majority of youth mentioned an increase in financial literacy and a boost in self-confidence.

“My self-confidence has increased. I have more confidence in my abilities.”

-Clementine, 18, Kamonyi District

Youth from Bugesera had opened savings accounts at both a bank and a Savings and Credit Cooperative (SACCO) since finishing the program. Youth in Kamonyi, though only employed on a very part-time basis, save through mobile money. “If I make 500 RWF, I put 200 into mobile money so that I continue saving,” explains Eric, a 20 year old youth from Remera-Rukoma. Additionally, youth frequently described their increase in self-confidence not only in their ability to find a job, but in their feeling of self-worth and place in society. “The most important factor has been confidence,” explained Claude, aged 23, who completed ALP in Kamonyi District. “I can go to the police station, knock on the door and tell them that I can do a good job.”

Overall, youth that we interviewed had a positive opinion of the program and saw it as a valuable use of their time. Youth wanted more focus on technical skills training and asked for the time to be extended or for the certification level to be increased. This demographic of youth are often not interested in going back to secondary school after being out of the formal school system for so long, but crave technical and vocational skills training. This may be the draw of the program, but they agreed that for at-risk youth with a limited educational background, the accelerated learning component and work readiness curriculum were also integral parts of the program. “You can’t separate ALP from Akazi Kanoze,” mentioned one youth. This accreditation is the only certificate of achievement that many of these youth have ever received and it is a valuable piece of their job search approach. Youth agreed that additional credentialing and training will only increase their competitiveness in the job market.

Youth Case Study: Female welder gains technical and soft skills



As I approach the welding shop I can see several youth working on the pieces for a large metal gate. With tools in hand, they cut and solder together pieces of metal. Among them is 18 year old Honorine, who graduated from the ALP in 2014 and has since been working at this small welding shop in Kabukuba, Bugesera District. Carefully placing her saw on the ground, she confidently walks over to speak with me. Before joining the program, Honorine was unemployed and worked at home for her family. She joined the ALP in the hopes of getting “a bit more than [she] had” and was very happy with the training and the trainers. Her favorite part of the training was learning about reproductive health and work conduct. She loves welding and has felt encouraged and supported by her peers and trainer to pursue a non-traditional career for a woman. “They know that I can do the work and do it well, so I am no different from that boy over there,” Honorine explained. She was functionally literate before the program, but appreciated the literacy curriculum as a refresher. She uses her improved numeracy skills to help her with measurements at work and keeps a budget to keep on track for her savings goals. Since graduation, she has been slowly saving her money and found the step-by-step goal setting that she learned in Akazi Kanoze has helped her to reach her financial goals. She admits that she used to be careless with money before because she did not understand the concept of saving. Honorine lives with her parents and siblings and can now contribute financially. “We eat better now and I bought a male goat. Next month I will have enough money to buy a female goat,” Honorine said proudly. She believes that Akazi Kanoze and ALP go together, without separation. “Even if we are not using a skill right now, I know it will be helpful in the future,” explained Honorine.

Student Employment Outcomes

Comparing AK and ALP youth with a P6 education shows that on average more AK youth had work experience before starting the program. Over 67% of AK youth had previous work experience and only 47% of ALP reported some kind of work before joining. The difference in previous employment levels is statistically significant at the $p < .025$ level. These percentages are consistent with the entire population of AK and ALP youth with a P6 education level. Overall, 60% of AK youth and 47% of ALP 2013 graduates in all districts had no prior work experience.

When disaggregated by sex, the female participants in AK and ALP had lower levels of prior work experience compared with male participants, but reported higher levels of employment after the program. Before joining, 71% of AK males and 58% of ALP males had worked. In contrast, about 64% of AK females and only 29% of ALP females had experience.

After graduating, ALP youth reported similar levels of employment compared to AK youth, with females outperforming males. About 42% of ALP and 40% of AK youth had employment after graduation with no statistical significance between the two groups. Females in both AK and ALP reported higher employment rates after graduation compared with male participants. Only 29% of AK male and 35% of ALP male youth had an economic opportunity after graduation in contrast to 50% of female AK youth and 54% of female ALP youth. Female ALP youth, who started the program with the lowest level of prior work experience, reported the highest employment rate after completing the program.

Overall, ALP youth started further behind the AK youth in terms of work experience and were able to catch up. After graduation, even with less work experience, ALP youth had the same economic opportunities as AK youth. Furthermore, the profile of work opportunities before and after the program looked very similar for both ALP and AK youth. The following table shows the top economic opportunities reported by youth before and after the program:

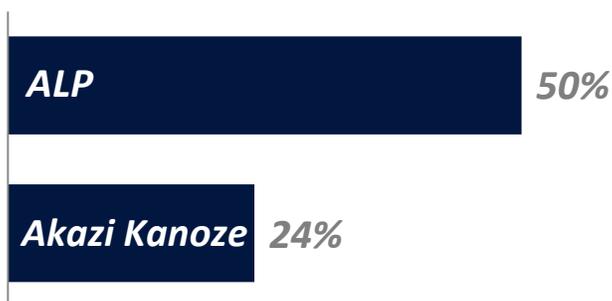
Table 5: Economic opportunities before and after the program

Economic Opportunities Before	
ALP Youth	AK Youth
1.) Construction Work	1.) Construction Work
2.) Domestic Work	2.) Service Industry Work
3.) Agriculture/cultivation	3.) Agriculture/cultivation
4.) Owner of small business	4.) Owner of small business
	5.) Domestic Work
Economic Opportunities After	
ALP Youth	AK Youth
1.) Welding	1.) Agriculture/cultivation
2.) Construction Work	2.) Owner of small business
3.) Agriculture/cultivation	3.) Construction Work
4.) Hair dressing	4.) Domestic Work

The gains in employment for ALP youth who had no work experience were significantly more than AK youth with no prior work experience. After the program, 50% of ALP youth who had no prior work experience had found an economic opportunity, compared to only 24% of AK youth with no previous work. This difference in employment gains between AK and ALP students is statistically significant at the $p < .001$ level. For low literacy youth with no work experience, pairing accelerated basic education with the Akazi Kanoze package appears to be more effective than just the Work Readiness Curriculum and technical training alone.

Overall, ALP students have better employment outcomes

P6 ALP students with no prior work experience have over double the employment level of similar P6 AK youth.



The levels of employment reported after the project vary by implementing partner in Kamonyi District (See detailed tables in Appendix 2). Three implementing partners conducting AK trainings had youth with no prior work experience—Catholic Relief Services (CRS), CPJSP Kamonyi and AVSI. Forty percent of CRS’s AK youth with no previous employment, 20% of AVSI’s and 0% of CPJSP’s reported having an economic opportunity after finishing the program. Between the two implementing partners working with ALP youth, CPJSP graduates were more successful in finding employment than AVSI ALP youth. Not a single CPJSP youth had work experience before joining the ALP, but 80% of graduates reported having an economic opportunity. AVSI youth started the ALP with higher levels of prior work experience—61% had worked before. Of those AVSI youth with no prior employment, 26% reported having work after completing the program. Although there is variation between implementing partners, as to be expected since the operating environments and labor markets are unique even within one District, overall ALP youth with no prior work experience were more successful in finding employment after the program than AK with no previous work history. Due to a small sample size and lack of demographic information to control for possible influential factors, this finding deserves more exploration in order to understand the exact cause of these ALP students’ success in the labor market.

This small dataset is only a foundation for further examination of similar programs. In future ALP work, an evaluation to understand the intervention level effect size would be helpful in order to isolate the value added of accelerated basic education in Rwanda on a larger sample of youth.



Francis, aged 21, stands in front of the welding shop where he works in Bugesera District.

Youth Case Study: Carpenter puts new math skills to use

Joseph is a 23 year old carpenter in a rural area of Kamonyi District. Before the program he kept himself busy by doing housework for his family. When he heard about the ALP he jumped at the opportunity and gave it his all. Besides the technical training in construction and carpentry, he found that mathematics has been most helpful for him in his new profession. "I am able to make accurate measurements and people complement me on my skills," explained Joseph. He does not go for more than one month without work. When a construction job is done, he starts looking for another job and has been consistent in finding new work opportunities. "With my confidence acquired from the Akazi Kanoze ALP and my work experience, I am now able to ask for a job at any construction site," said Joseph. He uses his math and technical skills on a daily basis, but thinks that he uses all the skills he learned in the program. He is not confident in his English skills, but says that this is okay since it is not really required in the rural area where he lives. In addition to the hard skills that he learned in the program, he thinks that his social skills were vastly improved. Joseph explained, "If you had seen me before joining, you would have seen a different person. I am now more confident and can work in a group with other people."

Youth Case Study: Young male in rural Kamonyi is developing employability skills and learning the value of saving

Eric, aged 20, dropped out of Primary 6 when he was 17 years old. In a rural area of Kamonyi District, he occasionally worked as a mason's assistant, but found that people did not trust his skills to do the job. Eric enrolled in the ALP with the hope of improving his employability skills. He strengthened his literacy skills and trained as a carpenter along with nine other youth. Since graduation he has continued to struggle to find work. "There are few construction sites in this area. The opportunities are gardening and small carpentry jobs," explained Eric. Along with his peers in a carpentry cooperative, he would visit construction sites and talk to the foremen about possible jobs. "Sometimes they trust me. Sometimes they don't," he said. Though ALP has provided him some employability skills, he would like to continue to study carpentry in order to get a TVET certificate to help him gain more study employment. He faces challenges in pursuing TVET opportunities because of his low formal education level. Despite not having steady employment, Eric considers himself better off after having participated in the ALP. He has gained employability skills and improved his confidence – he is able to now support himself and uses mobile money to save a portion of his earning.



Jean deDieu, aged 24, paints a gate at the shop where he works in Bugesera District.

Implementing Partners' Perspectives

Benimpuhwe was in the second cohort of organizations to implement the ALP. Working in Bugesera District in Eastern Province, Benimpuhwe graduated 145 students (66 boys and 79 girls). They trained youth in welding, house painting and masonry, and included English language in the curriculum. "This type of program is much needed," explained Verdiane Nyiramana, the organization's Executive Secretary. Benimpuhwe understand the value of such a program and demonstrated their commitment by securing funding through another donor in order to continue the ALP after the USAID-funded program ended in 2014. "Students did not want to go to general secondary school, but they wanted to get technical training," said Verdiane. Only two to four of their students continued their education after ALP graduation. Almost all of the students started searching for jobs. "Poverty is what makes them desperate for the technical skills," Verdiane explained. As we heard from many of the youth we interviewed, access to capital is a large barrier for these youth. Working towards a certification is a large motivation for these youth and the practicality of the curriculum makes the time commitment worthwhile. Out of the 50 welding students that they trained in Kabukuba, Bugesera, 45 are employed. The five that are not employed were not actively pursuing work or postponed it due to marriage or pregnancy. This high placement rate is due to the dedication and mentorship of the trainers during and after the program, explained one of the welding facilitators. If the ALP was to continue, says Verdiane, she would recommend extending the length of the vocational and technical training to give the youth a deeper knowledge and skillset. Before providing further training, assessment of how much time youth would be willing to commit would need to take place. Today, Benimpuhwe continues to implement an accelerated basic education program and has graduated about 130 youth thus far. "Youth crave this type of training and we need to find a way to make it more integrated and accepted by employers and the formal school system," concluded Verdiane.

CPJSP implemented the ALP in Kamonyi District from 2012 to 2013. Located in Remera-Rukoma, a rural area of Kamonyi District, they train youth in carpentry, hairdressing, masonry and agri-business in a small training facility. CPJSP helped the youth establish four cooperatives in welding, carpentry, hairdressing and agri-business and these groups of youth look for jobs together and help support each other. About 100 youth graduated from their trainings and CPJSP has encountered some difficulties with job placement due to a lack of demand for these services in this rural area, although CPJSP youth in the dataset analyzed for employment outcomes reported higher levels of employment than AVSI youth. No CPJSP youth had prior work experience, yet 80% of them had an economic opportunity after graduation. A staff member at CPJSP noted that many of the youth end up working in agri-business even if they did not receive that vocational training in the program. "Due to the rural nature of this place, many of these youth apply their Akazi Kanoze skills to agriculture related work," he explained. Youth's newly acquired skills can add much value to agriculture-related work and can help support them to identify agriculture and non- agriculture related opportunities as well. The organization remains in touch with youth and continues to support them in their job search understanding the reality of a lack of private sector demand for their services.

Conclusion

The Akazi Kanoze ALP was designed and implemented in order to increase the literacy and productivity level of out-of-school youth with less than a primary education. This accelerated model was intended to provide a pathway to primary school completion and technical training. Overall, the program met its three objectives and the students and implementing partners interviewed looked highly upon the ALP and its benefits for this group of vulnerable youth.

ALP students made significant progress in both fluency and comprehension after completing the accelerated basic education course to “exceed grade level expectations” of the national benchmarks. Fluency levels increased from 52.7 WCPM to 60 WCPM on a grade-level text and comprehension increased at endline on all three sets of comprehension questions. Youth who had been out-of-school for several years were able to progress in reading fluency and comprehension in order to surpass the national averages for P6 students.

After the completion of the program, the majority of youth we interviewed had found at least part-time work. That being said, the youth and implementing partners spoke of youth who were still struggling to find work in areas with low demand for their technical services. The economic opportunities vary greatly by area and the rural areas offer the least amount of non-agricultural jobs. Despite these challenges, youth were generally more confident in their skillset and ability to find work. They saw the value of the life skills included in the Akazi Kanoze Work Readiness Curriculum and were actively using the transferrable skills in their everyday life.

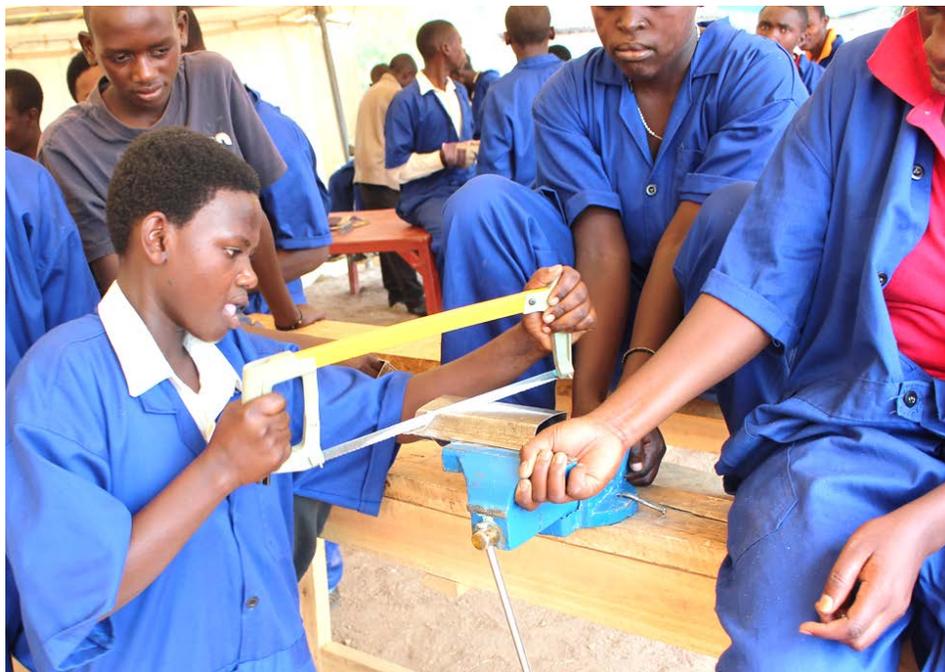
Although ALP youth had less prior work experience than their Akazi Kanoze counterparts, the ALP youth who reported no prior economic opportunities had higher employment outcomes after completion of the project. This finding implies that the combined package of literacy and numeracy plus technical skills, work readiness training and mentoring is more effective for primary school dropouts than just the Akazi Kanoze program by itself. More research on the intervention level impact of ALPs is necessary to better understand the effect size of mentoring and job linkage services.

An original objective of the program was to try to find a way to integrate these accelerated learning students back into the formal school system by allowing them to take the P6 National Exam. Unfortunately, this was not achieved and only 24 of the youth took the exam. This was in part due to barriers at the Ministry and District office level, but also due to the fact that almost all youth chose to enter the workforce directly after graduation. Since this is the case and technical and vocational training is in higher demand than entry back into formal grade school, the implementing partners suggested that any future iterations of ALP focus mostly on providing more in-depth and credentialed training.

The current TVET qualification framework does not include any entry track into Level 2, which does not require nine-year basic education. Because of this, Level 2 does not offer upward mobility through the TVET system, but still provides youth a Workforce Development Authority (WDA) certified TVET certificate. With Level 2 currently empty, there is an opportunity to create a track into the TVET system

from an accelerated basic education (ABE) program that would provide the basic education and foundational technical skills to pass a test at this level. An accelerated learning program similar to the one that Akazi Kanoze implemented, but with additional modules could be aligned to the TVET framework. It could provide an entry point into the system for youth without a formal nine-year basic education. The high demand for ALPs shows that primary school dropouts are eager to learn and advance their skills. For this group of highly vulnerable youth, who will likely not receive any other certification for their educational achievements, a TVET Level 2 certificate would be a motivation and incentive to take the program seriously. Verdiane Nyiramana at Benimpuhwe Organization supports the idea of collaborating with WDA on an accelerated learning initiative, but cautioned about the need to carefully assess the capacity of primary school dropouts, pilot an expanded curriculum, and create local support for such a program.

The demand for accelerated basic education will still remain high in Rwanda as the current primary school completion rate is only about 59% of school-age children (54% of boys, 62% of girls) (World Bank, 2013; UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012). Creating a parallel non-formal ABE system is not sustainable for a ministry and formal system that is already overwhelmed. Yet continuing to have NGOs train youth in ALPs using different curricula and certification standards is also not sustainable. A synergy of efforts between Akazi Kanoze and the WDA to align the ALP with the TVET framework in order to allow ALP graduates to test into Level 2 programs would give these at-risk unemployed youth the opportunity to attain a nationally recognized credential and work readiness level to be active and productive members of the Rwandan economy.



ALP students during their AVSI construction training course in Kamonyi District

Appendix I: Literacy Assessment Tables

Table 6: Summary of results by sub-test

Literacy Assessment Summary Results				
Subtest	N		Mean % (SD)	
	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Endline</i>	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Endline</i>
Letter Naming	268	252	93.8 (3.4)	98.5 (2.6)
Syllables	268	251	90.1 (12.4)	89.6 (11.4)
Familiar Words	268	252	76.4 (19.1)	78.7 (17.5)
Real Life Reading	268	252	67.8 (15.8)	63.3 (17.1)
Oral Reading Story 1	268	250	96.6 (10.7)	99.0 (3.4)
Comprehension Story 1	267	252	98.1 (10.5)	99.4 (5.4)
Oral Reading Story 2	265	251	94.8 (12.9)	96.8 (8.0)
Comprehension Story 2	264	252	88.3 (23.8)	93.3 (17.7)
Silent Reading	261	252	51.5 (24.4)	64.2 (20.0)
Familiar Words Correct per Minute	262	252	27.3 (8.8)	28.0 (8.7)
Words Correct per Minute Story 1	266	249	58.0 (30.5)	69.9 (78.5)
Words Correct per Minute Story 2	261	251	52.7 (18.4)	60.0 (19.8)
Total Mean	264	248	88.4 (8.3)	89.7 (6.1)

Table 7: Summary of results by sex

Literacy Assessment Summary Results by Sex				
Subtest	Male		Female	
	Mean % (SD)		Mean % (SD)	
	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Endline</i>	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Endline</i>
Letter Naming	93.8 (3.5)	98.5 (2.6)	93.9 (3.2)	98.4 (2.7)
Syllables	90.0 (13.3)	90.2 (10.7)	90.3 (11.3)	88.7 (12.3)
Familiar Words	74.6 (20.4)	77.4 (18.4)	78.6 (17.2)	80.5 (16.0)
Real Life Reading	68.4 (15.6)	65.2 (16.9)	67.0 (16.1)	60.4 (16.9)
Oral Reading Story 1	95.8 (11.7)	99.0 (3.7)	97.5 (9.1)	98.9 (2.9)
Comprehension Story 1	96.9 (13.5)	100.0 (0.0)	99.6 (4.5)	98.5 (8.5)
Oral Reading Story 2	93.4 (15.8)	96.6 (8.2)	96.4 (7.9)	97.1 (7.8)
Comprehension Story 2	87.8 (25.3)	93.0 (18.3)	88.8 (21.9)	93.6 (16.8)

Silent Reading	53.0 (26.5)	65.6 (18.9)	49.8 (21.8)	62.1 (21.5)
Familiar Words Correct per Minute	26.0 (8.3)	27.2 (8.4)	29.0 (9.2)	29.1 (9.1)
Words Correct per Minute Story 1	53.8 (20.7)	63.3 (21.8)	63.2 (38.5)	79.8 (120.7)
Words Correct per Minute Story 2	50.1 (18.4)	58.3 (20.0)	56.0 (18.0)	62.5 (19.2)
Total Mean	87.8 (9.0)	90.0 (5.8)	89.1 (7.2)	89.4 (6.5)

Baseline: Male-(n=146) Female-(n=122) / **Endline:** Male-(n=150) Female- (n=102)

Table 8: Summary of results by region

Literacy Assessment Summary Results by Region				
Subtest	Rwamagana		Bugasera	
	Mean % (SD)		Mean % (SD)	
	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Endline</i>	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Endline</i>
Letter Naming	94.0 (3.0)	98.8 (2.1)	93.8 (3.6)	98.0 (3.3)
Syllables	92.8 (8.3)	91.1 (10.0)	88.7 (14.0)	87.4 (11.4)
Familiar Words	80.4 (15.8)	80.8 (16.4)	74.2 (20.3)	78.5 (15.6)
Real Life Reading	70.7 (14.9)	66.8 (18.1)	66.2 (16.1)	59.0 (16.4)
Oral Reading Story 1	98.2 (3.8)	99.4 (1.7)	95.7 (12.9)	98.9 (3.0)
Comprehension Story 1	98.9 (7.3)	98.8 (7.7)	97.7 (11.8)	99.3 (5.7)
Oral Reading Story 2	97.8 (3.4)	98.4 (1.9)	93.1 (15.6)	96.8 (8.1)
Comprehension Story 2	91.8 (21.3)	92.8 (19.3)	86.3 (24.8)	94.7 (15.4)
Silent Reading	60.3 (21.1)	70.5 (16.9)	46.8 (24.8)	62.7 (17.9)
Familiar Words Correct per Minute	29.1 (8.3)	29.5 (9.6)	26.4 (9.0)	27.7 (8.1)
Words Correct per Minute Story 1	63.3 (18.4)	70.4 (20.9)	55.2 (35.1)	63.7 (21.1)
Words Correct per Minute Story 2	58.5 (18.0)	65.8 (17.4)	49.5 (17.9)	57.2 (18.2)
Total Mean	90.6 (5.3)	90.7 (5.4)	87.2 (9.3)	89.1 (5.3)

Baseline: Rwamagana-(n=94) Bugasera-(n=174) / **Endline:** Rwamagana-(n=83) Bugasera- (n=76)

Appendix 2: Economic Opportunities by Implementing Partner

Table 9: Previous work experience by program and implementing partner

Implementing Partner	% with Previous Work Experience
AK ALP Youth	
CPJSP	0% (0 out of 15 youth)
AVSI	61% (30 out of 49 youth)
AK Youth	
CRS (Rural)	74% (29 out of 39 youth)
CPJSP Kamonyi	33% (3 out of 9 youth)
WDA	100% (7 out of 7 youth)
AVSI	37.5% (3 out of 8 youth)
CEFOTRAR	100% (1 out of 1 youth)

Table 10: Reported economic opportunities after graduation by implementing partner

Implementing Partner	% reporting work after graduation
AK ALP Youth	
CPJSP	80% (12 out of 15 youth)
AVSI	31% (15 out of 49 youth)
AK Youth	
CRS (Rural)	56% (22 out of 39 youth)
CPJSP Kamonyi	0% (0 out of 9 youth)
WDA	0% (0 out of 7 youth)
AVSI	37.5% (3 out of 8 youth)
CEFOTRAR	100% (1 out of 1 youth)

Table 11: Youth with no work experience reporting economic opportunities after graduation (%) by implementing partner

Implementing Partner	% with no work experience reporting employed after graduation
AK ALP Youth	
CPJSP	80% (12 out of 15 youth)
AVSI	26% (5 out of 19 youth)
AK Youth	
CRS (Rural)	40% (4 out of 10 youth)
CPJSP Kamonyi	0% (0 out of 6 youth)
AVSI	20% (1 out of 5 youth)