



USAID/GHANA YOUTH ASSESSMENT

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USAID/GHANA YOUTH ASSESSMENT REPORT

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BECE	Basic Education Certificate Examination
CAMA	CAMFED Association
CAMFED	Campaign for Female Education
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CDD	Center for Democratic Development
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DO	Development Objective
DP	Development Partner
ENGINE	Enhancing Growth in New Enterprise Programme
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoG	Government of Ghana
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
IRB	Institutional Review Board
KII	Key Informant Interview
LEFY	Livelihood Enhancement for Youth
MASLOC	Microfinance and Small Loans Centre
MoFA	Ministry of Food and Agriculture
MSLC	Middle School Leaving Certificate
NABCO	Nation Builder Corp
NEIP	National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NORC	NORC at the University of Chicago
NSEZ	Northern Savannah Ecological Zone
NSS	National Service Scheme
NVTI	National Vocational Training Institute
NYA	National Youth Authority
OICG	Opportunities Industrialization Centre Ghana
PGD	Peer Group Discussion

PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
SBCC	Social and Behavioral Change Communication
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
SOW	Statement of Work
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations Human Rights Commission on Refugees
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSLA	Village and Savings Loan Association
YALI	Young African Leaders Initiative
YIAP	Youth in Agriculture Programme
YIEDIE	Youth-Inclusive Entrepreneurial Development Initiative for Employment
YOLO	You Only Live Once

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“There is a great awakening among the Ghanaian youth about getting themselves involved in civic activities because they feel [that] for long they have been exploited by the political leaders. So now they are engaged in the activities of accountability.”—Assessment Youth Researcher

USAID/Ghana recognizes the importance of actively engaging young people to achieve Ghana’s long-term goal of being a self-reliant, prosperous, and stable democratic country, and to avert threats and challenges to progress. Some of these challenges include unemployment, poverty, gender inequality, conflict, and climate change, all of which significantly affect the outcomes of young Ghanaians. For this reason, USAID/Ghana has commissioned a rapid youth assessment through the YouthPower2: Learning and Evaluation (YP2LE) activity, to provide a comprehensive snapshot of the youth landscape, including salient challenges, needs, opportunities, and resources in Ghana. This assessment is designed to inform the implementation of the USAID/Ghana 2020-2025 Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) by providing recommendations for integrating and engaging youth. It is also intended to be a useful resource for Ghanaian stakeholders and international development partners.

Findings: DOI. Broad-Based Economic Growth Accelerated and Sustained

Employment

- The National Service Scheme (NSS) and the Nation Builders Corps (NABCO), two government-sponsored youth employment programs, reach large numbers of tertiary graduates with entry-level job experience. However, secondary-level high school dropouts and graduates do not have access to these programs.
- Both youth and adult stakeholders urgently call for increasing labor market-relevant skills development in both general education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) so that when youth leave the education system, they are better prepared to find employment or create their own self-employment.
- Perceptions of corruption in the labor market appear prevalent; even well-connected youth cannot access jobs without “paying for them.”

Entrepreneurship

- Youth are gravitating to self-employment because of lack of access to jobs, either due to paucity of jobs or inaccessibility due to corruption in the labor market.
- Some Ghanaian youth participate, at least to some degree, in village savings and loans associations (VSLA) to expand their access to finance for livelihoods. One spill-over effect appears to be higher capacity and motivation to engage in civic issues.
- Universities are experimenting with entrepreneurship incubators to help graduates launch businesses.

Agriculture

- Major constraints affecting all Ghanaian farmers include lack of income to join saving associations, the high costs of bank loans and agricultural inputs, lack of access to irrigation systems amidst increasingly drier climate conditions, and lack of information about market opportunities. Young farmers or agri-business operators are affected to an even greater extent.
- Youth are engaged in agriculture as service providers, extension agents, and researchers, as well as smallholders, depending on age, education level, and geographic region. Consistency of income is a key challenge associated with deployment of youth as service providers and agents.

Health

- Youth identified key health-related issues as a concern to themselves and their peers, including child and early forced marriage, domestic violence, teen pregnancy, and maternal and child health. Addressing these health issues is essential for youths' ability to stay in school, thrive, and pursue future aspirations, and yet many face the hurdle of an information gap around sexuality and reproductive health.
- Many school-aged girls who drop out do so because of pregnancy. The use of contraception is a hot-button issue for some faith leaders.

DOI Recommendations

- 1) **Support youth employment and livelihoods development, especially for secondary-school completers.** While simultaneously encouraging and supporting students to remain in school through Senior High School, USAID/Ghana should expand school-to-work transition opportunities that resemble the National Service Scheme and NABCO but that are accessible to high school graduates. In partnership with the private sector, these experiences could provide critical workforce experience and be combined with vocational training short-courses and entrepreneurship pathways.
- 2) **Enhance the ability of Ghanaian education systems to prepare youth for the demands of the labor market.** Create partnership mechanisms between general education and TVET institutions and businesses (through industry associations) to enable educators and employers to collaborate on reforming curriculum and pedagogy that better prepares youth for the world of work. Skills needed by the labor market include foundational (literacy/numeracy), technical and soft skills.
- 3) Incentivize and support secondary schools and universities to **nurture youth-led innovation through initiatives that foreground hands-on learning and experimentation.** For example, select schools and universities could pilot idea labs, maker spaces, and business plan and science competitions on campus, in partnership with enterprises, think tanks, and innovative NGOs.
- 4) Mainstream a more **precise and robust understanding of soft skills in key youth-serving institutions** with which USAID partners to better prepare youth for the 21st century labor market and citizenship, and to improve their overall well-being. This work includes behavior change interventions for trainers, teachers and professors, administrators, parents, employers, healthcare providers, and others to improve soft skills development for youth.
- 5) **Strengthen the entrepreneurship eco-system, including for agriculture** in ways that are youth-friendly and that embrace the scale of the youth unemployment crisis. Access to a variety of supports and resources are needed for youth to succeed in creating and sustaining their own businesses. These supports include business and targeted technical training, mentorship, market analysis and linkages, financial services, and material inputs/assets. Value chains selected for their interest and accessibility to youth entrepreneurs, as well as higher education entities, can be anchors for this eco-system strengthening.
- 6) **Facilitate the flow of information and technology** among value chain actors including youth as actors for co-creation, uptake, and application of technological advances for improving livelihoods. USAID's Feed the Future Innovation Labs and other research and development efforts test low-cost, labor-saving technologies, such as fish smokers or maize de-huskers, for female youth involved in crop production and "beyond production" (e.g., processing, storage, and sale of agricultural harvests and fisheries).

7) **Scale up innovative sexual and reproductive health interventions** created by (or with) the Ghana Health Service such as a counseling app and Youth Corners. Scale also includes expanding health innovations, such as the USAID-funded “You Only Live Once” (YOLO) videos, to other domains of young people’s lives such as civic engagement and livelihoods.

8) As the COVID-19 pandemic causes programming around the world to shift to more blended formats, there are **promising opportunities to complement virtual youth outreach with in-person discussion groups**. In-person formats are especially important for creating a safe space for youth discussion of difficult and taboo issues such as sexuality, addiction, mental health, and radicalization.

9) **Mainstream a deeper understanding of adolescent health across the health workforce**, including community health workers and school nurses, in support of the Ghana Health Service. Adolescents and young adults have unique health needs and preferences in accessing health services; these differences from other population cohorts require expertise and attention.

Findings: DO2. Quality Services Delivered with Increased Accountability

Civic Engagement and Local Governance

- Livelihood development is an important building block for dynamic civic engagement.
- Youth parliaments sponsored by the National Youth Authority (NYA) in districts provide critical platforms to increase youth civic engagement, allowing them to develop the leadership skills and confidence to demand quality services from local government. Youth learn and acquire valuable soft skills while engaging in youth parliaments and youth groups, including critical thinking, problem-solving, negotiation, teamwork, and leadership. Acquisition of these skills has been through a “learning-by-doing” process.
- The generation and use of real-time data on access and quality of education, health, and financial services is a major challenge to development and equity in the country.

Access to Services: Education and Training

- The Government of Ghana’s (GoG) Free Senior High School initiative has enabled many young people to persist and complete their high school education. Yet access to TVET is too limited to allow for the technical training needs required by Ghana’s economy.
- Educators and NGOs are struggling to meet the digital needs of youth today.
- Youth highlighted that the modified school calendar and long gaps in the school year hampered student motivation to remain enrolled. This leads to students from poorer households seeking jobs during off-periods and eventually dropping out of school.
- Youth groups also play an important role in advocating for and providing various kinds of education support including motivating their peers, managing district libraries, campaigning for library funds, and organizing stakeholder dialogues to brainstorm ways to improve school performance.
- Education is too theory-oriented and must be reformed to better foster the skills that youth need for the current job market.

DO2 Recommendations

1) **Increase support to local governance actors including District Assemblies, NGOs, the media, and community groups, to engage youth as decision-makers, co-creators, and evaluators** of new programs, policies, and regulations targeting their communities. Youth should be involved in all aspects of the design stages of interventions targeted for their communities. Successful engagement of youth must include support and training for adult leaders to be able to productively

partner with youth. Engaging youth *from the very beginning* is important for setting expectations of both youth and adults.

2) Increase outreach to youth to engage in district and regional policy and program formation, implementation, and evaluation. Youth can be best reached, perhaps simultaneously, through at least three different vehicles: the 1) NYA-led Youth Parliaments; 2) independent youth-led groups and associations (many of which are unregistered); and 3) youth networks that are registered as and/or are off-shoots of NGOs/CSOs.

3) Modalities for engagement of youth should be innovative and forward-facing, and to the degree possible, should be peer-to-peer, making use of the kinds of communication they favor and have access to, including drama/theater, video, visual arts, and social media.

4) Step up youth's capacity to hold governance actors accountable in a meaningful way by ensuring they have the necessary skills and learning experiences. These skills include research strategy; data collection, monitoring and analysis; leadership; communication; and policy formation and advocacy. Journalism is one possible pathway: by increasing youth interaction and collaboration with the media (radio, print, etc.) youth gain critical skills and feel empowered to hold authorities accountable. Geospatial/community mapping and blogging are other youth-friendly modalities.

5) Take care not to exacerbate the politicization of the youth field and break the cycle of election season politicization. Engagement with youth groups requires due diligence to the surrounding politics of grievance and reward. USAID should help build mechanisms for pro-social youth inclusion, voice, capacity-building, and advocacy that operate year-round, not just at election time.

6) Support student government, civic education, and meaningful youth participation in education reform. Education reform can be strengthened through the power of youth mobilization; youth insights into educational challenges are critical and unique because they “live it.” Engagement of youth in education reform also builds the next generation of active citizens. Opportunities for this work exist through after-school programs, weekend and summer camps, extracurricular clubs (e.g., student journalism), and student government.

Findings: DO3. Sustainable Development Accelerated in Northern Ghana

Services for Youth in Northern Ghana

- Disparities that disproportionately affect youth in the north include lack of access to employment, entrepreneurship opportunities, education, and reproductive rights and health care. This reality is not lost on young people in the north.
- Lack of access to information about opportunities for skills development and livelihoods likely contributes to faltering progress in sustainable development in the north.

Youth Safety and Security

- Youth safety and security in northern Ghana is a mixed situation. At times youth were subject to police brutality and northern migrants to the south are exposed to risk when they take on informal sector work. Yet, youth groups are also playing a constructive role in security and safety, such as building positive working relationships with local police forces by volunteering to support the police in preventing crime.
- Youth parliaments were described as providing an excellent platform for youth to express their grievances, debate key issues and resolve community conflict, including among youth.

Youth Engagement in Northern Ghana

- The stakes are high for meaningful youth engagement in northern Ghana. Social, political, and economic inequities can breed grievance which can, in turn, be mobilized by malignant actors leading to violent extremism and instability. On the other hand, youth engagement is a powerful engine for change. Northern youth groups, like their counterparts around the country, have successfully created promising advocacy campaigns (such as for peaceful elections and HIV awareness) and development activities.
- Questions around deprivation, grievance, and motivation (often called “apathy”) in the north are complex and illusive. Still, PGD participants felt that youth who were out-of-school were most at risk, whether in rural or urban areas.

DO3 Recommendations

1) **Enhance the capacity of broad-based groups** such as the [Northern Youth Network](#) to identify youth concerns and to mobilize youth for development activities. Due to the risk of alienation, isolation, and grievance in the northern region, USAID should take particular care to ensure youth voice and inclusion in all development activities in the region, building on existing local youth groups and networks that exist. Increasing the perception of youth as an opportunity worthy of investment as opposed to a risk to suppress is an important starting point for engaging with youth and their communities.

2) **Leverage community radio, mobile messaging, and community-based networks** to disseminate information to youth about existing programs and opportunities. There is a strong possibility that youth in northern Ghana experience alienation in part because they lack access to information.

3) **Invest in improving livelihoods for youth in northern Ghana in agriculture and the off-farm rural service sector.** For example, opportunities may exist in poultry-raising, irrigated horticulture, and cash crops. Recommendations in DOI (workforce development, entrepreneurship, access to business start-up capital, and agricultural livelihoods and innovation) are all relevant for northern Ghana.

4) **Engage youth in building peaceful communities across a range of in-school and community-based contexts and modalities.** Promote the substantive inclusion of youth in peacebuilding and conflict-sensitive development programming to mitigate youth exclusion and disengagement. Intervention opportunities include promoting youth peace clubs work to reduce the appeal of violence; media literacy education to reduce the spread of hoaxes and inflammatory speech; and development of early warning systems that engage youth in detecting signs of recruitment to violent extremism ideologies and networks in their communities.

5) **Provide economic pathways to vulnerable youth in the north** as an alternative to participating in violence for material gain through apprenticeships and vocational and entrepreneurship support. It may be necessary to develop a risk differentiation assessment tool – such as the [Intrinsic, Contextual and Structural Analytical Framework for Vulnerability](#) framework (ICS) – adapted for the Ghanaian context to identify youth in the most vulnerable situations.

Cross-cutting Recommendations

1) **Create Mission-wide mechanisms that facilitate linkage of active Ghanaian youth groups and networks** to USAID/Ghana staff and USAID-funded implementing partners (and vice-versa). USAID staff and IPs would benefit from hearing directly from youth representatives about challenges

they face and development initiatives they are leading so that partnerships and synergies could be identified and leveraged.

2) **Analyze the Mission's youth portfolio in terms of strategic investments along various points in the youth age span.** The youth age span of 15-35 years old is wide, with various technical sectors tending to focus on different segments of this span. Age span analysis would inform and help coordinate strategic decisions on USAID/Ghana investments in youth.

3) **Areas for further USAID/Ghana learning and research** include workforce development; youth entrepreneurship; the needs and opportunities of youth in northern Ghana; mental health; nutrition; and migration.

I. INTRODUCTION

“There is a great awakening among the Ghanaian youth about getting themselves involved in civic activities because they feel [that] for long they have been exploited by the political leaders. So now they are engaged in the activities of accountability.”—Assessment Youth Researcher

I.1 Purpose

In alignment with USAID’s *Youth in Development Policy* (2012), USAID/Ghana recognizes the importance of actively engaging young people to achieve Ghana’s long-term goal of being a self-reliant, prosperous, and stable democratic country, and to avert threats and challenges to progress. Some of these challenges include unemployment, poverty, gender inequality, conflict, and climate change, all of which significantly affect the outcomes of young Ghanaians. For this reason, USAID/Ghana requested YouthPower2: Learning and Evaluation (YP2LE) conduct a rapid youth assessment to provide a comprehensive snapshot of the youth landscape, including salient challenges, needs, opportunities, and resources in Ghana. This assessment is designed to inform the implementation of the USAID/Ghana 2020-2025 Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS), by providing nuance to the behavior profiles that support the CDCS and recommendations toward integrating youth into current and anticipated activities. The assessment is also intended to be a useful resource for Ghanaian stakeholders and international development partners focused on improving youth outcomes and engaging young people in a wide range of sustainable development priorities.

I.2 Methodology

“[The assessment] was an overwhelming experience. We are all experiencing how COVID is changing the world of work...especially conducting interviews via virtual platform. It’s a new experience, despite the challenges. But we were resilient in it and we were able to pull through it and get...information that is sufficient.”—Assessment Youth Researcher

Assessment questions

This assessment addresses the following overarching questions. (Detailed questions can be found in Annex A.) Questions #3-5 relate to the relevance of youth to meeting the Development Objectives (DO) found in the USAID/Ghana CDCS, 2020-2025: DO1 Broad-Based Economic Growth Accelerated and Sustained; DO2 Quality Services Delivered with Increased Accountability; and DO3 Sustainable Development Accelerated in Northern Ghana.

1. What is the overall status/situation of youth in Ghana (e.g., population size, education, health, employment, civic engagement, social support)?
2. What strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement and growth exist currently in the Ghanaian youth sector towards enabling all youth to become healthy, productive adult citizens?
3. What strategy and programming considerations should USAID/Ghana use to integrate youth in accelerating and sustaining broad-based economic growth (DO1)?
4. What strategy and programming considerations should USAID/Ghana use to integrate youth in the delivery of accountable quality services (DO2)?

5. What strategy and programming considerations should USAID/Ghana use to integrate youth in the delivery of accelerated sustainable development in northern Ghana (DO3)? What are specific considerations, challenges, and opportunities affecting youth living in northern Ghana?

Frameworks

This assessment is guided by the USAID Think Big behavioral approach which defines and targets behaviors of key actors (e.g., government, private sector, and citizens) required to achieve a development goal. The specific behaviors that the Assessment team identified as most relevant to youth-focused development objectives are noted in Annex B. The assessment is equally informed by the USAID Positive Youth Development (PYD) Framework which consists of the following dimensions:

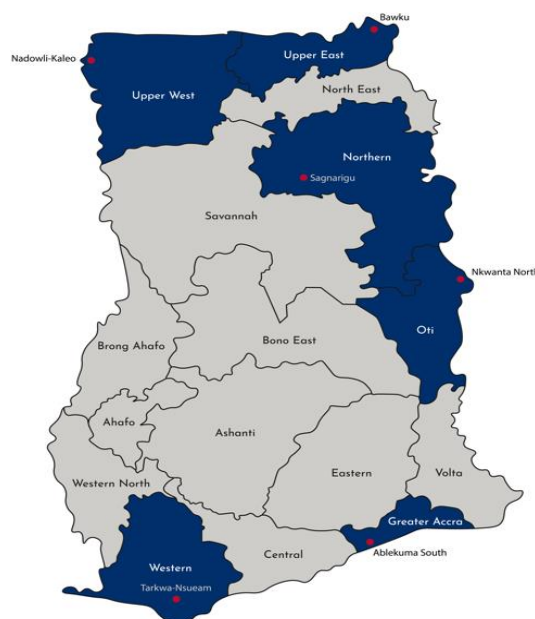
- **Assets:** Youth have the necessary resources, skills, and competencies to achieve desired outcomes.
- **Agency:** Youth perceive and can employ their assets and aspirations to influence their own decisions about their lives and set their own goals, as well as to act on those decisions to achieve desired outcomes.
- **Contribution:** Youth are engaged as a source of change for their own positive development and for that of their communities.
- **Enabling Environment:** Youth are surrounded by an environment that develops and supports their assets, agency, and access to services and opportunities, and that strengthens their ability to avoid risks and stay safe, secure, protected, and live without fear of violence or retribution.

The PYD framework informs not only the content of the assessment but also the participatory methodology that actively engaged young people in dialogue, data collection and analysis. (More detail on PYD can be found in Annex C.)

Data collection and analysis methods

The assessment is a cross-sectoral qualitative study incorporating secondary quantitative data sources. It is comprised of a desk review, USAID Mission consultations, key informant interviews, and virtual fieldwork with trained youth researchers leading dialogues with youth between the ages of 18-35 in six districts across Ghana. The six districts (Ablekuma South, Bawku, Nadowli-Kaleo, Nkwanta North, Sagnarigu, and Tarkwa-Nsueam) represent a range of geographic areas in Ghana (Greater Accra, Upper East, Upper West, Oti, Northern, and Western Regions) and were selected by USAID/Ghana based on the priorities of its Country Strategy (CDCS). (See map below.) This assessment, conducted from February-June 2021, was conducted entirely virtually to ensure safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Map I: Assessment districts and geographic areas



The six districts (Ablekuma South, Bawku, Nadowli-Kaleo, Nkwanta North, Sagnarigu, and Tarkwa-Nsuaem) represent a range of geographic areas in Ghana (Greater Accra, Upper East, Upper West, Oti, Northern, and Western Regions).

Taking an asset-based approach, the desk review provides contextual data on the challenges faced by youth, as well as identifying “bright spots,” that is, areas of success that may be considered for scaling efforts. Although the fieldwork targeted youth ages 18-35, the desk review is somewhat broader including data on youth from young adolescence through young adulthood, with emphasis on those ages 15-35. It involved the review of more than 60 youth-related studies, project reports, databases, and policies published within the last 10 years. The assessment team grouped these reports into four broad categories: employment and workforce development, education, health, and governance and security, and conducted a rapid content analysis of key trends, data points, and findings related to youth outcomes in Ghana. Consultations with technical teams within USAID/Ghana contributed to the Assessment team’s understanding of strategic priorities.

The primary data sources are key informant interviews (KIIs) and Peer Group Discussions (PGDs), conducted with the use of pilot-tested demographic intake forms and interview protocols (see Annex D). The team conducted 19 key informant interviews with national and regional public and private sector leaders engaged in diverse dimensions of youth development programming and policy. The key informants represented a wide range of stakeholders including universities, entrepreneurs, national and district government, and NGOs. USAID/Ghana was instrumental in identifying these informants. National-level KIIs were conducted via Zoom. (A list of assessment stakeholders is located in Annex E.)

The assessment team included four Ghana-based youth researchers (two female and two male) between the ages of 31 and 37. After receiving training in research methods, they conducted 23 PGDs and five individual interviews with young people and the District Youth Coordinators in each of the six regions covered by the assessment. The PGDs were conducted with youth groups identified by USAID/Ghana as well as the assessment team. In comparison to typical PGDs that are conducted face-to-face, these virtual PGDs were reduced in size to, on average, four youth in order to build trust among youth to share freely in this format. The PGDs together encompass diversity by gender, rural/urban setting, region/district, and included underrepresented populations such as persons with disabilities. The selection of the PGDs prioritized youth groups who were active, as opposed to convening individuals of

certain selected characteristics. Protocols including informed consent procedures were approved by an IRB. After each fieldwork session, international, national, and youth researchers completed after-action reflections to summarize key points made by informants.

Table 1. Overview of data collection

Data Collection Method	Number Conducted
Key Informant Interviews	19
Peer Group Discussions	23
Individual Interviews	5
USAID Focus Groups	4
Total	51

NORC conducted the data analysis, reviewing all KIIs, PGDs, and individual interviews to develop findings organized by DO. The NORC team used Dedoose software to code and analyze the raw qualitative data, in the form of session notes and transcripts. The YP2LE team conducted a data validation session with the youth researchers to ensure that their perspectives were included in the development of key findings and recommendations.

USAID has already conducted several assessments that integrate consideration of youth to varying degrees, including those on women’s empowerment in agriculture, private sector engagement, conflict, gender, and democracy, rights, and governance. To integrate and build on this prior work, recommendations in this report cross-reference pertinent recommendations made by the earlier assessments.

Presentation of data and report structure

Section II of this report summarizes findings from the literature review. Findings from the fieldwork including direct quotations from PGD participants and KII are presented in Section III. (Readers familiar with the Ghana context may want to go directly to that section.) Findings and recommendations are organized by CDCS DO, prefaced by observations on the assessment process. Section IV presents recommendations that cut across all three DOs and that suggest future avenues of learning. All findings and recommendations combine data from both the literature review and fieldwork.

Limitations

This assessment was conducted entirely virtually due to the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, the team experienced limitations to data collection as a result of the virtual format which required the use of cell phones and Zoom instead of face-to-face PGDs and interviews. Implications include having fewer youth in the PGDs, adding more time-consuming individual interviews, and, most importantly, having to work harder to build trust among virtual PGD participants for the more nuanced communication that occurs more organically through in-person meetings. For these reasons, the team was not able to deeply probe the more difficult challenges facing Ghanaian youth such as the threats of violence, extremist ideology, mental health, and drug abuse. The virtual format was also challenging due to cell phone and broadband limitations in Ghana, especially in the northern and rural regions. Innovative youth-friendly assessment methodologies like virtual whiteboards and youth-led community mapping were not able to be used due to these limitations. Nonetheless, due to the persistence of the youth researchers and the Lead Local Researcher, the team was able to engage enough youth in meaningful virtual discussions that the assessment yielded significant findings.

In addition, the political conditions in Ghana at the moment imposed some constraints on accessing government stakeholders. The national elections were in 2020 which meant that government officials

(except for one) were largely unavailable for key informant interviews. The assessment, therefore, is based primarily on the perspectives of the civil society in Ghana.

II. YOUTH LANDSCAPE: KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

Ghana's economic performance has been impressive over the past decade and in 2017 the country was among the 10 fastest-growing economies in Africa. In 2011, Ghana registered a record-high 14 percent gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate as a result of commercial production and oil exports. This growth rate propelled Ghana into a lower middle-income country. However, the pace of economic growth was not sustained, declining to about seven percent in 2013 and then to 2.9 percent in 2015 (IMF, 2021¹). While economic growth bounced back in 2017 (eight percent), the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are affecting the economy, leading to a lower (0.9 percent) GDP growth rate in 2020 (Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu, 2021). The economic turmoil from the COVID-19 pandemic has far-reaching implications for young people.

Young people around the world are both a major human resource and key agents for socio-economic development. Their imagination, ideals, resilience, and vision are essential for national development. The definition of youth, however, varies widely. The United Nations (UN) describes youth as individuals ages 15-24 years, whereas the USAID Youth in Development Policy (2012:9) identifies youth as individuals ages 10-29 years. The African Union (AU) expanded the description of youth to include individuals ages 15-35 (African Youth Charter, 2006). As a signatory to the AU Charter on youth development, Ghana's definition of youth is individuals aged 15-35 years (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2010).

According to the UN, there are 1.2 billion young people ages 15 to 24 years old worldwide, accounting for 16 percent of the global population. However, in Ghana, youth (ages 15-35) constitute about one-third of the country's population, a demographic pattern common across sub-Saharan Africa. Ghana's youth population is estimated at 10,983,404. The majority (55.6 percent) of Ghana's youth live in rural areas where unemployment is prevalent (GSS, 2016). However, there has been a steady pattern of urbanization. In 2017, the total population living in urban areas reached 55 percent, an increase of six percentage points since 2007 and relatively higher than neighboring countries (e.g., 41 percent in Sierra Leone, 41 percent in Togo, and 19 percent in Niger) (DTUDA, 2020:24). Younger and more educated individuals are more likely to migrate, doing so in search of education and employment opportunities (Ibid). North-South migration is an important internal migration pattern with nearly one in five people born in northern Ghana living now in the south (van de Geest, 2011). Environmental degradation and climate change are key factors in decisions to migrate from the northern to southern regions, as found in a survey of 203 migrant farmers (not disaggregated by age) (Ibid).

Three percent of Ghanaians are classified as people living with disabilities (PWD), with more PWDs in rural areas than urban areas. Sight/visual impairment accounts for about 40 percent of disabilities among PWDs, followed by those with physical disabilities (25 percent). Other disabilities include emotional (19 percent), intellectual (15 percent), and hearing disabilities (15 percent). Forty percent of PWDs have never attended school, and less than nine percent have completed secondary education. In terms of employment, the majority (54 percent) of PWDs ages 15 years and older are employed. (GSS, 2014).

Employment, Workforce Development, and Agriculture

Youth Employment and Unemployment in Ghana

While Ghana experienced impressive economic growth over the past two decades, not enough jobs are being created to keep pace with the number of new entrants into the labor market, given underlying

¹ <https://www.imf.org/en/Countries/GHA>

demographics (“youth bulge” dynamics). The World Bank (2016) notes that Ghana’s economy would need to grow nearly 20 percent each year just to keep up (p. 10).² Of the entire working-age population in Ghana, unemployment is highest among the youth (Africa Insights Desk, 2020). In 2015, youth unemployment accounted for 73.1 percent of total unemployment, climbing to 77 percent in 2017 (Ibid, p. 11). Youth (ages 15-35) have an unemployment rate³ of about 13 percent—higher among females (13.8 percent) than males (11.4 percent) (GLSS 7 2019: 104). The rate is higher in urban than rural areas because of predominance of agricultural work in rural areas (Africa Insights Desk, 2020:11).

Reporting of strict unemployment figures in Ghana does not paint a realistic picture of the challenge for several reasons. First, they mask the large numbers of youth who would be available for work but have given up searching for employment (“discouraged workers”). A recent survey conducted by the Ghana Statistical Service (GLSS 7, 2019:99) found that 55 percent of Ghanaian youth (ages 15-35 years) are economically active, eight percent are unemployed, and 37 percent are not in the labor force. This large proportion of “NEET” youth (not in education, employment, or training) is especially concerning. See Figure 1 below showing Ghana’s comparatively high rate of NEET youth—about 30 percent—in comparison to neighboring countries (with caveats in caption noted) (ILOSTAT cited in USAID, June 2020, p 20).

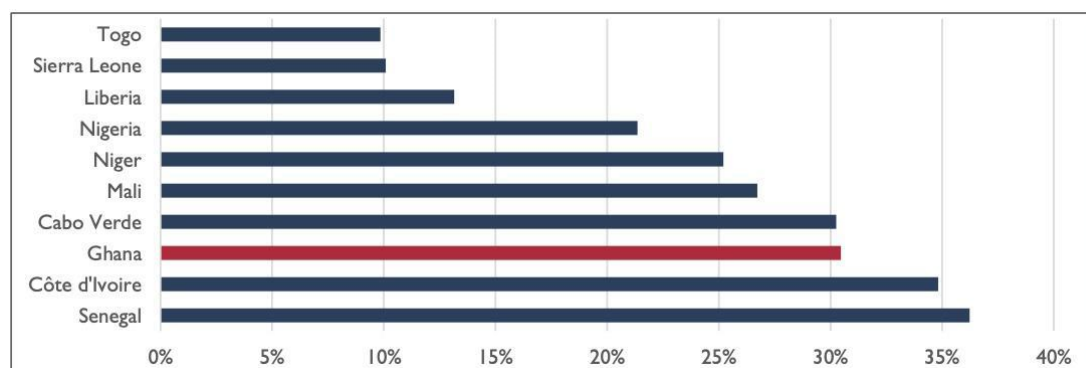


Figure 1: Share of Youth Not in Education, Employment, or Training. Ghana is compared to ECOWAS members with available data no older than five years in the World Bank Database: Côte d'Ivoire 2017, Cabo Verde 2018, Ghana 2017, Liberia 2016, Mali 2018, Nigeria 2016, Senegal 2015, Sierra Leone 2014, Togo 2015. Youth are defined as persons ages 15 to 24; young adults are those ages 25 to 29; and adults are those ages 25 and above. However, data should be used cautiously because of differences in age coverage (some countries include persons ages 15 to 29). (Source: ILOSTAT database, International Labour Organization)

Second, the labor market is characterized by a very high degree of informality: nine out of 10 workers work in the informal economy which is not covered by labor regulations (DTUDA, 2020:20). As stated by the World Bank (2016), “The main problem in Ghana is not access to work, however, but the poor quality of jobs available to the majority of the population. Poverty is intimately connected to the kind of job one holds, rather than to whether one works. This is all the more valid for the youngest workers.” (p. 6). Youth and women have limited access to wage jobs, and these are concentrated in the south, especially Accra (World Bank, 2016; 10).

There is also regional variation in youth employment. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in 2018 estimated that the youth unemployment rate in the Northern Savannah Ecological Zone (NSEZ) is about 18 percent. The survey showed that Northern Region had the highest rate of youth unemployment, with close to four out of every 10 youth (38 percent) unemployed. The second highest region of unemployment is the Upper West Region, where youth unemployment is at 16 percent. For the NSEZ locality, rural unemployment (19 percent) is slightly higher than urban

² See the USG/GoG Constraints to Growth Analysis for discussion of structural challenges to Ghana’s economic growth.

³ The unemployment rate is computed by dividing the unemployed population by the labor force.

unemployment (17 percent), with little variation by sex. The Northern Region is an agrarian region and the majority of employment stems from the agricultural sector. Inconsistent rainfall and seasonal variations caused by climate change deeply affect the economy, causing youth to experience employment instability.

Table 2: Activity of Youth ages 15-35 by locality and sex

Age/Type of locality	Employed			Unemployed			Not in labour force		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Total									
15-35	56.2	54.7	55.4	7.3	8.7	8.0	36.5	36.6	36.6
15-24	37.6	37.6	37.6	8.2	8.9	8.5	54.2	53.5	53.9
25-35	81.2	74.1	77.3	6.0	8.5	7.4	12.8	17.4	15.3
Urban									
15-35	50.9	49.7	50.3	10.0	10.3	10.2	39.1	39.9	39.5
15-24	27.4	30.7	29.1	11.6	10.1	10.8	61.0	59.1	60.0
25-35	78.6	70.3	74.2	8.2	10.5	9.4	13.1	19.2	16.4
Rural									
15-35	62.1	60.9	61.5	4.2	6.7	5.4	33.7	32.4	33.1
15-24	47.8	45.8	46.8	4.8	7.4	6.0	47.4	46.8	47.1
25-35	84.5	79.0	81.6	3.1	6.0	4.7	12.3	15.0	13.8

Source: GLSS 7

Skills Gap

The root causes of youth unemployment and underemployment in Ghana are a mix of demand- and supply-side challenges.⁴ The youth unemployment rate is higher among the educated than the less educated, underscoring the lack of a robust job market for those with advanced skills (Ghana Statistical Service 2014, cited in USAID, May 2020). The gap between the existing skills of the Ghanaian youth labor force and the needs of the private sector (the “skills gap”) also contributes to weak labor market performance. With about 70 percent of the youth population in Ghana attaining less than a secondary education, they do not have the appropriate skills to acquire well-paying jobs (Ghana Statistical Service, 2016). Ghana’s educational system is unable to ensure literacy and numeracy skills for all youth, nor provide much-needed soft and technical skill development. The education and training system emphasizes theory over practical application (USAID/Ghana, 2020). USAID/Ghana’s private sector landscape assessment found that the majority (66 percent) of private sector actors in Ghana indicated employees lacked the required skills to perform job functions.

Entrepreneurship

Given the paucity of formal sector employment in Ghana, many youth turn to entrepreneurship—both out of necessity and choice. Ghanaians surveyed indicate that they prefer owning their own business to formal permanent employment (Mastercard 2017). Youth-owned small businesses tend to have the following qualities: low capital input; easy to start and stop; and predominate in “easy to enter” sectors, e.g., market stalls, bars, shops, and gambling (Ibid; Tagoe et al, 2018). There are, however, limitations, notably lack of access to networks and social capital, and the risk of negative income (losses) (Ibid).

⁴ USG/GoG Constraints to Growth Analysis (August 2011) did not find human capital to be an immediate binding constraint due to data on low returns to education and employer survey data showing few firm managers with university degrees. Still the report notes, “schooling is important not simply because of its long-term impact on economic growth. Equally important—if not more so—broad access to effective schooling is essential to provide young people with the skills they will need to gain access to better-paying, more productive employment in growing sectors of the economy, and to develop additional skills throughout their working lives. From this perspective, evidence of extremely low levels of learning achievement in Ghana’s schools suggests that the nation faces a major, long-term challenge to improve the quality of its schools.” (p. 32)

While women are more active entrepreneurs in Ghana, Ghanaian men with self-owned businesses earn 52 percent more than women, and men in business with partnerships earn 91 percent more (Ibid). There are different groups of entrepreneurs—for example, those starting a small business and those “hawking”—and there is a positive correlation between training/education and opportunity identification. The same study found that 15 of the 20 youth sampled used their education to drive opportunity development, but also that only 35 percent conducted market research for opportunity development (Ibid).

Agriculture

Youth perceptions of agriculture as a sector to make a livelihood in Ghana is complex, and studies have mixed findings. A recent USAID Feed the Future assessment (May 2020) found that “young people do not regard agriculture as a viable job option,” associating it with aged and illiterate people (p. 5). In a recent survey that asked Ghanaian youth about their priorities for government action, agriculture ranked lowest (Center for International Private Enterprise 2017). However, another recent study (Yeboah et al 2020) found, “there is little evidence from...three rural commercialization hot spots that young people are not interested in agriculture or the rural economy; need to have their ‘mind-set’ changed in relation to the rural economy; or are unable to access land or capital even if they want to farm” (p. 150). These researchers challenge the assumption “that migration to urban areas is the default option for rural young people” (p. 150). Still, where youth are engaged in agriculture, income is poor and their work focuses on consumption, not profit (Mastercard 2017, cited in USAID, May 2020).

When young people contemplate working in agriculture, they “do not want necessarily to follow their parents’ footsteps” (USAID 2020:12). They are less interested in primary production and prefer roles in processing, input, sales, and services. Young men are interested in agricultural production of value chains that generate more income, such as onions, yams, and fisheries” (2020: 12). While young women face more barriers to engaging in on-farm activities than young men, they have a unique opportunity in off-farm activities because of social acceptance and their experience in marketing farm produce (The Mastercard Foundation, Jan 2018: 15).

Several constraints to youth participation in agriculture do exist. Youth are not always included in local networks, such as associations and savings groups, not due to age restrictions, but because they lack financial resources to contribute which is a prerequisite to attending meetings where vital farming information is transmitted (USAID 2020: 12). Another constraint includes lack of information about off-farm opportunities, a recent youth-led assessment found that youth were often not aware of these opportunities (Mastercard, Jan 2018: 12). This study suggests that isolation is a limitation and that: “to ideate, young people need a space where they can access resources and mentorship, and share ideas,” a collective response to address challenges in the agri-food system more comprehensively (2018:17).

There is evidence that Ghana can be a leader in this area. The African Youth Survey (2020) notes,

Ghana has been leading the continent in attempting to get millennials to start businesses or work in agriculture. This effort to make “farming sexy again” (New York Times, 2019), is targeting college-educated young people to work in an industry often stigmatized as being related to poverty. This seems to be translating to real impact: 86% of Ghana’s sample said they were interested in working in agriculture.... showing that the Ghanaian government’s attempt to make farming desirable is on the right track (p. 51).

Overall, the desk review found that the literature base on youth employment is quite large, more so than for the sectors that follow.

Education

School Participation

While the gross enrollment ratio⁵ at the primary and junior high school levels in the 2018/19 academic year is high—105 percent and 86 percent respectively—it drops off substantially (63 percent) at the senior high school levels (Ministry of Education, 2019). This high dropout rate following junior high school education affects youths' ability to gain the skills needed to obtain meaningful employment.

Forty percent of youth in Ghana have no formal education qualification (see Table 3). About 30 percent of the youth have attained basic education qualification (Middle School Leaving Certificate, Basic Education Certificate Examination, MSLC/BECE) and 20 percent attained secondary education – the second/final stage of general and vocational education (UNESCO, 2011). Only about six percent obtained post-secondary education – non-tertiary education that provides learning experiences built on secondary education – and less than four percent of youth attained tertiary education – academic education providing diploma, degree, and higher education (Ghana Statistical Service, 2016, UNESCO, 2011). This situation has far-reaching implications on youths' ability to secure well-paying jobs as employers seek individuals with higher order skills and problem-solving abilities (Dadzie et al., 2020).

Table 3: Distribution of population 15-35 years by educational qualification attained, locality of residence, and by sex

Educational Level	Urban			Rural			National		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
No Education	21	31	26	51	62	57	35	44	40
MSLC/BECE	33	34	33	26	25	26	30	30	30
Secondary	30	25	27	16	9	12	24	18	20
Post-Secondary	9	7	8	4	3	4	7	5	6
Tertiary	8	4	6	2	1	2	5	3	4

Source: 2015 Labour Force Report (Ghana Statistical Service, 2016)

Youth Literacy Level

The average literacy rate of youth in Ghana is 54 percent. Youth literacy rates in urban areas (61 percent) are higher than those in rural areas (45 percent). As illustrated in Table 4, in the rural savannah where poverty is very high, women had a lower (22 percent) literacy rate than men (33 percent). Similarly, in the urban areas, men (64.4 percent) have attained a higher literacy rate than women (58 percent) (GSS 2019). Only about 28 percent of the youth living in the rural savannah area are literate compared to about 61 percent of their peers in the urban areas. This data suggest that females are less likely to be literate than men, a situation that disadvantages young women in the labor market.

Table 4: Literacy level youth aged 15-35 by location and by sex

⁵ Gross enrollment includes students of all ages, including students whose age exceeds the official age group (e.g., repeaters). Thus, if there is late enrollment, early enrollment, or repetition, the total enrollment can exceed the population of the age group that officially corresponds to the level of education – leading to ratios great than 100 percent (World Bank).

Age Group (sex)	Urban			Rural			
	Accra (AMA)	Other Urban	All	Rural Coastal	Rural Forest	Rural Savannah	All
Male	65	64	64	63	58	33	50
Female	54	58	58	53	47	22	40
Total	59	61	61	57	53	28	45

Source: GSS (2019), GLSS and Ministry of Education (2018). Education Sector Analysis 2018, Ministry of Education

Education Quality and Relevance

In terms of learning outcomes, results from the West African Senior Secondary Certificate Exam (WASSCE) have been poor for both core and elective science and mathematics subjects. Gender disparities in performance exist across all regions for math, science, and social studies, and, in the three northern regions, for English as well, with girls underperforming. The 2017 WASSCE performance shows that males tend to outperform females in Math, Science, and Social Studies in all regions. As a result of this performance disparity, males (26 percent) are more likely to qualify for tertiary education than females (20 percent) (MOE, 2018).

The education system in Ghana, particularly tertiary education, tends to produce social sciences and humanities graduates beyond the labor market's capacity to absorb workers with such skills. Furthermore, pedagogy in most Ghanaian educational institutions places a greater emphasis on performance on standardized tests as opposed to practical problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Graduates lack practical experience in the application of knowledge and skills (Africa Insights Desk, 2020).

The Ghanaian education system faces a range of complex systemic challenges. One USAID/Ghana study on teacher rationalization shows that inefficient teacher deployment is one of the main drivers of poor academic performance in public primary schools. Teachers are concentrated in urban areas, leaving rural areas with underqualified teachers, contributing to poor student achievement (Epstein et al, 2019).

Access to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) has been increasing in recent years despite the stigma about participation in TVET programs as an indication of underachieving. The participation of women and persons with disabilities in TVET is particularly low, especially in traditionally male-dominated trades such as engineering and construction. Challenges facing TVET are further compounded by a low absorption capacity for existing institutions, as well as obsolete training equipment and outdated curriculum and pedagogy (MoE, 2018).

The 2018 education sector analysis shows student participation in tertiary education is relatively lower compared to the other levels of education. The gross enrollment rate of tertiary education for 2016 was about 16 percent. After two years (2018), the GER increased marginally to 17 percent. This figure is lower than the 25 percent benchmark specified by the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE, 2018). In terms of participation by sex, the gender parity index which measures female participation in tertiary education was 0.85 in 2019, an increase from 2016 when it was 0.72 percent (UNESCO Institute for Statistics).⁶ These results show that participation of young people in tertiary education in Ghana is very low and there is a wide gender disparity between male and female attendance to tertiary education. The data suggest that more males tend to enroll in tertiary education than females.

⁶ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ENR.TERT.FM.ZS?locations=GH>

Health

Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health

Adolescents and young adults have unique health care needs and preferences, as well as challenges to accessing appropriate services and care, and health education. Adolescent health programming tends to focus on reproductive health and teenage pregnancy, as opposed to broader aspects of adolescent health, nutrition, and well-being, including mental health.

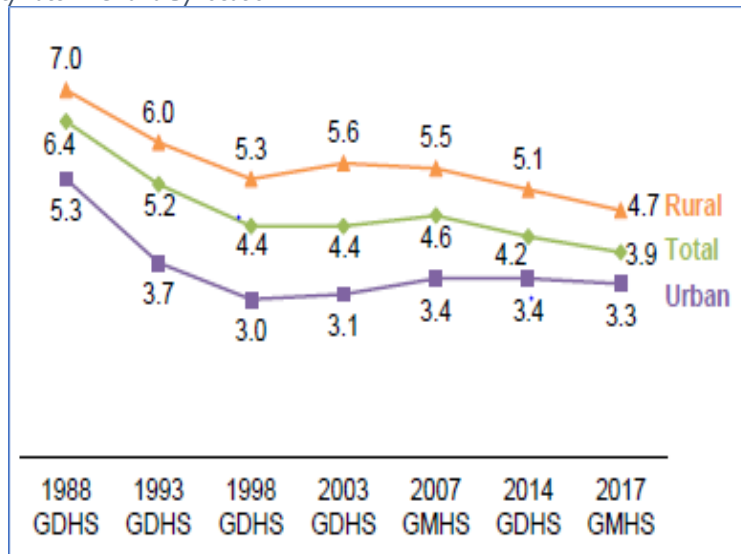
Studies show that young women in Ghana first engage in sexual activity at a median age of 18.1 years, the average age of marriage at 21.5 years, and first birth at 21.5 years. However, adolescent women (15-19 years) in the two lowest wealth quintiles are more likely to bear children (21 percent each) than young women in the wealthiest quintile (3 percent). Fourteen percent of women aged 15-19 nationally are pregnant with their first child or are already mothers. Rural young women have higher rates of teenage pregnancy (18 percent) than urban young women (8 percent), with teen pregnancy highest in Volta (18 percent) and Western (19 percent) regions and lowest in Greater Accra (seven percent) and Upper West (eight percent) regions (Ghana Maternal Health Survey 2017).

To reduce new HIV infections to zero, the Ghana Aids Commission, in collaboration with its partners, has rolled out behavior change education. The national HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is estimated at 2.0 percent (GDHS, 2014) and the prevalence rate for adults ages 15-49 years is 1.7 percent. HIV prevalence among women ages 15-49 is higher (2.3 percent) than men (1.0 percent). Youth ages 15-24 years have lower (0.8 percent) HIV prevalence rates. However, young women in this age range (15-24) have higher (1.5 percent) HIV prevalence than males (0.2 percent). This suggests that young women are more vulnerable to HIV than young men (Ghana Aids Commission 2019).

Maternal Health

The total fertility rate (TFR) in Ghana has been decreasing over the past decades (see Figure 2). TFR is defined as the average number of children a woman would have by the end of her childbearing years if she bore children at the current age-specific fertility rates. Evidence from the 2017 Ghana Maternal Health survey indicates that age-specific fertility rates are calculated for the three years before the survey, based on detailed birth histories provided by women ages 15-49 years. The TFR in Ghana is 3.9 children per woman with variations between urban and rural areas. Women in urban areas are likely to have fewer children (3.3 children per woman) than their peers in rural areas (5 children per woman) (GMHS, 2017).

Figure 2: Trends in fertility rate in Ghana by location



Source: Ghana Maternal Health Survey 2017

The use of contraceptives is central to birth control. Women who use contraceptives can control and plan for the number of children they want to have, which empowers them to manage their lives well. Evidence from the 2017 Ghana Maternal Health survey shows that one in four married women ages 15-49 years use modern contraceptives (25 percent). The most common methods among married women are injectables (eight percent), implants (seven percent), and the pill (four percent). Evidence shows that 30 percent of women aged 20-24 report unmet needs for family planning while the same age group has the highest utilization of emergency contraceptives (11 percent).

Healthy Behaviors and Mental Health

Mental health problems among adolescents and young adults, including loneliness, worry, and suicidal ideation, are a leading cause of disease burden globally including both low-and middle-income economies (Glozah, Asante and Kugbey, 2018). About 62 percent of Ghanaian youth have reported having moderate to high common mental illnesses (Ibid:1). This research suggests that “physical inactivity and poor dietary habits could have a negative effect on mental distress, however, parental involvement could mitigate the impact of these lifestyle habits on mental distress and should therefore be taken into consideration” in public health interventions (Ibid:6). These researchers advise Ghana’s Ministries of Health and Education collaboration to ensure students receive adequate physical education and access to healthy foods at school. Furthermore, a four-country study that included Ghana found that approximately one in five children and adolescents suffer from mental disorders and that “scaling up child and adolescent mental health services needs to include anti-stigma initiatives” and greater investment. Researchers call for clear policy directions, priorities, and targets to be set at the country-level, that community-level intervention should engage youth, parents, and local organizations, that mental health professionals need to be trained, and finally that there should be greater consideration of the link between poverty and mental health problems (Kleintjes, Lund, and Flisher, 2010).

Drug abuse among youth is a significant public health concern, though one study of marijuana use among junior high school studies in the Central Region of Ghana showed lower prevalence rates than in other African countries and in Western societies (Hormenu, Hagan, Thomas and Dietmar, 2018). Nonetheless, another researcher who studied alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana use in senior secondary schools in Accra found “boys were significantly more likely than girls to be lifetime users of all three drugs, but not as current users.” (Adu-Mireku, 2002) He calls for strengthening current prevention

programs through better education of in-school adolescents “primarily because of the increasing availability of and the unrestricted access to, cigarette and alcohol products” (Ibid). Another researcher (Bird, 2019) found the treatment of people who use drugs in Ghana to be “generally unsympathetic” and that “the current legislative framework on illicit drugs takes a hard-line approach.” She notes that a recent draft Narcotics Commission Bill seeking to decriminalize drug use (while retaining heavy sentences for trafficking offenses) is a shift towards treating substance use as a public-health issue, a laudable change but one that must be accompanied by the allocation of resources towards improving rehabilitation services to be effective (Ibid: 2).

Child Marriage

Child marriage is defined as the formal or informal union in which one or both of the parties involved are below the age of 18 years (The Children’s Act of Ghana, Act 560 of 1998). It is estimated that one in five girls in Ghana, ages 20-24 years, are married before age 18 (Republic of Ghana, ND: 3), corroborated by a 2019 study (Ahonsi et al). While the prevalence of child marriage in Ghana has declined over the past three decades, progress has not been even within regions. Girls in the three northern regions of Ghana are disproportionately affected by incidence of child marriage as 34 percent of girls in these regions are married before they turn 18 years (Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2017). Regardless of their sex, the effect of child marriage on their education, health, and economic prospects are severe and far-reaching, including elevated rates of suicidal thoughts, and increased vulnerability to sexual, physical, and psychological violence. Young women married as children are also more susceptible to health complications due to sexual intercourse, and an increased risk of sexually infected diseases, including HIV (Child marriage in Ghana, 2019). The key drivers of child marriage are multi-faceted and are linked to gender inequality, poverty, harmful social norms, and traditional cultural practices, as well as teenage pregnancy.

Civic Engagement/Conflict/Security

Civic Education, Youth Voice, Advocacy

Ghana’s governance is a source of strength for youth, though there are areas where there is room for improvement. In comparison to other young people ages 18-24 years in sub-Saharan Africa who participated in the African Youth Survey (2020:20), young Ghanaians are among the most optimistic about their future; 62 percent had positive feelings for their country (only second behind Rwanda in a 14-country study). Eighty-six percent believed that their standard of living would be better in two years (2020:21). The 2019 Ghana Afrobarometer survey⁷ shows that 70 percent of respondents thought that Ghana is a full democracy or one with only “minor problems” and 66 percent felt it “works well” or “fairly well” (Afrobarometer, 2019:29). Still, it is important to note that a significant minority (28-30 percent) are dissatisfied. The survey shows that freedom is an area of strength among respondents, though rule of law, especially as it pertained to the powerful, is a significant weakness. Sixty-one percent believed officials who commit crimes go unpunished, while 77 percent felt ordinary people who commit crimes are punished (Afrobarometer, 2020:38).

There tends to be low participation of the general public in decisions that affect their lives. Power is concentrated at the national level, and powerful Ghanaians do not sufficiently feel the effects of their actions, except through the very blunt tool of presidential elections (Dwyer, 2019). There may be strong interest in increasing opportunities for community participation: the Afrobarometer survey shows that 78 percent of respondents had attended a community meeting in the past year or would want to if given the opportunity (2019:34). However, public demonstrations or protests may be seen as risky as 64 percent of respondents said they “would never do that” (2019:34). Young women especially are underrepresented in all formal spheres. Challenges such as poverty, gender-based violence, and lack

⁷ Afrobarometer does not disaggregate by age, though 50 percent of respondents are between 18 and 35 years old.

of quality education are the key drivers of marginalization of women in participating effectively in socio-economic issues related to governance (Knoope and Chauzal, 2016).

Youth voice in democratic structures is constrained by cultural norms. For example, even though the Afrobarometer survey respondents are 50 percent youth, the 2019 survey shows that 54 percent of respondents believe that “we should listen more to the wisdom of elders”; as compared to 36 percent who indicated that “we should listen more to fresh ideas from young people” (Afrobarometer 2020: 76).

Vigilantism

An increasingly disconcerting issue stemming in part from youth unemployment is vigilantism. Vigilantism is “An act or threat of violence or intimidation undertaken by a person to further the interest of that person or any other person affiliated or associated with...” (Ghana Vigilantism Act, 2019). It is often carried out by the youth who are emboldened by politicians and landowners to serve their parochial interest (Asamoah, 2019). Youth join vigilante groups in hopes of rewards for services, recognition within parties, revenge, protection, and protection from law enforcement (Center for Democratic Development Ghana, 2019). Mistrust for state institutions (Electoral Commission and police), a desire for internal party security, and the conceptualization of vigilantism as a “business model” to win political power contribute to the formation of vigilante groups. The use of illicit drugs among some political youth vigilantes is a major concern across communities.

To address this issue, the Parliament of the Republic of Ghana enacted the Vigilante and Related Offences Act 2019, Act 999 calling for the disbanding of vigilante groups in Ghana (Act 999). A majority of members of vigilante groups in Ghana are youth ages 15-35. Evidentially, “Youth Group” is used as a euphemism for vigilante groups across the country. Political violence carried out by unemployed youth, who form the critical pool for recruitment, is one of the major sources of conflict in Ghana. Kyei (2020) argues that while vigilantism is seen as disruptive to Ghana’s democratic process, vigilante groups should not be disbanded outright as they have the potential to contribute to the deepening of the democratic process of Ghana. Kyei (2020) advocates for the recognition of vigilante groups as actors within registered political parties and argued that they should be given training on citizenship rights, electoral laws, and good governance.

Radicalization (Violent Extremism)

Concern about rising violence emerging from extremism ideology is primarily focused on northern Ghana. Some of the West African regional aggravating factors for the spread of extremist ideology that are most relevant to youth include their frustration with elders’ political and economic monopoly, rural and urban disparities, and high illiteracy (Knoope and Chauzal, 2016). There is evidence that a cultural shift is underway in which the self-protecting behaviors and social control of elders are eroding (Ibid). Some researchers suggest that a countering violent extremism (CVE) action plan should be developed and initiated by government (e.g., Ministry of the Interior and Religious Affairs) and civil society organizations, jointly with youth groups and key leaders. This will empower community members to identify hotbeds of radicalization and counter extremist messaging and recruitment activities (ibid). Researchers have called as well for diverse social actors to be mobilized to create space for a new generation (students and youth) to step forward and take societal and other relevant leadership positions. They should be equipped with training and building of leadership skills (Ibid).

Gender-based Violence (GBV)

Restrictive social norms and stereotypes lead to women being more vulnerable to discrimination and sexual violence, however, both genders are subject to gender-based violence (GBV). Women are often blamed for HIV acquisition and subject to discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace. This is an issue in particular for northern Muslims who are also deemed as less capable of skilled employment. Both women and men report experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV), although women and girls are more often victims. Tolerance for and attitudes toward violence, however, are changing. For

example, the proportion of women who agreed that wife beating is justified decreased from 37 percent in 2008 to 28 percent in 2014.

In northern Ghana, female genital mutilation (FGM) is one form of GBV that is more common. Banyan Global (2020) noted that over the past decades, efforts were made to eradicate FGM/C led to reduction of its prevalence. However, recent developments show that the incidence of FGM is reemerging among some ethnic groups (e.g., Hausa, Bissa, and Chokossi). The practice is carried out on girls ages 4–17, but there is concern that communities are now targeting younger girls to be cut, including newborns. Available evidence suggests that 2.4 percent of women ages 15–49 in northern Ghana have undergone FGM. Percentages are lower in rural areas (3.6 percent versus 12 percent in urban areas).

Key Policies and Actors in the Youth Sector

Youth Policies and Governmental Initiatives

Youth policies in Ghana date back to 1974 when the National Youth Authority was established to coordinate and facilitate youth development in Ghana (National Youth Authority, 2021). In 2010, the GoG developed the National Youth Policy, which set out the policy framework for development of youth in Ghana. The policy provides guidelines for all stakeholders engaged in youth programming to develop appropriate interventions and partnerships towards the empowerment of young people in Ghana for national development (Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2010). The policy has four program areas: Human development and technology; Economic empowerment; Youth participation, governance, and leadership; and Culture, sports, and national orientation.

To operationalize the Ghana Youth Policy, the Ministry of Youth and Sports has developed various institutional and legislative frameworks to support youth development (NDCP, 2015). The key institution responsible for implementation of the Ghana Youth Policy is the National Youth Authority (NYA), which was established in 2016. The goal of this agency is to develop, coordinate, supervise and facilitate efforts to reduce unemployment among the youth, promote active citizenship, and prepare, and inspire youth to harness their potential. To that end, the NYA has rolled out programs aimed at empowering young people for decent jobs and has established a vibrant platform, YouthConnekt Ghana, to connect youth with role models, resources, skill development, and employment opportunities.

While the NYA is responsible for youth development in Ghana, the government has rolled out other large programs such as the Nation Builders Corp (NABCO), the Youth Employment Agency, the National Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme (NEIP), and Planting for Food and Jobs. These programs provide employment opportunities to young people across the country. However, coordination is a challenge as they are implemented by different Ministries (Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, Ministry of Trade and Industry, and The Office of the President) and the Ministry of Youth and Sports has no jurisdiction over them.

Another policy that targets youth is the National Employment Policy, which was developed by the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations (MELR, 2014). This policy is aimed at generating employment opportunities for vulnerable groups, youth, women, and PWDs in Ghana. In 2017 the government rolled out the Coordinated Programme of Economic and Social Development Policies (2017–2024): An Agenda for Jobs: Creating Prosperity and Equal Opportunity for All. It then followed up with a medium-term development framework, a three-year rolling plan spanning 2018-2021. This framework defines Ghana's strategic direction for job creation over the medium term. An objective of this plan is to build human capital through improved access to high-quality education and health to create an employable and competitive labor force with youth at the center of the development fulcrum.

Because many ministries are engaged in youth programming, the programs tend to be fragmented as the Youth and Sports Ministry is not able to coordinate and harmonize all youth activities. There is also little

rigorous evaluation of programs including tracer studies to learn of their effectiveness. Public sector programming has focused on the creation of subsidized employment opportunities for youth. This work is generally temporary and is not intended to be permanent and sustainable employment. A more sustainable approach would be a focus on private sector development.

Another critical player in youth development in Ghana is the National Service Scheme (NSS), founded in the 1970s. The NSS is an agency under the Ministry of Education mandated to provide college students upon graduation with a one-year job experience (both in the public and private sectors) as part of their civic responsibility to the State and to engender national social cohesion. It also provides user agencies the opportunity to meet their short-term human resource needs and affords poorer communities the opportunity to access mainstream development initiatives and improved social services through community service. NSS's vision is "Leader in Youth Service" and its mission is to "mobilize and deploy Ghanaian citizens 18 years and above for national development". Each year the agency recruits thousands of youth people from both public and private tertiary institutions across the country and deploys them to work in regions other than their own in education, health, agriculture, industry and commerce, local government, and private sector. In 2020, the NSS posted about 87,000 national service personnel to various departments and agencies across the country ([NSS, 2020](#)). Through this mandatory service, young people obtain temporary job placements, and they are paid a stipend for their service.

Key actors in the youth sector

Key actors in the youth sector in Ghana comprise government entities, donors, and non-governmental organizations including the private sector. Within the government sector, five key Ministries are engaged in youth policies and programming: the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and the Ministry of Agriculture. Key donors in the youth sector in Ghana include The World Bank, USAID, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), International Labour Organization (ILO), GIZ, and UKAID. Apart from these donors, there are a plethora of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and CSOs engaged in all aspects of youth programming. A non-exhaustive list of these organizations is provided in Annex I.

Bright Spots: Promising Programs and Start-ups

The challenges described in this report have been the focus of considerable and often successful work by diverse Ghanaian actors. "Bright Spots" are policies, programs, and partnerships that appear effective or innovative. While evaluation data for most youth programs in Ghana is not available, there are useful program inventories available including the World Bank's on youth employment programs in Ghana (Avura, F. B. and Ulzen-Appiah, A. (2016).

The following are examples of bright spots that may warrant examination for future scaling efforts.

National Entrepreneurship & Innovation Programme (NEIP): This is a government of Ghana flagship policy initiative aimed at contributing to Ghana's long-term strategic vision of consolidating its middle-income status, building an industry-driven economy capable of providing decent jobs, and facilitating its journey to self-reliance. NEIP provides integrated national support (training and funding) for start-ups and small businesses to enable them to grow. Since its establishment in 2018, NEIP has trained more than 45,000 young entrepreneurs, funded more than 9,350 businesses, and created about 92,000 jobs. Evidence of achievement can be found [here](#).

Nation Builders Corps (NABCO): [NABCO](#) is a governmental program implemented in 2018. It has provided jobs to about 100,000 youth across Ghana. The NABCO trainees are tertiary institution graduates who hold diploma degrees and above. The program offers the following youth focus job models: educate Ghana (teaching), heal Ghana (health sector), feed Ghana (agricultural), revenue Ghana

(revenue mobilization), digitize Ghana (Information Technology, civic Ghana (governance), and enterprise Ghana. While this program does not provide permanent employment for the youth, it offers youth practical experience. The trainees are enrolled in the program and posted to the respective public sector institutions that align with their chosen model to serve for three years. While on the program trainees receive a stipend of GHC 700 per month.

Microfinance and Small Loans Centre (MASLOC): MASLOC is a microfinance apex body responsible for implementing the GoG's microfinance program aimed at poverty reduction in Ghana. Some of the products offered by MASLOC include micro-group loans, vehicle loans, on-lending loans, and special project loans. The duration of repayment of the loans offered varies considerably depending on the type of product. Since this is a poverty alleviation program, interest rates charged are much lower than the prevailing market rates. More recently MASLOC has targeted the provision of loans to youth to procure tricycles and taxis.

Youth in Agriculture Programme (YIAP): YIAP is an initiative of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) designed to facilitate food and nutrition security in Ghana. The program targets youth who want to go into Agriculture to contribute to Ghana's food security. The program provides tractor services, supply of farm inputs such as seeds, agro-chemicals, fertilizers, and sacks. The program participants are provided with training and technical support from Agric. Extension staff of MOFA. YIAP has four components: crops/block farm, livestock and poultry, fisheries/aquaculture, and agribusiness.

National Vocational Training Institute (NVTI): A World Bank review (2016:18) cites NVTI as only one of three programs that has released the results of tracer (longitudinal) studies. By 2012, a group of 2007-2010 graduates were either self-employed (53 percent), in wage employment (31 percent), or in further training (12 percent).

Opportunities Industrialization Centre Ghana (OICG): While it is not known whether all OICG programs are successful, their Livelihood Enhancement for Youth (LEFY) program showed impressive tracer study results of 95 percent employed and using the skills in which they were trained (World Bank, 2016, p.19).

Youth-Inclusive Entrepreneurial Development Initiative for Employment (YIEDIE): YIEDIE was implemented in 2015-2020 by OICG; Aurora Africa Business Network; Artisans Association of Ghana; and Republic-Boafo, with support from Global Communities and the Mastercard Foundation. YIEDIE created economic opportunities in Ghana's construction sector for economically disadvantaged youth, using five components: (1) employability and entrepreneurship skills development; (2) youth-friendly financial services; (3) an apprenticeship-based skills training model; (4) start-up funding, access to business development services, job matching and mentoring to youth, and supporting job creation in small and medium construction enterprises; and (5) increased coordination for a better enabling environment for youth employment in construction. The project operated at significant scale, reaching 23,700 youth ages 17-24 in five of Ghana's largest cities who had dropped out of school and were living on under \$2/day. The Artisans Association of Ghana has become a market-based source of job matching and skills development. Financial service providers continue to offer profitable youth-focused products after projects close, and local policies should ensure the continued growth of opportunities for youth.

ENGINE (Enhancing Growth in New Enterprise) Programme: Implemented in 2013-2016 by TechnoServe with UK DFID funding, ENGINE was considered highly successful, with 174 percent revenue growth across the enterprises and 283 new jobs in 2015 (World Bank, 2016, p. 19).

Reach for Change Program: An international network with a Ghana chapter, Reach for Change is a social entrepreneurship incubator that improves children's lives. The program works to locate high potential entrepreneurs who then benefit from accelerator and incubator programs and bring data, evaluation, and learning to the visionary process. Partners include UNICEF, the British Council, and others.

Blossom Academy: Start-up for training Ghanaians in data analytics, founded by Ghanaian Wall Street entrepreneur [Jeph Acheampong](#).

OZÉ: A Ghana-based, woman-led fintech start-up, OZÉ helps small businesses access capital and digitize operations. With 25,000 registered users, OZÉ is the largest online community of micro, small, and medium enterprises in Ghana.

III. YOUTH ASSESSMENT FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section begins with overall observations about the assessment process and then covers findings and recommendations by each **USAID/Ghana CDCS Development Objective**.

Assessment Process

In an abbreviated way, the Ghana youth assessment was intended to model for the Mission ways of engaging youth in the USAID assessment process. The assessment gave four Ghanaian youth researchers the opportunity to hone their research skills with training and coaching from a senior local researcher and an international youth advisor. As a complement to their prior research experience, they received refresher training on data collection techniques and informed consent protocols, as well as continuous feedback on facilitation, note-taking, and synthesis of findings. In exchange, they contributed a great deal to the assessment; they adapted data collection protocols, refined virtual data collection methods, and shared insights on data gathered from the PGDs and KIIs. All four researchers felt that they had developed skills and knowledge that they would take with them in their future work and that USAID/Ghana should continue to actively engage youth in their assessment and listening/learning processes. Here are their words:

“Participating helped me improve my virtual assessment skills, especially having the opportunity to do virtual interviews. It has also improved my negotiation skills. I had to convince youth to be interested in having an interview.” — Assessment youth researcher

“I got to see the emotion of the youth and feel that the youth are not getting the best, their potentials are not being realized, their dreams are not being realized. I realized that the youth have connections with the community and the government. The community in the sense that they take initiative to see development in their community – awareness campaign, self-contribution, etc. They have their own strategies.” — Assessment youth researcher

“Through the KIIs, I was exposed to the content and programs of the National Youth Authority. They have good and rich plans; the gap has to be with budgeting and resources.” — Assessment youth researcher

“I realized that it’s not enough to just create an intervention and say it’s for youth and just leave it as it is. I believe as [regard to] policy-makers in the country, every intervention must be assessed to find out how it is helping youth...and to try to improve it so the impact can be sustainable.” — Assessment youth researcher

DOI: Broad-Based Economic Growth Accelerated and Sustained

Findings

Employment

- The National Service Scheme and the Nation Builders Corps, two government-sponsored youth employment programs, are reaching large numbers of tertiary graduates with entry-level

job experience. Youth appreciate these programs. One government stakeholder summarized what he had observed: "...[M]ost of the youth who are part of the NABCO program benefit from the experience of the staff in the departments in which they are posted as trainees. This experience they will not have had if they were not part of the NABCO program. Some PGD participants noted that they experienced delays in their paychecks—which according to some is not a grave concern because they know that their pay is guaranteed by the government. This is something they cannot assume of private sector employment. They also understand that these employment programs do not provide – by design – permanent positions. This leaves some feeling insecure, though they recognize the value of building skills through these experiences.

"The challenge we are faced with at NABCO has to do with poor communication on the program. As I am talking, we do not know our fate as to whether they are going to retain us or permanently employ us. We have not been paid for some time now and we are not hearing anything from our leaders."

— Youth PGD participant

- Youth respondents generally felt that youth, regardless of gender, experienced the NABCO and Free Secondary High School (SHS) programs similarly in terms of access and participation. "When you look at the free SHS, you can see that it's both boys and girls who have been going, and it's equal," said one PGD participant. However, in Ghana more broadly, experiences differ, with men and boys having greater access to opportunities than women and girls which then can result in disparities in skills acquisition.

"When it comes to skills or handiwork, you can see a man who has two or three of those skills but the women sometimes, it's just one or none at all. So, [in terms of] experiences I will say the men are ahead of the women." — Female youth PGD participant

"Most of the participants are women, but when it comes to group work, they will leave everything for the men to do. Women always feel reluctant to challenge themselves unlike men who are always ready for challenges. I think it is society that has attached so much importance to men more than women. So, most women are not able to express themselves in the midst of men. That is why most men are seen as having more experience than women." — Female youth PGD participant

- Secondary high school dropouts and graduates do not have access to a government-sponsored employment program similar to the NSS and the NABCO. It is unclear how they access jobs, though most certainly jobs they do access are in the informal sector. Informal sector jobs tend to be poorly paid, so many youth use these to gain some income and develop skills with the hope of creating their own self-employment in the future.
- Both youth and adult stakeholders call urgently for increasing labor market-relevant skills development in both general education and TVET so that when youth leave the education system, they are better prepared to find employment or create their own self-employment.
- PGD and KII informants did not refer to soft skills using that term (that is, the inter- and intra-personal skills, attitudes, and behaviors associated with success in the modern world, including critical thinking, teamwork, communication, and problem-solving). However, they spoke often of "self-motivation," "capacity," and "functioning" and, moreover, called for increasing mentoring opportunities for young people. These comments suggest a positive valuation of soft skills as useful and relevant to the Ghanaian context.

- Perceptions of corruption in the labor market appear prevalent; even well-connected youth cannot access jobs without “paying for them.”

“[O]ne important thing that emerged [from the PGDs] was that youth employment was politically inclined, in the sense that most youth complained that for you to have the opportunity to work in the formal sector, you have to have ‘political connections—which most of them are disadvantaged to have. So most of them resort to skills[that they already have].”

— Assessment youth researcher

“Before you get a job, you must really know a person in the current government who has influence. IN most of the public sectors, there is an advert for a job, and then they go behind the curtains and they have lists from prominent politicians of individuals they want them to employ even though those might not have the qualifications. Even if you have the right qualifications, you might not get employment, and you must be able to buy you way to employment.”

— Assessment youth researcher

Entrepreneurship

- Youth are gravitating to self-employment because of lack of access to jobs, either due to paucity of jobs or inaccessibility due to corruption in the labor market. *“The majority of businesses [can’t] employ youth because of how businesses are faring in the country. Some are exploiting youth by not paying them well and not following the employment laws. They try to take advantage of the youth being unemployed by giving them low wages. So youth now are inclined toward building their own capacity and starting up their own businesses and being their own masters in their affairs rather than relying on anyone to employ them.”* — Assessment youth researcher
- Youth need more support to enable them to become successful entrepreneurs. For example, one PGD respondent noted that one government program helped youth entrepreneurs develop critical skills: *“...[I]f you’re a businessman or woman, you are taught how you can manage your business. And if you are also into fashion and design, they will help upgrade your knowledge in those fields so that your work will meet the standards required.”* However, they also report that many business training programs fail to provide start-up material inputs or capital for youth to launch their own micro-enterprises.
- There are indications that Ghanaian youth are participating, at least to some degree, in village savings and loans associations (VSLA) to expand their access to finance for livelihoods development. VSLAs are self-managed and self-capitalized microfinance mechanisms that offer savings, insurance, and credit services in markets outside the reach of formal institutions. One NGO leader noted that in his agricultural program, 33 percent of VSLA members were youth and that he sees this as a sustainable mechanism.
- A link exists as well between saving associations and youth civic engagement. One NGO leader noted that it is important to work on livelihoods first because people including youth, only become free to volunteer and engage in civic issues when they have a way to survive. Income generation activities and financial literacy training are thus part and parcel of the process of strengthening citizen participation in governance.
- Entrepreneurship promotion is a multi-faceted effort. Financial literacy is understood as essential and complementary to business and technical skills training as well as access to capital and mentoring support.

“We don't just gather them to save in groups. We also give them training. Training on financial literacy so that they know how to save, when to take lead and don't run into debts, and how they can be able to manage their business. So we give them training on their business skills as well.”

— KII, Female NGO representative

- Of universities in Ghana with entrepreneurship degree programs, the more innovative of them – such as Ashesi University – are creating, with initial USAID support, a pilot entrepreneurship [incubator](#) for recent grads to launch businesses supported by mentorship and training. Ashesi is working also with a set of international universities, industry actors, and venture capitalists to strengthen the entrepreneurship [eco-system](#) in Ghana.

Agriculture

- The major constraints that affect all farmers in Ghana, affect—perhaps to an even greater extent—young farmers or agri-business operators. For example, lack of irrigation and dependence on rain-fed agriculture is becoming increasingly serious given regional climate change effects. Furthermore, the high cost of bank loans and access to agricultural inputs such as tractors, are further constraints requiring government attention.
- Nonetheless, there are numerous pathways for youth engagement in agriculture, and a number of the youth interviewed for this assessment were engaged in agricultural activities. Youth are engaged as service providers, extension agents, and researchers, as well as smallholders, depending on age, education level, and geographic region. As service providers, for example, youth are involved in spraying crops. As assistant agents, they aid agricultural extension agents who supervise farmers in the field at the community level. In this case, youth used tablets as a digital resource to keep track of farmers' needs as well as their own savings, which contributed to youths' financial stability.

“[The digital resource] was something that attracted a lot of the youth and what enabled us to work with them... So, some of them are also in 'learning groups.' We provided tablets and they also engage as learning groups when they meet weekly to discuss savings, they choose the day in the week and discuss everything.” — KII, Ghana

- One informant noted that the tension between older adult farmers and youth agents was managed and power imbalances equalized when the farmers saw the youth listening to them and inputting data on iPads to share back with agricultural services. Youth bring digital skills that older farmers lack, and even youth who were less educated did well when they learned on the digital device.
- Sustainability and consistency of income are challenges associated with deployment of youth as service providers and agents. The lack of income stability for farmers means that they are unwilling to pay regularly for agent services (where youth fit in), and only have cash for such payments at harvest time. For their part, youth lack “deep pockets” to maintain themselves over many months without income.
- In rural areas, the Planting for Food and Jobs program is providing opportunities in agriculture to less educated populations, including youth. This government program is providing agricultural inputs and subsidizing certain crops.
- USAID and other funders have been involved in training the next generation of agricultural researchers, an important effort given the retirement of the older cohort of agricultural experts. Capacity-building is needed for these young people to specialize but funding from government

and donors is limited, and the private sector only tends to invest when they see a specific problem requiring a research solution.

Health

- Peer group and key informants identified health as a vital priority area for future support and attention. Child and early forced marriage, domestic violence, and maternal and child health, were mentioned as key concerns for youth. Teen pregnancy loomed large as an oft-cited issue.
- Many school-aged girls who drop out do so because of pregnancy. A KII CSO representative explained that local faith-based leaders resist encouraging the use of condoms: *“We believe in organizing programs to engage the youth to educate them on the need to wait until marriage before pregnancy. Most pastors... see [condoms] as evil and so most of them do not want to hear the word condom.”*
- Youth-friendly maternal and child health has been an important intervention. The youth researcher reported hearing from the PGD participants about *“mother-to-mother support groups that educate young mothers on exclusive breastfeeding practices, the importance of antenatal and child welfare clinics and...family planning methods...From what we heard, it has really helped them, they compared themselves now to when they didn’t have such groups, and [they said] they didn’t know anything about family planning and these practices. As a result, now the other mothers are emulating them in these practices.”*
- Addressing these health issues is essential for youths’ ability to stay in school, thrive, and pursue and achieve future aspirations. Yet, youth face the hurdle of an information gap on issues of sexuality and their own reproductive health. USAID has taken bold, innovative steps to address this through the “You Only Live Once” (YOLO) media program with youth actors. There has been progress in reaching youth through a wide range of channels including TV and radio shows and videos on social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.).
- WASH including the building of household latrines has been an important area of engagement for youth, as reported by PGD participants. *“The youth are out there advocating for behavioral change in sanitation, hygiene and health: how to really take care of themselves and how to really take care of their environment.”*— Assessment youth researcher

Recommendations for integrating youth into DOI behavioral profiles and select DO3 behavioral profiles.

Relevant Development Objective 1 Behavioral Profiles

- 1.3.3. Workforce acquires marketable work skills.
- 1.3.2. Citizens seek care for optimal health.
 - Steps 1-3: Pregnant woman seek care.
 - Step 4: Women of reproductive age use modern contraceptive methods.
- 1.1.3. Business associations and other civil society organizations promote an improved business enabling environment.
 - Step 5: Market to new members and stakeholders to grow and stay relevant and sustainable.
- 1.2.1. Businesses use financing to grow.
- 3.3.2. Farmers link to profitable market systems.

1) **Support youth employment and livelihoods development, especially for secondary-school completers.** While youth who do not complete secondary education may be the most vulnerable population of young people, DOI programming should be focused on secondary school completers' transition to the workforce given the personal, familial, and societal investment already expended on their preparation for employment. This cohort does not benefit from large government employment programs as tertiary graduates do. While simultaneously encouraging and supporting students to remain in school through Senior High School, USAID/Ghana should expand school-to-work transition opportunities that resemble the National Service Scheme and NABCO but that are accessible to high school graduates. In partnership with the private sector, these experiences could provide critical workforce experience and be combined with vocational training short-courses and entrepreneurship pathways.

2) **Enhance the ability of Ghanaian education systems to prepare youth for the demands of the labor market.** Create partnership mechanisms between general education and TVET institutions and businesses (through industry associations) to enable educators and employers to collaborate on reforming curriculum and pedagogy that better prepares youth for the world of work. Skills needed by the labor market include foundational (literacy/numeracy), technical and soft skills. USAID's Private Sector Assessment (June 2020) provides many recommendations from a private sector perspective around "foster[ing]" collaboration to tackle the skills mismatch in the labor market" (p. 34), including:

- *Launch or support public-private dialogue around workforce development priorities.* USAID/Ghana can convene training institutions, universities, business associations, large firms with large and growing workforce needs, and government actors such as the Ministry of Education.
- *Bolster private sector involvement in curricula development.* USAID/Ghana can facilitate cross-sector discussion and collaboration to adjust curricula to better align with business needs.

3) Incentivize and support secondary schools and universities to **nurture youth-led innovation through initiatives that foreground hands-on learning and experimentation.** For example, select schools and universities could pilot idea labs, maker spaces, and business plan and science competitions on campus, in partnership with enterprises, think tanks, and innovative NGOs.

4) Mainstream a more **precise and robust understanding of soft skills in key youth-serving institutions** with which USAID partners to better prepare youth for the 21st century labor market and citizenship, and to improve their overall well-being. This work includes behavior change interventions for trainers, teachers and professors, administrators, parents, employers, healthcare providers, and others to improve soft skills development for youth.

5) **Strengthen the entrepreneurship eco-system, including for agriculture** in ways that are youth-friendly and that embrace the scale of the youth unemployment crisis. Access to a variety of supports and resources are needed for youth to succeed in creating, growing, and sustaining their own businesses. These supports include business and targeted technical training, mentorship, market analysis and linkages, financial services, and material inputs/assets. Value chains selected for their interest and accessibility to youth entrepreneurs, as well as higher education entities, can be anchors for this eco-system strengthening. Since no single international partner can take on all dimensions of this work, USAID/Ghana must be strategic in terms of the type of youth it seeks to support (by age-cohort, educational level and affiliation, gender, region, and vulnerability to violent networks⁸) and in some cases, the industrial sector or value chain. Higher education institutions could be an anchor for this work as demonstrated by Ashesi University's pilot (see page 32), though access for less educated youth entrepreneurs and focus on business innovations to improve the lives of populations living in vulnerable situations would need to be developed.

⁸ See recommendations under DO3 for youth entrepreneurship for youth at-risk of engaging in violence for profit or livelihoods.

USAID's Feed the Future/Gender and Youth Assessment (May 2020) makes these more specific recommendations related to agri-business:

- Connect agribusiness women and youth to savings and SACCOs in their geographies (p. 30).
- Work with formal financial institutions, including banks and microfinance institutions (MFIs), to develop financial products that target women and youth. Prioritize products that encourage agricultural technology purchase and maintenance. Seek opportunities to link VSLAs with formal financial institutions (p. 30).
- Connect successful women agribusiness leaders with young women in their communities who are interested in becoming entrepreneurs, but unaware of their options (p. 32).
- Invest in literacy and numeracy programming for youth, particularly female youth, with an emphasis on financial and digital literacy.

6) **Facilitate the flow of information and technology** among value chain actors including youth as actors for co-creation, uptake, and application of technological advances for improving livelihoods. These recommendations from USAID (May 2020)⁹ include:

- Set up a regional innovation fund to invest in rural youth with agricultural technology ideas in need of research and development. The fund can partner with the private sector to help young rural "agripreneurs" and innovators access information and resources and expand networks (p. 33).
- Increase flow of technology information from the private sector and USAID implementing partners to VSLAs, women's producer groups, and agribusiness associations (p. 33).
- USAID's Feed the Future Innovation Labs and other research and development efforts test low-cost, labor-saving technologies, such as fish smokers or maize de-huskers, for female youth involved in crop production and "beyond production" (e.g., processing, storage, and sale of agricultural harvests and fisheries) (p. 34).

7) **Scale up innovative sexual and reproductive health interventions** created by (or with) the Ghana Health Service such as a counseling app and Youth Corners. Scale also includes expanding health innovations, such as the USAID-funded YOLO videos, to other domains of young people's lives such as civic engagement and livelihoods.

8) As the COVID-19 pandemic causes programming around the world to shift to more blended formats, there are **promising opportunities to complement virtual youth outreach with in-person discussion groups**. In-person formats are especially important for creating a safe space for youth discussion of difficult and taboo issues such as sexuality, addiction, mental health, and radicalization.

9) **Mainstream a deeper understanding of adolescent health across the health workforce**, including community health workers and school nurses, in support of the Ghana Health Service. Adolescents and young adults have unique health needs and preferences in accessing health services; these differences from other population cohorts require expertise and attention.

⁹ See Annex C (page 44) of USAID 2020 for a useful summary of value chains and off-farm livelihoods in which youth, disaggregated by gender, have had past experience and express future aspirations.

DO2: Quality Services Delivered with Increased Accountability

Findings

Civic Engagement and Local Governance

- Generational shifts in power are in flux in Ghana (as they are in many societies around the world). Therefore, youth engagement in decision-making is constrained by socio-cultural norms that limit the types of roles considered appropriate for young people.
- Livelihood development is an important building block for dynamic civic engagement because individuals (including, but not limited to youth) cannot be free to volunteer to work on civic issues unless they have a way to survive. For this reason, efforts on accountability in governance sometimes include simultaneous work to build the income of youth and adults through participation in VSLA and financial literacy training.
- Youth parliaments sponsored by the NYA in districts have provided critical platforms to increase youth civic engagement, allowing youth to develop leadership skills and enable them to feel more confident about demanding quality services from local government. The assessment uncovered numerous examples of youth holding service providers accountable, either through the youth parliament or through less formal youth-led group advocacy. For example, a youth group was able to convince community members and the local chief to provide land for a community health facility. In another case, a youth parliament was able to advocate for and get a seating pavilion constructed for patients waiting outside an antenatal care clinic. Youth have also successfully led community clean-up and sanitation campaigns, engaged in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and spreading awareness around electoral processes. Recently, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, youth parliament volunteers partnered with health professionals to increase community awareness around pandemic safety protocol.

“[In one case] ...a school building was being constructed [with support from]...the district assembly Common Fund project. The project that was expected to be completed in like six months had taken a year or two, and...was still not complete. [The youth] sought to know why the project was delaying, get the answers from the district assembly...[eventually] with their intervention, the project has now been completed. The school, the people have access to their school building, and they are...learning [about] their activities in the community. — NGO KII

- In the more successful youth parliaments, youth are also provided with access to information to review and track progress of various community projects and engage in open dialogue with government leaders to discuss any shortfalls. In some cases, youth who have been successful in youth-led advocacy at the local level have successfully run for assembly positions.

“Youth Parliament over the last three years actually held a lot of activities both at the community level and other media platforms...we have been able to advocate for issues of drug abuse, education challenges, issues on sanitation especially trying to pollute the use of household latrines instead of defecating around.” — NGO KII

“We have been able as a group to call on the Member of Parliament in support of the okada [motorcycle taxi] issue. ...[W]hen the okada business got started, we know that most of our youth engaged in that business but the problem is that [when] they go on the street to...work they are harassed by the police...So, we shared contacts with the MP, to share our concerns to her, and the MP bought our idea to speak with the district police boss. And with that, now today we will say that we have achieved an aim that whenever the okada riders go to work, the police have not been harassing them like formerly.” — PGD participant

- Youth have been able to learn and acquire valuable soft skills while engaging in youth parliaments and youth groups, including critical thinking, problem solving, negotiation, teamwork, and leadership. Acquisition of these skills through a “learning-by-doing” process has empowered them, giving them the confidence to hold authorities accountable. Some NGOs/CSOs support this youth development process by mainstreaming such training in their interventions.

“When we set up youth groups [as] the community monitors, we do a training for them so that they can be prepared to go about their responsibilities. We do a training on the knowledge that they need to acquire to monitor projects effectively. We do a training on the structures of the local governance system so that they know the communication structures and how they can get the issues moved up to the top to get them addressed.” — NGO KII

“[Youth] gain so much confidence. The knowledge that they build—it helps them to understand and they are able, when they go to the spaces at the district assembly level, to be respected for the knowledge that they hold, so they are given that opportunity.” — NGO KII

- Despite youth engagement in these different groups being voluntary, the opportunity to make a difference, interact with other youth and acquire a range of skills motivates strong youth participation. Public recognition for their contributions is another intangible incentive for youth civic engagement. However, given most young people’s economic vulnerability, some nominal material supports are also needed, such as transportation subsidies, meals, and refreshments.
- Some KIIs who are thought leaders in good governance believe that the generation and use of real-time data on access and quality of education, health, and financial services is a major challenge to development and equity in the country. One KII saw an opportunity for youth groups to be engaged with researchers in collecting and advocating around the services that are critical to youth success such as increased access to TVET.
- Systemic issues such as politicization and bureaucracy, combined with program funding and sustainability constraints impede progress not only among youth groups but also in youth parliaments.

Access to services: Education and Training

- Key government and civil society actors are working with youth in Ghana to provide education support aimed at increasing access to education and school enrolment at the senior high school levels, as well as reducing dropout rates. The GoG’s Free Senior High School initiative has enabled many young people to persist and complete their high school education. KIIs and PGDs suggest that this effort has had a positive impact on school enrollment and increasing youth education levels and that the FHS program was truly accessible to all youth, including persons with disabilities and young women equally to young men.
- The wide range of NGOs/CSOs working on youth issues in Ghana focus their efforts in several different areas. Some organizations focus on providing meals at schools, while others engage in advocacy, influencing government education policy, and organizing education forums to brainstorm solutions on pressing problems with a range of stakeholders. In addition, many organizations such as CAMFED and the Mastercard Foundation are working directly with youth to provide scholarships, counseling support, and other resources.

“There is what we call in Ghana, the School Feeding Program. SEND has been on it since 2010. Through our efforts that program is meant to provide one hot meal a day to primary school in Ghana.” — NGO Stakeholder KII

- Organizations are also adapting their programs and innovating to provide services that meet youth needs in the digital age. For instance, one NGO the team interviewed had innovated and developed a free digital application that has more than 45 lessons available offline. However, as influential as the FHS program has been, there are still areas of improvement. Youth group representatives highlighted that the modified school calendar and long gaps in the school year hampered student motivation to remain enrolled. They added that in many cases this leads to students from poorer households seeking jobs during off-periods and eventually dropping out of school. During the hiatuses, said one PGD participant, students tend to develop bad habits, “Because if you go to school for the first three months and come back, you will not continue the learning again till for like three months’ time,” and another youth PGD respondent noted, youth tended to loiter, and some girls are more likely to become pregnant when out of school.
- Youth groups also play an important role in advocating for and providing various kinds of education support including motivating their peers, managing district libraries, campaigning for library funds, and organizing stakeholder dialogues to brainstorm ways to improve school performance. Youth group PGD participants highlighted that being youth themselves they understand the unique challenges facing students in school and are well-positioned to advocate for education support and motivate students and fellow youth.

“We motivate the youth to take their studies seriously when in school. We realized that most of the youth are jobless after school and decide to go into [areas such as] ...music which does not [itself] actually bring development. So, we are trying to mobilize them and encourage them to involve themselves into the aspect of music that will be developmental.”

– Youth-led Organization KII

- Several NGO KII stakeholders also stated that education quality in Ghana is still an issue, specifically, there was a need to make it less theory-oriented and integrate skills training commensurate with the requirements of the current job market. PGD participants also echoed the same perception about education quality: *“Our formal education has been...to go to school, learn theory and after theory you will get your work. But some of us have to, after school, some of us have to realize that no, that is not the best thing to do. They should change the system to make it more practical,”* said a youth group PGD.
- Despite positive strides in the education sector, key stakeholders still felt that the resources were inadequate to meet the evolving demands of Ghanaian youth. For instance, KII stakeholders and PGD participants noted that neither libraries nor ICT centers/labs were available in most districts. Moreover, despite the FHS program, educational facilities are still limited compared to the number of students eligible for attending high school.
- Access to education is not limited to general education; TVET access is also too low for the technical training needs required for Ghana’s sustained economic growth. One informant noted that in other countries such as Germany, 40-50 percent of youth are enrolled in TVET and come out of secondary-level education with a marketable skill and the ability to attend higher education later. He contrasted with Ghana which has only six percent of youth in TVET and calls for scaling up Ghana’s free TVET program in order to reach a target of increasing

secondary level TVET enrollment to 20 percent in three to four years. The Free TVET Policy Report is available [here](#).

Recommendations for integrating youth into DO2 behavioral profiles

Relevant Development Objective 2 Behavioral Profiles

- 2.4.1. Citizens participate in local governance.
- 2.4.2. Citizens participate in electoral processes
- 2.4.3. Citizens demand quality services

1) Increase support to local governance actors including District Assemblies, NGOs, the media, and community groups, to engage youth as decision-makers, co-creators, and evaluators of new programs, policies, and regulations targeting their communities. Youth should be involved in all aspects of the design stages of interventions targeted for their communities. Successful engagement of youth must include support and training for adult leaders to be able to productively partner with youth. Engaging youth *from the very beginning* is important for setting expectations of both youth and adults.

Recommendations from the USAID Gender Analysis (April 2020)

- Support District Assemblies (DA) in strengthening unit committees and area councils as a means of increasing the voice of the communities, especially regarding women and youth (p. 48).
- Support youth parliaments for engaging youth to learn about issues and advocate for responsive governance (p. 48).
- Encourage discussions and consultation at the DA and constituency levels on how to discourage and avoid political vigilantism and electoral misconduct (p. 48).

2) Increase outreach to youth to engage in district and regional policy and program formation, implementation, and evaluation. Youth can be best reached, perhaps simultaneously, through at least three different vehicles: the 1) NYA-led Youth Parliaments; 2) independent youth-led groups and associations (many of which are unregistered); and 3) youth networks that are registered as and/or are off-shoots of NGOs/CSOs. An example of the latter is CAMA which is the network of young women graduates who give back to their communities after they themselves have been supported by a scholarship from CAMFED, an INGO (with national affiliation) focused on girls' education. USAID support to youth to actively engage in improving governance and service delivery must be carefully crafted

3) Modalities for engagement of youth should be innovative and forward-facing, and to the degree possible, should be peer-to-peer, making use of the kinds of communication they favor and have access to, including drama/theater, video, visual arts, and social media. Recommendations from the USAID/DRG Assessment (November 2020) concur:

- Support new modes of civic action. Speak to the younger generation in the ways and modes they use and understand (p. 51).
 - Challenge CSOs to be innovative and engage young people in designing new programs.
 - Incorporate new mobilization modes and methods that engage young people where and how they communicate.

An example of this type of successful outreach is USAID's YOLO activity which features drama, video, youth actors, and social media. The YOLO format could be expanded beyond the health sector to engage youth in civic issues, peacebuilding, and entrepreneurship.

4) Step up youth's capacity to hold governance actors accountable in a meaningful way by ensuring they have the necessary skills and learning experiences. These skills include research strategy; data collection, monitoring and analysis; leadership; communication; and policy formation and advocacy. Journalism is one possible pathway: by increasing youth interaction and collaboration with the media (radio, print, etc.) youth gain critical skills and feel empowered to hold authorities accountable. Geospatial/community mapping and blogging are other youth-friendly modalities. Another pathway is through higher education; university youth can be engaged in research of benefit to their communities through capstone projects and project-based learning, while simultaneously building their skills and knowledge. Finally, NGOs/CSOs are actively fostering youth volunteerism and policy engagement such as [Youth Arise](#), though they are clustered in Accra and a few regional cities. USAID investment could be used to replicate these NGO leadership training models to extend opportunities to youth in rural areas, especially in the North.

The USAID Gender Analysis (April 2020) provides more detail on citizen-led accountability modalities that equally apply to youth:

- New innovations, such as citizen scorecards, social audits, and user-friendly public financial management (PFM) templates hold promise for increasing citizens' interest, understanding, and engagement. The district citizens monitoring committees (DCMCs) that have been introduced in some areas serve an important interface function for participatory planning and feedback on DA performance to improve responsiveness and accountability (p. 34).

USAID's YouthPower2: [Youth Excel](#) activity is a global activity designed to strengthen youth-led implementation research. Youth Excel's pioneering approaches for engaging youth in research involves partnerships among local universities, NGOs, and youth-led organizations focused on strengthening solutions to local development challenges.

Another example is USAID's [YouthMappers](#), a global network of university chapters that enable youth to use geospatial mapping techniques to inform development solutions. The Ghana YouthMappers chapter, hosted by the University of Cape Coast, has been active recently in support of a Feed the Future activity requiring accurate mapping of women's farms to understand the challenges they face. A [blog article](#) describes how the university youth partnered with an NGO to create data leading to a better understanding of women's farming. This type of technology-enabled, youth-charged activity should be scaled up and extended even to youth who are not enrolled in universities.

5) Take care not to exacerbate the politicization of the youth field and break the cycle of election season politicization. Engagement with youth groups requires due diligence to the surrounding politics of grievance and reward. There is the tendency of political actors (both government and out-of-office politicians) to take up the mantle of youth grievance, offering rewards to certain youth factions which politicizes and fractures civil society in potentially dangerous ways. Instead, USAID should help build mechanisms for pro-social youth inclusion, voice, capacity-building, and advocacy that operate on a regular basis, not just at election time. An example of a non-partisan, youth-led national network of allied youth groups is [FOSDA](#), founded in 2014 from a dialogue with youth with support from a Ghanaian NGO and Oxfam. Politicization of youth groups could be countered by creating neutral spaces or neutral groups wherein a set of ground rules could be set to foster open communication and constructive dialogue on community development. Further, the USAID/DRG Assessment (November 2020) recommends:

- Mobilize peace networks to build continual youth engagement rather than only trying to avoid violence closer to elections (p. 51).

6) Support student government, civic education, and meaningful youth participation in education reform. The purpose of this support is not only to create the next generation of active citizens but also to strengthen education reform through the power of youth mobilization and insights into educational challenges that only youth can bring because “they live it.” Not unlike schools around the world, many educational institutions in Ghana (including secondary school, TVET, and universities) tend to value only individual academic performance at the expense of treating students as active partners in creating an effective and inclusive learning community. Not only can youth and their ideas be part of the solutions that bedevil educational reform, but they also develop, in the process, critical 21st century soft skills that they carry with them for the rest of their lives. The DRG assessment calls out areas where such support can be targeted: “after-school programs, weekend and summer camps, student jobs, [extracurricular] clubs and student democratic government.”

DO3: Sustainable Development Accelerated in Northern Ghana

Findings

Services for Youth in Northern Ghana

- KIs and youth PGD respondents were cognizant of the disparities between the north and south of Ghana, an indication of the challenges that lie ahead for addressing youth issues in the north. But views were mixed as to whether the government is responsive to the needs of youth in the northern region. Some youth were critical of northern local authorities in terms of their responsiveness to their concerns and needs. Specifically, while some say the bodies like the District Assembly have done little to improve opportunities for youth, others attribute that neglect of youth issues to youth apathy.
- Disparities that disproportionately affect youth in the North include lack of access to employment, entrepreneurship opportunities, education, and reproductive rights and health care, and this reality is not lost on young people in the north. For example, one youth PGD respondent from the North pointed to the unique problems of youth in the north, saying, “... [There are] a very different sets of problems [here] as opposed to young people in the coastal part of Ghana.”

Another youth noted less access to education among youth in the north in general, and further cited the wide gap in education levels between girls and boys. The prevalence of persistent traditional norms and practices that uphold male dominance was cited as a reason for the gap, which was said to affect adolescent girls in particular. A female PGD respondent in the north said, “The challenges and the adolescent girls in the north are quite different than the girls in the south. We receive [less] access to quality of education... As to quality healthcare, especially for young women, it is a very big problem. For those who managed to go to school and get some level education, access to a quality job is a big problem.”

Another noted, “The limited access to employment, widespread low income, are problems that translate into access to social services, like housing, for example.”

- Lack of access to information about opportunities likely contributes to faltering progress in sustainable development in the north; youth are not immune to this challenge. One PGD participant from the North observed, “I think a lot has been done with regards to youth development in the north. It’s just that the youth themselves are not concerned about the situation. The northern

authority is doing a lot, but the youth themselves do not have the zeal and passion to be part. Some of the youths do not have information about what is happening around or in their communities. Most of the NGOs around do not sell the programs to them especially those in the rural areas. The youth always sit and wait for the government to do something for them even though they can do things to change their lives.”

Youth Safety and Security

PGD participants expressed a mixed situation for youth safety and security in northern Ghana. They needed that at times youth were subject to police brutality.

“I remember in Tsanle, there was a situation between the members of the community and the police security service [because] a lot of young people were brutalized...[T]o date, we have not received any reports of action that have been taking to prevent this unforeseen circumstance from happening again. That is a worrying situation, given the poverty levels in the region too, exposing young people to prostitution and a lot of vices.” — PGD Participant, North

Northern migrants to the south are exposed as well to risks when they take on informal sector work.

“Some of them have to drop out of school and some have to travel to the southern part of the country to carry out what do you call "kayaye" (head porting), exposing them to all sorts of risks.”

— PGD Participant, North

KII and PGD data suggest that youth groups are playing a strong role in security and safety especially as it relates to youth, perhaps as much or more than government entities and NGOs. In many cases, youth can build good working relationships with local police forces, volunteering to support the community police in bolstering security and reducing theft. Youth representatives also collaborate with police to sensitize the community to issues of peace and conflict, specifically by discouraging fellow youth from engaging in conflict and violent activities. They also serve as monitors to ensure that in-school youth are not loitering in unsafe places. In addition, *“In terms of security, the youth group aims at providing community support to the police in providing security to the area. This is to ensure that the thieves don't steal from people at night. So this has curbed the rate of stealing in the area,”* said a Youth PGD

Other youth-led safety efforts include helping to install streetlights and fix potholes in roads to improve road safety. They provide nighttime security support and discourage community youth from loitering outdoors late at night. In addition, youth engage in productive activities and do not resort to crime. In dealing with the safety concerns around motorcycle taxis (*okada*), youth groups developed programs such as “Okada Meet the Police,” a collaborative educational forum to educate motorcyclists and young boys on traffic rules and regulations and riding do’s and don’ts with the support of local police.

NGO stakeholders are also involved: youth camps have been set up to raise awareness and discourage youth from participating in conflict or violent extremism and emphasize the importance of religious cohesion.

“You visit a community and you will see young men and women who are not on talking terms with each other. This is something we have been able to put a stop to and we are successful about it. During this Eid festivities, we will go round the Muslim communities to talk to them about peace and unity.” — Youth PGD

In one PGD, participants emphasized that youth parliaments also provide an excellent platform for youth to talk about their grievances, as well as debate on key issues and try and resolve community conflict. In these contexts, youth feel like they have a space to discuss their concerns and are less likely to resort to violence to make their point.

Youth Engagement in Northern Ghana

- The stakes are high for meaningful youth engagement in northern Ghana. Social, political, and economic inequities can breed grievance which can, in turn, be mobilized by malignant actors leading to violent extremism and instability. On the other hand, given the deprivations of the north, youth engagement can be a powerful engine for change.

“[Adolescents] are ready to take charge of their own lives, their own-selves in order to get the ideal future they all aspire to, and when you have a chance of discussing or having one-on-one discussions with these adolescents, you see that there were a lot of things that they didn't know, but [that] now they're getting understanding on those things.” — KII, Northern Region Network for Youth

- Northern youth groups, like their counterparts around the country, have successfully created effective advocacy campaigns and development activities. For example, in Malshegu, youth and adult women can go to a clinic for antenatal care and other health services. Through further efforts of the Sagnerigu Youth Parliament, youth were able to advocate secure a pavilion that was constructed for clinic patients. Groups also led a campaign that included dialogue with stakeholders on the need for peaceful presidential and parliamentary education during the 2020 general election. Other groups are engaged in HIV/AIDS issues in the north and work on raising awareness among youth.

“We have been able to establish 15 Youth Parliament in 15 districts in two [Northern] regions that are running effectively and that are actually promoting a democracy, a governance, and good governance and demanding accountability at the local level.”

— NGO KII based in the North

- There is some evidence that GoG youth mechanisms such as the National Youth Authority are not reaching youth-led groups in the North. At least one KI in the North—though this perception may be more widespread—felt that governmental youth policy implementation is very weak, mostly due to lack of coordination and budget resources. There was also a concern that political leaders launch their own youth initiatives without coordinating through the NYA which reduces effectiveness.
- Youth PGDs conducted in the north revealed perceptions of public apathy around engagement in core development issues in the north. A number of reasons for this was cited including a lack of awareness and lack of interest in development among youth, as well as youth feeling jaded about politicians' intentions. Feelings of alienation among youth was also apparent. As a north-based NGO representative asserted: *“People don't really see the interest or the importance of*

advocacy. People just believe that development must come from somewhere and not from within. So sometimes when you are going to give them advocacy, they just believe that you are going to waste their time or what you are going to tell them wouldn't benefit them, so they just don't really see the need [to be engaged]. Even those who may give you attention will be people who are 35 years or the aged. The youths will not even see the importance. This is their mentality, so they won't even participate."

- Questions of deprivation, grievance and motivation in the north are complex and were not able to be fully fleshed out by a virtual assessment. Nevertheless, PGD participants felt that youth who were out-of-school were most at risk, whether they were in rural or urban areas.

Recommendations for Integrating Youth into DO3 Behavior Profiles

Relevant Development Objective 1 Behavioral Profiles

- 3.1.3: Private sector invests in low-cost quality services
- 3.1.4: Citizens Advocate for Government to Deliver Quality Services Equitably
 - Step 5: Create networks of youth and women to advocate for equitable distribution of quality services
- 3.3.2: Farmers link to profitable market systems
- 3.3.4: Most vulnerable households use community support and social services
- 3.3.5: Parents send their children to school year round
- 3.4.1: Peace actors improve institutional collaboration and resource allocation
- 3.4.2: Citizens adopt mechanisms to prevent and respond to conflict

The recommendations for the north emerging from this assessment are consonant with recommendations for the other two DOs because youth engagement in development—and youths' own developmental needs—are not fundamentally different based on geography. In fact, to increase national social cohesion, it is important that youth in the north have, to the degree possible, the same opportunities as youth in the south. However, to achieve that equity will require increased targeting of resources and sensitivity to conditions in the north. The limitations of a virtual format made unearthing those nuances extremely challenging.

- 1) **Enhance the capacity of broad-based groups** such as the [Northern Youth Network](#) to identify youth concerns and to mobilize youth for development activities. Due to the risk of alienation, isolation, and grievance in the northern region, USAID should take particular care to ensure youth voice and inclusion in all development activities in the region, building on existing local youth groups and networks that exist. Increasing the perception of youth as an opportunity worthy of investment as opposed to a risk to suppress is an important starting point for engaging with youth and their communities.
- 2) **Leverage community radio, mobile messaging, and community-based networks** to disseminate information to youth about existing programs and opportunities. There is strong possibility that youth in northern Ghana experience alienation in part because they lack access to information.
- 3) **Invest in improving livelihoods for female and male youth in northern Ghana in agriculture and the off-farm rural service sector.** For example, opportunities may exist in poultry-raising, irrigated horticulture, and cash crops. Recommendations in DOI (workforce development, entrepreneurship, access to business start-up capital and agricultural livelihoods and innovation) are all relevant for northern Ghana.

4) Engage youth in building peaceful communities across a range of in-school and community-based contexts and modalities. Selected recommendations from USAID’s Conflict Assessment (April 2019) include:

- Promote the substantive inclusion of youth in peacebuilding and conflict sensitive development programming to mitigate youth exclusion and disengagement (p. 40).
- Support youth civics education with the goal of de-escalating youth contributions to hyper-partisan politics in a multi-ethnic environment. Promote the development and implementation of effective civic education curricula in schools, including support for the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) (p. 33).
- Promote youth peace clubs and non-violent youth organizations in their efforts to reduce the appeal of violence (p.33).
- Promote media literacy education for youth, with special attention to social media literacy, including its potential to spread hoaxes and inflammatory speech and to serve as a tool for recruiting youth to VE (p. 45).
- Identify local capacities to detect early warning signs of violent extremism and engage youth at risk of religious extremist recruitment (p. 46).

5) Provide economic pathways to vulnerable youth in the north as an alternative to participating in violence for material gain. USAID’s Conflict Assessment (ibid) suggests (p. 40):

- Support vocational/entrepreneurship training for youth, in collaboration with the private sector, including apprenticeship programs and youth “boot camps,” to mitigate the economic incentive for youth participation in violence.
- Support access to capital and credit for youth entrepreneurs, providing alternatives to engagement in violence for profit.

To identify which youth are most vulnerable (as opposed to most youth in the region who experience reduced access to employment in comparison to those in the south), it may be necessary to develop a risk differentiation assessment tool – such as the [Intrinsic, Contextual and Structural Analytical Framework for Vulnerability](#) framework (ICS) – adapted for the Ghanaian context.

IV. ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR USAID/GHANA

Most of this Report’s recommendations are organized by DO and are noted above, even if they require cross-sector collaboration. Additional recommendations are truly cross-cutting and require the engagement of the entire Mission. Finally, this assessment was quite broad and gave rise to areas in which USAID might invest in more targeted assessments to help inform strategic questions.

1) Create Mission-wide mechanisms that facilitate linkage of active Ghanaian youth groups and networks to USAID/Ghana staff and USAID-funded implementing partners (and vice-versa). The purpose is to share information about dynamic youth groups that may work in more than one sector or on cross-sectoral responses to development challenges. Mechanisms might include:

- A Youth Council platform for representative youth in Ghana to give input to, inform and shape USAID/Ghana investment strategies and modalities. (The US Embassy might partner on this.)
- A USAID database of youth-led organizations and youth-serving organizations for use in outreach.
- A mini-grant program to support locally led development and capacity development of youth-led organizations. A buy-in activity through the [Youth Excel](#) program provides a mechanism to pursue this type of mini-grant program.

2) **Analyze the Mission's youth portfolio in terms of strategic investments along various points in the youth age span.** The youth age span of 15-35 years is quite wide and various technical sectors tend to focus on different segments of this span. Furthermore, each sector needs to understand the different needs and capacities of youth at different developmental stages. For instance, the sexual and reproductive health needs of 15-year-olds are quite different from those of 25-year-olds. Sometimes cross-sectoral collaboration be challenged by the disconnects that happen when staff in technical sectors are focused on young people at different developmental stages. For example, economic growth officers are primarily concerned with the labor market readiness of young adult hires while education officers may be focused on early grade reading. Both are important, and it may be possible to do both at the same time; but other times, strategic decisions must be made to either focus efforts or to find synergies such as those in support of DO2 on accountability and DO3 on sustainable development in the North.

3) Recommended areas for **further USAID/Ghana assessment, including youth-led assessments and research.** The following areas are selected for Mission consideration for further learning because they are either urgent or emerging challenges facing youth in Ghana (and globally), and there does not appear to be much Ghana-specific literature on them.

- Youth workforce development including the role of TVET reform and analysis of strategic economic sectors such as agriculture and tourism.
- Entrepreneurship and innovation with a focus on the enabling environment for youth entrepreneurs.
- A nuanced study of the particular needs and opportunities for youth living in northern Ghana.
- The digital divide and opportunities for enhancing education, youth livelihoods, and youth needs for services and information through digital resources.
- New challenges in health that are affecting youth disproportionately such as obesity, substance abuse, mental health (particularly, depression, anxiety, and suicide), and challenging attitudes around gender and sexual orientation and identity.
- Migration: both internal (North/South Ghana) and international.
- Nutritional and food security status of youth by region and urban/rural residence.

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Annex A: Detailed Research Questions

I. Youth Context and Needs

1. **General situation.** What is the overall status/situation of youth in Ghana (e.g., population size, education, workforce and entrepreneurship training, health, employment, civic engagement, security, etc.) and across Ghana's regions?
 1. What are the defining structure and characteristics of youth cohorts in Ghana, including disparities by key categories such as poverty level, gender, age, disability, religion, ethnicity, urban vs. rural, etc.?
2. **Gaps.** What are the most important challenges facing youth development in Ghana according to youth (and where comparison is possible, according to families, the government, NGOs, and the private sector)?
3. **Threats.** What do youth perceive as the most pressing risks or threats (self-identified) to their growth and development, such as radicalization, violent extremism, corruption, gender-based violence, political manipulation, and crime? (*Note: given the sensitivity of these subjects, data may be limited.*)
4. **Actors/Stakeholders.** Which key actors/stakeholders (government ministries, donors, civil society, etc.) are addressing the issues identified for Q2 and Q3?
5. **Bright spots.** What is working well for youth in Ghana? What promising policies, structures, programs, and/or partnerships currently exist that could be learned from and scaled?

II. USAID Investment in and Engagement with Youth

1. **Strategic investment.** What opportunities for engagement in the youth sector align with the CDCS objectives and select behavior profiles? How might current and anticipated USAID activities enable youth and youth-serving institutions to enact and scale positive behavior change?
 - a. DO 1: Broad-based economic growth accelerated and sustained
 1. What do female and male youth (by key sub-cohorts)¹⁰ perceive as the main barriers *and* opportunities to their successful transition from education to the labor market?
 2. What are promising initiatives, programs, policies promoting youth livelihoods and employment, with special attention to northern Ghana (see III.3 below)? What opportunities exist for collaboration with the private sector? (See 6.a above.)
 - b. DO 2: Quality services delivered with accountability
 1. What impediments exist that limit the full and robust participation of young people in governance? What do youth identify as barriers to the equitable and effective delivery of quality services (especially health and education) with accountability?
 2. What are existing platforms, movements, and/or government structures conducive to active youth participation in governance and service delivery, especially for youth-related services such as reproductive health services or accelerated learning? How can USAID best support female and male youth as drivers of change in demanding accountability for quality service delivery and in leadership positions in providing quality services?
 3. What opportunities exist to involve youth in local revenue mobilization (such as local government budget decision-making, private sector social impact investing/social responsibility, volunteer mobilization, and community asset

¹⁰ For example, residence by rural/urban and region; education level; age cohort; disability status, etc.

leverage)?

c. DO 3: Sustainable development accelerated in northern Ghana

1. How can the quality and sustainability of non-formal programs for youth in northern Ghana be improved?¹¹
2. How can USAID best empower youth in northern Ghana to advocate for equitable delivery of services?

2. **Modalities for engagement.** How can USAID investment in youth support Ghana in its Journey to Self-Reliance and Ghana Beyond Aid vision?

- a. How could USAID engage with youth to effectively promote youth civic engagement in the Ghanaian context through mirroring and modeling effective practices? What are the most promising fora for youth engagement (both face-to-face and virtual/social media)?
- b. What areas for partnership offer the most potential benefit to support youth in Ghana (i.e., partnerships with other USG agencies, the private sector, NGOs, universities, faith-based organizations, etc.)? Which actors lend themselves to a Collaborative and Diverse Partnering arrangement for co-creation and innovative financing?

¹¹ Led and implemented by NGOs, non-formal programs for youth span a diverse range of sector needs including education, workforce training, life skills, civic engagement, conflict mitigation, and health services.

Annex B: USAID/Ghana CDCS Behavior Profiles Most Relevant to Youth

Note: Where specific steps within a behavior profile are particularly relevant to youth, they are noted, otherwise, all steps are relevant.

DOI: Broad-Based Economic Growth Accelerated and Sustained

- 1.3.3. Workforce acquires marketable work skills.
- 1.3.2. Citizens seek care for optimal health.
 - Steps 1-3: Pregnant woman seek care.
 - Step 4: Women of reproductive age use modern contraceptive methods.
- 1.1.3. Business associations and other civil society organizations promote an improved business enabling environment.
 - Step 5: Market to new members and stakeholders to grow and stay relevant and sustainable.
- 1.2.1. Businesses use financing to grow.

DO2: Quality Services Delivered with Increased Accountability

- 2.4.1. Citizens participate in local governance.
- 2.4.2. Citizens participate in electoral processes.
- 2.4.3. Citizens demand quality services.

DO3: Sustainable development accelerated in Northern Ghana

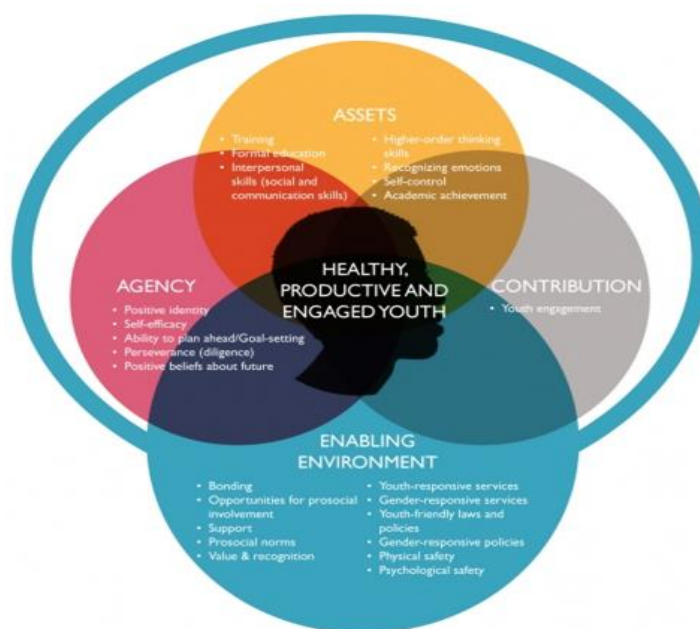
- 3.1.3. Private sector invests in low-cost quality services.
- 3.1.4. Citizens Advocate for Government to Deliver Quality Services Equitably.
 - Step 5: Create networks of youth and women to advocate for equitable distribution of quality services.
- 3.3.2. Farmers link to profitable market systems.
- 3.3.4. Most vulnerable households use community support and social services.
- 3.3.5. Parents send their children to school year round.
- 3.4.1. Peace actors improve institutional collaboration and resource allocation.
- 3.4.2. Citizens adopt mechanisms to prevent and respond to conflict.

Annex C: Positive Youth Development Framework

This assessment is informed by USAID’s commitment to the PYD approach, both in terms of the kinds of questions asked of youth and the search for promising and innovative approaches to address priorities identified by youth during the assessment. A wide array of resources on PYD can be accessed at USAID’s YouthPower website.

PYD is both a philosophy and an approach to youth development that “engages youth along with their families, communities, and/or governments so that youth are empowered to reach their full potential. PYD approaches build skills, assets, and competencies; foster healthy relationships; strengthen the environment; and transform systems.” This approach has had a proven positive impact across an array of outcomes and sectors in the United States and other high-income countries. Development partners, governments, practitioners, and policymakers are increasingly applying this approach to provide more holistic support for youth in low- and middle-income countries. The [PYD framework](#) offers four domains through which the vision of healthy, productive, and engaged youth can be achieved:

Figure 3: Positive Youth Development



- **Assets.** Youth have the necessary resources, skills, and competencies to achieve desired outcomes.
- **Agency.** Youth perceive and can employ their assets and aspirations to influence their own decisions about their lives and set their own goals as well as to act upon those decisions to achieve desired outcomes.
- **Contribution.** Youth are engaged as a source of change for their own positive development and for that of their communities.
- **Enabling environment.** Youth are surrounded by an environment that develops and supports their assets, agency, and access to services and opportunities and that strengthens their ability to avoid risks and stay safe, secure, and protected and live without fear of violence or retribution.¹²

¹² An enabling environment encourages and recognizes youth while promoting their social and emotional competence to thrive. The term “environment” includes four key domains: (1) social: relationships with peers and adults; (2) normative: attitudes, norms, and beliefs; (3) structural: laws, policies, programs services, and systems; and (4) physical: safe, supportive spaces.

Annex D: Methodology and Data Collection Tools

USAID/Ghana Youth Assessment

Protocols for Data Collection: Youth and KIIs

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PGD AND INTERVIEWS (WRITTEN VERSION FOR SHARING ELECTRONICALLY)

USAID/Ghana has commissioned Making Cents International (MCI), a Washington, D.C.- based research firm, to conduct an assessment to understand how USAID can better support youth development in Ghana. Your informed consent is requested to participate in this assessment. You may participate in a peer group discussion (PGD), individual interview, or online text chat.

Researchers with MCI will facilitate, record and/or take notes during PGDs and interviews. We will not record your name and you may use a pseudonym instead of your given name. We will use the information you provide to generate a report and recommendations for USAID on future investments to support youth in Ghana. Participation in this discussion is completely voluntary and you are not required to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable discussing and are encouraged to only share details and information you feel comfortable disclosing to the study team. You may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. You are not required to use the video function on your phone or computer for conversations, but if you do, it can make the discussion easier.

Only essential researchers on the MCI team will have access to your information and on a need-to-know basis. Your name will not be recorded in our notes or shared in the final report; instead, we will use a unique identification number to record your responses. Your personal information will only be shared with immediate study team members for analyzing the data for the study. We ask that you not share with others outside of the PGD, interview or text-chat what participants have shared during the discussion. All your information will be de-identified and stored in electronic password-protected files and computers on Making Cents International's secure, private server. There are no direct benefits to you by participating in this discussion however, your contribution will help USAID to improve youth programming for the benefits of youth in Ghana.

PGDs and interviews will each last about 60 minutes. Participants in the PGDs will first have a one-to-one intake survey prior to the PGD. By staying on the PGD Zoom, conference call, or text-chat, you consent to participate in the discussion. If you would like to discontinue participation, you are welcome to leave, and we thank you for your time and interest in our work.

If you have further questions about this study after participating, please contact YouthPower2: Learning and Evaluation Project Director, Christie Scott, christie@makingcents.com.

YOUTH PARTICIPANT INTAKE FORM

Focused Discussion Information	Date: ___/___/___
Name of Facilitator:	
Name of Recorder:	

Focused Discussion Information	Date: ___/___/___
PGD#:	

Individual Intake Form

[Complete this form for each PGD participant prior to the PGD session. Fill each participant and record this information. This form can be administered a day or two before the PGD session or a couple of hours before the PGD session. The facilitator will seek consent when asking for provision of the intake information as well as again when the participant engages in other data collection activities.]

Introduction to Part I

Thank you for agreeing to meet with us today. My name is _____ and my colleague's is _____. We are meeting with you on behalf of Making Cents International, a Washington, D.C.-based research firm commissioned by USAID/Ghana to conduct an assessment to understand how USAID can better support youth development in Ghana.

Our discussion today will take place in two parts. In this first part, I am going to ask some questions to learn more about your background. In the second part, we will meet as a group virtually with other members of your group to discuss topics related to services and youth development in your community and in this country.

But first we need to ask for your informed consent to participate in the assessment. You should have received a written informed consent by email or text. *[Pause to hear from them if they received it.]* Any information you provide for us during our time together will be kept strictly confidential and will not be attributed specifically to you. We will not write your name or any other identifiable information. After you participate in the peer group discussion, we ask that you not share who took part in the discussion or what others have said in it, with anyone outside of the discussion group. We will ask this of all participants. Participation is voluntary, and you can choose not to answer any specific question or all of the questions. You can also stop the discussion or leave the session at any time. However, we hope you will participate since your views are important.

Do you agree to participate? *[Pause to hear response.]*

Do you have any questions? *[Facilitator: Answer any informational questions about the assessment.]*

Comments:

Demographic Information: We would now like to spend approximately 10 minutes collecting individual information from you. My colleague _____ and I will fill out an individual form for each of you that gives us a bit more detail about some of your basic background.

1. Sex: () Male () Female () Other

2. Age Cohort: () Ages 18-20 () Ages 21-25 () Ages 26-35

3. Region:

- () Greater Accra
- () Oti Region
- () Western Region
- () Northern Region
- () Upper East Region
- () Upper West Region

4. District

- () Ablekuma South Municipal
- () Nkwanta North District
- () Sagnarigu Municipal
- () Bawku Central Municipal
- () Nadowli-Kaleo District
- () Tarkwa-Nsuaem Municipal

5. Do you have any form of disability?

- () Yes
- () No

6. If yes, what type of disability do you have?

- () Physical disability
- () Visual impairment
- () Hearing impairment

Intellectual disability

Emotional disability

7. Family Status:

Married Single

8. If unmarried, have you been married previously?

Yes No

9. Do you have children:

Yes

No

10. If yes, how many: 1 2 3 4 or more

11. Have you been through any educational system? Yes No

12. If yes, which education system have you attended:

Traditional/ Religious

Formal Public School

Formal Private School

13. What formal educational level have you completed?

None

Some primary education

Basic Education Certificate Examination or completion of Junior High School(JHS)

Senior secondary school/senior high school/ vocational/technical school

Professional certificate (Teacher, Agric, Nursing, Allied Sciences)

Diploma (Polytechnic, University, training colleges)

Bachelor's degree

Master's and post-graduate

Doctorate or equivalent

14. Are you currently enrolled in a formal (regular) education program?

Enrolled

Not enrolled

15. Are you currently enrolled in a non-formal education program? That is education that occurs outside the regular school system (For example, education organized by the community for example functional literacy programs)?

- Enrolled
 Not enrolled

16. What is your employment status?

- Formal employment (employment that are regulated for example wage employment)| *If formally employed, list type of employment* _____
- Informal employment (employment that are not regulated or protected by the state e.g., farm work, trading, artisan etc.) | *If informally employed, list type of employment* _____.
- Is it family-based work? Yes or No.
- Not employed, Not looking for work
- Not employed, Looking for work
- Unable to work

17. Have you migrated (moved) from the village or town in which you were born?

- No.
- Yes, from a village in a rural area to a city within the *same* region.
- Yes, from a city to a village within the *same* region
- Yes, from a Northern region to a Southern region.
- Yes, from a Southern region to a Northern region.

18. If yes, when did you migrate/move?
 ___# of years (or months) ago.

19. If yes, why did you move/migrate?

- To attend school.
- To find a job or pursue a livelihood or business.
- For safety or security reasons.
- To access more or better services such as electricity, water, ICT/technology, roads, etc.
- Parents made the decision to migrate.
- Other: _____
- Prefer not to say.

COMMENTS:

PEER GROUPS DISCUSSION

Note: Length of narrative and number of questions will be adapted for actual session modality.

A. Modality: Zoom or Phone Conference Call

Welcome and overview.

Welcome, and thank you so much for agreeing to participate in this discussion today! My name is [NAME] and joining us is my colleague [RECORDER'S NAME]. We are meeting with you on behalf of Making Cents International. As I or my colleague indicated during our one-on-one discussion, the purpose of this assessment is to understand the perspective of youth in Ghana and how USAID/Ghana can better support youth programming. This discussion will last about 60 minutes. Please remember about informed consent we discussed in your individual intake: that you should keep our discussion here today confidential (not share with others outside this group) and that if you have any questions or need clarification on anything about this assessment, please feel free to ask and I will be glad to respond to them.

Introductions. Let's get started by asking each of you to share your first name or the pseudonym name you would like to be called during this discussion. [*Facilitator: wait for each person to mention their names and then thank them for participating*] Thank you for taking time off your busy schedule to participate in this interview. Your perspectives are very important to us.

I. Personal Aspiration:

1. Tell us about your career aspirations. Where do you see yourself in the next five to ten years from now? Where are you and what would you like to be doing? [*Recorders, be sure to capture all responses, including responses that are not only career-focused such as family, community service, personal, etc.*]

II. Youth Group:

We would like to continue by learning more about you and your youth group.

1. Please tell us about your group's vision, mission, programs, and activities. What have been some of your main achievements, as well as challenges?
2. Do you feel your group has the support you need to succeed? Why or why not?

III. Youth Services

Now we'd like to learn more about what has made you successful so far in your life. Young people need many kinds of services, support, and opportunities to become successful adults. These include education and training as well as help finding jobs or creating their own businesses. You often need financial services, and health services. They also need opportunities to participate as citizens in their communities and to feel safe. In this discussion, we'll explore the different kinds of services and supports that you and other youth in your community are *currently* accessing, how well these have been helping you, and what services or supports are missing or are unavailable. And finally, we will look at what *could be done* to enable more youth to have the support they need, including what youth themselves can do.

3. **Programs/services they have used or are using.**

First, I'd like to discuss the services, supports and opportunities that you and your friends have recently or are currently participating in or using. These could be a youth or recreation program in your community; an education or training program; job placement service; healthcare; mentoring; or many other supports. *[Facilitator: Explain that they are welcome to share the name of the school, program, or service, but they don't have to. Let's do this as a rapid brainstorm and then go back and have each explain more deeply. Recorder should keep a running list of youth responses.]*

Probes:

[Facilitator: allow the participants to choose and name the types of services that come to their mind. You may select a few from the list below to prompt them if: a) there is not much response; or b) all the youth are talking about the same kind of service. Do not go through each type of service. You may also shape this according to what you learned about the participants in the section above on youth groups.]

- Education and training
- Employment services (finding a job, mentoring on the job)
- Business/entrepreneurship support (for youth-led business)
- Financial services (bank account, loans, savings)
- Health (including sexual and reproductive health, mental health services, substance abuse) *[Note: these are sensitive topics that might be covered by talking generally "about what friends or 'friends of friends' are doing" versus individual disclosure]*
- Leadership and civic engagement
- Security provided by the police or community members within the community; and personal safety (e.g., gender-based violence)
- Justice and legal aid (if involved with justice system)

4. **What's working well.** Now let's go back and hear why you decided to participate in this program or service, what you were hoping to get from it?
- a. How is it helping you or young people in your community?
 - b. In what ways is/was it specifically responsive to young people like yourself?

Probes:

- Ask for these kinds of details, as appropriate: Location of service, mode of delivery, time of day, length of program, fun/engaging, relevant/meaningful, balance between challenging and supportive, etc.
- Among these services, are there any that have been particularly excellent? Why did you choose this example?

5. **What's not working.**
- a. Do you feel the services you just mentioned are adequate?
 - b. If not, why not? What is missing?
 - c. How could they have been better?
 - d. Have you noticed any improvement (in accessibility or quality over time), and if so, what changed?

Probes: *[Facilitator: ask only questions that are applicable to the group]*

- How widespread do you think your experience is in comparison to other youth in your community?
- Do you think all youth in Ghana have access to this service? [Probes, as needed: region, urban/rural, income level, disability status, educational background.]
- Do young women have the same experiences as young men? Explain why or why not.
- Why do you think that the services you mentioned were not as helpful as they could have been? What are the causes or factors contributing to this poor performance?

6. Stakeholders/allies for youth.

- a. Who (individuals or institutions) has been working to improve youth services/opportunities in your community?
- b. Who are the individuals or institutions working to improve youth services and opportunity in Ghana as a whole?

Probes:

- Have you ever been asked what you think of a program or service intended for youth?
 - If so, explain by whom, how did that consultation feel, and what came of it (i.e, did you notice any improvement)?
 - If not, what would you have liked to tell the program operators or officials, and how would you like to tell them (e.g., face-to-face discussion, survey, anonymous, individual, in group, etc.)?

7. Your advocacy. *[Facilitator, if there is not enough time, skip this question.]*

- a. Have you or any of your friends ever advocated (publicly recommended or supported) or raised funds for services, supports and opportunities for young people--in your own community or in Ghana?

[Note: “advocated” can be any kind of organized effort (formal or informal) to get something changed for the benefit of youth by appealing to government officials, program administration, politicians, community leaders, or even family leaders. “Raised funds” can be formal or informal but should be the benefit of more than yourself.]

- b. If so, what did you do and to what degree did you succeed? How did you define success in this case? What contributed most to your success?
- c. If you did not fully succeed, what were some of the barriers or challenges you faced?
- d. If you have never been involved in advocacy or fund-raising, why not? What are the most significant barriers to engaging in advocacy for youth services and opportunities? What do you think are the barriers for those who do not participate in these efforts or who feel they cannot speak up?

Probes:

- Is it easier for young women or young men to advocate for services (for themselves or other youth)? Why do you think so?

- Are there some youth who are less likely to be able to advocate for themselves? Who are they, and why are they at a disadvantage? (Examples, if needed: youth with disabilities, younger youth, youth from families with low income, youth who have differences of some kind, etc.)

8. **Your ideas for improving conditions for youth.** What could be done to enable all youth in Ghana to have the services, supports, and opportunities they need to succeed?

Probes:

- Who is most responsible for making that happen and what are their roles? (e.g., youth, parents, governments, faith-based organizations, community organizations, businesses, etc.)

9. **Anything else?** Have we missed anything? Is there anything else we need to know about young people living in Ghana today? *[If they add anything else, probe for rationale and other relevant information.]*

10. **Engagement in group text chat.** We have one last request. Would you be interested in helping us find young people in your networks (your friends, colleagues, classmates, etc.) who might be interested in doing a group chat on these same questions? If so, please let us know by _____ and we will reach out to them.

11. **Your questions.** As we finish our discussion, do you have any questions for our team?
[Recorder to capture questions and answers]

12. **Concluding Remarks**

We have come to the end of the discussion. Once again, thank you so much for talking to us. We really appreciate your ideas, thoughts, and contributions. Your contribution will enrich the assessment report to inform USAID/Ghana on how to support youth development in Ghana. Enjoy the rest of your day, bye for now.

B. Internet-based PGD using Zoom and Padlet

This modality will use the protocol above, but it will be adapted to [Padlet](#), a virtual white board in which youth can type in their responses to questions, see each other's responses and manipulate them on the white board field. This modality will only be used for PGD members who are literate, including computer literate, and have access to a computer with internet and can connect on Zoom.

C. Text-only group chats (WhatsApp)

These are text-only chats that will be downloaded and analyzed as data. Participants will be identified through snowball method through youth who have already participated in the PGD and through youth-led organizations and youth-serving organizations.

Informed consent. We will message invitees to the chat privately, confirm consent and then invite them to the group chat, or if invited directly to the group chat we will have each participant type in "I consent" before moving forward with discussion. In either case, they will receive the informed consent information via PDF on WhatsApp.

The prompts below will be initiated both by Making Cents team members. The questions do not have to be used in order. In the course of the chat, youth may be invited to add their own questions that relate to issues of youth empowerment in Ghana.

Prompts:

1. What is the best program, service or opportunity for youth that you have ever experienced? Why was it so important to your growth?
2. What person, group, or organization in your community has contributed the most to empowering youth? Why? What did they do?
3. What service or opportunity that youth need to succeed is missing now in your community? What would you like to see created?
4. When was the last time you tried to make change for the better in your family, community, workplace, or country? What did you try to change? What happened as a result? Do you succeed? Why or why not?
5. Do girls and young women in Ghana have an equal voice to express their opinions in Ghana? Why or why not, and what should be done to improve that?
6. Do girls and young women in Ghana have the same support as boys and young men in Ghana? Why or why not, and what should be done to improve that?

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS: STAKEHOLDERS AND POLICYMAKERS

Demographic Information

National-Level Regional-Level District-Level

Organization Type: Government Private Sector NGO Youth-led

Name		Organization	
Position		District/ Department	
Sex		Region	
Name of Interviewer		Date	

Welcome and overview.

Welcome, and thank you so much for agreeing to participate with us in this discussion today! My name is [NAME] and also joining us is my colleague [RECORDER'S NAME]. We are meeting with you on behalf of Making Cents International, the implementer of USAID's YouthPower2: Learning and Evaluation (YP2LE) project, a global project based in Washington, D.C. that seeks to empower youth to be successful in all aspects of their lives: education, employment, health, and citizenship. USAID/Ghana believes that youth are important to Ghana's development, so they have asked us to help them understand better the needs, challenges and opportunities that youth are facing, as well as the programs and policies that are currently supporting them. This information will help USAID focus its future investments in ways that support youth.

Informed consent. Let me tell you about the assessment after which, I would like to ask for your **consent** to participate in today's discussion. (We have sent a copy of this to you by either email or in PDF on the chat.)

My role will be to facilitate our interview. My colleague, [RECORDER'S NAME] will be taking notes, so that we don't miss any of the important insights you will provide for us. We will not record your name. We will use the information you provide to generate a report and recommendations for USAID on future investments to support youth in Ghana. Participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you are not required to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable discussing and are encouraged to only share details and information you feel comfortable disclosing to the study team. You may discontinue participating at any time without penalty. You are not required to use the video function on your phone or computer for this conversation, but if you do, it can make the discussion easier.

Only essential researchers on the Making Cents International team will have access to your information and on a need-to-know basis. Your name will not be recorded in our notes or shared in the final report. Your information will be assigned a unique identification number to track your study responses. Your personal information will only be shared with immediate study team members for data cleaning, analysis, and dissemination. All of your information will be de-identified and stored in electronic password-protected files and computers on Making Cents International's secure, private server. There are no benefits to you by participating in this discussion. We hope you will participate since your views are important.

This interview will take about 45-60 min. Thank you for agreeing to speak with us. Do you have any questions for us before we start?

If not, then let's get started!

1. Please tell us about your work with [Name of organization, company, or governmental department] _____. What is your main mission in relation to youth, and how do you go about achieving that?
2. Please tell us about a success you have had. What were you able to accomplish and how did you go about solving the challenges you faced?
3. What are the main challenges you and your colleagues are still facing? Probe challenges stemming from:
 - Youth vulnerabilities/risks
 - Systemic issues such as policies, operating environment, resources, personnel, etc.
 - Access to information, including evidence and best practices.
 - Increasing scale of the work (number of or type of youth served, organizations involved etc.)
 - Sustainability--ensuring it endures over time.
4. Does your organization have programs that support youth development? If yes, tell us more about those programs, their successes, challenges, and opportunities.
5. In what way do you involve youth in planning and implementation of your program?
6. Have you heard the term "positive youth development" before? [If so...] What has that meant to you and your area of work? [If not...] Have you tried to involve youth actively in making decisions about the program or asking them about their perspectives? When you did that, how did that go?
7. **For youth-led organizations only**, how have other organizations and government and community leaders responded to your work? What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them? Are you optimistic that the number of youth-led organizations will increase in the future? Why or why not? What could be done to improve the success of youth-led organizations?

8. **Bright spots.** Let's think more broadly about programs, services, and support for youth in your region and in Ghana. In your opinion, what is currently working well to support youth development in your region and/or in Ghana? Please tell us about any especially promising or excellent policies, structures, programs, and/or partnerships that you know of.
9. Finally, what could USAID do to support youth development in Ghana? Where do you recommend that USAID focus its efforts? In what ways should USAID operate so as to be as helpful as possible?
10. Is there anything else you'd like to share that we haven't already discussed today?
11. Do you have any questions for me?

Please remember to send along [insert anything they have promised to share] _____. And thank you very much for sharing your thoughts and ideas with us today.

INDIVIDUAL STORIES OF CHANGE INTERVIEW

[This instrument should be administered to three selected youth leaders at the district or national level]

Informed consent.

My name is _____ and also joining us is my colleague [RECORDERS'S NAME]. We are meeting you on behalf of Making Cents International, a US-based international development organization working to promote youth development across the globe. USAID/Ghana commissioned Making Cents International to conduct an assessment to enable it to understand how to best support the development of young people to facilitate Ghana's journey to self-reliance agenda. As a youth leader we purposely selected you to participate in this assessment.

The information you provide will be used to generate a report and recommendations for USAID on future investments to support youth in Ghana. Participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you are not required to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable discussing and are encouraged to only share details and information you feel comfortable disclosing to the study team. You may discontinue participating at any time without penalty. You are not required to use the video function on your phone or computer for this conversation, but if you do, it can make the discussion easier.

Only essential researchers on the Making Cents International team will have access to your information and on a need-to-know basis. Your name will not be recorded in our notes or shared in the final report. Your information will be assigned a unique identification number to track your study responses. Your personal information will only be shared with immediate study team members for data cleaning, analysis, and dissemination. All of your information will be de-identified and stored in electronic password-protected files and computers on Making Cents International's secure, private server. The information you provide will be combined with others and presented as a summary report.

There is no known risk of participating in this interview. And there are no direct benefits to you by participating in this discussion. We hope you will participate since your views are important.

This interview will take about 45 minutes. Thank you for agreeing to speak with us. Do you have any questions for us before we start?

Introduction: Let's get started. We greatly value your time and your contribution. We want to hear more about your personal experiences, your career aspirations, education experience and the degree to which you feel prepared to achieve your goals. I will first take your demographic information.

Demographic Information

1. **Sex:** () Male () Female () Other

2. **Age Cohort:** () Ages 18-20 () Ages 21-25 () Ages 26-35

3. **Region:** () Greater Accra () Oti () Western () Northern () Upper East () Upper West

4. District

() Ablekuma South Municipal

- Nkwanta North District
- Sagnarigu Municipal
- Bawku Central Municipal
- Nadowli-Kaleo District
- Tarkwa-Nsuaem Municipal

5. Do you have any form of disability?

- Yes
- No

6. If yes, what type of disability do you have?

- Physical disability
- Visual impairment
- Hearing impairment
- Intellectual disability
- Emotional disability

7. Are you married? Yes No

8. If unmarried, have you been married previously? Yes No

9. Do you have children? Yes No

10. If yes, how many: 1 2 3 4 or more

11. Have you been through any educational system? Yes No

12. If yes, which education system have you attended:

- Traditional/ Religious
- Formal (regular) Public School
- Formal Private School

13. What formal educational level have you completed?

- Junior High School (JHS) or lower
- Senior Secondary School/Senior High School/Vocational/Technical
- Professional certificate (Teacher, Agric, Nursing, Allied Sciences)
- Diploma (Polytechnic, University, training Colleges)

- Bachelor's degree
- Master's and post-graduate
- Doctorate or equivalent

14. Are you currently enrolled in a formal education program?

- Enrolled
- Not enrolled

15. Are you currently enrolled in a non-formal education program?

- Enrolled
- Not enrolled

Story of Change

1. Let's now discuss your leadership role in your group. What leadership position do you currently hold in your group?
2. Tell us about your career aspirations and goals. Where do you see yourself in the next five to ten years from now?
3. Do you feel you have the requisite qualifications and experiences to achieve the goals you outline? If yes, tell us more about them. If no, why do you feel that you don't have the skills? If you don't have the skills, do you have any plans to acquire additional skills to be competitive? What are the barriers to acquiring these skills?
4. Tell me about your most important personal achievement and why you consider it so.
5. From your point of view, can you describe the most significant change in your life that occurred as a result of your group activities?
6. Have you ever led any effort to improve services for youth in your community? If yes, tell us more about that effort. Was that effort successful? Why and why not?
7. Do you feel that development actors such as the government, district assemblies and non-governmental organizations have been involving youth in planning and implementation of development programs (for example provision of education, health facilities, jobs etc) targeting youth in this country?
8. Tell us about what is working well and what is not working well for youth development in Ghana.
9. Do you have any other information to share with us?

Conclusion: We have come to the end of this interview. Thank you very much for participating. We highly value and appreciate your contributions as they will enrich our report.

Annex E: List of Stakeholders Consulted

Youth Group/Stakeholder/Individual	District	Collection Method
Visionary Youth	Ablekuma South Municipal	PGD
Excellent Generation Youth Group	Ablekuma South Municipal	PGD
Patriotic Thinkers Group	Ablekuma South Municipal	PGD
Accra Youth Network	Ablekuma South Municipal	PGD
One Voice Youth Movement	Ablekuma South Municipal	PGD
Bawku Youth Parliament	Bawku Municipal	PGD
Peace and Justice Group, Bawku	Bawku Municipal	PGD
Bawku Watch Dog Group	Bawku Municipal	PGD
Persons with Disability Group	Bawku Municipal	PGD
Unity Youth Camp	Nadowli-Kaleo District	PGD
Yirimambo Youth	Nadowli-Kaleo District	PGD
Suntaa Youth Camp	Nadowli-Kaleo District	PGD
Nadowli Youth	Nadowli-Kaleo District	PGD
Tinjase Youth Group	Nkwanta North District	PGD
Mother to Mother Support Group	Nkwanta North District	PGD
Kpassa Youth Association	Nkwanta North District	PGD
Northern Regional Youth Network	Sagnarigu Municipal	PGD
Sagnarigu Youth Parliament	Sagnarigu Municipal	PGD
CAMA	Sagnarigu Municipal	PGD
Ghana Society People Living With Disability	Sagnarigu Municipal	PGD
Chalekrom Youth	Tarkwa-Nsueam Municipal	PGD
Islamic Youth Ladies	Tarkwa-Nsueam Municipal	PGD
Tarkwa Youth Parliament	Tarkwa-Nsueam Municipal	PGD
Prominent Youth Leaders (Watch Dog President)	Bawku Municipal	Individual Interview
Prominent Youth Leader (Youth Parliament Speaker)	Bawku Municipal	Individual Interview

Youth Group/Stakeholder/Individual	District	Collection Method
Prominent Youth Leader	Tarkwa-Nsueam Municipal	Individual Interview
Prominent Youth Leader	Sagnarigu Municipal Youth	Individual Interview
Prominent Youth Leader	Ablekuma South Municipal	Individual Interview
Bawku Municipal Youth Coordinator	Bawku Municipal	KII
Tarkwa Municipal Youth Coordinator	Tarkwa-Nsuaem Municipal	KII
Nadowli-Kaleo District Youth Coordinator	Nadowli-Kaleo District	KII
Sagnarigu Municipal Youth Coordinator	Sagnarigu Municipal	KII
Ablekuma former president of Greater Accra Regional Youth Network	Ablekuma South Municipal	KII
SEND Foundation	National	KII
Access for Life Foundation	National	KII
Breakthrough ACTION	National	KII
Ashesi University	National	KII
Youth Arise Ghana	National	KII
Africa Education Watch	National	KII
Youth Empowerment for Life	National	KII
AG COP, ADVANCE II	National	KII
Lead for Ghana	National	KII
Kali Etch Foundation	National	KII
National Vocational Training Institute	National	KII
Bankyekrom LLC	National	KII
Ghana Health Service	National	KII
Kwame Krumah University of Science and Technology	National	KII
USAID Ghana Mission, Education Office	National	Focus Group
USAID Ghana Mission, Health Office	National	Focus Group
USAID Ghana Mission, Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Office	National	Focus Group
USAID Ghana Mission, Economic Development Office	National	Focus Group

Annex F: Youth Researchers' Assessment Reflections Video

Video Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPr8pW_vHPE