



ASSESSMENT REPORT OF **FACILITATION OF LEARNING SESSIONS¹**

Youth in Action-Uganda

Study Brief-2014

¹ Nancy Rydbery, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Introduction

Youth in Action (YiA) is a six-year learning and livelihood program. In partnership with The MasterCard Foundation, YiA aims to improve the socio-economic status of approximately 40,000 out-of-school young people, both girls and boys, in rural Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Malawi and Uganda. Through the development of youth's foundational skills (literacy, numeracy and financial literacy) transferable life skills and entrepreneurship skills, they are empowered to make informed pathway choices for the future. YiA supports the youth to choose between one of three pathways: enterprise, vocational training/apprenticeship and education. The program also supports them through small start-up funds, mentorship and peer-to-peer support.

In Uganda, launched in 2013, YiA aims to reach 11,050 girls and boys aged 12 to 18 living in the rural communities of the Kasese, Bundibugyo and Ntoroko districts in western Uganda. The focus for the 12 to 14 age group is on three pathways: education, vocational training/apprenticeship and group enterprise. As for the 15 to 18, they are given the chance to choose between two pathways: vocational training/apprenticeship and group enterprise.

Save the Children works with international partners in order to advance the learning and research agenda. Hence, the Save-University Partnership for Education Research (SUPER) fellowship was formed to help measure, document, and analyze the mechanisms affecting the project's impact. Academic research fellows conduct in-depth formative studies as part of the partnership. In 2014, Uganda decided to document **an Assessment Report of Facilitation of Learning Sessions** in a SUPER study in cooperation with the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Objective

This report brief provides an overview of the findings and recommendations from an in-depth qualitative study of facilitation practices in Youth in Action (YiA) in Uganda. The aim of this study was to understand the *best practices* in facilitation that are consistently used by facilitators during the learning phase of the program, and how the facilitator training affects these practices. The study also attempted to explore the association between facilitation practices and youth participation in the program activities.

Methodology

The study adopted a multi-modal qualitative methodology that triangulated findings across multiple sources of datum. Data was analysed for:

- Frequency of best practices in facilitation, and
- Themes describing the link between facilitation and youth participation.

Methods by the numbers

- 3 Districts visited
- 17 Learning centres visited
- 25 Interviews with YiA youth
- 14 Interviews with facilitators
- 7 Interviews with master trainers
- 10 Focus Group Interview (FGIs) with YiA youth
- 5 FGIs with facilitators & master trainers
- 11 Video-recordings of learning sessions
- 1 Video-recording of monthly workshop with master trainers & facilitators
- 2 Observations of weekly planning sessions with master trainers & facilitators
- 3 Master trainer observation forms for Kasese, Bundibugyo, and Ntoroko districts

Research Questions

Question 1: Which of the Best Practices for Facilitation are Consistently Demonstrated by Facilitators?

There are 5 main areas of facilitation practices on which facilitators receive training:

1. Making sessions participatory;
2. Ensuring that youth understand practical application of content;
3. Ensuring that sessions are engaging and fun for youth;
4. Using positive behavior management techniques; and
5. Always being positive and encouraging when working with youth.



The majority of facilitators reported learning about facilitation practices during training, and being able to implement those practices. Indeed, most facilitators demonstrated several of the *best practices* that they were taught during the trainings. However, over half of the facilitators we observed struggled with managing the sessions and youth:

- Preparing learning sessions and materials in advance;
- Arranging seating in a circle/semi-circle or in small groups;
- Handling disruptions well without losing too much instructional time; and,
- Managing time across different activities.

One reason for this may be that monthly review sessions and refresher trainings were not held regularly enough for facilitators to review their practices. Indeed, most of the facilitators reported that the initial training did not provide adequate time to absorb the material. They requested more training and follow-up sessions. Additionally, facilitators felt that their salary did not match the amount of work that they had to do for the program.

Question 2: What is the Link between Facilitator Behaviours and Youth Participation?

▪ Addressing Language Barriers

Though the language of instruction at a learning centre reflected the most common mother tongue, the language diversity in Uganda meant that in half of the learning centres several youth were learning in a language that was not their mother tongue. Minority language youth reported feeling anxiety participating in the majority language in class discussions.

Facilitators attempted to address this discrepancy by facilitating the learning sessions in multiple languages, encouraging youth to speak in their preferred language. This practice markedly increased the participation and engagement of youth whose mother tongue was not the majority language.

▪ Fostering a positive learning environment

The ethnic tensions in Western Uganda have had some impact on the classroom environment. In 7 youth Focus Group Interviews and 7 youth interviews, learners reported peer disrespect inhibiting participation. This was especially true for youth from minority ethnic groups.

Several of the facilitators acknowledged this tension and described modelling as their way of dealing with this situation: modelling types of respectful interactions expected from learners. During our observations, we also noted that facilitators openly addressed this issue and used instances of disrespect as teachable moments.

▪ Gender-Based Barriers

In 55% of sessions, facilitators called on at least 15% more males than females in attendance. This unintentional facilitation bias was compounded by several gender-specific barriers to program participation:

- Female youth reported males' eagerness to speak and disrespect of females' views, as inhibiting female participation.
- In one FGI, female learners reported that male learners sexually harassed them.
- Youth who were pregnant or married reported having a harder time attending learning sessions. This was especially true since community members made gender and class-related discouraging remarks to youth traveling to the centre.

Recommendations

- Ensure more regular and structured review and reflection sessions, focusing on common challenges and best practices in facilitation.
- Include a session on second language techniques for all facilitators and have facilitators work with youth to translate important components of the curriculum.

- Work with community stakeholders to:
 - Create an accountability system to deal with harassment,
 - Follow-up with female dropouts to encourage a pregnant or married learner to return,
 - Establish ground rules that address sexual harassment and discrimination.