



WORKFORCE CONNECTIONS

Final Report



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Workforce Connections Final Report 2018

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ACRONYMS

AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative
ARTC	Asia Regional Training Center
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
AUP	African Union Partnership
BCS	Business Community Synergies
BFI	Big Five Inventory
CIES	Comparative and International Education Society
COMPASS	Center for Complex Adaptive Socio-technological Systems
CoP	Community of Practice
COR	Contracting Officer's Representative
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
CT	ChildTrends
DSA	Department of Social Affairs
E3	Bureau for Economic Growth, Education and Environment
EAHF	East Africa Healthcare Federation
ECDC	Employability and Career Development Centers
EDC	Education Development Center
EIG	Education for Income Generation
ERA	Education and Research in Agriculture
FIELD	Financial Integration, Economic Leveraging, Broad-Based Dissemination and Support
GYEO	Global Youth Economic Opportunities
HEA	Higher Education for Economic Growth Activity
HEEAP	Higher Engineering Education Alliance Program
HRST	Human Resources, Science & Technology Department
ILO	International Labor Organization
LAC	Latin American in the Caribbean
LEVE	Local Enterprise and Value Chain Enhancement
LINC	Local-International NGO's Collaborate
LMIS	Labor Market Information System
LWA	Leader with Associates
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MSB	Mediterranean School of Business
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
ONA	Organizational Network Analysis
PAD	Project Appraisal Document
RFA	Request for Applications
RTI	Research Triangle Institute

ACRONYMS

STRIDE	Science, Technology, Research and Innovation for Development
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UCC	USAID Morocco Career Center
UCCD	University Centers for Career Development
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WC	Workforce Connections
WFD	Workforce Development
YEFG	Youth Employment Funders Group
YEO	Youth Economic Opportunity

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Workforce Connections (2013-2018) brought together evidence and best practices from three technical areas to form a cohesive and widely accessed body of knowledge that is consistently applied in USAID programming and beyond. The three technical areas “connected” were: education systems alignment with labor market demand, positive youth development, and economic growth approaches to job creation and demand-driven skills development.

The Workforce Connections project was operational for five years, throughout that time addressing the youth employment crisis, and supporting USAID and the community of practice for better program design and implementation. The focus of the project has been on three main components:



Component 1: Generate, Synthesize and Disseminate Evidence

To create a dedicated community of practice in the USAID sphere focusing on youth workforce development, and provide opportunities for USAID staff, implementing organizations and a broader set of stakeholders to exchange knowledge and disseminate evidence.



Component 2: Provide Technical Leadership and Field Support

To respond to requests from USAID/Washington or USAID missions in the field for specific research deliverables, as well as pursue a focused set of research objectives throughout the project.



Component 3: Build Capacity for a Range of Workforce Development Stakeholders

To enhance the knowledge of and interest in workforce development among USAID staff, particularly Education and Economic Growth Officers, but also serve the broader workforce development community.

Key achievements of Component 1 included:

- Launching the Workforce Connections Community of Practice, which grew to over 200 members, including working groups on Informality, Systems, and Measuring Employment Outcomes which resulted in research products and guidance documents
- Awarding technical grants which resulted in innovative research products, an e-learning course, a web portal, and well-attended learning events
- Creation of an Advisory Board with private sector and youth representatives

Key achievements of Component 2 included:

- Innovative and influential research on soft and non-cognitive skills
- Publication of a rigorous, yet accessible guide to labor market assessment approaches
- Delivery of webinars and best practice briefs focused on higher education programming in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)

Key achievements of Component 3 included:

- Delivery of 10 separate workforce development trainings, sessions and workshops for USAID staff and other practitioners; key content included an overview of youth workforce development programming, systems thinking, an introduction to labor market assessment tools, and positive youth development
- Publication of an influential research paper on labor market information systems
- Design and delivery of a comprehensive fellowship program on youth employment which supported four Nicaraguan youth to accomplish their professional and research goals

BACKGROUND

Program Overview

Workforce Connections (2013-2018) brought together evidence and best practices from three technical areas to form a cohesive and widely accessed body of knowledge that is consistently applied in USAID programming and beyond. The three technical areas “connected” were: education systems alignment with labor market demand, positive youth development, and economic growth approaches to job creation and demand-driven skills development.

As one of Workforce Connections’ first year-one activities, in October 2013 the project undertook a broad review of USAID investments in youth workforce programming, finding approximately US\$925 million invested in youth employment by USAID since 2008.¹ Given the continued global youth employment crisis, the outlook suggested continued or even increased funding from a range of organizations including USAID for workforce development. Within that context, Workforce Connections was designed to support USAID’s E3 Office of Education in its learning, outreach, and technical leadership activities to advance the achievement of Goal 2 of the USAID Education Strategy: “Improved ability of tertiary and workforce development (WFD) programs to produce a workforce with relevant skills to support country development goals by 2015.”

The Workforce Connections project was operational for five years, throughout that time addressing the youth employment crisis, and supporting USAID and the community of practice for better program design and implementation. The focus of the project has been on three main components (see below).

Objectives



Component 1: Generate, Synthesize and Disseminate Evidence

To create a dedicated community of practice in the USAID sphere focusing on youth workforce development, and provide opportunities for USAID staff, implementing organizations and a broader set of stakeholders to exchange knowledge and disseminate evidence.



Component 2: Provide Technical Leadership and Field Support

To respond to requests from USAID/Washington or USAID missions in the field for specific research deliverables, as well as pursue a focused set of research objectives throughout the project.



Component 3: Build Capacity for a Range of Workforce Development Stakeholders

To enhance the knowledge of and interest in workforce development among USAID staff, particularly Education and Economic Growth Officers, but also serve the broader workforce development community.

¹ Preliminary data from a program inventory compiled by the Workforce Connections program between August and January of 2013. USAID has also undertaken an internal review of investments in projects that specifically report on the indicator ‘Number of people gaining new or better employment’ for which the amount invested is less than the cited US\$925 million.

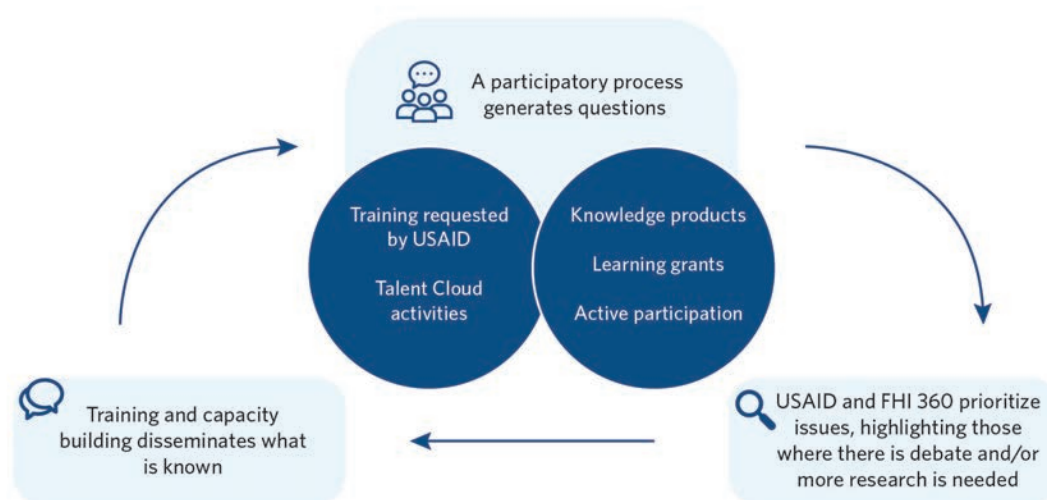
COMPONENT 1

GENERATE, SYNTHESIZE, AND DISSEMINATE EVIDENCE

Activity 1: Launch the Workforce Development Learning Network

The Workforce Connections Community of Practice was launched on May 28, 2014 and in November 2014 three working groups were identified and established, focusing on 1) Informality; 2) Systems; and 3) Measuring Employment Outcomes.

Community of Practice Dynamics



The **Informality working group** focused on a review of labor market assessment tools and studies, and workforce development program evaluations to analyze how these resources incorporate information and analyze informality. The group finalized a technical brief, *Youth and Informality*, prepared by Dr. Anne Genin (Morgan State University) with contributions from Grace Akukwe (Creative Associates), Tamara Duggleby (Duggleby and Associates, Inc.), Deborah Martierrez (Department of Labor), Rekha Mehra (Creative Associates), Karla Yoder (Global Communities), and Eleanor Sohnen (FHI 360). The technical brief was presented at the USAID Education Summit, *Toward a New Global Education Agenda: How the Past and Present Inform the Future*, in November 2015, in Silver Spring, Maryland. The Informality working group also participated in the Global Youth Economic Opportunities Summit (GYEOS) poster session titled, *Research and Technology Exhibit and Reception: Innovating Youth for Economic Inclusion*, on September 28, 2016, in Crystal City, Virginia. Dr. Anne Genin (Morgan State University), presented the poster, *How Can We Measure and Include Informal Labor Markets in Youth Jobs and Enterprise Development? – A Practical Toolkit*. The poster garnered positive feedback and spurred interest as the topic of informality resonates with many organizations working in the field, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), South Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The **Systems working group** focused on systems thinking and produced a draft white paper which offers a framework for how systems thinking can be applied to workforce development, and which served as the basis for the module on systems in the publication *Key Approaches to Labor Market Assessment*. The Systems working group participated in a panel discussion, *Applying Systems Thinking to Workforce Development: Social Network Analysis* in Morocco and Nicaragua on October 7, 2015 at the GYEOS in Crystal City, Virginia. The presenters, Tim Sparkman (MarketShare Associates), Yousra Elhatib (FHI 360 Morocco), and Patrick Sommerville (LINC), discussed a variety of different systems approaches and tools, examining how they fit into a broader framework of program design. To illustrate, they introduced concrete examples of the application of social and organizational network analysis within the workforce development context. The presenters engaged the attendees in a participatory system mapping exercise that explored the participant's own networks.

The **Measuring Employment Outcomes working group** reviewed the foundational measurement work undertaken by the Workforce Connections project. A separate launch event was organized for Measuring Employment Outcomes in Workforce Development on February 5, 2015; featured presenters were Monika Aring (FHI 360) and John Lindsay (FHI 360). This event brought together members of the Community of Practice (CoP) to explore and seek answers to the following questions: what are the 'best' indicators for measuring youth workforce development outcomes; how have these been measured in the past; and what can we learn from those experiences? The working group refined and endorsed key high-level pieces of the workforce development 'story' including a revised definition; a new theory of change including multiple goals; and logical framework that outlines the key pathway for workforce development situated within a larger framework with multiple outcomes, goals, and impacts (within which most projects should be able to see themselves). The Measuring Employment Outcomes working group also presented their work to the Youth Employment Funders Group (YEFG) on October 5, 2015 and at the USAID Education Summit on November 3, 2015. The presentation engaged participants in testing the framework using their own work and projects as an example. From that discussion, participants recommended that the same exercise that led to the creation of the logical framework be repeated, though using different perspectives as the starting point, to ensure the framework is relevant across stakeholders. The additional perspectives recommended to be tested were those of education/training institutions, employers, and of labor. This feedback led to the identification of 'improved linkages' as an intended outcome of workforce development projects that had not been incorporated into the original framework.

As an outgrowth of the work of the Measuring Employment Outcomes working group, the Workforce Connections project, in response to a request from USAID, completed a similar product tailored for USAID as an input into the next round of top line 'F Indicators' for workforce development. Diana Rutherford (FHI 360) and John Lindsay (FHI 360) completed the paper, *Recommendations to USAID for Workforce Development F Indicators*, after receiving feedback from USAID. This final paper supports the revision of USAID's top-line indicators for workforce development; improving the workforce development specific 'F' indicators for monitoring, evaluation, and reporting by building upon the experience and lessons learned in workforce development project implementation and reporting over the previous five years.

The four recommended indicators are listed as follows:

- *Number of individuals with new or better employment following participation in USG-assisted workforce development programs.*
- *Percentage of individuals with new or better employment following participation in USG-assisted workforce development programs.*
- *Number of individuals with improved skills following participation in USG-assisted workforce development programs.*
- *Number of individuals who completed USG-assisted workforce development programs.*

Through a competitive process, Workforce Connections awarded the following technical **grants**:

- **LINC** received a grant in April 2015 to test its Organizational Network Analysis (ONA) tool in three subnational labor market systems (Matagalpa/Jinotega, Managua and Leon/Chinandega) in Nicaragua. The research was undertaken to better understand how various workforce development actors and functions interrelate, informing future program strategy and design efforts in support of their sectors. LINC shared their findings at the Making Cents GYEOS on October 7, 2015, and also at an event in Nicaragua, *Resultados del Análisis de Conexiones Organizacionales - Sistema de Desarrollo de la Fuerza Laboral en Nicaragua (Results of the Organizational Network Analysis - Workforce Development System)*, on October 15, 2015.
- **EDC** received a grant in June 2015 to adapt the existing Big Five Inventory (BFI-44) and develop a reliable soft skills measurement tool in collaboration with ProExam and the Akilah Institute. EDC adapted the tool by adding a set of five anchoring vignettes, which are situational judgement items focused on conscientiousness (the highest soft skills predictor); and by adding an additional measure/subscale that includes items that measure facets within personality traits. The expanded BFI-44 was piloted by EDC youth programs in the Philippines and Rwanda (in the latter country, in collaboration with the non-profit Akilah Institute). EDC finalized the paper, *Measuring Youth's Soft Skills Across Cultures: Evidence from the Philippines and Rwanda*. The paper documents statistical analysis and validity evidence for Big Five personality constructs collected in the Philippines and Rwanda. This two-country study suggests that youth workforce development projects may, with the use of the Anchored BFI coupled with situational judgement tests, reliably measure soft skills across projects and cultures. While continued research in additional contexts is necessary, the Anchored BFI's potential for wide-scale implementation offers the youth workforce development field the chance to measure and understand soft skills both more broadly and more deeply.
- **RTI** received a grant in January 2014 to develop a short online course on youth in development, designed for USAID staff, to communicate foundational principles of positive youth development and provide guidance on operationalizing the USAID Youth in Development Policy. This course was designed to build on a brief module presented by RTI during the Workforce Connections training course in Bangkok in February 2014. RTI began work on the e-learning course, but FHI 360 completed and expanded on the initial content. The course included two modules, one on the case for investing in youth and an introduction to adolescent development, and a second one on Youth in Development policy. The e-course was finalized by FHI 360 in 2015.
- **Making Cents** received a grant in January 2014 to play a major role in the learning and knowledge management activities, which included developing the Workforce Connections web portal that became a go-to resource for WFD tools, resources, ideas, and dialogue among practitioners and outside actors. In addition, Making Cents supported Workforce Connections to organize a learning event series focused on demand-driven themes and co-hosted several expert group meetings. The WC web portal, www.wfconnections.org, network account ended at the end of the project on September 30, 2018 and key Workforce Connections technical resources have now moved to the Youth Power site (www.youthpower.org), and are included in Annex A.

Activity 2: Create an Advisory Board

In July 2014, WC formed an Advisory Board through a competitive selection process. The purpose of the Advisory Board was to set research priorities, provide substantive input, and leverage funding for research initiatives and provide links to key actors in the workforce development arena. Three Advisory Board meetings were held, which offered an opportunity to develop consensus around a set of technical issues which are

critical to addressing youth unemployment. Members of the Advisory Board included youth, private sector employers, government, donors, and thought leaders (see below).

Advisory Board Members	Position	Affiliation
Roma Arellano	Manager of Learning and Development	Intel Corporation
Michael Bzdak	Director of Corporate Contribution	Johnson & Johnson
Lisa Neuberger-Fernandez	Director of Corporate Citizenship Programs	Accenture
Adrianus Melkert	Independent Advisor to Private Corporations and Public Institutions	Independent Contractor
Mona Mourshed	Senior Partner	McKinsey & Company
Kim Ouillette	Co-Founder & Program Director/ Youth Representative	Liberian Education Fund
Michaela Munyuzangabo	Graduate Student at NYU Stern School of Business/ Youth Representative	Independent

COMPONENT 2

PROVIDE TECHNICAL LEADERSHIP AND FIELD SUPPORT

Activity 3: Research on Soft and Non-Cognitive Skills

In January 2014, WC signed an agreement with partner ChildTrends to provide technical leadership on the activity, following a competitive selection process. Their scope included three primary tasks: 1) Identify and define key soft and non-cognitive skills, 2) Convene a symposium on key soft and non-cognitive skills, and 3) Develop a concept paper relating to development of measurements in the future. Obed Diener (FHI 360) led this workstream from the initial development of the soft skills research. ChildTrends' white paper was reviewed by FHI 360 and USAID, and the final paper, entitled *Key 'Soft Skills' that Foster Youth Workforce Success: Toward a Consensus across Fields*, was released in June 2015.. The report identifies five critical skills most likely to increase the odds of success across all outcomes and which employers expect employees to have: social skills, communication, and higher-order thinking skills (including problem solving, critical thinking, and decision-making); supported by the intrapersonal skills of self-control and positive self-concept.

In collaboration with FHI 360, ChildTrends presented findings at several relevant events:

- In October 2014, WC hosted a one-hour breakout session on soft skills to kick off the Workforce Development track of Making Cents GYEO Summit based on a session proposal prepared by Workforce Connections with input from ChildTrends and USAID. In this interactive session, ChildTrends presented findings, including the preliminary shortlisting of skills based on counts of search terms from the database, and consulted practitioners and other experts on follow-up steps. The summit organizer reported that the session was highly rated by reviewers.

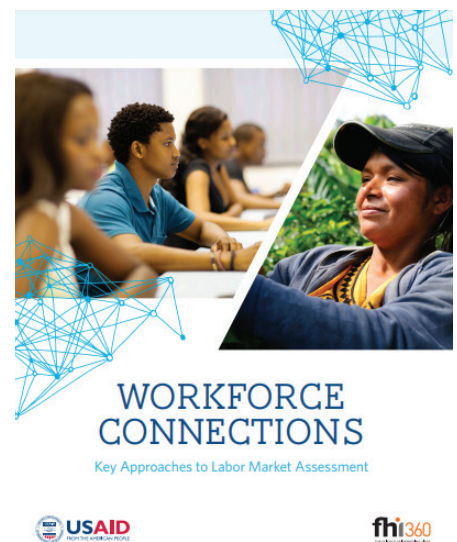
- On January 20, 2015, ChildTrends presented findings at a meeting convened by the Federal Reserve of Boston for the workforce development community in New England. This group included practitioners, funders, and policy makers. ChildTrends collected feedback from this group on the findings from the white paper, including feedback from an employer panel that responded to the presentation by ChildTrends.
- On March 12, 2015, FHI 360 and ChildTrends presented findings at the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) conference in Washington, D.C. Presenters included Laura Lippman (ChildTrends), Kristin Brady (FHI 360), and Jacqueline Karau (youth representative who has participated in Workforce Connections labor market assessment activities in Kenya).
- On March 31, 2015, ChildTrends presented to the Secondary Education and Transferable Skills meeting hosted by 3IE and funded by the MasterCard and MacArthur Foundations.
- On June 17, 2015, FHI 360 developed content for a full-day symposium in partnership with USAID, Brookings, and ChildTrends. The event, *Skills for Workforce Success: from Research to Action*, convened experts to discuss the state of evidence on soft skills, how to measure them, terminology, and best practices. Laura Lippman, Senior Program Director with ChildTrends, presented the report, *Key 'Soft Skills' that Foster Youth Workforce Success: Toward a Consensus across Fields*, as part of the Workforce Connections project.

Activity 4: Develop or Refine USAID Workforce Development Assessment and Design Tools

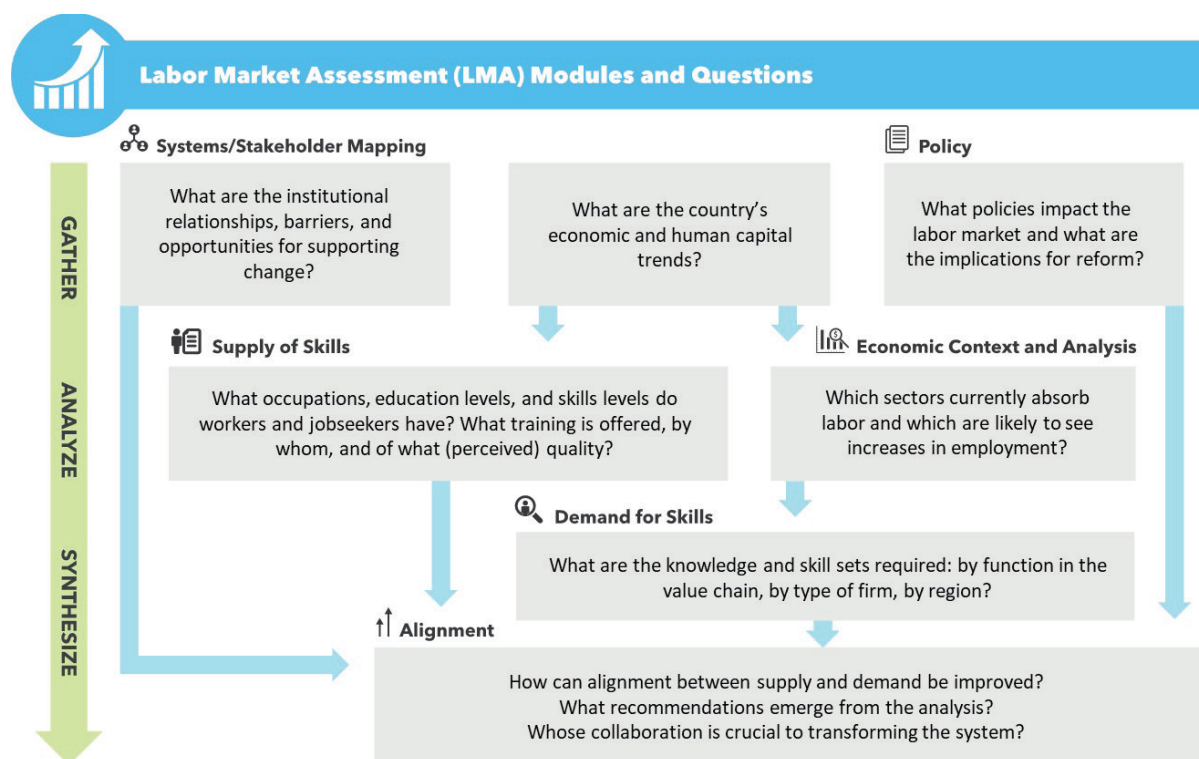
During the life of the project, WC established a framework for the development of a labor market assessment (LMA) toolkit and completed labor market assessments in Kenya, Lebanon, Zimbabwe, and Indonesia. In addition, the WC conducted a health sector labor market assessment in Kenya with additional funding from Johnson & Johnson. The results of the Kenya health sector labor market assessment along with the findings of the WC Kenya Youth Assessment were presented at the East Africa Healthcare Federation (EAHF) Conference in Kigali on May 17-19, 2015 and at an FHI 360-sponsored youth employment thought leadership event in Nairobi, Kenya in June 3, 2015.

During the final year of the project, WC finalized the publication, *Key Approaches to Labor Market Assessment*. This publication highlights existing labor market assessment approaches and related tools from across the workforce and youth landscapes to develop a core suite of tools that can be used to conduct a labor market assessment. The guide, which was developed with the participation of the Community of Practice, will assist USAID mission staff and project implementers working at the project design and/or early implementation phases to assess employment and workforce development in a given country, offering techniques for measuring and modeling the demographics, policies, and supply and demand for skill sets today and in the future. The [publication](#) can be found on the Youth Power Site. Additionally, an [interactive version](#) of the final publication was developed for the YouthPower website.

WC presented this publication at an internal USAID Working Group on



Employment Session on November 28, 2017. The Working Group was led by USAID Chief Economist Louise Fox and presenters included Nora Sohnen (FHI 360) and Alec Hansen (FHI 360), and approximately 10-15 representatives from USAID attended. The facilitators discussed the methodological framework and main components of the LMA document, highlighting several of the major tools. The USAID Working Group, including Dr. Louise Fox (USAID), provided feedback which was incorporated into the final version of the *Key Approaches to Labor Market Assessment* publication. WC also presented this publication at a webinar on December 7, 2017, organized by WC and the USAID E3/ED team. This webinar was facilitated by Nancy Taggart (USAID) and presenters included Nora Sohnen (FHI 360) and Alec Hansen (FHI 360), and was attended by approximately 15 people from USAID. The webinar focused on a review of the main components of the labor market assessment document, including highlights of several of the major tools. This webinar was specifically organized for Missions and USAID/Washington Staff.



On *Key Approaches to Labor Market Assessment*: “[T]here is a lot to like in it - and I mean a lot. And somebody is doing a very good job of putting economics into English.” (Louise Fox, USAID Chief Economist)

In the final year of the project, WC hosted two additional webinars. The first webinar, *Unpacking Career Centers*, was co-hosted with YouthPower Learning’s Cross-sectorial Skills Community of Practice on July 17, 2018. The webinar highlighted the importance and impact that Career Centers can have on youth transition into the workforce and into self-employment, looking closely at USAID’s Career Center programs in Morocco and Egypt. This webinar’s key speakers were Ms. Nadia Amrani, Development Specialist, Gender Advisor, USAID/Morocco Economic Growth Office and Contracting Officer’s Representative (COR) of the USAID Morocco Career Center (UCC) Project; Alexandra Balafrej, Chief of Party, USAID Morocco Career Center (UCC) Project; Wafaa El Adawy, Project Management Specialist, USAID/Egypt Office of Education and Health/Agreement Officer’s Representative (AOR) of the University Centers for Career Development (UCCD); Maha Fakhry, Chief of Party, University Centers for Career Development (UCCD) Project; and Maha Guindi, Former Chief of Party for Employability and Career Development Centers (ECDC) Project. The webinar moderator was Grace Lang, Division Chief, Higher Education, Youth Workforce Development, Office of Education, USAID. The webinar

speakers shared lessons learned and best practices with a particular emphasis on the following topics: private sector engagement in Career Centers; examples of sustainability models for Career Centers; and how Career Center models can best be scaled. A total of 77 participants attended the webinar.

The second webinar, *Forging a Better Future: Better Skills, Better Economy, and Better Pathways for El Salvador's Youth: Analysis and Best Practices of the USAID Higher Education for Economic Growth Activity*, was held on September 17, 2018. The webinar highlighted the USAID Higher Education for Economic Growth activity (HEA) in El Salvador, which is a highly effective example of a multi-faceted effort to catalyze economic growth by aligning the needs of the private sector with those of universities and youth, supported by enabling government policies. The webinar's key speakers were Sandra Duarte, USAID/El Salvador COR; Ami Thakkar, RTI Project Manager; Reina de Alvarado, RTI Chief of Party; and Mario Rafael Olmos Argueta, President of the University of Don Bosco in El Salvador. The webinar moderator was Monika Aring, FHI 360 Technical Advisor. The webinar speakers provided an overview of the HEA activity and its innovative design; explored the ways in which program stakeholder groups – business, universities, government, and youth -- are benefiting from the program; and shared lessons learned and best practices. A total of 83 people registered for this webinar with 43 separate log-ins, given some accessed the webinar as a group.

WC has also produced two briefs centered around higher education case studies, research and analysis of past and existing projects from the field, and key informant interviews. The objective of these two best practices briefs is to elevate the profile of these programs, articulate their programming approaches and highlight key lessons and/or best practices emerging from a particular approach.

The first brief, *Building a Higher Education Pipeline for Innovation-Driven Economies in the Asia-Pacific Region: Analysis & Best Practices from Vietnam & the Philippines*, looks at the Higher Engineering Education Alliance Program (HEEAP) in Vietnam and the Science, Technology, Research and Innovation for Development (STRIDE) Program in the Philippines. The brief compares the two initiatives over a multitude of features, featuring short case studies informed by consistent interviews, a summary listing of the best practices derived from each program, analysis of contextual factors that support success and replication, and constructive first steps for developing similar programming.

The second higher education brief, *Better Education, Better Skills, Better Economy, and a Better Future for El Salvador's Youth: Analysis and Best Practices of the USAID Higher Education for Economic Growth Activity*, looks at case studies of the Higher Education for Economic Growth program (HEA) in El Salvador, featuring in-depth analysis of the program with constituent interviews, a summary listing of the best practices derived from HEA, and constructive first steps for developing similar programming.

COMPONENT 3

BUILD CAPACITY FOR A RANGE OF WFD STAKEHOLDERS

Activity 5: Design and Deliver Technical Training on WFD to USAID and Other Stakeholders

During the life of the project, Workforce Connections developed and delivered various Workforce Development trainings in Bangkok, Thailand; Washington, DC; Arlington, Virginia; Miami, Florida; and Frankfurt, Germany, to USAID and other implementers. WC trainings use a 21st century learning approach of “Learner Centered Design” - where learners are at the center of the approach and “construct” their knowledge by interacting with the material, peers, and instructors. Trainers play more of a facilitator role as opposed to a more traditional one-directional model. They provide a base of relevant technical content, using questions and peer interactions to help participants integrate new knowledge in ways that are meaningful for them.

Systems Thinking in International Development

Workforce Connections organized an eight-day training course for over 20 USAID staff on Systems Thinking for International Development in October and November of 2013. Systems Thinking provides an analytical framework and tools for examining how change happens within complex adaptive systems, which characterize most international development problems. The course introduced participants to the basic concepts and principles of systems thinking, including archetypes, or patterns that commonly emerge in complex adaptive systems. In addition, participants learned to use tools including Causal Loop Diagramming and Systems Dynamics Modeling, working in small groups to apply them to specific cases related to topics such as youth programming, women's land rights, NGO capacity building, and others. The course was instrumental in informing content development for the Workforce Development course.

The course was conducted by Dr. Ali Mostashari, the Director of the Sociotechnical Systems Program and the Director of Center for Complex Adaptive Socio-technological Systems (COMPASS) at the Stevens Institute of Technology, where he also serves as an Associate Professor at the School of Systems and Enterprises.

Workforce Development for Youth Employment: Program, Design, Concepts, and Tools

Workforce Connections in collaboration with E3 initiated the design of a three-day training course at the Asia Regional Training Center (ARTC) in Bangkok, Thailand, from February 12-14, 2014. The course was designed to support the participants – primarily field-based USAID Education and Economic Growth Officers – to access current thinking in and outside of USAID on workforce development, and equip them to lead and participate in successful WFD program design and implementation. It was facilitated by Lara Goldmark (FHI 360) and Rachel Blum (USAID), and co-facilitated by John Lindsay (FHI 360) and Stacy Cummings (USAID), with additional inputs from Phil Psilos (then with RTI, now with FHI 360), Katie Green (formerly RTI), and Julie Lostumbo (RTI), and Katy Vickland (then with CARANA, now with Creative Associates). The project also collaborated with Business Community Synergies (BCS) for design support and logistics.

The training content focused on helping participants to understand workforce development as a system, within which different types of programs, activities, and interventions can take place depending on the nature of the problem and characteristics of the target population. In addition, the course included a series of infographics, visualizing WFD program models, drawing from actual WFD programs funded by USAID and other donors. Specifically, the content strengthened participants' ability to:

- Recognize workforce development as a system, including the economic and political drivers for change (or the lack of change), where to look for data and what to do with it, the institutional landscape, and how to engage with multiple stakeholders throughout the system.
- Articulate a theory of change for a USAID-funded WFD programs based on the existing portfolio of programs including key questions such as: "What are the programming options for workforce development?", "How do we measure results?", "What lessons have we learned?" and "What are the funding sources?"
- Engage in case-study based practical exercises to become familiar with and use workforce assessments meant to support the process of developing a concept note or Project Appraisal Document (PAD), utilizing four country-specific case studies: Rwanda, Indonesia, Jordan, and Morocco.
- Identify different program models for workforce development and link them to USAID goals in varying country contexts.
- Conduct successful stakeholder consultations for WFD program design.
- Develop the WFD content needed for program cycle documents such as concept papers, PADs, gender analyses, etc.

The course was administered over a three-day period, with each day consisting of a full-day of training starting at 9am and finishing at 5pm. There were 18 USAID participants, in addition to the facilitators, who also actively took part in training activities.

In general, **the training was well received, and the objectives were met**, with participants demonstrating improved knowledge and skills through the development of their own WFD Project Appraisal Development (PAD) exercises by the end of the training. More specifically, in terms of content, positive feedback was received about every session. Participants were very engaged throughout the training and had many questions around how to design and fund the next generation of modern and systemic WFD programs. The PAD exercise structure was well received as quite relevant to the participants' work. Despite initial concern that with a mix of Economic Growth and Education Officers, one group would not relate to the training, all participants were actively engaged in the topics and activities.

"Thanks again for a great training! Honestly this training was one of the best "technical" trainings I've taken at USAID... You all did a fantastic job! Honestly, I think I personally am a better Economic Growth officer after that training, and I hope [we] can translate some of that back to the Mission. Please pass my thanks to the FHI 360 team." -USAID

Employment and Workforce Development Programming for Rural and Food-Based Economies

Workforce Connections designed and delivered a three-day training in Arlington, VA from October 1-3, 2014, building on the Bangkok training with a specific focus on employment and income generation in rural and agricultural economies. The three-day training course was attended by approximately 21 USAID participants, in addition to the facilitators who actively attended all three days. Participants included USAID officers from a number of different technical and geographic areas who were involved in designing or improving workforce development projects, assessments, or related activities.

Several implementers presented relevant examples of projects in workforce development that provided an opportunity for training participants to ask questions of guest speakers deeply familiar with these projects. Implementers and their respective projects included the Education for Income Generation (EIG) implemented by Winrock International in Nepal; the Local Enterprise and Value Chain Enhancement (LEVE) project implemented by RTI in Haiti; and Education and Research in Agriculture (ERA) implemented by Virginia Tech and EARTH University. The training also guided participants through the PAD process. The participants formed five groups based on four case studies: Kenya, Senegal, Colombia, and Jordan. On the final day each group presented their PAD to an expert panel and received feedback from the panel on the PADs final design. The training was well received by the participants.

Employment and Workforce Development Programming for Latin America and the Caribbean

Workforce Connections designed and delivered a four-day training in Miami, Florida from June 8-11, 2015, built upon past training courses, but focusing more specifically on applying workforce development concepts to promote employment for young people, reduce violence in their communities, and support business to grow. Workforce Connections was responsible for overseeing the final development of the course's technical content, production of the training materials, coordination of inputs from all facilitators and outside presenters, as well as delivery of the course and materials. SSG Advisors were responsible for the logistics of the course. The training course was administered over a four-day period, with each day consisting of a full day training from 9am-4pm. There were 18 USAID participants who attended all four days, in addition to the facilitators, who also actively took part in training activities. Participants consisted of USAID officers, primarily from the Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) Missions, representing a number of different technical areas.

Several implementers presented relevant examples of projects in workforce development. pProjects included

the Local Enterprise and Value Chain Enhancement (LEVE) project implemented by RTI in Haiti; the Improving Access to Employment program implemented by CARANA in El Salvador; and the Jóvenes Constructores or Youth Build program implemented by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in El Salvador.

Experts from USAID and other organizations, including representatives from Creative Associates International, Social Impact, EDC, and National Network for Safe Communities presented on specific topics. The training also guided participants through practical methodologies relevant to their work in project development, where the participants formed groups based on four case studies: Kenya, El Salvador, Indonesia, and Morocco. The outputs of the various training modules were inputs into each case study group's final day mini-design session. The training was well received by the participants.

Education Summit, Toward a New Global Education Agenda: How the Past and Present Inform the Future

Workforce Connections as the current organizer of the Goal 2 Community of Practice was asked by USAID to bring together leading thinkers in the workforce development field and develop and deliver the technical content for a series of workforce development (Goal 2) technical sessions at the Summit. The summit was held from November 2-4, 2015 in Silver Spring, Maryland. The Summit focused on new and innovative approaches to education and training, as well as informing an updating of USAID's Education Strategy, and it was organized around the three goals of the current USAID Education Strategy.

The themes for the sessions included:

- Theme 1: *It's Not Just about Skills: Systems Thinking for Workforce Development*
- Theme 2: *A Shift in Philosophy: Focusing on Outcomes for Youth*
- Theme 3: *Changing Our Approach: Delivering 21st Century Knowledge and Skills*

Each of these themes were divided into at least three daily sessions and were delivered at the Education Summit for a total of 11 sessions.

USAID Economic Growth Training

Workforce Connections led two sessions at the USAID Economic Growth Training from April 27-28, 2016 at the Washington Learning Center in Crystal City, Virginia. The USAID Economic Growth Training is a standard training course introducing economic growth concepts and programming and designed for economic growth officers and other USAID personnel involved in economic growth programming. These sessions were tailored for this course, from among a larger set originally developed for the 3-day Workforce Development training course. In the first session, *Where do Jobs Come from?* was led by Lara Goldmark (FHI 360) and Alec Hansen (FHI 360), which was an introduction to workforce development concepts, followed up by an exercise where participants selected between four categories, a) Growth first, b) Jobs first, c) Skills-first, and d) Mixed-Approach; and were then asked to present and defend their case for using the approach they chose. The second session, *Labor Market Assessments*, was led by John Lindsay (FHI 360) and Alec Hansen (FHI 360).

They started the session with a gallery walk through a visual LMA process, which included an overview of the core concepts and components of a typical labor market assessment, brought to life through the use of specific tools based on data from an actual assessment. Following the gallery walk, participants as groups undertook their own assessments based on a case study of Zimbabwe's economic context and labor market.

USAID Education Overview Course

Workforce Connections led two sessions on September 15, 2016. This USAID foundational training 5-day course, held from September 12-16, 2016, is designed to introduce USAID staff who will be involved in relevant program design and oversight to current practices and priorities in education and training. The training was organized around USAID's current Education Strategy focusing on Education in Crisis and Conflict, Early Grade Reading, and Higher Education/Workforce Development. The first session, *Principles of Workforce Development*, was led by Lara Goldmark (FHI 360), which introduced participants to many of the core concepts used in workforce development programming focusing on systems thinking, defining workforce development, assessing and mapping the system, and understanding where jobs come from. This session concluded with a participant-led activity where teams debated different approaches to linking skills, jobs, and economic growth. The second session, *Workforce Development Theories of Change*, led by John Lindsay (FHI 360), was an interactive session where participants built a theory of change for a workforce development project based on a case study that they selected. In this training, there were a total number of 24 participants representing a diversity of USAID Regions and Offices.

Build Your Labor Market Assessment Toolkit: A Hands-On Introduction to Analyzing Youth Employment Opportunities

On September 29, 2017, Workforce Connections and USAID delivered a 3-hour workshop on Labor Market Assessments at the Global Youth Economic Opportunities Summit. In this interactive session, participants learned about the key uses and components of a labor market assessment, and had the opportunity to test out powerful and innovative tools that can help them answer important questions about a labor market system, e.g.: How do stakeholders act and interact? How can changes in the global, national, and local economic context affect employment opportunities for youth, and employers' demand for skills? What do these changes mean for female youth, rural youth, and others? How do young people move through the educational system and into the labor market? The approximately 40 participants gained knowledge of tools drawn from a range of disciplines, and learned to use both qualitative and quantitative information to analyze the nature and dynamics of labor supply and demand, and the alignment between the two (or lack thereof) in a labor market system.

Best Practices in Workforce Development for Youth Employment

Workforce Connections designed and delivered a three-day immersive training on youth workforce development (WFD) programming with USAID officers in Frankfurt, Germany from Jun 12-14, 2018. The training focused on WFD approaches and tools as well as practical exercises to support the USAID program cycle. Participants learned about what works in WFD, USAID best practices, private sector engagement and recognizing opportunities and challenges. A module was also focused on understanding WFD as a complex systems challenge.

The training was designed using a 21st century learning approach of "Learner Centered Design" - where learners are at the center of the approach and "construct" their knowledge by interacting with the material, peers, and Instructors. Facilitators provided a base of technical information and relevant content and then relied heavily on asking skillfully guided questions to enable participants to self-discover and to foster a certain level of peer-to-peer learning. The training focused on the following:

1. Workforce development as a system with multiple facets, including economic and political drivers for change (or the lack of change), the institutional landscape and multiple stakeholders
2. Opportunities and challenges in a rapidly transforming global workforce development space where the future and nature of learning and work are rapidly changing

3. USAID best practices in monitoring and evaluation as well as private sector engagement, drawing upon existing USAID programs focused on youth employability and development

The course was administered over a three-day period, with each day consisting of a full day training from 9am – 5pm. There were 10 USAID participants who attended all three days, in addition to the facilitators, who also actively took part in training activities. Participants consisted of USAID/Washington staff from different bureaus as well as education and economic growth staff from various USAID Missions across Africa, Asia, Central Asia, and MENA, representing a number of different technical areas. Experts from USAID and McKinsey presented on specific topics including WFD and monitoring and evaluation as well as private sector engagement. The participants formed groups to focus on two country case studies, i.e., Morocco and Laos. The training was well received by the participants as evidenced by the final participants' feedback survey; the activity led to a USAID-requested follow-on 3-hour version of the training at the Youth Global Economic Opportunities Summit in September 2018 (see below), and will also be adapted to a youth workforce development training for LAC-based USAID Education and Economic Growth Officers to be delivered in May 2019.

Research Roundtable

On April 25, 2018, WC co-sponsored and co-hosted with Making Cents International and the Youth Economic Opportunities (YEO) Network a Research Roundtable discussion. The Global Youth Economic Opportunities (GYEO) Research Roundtable gathered 50 researchers from universities, think tanks and other organizations to discuss what practitioners and researchers know, and don't know, about the issues impacting youth unemployment. The learning agenda, as captured by University of North Carolina researchers, was shared in advance of the formal written report, and key stakeholders (implementers, donors, practitioners and academics) convened to discuss key WFD findings from the GYEO 2017 Summit and make recommendations for the 2018 Summit.

What Works in Youth Workforce Development: Key Tools, Approaches and Evidence

On September 25, 2018, WC provided a condensed 3-hour mini WFD workshop at the GYEO Summit. The workshop covered critical elements of effective workforce development programs for youth and raised participants' awareness of promising practices and evidence-based approaches and tools. The workshop took place concurrently with some Summit breakout sessions, and attendees pursued a mix of breakout sessions coupled with a training to deepen their capacity as youth development practitioners. The mini WFD workshop was attended by approximately 70 people from USAID and other implementers.

Activity 6: Technical Assistance to the African Union on Youth Employment

Workforce Connections assisted the USAID Mission to the African Union (AU) in its efforts to address the educational and employment needs of youth in Africa through support to the AU. During the second year of the project, Workforce Connections undertook work to research and review the current state of **labor market information systems (LMIS) in Africa**; and the potential role of the African Union Commission (AUC) in strengthening these systems in member countries. The paper, *A Roadmap for the Development of Labor Market Information Systems*, has been revised and finalized in response to comments from the AUC and the International Labor Organization (ILO). Exploring the potential for Tunisia to become a leader among African countries in LMIS development, a dissemination event titled, *LMIS Forum: Strengthening Collaboration Between Services and Data*, was held in Tunisia on September 22, 2016 at the Mediterranean School of Business (MSB); presenters included Alec Hansen (FHI 360), Jean-Michel Mas (FHI 360) and Kjartan Sorensen (Consultant).

Following an introduction by the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, participants were grouped to brainstorm, to deepen their reflection on the Tunisian LMIS and provide recommendations for its development for employment, especially for young people. There were approximately 30 participants representing government officials, USAID, AU, and private sector. The forum was independently funded and organized by FHI 360.

Activity 7: Talent Cloud and Youth Engagement

Workforce Connections continued the **Talent Cloud** initiative that targets young professionals working in development on the global youth employment problem. The objective of the initiative is to equip young people with technical and field knowledge, offer opportunities to collaborate with like-minded peers, and provide access to experts and resources for professional development. In addition to supporting individual young professionals, this effort also works with other community of practice organizations to do the same. The program helps young people develop the skills and networks that will better enable them to tackle their own professional development, as well as work towards addressing youth unemployment globally.

In September 2015, Workforce Connections granted an award to FUNIDES, an organization based in Nicaragua, to recruit fellows into the Talent Cloud program. Four Talent Cloud fellows participated in this initiative. In Nicaragua, FUNIDES developed and delivered training courses for the fellows, mainly focusing on labor markets, education, and economic complexity. The fellowship in Washington, DC was divided into two groups: the first group of fellows were Sergio Cabrales and Monica Ferrey from November to December 2016, and the second group of fellows were Nestor Bonilla and Lourdes Zapata from March to April 2017. In addition to developing and finalizing individual research projects, the Fellows provided research support to a Labor Market Assessment in Jamaica; provided research support on an entrepreneurship paper; met with workforce technical experts at FHI 360 and USAID; and attended numerous workforce-related events in Washington, DC. A Talent Cloud Fellow, Mónica Ferrey, supported the LMA training at the Global Youth Economic Opportunity Summit (GYEOS) in September 2017 and participated in a panel on women entrepreneurs. The Talent Cloud Fellows presented their [final research](#) in Managua, Nicaragua on December 12th, 2017 at an event organized by FUNIDES. The event was broadcasted online and shared on [YouTube](#). It was also published in the [local newspaper](#). The FUNIDES grant ended on October 30, 2017. On January 29, 2018, WC hosted an internal USAID webinar for the Talent Cloud Fellows to share their experience as Talent Cloud Fellows and their final research findings with USAID/Nicaragua and other USAID staff.

"As a Talent Cloud Fellow, living and participating as a fellow in Washington, DC was very stimulating. During the fellowship, I explored different approaches by which nonprofits like FHI 360 address various social issues and propose solutions; expanded my knowledge on labor market assessments; and made significant contributions to my research with the support of FHI 360 technical experts. Overall, it was an eye-opening, exhilarating and heartening experience that did not only provide me with networks and skills for a more prosperous career but also the tools for challenging endeavors that I have set for myself and for those I have promised to serve." - Talent Cloud Fellow

"Having the opportunity to live and participate as a fellow in Washington DC at FHI 360, an international organization committed to improving lives, has been a life changing experience. Being able to learn and experience how an organization can design, analyze and implement worldwide projects has allowed me to acquire knowledge, improve my skills and reinforce my desire to follow the path to the solution of societal issues using technology. During my stay, I worked on a research project on entrepreneurship and a data science project to improve and strengthen decision-making processes. Also, I got immersed in the technology world by attending many events such as at Google, Microsoft, USAID, Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Washington Post and other events to improve my entrepreneurial and innovation mindset and expand my network. It was a unique and transformative experience...!" -Talent Cloud Fellow

"Living and working in DC, as part of the Talent Cloud Fellowship, has definitely left an invaluable impression in my life. I got to develop a great understanding of the labor market systems; I made important adjustments to my ongoing research after getting feedback from FHI 360 senior researchers; and I managed to develop my personal and professional network. It was a wonderful and rich experience that provided me with remarkable knowledge, contacts, and opportunities to develop my career pathway, and I can't wait to see the long-term results of this journey!" – Talent Cloud Fellow

RESULTS

ASSESSMENT AND OVERALL PERFORMANCE

Flexible mechanisms such as Workforce Connections can advance various objectives, both general and specific. By launching a much-needed community of practice in workforce development, and creating a virtuous cycle of investment in research, knowledge sharing, and capacity building, the knowledge generated under the project was widely shared, magnified and put to practical use. We found that, in particular, webinars were a high-impact format for sharing knowledge and encouraging participation in the community of practice. As interested USAID missions and bureaus and other donors learned from and bought in to the project, the tools, approaches and knowledge developed were further amplified beyond USAID's Office of Education. In a fluid atmosphere such as workforce development, this responsiveness and flexibility has allowed for the learnings and tools to be applied in a number of settings. For example:

- Workforce Connections LMA learning and tools have informed subsequent LMAs implemented by FHI 360 and supported by USAID. The 2018 USAID YouthPower Action South Africa Health Workforce Assessment incorporated learning from the WC Kenya Health Sector LMA. Other examples include the [AUP Tunisia Strategic TVET Assessment](#) (2017) and the ASPIRES Zimbabwe Employment Market Opportunity Analysis (forthcoming), both of which applied WC analytical approaches and tools.
- WC LMA findings have informed USAID Missions' design of youth workforce programs in Kenya, Zimbabwe, and Indonesia. Additionally, the 2014 LMA in Zimbabwe informed design of the second phase of the Zimbabwe:Works program, funded by DFID and SIDA. Multiple development actors in Zimbabwe (e.g. Mercy Corps, ILO, World Education) reported that they had read and utilized the document as well.
- FHI 360 is using the LMA tools to design and implement programs in Guatemala, Honduras, and Jamaica (USAID Advance), Morocco (USAID Career Centers), and Ukraine (USAID Economic Resilience Activity).
- The Workforce Connections publication *A Roadmap for the Development of Labor Market Information Systems (LMIS)* continues to shape and inform policy dialogue in Africa, through engagement by the USAID-funded African Union Partnership (AUP) project. Currently, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Union Commission (AUC) are developing a policy brief on LMIS that incorporates numerous recommendations from the Workforce Connections paper, with input from FHI 360 and other TVET experts from across Africa. Once finalized, the policy brief will be submitted by the African Union Commission for endorsement by African Heads of State. In addition, the AUC is developing a 10-year Plan of Action for TVET in Africa, which focuses on LMIS strengthening as one of the core thematic pillars and includes recommendations from *A Roadmap for the Development of Labor Market Information Systems*. The Plan of Action, which provides a framework for investments by the AU, Regional Economic Communities, and Member States, is also expected to be endorsed by the Heads of State in the upcoming AU Summit in

early 2019. *A Roadmap for the Development of Labor Market Information Systems* has been cited in research published by the World Bank and the World Association of Public Employment Services.

- The publication *Key “Soft Skills” that Foster Youth Workforce Success: Toward a Consensus Across Fields* has become widely cited in the field, with a cumulative 61 citations in Google Scholar as of November 2018.
- The community of practice that Workforce Connections established has also created synergies and bridges between WFD programming, which often sits in USAID Economic Growth offices, and education programming, providing the data and evidence to confirm that learning is life-long and successful workforce training should start before entry into labor markets. This thinking has manifested in the recent USAID Education Policy which directly references the need for education interventions to focus on market-relevant workforce and skills development for successful labor market entry. This has made what was often siloed programming and funding more collaborative and synergistic.

LESSONS LEARNED

AWARD IMPLEMENTATION AND RESULTS ACHIEVEMENT

▪ **Management transitions as challenges ... and opportunities**

Several times over the period of performance, management and technical leadership of the project both at USAID and FHI 360 changed hands due to employment transitions and leave – as is normal for a project spanning five years. During and immediately after these transitions, however, it was necessary for both USAID and FHI 360 technical leads to assess and redefine the vision for the project and design new activities to successfully carry out that vision. At points, these transitions occurred simultaneously at USAID and FHI 360 (as in the final 6 months of the project, when completion of research briefs was delayed). In the case of designing and delivering workforce development training for USAID officers, management changes meant that some of the original content developed as well as feedback received during the delivery of initial trainings was not incorporated into later trainings. Additionally, some of the activities and outputs originally conceived for the project were not ultimately pursued under subsequent management.

However, although these transitions brought with them time and transactional costs, they also presented opportunities to refresh thinking on the project’s objectives and set new priorities (for example, with respect to research topics) to flexibly respond to USAID’s needs.

▪ **Importance of engaging with Advisory Board members**

In its first two years, the project selected and reported to an Advisory Board including youth and private sector representatives. The Board was helpful in shaping the project, marketing it to a broader network of workforce development community of practice members, introducing new perspectives, and forging and deepening partnerships.

For example, interest in the labor market assessment tools and initial findings of the Kenya youth assessment on the part of the Board representative from Johnson and Johnson (which works around the world helping prepare young people for careers in health) led the company to co-invest with the project in a follow-on health sector labor market assessment. Incorporating guidance and suggestions from Johnson and Johnson, this assessment innovatively focused on private as well as public sector health services, and examined employment opportunities for youth in the broader health economy – such as for pharmacy technicians. Drawing on the Kenya health LMA and the LMIS publication, Johnson and Johnson and Workforce Connections also co-presented on “Bringing Healthcare Human Resources Data to Life: The Potential for Workforce Analytics in

Low and Medium Income Countries” at the 2016 American Public Health Association annual meeting.

The Advisory Board was not active in the final years of the project, but given these valuable experiences, it is recommended to work with a carefully selected board that can help a project gain new perspectives and expertise, achieve cost share targets, and reach broader audiences.

▪ **Opportunity to scale up Talent Cloud model**

The Talent Cloud fellows reported that the program has made a significant impact in their professional lives. It would be useful, in the future, to explore if similar results can be achieved at greater scale. Whereas four fellows completed the program under Workforce Connections, now that the grantee, FUNIDES, has developed and piloted a labor market essentials course, it could be adapted for use with larger groups of fellows and in other locations. Furthermore, all fellows were placed at FHI360 for their time in the US; but with the participation of additional organizations in hosting fellows, program participants could gain from a richer set of experiences and the program would be able to absorb and thus support more fellows. Finally, presentation of the program to the USAID/Nicaragua mission happened only after the fellowships had been completed; an earlier introduction might have helped the fellows in shaping their research and forging professional connections earlier, and aided in promoting the Talent Cloud program.

▪ **Align training offerings with participant incentives**

A three-day off-site training – as the standalone Frankfurt training was – does not meet USAID requirements for participants to receive credit, which limits USAID attendance from the missions. In the future, workforce development training offerings should align to USAID’s continuing education and training parameters, to ensure that participants will receive credits, and hence incentivize greater USAID participation.

▪ **Need for streamlined commenting and approval process for technical deliverables**

The quality of WC technical deliverables was greatly strengthened by bringing in the perspectives and expertise of individuals across USAID. However, a streamlined process for commenting on and approving deliverables would have reduced confusion and effort spent on incorporating suggested changes and reconciling different document versions.

▪ **Communities of Practice require dedicated and sustained leadership**

The project convened several working groups that were organically formed by participants at an event early in the project’s period of performance. Although initial participation in the monthly meetings of the working groups was diverse and robust, it was difficult for the members to identify common agendas and concrete action items beyond a set of initial deliverables. Since leaders did not emerge for the working groups after they produced these deliverables, they ceased convening. Additionally, although the Workforce Connections website provided a function for users to comment on resources, it largely served as a repository for project and other relevant publications rather than a forum for discussion. Events and webinars proved to be a more effective format for provoking conversation between members of the CoP. To that end, a closing event would have been useful to further share the extensive knowledge generated during the project. Furthermore, although the tools and resources developed under the project have been transferred to www.youthpower.org, a strategic alliance with another organization (not another project which will lose its own website after the period of performance ends) might have allowed the Community of Practice to find a permanent home in its original form.

The challenges discussed above are common for communities of practice. Best practice calls for such communities to meet in person, to maintain interest with regular meetings and events, and to have facilitator(s) supported by time and funds. Although Workforce Connections followed best practice in these aspects, to the last point, the considerable skills and resources truly necessary for active facilitation and sustainability of the overall CoP and of multiple working groups should have been more carefully considered

and allocated at the outset of the project, including training for CoP leaders. Furthermore, an additional best practice which was not implemented in this case is for the community to establish a charter which outlines, e.g., objectives, deliverables, benefits, norms, rules, and roles and responsibilities.

It is important to note that, by nature of being voluntary, CoPs are often put on the back burner regardless of how much interest in the subject there is among the members. Communities go through natural cycles, with participation ebbing and flowing. Additionally, there are various types of participation in such a community, and all of them are positive, e.g.:

- A small core group of people who actively participate and are really invested in the topic/work;
- People who occasionally participate; and
- The largest group, people on the periphery who rarely participate.

There are a variety of reasons that most people are in this last category (for example, they don't feel knowledgeable or comfortable enough and assume they don't have much to offer, or they don't have time), but they are an important part of every CoP because they may think and discuss topics in separate conversations, and take information from the CoP and apply them to their own work, even though this participation may not be obvious or visible.

According to CoP experts Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott, and William M. Snyder, "The key to good community participation and a healthy degree of movement between levels is to design community activities that allow participants at all levels to feel like full members. Rather than force participation, successful communities "build benches" for those on the sidelines. They make opportunities for semiprivate interaction, whether through private discussion rooms on the community's Web site, at a community event, or in a one-on-one conversation."² Therefore, we recommend that future CoPs encourage participation at and among all levels by expressly planning and creating various types of low-demand, in-person and online opportunities for interaction -- especially for participants in the last and largest category described above -- and employ novel methods (such as social network analysis) to measure the connections created by, and behavior change impact of, such communities.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR USAID TO FURTHER SUPPORT SUCH WORK

As noted above, flexible mechanisms such as Workforce Connections -- i.e., cooperative agreements that permit buy-ins for specific pieces of work that respond to donor needs -- are incredibly useful for responding quickly to emerging needs at USAID headquarters and missions, and allowing for external actors to support the project's objectives as well. Additionally, demand for the types of knowledge products and capacity-building activities that WC delivered has continued to grow (see specific details below), and the Community of Practice would benefit from a new home, leadership, and resources. USAID should consider a follow-on mechanism to build upon the solid foundation of knowledge, tools and approaches generated under WC.

- The final training produced demand for a regional training for Education and Economic Growth officers based in LAC, to be carried out in May 2019 under YouthPower. Feedback from participants indicates that a regional focus is important, and the project noted particular demand from MENA and Asia. In addition to training content customized to contexts, challenges and opportunities in their respective regions, participants also wanted more specific implementation examples and lessons learned as well as more hands-on practice with the tools introduced.

² Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. M. (2002). Seven principles for cultivating communities of practice. *Cultivating Communities of Practice: a guide to managing knowledge*, 4

- Under WC a brief was developed – but not finalized – on the subjective vs. objective barriers to female employment in MENA. This research has sparked a great deal of interest from research institutions and government entities in the region, as it aims to shed light on a little-understood topic. USAID could support finalizing, publishing and disseminating this valuable knowledge product, which would inform project design and implementation in the region.
- The African Union Commission Youth Division is actively engaged in promoting the strengthening of Labor Market Information Systems and labor market forecasting capabilities in Africa, building on the findings and recommendations originally developed by WC through the “Roadmap for the Development of Labor Market Information Systems” report. Experience has shown there is high demand among African policymakers for expertise and evidence in this field. USAID could, in partnership with the AUC, support additional studies, technical assistance, or training activities to inform and accelerate the reform process. Other relevant thematic areas of high interest to the AUC Youth Division include Technical and Vocational Education and Training (including quality assurance systems and developing Centers of Excellence in Africa) and youth entrepreneurship including improving the ease of doing business. USAID could support comparative studies to develop an evidence base for action by the AUC and other African stakeholders, using the successful model pioneered on the topic LMIS.

IMPLICATIONS OF THIS WORK AND FUTURE SUCH WORK FOR THE FIELD OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Members of the community of practice reported to us that they found Workforce Connections valuable in that it established a much-needed community and shared tools and methodologies that were country and sector agnostic, so that they could be localized and customized. Workforce development practitioners are hungry for tools and methods, like those produced under WC, that are evidence based, practical, and allow for course correction and evaluation. There was wide interest in the knowledge generated under the project from other donors, governments, national and international NGOs and implementers – it resonated with a diverse audience. At this point, it will be important for both the tools and the CoP to evolve to and respond to a rapidly changing and evolving technical field, so that practitioners can continue to have a forum to further develop these approaches and share best practices, the community can grow to increasingly include more non-US-based and USAID-focused actors, and ideally establish a permanent home.

MANAGEMENT

WC Project Staff	Position	Time with Project
Alec Hansen	Technical Advisor	January 2014 – End of the Project
Eleanor (Nora) Sohnen	Technical Advisor	January 2015 – End of the Project
	Project Director	November 2016 – April 2018
Elebthel Gebrehiwot	Senior Program Officer	December 2014 – End of the Project
John Lindsay	Technical Officer	January 2014 – October 2016
Kiera Derman	Senior Program Officer	Proposal – April 2015
Lara Goldmark	Project Director	Proposal – October 2016
Meredith Cann	Program Assistant	September 2013 – December 2014
Monika Aring	Technical Advisor	January 2014 – End of the Project
Obed Diener	Technical Advisor	Proposal – September 2016
Shahera Youssef	Technical Director	April 2018 – End of the Project
Tommy Galloway	Technical Officer	September 2017 – End of the Project

BENEFICIARIES TARGETED AND REACHED

Indicator	Type	Data Source	Target (if appropriate)	Cumulative
# participants in learning network	Output	Participant records from events, webinars, discussion forums (website entrants)	1500	45,554
# Knowledge Base publications	Output	Project reports	15	18
# publications exploring gender dynamics	Output	Project reports	5	7
# events organized or supported by WC	Output	Project reports	25	51
# of new WFD actors engaged in knowledge production	Outcome	Project reports, advisory board records	10	39
# of country-based requests to apply and customize tools to local contexts	Impact	Project reports	3	7
# workforce development design and assessment tools developed or refined	Output	Project reports	3	15
A common framework for life skills measurement is developed and tested	Outcome	Project reports	1	1
# Guidance notes developed for practitioners	Output	Project reports	2	2
# USAID staff or other practitioners trained in workforce development	Output	Participant lists	100	144
# USAID education staff trained in youth WFD	Output	Participant lists	75	49
USAID economic development staff trained in youth workforce development	Output	Participant lists	75	18
# USAID staff or other practitioners in adjacent technical fields trained in youth workforce development	Output	Participant lists	25	165
# technical assistance engagements supporting USAID Missions	Output	Project reports	2	5
Funds leveraged through strategic partnerships with the private sector or other donors	Outcome	Project reports	\$500,000	\$310,278.72
# of trained USAID staff applying knowledge and tools	Impact	Survey of training participants	20	8
# of youth and women achieving key professional development milestones	Outcome	Project reports	25	27
% of trained USAID staff with improved understanding of applying youth development principles to WFD programming	Outcome	Survey	80%	80%

ANNEX A: PUBLICATIONS

Report/Brief	Link to Youth Power
A Roadmap for the Development of Labor Market Information Systems	https://www.fhi360.org/resource/roadmap-development-labor-market-information-systems
Analysis of Skills Demand in Indonesia	https://www.youthpower.org/resources/analysis-skills-demand-indonesia
Kenya Youth Assessment	https://www.youthpower.org/resources/kenya-youth-assessment
Kenya Health Sector Labor Market Assessment	https://www.fhi360.org/resource/workforce-connections-kenya-health-sector-labor-market-assessment
Key “Soft Skills” that Foster Youth Workforce Success: Toward a Consensus Across Fields	https://www.youthpower.org/resources/key-soft-skills-foster-youth-workforce-success-toward-consensus-across-fields
Key Approaches to Labor Market Assessment	https://www.youthpower.org/resources/key-approaches-labor-market-assessment
Key Approaches to Labor Market Assessment: An Interactive Guide	https://www.youthpower.org/key-approaches-labor-market-assessment-interactive-guide
Labor Market Assessment Tools: Value Chain Mapping	https://www.youthpower.org/resources/labor-market-assessment-tools-value-chain-mapping
Recommendations to USAID for Workforce Development F Indicators	https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/Measuring_Employment_Outcomes_Briefing_Paper.pdf
WFD 101 Fact Sheet	https://www.edu-links.org/sites/default/files/media/file/WFD_GraphicV6.pdf
Zimbabwe Labor Market Assessment	https://www.youthpower.org/resources/zimbabwe-labor-market-assessment-2014

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