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ETHIOPIA

USAID's Building the Potential of Youth Activity

Final Report

(January 1, 2015 – July 31, 2020)

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Save the Children.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BDS	Business Development Services
BYOB	Be Your Own Boss
EDC	Education Development Center
ETB	Ethiopian Birr
FC	Facilitator for Change
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GOE	Government of Ethiopia
HUNDEE	HUNDEE-Oromo Grassroots Development Initiative
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IR	Intermediate Result
M4CD	Mobile for Career Development
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
PADet	Professional Alliance for Development in Ethiopia
PAT	POTENTIAL Addis Team
PDP	Personal Development Plan
POTENTIAL	USAID's Building the Potential of Youth
PYD	Positive Youth Development
REST	Relief Society of Tigray
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region
TOT	Training of Trainers
TTIs	Technical Training Institutes
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
WBL	Work-Based Learning
WO	Woreda Officers
WRN!	WorkReadyNow!
YES	Youth Economic Strengthening
YDV	Youth Development
YF	Youth Facilitator
YiA	Youth in Action

1. Program Overview/Summary

Activity Name:	USAID's Building the Potential of Youth
Activity Start Date and End Date:	January 1, 2015 to July 30, 2020
Name of Prime Implementing Partner:	Save the Children 501 Kings Highway East Fairfield, CT 06825 Telephone: 202-640-6600 genet.lemma@savethechildren.org
Agreement Number:	AID-663-A-15-00006
Name of Sub-awardees:	Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), HUNDEE-Oromo Grassroots Development Initiative (HUNDEE), Professional Alliance for Development in Ethiopia (PADet), Relief Society of Tigray (REST), Facilitator for Change Ethiopia (FC), Brandeis University, Stanford University Global, LLC – Kenya Branch
Major Counterpart Organizations	
Geographic Coverage (cities and or regions)	Afar, Amhara, Oromia, SNNPR, Somali, and Tigray
Reporting Period:	January 1, 2015 to July 30, 2020

1.1 Background

In keeping with its commitment to the Government of Ethiopia (GOE) to support its efforts to bring economic growth opportunities to its people, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) funded the Building the Potential of Youth Activity (POTENTIAL) with the goal of “helping youth increase their assets and incomes through employment or better employment for them to achieve economic self-sufficiency, while building the capacity of local institutions to continue this work in the long term”. The support aimed at providing rural youth with transferable soft skills training alongside vocational and entrepreneurship development activities through partnerships with training, small business, and microfinance institutions.

A six-year program launched in January 2015, POTENTIAL targeted unemployed and underemployed young people aged 15-29 living in 30 Woredas of six regional states of Ethiopia. The Activity helped beneficiaries access the livelihood knowledge, skills, and opportunities they need to be economically self-sufficient.

It was implemented by Save the Children Federation, Inc. and its partners: Education Development Center, Inc., HUNDEE-Oromo Grassroots Development Initiative, Professional Alliance for Development in Ethiopia, Relief Society of Tigray, and Facilitators for Change Ethiopia (FC). In order to fulfill its goal, the Activity aimed to achieve the following Intermediate Results:

- IR1: Rigorous evidence base developed to inform USAID and its development partners, including youth, Government of Ethiopia (GOE), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), on appropriate, effective, and sustainable market driven youth workforce development intervention
- IR2: Improved youth access to market relevant skills and experiences to support the transition to safe and viable employment; and
- IR3: Coordinated delivery, among local institutions, of quality market driven services connecting underserved youth, especially women, to employment and income opportunities.

By the end of its life, this Activity aimed to build the economic self-sufficiency of 34,537 youth across the 30 Woredas of Afar, Amhara, Oromia, SNNPR, Somali, and Tigray regional states. POTENTIAL’s youth livelihood framework encompasses the development of young people’s human, social, financial and physical capital while concurrently building the capacity of local service providers. The Activity’s strategic approach responded to unemployed and underemployed youths’ capacity needs, leveraged existing youth development activities, and contributed to improving the quality and accountability of local training and business service providers by ensuring existing entities work in concert. Specific strategies included the following:

- Focus on skills building: POTENTIAL offered tailored technical and transferable life skills trainings to create more viable livelihood prospects.
- Use targeted labor market assessments: POTENTIAL ensured training and service providers considered market relevance, targeting curricula and programs to emerging skills needs.
- Expand approaches and offerings in work-based learning: POTENTIAL assisted youth to participate in employer visits, job-shadowing, short-term employment, and internships.
- Both learners and employers benefited from training and supervisory support, leading to workforce-ready and employable youth with practical experience.
- Build youth service provider networks: POTENTIAL implemented a cost-effective approach to enhance support service access for remote communities and disadvantaged groups.

POTENTIAL has now completed its mission after six years of implementation, offering beneficiary youth a menu of up to nine training modules as well as integrated employability interventions that provided knowledge and support (through coaching, mentoring, and linking) to enhance their developmental assets (skills, understandings, and personal attributes) so as to be able to gain sound employment (self- or wage) and to be successful in their chosen career. As of December 2019, the Activity reached 35,984 young people

(104% of the LoP target). About 47 percent of program participants are female. So far, 24,360 (42% F) have gained new; of these, 66 percent are self-employed, 20 percent have acquired wage work, and 14 percent have gained better employment.

2. Activity Implementation Progress

2.1 Summary of Key Indicators

USAID’s Building the Potential of Youth Activity (POTENTIAL) has been able to reach 35,984 (47% F) youth through its transferrable life skills training over the life of the project. Participants received complementary soft and hard skills trainings, along with continuous post training follow-up support including coaching, mentoring and work-based learning opportunities. Many youth were linked with microfinance institutions (MFIs) to obtain loans for starting businesses. To date, youth beneficiaries have invested 107,845,318 ETB (USD 3,666,740) as startup capital. About 40% of this starting capital came from MFI loans, 32% from family support, 15% from collaborative partner’s support, 13% from their own savings and loans from Youth Economic and Social Groups (YESGs).

POTENTIAL was implemented in close coordination with other service providers such as technical training institutes, community leaders, non- and governmental organizations and MFIs, etc.

Five-Year Overview:

35,984 (47% F) youth received transferable life skill training

24,360 (42% F) youth employed (Self/Wage/Better)

3,286 (44% F) youth attended hard skill trainings

39,325 (44% F) youth received coaching

11,846 (41% F) youth received mentoring

107,845,318 ETB (USD 3,666,740) invested for businesses startup

3,457,055-person hours of trainings completed

The following graph shows the yearly growth of beneficiaries’ engagement over five years: Y1: 2,400; Y2: 7,322; Y3: 16,853; Y4: 28,777; Y5: 35,984

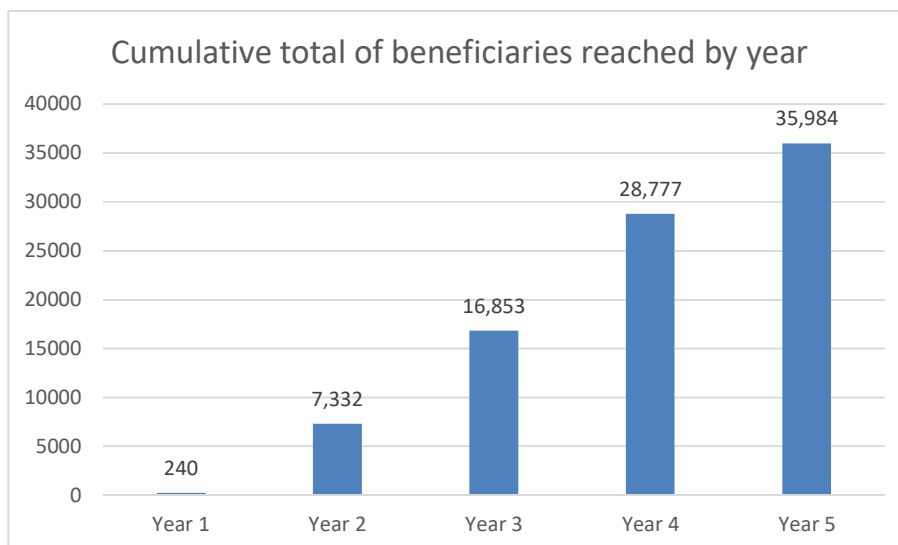


Chart 1- Cumulative of total beneficiaries by year

Over the five-year period, after participating in the transferrable life skills and technical training, 24,360 youth (42% F) are now engaged in new or improved income earning opportunities. This indicates that more than 67% of those who have attended the trainings have secured better livelihood options. This number is higher than the targeted level of achievement for employment across the life of the Activity (LOA).

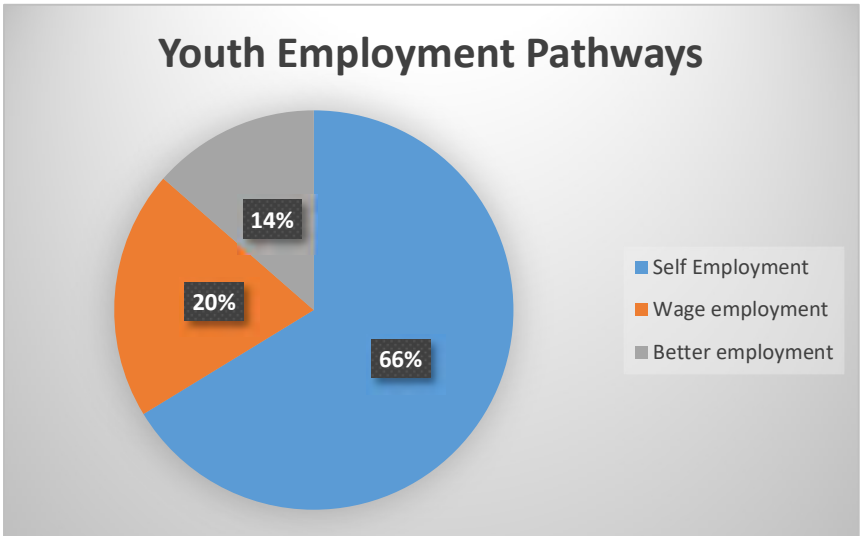


Chart-2 Employment of beneficiaries by type

Of the total youth employed, 66% are involved in self-employment and 20% were able to find wage employment opportunities in their areas, while 14% were formerly

underemployed but have now found better employment opportunities in terms of work safety and income. The above chart outlines these achievements.

POTENTIAL has been developing a rigorous evidence base to inform USAID and its development partners, including youth, the GOE and NGOs on appropriate, effective, and sustainable, market-driven youth livelihood development programming. POTENTIAL has implemented five thematic studies on TVET, gender, migration, mentorship and YESG groups, as well as three consecutive outcome surveys.

The POTENTIAL team has been delivering market relevant transferable life skill trainings. Throughout the life of project, the Activity delivered Positive Youth Development (PYD) training to 23,859 youth (46% F). In addition, POTENTIAL reached 35,984 youth (47% F) through Work Ready Now! (WRN!) and WR+ trainings. Work Ready Plus (WR+) is a training designed for youth with lower literacy and numeracy skills. Following WRN! training, 13,424 youth (45% F) who preferred to engage in self-employment received Be Your Own Boss (BYOB) training. Additional 2,668 youth (44% F) were supported to enroll in Technical Training Institutes (TTIs/TVETs) to attend technical hard skills training in their preferred location.

Over the past years, 6,678 youth (42% F) accessed Work-Based Learning (WBL) opportunities of which a great majority (98%) were in a form of job shadowing. Additionally, and based on their individual interests and personal development plans, 11,846 youth (41% F) were mentored by trained volunteer mentors.

To meet the demand for mentoring services, the Activity trained 1,051 (33% F) volunteer community-based mentors within the implementation regions. Most of the Activity's volunteer mentors are successful business owners, community leaders and employees of organizations within the implementation areas. Each mentor supports four to six youth, individually or in groups, who have interests in line with the mentor's career or livelihood pathway. Mentors also often share views on and discuss social, cultural, family and health issues. Finally, 39,325 (44% F) youth received coaching from Youth Facilitators in all program regions. Like mentoring, coaching was given either individually and/or through groups.

Since its start, the Activity has partnered with 30 TVETs (Technical Vocational Education Training) Centers in Afar, Amhara, Oromia, SNNP, Somali and Tigray regions. The Activity supported the targeted TVETs to rapidly increase access to workforce development and livelihood support while building national capacity to

ensure gains continue in the future. It aimed to provide Ethiopian youth with the tailored services to help them achieve increased income and gain the skills, knowledge, and social capital required to achieve economic self-sufficiency. POTENTIAL's proposed strategies and approaches responded to unemployed and underemployed youth's capacity needs, leveraged existing youth development activities, and contributed to improving the quality and accountability of local training and business service providers by ensuring existing entities worked in concert.

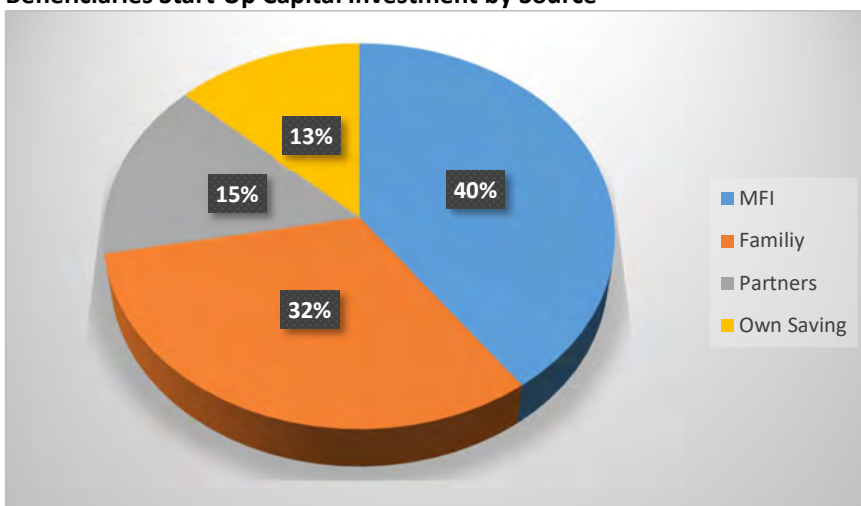
During the life of the project, 30 Youth Economic Strengthening (YES) services within existing youth centers of the implementation woredas have continued to provide services to youth across all regions. A total of 71,812 (29% F) youth benefited from the menu of services provided by the youth centers. Young women's utilization of YES services has increased over the duration of the Activity (19% in Year 3 to 29% in year 5). The Activity has been working to strengthen YES services within the youth centers for rural youth to assist them to get information, to develop their business ideas, and link them to employment opportunities.

The Activity partnered with different public and private sector partners to coordinate services and resources including access to credit and other resources such as land, materials and working spaces, as well as employment opportunities in order for youth to pursue their career paths and employment goals.

To this end, POTENTIAL has established 157 partnerships with public and private entities, surpassing the planned target of 135. These partnerships include actors operating in different sectors including agriculture, education, finance, and health, with a focus on training provision. The partnerships improved input and output market linkages, and provision of practical learning or job trainings, as well as paid jobs.

For the young people that have followed self-employment opportunities, their source of start-up capital came from individual savings, family support and loans from MFIs and Youth Economic and Social Groups (YESG). As partners to our Activity, the MFIs in all six implementation regions played a vital role in supporting youth, particularly those who wanted to engage in self-employment, by providing loans with minimal interest (8%) that served as startup capital. During the implementation period, 43,138,127 ETB (USD 1,294,144) was secured by the youth beneficiaries in the form of loans from the partner MFIs. The Activity has also been partnering with development partners operating in POTENTIAL's intervention regions. These efforts resulted in financial and material support for the youth beneficiaries that chose the self-employment pathway.

Beneficiaries Start-Up Capital Investment by Source



In its fifth year, Save the Children initiated its partnership with Brandeis University with the following expected results:

Expected Result 1: Capacity of Ethiopian higher education institutions developed to deliver transferable life skills education for their graduates through established or improved Career Labs.

Expected Result 2: Partnerships developed between higher education institutes, colleges and employers.

Brandeis University and Save the Children jointly conducted rapid assessments in July and August 2019 at six universities to assess the current career center offerings and transferable life skills. Following the rapid assessments, Brandeis University conducted an Action Planning Workshop with the universities to plan a path forward guided by the rapid assessments. The six university presidents formed a President's Compact with guidance and direction from Brandeis University to reinforce their dedication to improving their career services.

Table 1: Indicator Performance Tracking Table (January 2015 to December 2019)

Performance Indicators	LoP target	Cumulative to date actual	% of cumulative actual to LoP target
Number of youth completing POTENTIAL program components (Total reach)	34,537	35,984 (F 47%)	104
Person hours of POTENTIAL program training completed	3,645,856	3,457,055	94.8 ¹
Number of job placements for youth facilitated by POTENTIAL and partner TTIs -Work based learning	339	333	98.2 ²
Number of youth who utilized coaching to search for employment	20,800	39,325	189 ³
Number of public-private partnerships formed as a result of POTENTIAL assistance	135	157	116 ⁴
Number of persons receiving new employment or better employment (including self-employment) as a result of participation in USG funded workforce development programs	17,643	24,360	138 ⁵

¹ Aflateen training was stopped after short period of implementation. This has limited the Activity to fully achieve the target set at the start.

² The LOP target for this indicator was revised on July 2019. More beneficiaries than anticipated have chosen the self-employment pathway under POTENTIAL. The job placement opportunities for self-employment are fewer than those for wage-employment.

³ Due to the increased in number of YFs in some woredas, it was possible to perform more coaching support than anticipated.

⁴ Establishing new partnership was not a focus in the last quarters of year 5 as the target has already been achieved; rather the existing partnerships were further strengthened

⁵ The improved peace and security in most parts of the country coupled by the initiation of the special revolving youth fund, has helped the Activity gain a better record of youth employment than the targeted number.

2.2 Executive Summary

USAID's Building the Potential of Youth Activity was a six year program launched in January 2015 through July 2020. The overall goal was to help youth increase their assets and incomes through employment or better employment for them to achieve economic self-sufficiency, while building the capacity of local institutions to continue this work in the long term. The support aimed at providing rural youth with transferable soft skills training alongside vocational and entrepreneurship development activities through partnerships with training, small business, and microfinance institutions.

- IR1: Rigorous evidence base developed to inform USAID and its development partners, including youth, Government of Ethiopia (GOE), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), on appropriate, effective, and sustainable market driven youth workforce development intervention
- IR2: Improved youth access to market relevant skills and experiences to support the transition to safe and viable employment; and
- IR3: Coordinated delivery, among local institutions, of quality market driven services connecting underserved youth, especially women, to employment and income opportunities.

Upon concluding its six year long intervention, the Activity has reached 35,984 youth across six regions in transferable life skills and employability skills trainings. These trainings prepared youth to enter into the labor market, improve existing small-scale businesses, or to pursue wage- or self- employment. A total of 24,360 beneficiaries, almost 138% of the LOP target, are now engaged in new or better employment. More than 66% of the total employed youth are in self- employment in different sectors such as agribusiness, petty trade, and services.

Key Achievements under IR 1: Rigorous evidence base developed to inform USAID and its development partners, including youth, Government of Ethiopia (GOE), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), on appropriate, effective, and sustainable market driven youth workforce development intervention

The Activity undertook numerous studies to determine the effectiveness of the interventions. See below for key learnings from these studies.

Outcome Surveys

Three outcome surveys were conducted in 2016, 2017 and 2019 to learn whether the desired outcomes were being achieved and ascertain if the implementation was on track. Some of the key findings from the 2019 outcome survey include key participant behavior changes include saving at 73% (F 70%, M 76%), seeing improved livelihood opportunities at 72% (F 70%, M 74%), improved job search skills at 70% (F 69%, M 71%), and improved customer handling at 55% (F 54%, M 56%). Respondents reported improvements in their work habit conduct (88%) and interpersonal communication skills (83%), business start-up skills (68%), resource management, including saving habits (66%) and self-confidence (59%). Only 23% (F 16%, M 29%) of the respondents mentioned that they were employed before joining the program. At the time of the survey, more than 61% of the respondents (F 59%, M 63%) were engaged in self-employment, both individually (54%) and in groups (7%) in different economic sectors. Another 13% (F 11%, M 14%) reported they were better employed while 7% (F 4%, M 10%) were wage employed. Regression analysis on the correlation of certain outcome variables with employment reveal that those who participated in coaching and mentoring were involved in many program activities, gained more skills, had higher levels of attitudinal changes, and greater access to loans.

Tracer Study on Work Ready Now (WRN!) Trainee Graduates of TVETs

POTENTIAL collaborated with TVETs by offering its transferable life skills training course, Work Ready Now!, to TVET students with the goal of increasing employability after TVET graduation. The Activity undertook a study to assess the effectiveness, relevance and impact of the WRN! training on helping TVET graduates to find suitable livelihood options. The study found that WRN! training graduates secured employment at a statistically significant higher rate than non-WRN! training graduates. Among male WRN! graduates, 88.7% secured employment, whereas 11.3% were still looking for a job. Similarly, among WRN!

female graduates, 74.0% of them were employed and 26.0% were in search of a job. This gender gap requires further research as it was not part of the scope of this study.

Study on the State of Unsafe Migration in Ethiopia and the Contribution of Youth Development Projects

This study aimed to contribute to a better understanding of the relation between transferable life skills trainings, youth employment and their relations with unsafe migration. The data shows that migration around the study areas decreased over the last four years and more so with the beneficiaries of Save the Children. Participants of the study reported that the training they received from Save the Children helped them form social networks and institutional (public or private business institutions) linkages. More than three quarters of the respondents reported that youth trained through POTENTIAL are more likely to be employed, and their lives are improving. Nearly 85% of the respondents agreed that employment reduces the probability of unsafe migration.

Study on POTENTIAL's Youth Business Mentoring Program

Overall, 95.1% of the 405 youth mentees who participated in this study believed that their engagement in the business mentorship project helped them in their livelihood. Almost all participants stated that participation in mentoring support services had a significant impact on their knowledge, skills, and behaviors, and resulted in overall betterment of their livelihood. Overall, 86.4% of the mentees agreed/strongly agreed that their income level changed since they start participating in the business mentorship program.

Gender Integration Assessment

Despite the Activity's efforts to ensure gender equality, the data continued to show less female participation in key areas such as technical training and access to YES center services. The team implemented a gender integration assessment to understand the key barriers preventing young women from realizing the same access and gains as young men. Generally, the study recommended to refresher trainings and strategy sessions to take advantage of staff's knowledge and ensure buy in to the gender approach and a gender focal person in each region with dedicated level of effort. More specifically tied to the project the study recommended increased sensitization for a range of stakeholders including female and male youth, family members and community members along with a strategy for gender champions from those groups of stakeholders; improving access to capital for young women through various means such as individual or group loans, grants, subsidies or asset distribution; making traditionally female-dominated career options more profitable and fulfilling for young women through better market understanding; and encouraging more participation in YES Centers through more women-focused services.

Study on the Catalytic Role of YES Groups

The overall purpose of the study was to assess the contribution of YESG initiatives to the socio-economic wellbeing of youth. The YESG members confirmed improvements in self-confidence, self-esteem, customer care, time management, resource mapping, communication skills, generating business ideas and saving habits. Additionally, 91% of the YESG members affirmed improvements in social aspects such as developing leadership skills, enhancing the sense of ownership, trust and social integration and spirit of mutual support among members. Before the intervention of POTENTIAL, 60% of the YESG members were unemployed and were looking for jobs. Following the intervention of POTENTIAL, including the YESG initiative, 91.7% of the sampled youth were self-employed either individually or in a group and 4.6% were employed in government or private sector jobs.

Technical Brief on Predictors of Youth Employment

This study found that the following factors were meaningfully associated with becoming self-employed after completing POTENTIAL's training packages: gaining a belief and new attitude about the possibility to creating their own or finding employment within their community, previous practice or learning to save during POTENTIAL, and having a coach to provide advice and encouragement in finding employment after completing POTENTIAL's training and post training packages. The main difference between young women and men in this study was that receiving financial resources was significantly associated with gaining self-employment for young women but not for young men.

Third Party Endline Survey

Conducted by Social Impact, the endline survey found overall that that the Activity met its implementation targets. It effectively targeted and recruited participants and engaged and leveraged partners in the implementation process. Areas for improvement and consideration for future programming are more active gender mainstreaming in implementation of activities, diversified approaches for rural and underserved populations, and more comprehensive support for the institutional determinants of workforce development.

Experience sharing

The Activity has made concerted efforts to share experiences of the participants. Two success story booklets showcasing participants from all regions were produced. Save the Children and USAID even featured some of these stories on their social media. The Activity produced eight short videos focusing on the successes of individual and/or group participants. Additionally, the Activity produced and transmitted 220 radio shows focusing on inspiring stories and information for youth around the country.

Key Achievements under IR 2: Improved youth access to market relevant skills and experiences to support the transition to safe and viable employment

Under POTENTIAL, Save the Children and key implementing partner Education Development Center provided the below trainings to participants:

Training Support Package	Number of Participants
<i>Positive Youth Development</i> is an “asset-based” approach, focusing on one’s self, and their community	23,859 (46% F)
<i>Work Ready Now!</i> considers employability skills, knowledge, and behaviors needed in order to be successful in society and labor market	35,984 (47% F)
<i>Be Your Own Boss</i> (BYOB) training guides youth to start their own or a group business	11,558 (42% F)
<i>Work-Based Learning</i> (WBL) provides real workplace experience by observing or working on products or services, primarily for WRN! graduates who decided to enter wage employment	6,678 (42% F)

Additional training included **hard skills training** in wood work, metal work, hair dressing and cosmetology, mobile phone maintenance, and others. These trainings lasted from 10-45 days through a special arrangement with local TVETs. A total of 3,286 (44% F) received hard skills training.

Coaching was conducted by youth facilitators who provide support on a personal development plan and/or business plan. Coaches use methods like motivational interviews, mind mapping, and short and long-term goal setting. A total of 39,325 (44% F) youth participated in coaching sessions.

Volunteer **mentors** are business people, career professionals or role models from local communities who have relevant experience and are interested in supporting and promoting youth. The goal of mentoring was to provide guidance and support to an aspiring mentee. A total of 11,846 (41% F) youth participated in mentoring sessions while 1,051 (33% F) volunteer community-based mentors were trained.

Integration of Technology

The Activity outsourced the development of a comprehensive information system – Mobile for Career Development (M4CD) – that can be accessed via phone, tablet or computer with the objective of providing a complete set of training materials, information pertinent to labor market, employment opportunities available locally, etc. The M4CD platform has the following core modules: 1) Information and knowledge packages, 2) Training manuals, 3) Practical guides, 4) Publications, audio, and video, 5) Market data, 6) Labor market data incl. employment opportunities for self and wage employment, and 7) Event calendar.

Key Achievements under IR3: Coordinated delivery, among local institutions, of quality market driven services connecting underserved youth, especially women, to employment and income opportunities.

The Activity collaborated with local TVETs/TTIs in all regions to address these dual purposes:

1. Introducing Work Ready Now (WRN) in TTIs through training their teaching staff on WRN so that they would be able to cascade the soft skill to graduating students.
2. Integrating and contextualizing the WRN in the TTIs' curricula thereby scaling it up in the institutions as an ultimate goal.

As a result, 1,163 graduates were trained on WRN! package, which is believed to have helped improve their chances of gaining employment.

Establishing and Strengthening YES Centers

The YES centers serve as Business Development Service (BDS) Centers that coordinate and facilitate youth access to training, ongoing technical and business development support during and after participation in POTENTIAL. The YES centers were hosted within Government youth centers.

The types of services delivered for the youth through the YES services are mainly employability skills training, coaching, mentoring, job information, computer training, computer services, photocopying, and internet service, and entertainment such as TV and indoor and outdoor games. Other services include refreshments (tea, coffee, soft drinks), shower service, and hall renting. POTENTIAL established 30 YES centers throughout its implementation woredas. About 71,812 (29% F) youth have benefited from the menu of services provided by the youth centers in the past years.

Youth Economic and Social Groups

The Activity introduced Youth Economic and Social Groups (YESGs) to improve the social, cultural and economic status of the members. The objectives of YESGs revolve around sensitization, savings, resource mobilization and information transfer or some form of empowerment of members in response to social and economic marginalization. POTENTIAL established YESGs so youth, individually or in organized groups, can borrow funds from MFIs to establish small enterprises. To date, the Activity has helped the establishment of over 500 YESGs who have more than 7,500 members. Most YESGs have started saving which can be used by members as a startup capital to start self-business. For instance, the newly established YESGs in year 5 managed to save 354,041ETB (12,037 USD) since their establishment.

Key Achievements in Cross Cutting Issues and Sustainability

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Since the beginning of the award, POTENTIAL aimed for 50% participation. Given the gender barriers and mobility constraints of young women in Ethiopia, the Activity has found that the gender gap is most visible in access to technical skill trainings and participation in YES Center services. The social expectations and mobility constraints of young women limit the beneficiaries' vision to trainings that are traditionally assigned for women only. Unfortunately, young women are engaging in micro-business which typically brings less profit to them as compared with their male counterparts.

In regard to YES services, only 29% of the more than 71,000 youth who access services at the YES Centers were women. The Activity has tried to make the centers more accessible to young women by considering gender barriers that challenge young women in accessing them. Awareness creation about the YES services was conducted with the involvement of local elders, religious leaders, families and stakeholders to get the trust of families as well as young women themselves.

Over the years, the membership of young women in YESGs has shown improvement in most regions. From the total 7,530 youths in YESGs, about 45% are female. These groups create a good opportunity for young women and men to discuss their economic and social challenges and opportunities in their local community. Leadership positions in the groups transition among the youth to assist them to practice and enhance decision making skills, particularly for young women.

Sustainability

The Activity has worked with three local implementing partners: HUNDEE, PADet and REST. It has worked to build their capacity to deliver employability interventions to young people. REST has actually continued to conduct trainings and support services for young people despite the Activity's end.

The MFIs operating within the implementation areas of the activity are greatly contributing to the success of the youth by providing startup capital in the form of loan with reasonable interest rate (8%). To date, a total of 43,138,127 ETB (USD 1,294,144) in loans from MFIs were provided to the beneficiary youth in the six regions.

The Activity established partnerships with 157 public and private entities in Afar, Amhara, Oromia, SNNP, Somali and Tigray regions; of these a good sum are private business firms and training institutes. During the years 6,465 youth (42% F) beneficiary youths benefited from WBL opportunities provided by partners and stakeholders; private sector partners facilitated the majority. The Activity has continuously worked with key regional and woreda level public stakeholders to build their capacity and ensure smooth continuation of the interventions.

Institutional Capacity Development Support to Higher Education Institutions

Additionally, POTENTIAL implemented a one year ***“Institutional Capacity Development Support to Higher Education Institutions in Ethiopia,”*** since June 2019. The one year leveraging project aimed to address some of the existing gaps between the skillsets of university students and the demands of the job market they face after graduation. Save the Children along with key partner Brandeis University worked alongside Bahir Dar, Hawassa, Jigjiga, Jimma, Mekelle and Semera universities to equip graduates with the skills necessary to pursue and acquire appropriate job opportunities. The capacity building focused on high-order thinking skills, positive self-concept, self-control and social skills to strengthen graduates' employability. The six partner universities in turn created partnerships with TVETs in their geographic regions to address skills mismatches, improve graduates' employability and create partnerships with the private sector and potential employers. The two expected results of this leveraging project are:

Expected Result 1: Capacity of Ethiopian higher education institutions is developed to deliver transferable life skills education for their graduates through Career Labs established or improved.

Expected Result 2: Partnerships are developed between higher education institutes, colleges and employers.

Brandeis University initially conducted rapid assessments at all six selected universities to understand the status of career services and their readiness for initial implementation, operation and support for Career Labs. Following the assessments we conducted action planning workshops with university presidents and core staff members and later with the 25 selected TVETs.

The Brandeis team completed a university appropriate *Transferable Life Skills* (TLS) curriculum. The curriculum was built from Save the Children's *Skills to Succeed*, Education Development Center's *Work Ready Now*, as well as the curricula developed by Brandeis over the course of three decades of work in the field of youth development, education, and youth employment. TOTs were offered in four selected sites. The training focused on giving university staff a sense of the full curriculum, the values that frame the content (gender equity, positive youth development, trainers as learners), engaging delivery modalities, and also provided time for reflection and feedback on the content, process, assessment of student learning, and any implementation challenges they foresaw.

Trainers from TVET colleges were also selected to take part in the ToT on TLS. In three regions, 378 TVET instructors were trained on the TLS curriculum. All partner universities and TVET colleges planned to provide TLS training for their graduating students.

The pilot of the *Education Works: Career Development Center Management Course* for the staff and managers of campus-based Career Development Centers was launched online in early March 2020. This eight-module course has opportunities for participants to review best practices; reflect on their campus career development center capacity, infrastructure, student and employer engagement, and other practices;

complete performance tasks to support their own planning; and get feedback from their coaches at Brandeis University.

During the pilot period all six universities and partner TVETs designated space and established or enhanced their Career Development Centers. While early visits showed that some of them needed additional infrastructure and technology resources, all the partner TVETs and universities have received infrastructure support from POTENTIAL and other development donors.

To ensure sustainability past the Activity's end, Brandeis University set up the President's Compact, a group of university presidents dedicated to the improvement of the career services at their universities. This Compact has agreed to continue meeting and has plans to expand to other universities. The Higher Education Collective Impact, a group of MoSHE, JCC, Save the Children, Brandeis University, GIZ, and Dereja.com, plans to ensure collaboration, wise use of resources and increase the impact of career services at the university level.



PART ONE

POTENTIAL CORE ACTIVITIES



2.3 Implementation Progress

IR.1: Rigorous evidence base developed to inform USAID and its development partners, including youth, GOE, and NGOs on appropriate, effective and sustainable market driven youth workforce development interventions

Since the beginning of the Activity's implementation in 2015, POTENTIAL conducted a series of assessments and surveys, to build a rigorous evidence base to inform intervention design, learning and mid- course strategy adjustments, as well as decision making on investments for youth workforce development.

These assessments at the regional and woreda level indicated a need for greater collaboration among various stakeholders so that proactive solutions were developed to address various labor market opportunities and challenges. For instance, the results of the labor market assessments were used to inform stakeholders at kebele, woreda and regional level of trends in the labor market and highlight opportunities to produce a diverse, adaptable and skilled workforce to propel economic growth and youth development. In particular, the rapid woreda assessments identified the socio-economic and demographic status of under-employed and unemployed youth, while the woreda-targeted labor market surveys identified location-specific economic sectors with growth potential and shed light on the demand for goods and services within value chains that offer opportunities to youth for viable self- and wage employment. Assessments were also conducted to confirm labor market relevance of short-term technical skills trainings offered by the TVETs. Additionally, the Activity carried out three outcome surveys. The objective of the outcome survey is to capture data on major results, assessing outcome indicators as depicted in the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (PMEP) of the Activity and also recording related unintended results. The surveys used mixed methods, combining a secondary source review with qualitative data collection and a quantitative individual interview.

Throughout the implementation years, the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) team conducted monitoring activities using the existing monitoring tools, and led data collection to track participants and gather data of major indicators. For facilitation of implementation follow-up and experience sharing, consultative meetings with stakeholders have continued while ensuring local ownership. Quarterly field visits and review meetings were also organized as further monitoring activities.

After the midline of the Activity, efforts were made to generate learnings through operational research; studies on five thematic areas of the Activity have been undertaken. The studies have brought new knowledge that can be useful to inform the implementation of similar programs in the future. Details of the achievements under this IR of the Activity are explained below.

IR 1.1: Local context and beneficiary profile information base developed to inform the design of customized interventions that enable access to opportunities for youth skills development, decent work and increased income.

The Activity conducted assessments, operational research, review meetings, experience sharing visits and other similar tasks to generate evidence and learnings to be used to inform and guide the program implementation of youth workforce development programs. These assessments enhanced the learning agenda and collaboration with partners, the donor, and the sectoral government offices involved directly or indirectly with youth livelihood programs. The following are major achievements under this category.

1.1.1 Baseline Data Collection (youth entry profile data)

Throughout the implementation period, profiles of the newly enrolling youths were collected to identify

the socio-demographic statuses and career aspirations of the targeted youth participants. Youth facilitators collected the data and used it to coach and support participants to identify the most appropriate career options. The data was stored centrally in POTENTIAL's database system and was analyzed to inform intervention strategies. These data provided information on major similarities and differences in the social, educational and economic background of participating youth, disaggregated by gender and other relevant parameters.

1.1.2 Outcome Surveys/ Findings

Three consecutive outcome surveys were undertaken in 2016, 2017, and 2019. These outcome surveys used quantitative and qualitative methods, including structured individual interviews, focus group discussions with beneficiary youth, and key informant interviews with other stakeholders. The primary objective of the surveys was to gather program data and learn whether the desired outcomes are being achieved and to ascertain if the implementation is on track. Below is a brief summary of the most recent outcome survey.

The 2019 outcome survey covers twelve intervention woredas of the Activity which are found in the six target regions. Out of the twelve selected, four are from the pastoralist communities while the remaining eight are from agriculturalist zones. The age distribution shows that 50% of the survey participants are within the age group of 20-24. The gender breakdown shows that 47% of the participants are female while 53% are male. This reflects the Activity's promotion of equal gender participation.

The findings show that 48% are single, 49% are married, and the remaining 3% are separated /divorced. The proportion of married youth both female and male was reported as 30% in the 2017 outcome survey. The current higher rate of 49% may be because a good portion of the youth have become employed or better employed and hence are in a better condition to establish their own nuclear family and the acceptance of young married women to the project. The project was also open and encouraging young married women to join the program.

The survey findings show that a great majority of the respondents are literate (93%) with varying level of educational status. 35% of the participants completed grades 5-8 and another 35% grades 9-10. Variation in level of education among female and male is also observed. While the participation of female in grade 1-4 is higher compared to male (5% vs 3%), their participation steadily decreases in higher school grades until grade 12. However, female and male have equal participation in TVET (2% each).

Study participants are engaged with the Activity for a period ranging from 2 to 28 months and the mean is 21.6 months. The average length of participation was 13 months in 2017. The longest is in SNNP (26 m) followed by Afar and Oromia (22m), and the shortest in Tigray (16 m). This may be attributed partly to the step-wise increase approach of project coverage expansion (Potential was operational in 8 woredas in year one and has grown to 19 in year 2 and 30 after year 3.). Recruitment of youth participants on annual rolling basis across the 5-year life of award also might contribute to the diversity in lengths of program participation. The survey revealed that all of the enrolled participants (100%) across all regions have completed the basic Work Ready Now (WRN) or Work Ready Plus training session.

The mean number of activities in which respondents participated is 4.5 (compared to 4.1 in 2017) and no significant difference is observed between male and female. The mean number of activities in which respondent youth beneficiaries participated was 5.6 for Oromia, 4.7 for Amhara, 4.4 for Somali and Tigray 3.5 for SNNP and 3.4 for Afar. The rate of participation in different activity programs ranges from 100% for WRN/ Plus down to 11% for hard skill training and 10% for work based learning.

About 89% of participants have received post training coaching and 46% mentoring support. Beneficiaries met with their mentors an average of 7.6 times for coaching and 4.9 times for mentoring. Youth Facilitators, Woreda Officers and Volunteer Role Model Mentors trained in mentoring are providing the continuous follow up and advice. Participation in coaching is higher in SNNPR (95%) Somali (94%) and Amhara (93%), while mentoring is the highest in Somali 84%.

The FGD participants expressed that the mentors are helpful. They also expressed that while they are accessible most of the time, few are not due to transportation problems. The analysis that those who had accessed to coaching and mentoring were more likely to get employment.

The largest proportion of respondents reported improvements in their work habit conduct (88%) and interpersonal communication skills (83%). Business start-up skills (68%); resource management, including saving habits (66%) and self-confidence (59%) were reported as third, fourth and fifth respectively. Regional variation is observed in knowledge and skill changes. The average number of skills gained is 6.3. Respondents from Tigray gained 9.3 skills, which is the highest, followed by Oromia (8.1), Amhara (7.4), SNNP (6.8), Somalin (5.8), and Afar (5.1). Respondents reported attitude and behavior related improvements ranging from 73% to 31% on all seven measures.

The level of change is highest on saving at 73% (F 70%, M 76%), followed by improved livelihood opportunities at 72% (F 70%, M 74%); job search at 70%(F 69%, M 71%); customer handling at 55% (F 54%, M 56%); respect for resources 53% (F 51%, M 55%), initiative for advice and counselling (51%), and searching for livelihood services (41%). The current reported average behavior change is 4.2 (F 4, M 4.4) which shows a slight increase from 2017 where it was 3.9 (F 3.8, M 4.1). The differences observed between male and female respondents' changes in attitude and behavior are not significant.

All of the FGD participants and KII respondents expressed that both male and female beneficiaries have demonstrated marked behavioral changes. Significant difference were observed between the trained and untrained group. They also mentioned that the change had a spillover effect on the untrained youth of the community. It was not only less educated youth that benefited from the training - unemployed university graduates also joined the project and are now successfully employed after training.

Only 23% (F 16%, M 29%) of the respondents mentioned that they were employed before joining the program. Regional variation is observed where in Afar only 9%, SNNP 10% and Tigray 13% reported that they were employed at entry. Almost all of the respondents (99%) mentioned that there is marked change in their employments status and income level. Out of these, 66% mentioned that they have attained full employment status from their previous unemployed and underemployed status. This rate is higher in Tigray (88%) Oromia (74%) and SNNP (73%)

Currently 81% (F 74%, M 87%) of the respondents declared they are engaged in different forms of employment (see annex). Self-employment is by far the main employment option among POTENTIAL's youth. More than 61% of the respondents (F 59%, M 63%) are engaged in self-employment, both individually (54%) and in groups (7%) in different economic sectors. Another 13% (F 11%, M 14%) reported they are now better employed while 7% (F 4%, M 10%) are wage employed. The findings on saving and capital formation reveal that the beneficiaries in Tigray appear relatively better established as the majority (85%) used their own startup resource to establish businesses and have the highest estimated capital. (ETB 61,163 as compared to the overall mean of 32,346). The relatively wider variation in the employment status from the initial low to the current higher in the two regions may be due to conducive environmental factors like ongoing and better economic activities in and around the project areas with better employment opportunities, beneficiaries have relatively effectively used and benefitted from the training and support. Or there was conceptual variation in response to employment status during the baseline study as the respondents' direct response was taken per se. Regression analysis on the correlation of certain outcome variables with employment reveal that those who participated in coaching and mentoring were involved in many program activities, gained more skills, had higher levels of attitudinal changes, and greater access to loans. Additionally, those from Tigray, SNNP and Amhara have significantly more chances of getting employed.

1.1.3 Tracer Study on the Situations of Work Ready Now (WRN!) Graduates of TVETs in Four Regions of POTENTIAL/Findings

POTENTIAL has emphasized the importance of working with TVETs right from its inception. The Activity has reached the targeted TVET students with its soft skill training known as Work Ready Now! (WRN) to boost the employability of the TVET graduates after the completion of their formal technical education. The Activity has undertaken a study to trace and assess the effectiveness, relevance and impact of the WRN! training on TVET graduates in helping them to find suitable livelihood options (self-employment, wage employment). The tracer study employed a mixed methods approach. The study examined the whereabouts of the WRN! trained TVET graduates and their status in the workplace – in securing job placement, retaining their jobs, succeeding in boosting their careers and in showing better behavior in their workplaces as compared to non-WRN! trained graduates of the same batches. The study followed a participatory approach by which targeted graduates, non-WRN! trained graduates, TVET teachers, implementing partners, and other key stakeholders were involved to improve the quality of the data and thereby ensuring the reliability and validity of the report. The study generated both quantitative and qualitative data from WRN! trained and non-WRN! trained TVET graduates. The samples for this tracer study were drawn from the TVET graduates of 2016-2017.

The study assessed a total of 257 TVET graduates with WRN! training. Thus, 145 (56.4%) were males and 112 (43.6%) were females. Regionally, 93 (36.2%) were from Oromia, 47 (18.3%) from Amhara, 13(5.1%) from Afar, and 104 (40.5%) were from Tigray. In line with their year of graduation, 162 (63.0%, 28.8% females) were from 2008 Ethiopian Calendar (E.C) (2016) graduates and 95 (37.0%; 14.8% females) were from 2009 E.C (2017) graduates. Among these respondents, 118 (45.9%) were above 23 years old, 108 (42.0%) form 21-23 years of age and the rest 31(12.1%) were from 18-20 years of age.

Similarly, 128 trainers/ teachers were disaggregated in terms of their regional location, gender, qualification and years of experience. Overall, the tracer study included 28 (21.9%) teachers from Oromia, 11(8.6 %) from Afar, 46 (35.9 %) from Amhara and 43 (33.6%) from Tigray, of whom 105 (82.0%) were males and 23(18.0%) were females. In terms of their qualification, 81(63.3%) are qualified with BA/BSC level, 39 (30.5%) with diploma, 6 (4.7%) with MA/MSC level and 2 (1.6%) reported other. On the other hand, 94 (73.4%) have more than 5 years of experience and only 34 (26.6%) who have less than five years of experience. The qualification and experience of teachers allowed for the cascade WRN! trainings in each TVET. However, 37.5% of the targeted TVET teachers did not get WRN! trainings. Among the targeted TVETs, Adulala TVET teachers were not informed nor trained on WRN! Thus, they did not fill the questionnaire distributed to them. Among teachers, 71.9% have appreciated the intervention in addressing its target groups. Those who did not favor the WRN! training in terms of addressing its target groups (28.1%) noted this was due to scarcity of resources, lack of coordination, and lack of information about the project.

Among male WRN! graduates, 88.7% have secured employment, where as 11.3% are still looking for a job. Similarly, among WRN! female graduate, 74.0% of them are employed and 26.0% are in search of a job; this may be because of several underlying gender issues; for example, if two male and female metal work graduates apply for the same position, employers tend to prefer male students because of masculinity not capability. But this requires further research.

WRN! training graduates secured employment at a statistically significant higher rate than non-WRN! training graduates. Furthermore, 60.2% of the teachers have seen the difference with regard to finding employment in line with gender, while 39.8% did not see visible differences. Those who observed the difference reported that some employers and the work itself favors male applicants (60.5%).

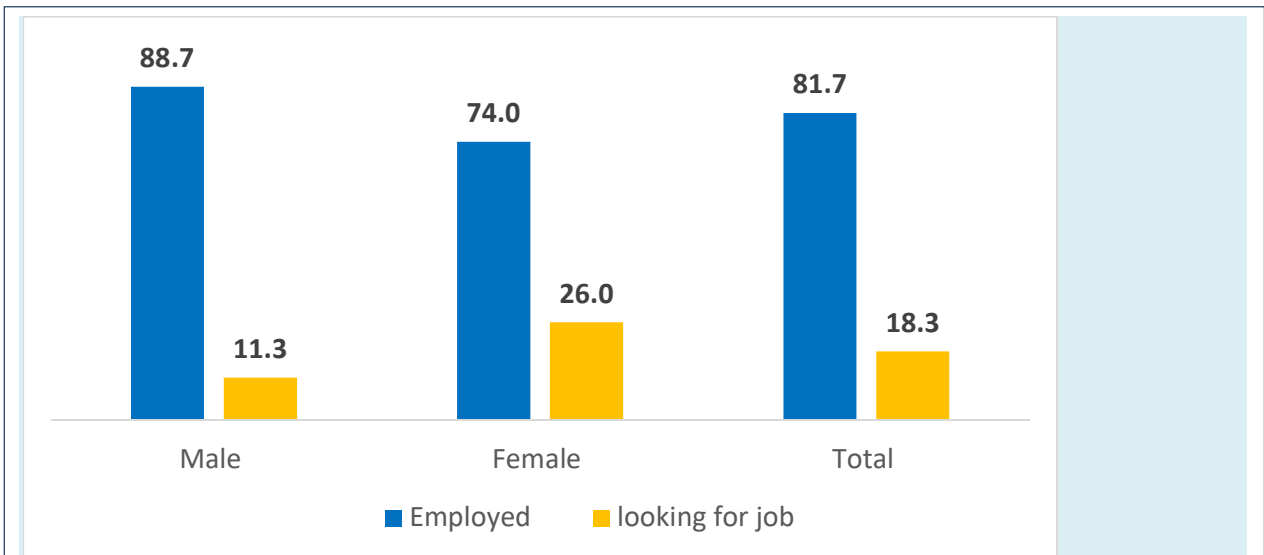


Fig: WRN! Graduates' Employment Status Across Gender

The graduates have also given their observation on the employment patterns (status) of soft skills training graduates as increasing (65.3%), decreasing (20.1%) and 8.2% did not see any significant change. Still, 6.3% of them did not know about its direction or pattern. Teachers have also reported their experiences in terms of the patterns of the employment status of soft skills training graduates. Accordingly, 64.8 % have seen positive progresses, 13.3% did not observe any positive progress and 21.9% did not know about the current pattern of employment.

1.1.4 Study on the State of Unsafe Migration in Ethiopia and the Contribution of Youth Development Projects to Mitigate the Problem Findings

This study tries to contribute to a better understanding of the relation between transferable soft skill trainings, youth employment and their relations with unsafe migration. Close to 500 participants were taken from four regions (Amhara, Oromia, SNNP, & Somali) for the quantitative data, considering the region's size, and demographic characteristics of the respondents (e.g., sex, age, education, employment status). The number of participants for the qualitative study is 16 from four sectors of the society: youth POTENTIAL beneficiaries, government officials, community representatives, and business owners.

The data from interviewees and the responses of 370 (75%) respondents show that migration around the study areas has decreased over the last four years and more so with the beneficiaries of Save the Children. Seventy percent of the respondents (342 out of 492) reported that they have participated in training other than Save the Children's. Participants of the study reported that the training they received from Save the Children helped them form social networks and institutional (public or private business institutions) linkages. More than three-fourth of the respondents reported that youth trained through POTENTIAL are more likely to be employed, and their lives are improving. Nearly 85% of the respondents agreed that employment reduces the probability of unsafe migration. Respondents also reported youth trained through POTENTIAL have high level of employability skills (positive self-esteem, self-control, social skills, communication skills, problem solving skills, and job search skills), though the skills are not uniform across regions.

As POTENTIAL is found to be effective in bringing desired changes in not only improved employability skills, but also attitudes and actions of unsafe migration, scaling it up and working for ownership by the community and local administration is vital. Participants expressed that POTENTIAL's reach is still limited given the country's huge youth population.

1.1.5 Study on POTENTIAL's Youth Business Mentoring Program

With the end of the POTENTIAL project approaching, SCI/POTENTIAL now desires to generate evidence to inform USAID and its development partners, including youth, Government of Ethiopia (GOE), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), on appropriate, effective, and sustainable market driven youth workforce development interventions. Hence, this study was conducted to understand the added value of POTENTIAL's youth business mentoring activities in enhancing opportunities for business development of participating youth. With this in mind, SCI has initiated this research with the following general objectives to address the subsequent research questions. The following is the preliminary finding of the study.

Overall, 405 youth mentees (110 from Amhara, 170 from SNNPR, and 125 from Somali regions) who have been engaged in youth business mentorship were interviewed with a response rate of 100%. More than half of the mentees (57.3%) included in this assessment in the three regions were male. In terms of age of the mentees that participated in this study, the range is between 15-35 years. Except in SNNPR most of the mentees were age between 20-24 years. Most (51.8%) of the mentees in Amhara were married while most of the mentees in Somali were single. With regards to current employment status, the majority of the mentees in the three regions were self-employed in individual/own business.

Overall 93.6% of the mentees stayed in the project for more than 6 months with 84.5% in Amhara, 94.7% in SNNPR and 100% in Somali. Almost all of the mentees received soft skills training: WRN, PYD, BYOB in the three regions. A relatively higher percentage (74.1%) of mentees in SNNPR received coaching than Amhara (54.5%) and Somali (45.6%). Most of their mentors were male in Amhara (67.3%) and SNNPR (91.8%) whereas most of the mentors in Somali region were female (53.6%).

The majority of the mentees in SNNPR (66.5%) and Somali (80.0%) received group mentoring while most (43.6%) in Amhara received individual mentoring. Only 7.1% in SNNPR and 2.4% in Somali received blended mentoring, compared to 26.4% in the Amhara region. The most common method of communication of the mentees with their mentors was face-to-face in all three regions. Few also used phone calls, while none of the mentees used email communication in the three regions.

Overall, 95.1% of the mentees believed that their engagement in the business mentorship project helped them in their livelihood. However, this percentage is relatively high in SNNPR (98.8%) and Somali (96.0%) regions when compared to Amhara (88.2%) (Table 4). "Started my own business", was the main type of benefit mentioned by most of the mentees in the three regions. Most of the mentees reported that their income level improved since they start participating in the business mentoring program. Almost all qualitative study participants reiterated that participation in mentoring support services had a significant impact on their knowledge, skills, and behaviors, and resulted in overall betterment of their livelihood.

Overall, 86.4% of the mentees agreed/strongly agreed that their income level changed since they start participating in the business mentorship program. However, this figure was low in Amhara (68.2%) region when compared to that of SNNPR (89.4%) and Somali (98.4%) regions. Overall 94.1% of the mentees agreed/strongly agreed that they are more satisfied with their performance after engagement in the project.

FGD participants highlighted how the youth business mentorship project has impacted mentees beyond mere business. One participant said youth who had previously "bad habits in the past have now turned into respectful and decent citizens started running their own business by group and individual, and some become wage employed. Females who were shy have but now become self-confident and able to express themselves and develop interpersonal communication, and develop working habit. Now after these mentoring females and males are started going out and creating different job opportunity" (24 years old female youth from SNNPR)

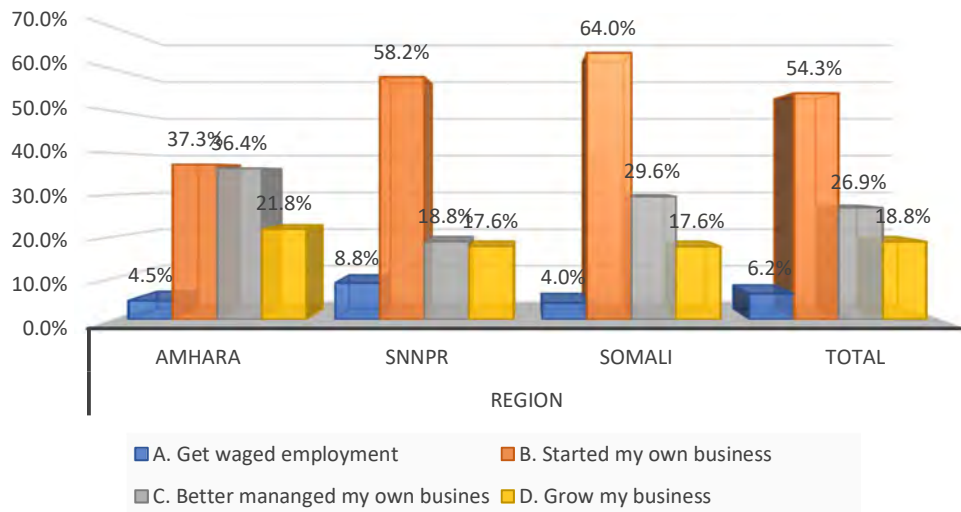


Figure: Specific type of benefit the youth obtained after engagement in the project by region

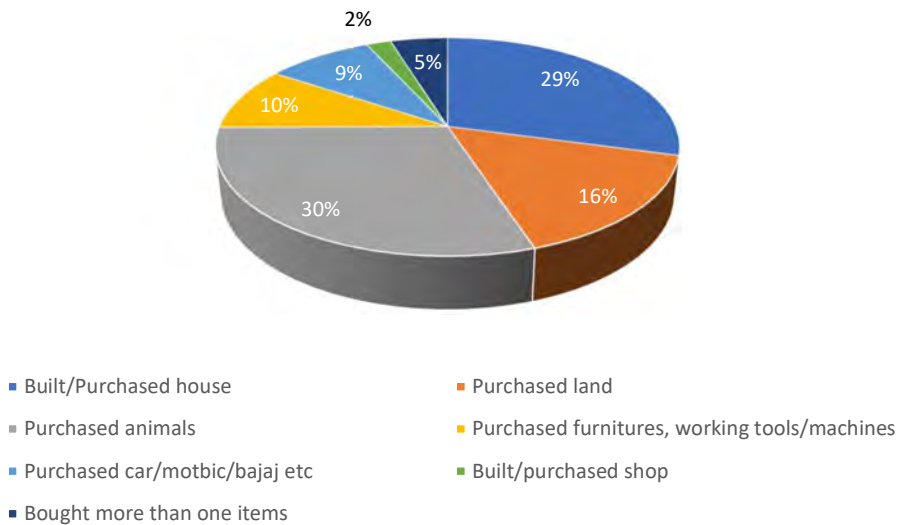


Figure: Types of assets the mentees started to develop

This assessment affirmed the importance of youth business mentorship programs in improving the livelihood of youth in the project. Youth who engaged in the youth business mentorship program have positively improved their livelihoods through improving their income, saving or owning productive assets than those youths who didn't have the chance in youth business mentorship program. Therefore, this intervention needs to be scaled up to other woredas and/or regions while contextualizing the implementation approaches, which are instrumental to further enhance impact of the program. Almost all the qualitative study participants expressed their delight with the performance of the mentorship program and pleaded for it to be strengthened and scaled up to reach many more youth beneficiaries.

In order for mentees to better benefit from the business mentorship programs, additional supports such as coaching and linking mentees with MFI need to be included in the intervention package, as they were shown to be associated with good performance of the mentees. The issue of linking mentees with project financing (such as through MFIs) was almost universally stressed by the qualitative study participants. Rather than using a blended method, use of either individual mentoring or group mentoring is recommended as they were shown to be associated with good performance. As much as possible mentees need to have face-to-face, frequent communication with their mentors.

1.1.6 POTENTIAL Gender Integration Assessment

This study focused on the assessment of gender integration in the implementation of the Activity. The overall scope of this assessment was to review the existing literature in Ethiopia on the status and barriers of young women to succeed in livelihood opportunities, and where possible focused on six regions of implementation of the POTENTIAL program. The study also included interviews with individuals and focus group discussion with youth beneficiaries to verify and validate the desk review findings in three regions of program implementation. The qualitative data collection took place in three locations in Ethiopia: SNNP, Amhara, and Somalia region.

Following the findings, the assessment team made the following recommendations of practical actions to improve young women's involvement and benefit from the livelihood opportunities provided by the POTENTIAL program and similar future programs.

Implementing Recommendations

Make sure that the interventions that are selected from this set of recommendations are shared broadly, and that staff understand the importance of gender mainstreaming to senior management and the donor. The same goes for any longer strategy for a follow-on or youth employment program elsewhere.

Of the few Addis-based staff and YFs the team spoke to, most of them had already participated in at least one gender training. It may not be necessary to do a full training, but a refresher combined with a strategy session to take advantage of field staff's knowledge will ensure interventions are relevant and that staff buy in to the approach.

Identify one person in each region to serve as the gender focal person. This approach is not typically successful if it is a volunteer position. Dedicating around 20 percent of the focal person's level of effort is more likely to produce results. Deliverables could be designed around ensuring other regional staff understand the gender strategy and have access to the tools they need, and gathering data to contribute to monitoring, evaluation and learning as well as keeping the gender strategy up to date. A WhatsApp group between the gender team to share information and address challenges and opportunities can serve as well as face to face interactions if used appropriately.

Sensitization

The need for increased sensitization for a range of stakeholders, including female and male youth, husbands and parents (especially mothers and grandmothers), community leaders, GOE representatives and even POTENTIAL staff emerged in every meeting. Given YFs' already high workload, the burden cannot fall fully on them. Some previously reluctant guardians have become enthusiastic about the Activity and said they would be willing to serve as more formal advocates. This could have a positive impact, as could a male champion activity that highlights the benefits of shared household responsibility on economic security and overall happiness. According to best practices, it is important to talk to both men and women to see what tasks they are willing to share before rolling out the activity. Addressing women's self-confidence issues can be achieved by highlighting women's success in both traditional and non-traditional activities. Listening to how other women managed to overcome obstacles and achieve success can be very inspiring.

Access to capital

Showing young women what they can do, then not providing them with the tools they need to achieve their dreams can be considered as denying them their rights. Continuing to give young women information on how to plan and manage money will only make them more confident to apply for and manage loans. The GOE group loans are one avenue to access capital, and staff can continue to encourage interested women to apply. Working through private financial providers as has been done in the Somali region is a good way to enable individual entrepreneurs to access loans. Through the sensitization campaign above, POTENTIAL can

encourage parents to invest in their daughters' education and businesses as much as they do their sons, and also for husbands to help if they can, as the investment will eventually benefit the whole household. Husbands can also be encouraged to share information about their own earnings and to plan with their wives how to use their joint income to achieve the best outcome.

Promoting group savings is also an effective strategy. Women can use savings to slowly grow their businesses. Other more direct forms of support, like grants, smart subsidies or asset distribution can be considered. POTENTIAL needs to be careful to not develop a culture of dependence or to cause resentment from men, but handled carefully these types of interventions can accelerate the growth of women's businesses and help them become independent. It is important to tie these efforts to real opportunities, as seeing other women fail will scare other women away.

Making traditionally female-dominated career options more profitable and fulfilling for young women

Many development programs try to move women into new career paths. While it is true that they are often more profitable, not every woman wants to be a groundbreaker. She may be truly more interested in styling hair rather than changing tires, and as the team saw during the assessment, many of these more traditional jobs allow women to meet other responsibilities. Increased sensitization will hopefully contribute to a decrease in women's heavy work load, allowing them to explore options further from home, but in the short- to medium-term, the Activity can work to make sure the work they are doing is sufficient to move them in the right direction.

One piece of that is making sure they understand the market. While staff can't tell them what to do, there must be a way to avoid what has happened in Amhara, where the team was concerned about the proliferation of beauty salons, and young women investing time and money in TVET courses and then being unable to find work post-graduation.

Increasing the number of young women in traditionally male- dominated sectors

Even if they don't achieve high numbers, it is important for an activity such as POTENTIAL to create opportunities for women to enter into more profitable career paths, many of which are traditionally male dominated. But it is equally important to create an environment where they can succeed, otherwise both young women and guardians will see failure and be reluctant to make such an investment in time and financial resources again. The TVETs also have an important role to play in this. They also have 50 percent gender targets and are motivated to get women into different courses, but as with the traditionally female jobs above, they need to also be clear about job opportunities post-graduation. These women can serve as role models for other women and help them with the real challenges they might face and to overcome fears.

For women entering into wage labor, POTENTIAL can help to ensure the environment is safe and comfortable, to include day care, breastfeeding rooms, adequate restrooms and, importantly, equal pay.

Uptake of hard skills training and post-training support

The strategy in SNNPR where the TVET brought its short-term classes closer to the community likely helped more women access hard skills training. It might be possible to apply this approach more broadly across regions. Sensitizing instructors on gender issues will help them understand the challenges women face and work with them to overcome them. For example, women often have problems with transport. Providing a subsidy may make it easier for them to get to class on time, alleviating one of the stresses.

For married women with children, day care during courses or other activities is likely to increase their attendance. One group of married women said they would be happy to take turns volunteering with the children, or perhaps

this could be a business idea for a female entrepreneur. Sensitization in general to promote participation of married and pregnant women needs to continue.

The team heard that the YES Centres are struggling to increase female participation. One suggestion is to inventory what they have been trying, perhaps through a questionnaire. Another suggestion is to try a small competitive grant fund. The winners can pilot different approaches with a small amount of money, perhaps to include game nights for women, book readings about female entrepreneurs, a dedicated child room with toys and blankets, etc. Findings can be shared with the best ideas rolled out more broadly.

Improved collaboration with stakeholders

The Youth and Sport, Women and Children and TVET representatives all highlighted the need for increased sensitization. It would be helpful to inventory what they are currently doing in the communities where the Activity is collaborating with them, to make sure the messaging is synchronized, and to see how to work together to reach more people with a more effective message.

The team learned that the approach in Amhara to only invite one person per family to participate in POTENTIAL was different than in Somali and SNNPR region. There may be other strategies that did not emerge during the assessment. It would be interesting to compare what worked and what didn't work in each region from a gender perspective as well as overall, and to use lessons learned to design future collaboration.

Both TVETs said they do regular market assessments to understand opportunities and what courses to offer. Linking that process to the community mapping process carried out during the soft-skills training could help young women and men make better choices. It would be interesting to see if the research includes a gender component.

Finally, the team heard that GOE staff at a higher level had access to gender training as well as information about national-level gender strategies. Helping to make sure woreda and kebele-level staff have the capacity and understanding to mainstream gender could only make them more effective partners.

Monitor impact on gender equity and women's empowerment

The few disaggregated indicators do show positive change, but if POTENTIAL intends to increase sensitization to change mindsets, the Activity will also have to put in place indicators to see how these interventions are impacting both mindset and the desired end result of getting young women into more profitable pathways. It is likely this will require qualitative surveys. SC will have to balance the need for information with budget implications. Dedicated studies such as these can be useful to acquire targeted information, but often without hard data to back up findings it becomes challenging to claim attribution.

Many of these recommendations are in line with the best practices identified in the desk research and were echoed in the validation workshop in Addis. Participants were split into three groups and asked to provide recommendations under the following topics:

Topic 1: How to make traditionally female-dominated career options more profitable and fulfilling for young women

- Access to inputs and market linkages (with cost-share)
- Sensitization/training for both men and women to address mindset issues
- Use of female role models to share experiences, provide exposure to beginners
- Diversification of business opportunities
- Promotion of time & energy saving technologies (for work and home use)
- Expansions of savings groups

Topic 2: How to make traditionally female-dominated career options more profitable and fulfilling for young women

- Addressing young women's mindset issues
- Community level sensitization
- Relevant and accessible hard skills training
- Promote shared household and workplace responsibilities for men and women
- Advocate for private sector to hire women
- Encourage favorable working environment for women

Topic 3: How to increase young women's usage of relevant hard skills training and post-training support in YES Centers

- Increased collaboration between YES Centers and TVETs to do training at the Centers
- Awareness creation for community members & beneficiaries
- Inclusion of a variety of services at YES Centers, potentially through service providers, such as day care or reproductive health support
- Additional female YES Center staff
- Club/group formation
- Scheduled time for female-only activities

1.1.6 Study on the catalytic role of YES Groups

The overall purpose of the study was to assess the contribution of YESG initiatives to the socio-economic wellbeing of youth in the specified project intervention areas. This general objective subsumed specific objectives:

1. Examine whether YESGs initiatives undertaken by youth in POTENTIAL contributed to their socio-economic empowerment,
2. Evaluate the influence of key challenges facing YESGs on socio-economic wellbeing of youth,
3. Assess the key opportunities available for YESGs on socio-economic wellbeing of youth,
4. Examine the sustainability strategies adopted by YESGs on the socio-economic wellbeing of youth,
5. Assess the socio-economic wellbeing of YESG members before and after joining the YESGs
6. Forward feasible recommendations to YESG initiatives.

For the purpose of confirming the stated objectives, qualitative and quantitative data were collected following a mixed approach. For this, different sampling techniques were employed depending on the nature of the respondents. Thus, three regions (Tigray, Somali and SNNPR) and five woredas (Endamohoni, Ofla, Jiggiga, Hawassa Zuria and Yem special woreda) were sampled purposively considering the agro-ecology (pastoralist and agricultural) areas and activities of the YESG, time, cost and geographical proximity. Though the YESGs and their members' distribution across regions was not known, it was roughly estimated that there are 13 YESGs in each woreda. Considering 20% of the YESGs, the study addressed 3 YESGs per district. Thus, a total of 193 YESG members participated in the study in five sampled districts. The study has used different tools like desk review, questionnaire (Semi Structured) for YESG members, KII for government partners, in-depth interview for YESG members, FGD with YESG members, and observations of business sites. Overall, 25 KIIs, 5 FGDs, 193 questionnaires, 10 in-depth interviews and 5 observations have been carried out.

91.7% of the sampled youth are currently self-employed either individually or in a group and 4.6% are employed in government or private sector jobs in Industrial Parks like Hawassa and Lemi Industrial Parks. Among the YESG members, 3.6% are still looking for jobs. The assessment confirmed that the YESG members and stakeholders like Woreda Women and Children Affairs (WCA), Youth and Sport (YS), Enterprise and Industry Development (EID), Cooperatives, Micro Finance (MF), and Woreda Administration are clear with the objectives of YESG. With regard to the income of YESGs, the main sources of finance for YESGs are members' contributions, incomes collected from sales of products, and services and loans from financial institutes. In this regard, few YESGs have reached a transaction of 140, 000 ETB (\$4.200) and they are paying their loans successfully.

The assessment verified personal developments within YESG members that occurred as a result of the YESG intervention. In this regard, the YESG members and line offices confirmed improvements in self-confidence, self-esteem, customer care, time management, resource mapping, conflict resolution, communication skills, generating business ideas and saving habits. Additionally, 91% of the YESG members affirmed improvements in their social aspects like developing leadership skills, enhancing the sense of ownership, youth participation and confidence, trust and social integration and spirit of mutual support among members. The YESG members are also happy with their skills in financial management, income generation schemes and asset accumulation. The stakeholders recognized the YESG members' contribution in keeping stability and peace in their locale and the YESG members are no more burdens for their community, they are not involved in bad practices such as robbery and stealing. These positive contributions happened as a result of the technical supports offered through training on Transferable Life Skills (TLS), coaching, mentoring and supervisions where 94% of the YESG members confirmed the provision of these supports on a timely basis. Overall, 81% of the YESG members are happy with the technical support provided by POTENTIAL and its stakeholders.

The assessment has also addressed the employment status of YESG members before and after the intervention. Before the intervention of POTENTIAL, 60% of the YESG members were unemployed and were looking for jobs. However, as members of a farming community, many were supporting their parents or relatives in farm activities including crop and livestock production (28.0%) and 9.8 % were engaged in petty trades. Nonetheless, these sorts of economic engagements can only be considered underemployment. Following the intervention of POTENTIAL, including the YESG initiative, YESG members have started their own business (working individually or in group) and they are working hard to strengthen and diversify their business.

1.1.7 Technical brief on predictors of youth employment

The objective of this technical brief was to learn which characteristics of young women and men entering POTENTIAL unemployed are the best predictors for gaining employment 6-months after completing the training.

The analysis was made based on the quantitative and qualitative data collected from 2,072 youth participants of the 2017 outcome survey. Young women and men in this study had the following factors meaningfully associated with becoming self-employed after completing POTENTIAL's training packages: gaining a belief and new attitudes about the possibility to creating their own or finding employment within their community, previous practice or learning to save during POTENTIAL, and having a coach to provide advice and encouragement in finding employment after completing POTENTIAL's training and post training packages.

The main difference between young women and men in this study was that receiving financial resources was significantly associated with gaining self-employment for young women but not for young men. Further, for both young women and men the region where they lived was significantly related to gaining self-employment. Although more investigation is needed to better understand why regional differences exist, most likely this is due to differences in opportunities and barriers related to economic conditions (e.g., availability of wage labor), service infrastructure, community support, cultural norm and practices, level of social cohesion, as well as environmental conditions. Therefore, youth employment programs in Ethiopia need to be tailored for the context where youth reside.

1.1.8 USAID Commissioned Studies and End-line evaluation

USAID/Ethiopia has contracted with Social Impact to conduct an independent cohort study on a subset of beneficiaries selected from four implementation regions of the Activity.

The overall objective of the Youth Cohort Study was to evaluate whether youth who receive workforce development/livelihood support achieve increased income and strengthen skills, knowledge, and social capital required to achieve economic self-sufficiency over the longer term. The study followed a sample of 582 youth from 13 woredas. The final result of the study highlighted major strengths and weaknesses of the Activity which as a result enabled the project and partners to make mid-course adjustments as necessary to the Activity as well as inform the design of similar programs in the future.

Additionally, following the completion of the five year program, USAID contacted Social Impact again to conduct an independent end line evaluation on POTENTIAL. This third-party evaluation was designed to generate evidence that would help explain the performance of the Activity and inform future similar programs on youth economic opportunity and employment. Overall, the evaluation found that the Activity met its implementation targets. It effectively targeted and recruited participants and engaged and leveraged partners in the implementation process. Areas for improvement and consideration for future programming are more active gender mainstreaming in implementation of activities, diversified approaches for rural and underserved populations, and more comprehensive support for the institutional determinants of workforce development.

IR 1.2. Review meetings and experience sharing visits

1.2.1 Regional and woreda level review meetings

Quarterly and annual review meetings were held at woreda and regional levels throughout the implementation period. Every year, at least four regional level review meetings and more than a hundred woreda level quarterly review meetings took place. Thousands of participants attended the meetings. Participants were drawn from Regional and Woreda Level Administration Offices, Youth and Sport Offices, Women and Children Offices, TVETs, Finance and Economic Development Offices, Agriculture Offices, Kebele Administrations, Microfinance Institutions (MFIs), private and public partners, and youth representatives from within the catchment areas. During the review meetings, brief presentations on the achievements of the quarter were made and follow-up discussions were also held. The presentations mainly focused on POTENTIAL's progress, challenges faced, and lessons learned in the course of the implementation. Some main points of the discussions included: (1) how the linkage for youth employment could be strengthened, (2) how youth could access farmland and start-up capital, and (3) what self and wage employment opportunities are available for youth. (4) Gender equality and women's empowerment issues among others.

1.2.2 Regional Closeout workshops

As the Activity approached its end, a major emphasis was given to share the learnings of the Activity and hand over the program to concerned government bodies. To this end, regional project closeout events were conducted across all program regions. The main purpose of the events was to present the status of the achievements made by the Activity as a result of its five-year intervention, share the different learnings, and hand over project components for local government stakeholders to ensure the sustainability of the program after the life of the Activity. The events included representatives of different stakeholders from all implementation regions, zones, woredas and kebeles, including beneficiary youth and representatives from USAID, SCI, EDC and regional partners. Panel discussions were held by the regional BoWCY to reflect the readiness to sustain the achievements and continue the interventions to the limit of their resources. Different activities such as dramas, poems and other sorts of entertainment were parts of the workshops. Gallery walks were also part of the programs to visually depict the achievements in the regions.



Photo: A drama show staged by the youth beneficiaries of POTENTIAL in Amhara region, on the occasion of the regional closeout event.

1.2.3 National Level Closeout and Learning Event

In October 2019, POTENTIAL conducted a one-day learning event in Addis Ababa. Over 200 participants from different organizations attended the workshop, including high-level officials from the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth, representatives of other sectoral ministries, development partners, USAID and senior managers of Save the Children. In his official opening speech, Ato Mathias, representing her excellency the State Minister of Women, Children and Youth, said the support provided to the government from USAID and its partner Save the Children had contributed tremendously to improving the livelihoods of youth in the implementation regions. On the same day, USAID, jointly with Save the Children, made a press release marking the final learning event. The press release stated that the “Activity has a focus on helping vulnerable, out-of-school young men and women to become self-sufficient. The USAID POTENTIAL Activity created access to job networks and self-help groups for youth participants, while also organizing experience-sharing sessions to increase their self-confidence.” On the occasion, the different learnings of the Activity were shared with the audience and discussions were held among participants. The following major areas of learnings were discussed:

- Change in attitude is the highest predictor of youth finding new economic opportunities
- Youth can and do find employment opportunities in the agriculture sector
- Fostering strong savings habits and using their own resources is a key predictor of youth employment
- Training is not enough: Mentorship, coaching and connecting are critical
- Context matters: location plays a large role in predicting economic opportunities for young people

Additionally, the most recent studies and outcome surveys undertaken by the Activity were shared along with other summarized learning briefs on topics such as the importance of community engagement, geographic differences and how they affect implementation, and designing trainings for targets of different background.



Photo: Sonjai Reynolds-Cooper, Chief of the Office of Education and Youth in USAID, making remarks on the Final Learning event

1.2.4 High-Level Delegation Visit

The Activity has hosted different high-level officials to visit program sites to demonstrate accountability to the public, the GOE and its donors. In fact, the platform also served to share experiences and facilitate exchanging of ideas. Such visits were organized for high-level decision-making bodies of the Ethiopian government, a US congressional delegation, officials of USAID, the Development Assistance Group-DAG (a high level delegation group composed of 20 key donor organizations, ambassadors, and diplomatic missions in Ethiopia), and many others. Below are the two most recent visits organized by the Activity.

Minister's Visit

On the 10th of August 2019, Her excellency Hiwot Hailu, the State Minister of Women, Children and Youth along with her senior deputies, visited a YES center in Yem special woreda of SNNP region.

The YES center in Yem woreda has been functional as of June 2017 and is offering different kinds of edutainment services to male and female youth aged 15-29. The service package includes transferable life skills training coaching, reproductive health counseling, computer services with M4CD application (a training and information platform), indoor and outdoor games. It also avails access to a service providers' directory and links youths with MFIs.

A warm welcoming was given by the deputy regional bureau head of Women Children and Youth, Ato Mustafa Issa, joined by Yem woreda administrator, Save the Children's POTENTIAL staff along with officials from the region's Women, Children and Youth Bureau. On the occasion, a short presentation about the center was made by the project staff of underlining the collaborative effort of the project and the woreda administration to support the local youth in an integrated manner.

Mustafa Issa, deputy bureau head, reflected that the project has achieved remarkable results in supporting the

unemployed and under-employed youth. He said that the Yem YES center is a model for other youth service centers with regard to providing diversified services for the youth.



Photo: The State Minister (middle with a white jacket) being welcomed by the beneficiary youth and the community of the wored

POTENTIAL's Chief of Party, Genet Lemma, presented the overall implementation strategy of the Activity along with achievements to date. The group visited in a booth following the presentation of the Chief. On the occasion, the delegation visited youth who were engaged in poultry production, metal work, leather shoe making and other business ventures.

The youth explained to the visitors how the transferable life skill trainings helped them to explore their potential and how they used the post training support services and linkage with resources to start their business. They stressed the importance of having well rounded support until their business become stable.

USAID Ethiopia Mission Director Visit

On September 24, 2019, USAID Ethiopia's new Mission Director, Sean Jones, visited one of the POTENTIAL catchment regions, Oromia. In an event organized by the Activity in Mojo town, the overall achievements of the project were presented by the Chief of Party, Genet Lemma, followed by a brief by the representative of the regional partner organization, HUNDEE. Ms. Lemma gave an overview of the project's approach and the achievements gained so far following the different youth workforce development program interventions of the Activity. The Mission Director was accompanied by a team of USAID and Save the Children staff. The visit was primarily aimed at introducing the project's implementation at the community level.



The Mission Director, expressing his appreciation during his visit and meeting with the youth beneficiaries POTENTIAL, Mojo town, Oromia region

Private Donor Visits

In the third quarter of Year 5, a delegation of a US-based private foundation led by the founder, Mr. Soderberg, visited the program site of POTENTIAL in SNNPR. The team visited one of the intervention woredas of POTENTIAL in the SNNP region. The foundation is specifically interested in supporting initiatives focusing on the empowerment of young women to improve their livelihoods. The delegation met with relevant local administration officials and senior managers of Save the Children as well as youth beneficiaries.

Similarly, in the second quarter of the reporting year, a high-level delegation led by Ms. Patsy Madden, Vice President of PVH Foundation, a US-based private sector partner of the Activity, has visited the intervention woredas of POTENTIAL in the SNNP region, that are being supported under the PVH corporate partnership for youth livelihood grant. During the visit, the delegation met with relevant government officials and representatives of Save the Children and USAID. They also attended the colorful launching ceremony of a youth center with YES services in Hawassa Zuria woreda. The launching and celebration ceremony were attended by more than 500 people, including the beneficiary youth. Members of the delegation include Ms. Patsy Madden, Vice President PVH Foundation, Ms. Meghan Simio, Senior Manager PVH Foundation, Ms. Laura Schiraldi, Manager SCUS and Mr. Thomas Myhren, Senior Director SCUS.

Upon conclusion of their meeting and visit, members of the delegations expressed their appreciation about the work that the Activity is implementing particularly its partnership efforts with public and private entities. The Activity has been making use of such opportunities to seek further assistance to its future youth livelihood intervention programs.

1.2.5 Experience sharing visit

Sharing experiences is one of the approaches that the Activity instilled into its management system to enhance learning from its own successes and limitations. The learnings have been used for systematic improvement of program implementation through adaptation. Such exchange visits were organized every year in one of the selected program regions emphasizing one selected theme each year. The technical staff of the Activity from Addis and across all implementation regions participated. Moreover, representatives from the

Ministry of Youth and Sports (later the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth), USAID, implementing partners, as well as participants from regional and woreda government offices and invited guests from the host region have been in attendance.

Amhara Experience Sharing Visit

Most recently, an experience sharing visit was conducted from December 11-13, 2018 in Amhara. The focus of the event was on planning, implementing and recording post training support services of the Activity. The field level experience assisted the participants to observe and learn from the Amhara regional team and its implementation woredas of Dera and Debub Achefer. During the workshop, all regional program managers shared their best learning and experiences regarding post training support, which includes training, coaching, mentoring and linkages with other youth service providers and MFIs, collaboration with TVETs, and delivery of different services in the youth centers. At the end of the event each region identified the 10 most impressive learnings and how they wanted to apply them in their particular regions within a given time table for implementation.

Ato Amanuel Mekonnen, Executive Director of PADet, made a brief welcoming speech representing the host region. He expressed his happiness on the opportunity given to PADet to share its experience in implementing the Activity and learn from one another. He then asked all visitors to actively participate and enjoy their stay in the region, and use the program as a good platform to exchange experiences.

Following the opening, Ato Tahir Gero, representative of USAID mission in Ethiopia, gave his remarks. He said that that the program is funded by USAID and is being implemented by Save the Children and its partners including PADet and other local and international partners. “Just like a big pillar is supported by a small bolt; our contribution to improve the employment condition of the youth in the country is small but it has a big impact.” Tahir said “We truly feel happy every time we see changes in the life of the rural youth who otherwise could have been a burden to the society.”

A total of 23 persons from Addis Ababa, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somali, SNNPR participated in the experience-sharing event. All regions agreed to work jointly for better compliance and growth together as the issue of youth unemployment remains an ongoing challenge for the country.



Photo: Ato Tahir Gero of USAID delivering remarks in a meeting organized to conclude the experience sharing visit

Ministry of Youth and Sports (later the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth) has been a priority for improving the livelihood of the youth. Accordingly, the leadership of POTENTIAL had been actively taking part in different regular and ad- hoc meetings and continued to provide technical support at a higher level.

The TWG serves as a think tank of the Ministry to provide technical support and consultation in matters related to the youth development agenda.

The recently launched “[2019 National Youth Status Report of Ethiopia](#)” is one example where technical input from members of the TWG was pivotal. Similarly, the Activity has played a significant role in developing [The National Youth Personality Development Guideline](#). The objective of this guideline is to serve the schools and other youth focused entities of the country.

Additionally, the staff in Addis Ababa and regional offices participated in technical meetings with different governmental and non-governmental stakeholder institutions who have a shared goal to improve youth livelihoods.

1.2.7 Identification and Documentation of Success Stories

The Activity has identified and documented numerous success stories demonstrating how beneficiaries have been positively impacted by the Activity. These stories describe how donor funds are used to change lives, create program accountability and transparency to stakeholders, and help qualitatively monitor program effectiveness beyond statistics. While the primary beneficiaries of the program are youth who received services, individuals, families and societies around them have also been indirectly impacted in a ripple effect.

POTENTIAL has produced two volumes of success story booklets. These booklets contain selected stories from all regions where the Activity has been operating since 2015. The stories included in the booklets represent the tip of the iceberg of the thousands of young men and women and institutions that benefited from the program. Efforts have been made to make the stories verifiable by providing names and unique identifiers of locations and institutions through their consent. The stories use plain language and avoid jargons so anybody, even with little or no knowledge about the Activity, can learn about POTENTIAL and its work.

The communications team of Save the Children and the USAID communications team featured some of these success stories in their newsletter and websites. This provided an opportunity for POTENTIAL to increase visibility and reach a large number of audiences, including the staff of Save the Children both in-country and abroad and the USAID community globally.

The Activity produced different factsheets, brochures, briefers, roll-up banners, posters and several other print products produced and used at different occasions to increase the awareness of the public and boost the visibility of the Activity. The factsheets are regularly updated following major progress every quarter.

The Activity has also conducted the documentation of success stories in video format. Eight short videos were produced focusing on the successes of individual youth beneficiaries.

The stories are all in local languages of the implementing regions with English subtitles, mainly reflecting the transition of participating youth from un/under employment to the world of work and career success. Selected female and male beneficiaries are featured on these short videos.

The videos range in length from 4-12 minutes and promote an exchange of experience among project regions and partners and are mainly for in-house consumption of SC Ethiopia, implementation partners and SCUS. The films cover a wide array of livelihood options chosen by the successful youth beneficiaries.



Photo: The film crew in action

1.2.8 Broadcasting Radio Programs

Radio shows have a long and rich tradition of raising awareness about important community issues. With this notion, POTENTIAL has been reaching its target audiences with vibrant and dramatic storylines through radio shows in local languages. In partnerships with regional radio stations, POTENTIAL has produced and transmitted more than 220 radio shows in the past years. POTENTIAL has signed MOUs with region-based local FM radio stations and tailored its messages on key youth employment issues to reach the youth community.

1.2.9 Monitoring and Evaluation

Throughout the years, the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) team conducted monitoring activities, using the existing monitoring tools, and led data collection to track participants and gather data for the major indicators. For facilitation of implementation follow-up and experience sharing, the consultative meetings with stakeholders continued in year five while ensuring local ownership. Quarterly field visits and review meetings were also organized as further monitoring activities. The following were some of the monitoring tools used during the course of implementation:

- Youth Intake Profile Data Collection Tool
- Youth Registration Data Collection Tool
- Activity Attendance Data Collection Tool
- Employment/Job Placement Data Collection Tool
- Rapid Assessment Tools

To strengthen the MEAL tasks and improve the program quality, the team has continually built the capacity of the staff at all levels on program monitoring, accountability and data quality assurance areas. MEAL capacity building workshops were conducted annually. The trainings aimed to raise the awareness of the program staff in

Addis Ababa and regions on areas pertinent to monitoring and evaluation including quality benchmarking and accountability while giving special emphasis to approaches of SCI and the practice at POTENTIAL intervention sites. Additionally, members of the MEAL team from Addis Ababa attended training workshops on project cycle management CLA and M&E which ultimately helped the overall MEAL system of the Activity.

The team has also produced quarterly and annual progress reports which were submitted to USAID and major partners such as the Ministry of Youth and Sports. This has been done on a timely and regular basis in order to comply with the requirement of USAID and the government. The reports serve as an important instrument for the Activity to ensure accountability to the donor and build trust by the government and partners.

IR 2: Improved youth access to market relevant skills and experiences to support the transition to safe and viable employment

Overview of training and support pathways

The Activity's training and support package consists of the following four major components:

1. **Positive Youth Development** is an "asset-based" approach, focusing on one's self, and their community
2. **Work Ready Now!** considers employability skills, knowledge, and behaviors needed in order to be successful in society and labor market; WR+, offers similar content for youth with low literacy
3. **Be Your Own Boss (BYOB)** training guides youth to start their own or a group business
4. **Work-Based Learning (WBL)** provides real workplace experience by observing or working on products or services, primarily for WRN! graduates who decided to enter wage employment. It can be also considered for young people who want to start a business and want to learn about production and business processes. WBL provides short-term placements with employers and additional skills training for youth.

During Years 1-5, all these curricula were customized to local needs and translated into the five common languages in Ethiopia. Delivery methods were adapted by considering youth needs, aspirations and ambitions, market demands, youth profiles, literacy levels, and woreda and labor market assessments. The case studies in the training curricula were enhanced as experiences and recommendations from the youth facilitators were incorporated.

2.1 Positive Youth Development

The *Positive Youth Development (PYD)* learning package was developed by Save the Children to follow an innovative pathway of change away from unproductive or harmful work towards more viable livelihood activities. The package assists youth to develop their life skills such as goal setting, appreciating themselves and their communities, and identifying potential livelihood pathways, which are further developed in the following training packages. PYD modules, adapted from Save the Children's Youth in Action program, target youth beneficiaries between 15-29 years of age.

Overall 23,859 youth (46% female) were trained in Positive Youth Development training package (PYD). The training helped young people develop insight on their personalities, communities and the resources available around them, and addresses life-long learning, taking action and mentorship. Beneficiary youth conduct practical assessments of economic, social and cultural context of their community, which is foundational to understanding themselves and their opportunities.

2.2 Work Ready Now!

After completing the PYD curriculum, youth will start training on the **WRN!** and **WR+** packages which continues to strengthen personal development, interpersonal communications, work habits and conduct, leadership, and financial literacy, thus providing the transferable life skills needed to secure a viable career and to succeed in the selected pathway. WR+ offers similar content with that of WRN; the only difference is that this training is designed for those youth who have low literacy and numeracy skills. The package takes around 60 hours. During the life of the Activity, WRN! and WR+ trainings were delivered to 35,984 (47% F) youth in all of its 30 implementation woredas.



Photo: Beneficiaries at work readiness training, Jigjiga, Somali region

2.3 Be Your Own Boss (BYOB)

Based on a given youth's interest, PDP, community mapping, and the local labor market assessment, youth can opt for the **Be Your Own Boss (BYOB)** training, where youth are guided to start their own or a group business. BYOB provides youth with the skills to identify a promising business idea, behave like successful business owners, nurture the right characteristics, skills and attitudes, conduct market research, understand competitors, develop business and marketing plans, find start-up capital, perform financial and stock record keeping, conduct legal business registration process, and to find mentors for further technical support and advice.

As of the final quarter of the Activity, the total number of beneficiaries who have benefited from BYOB has reached 11,558 (42% F). The training was provided only to youth who had successfully completed WRN! and were interested in being engaged in self-employment, as well as youth who want to expand already-existing businesses to increase their income. The training is delivered in five consecutive days for five hours every day.



Photo: Beneficiaries at business management (BYOB) training, Endegagn Woreda, SNNPR

2.4 Hard Skills Training

The Activity strategies respond to unemployed and underemployed youths' capacity needs by providing hard skills training. Youth received hard skills training in several areas including wood work, metal work, women's hair dressing and cosmetology, and mobile phone maintenance, from 10 to 45 days through a special arrangement with local TVETs. As resources are limited to provide hard skills training opportunity to everyone who indicated interest, preference was given to those who were socially and economically disadvantaged. These training opportunities are arranged with public and private TTIs, who have been sub-granted with fund by the Activity to provide the required trainings to selected beneficiaries. In the past five years, 3,286 (44% F) youth received the hard skills trainings.

The career guidance that is being offered to the target youth enables them to understand their capacity and helps them explore the existing educational and labor market opportunities, so that they can make appropriate career decisions. The youth are encouraged to assess their own qualities and capabilities and with that to be able to identify career opportunities that match their talents and competencies, as well as opportunities within their local markets.



Photo: Beneficiaries attending practical skill training, Durbete, Amhara region

2.5 Work Based Learning

The WBL is organized in two different types: (1) job shadowing, a 1- to 5-day visit to private or public sector employers involved in sectors similar to the participant's career choice. The purpose of the visit is to learn about the current technology in the area, and observe how others are doing to make it fit in the existing market; and (2) apprenticeship, where youth who have an interest in acquiring hard skills to start their business or are engaged in wage employment join an employer for 1- 6 months to gain practical experience. Most regions practice both types of WBL approaches. Apprenticeships are considered well suited to those trained in hard skills. They are organized in collaboration with TVETs or other similar skills development institutions. To date, 6,678 youth (42% F) accessed WBL opportunities. Of this, the majority (98%) was done in the form of job shadowing. The WBL opportunities were provided in selected sectors including hair dressing/ beauty salon, construction bricks/ hollow blocks production, woodworking, metal work, electricity, and barber shops. These WBL opportunities were offered by private businesses operating within youths' respective localities.

2.6 Coaching and Follow Up Support

The Activity adapted the coaching manual from a previous USAID-funded EDC program in Guyana. The adaptation of and training on the manual was led by EDC, with close follow-up and support by the Activity's staff members. Youth are coached on developing a PDP and/or a business plan. This is done using different coaching techniques including motivational interviews, mind mapping, and short and long-term goal setting. YFs provide coaching on PDP development to make sure their goal is achievable, is in line with their real interests and passions, the required resources are available and support can be utilized in and from their own kebele or woreda. Similar support is provided during BYOB training sessions to assist participants to develop viable business plans. In total, 39,325(44% F) beneficiary youths received coaching and follow-up services across all target woredas during the five years' period.

2.7 Mentoring

The Activity is engaging volunteer mentors who are willing to work with Woreda Officers (WOs) and YFs to prepare young people for self- or wage employment as well as for being a productive citizen. Volunteer mentors are business people, career professionals or role models from local communities who have relevant experience and are interested in supporting and promoting youth. The goal of mentoring is to provide guidance and support to an aspiring mentee. It is a collaborative relationship, the mentor and the mentee can learn from each other and devise a strategic plan for reaching the desired goals. It takes trust to work together and tackle the challenges that most aspiring young people face, including overcoming fears, building confidence, and taking risks. The Activity provides comprehensive training on skills such as active listening and effective communication that are critical for successful mentoring and relationship building.

EDC developed an integrated Mentor's Guide and Training Manual to train Volunteer Mentors who will mentor and support youth who have completed WRN! and are seeking to earn an income either through their own businesses or being employed in local workplaces. This guide was further enhanced by the Activity to train and assist volunteers to comprehend the situation of young people, the concept of positive youth development, their role as mentors and the support they are expected to provide to the youth. It also imparts information and skills that can assist the mentors for their meetings with their mentees, developing communication skills and relationship building, and understanding effective approaches for building trust and collaborative relationships.

To date, based on their individual interests and personal development plans, 11,846 (41%F) youth were mentored by trained volunteer mentors. To meet the demand for mentoring services, the Activity has further trained 1,051 (33% F) volunteer community based mentors within the implementation regions in five years' time.

2.8 Development of training modules, handbooks and guidelines

The Activity has produced five training modules and participant's manuals through one of its implementing partners, Education Development Center (EDC). Participant's manuals were prepared with the local languages of the implementation regions for ease of understanding by beneficiaries. Additionally, different facilitator guides for post training support services such as coaching and mentoring were developed and have been on use by youth facilitators and WOs. Moreover, different guides and handouts for community volunteer mentors, YESG leaders, etc. were prepared and shared with target users to support their effort. The YESGs were also assisted with developing bylaws for managing their groups properly.

2.9 Integration of technology

Mobile for Career Development (M4CD)

The integration of ICT into the Activity began in the third year and has been implemented largely in year four and five. ICT can assist young people to develop their skills, knowledge, and social capital. The application of ICT in the rural development sector has been rather slow. The main reasons for this are: (1) poor ICT infrastructure, (2) poor ICT awareness, and (3) language barriers in ICT applications.

The Activity outsourced the development of a comprehensive information system – M4CD (Mobile for Career Development) – that can be accessed via phone, tablet or computer with the objective of providing a complete set of training materials, information pertinent to labor market, employment opportunities available locally, etc. The Activity identified locally relevant information such as addresses of private companies and technical vocational training institutions and business ideas that can easily be accessed by the youth using ICT tools such as mobile telephones, laptops, tablets etc. Additionally, the application, with its various features, can be very instrumental to automate and simplify the work of the Activity facilitators and mentors working with beneficiaries. Although it is possible to access most information from the application

offline, some features require internet connection. Thus, the youth centers with YES services serve as a point in each locality to subscribe and avail the internet connection. They also provide access to both online and offline services with their desktop computers for those who wish to get the service.

The M4CD platform has the following core modules: 1) Information and knowledge packages, 2) Training manuals, 3) Practical guides, 4) Publications, audio, and video, 5) Market data, 6) Labor market data incl. employment opportunities for self and wage employment, and 7) Event calendar.

The M4CD platform was installed across all POTENTIAL regions. The newly uploaded version of M4CD has come up with new features and became simple and user friendly. The new version (2.0) has brought a new style of content management and data migration method. It also introduced modules like tagging, categorizing, yellow page, digital user tracking system, job opening and embedded translation modules. The search engine is more enhanced to increase content accessibility throughout the platform. It simplifies the content migration to make the content distribution easier across all YES service centers.

Radio Programming

'Be yourself' (BU) radio show has been on air since August 2016. The show has been broadcasted over the periods of between two months to one year depending on the budget allocated to each region. The leading shows are produced in Amharic language and broadcasted in Amhara and SNNP regions. Since these shows are produced at Addis Ababa office level they set focus areas of a particular period, tone of the show, hosting style of journalists and other show structures.

In Afar, Oromia, Somali and Tigray regional states, the show is outsourced to regional radio stations and they use the leading shows in Amharic as a reference to produce the shows in their local languages. Regional stations are allowed to translate the titles into their local language however the English title "Be yourself" is commonly used by all regions to keep the identity of the show nationally. To date, a total of 228 episodes of the show have been broadcast in the six regions. Success stories of beneficiaries, inspiring stories and information, experiences of successful personalities were areas where the radio program focused and the audience was encouraged to participate in weekly quizzes with a mobile card prize.

IR. 3: Coordinated delivery among local institutions of quality market driven services connecting underserved youth especially women to employment and income opportunities

3.1 Working with TVETs / TTIs to boost youth employment

Initial assessments of POTENTIAL confirmed that there is a mismatch between the type of skills students acquire at TVET institutes and the skillsets most manufacturing firms are looking for. Graduate trainees' options to seek employment or self-employment as a feasible income-generating alternative are negatively impacted by the lack of soft skill training. Since its start, POTENTIAL believed that analysis of skill gaps needs to be coupled with analysis of demand for those skills. On the basis of this fact, in addition to increasing the relevance of TVET education and services and improving access to TVET institutions, POTENTIAL has facilitated the transition of youth from education to workplace by strengthening links between the TTIs and other local economy actors that depend, either directly or indirectly, on the quality of human resources being trained.

The Activity has been working with 30 TVETs in Afar, Amhara, Oromia, SNNP, Somali and Tigray regions. It has been following a two-prong approach towards partnering with these TVETs/TTIs. The first one was strengthening the capacity of TVETs to integrate soft skills training in their curriculum. The second approach was providing

financial grants to selected public and private TVETs/TTIs to enable them to offer scholarship support to youth beneficiaries from socially and economically disadvantaged groups, particularly from peri-urban and remote rural communities.

Hence, the following support was provided to TVETs in the implementation regions is to address these dual purposes:

3. Introducing Work Ready Now (WRN) in TTIs through training their teaching staff on WRN so that they would be able to cascade the soft skill to graduating students.
4. Integrating and contextualizing the WRN in the TTIs' curricula thereby scaling it up in the institutions as an ultimate goal.

To this end, the following tasks have been undertaken to build the capacity of the TVETs:

- TOT on WRN modules was provided to 80 TVET instructors - nominated from the partner TVETs in the regions.
- Follow-up and technical support was provided during cascading of the training on WRN! to graduating students.
- Regular consultative meetings were undertaken with TVET officials from the federal, regional and partner TVETs to integrate the WRN! training in to their curriculum
- A software entitled 'M4CD Software' which helps to trace the whereabouts of graduate students and learn their employment status was developed, tested, and distributed to the TVETs
- TOT trainings have been conducted for TVET trainers on facilitation skills and on the application of the M4CD Software.

Upon concluding their TOT on WRN components, the trained TVET instructors have subsequently trained their graduating trainees in their respective colleges. As a result, 1,163 graduates were trained on WRN! package, which is believed to have helped improve their chances of getting employed. The recent tracer study conducted by POTENTIAL revealed that the graduates with WRN! training have shown a higher rate of employment (81.7%; 71.4% females) than the non-WRN! graduates (72.8%; 68.6% females). This difference was statistically significant; at the specified .05 level, $t(523) = -2.698$, $p < .05$, $d = -.099$, 95% CL [-.17, -.03] where WRN! training graduates have secured a higher rate of employment than non-WRN! training graduates.

POTENTIAL has also supported the TVETs to facilitate access to tailored short term technical training courses. Through a block grant approach, partner TVETs have administered scholarship support to approximately 7% of the beneficiary population. Priority to this opportunity was provided to socially and economically disadvantaged groups, particularly to those from peri-urban and remote rural communities, as well as to promote gender diversity in trades with low female enrollment.

Participants attended a 3-6-month training course. TVETs that were selected for the block grant program had a satisfactory record managing block grants, the capacity and willingness to adapt curricula to market needs, and committed to target youth that meet the beneficiary profile specified by POTENTIAL. During the implementation period, a total of 3,286 (44% F) beneficiaries were able to attend the hard skills training through the partner TVETs on different fields of interest, including food catering, wood work, metal work, electronics maintenance, hair dressing, garment, and building construction.

3.2 Establishing and Strengthening Youth Empowerment Service (YES) Centers

The POTENTIAL team organized Youth Empowerment Service (YES) centers or "Hubs," to be associated with

existing government owned Youth Centers. The YES centers serve as Business Development Service (BDS) Centers that coordinate and facilitate youth access to training, ongoing technical and business development support during and after participation in POTENTIAL. The YES centers were hosted within Government youth centers. In exchange for hosting the YES hubs, selected youth centers have benefit from material and capacity support that includes computers, wireless access where feasible, learning materials and knowledge and skills transfer. The YES centers have been managed by a full-time coordinator and a trainer who have receive regular support from POTENTIAL. A key function of the coordinator is to provide youth extension services that include establishing and coordinating access to responsive services through the network of youth service providers that includes local partners and the private sector.

The types of services delivered for the youth through the YES services are mainly employability skills training, coaching, mentoring, job information, computer training, computer services, photocopying, and internet service, and entertainment such as TV and indoor and outdoor games. Other services include refreshments (tea, coffee, soft drinks), shower service, and hall renting.

POTENTIAL established 30 YES centers throughout its implementation woredas. The Activity has further strengthened the support to the centers through funding from NetHope Device Challenge to increase the number of computer devices in the existing youth centers and to recruit 30 Junior Facilitators and 30 Youth Data Collectors to support the Activity's objectives. Accordingly, additional devices (30 desktop computers, 120 monitors, 60 Samsung tablets, and accessories) were procured and distributed to the YES centers. The one-year support of NetHope Device for Challenge was successfully completed achieving all the targeted objectives. A one-day dissemination and closeout workshop was held in August 2018 in Addis Ababa with the presence of representatives from the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports, Regional and woreda level delegates of the Bureaus of Youth and Sports of the implementing regions, implementing partners and the staff of POTENTIAL.



Photo: Participants of the closeout workshop

The centers where YES services are being deployed record the daily service users. The number of users differ from center to center by the kind of service delivered. The more services they have, the more youth visit the center. The number of youths who visited the centers was increasing from year to year.

About 71,812 (29% F) youth have benefited from the menu of services provided by the youth centers in the past years. The participation of young women in YES service utilization has shown improvement from that of the

earlier years (19% in Year 3 to 29% in Year 5). Moreover, the youth centers provide different paid services such as photocopying and refreshment at minimal and affordable cost to the youth. This income is used to meet their running expenses. The staff members of the centers are developing strategies and methods to attract more youth. In some of the centers, Wi-Fi connection has been installed to attract more youth to the center.

3.3 Youth Economic and Social Councils (YESCs)

To enhance its intervention approach, POTENTIAL has established woreda and kebele level Youth Economic and Social Councils (YESCs). The councils are comprised of relevant government and private sector actors, CBOs, community members, and youth representatives that support youth and advocate for youth economic and social development. In the past years, POTENTIAL has established 30 YESCs in all of the implementation woredas. The woreda level YESCs are responsible for overseeing the overall functioning of the Activities interventions in their respective woredas and support the YES services.

Additionally, the Activity established Kebele level community based YESCs in catchment villages. The kebele level YESCs are more responsible to select youths to be engaging with the Activity during the course of the different trainings. They are also very instrumental in supporting the youths during 'after training support'. All the kebele level YESCs meet with the woreda YESC periodically to discuss progress made and challenges faced.

3.4 Youth Economic and Social Groups (YESGs)

The Activity introduced Youth Economic and Social Groups (YESGs) to improve the social, cultural and economic status of the members. The objectives of YESGs revolve around sensitization, savings, resource mobilization and information transfer or some form of empowerment of members in response to social and economic marginalization. After completing the trainings, some youth opt to be organized in YES groups. The number of members ranges from 15-20.

POTENTIAL established YESGs so youth, individually or in organized groups, can borrow funds from MFIs to establish small enterprises. To date, the Activity has helped the establishment of over 500 YESGs who have more than 7500 members. Each YESG has their own bylaws and undergo regular meetings. Per the manual, the groups are meeting weekly and fortnightly and discussing economic and social issues. The YES council members were invited to take part in the YESG meetings. This supported the YESCs to follow up the functioning of the groups, discuss key issues of the groups during their regular meeting and take action. They also started sharing their experience and supporting each other, raising the awareness of the service providers and their community, promoting positive behavior and social wellbeing for youth. Most YESGs have started saving which can be used by members as a startup capital to start self-business. For instance, the newly established YESGs in year 5 managed to save 354,041 ETB (12,037 USD) since their establishment. The group's cashier is responsible for safely securing their savings in a cashbox and depositing the money in nearby banks when the savings are high enough. The groups have also been trained by the Activity on how to manage internal group lending.

3. Integration of Crosscutting Issues and Sustainability

3.1 Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

The Activity is committed to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls through its diverse components. Starting from the target selection process, the recruitment committees were made aware of gender equality issues and stakeholders working on gender equality. As such, the Women and Children Affairs Office and Youth and Sport Bureau at kebele level were included as members of the selection committees.

Additionally, internal and external review meetings with our implementing partners were conducted to address gender equality issues. Increasing female youth participation in the transferable life skills training as well as engaging them in employment were the major focus areas of the discussion in many of the review meetings. This has created a significant increase in young women's participation in the Activity compared with the previous years, particularly in pastoralist communities like Afar, Somali and in some Woredas of the Oromia region.

In the primary stage, beneficiaries were recruited by the established committees from different partnering government offices. The inclusion of the Women Affairs Office in the selection committee ensured equal recruitment of both young men and women. To this end, all regions planned equal participation of female and male youth. Although not all regions have achieved equal participation, all regions have improved in gender representation. The Activity continues to put effort towards gender equality in program implementation.

The targeted youths are trained on a variety of transferable life skills that enabled them to develop and improve the knowledge and skills for employment. The cumulative figure shows 16,989 female and 18,995 male youths reached with basic POTENTIAL training component and women are fairly represented in almost all transferable skills trainings. The following table indicates the sum of soft and hard skill training achievements in the past five years by sex.

Training type	Female	Male	Total	Female Percentage
Positive Youth Development (PYD)	10,920	12,939	23,859	46
Work Ready Now (WRN)	14,628	16,949	31,577	46
Work Ready Plus (WRN+)	2,361	2,046	4,407	54
Be Your Own Boss (BOB)	6,092	7,332	13,424	45
Technical/Hard Skill training	1,174	1,494	2,668	44
Aflateen	272	194	466	58

Table: percentage of female attending the soft and hard skill trainings

In utilizing the funds for technical trainings, gender has been given attention considering the practical situations and interest of young women and men. However, because of the existing gender barriers and mobility constraints of young women, the gender gap is most visible in access to technical skill trainings. Furthermore, women participate in minor service provision trainings more so than any other hard skills training.



Photo: Group picture of female youth facilitators in Somali region with the CoP of POTENTIAL, (third from left with blue shirt) on the occasion of the regional closeout event

Both male and female youth are provided with support after transferable life skills trainings to encourage their efforts and follow up on their progress. This support includes coaching, mentoring and WBL. The following table shows the representation of female youths on post training support in all regions.

Post Training Support Type	Female	Male	Total	Female Percentage
Coaching	17,303	22,022	39,325	44
Mentoring	4857	6,989	11,846	41
Mentors Training	347	704	1,051	33
WBL (Apprenticeship + Job Shadowing)	2,805	3873	6,678	42
<i>Job Shadowing</i>	2,037	3,141	5,178	39
<i>Apprenticeship</i>	48	70	118	41

Table: post training support achievements

As a result, from the provided transferable life skill trainings both young women and men gained important skills that are instrumental for their future employment undertakings. Though the participation of females is progressing with time, additional effort is required to keep this momentum in future program interventions. Coaching, mentoring and YES services are playing a major role for young women particularly to address gender related challenges and opportunities.

The social expectations and mobility constraints of young women limit the beneficiaries' vision to trainings that are traditionally assigned for women only. This is also replicated in selecting areas of employment that young women and men are mainly engaged in, traditionally assigned roles for women and men owned businesses. Unfortunately, young women are engaging in micro-business that brings less profit to them as compared with their male counterparts. Young women organized themselves in groups and started to be engaged in some businesses that were mainly dominated by men in the previous times such as farming particularly in Afar and Tigray.

To this end, there is a fair employment status between young women and men across all employment types in most regions.

Employment Type	Female	Male	Total	Female Percentage
Self-employment (individual + Group)	7,184	8,960	16,144	44
Wage Employment	2,139	2,769	4,908	43
Better Employment	1,022	2,286	3,308	31
Total Employment	10,345	14,015	24,360	42

Table: Youth employment status and the share of female in year 5

In regard to YES services, partners have been trying to make the centers accessible to young women and men by considering gender barriers that challenge young women in accessing them. Awareness creation about the YES services was conducted with the involvement of local elders, religious leaders, families and stakeholders to get the trust of families as well as young women themselves. However, the gender gap is still prevalent and requires much effort to increase females' participation in this regard such as engaging community members and religious leaders, as well as involving husbands and other family members on exploring how to support mothers in sharing household responsibilities and child care, providing sport/leisure services considering young women's interest in the local context and providing services that consider both literate and illiterate youth.

In the past years more than 71,000 (29% F) youths participated in YES center services. However, low female participation has been observed in the core areas where POTENTIAL has been working to improve the employability knowledge and skills of youth. Female participation is below the average in almost all YES services.

Over the years, the membership of young women in YESGs has shown improvement in most regions. From the total 7,530 youths in YESGs, about 45% are female.

The Youth Economic and Social Groups have been playing a great role for empowering youth socially and economically. They create a good opportunity for young women and men to discuss their economic and social challenges and opportunities in their local community. Leadership positions in the groups transition among the youth to assist them to practice and enhance decision making skills, particularly for young women. The groups also facilitate access to coaching and mentoring services. The gender matching of mentors enables young women to get practical life experiences and guidance including how to address gender barriers so as to achieve their goals.

Every year on International Women's Day (March 8), POTENTIAL organized events to celebrate gender equality and women's empowerment in every region. One of the objectives of organizing these events was to use the opportunity to promote the products and services of female youth engaged in different self-employment activities, to promote the YES centers, to discuss the challenges of females in their pursuit to employment and access of market to their products.

It has been celebrated with targeted youth, woreda officials and communities. POTENTIAL's woreda offices were instrumental for the events in collaboration with the office of Women and Children

and woreda administration offices. Representatives of sectoral offices, development partners, community and religious leaders, and youth representatives were in attendance. The celebration of March 8 was conducted across all regions within POTENTIAL supported woredas. For instance, in year 5, in one of the woredas of Amhara region alone, a total of 1,057 participants, out of which 117 were male community members, participated in the one-day event. Composition of participants include community elders, civil servants of the woredas, woreda governmental officials, students and representatives of the civil societies. In the events, issues related to opportunities for accessing job opportunities, experiences of women mentors and beneficiaries, and challenges of women and possible solutions were discussed. Successful women also shared their experience and had exhibitions to promote materials produced by young women. The event includes a discussion of both female and male's full involvement in the existing livelihood options and accessing the local resources and how to integrate gender in community activities.

3.2 Sustainability Mechanisms

POTENTIAL has been working on the issue of sustainability from the onset of the program. The Activity has been working closely with local implementing partners, existing private and public sector actors, particularly the youth and sport offices, woreda administration offices and kebele administrations, youth associations and youth-focused organizations, and youth themselves with great transparency is one of the guiding principles. The capacity building of the implementing partners, local government stakeholders and TTIs is another principle for reaching relevance and sustainability. By including external stakeholders in assessments and review workshops, they are now able to understand the situation of youth, contribute to the Activity's objectives, and increase their ownership of activities.

The capacity of three local implementing partners, PADet, HUNDEE and REST, is built through their engagement in different activities. Their involvement started from the design stage up to the outcome evaluation. In the past year, partner staff members were trained in different youth workforce development activities and facilitation techniques. The capacity building improved their technical capability to deliver and manage youth livelihood activities. Further, the Save the Children team for compliance, award management and finance/operations delivered a three-day training on managing and reporting of USAID-funded activities using the USAID Activity operation guide. This assisted the partners to understand the various financial and operation policies and procedures of USAID. Further, Save the Children supports the partners in implementation management and office operations support based on the needs identified to ensure efficient, accountable, and effective implementation.

Another important aspect of ensuring sustainability is creating linkages and synergy among local stakeholders through the establishment of YES services within existing youth centers or similar facilities. These centers are expected to test and develop relevant products and services for the youth as they are led by local youth with the support of the YES council. The council includes representatives from training institutions, private sectors, relevant government offices, community members, youth representatives and other youth service providers.

Currently the stakeholders are providing noticeable support including:

- Training center provision
- Activity participant identification and recruitment
- Participant follow-up
- Linkage to available resources (land, loan, working shelters, wage employment, material support)
- Provision of office space and facilities for Woreda level staff members

To make the operations successful and replicable, participants' expectations of per diem was addressed by

the stakeholders. Selected youth did not expect a sitting allowance during the training and coaching services. This demonstrates that the Activity has begun to break the tradition/expectations of allowances for participation, paving the way for similar approaches. Most programs in these areas usually pay a lot of money for participants as a sitting allowance. Breaking this culture was a challenging task for the implementing partners and stakeholders; however selected youth and local stakeholders are now aware of the importance of the Activity and have agreed to work collaboratively without any sitting allowance.

Community-level engagement is another sustainability strategy followed by the Activity. More than a thousand volunteer mentors have been engaged to provide youth with technical, financial, and networking guidance and support. 30 TTIs received training on different components to ensure sufficient outreach to their students. In addition, woreda- and kebele- level government offices are being engaged to support and create an environment that enables continuous support for youth to trigger aspirations and promote training and employment endeavors.

3.2.1 Building the Capacity of the Public sector with POTENTIAL components

Key regional and woreda level stakeholders from the public sector have attended a two-day Adaptation, Planning and Leveraging workshop organized by the Activity on April 9-10, 2019. This workshop aimed to ensure the sustainability of the interventions of POTENTIAL through local implementing partners, woreda and regional Women, Children and Youth offices, woreda administration, kebele administration offices, microfinance institutions, and existing private and public sector actors. The workshop also aimed to ensure the smooth adaptation of the program through the participation of key stakeholders. POTENTIAL cascades some selected program components to regional- and woreda level government stakeholders so then they can be able to continue the current POTENTIAL activities after the end of the project period.

The workshop was interactive and engaging allowing participants to easily understand the concept and implementation techniques of POTENTIAL. Participants from regions and woredas were encouraged to choose from the different components of POTENTIAL and prepare a three months' action plan that can be implemented by their respective offices with minimal technical support of the Save the Children, and local implementing partners and its international partner, EDC. Following their action plan, the regional Women, Children and Youth bureaus have organized TOTs on POTENTIAL training components in their respective regions. All program regions have provided the trainings to more than 200 of their staff (all of them civil servants). The following table shows details of the regional level TOT facilitated by the region public sector offices as a result of the Adaptation workshop of the Activity.

Region	Time	venue	#participant
Amhara	May 6-11	Bahirdar	30
Tigray	May 13-18	Mekelle	32
SNNPR	May 20-25	Hawassa	29
Somali	June 10-15	Jigjiga	30
Afar	June 26-July 1	Semera	34
Oromia	July 4 - 8	Adama	50
Total			205

Following the above training workshop and other related actions, intervention woredas of POTENTIAL have started to implement the program by allocating their own resources. For instance, some woredas in

Tigray region have continued supporting unemployed/underemployed youth in their respective administration in gaining employability readiness soft skills as well as hard skill trainings in order to improve their livelihoods. For this to happen, they preferred to replicate POTENTIAL's training and post training support approach. Following this, they contracted the TVET Colleges in their respective woredas to provided hard skills and life skills training for a total of 3,461 (M: 1,855, F: 1,606) community youth in the rural villages. The TVETs applied POTENTIAL's training package and trained the rural youth drawn from villages and woreda towns. These trainings last from 10 days to six months. Areas of the training include cobblestone production and road construction, masonry, food preparation, hollow block production, plastering, garment, automotive service, building and electric installation, wood work, poultry, beef and dairy production etc. The educational levels of beneficiaries range from grade 10 up to university degree.

3.2.2 Local Capacity Development

The implementing partners of Amhara, Oromia and Tigray regions are local non-governmental organizations. All of them participated in detailed studies, assessments, planning and important capacity building trainings delivered to improve their project and financial management skills, M&E tool development and system management skills, training delivery skills, coaching skills and partnership development and maintenance skills. The Activity includes training components that build the social capital, working culture, and motivation of youth that are instrumental for viable job creation. The Activity works to strengthen YES services within youth centers for rural youth to assist them to get information to develop their business ideas and link them to employment opportunities.

In general, the new set-up of youth centers with YES services, the quality of the services and facilities including the furniture and locations were received positively and the youth believe that these centers will assist them in spending their time fruitfully. Strengths identified included:

- the centers provide relevant services and training to the youth at a minimal fee;
- the centers provide information and create awareness on various issues;
- and youth can access different services in one place.

These developments are contributing to building the capacity of local youth development agents in general and for youth in particular as they have access to information and service packages that they can use within and outside of the youth center. Moreover, kebele and woreda level stakeholders are participating in continuous capacity development through a series of trainings, review meetings and consultations.

4. Partnership and Linkage with Public/Private Stakeholders and Microfinance Institutions

The success of the Activity depends on the participation of all stakeholders working together to improve youth livelihoods. Engaging community leaders, government stakeholders at different levels and structures, and the different sizes of private companies is critical for sustainable service delivery. The Activity built the ownership and engagement of stakeholders in target woredas, promoted their involvement in supporting youth, and developed strong linkages with service providers and government representatives. Government partners (especially at woreda and kebele level) are playing key roles in identifying under/unemployed youth and providing follow-up after training. Their role also extends to the level of technical backstopping, capacity development, resource mobilization, and ensuring sustainability.

4.1 Partnering with Micro-Finance Institutes (MFIs)

The MFIs operating within the implementation areas of the activity are greatly contributing to the success of the youth by providing startup capital in the form of loan with reasonable interest rate (8%). To date, a total of 43,138,127 ETB (USD 1,294,144) in loans from MFIs was provided to the beneficiary youth in the six regions. Credit services were previously not accessible to youth mainly due to collateral requirements and fear of youth and their families of taking loans. Many youths were forced to depend on their families' resources alone. Currently, this issue has significantly improved. The awareness of youth and their families about credit has considerably changed due to the trainings and orientations provided.

4.2 Partnerships with the private sector

During the assessments, private sector companies within the intervention woredas were identified and opportunities gauged. Partnership agreements were drafted based on the identified and agreed opportunities. These collaborations include but are not limited to capacity building, employment opportunities, advisory services, being role models, provision of in-kind or cash support, and loan and saving services, depending on the type of organization.

The Activity established partnerships with 157 public and private entities in Afar, Amhara, Oromia, SNNP, Somali and Tigray regions; of these a good sum are private business firms and training institutes. These partnership efforts have been undertaken in the past to collaborate and support youth by offering skills, WBL, mentoring, financial services, input-output-market linkages and employment opportunities. By participating in the Activity and working in partnership, the private sector becomes part of an extensive network of the youth service providers, with access to the network's knowledge and expertise that may lead to business growth. The involvement in the Activity will also motivate and inspire staff members. Additionally, the Activity is assisting private sector staff to acquire soft skills from which the business as a whole will benefit. The private sector has the opportunity to influence and increase the relevance of technical and vocational training according to their needs. Their participation in the Activity means that they will have the chance to hire well-trained employees from their localities in the near future.

Some of the private sector partners created job opportunities for the target youth. Individual model farmers collaborated with the Activity by providing job-shadowing opportunities for young people. During the years 6,465 youth (42% F) beneficiary youths benefited from WBL opportunities provided by partners and stakeholders; private sector partners facilitated the majority. The private sector actors, including model farmers, provided real-world work experience to youth beneficiaries in all of the implementation regions. The private sector is also highly instrumental in creating wage employment opportunities for the youth.

4.3 Stakeholder Participation and Involvement

Quarterly and monthly knowledge and experience sharing meetings among regional teams are used to share learnings from the interaction with young people and other stakeholders and to identify feasible innovative ideas. Staff members from Addis participated also in these meetings to learn and share experiences from other regions. Woreda and kebele level government officials and community leaders were also part of these meetings so that they can also share their experiences, challenges, and opportunities and can raise areas where they need support. This kind of collaboration among woreda and kebele level government officials and the team was invaluable and assisted to establish partnerships based on trust and collaboration.

From the beginning, community members participated in the various assessments that assisted to build

their awareness of young people's needs and challenges, as well as the relevance of the Activity's interventions. As communities have seen how youth changed after their interaction with the Activity, they demonstrated greater acceptance and willingness to work together in order to assist the youth in achieving their goals. In addition, community leaders and local government representatives attended the final day of trainings to listen to youths' experiences during the training and the goals they set. These interactions allowed youth to request support, and community leaders and representatives usually offered support such as access to farmland and credit.

Improved cooperation with the private sector is also important as it provides first-hand information about their needs and the opportunities they can offer for young people. The Activity will continue to create and link to business networks so that the youth have access to relevant platforms for employment.

5. Management and Administrative Issues

As the Activity is approaching its end, downsizing the number of staff has become a matter of consideration. To this end, the employment contract of all woreda based staff of the project was terminated. Similarly, the employment contract of some core technical staff including Gender, Livelihood, Partnership specialists was terminated in May and June 2020. Some staff members have resigned in the earlier quarters of Year 6. The regional program managers of Oromia (HUNDEE) and Somali regions resigned as the activity was approaching its closure; and no replacements were recruited. These personnel challenges combined with challenges related to COVID-19, such as working from home and movement restriction, have limited the timeliness and quality of closeout tasks.

Continuous monitoring and supportive supervisions were done by the regional based managers and MEAL officers of the Activity to ensure program quality. Additionally, specialists from the POTENTIAL Addis Team (PAT) conducted routine field monitoring in different woredas across all the regions. During the routine monitoring, woredas with relatively lower achievement were given priority and technical assistance was given based on the identified gaps.

Some of the areas given emphasis were strengthening YES services and YES Group activities, enhancing WBL and mentoring services, and enhancing partnerships with public and private actors. After the monitoring visits, feedback was provided to the respective staff members

6. Implementation Challenges

- As a result of **security issues** due to the intra-regional conflict between implementation regions, youth facilitators were forced to temporarily halt the delivery of capacity building and follow-up support packages for the eligible youth in their respective locality.
- POTENTIAL experienced **staff turnover** as it approached the end of its life. Positions from Addis team, Woreda Officers, Youth Facilitators and YES Junior Facilitators resigned for other job opportunities. The turnover of the staff had the potential to lower performance. Shifts in assignments were made to mitigate the challenge.
- Because POTENTIAL targets youth living in rural areas, the program confronted significant challenges in its attempts to link youth to financial service providers. Such challenges included limited access to formal financial services, as well as legal age restrictions for younger youths below the age of 18. The precondition for loans such as collateral, was also another factor limiting the youth from accessing the service.

- Limited wage job opportunity in the rural areas where the Activity is operating in both the private and public employment sectors, especially for those youths with little or low literacy levels.
- In some pastoralist woredas, finding the youth for “after training follow-up service” such as coaching was difficult due to the **mobile nature** of the communities from one village to another in search of water for both humans and animals.
- The **government restructured** which included local government staff turnover and formation of new woredas. As a result, some target kebeles officially became woredas, and this created challenges in regards to the original target numbers assigned per woreda.
- **High expectations of financial and material support.** Despite efforts made by the staff to raise awareness of the objectives of POTENTIAL, some public sector stakeholders continued to ask for more financial and material support.

7. Lessons Learned

The following are some selected lessons from the implementation:

- The introduction of YESCs at kebele and woreda level ensures the accountability and transparency among community groups to systematically mobilize community resources to promote youth employment and bring the desired change. It bridged the gaps between ranges of actors and youth service providers to establish a network and/or sensitive and responsive community practice that is geared towards the needs of the unemployed and underemployed youth in the community. The establishment of the YESGs at the grassroots level enables youth to address their social, economic and institutional barriers that have been hampering youth from attaining their livelihood.
- Regular joint monitoring visits and discussions with PAT to effectively and efficiently realize the anticipated changes and conducting regular joint discussion forum and monitoring field visits are crucial to oversee progress and make course corrections if necessary.
- The more stakeholders participate and are aware of the Activity, the higher their contribution would be in terms of providing support for the youth to transition out of unemployment into viable employment.
- Skills transfer or capacity building initiatives were found to be successful in responding to the existing unemployment and underemployment problem and bringing sustainable socio-economic transformation and ultimately reduce young people’s dependency on their parents.
- Value of social capital for initiating sustainable community development is key to the continued success of the Activity. Exercising the participation of community members, community leaders, parent and the local level administration as we continue to collaborate, learn and adapt the interventions will result in greater impact and successful realization of the intended project goal.
- Before the start of the project, rapid assessment results in the woredas showed that the majority of youth underestimate the available job opportunities around their localities and had poor motivation for work. The assessment further disclosed that poor service provision from local administrators, lack of credit and land services were major bottlenecks for youth to engage in employment opportunities.
- The transferable life skills training components provided for target youth were found to be instrumental in changing youth’s behavior. The trainings enhanced the skills of youth in their interpersonal communication, planning, customer handling, leadership, team work, financial management and entrepreneurial skills. Above all, the trainings enhanced their self-confidence, motivation for work and willingness to take risks and use credit.
- The activity also created strong collaboration among local stakeholders. Kebele stakeholders actively participated in the selection of youth, provided orientations of their service provision, arranged training halls free of charge, and facilitated preconditions for credit services.

- The combined effects of the trainings and the services provided motivated the majority of youth to engage in self-employment rather than searching for wage/salary employment. The majority of the youth did not think wage employment was a viable pathway in their communities until they went through the training and the WBL! Component of the Activity.
- The YESGs assisted youth groups in exercising saving and credit, building social and financial capital, and strengthening their bargaining capacity to access services.

PART TWO

**Institutional Capacity Development Support to Ethiopian
Higher Education Institutions
June 2019 – June 2020**

Introduction

From June 2019- June 2020, Save the Children, in partnership with Brandeis University and EDC, implemented a one year leveraging project through POTENTIAL. This one-year project was named “*Institutional Capacity Development Support to Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions*”. It aimed to develop the capacity of Ethiopian higher education institutions through institutional partnerships, professional development, training, coaching, technical assistance, participatory assessments, and process mapping. Through this sub activity, the delivery of transformative services was designed to produce ready-for-the-labor-market graduates with skills to contribute to economic growth. USAID allocated additional financing to the already functioning Activity to implement this one-year capacity development support.

The subaward built on the existing synergies of POTENTIAL’s Intermediate Result 3: Coordinated delivery, among local institutions, of quality market driven services connecting underserved youth, especially women, to employment and income opportunities. The following are the two expected results of the project:

Expected Result 1: Capacity of Ethiopian higher education institutions is developed to deliver transferable life skills education for their graduates through Career Centers established or improved.

Expected Result 2: Partnerships are developed between higher education institutes, colleges and employers.

Brandeis University was selected for the proper provision of the support in collaboration/partnership with Save the Children (SC). Brandeis has partnered with six Ethiopian Universities (Bahir Dar, Hawassa, Jigjiga, Jimma, Mekelle, Semera) to implement the expected institutional capacity building interventions. These universities are creating partnerships with 26 Technical Vocational Education and Training Colleges (TVET) in their respective geographic locations to strengthen the effort to develop employable youth.

The activities undertaken include the following:

- Implementing a new model of transferable life skills development at five universities that connect “would be graduates” with their outreach program in rural communities, with an emphasis on learning workplace skills;
- Strengthening career guidance and transition into the labor market at six universities and 26 selected TVET institutions;
- Adapting the new model for transferable life skills development to 26 selected TVET institutions; and,
- Increasing collaboration and mutual learning among institutions and agencies implementing and influencing innovative tertiary education for industrialization in Ethiopia.

At the end of the project, the selected six Ethiopian universities and 26 TVET colleges were expected to produce graduates with market relevant transferable life skills and experiences.

Result 1: Capacity of Ethiopian higher education institutions is developed to deliver transferable life skills education for their graduates through Career Centers established or improved

a.) Project Launching

US-based Brandeis University was selected for the proper provision of technical support in partnership with Save the Children (SC). EDC, PADet and REST continued to partner through the provision of technical guidance, support and to oversee overall coordination at regional and federal level. The Activity also selected 6 Ethiopian universities with which to work- Bahir Dar University, Hawassa University, Jigjiga University, Jimma University, Mekelle University and Samara University - and 26 TVETs within the six implementation regions.

The official launching and signing of MOUs was accomplished on September 23, 2019 at Hilton Hotel. The official signing was done between the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MoSHE), Save the Children and USAID. On the occasion, the minister of SHE, Her Excellency Professor Hirut Woldemariam underscored the importance of building capacity of graduate students with the skills needed in the market. Representing the USAID mission in Ethiopia, Sonjai Reynolds-Cooper, Director of USAID's Education and Youth office said, "We believe investing in education is one of the best investments we can all make – as this initiative will support Ethiopia's Journey to self-reliance in line with the country's education system reforms".



Her Excellency the Minister (front with pink jacket) accompanied by the presidents of the universities, signing the agreement with USAID and Save the Children

Brandeis University, along with SC staff conducted rapid assessments at the selected six Ethiopian universities. This included interviews with the Presidents, Vice-Presidents for Academic Affairs, Directors of Deliverology, Career Center Directors, Women's Affairs Directors and other pertinent leaders, faculty, students, staff, alumni, and employers in order to develop a baseline assessment of the current capacity of each Career Center, the relationships between universities and regional employers, and employers' perceptions of university graduates' employability.

b) Rapid Assessment

During the first quarter of the project, Brandeis conducted assessments and site visits to each of the participating six universities to understand their status, readiness for the initial implementation, operation and support for the Career Labs. Upon completion of the assessments, a report outlining the findings was prepared and was shared with universities for feedback. The Brandeis university team, SC staff and the universities representatives have taken part in the assessment process.

A similar assessment was undertaken by the POTENTIAL team on randomly selected 6 TVETs in Amhara, Oromia, Somali and Tigray regions in November 2019 to better understand the status of the TVET's capacity to implement the institutionalization of EDCR and promote the employability skills and career pathways of their students.

c) Action Planning

Action Planning Workshop was undertaken from 23-26, September, 2019 for the six partner universities. Presidents of the selected six universities along with core staff members of the respective institutions participated in the planning workshop. During the workshop, the Brandeis staff with the support of SC team, helped the participants exercise the basics of developing logic models with special consideration of their local context taking in to consideration the underlying assumptions. Ultimately, the logic model they developed will serve both as a guide for the planning and implementation process and for the monitoring and evaluation functions. The draft logic model was shared and discussed among participants and refined based on feedback. As part of the logic model process, the Brandeis and SC team identified key indicators for Career Lab development, implementation, and operation, as well as core short and longer-term program and student outcome measures.

Similarly, the POTENTIAL Addis team conducted a two days' action planning workshop to the 26 partner TVETs from 26-27, November 2019. During the two days' workshop, participants have undertaken the following major tasks:

- They developed a shared understanding of the goals and vision for the capacity development activity and how it strengthens student career development services
- The TVET team, with the support from Brandeis University and POTENTIAL staff, developed a logic model to align the connections between inputs and outcomes in their work.
- The representatives from regional TVET agencies and TVET colleges developed their action plans and shared their ideas to the group for further learning and action.

About 50 participants from 26 TVETs and Regional TVET agencies attended the workshop. All OBT directors and deans from each TVET actively participated and discussed the objectives and short term outcomes of the project. Brandeis was invited by SC to co-facilitate the Action Planning Workshop with the institutions. After the planning workshop each TVET prepared its respective work plan based on the capacity and the resources they have. The work plans have broadly tried to address two major strategies. The first strategy is institutionalizing EDCR in TVETs which mainly involves arrange spaces for EDCR, conducting awareness creation for TVET community and assigning staff for EDCR center. The second strategy focuses on integrating and implementing TLS trainings within the existing TVET curriculum.

d) Transferable Life Skills (TLS) TOT for University and TVET College trainers

As part of the intervention to promote EDCR activities in the partner universities and TVETs, a number of TOT sessions on TLS were organized by Brandeis University and SC team. Earlier, the Brandeis team completed a draft *Transferable Life Skills* (TLS) curriculum. The curriculum was built from *Save the Children's Skills to Succeed*, Education Development Center's *Work Ready Now*, as well as the curricula developed by Brandeis over the course of three decades of work in the field of youth development, education, and youth employment. The draft was reviewed by Save the Children and then pilot tested with the partner universities. Additionally, a field kit (training materials) for the *Transferable Life Skills* was prepared and distributed to participants. The kit consists of the introduction, representative lessons and activities from the remaining three curriculum modules, a training PowerPoint deck, and daily feedback forms for trainers.

After completing the required preparation, the TOTs were offered in four selected sites in Jimma, Bahirdar, Semera and Hawassa in the months of January and February 2020. The number of participants in each of the training sites range from 19-23, making the total 75 (8 F) faculty and staff of the universities through a four-day TOT. The trainings at Jimma, Bahirdar and Semera were organized from January 27-31, 2020 concurrently while the training in Hawassa was delivered in February 26-28, 2020.

The training focused on giving university staff a sense of the full curriculum, the values that frame the content (gender equity, positive youth development, trainers as learners), engaging delivery modalities, and also provided time for reflection and feedback on the content, process, assessment of student learning, and any implementation challenges they foresaw. All participants had at least two opportunities in pairs or teams to plan and deliver a lesson to their peers and to receive feedback on their delivery.

Participants were enthusiastically engaged in the training, were eager to learn new ways to engage students, and appreciated the opportunity to work with their peers and to practice delivering the content themselves. There was robust discussion about student engagement, positive youth development, assessment of student learning, and the challenges of implementation based on training capacity and resources at their universities. Participants drafted plans for pilot implementation of the TLS curriculum with graduating class students at their campuses, identifying the number of students to be trained for this pilot, the number of additional trainers they would need to train on each campus, and specifics about how to successfully implement their plans. These plans have been postponed due to the impact of COVID-19 in the country, particularly in the universities. Participant feedback and written evaluations of these three trainings informed the final revisions of the curriculum. Brandeis University has finalized the revised TLS manual and was disseminated to the six universities.



Photo: TOT on TLS for university instructors and EDCR heads, Bahirdar-Amhara region

Similarly, 53 trainers from twenty-five TVET colleges were selected to take part in the ToT on TLS for six days at Debrezeit. The ToT was jointly organized by SCI and EDC. At the end of the TOT, individual TVETs have prepared action plan to cascaded the ToT in their respective colleges. Accordingly, the TVETs in Amhara have trained 40 (5F) instructors, while the TVETs in Tigray have trained 285 (25F). The trainings were provided for four consecutive days in each of the respective regional training venues. The opportunity has helped to improve the professional skills of participants and hence to produce adequate resource personnel in each of the partner TVET colleges. Trainees were happy both with the content of the training and methodology of facilitation. The participants believed the training would be a great input to enhance the employability of their graduating class students. On post training discussion, participants confirmed that they were able to testify the changes they have attained in terms of giving due attention to the importance of TLS.

The training was provided as a classroom lecture using a PowerPoint presentation, along with different interactive adult training methods, such as group work and role plays. Participants were given hard copies of all training manuals.



Photo: TLS training session at Gewane TVET, Afar region

All partner Universities and TVET Colleges have planned to provide TLS training for their graduating class students. However, only a few of them have managed to implement the training according to their plan because of the COVID-19 outbreak. Hence, in Tigray and Amhara there were 1,586 and 125 graduating students respectively who have benefited from the transferable life skills training (see the gender breakdown in the table below). It was reported that TVET students found the training very useful in its content and appreciated the facilitation approach. They believed that it will be helpful in their pursuit for employment opportunities.

On the other hand, those TVETs who were unable to implement the training because of the pandemic are exploring the possibilities to conduct the training in other means, such as sharing video recordings using virtual communication to reach graduate students. Students have shown great interest in participating in the training. For instance, in Afar region, two TVET Colleges have registered a total of 616 students for the planned TLS training.

The following table shows the participation of TVET graduating students on TLS training by region and sex:

Region	Number of Training participants		
	Male	Female	Total
Tigray	788	798	1586
Amhara	86	39	125
Total	874	837	1711

e) Develop and Pilot Online Management Training Course for Career Development Center Teams

The pilot of the *Education Works: Career Development Center Management Course* for the staff and managers of campus-based Career Development Centers was launched online in early March 2020. This eight-module course has opportunities for participants to review best practices; reflect on their campus career development center capacity, infrastructure, student and employer engagement, and other practices; complete performance tasks to support their own planning; and get feedback from their coaches at Brandeis University. Within each lesson are specific tools and resources related to the topic that can be downloaded for use.

The six Presidents were invited to nominate two participants each from their universities to participate in the pilot course. The nominated participants completed a self-assessment of their backgrounds and experiences, learning goals, and their strengths as well as areas for growth. Coaches were in weekly communication with participants, answering questions, providing clarification, and pushing the participants' thinking through ongoing dialogue about their performance task responses.

The engagement and progress in the course were remarkable given that a few days after the course was launched, Ethiopian universities were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in faculty and staff working from home, where several had limited access to internet connectivity. Despite this major disruption, 9 of the 11 registrants (one registrant did not start the course) finished all eight lessons and received a *Certificate of Course Completion* from Brandeis University.

f) Awareness raising

Raising the awareness of the management, the staff and the students' community of the TVET colleges and universities was a prerequisite for smooth program implementation. To this end, awareness raising workshops have been planned and hence undertaken in the partner TVETs. Such workshops were conducted in eight TVETs in SNNP and Afar regions so far. A total of 543(151 F) participants including TVETs senior managers, TVET instructors, regional TVET agency staff, and student representatives have attended the workshops. In the workshops, presentations were made by POTENTIAL regional offices regarding the objective and the full package of EDCR services. Following the presentations, fruitful discussions were held among participants, questions were raised and responses were forwarded by SC representatives

g) Institutionalize EDCR in partner Universities and TVETs

While most universities and TVETs have career counselling, advising, trainings, and job fairs as a set of program offerings, the number of students who benefit from a fully developed EDCR strategy is small as a percentage of the total number of students that Ethiopian universities are graduating. Hence, to get to scale within a university, training, learning and program offerings would need to be developed which would have downstream implications for numbers of staff and trainers available to engage with students, effective use of technology for virtual outreach and trainings, and for the infrastructure necessary to engage significantly larger numbers of students each year.

The Career Development Center Directors and staff have benefited from ongoing peer sharing, targeted trainings on topics such as building a measurement and evaluation framework and thinking about the impact of their work, building consistent effective employer engagement, and leveraging resources for the

Centers. Building out their staff teams with a focus on necessary competencies would build capacity and prepare the Centers to offer a wider range of programming. The experience levels of Center Directors are varied and a community of practice would help them strengthen their capacity.

During the pilot period all six universities and partner TVETs designated space and established or enhanced their Career Development Centers. While early visits showed that some of them needed additional infrastructure and technology resources, all the partner TVETs and universities have received infrastructure support from POTENTIAL and other development donors. Although they had limited prior experience on EDCR services, the TVET colleges have started taking plausible actions towards establishing EDCR centers; they have assigned staffs who run the centers and also allocated basic furniture and equipment for the units. However, our monitoring assessment confirmed that they are encountering challenge in terms of officially including the EDCR units in their structure, which in turn limits their effort to allocate budget and implement other relevant tasks.

The TVETs explained it is the mandate of the regional TVET agencies. POTENTIAL regional offices have made some efforts to discuss the issue with the representative of the agencies during monthly review meetings. Following this, the agencies along with representatives from their respective TVETs, have formed committees to expedite organizational structure modification issues. However, it requires further discussion with the management of the regional agencies as well as relevant federal level bureaus.

All the anticipated EDCRs will remain under the deliverology department of the colleges. The assessment confirmed that much is left in terms of strengthening the EDCR with the right professional manpower such as trained psychosocial counselors and availing relevant furniture and equipment for the centers, as this also will be determined after resolving organizational structure issues. During the monitoring exercise, the team has discussed the visions, missions, core values and activities of the ideal EDCR center with regional TVET agencies and representatives the TVET colleges.

In addition to the structure issues discussed above, the country office team has prepared a comprehensive guide for the TVET college EDCR units to help strengthen and standardize the EDCR services across all the partner TVETs and support the students in their quest for employment. Additionally, discussion is ongoing between the TVET colleges and the regional TVET agencies to design career center infrastructure. These may include, developing standard operational procedures, structural relation of EDCR units with other departments and faculties of the colleges, and preparing job descriptions and career structure for the staff.

Staffing

All the partner TVETs have assigned full time staff to coordinate the EDCR related activities on a permanent basis. These assigned staff were provided with orientation training on the concept and management of EDCR services.

Facility

All the partner TVETs have received material support from POTENTIAL in terms of office furniture and equipment such as desktop computers and accessories, tables, chairs etc. This is done based on the assessment made by ROs staff to know about the colleges readiness to start EDCR service.

h) Coaching and Mentoring

A training workshop on coaching was organized for TVET instructors' in two different sessions during

the first and second weeks of February 2020 for two days each. The training was held in Addis Ababa, Jupiter Hotel 2020. 29 (1 F) participants from all partner TVETs attended the workshop. Following the workshop, the trained instructors will cascade the training and follow on the implementation of coaching in their respective colleges. After attending the training, participants have started to identify and begin the process of recruiting volunteer community-based mentors and later linking them with graduating students. They are also expected to assist department representatives to prepare their own separate coaching plan to provide coaching support for students in their respective departments.

i) Monitoring and evaluation

In addition to the rapid assessments that helped to collect baseline information in partner universities and TVETs, routine monitoring visits were conducted on a monthly basis to follow progresses, track changes and identify gaps. The monitoring visits were instrumental in improving the program quality on a continuous basis. The Brandeis team in coordination with POTENTIAL regional office team has conducted a final evaluation on the six partner universities. The primary evaluation research question was to what extent were student employability development and career readiness (EDCR) practices and policies institutionalized at the six participating universities over the pilot period. Due to the extenuating circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the evaluation data collected was not as robust as it would have been had the pandemic not occurred. For the same reason the universities did not have the opportunity to fully implement as much of their action plans as they intended. However, there are still valuable lessons to be learned and observations to be made from the pre-COVID evaluation activities and from the M&E data collected.

Result 2: Partnerships are developed between higher education institutes, colleges and employers

a) Partnership and coalition with employers and stakeholders

All the partner universities have planned to establish partnerships with private sector employers and public sector entities. Remarkable effort was started in the past quarters. However, the breakout of COVID 19 have forced them to reconsider their plan. Hence, most of these activities which require people gathering were postponed until such time that the Ministry of Health lifts the restriction and campuses are reopened again. Bahirdar University was lucky to conduct its first workshop earlier; it invited the TVET agency, heads of partner TVETs in the region, and potential employers and representative of concerned sectoral government offices. The main purpose of this partnership development workshop was to create ongoing and sustainable working relationships between TVETs, employers, and other sectors (MFIs, education office, private partners and other youth service providers).

A total of 33 (6 F) participants representing different sectors have attended the workshop and discussed possible options for creating employment opportunities for graduates of the university as well as the TVETs. During the workshop, an MoU was signed with potential employers and stakeholders.

Similarly, 13 TVET Colleges in Afar, Amhara, SNNP, Somali and Tigray regions organized the employers and stakeholders' coalition meetings in March 2020 in their respective locations. The RO staff have observed the facilitation of the coalition meetings in some of the selected sites as much as their time allows. During the employer/ stakeholder coalition meetings in the five regions, a total of 346 (57 F) participants representing private and public firms have attended the forums.

On the occasions, Outcome Based Training (OBT) directors and deans of the TVETs, regional TVET agencies, heads of TVETs have presented the need to have such a forum. The heads of the TVETs introduced the agendas of the meetings. The agendas of the meetings focused on the establishment of the coalition whereby both the TVETs and employers can support each other's interest and hence promote the employability of graduating students of the TVET colleges. The OBT directors have presented the challenges they are facing in terms of linking the students with potential employers and requested the support from both private and public sector employers. They also discussed issues related to apprenticeship and other forms of work-based learning activities. During the occasions, MOUs were signed with volunteer public and private entities. Although all partner TVETs have planned to undertake the coalition meeting in their respective location, some have not been able to yet due to movement restrictions and closures following the COVID-19 outbreak.

Challenges and Mitigation Actions

The spread of COVID-19 has affected educational systems in the country leading to total closures of schools, universities and TVET colleges, undermining the implementation and achievements of the project. Some planned activities such as Universities-Employers partnership, TVET-EDCR awareness raising workshops, TVET- employer- stakeholder coalition meetings, TLS trainings and other related activities couldn't be implemented at full scale following the restrictions of movements and gatherings due to the pandemic. Although there are possibilities to continue implementing the planned activities through virtual means, availing the tools and connectivity will remain a challenge. Teachers, administrators and students' familiarity with the tools and processes are also issues of concern.

Providing resource to work at home can now be done using different technological options. But it requires availability of resources beyond the mandate and capacity of the project. Some students have access to smart phone devices and optimizing accessible solutions. However, most cannot afford to pay for the content to be downloaded which can be sent to them from the EDCR centers of the TVETs.

Mitigation plan

The ROs of POTENTIAL assisted the TVETs to revise their original action plan. Hence, the TVETs have prepared their Business Continuity Plan taking in to consideration the current COVID-19 crisis. CO has procured and availed twenty-six 4G Huawei network device and distributed to the partner TVETs to support their internet connectivity and encourage them to strive to continue finalizing the planned activities. The Activity has also supported the TVETs with desktop computers and accessories along with office furniture to equip the EDCR centers.

Sustainability

A. Invest in Leadership and Collective Impact for Aligned Systems Change and Sustainability

Leadership matters in any initiative and it is essential to build and nurture it at every level, especially with skilling up in the area of managing complex change.

i). Continue the Presidents Compact

i. Strengthen university student employability development and career readiness commitment and action

nationally and at the university level

- ii. Continue development of national policy and standards and guidelines
- iii. Expand Compact membership in concert with the plan for scaling

Compact members would be valuable partners in co-design scaling of student employability development and career readiness to all Ethiopian universities – invite Presidents to join as their universities become engaged in the scaling work. Similarly, Compact members could be valuable mentors to new cohorts of universities launching student employability development and career readiness programming

ii) Continue with the Higher Education Collective Impact (MoSHE, JCC, Save/Brandeis, GIZ, Dereja.com, and other higher education donors) to amplify the need for collaboration, wise use of resources, and increase impact

- Continue to clarify partners' roles and activities
- Co-develop a logic model with feasible short- and long-term outcomes
- Move to deeper planning and coordination of efforts (“what can we do together that we can't do alone?”)
- Annually assess progress

iii) Invest in a student employability development and career readiness *leadership pipeline*.

Faculty or staff leading Career Development Centers need content-specific training (see B). Center directors must be skilled managers and leaders to navigate the responsibilities of a critical university-wide initiative. In addition to typical managerial competencies, they, too, need the 21st Century ability to understand and know how to manage complex change.

B. Invest in Training, Professional Development, and Curriculum Refinement and Expansion – Build Out the Education Works Tool Kit

Support ***ongoing, multi-year, intensive TLS training, coaching and communities of practice*** for university faculty and instructors:

- Offer training and ongoing development to each college/institute/department along with best practices in student engagement
- Develop curriculum components aligned to industry standards for specific sectors
- Invest in expanding TLS curriculum and resources to include robust entrepreneurship programs that include courses on all aspects of business development but also continues for a year post-graduation and provides mentoring and access to capital for participants in the program

C. Design and Phase in the Establishment of National Infrastructure to Support and Scale Student Employability Development and Career Readiness

Grounded in a shared vision and theory of change, oversee and support high quality, sustainable student employability development and career readiness development and programming in all 46 Ethiopian universities. This would include responsibility for national quality standards; TLS, career development center management and related curricula and resource development, testing and revisions; professional development training, coaching, communities of practice, and certification; state-of-the-art pedagogy; programming and opportunities for women and people with disabilities; employer engagement; monitoring, evaluation, and continuous improvement; and research.

- With university leadership and other governmental entities, set feasible targets in line with the development of the overall system and university capacity for graduating students prepared for

the workforce.

- Support ongoing, multi-year, intensive training and coaching for university faculty and instructors to upgrade their pedagogy and the curriculum, including offering training and support to each college/institute/department in best practices in student engagement.
- Develop and implement a certification process for both Career Development Professionals and Centers to professionalize, build capacity, and raise the bar on career development center operations and quality.
- Work with employers to develop curriculum upgrades aligned with industry standards by sector.
- Incentivize universities to develop a base level of technology infrastructure to support student employability development and career readiness and expect all students graduating from universities to have been exposed to basic technology coursework.
- Create a scaling plan that has clear benchmarks for core capacities and readiness indicators for first round participants and a tiered plan for subsequent rounds of participants. In this way, first round participants have ongoing goals towards which they need to work while mentoring newer entrants into the initiative.

D. Develop and Implement a Higher Education-Employer Co-Investment Strategy

- Create a national higher education employer advisory council.
- Pilot the development and implementation of employability certificates with a few major employer partners and one university (in one region) to see how this might be strengthened and scaled across multiple regions.
- Create and evaluate a pilot focused on creating and facilitating employer advisory councils at each university charged with developing and implementing co-investment plans.

E. Establish State-of-the-Art Career Development Center Facilities with Furnishings and Equipment to Support Programming

- Assess facility, technological, tools, and other resource needs of students and employers across disciplines and campuses
- Create and implement investment plans with employers and donors

Create student- and women-friendly, accessible space in comfortable campus locations

Lessons Learned

Due to the extenuating circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, some of the planned activities would have been in a much better quality had the pandemic not occurred; for the same reason the universities did not have the opportunity to fully implement as much of their action plans as they intended. However, there are still valuable lessons to be learned and observations to be made from our pre-COVID evaluation activities and from the data our SC partners were able to collect. Below are the major ones:

1. There was widespread, though not universal, recognition among leaders, faculty, and staff of the higher institutions about the importance of focusing on student employability development and career readiness as part of realizing higher education's mission as an economic engine for Ethiopia.
2. There is a critical mass of willing and able colleagues at each of the universities and TVETs that are ready to engage in this transformational work.

3. The work, going forward, requires aligning systems and processes within the higher institutes so that all departments and offices see student employability and career readiness as a shared goal.
4. Knowledge is needed about how to manage large-scale, complex change projects so that efforts build on each other and ensure stakeholder ownership and sustainability.
5. Meaningful student engagement strategies remain a critical developmental goal.
6. As the institutionalization of student employability development and career readiness is brought to scale with other universities and TVETs, cohort models and peer learning opportunities will help institutions succeed in prioritizing and implementing these efforts.
7. The more the university-TVET relationships are strengthened and expanded, the more impact higher education will be able to have in their regions and across the country.
8. While there are a few examples of deeper relationships, employer engagement is at an early stage of development.
9. All of the universities and TVETs are at the beginning phase of developing and implementing strategic evaluation and monitoring plans.