



Save the Children

DOCUMENTING THE **STRENGTHS** AND CHALLENGES OF YOUTH **ENTREPRENEURSHIP** EDUCATION¹

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Introduction

Youth in Action (YiA) is a six-year youth livelihood program. In partnership with The MasterCard Foundation, YiA aims to improve the socio-economic status of 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 four pathways: enterprise, vocational training, apprenticeship and education. The program also supports them through small start-up grant, community mentorship and peer-to-peer support.

In Burkina Faso, launched in 2012, YiA aims to reach 4,500 girls and boys aged 14 to 18 with the focus on the enterprise pathway. In this pathway, youth are mentored to identify viable local business ideas - that they choose themselves - develop their business plans, and use the start-up grant to start their businesses. This practical learning opportunity links youth to financial services in their community for additional resources in order to improve their livelihood opportunities.

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 2016, Burkina Faso decided to document ***Strengths and Challenges of Youth Entrepreneurship Education*** in a SUPER study in cooperation with the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Objective

This brief summarizes the findings from a SUPER fellowship study in Burkina Faso. The study sought to find out what youth and community members in Burkina Faso consider to be important entrepreneurial skills and how they view entrepreneurship education and training (EET) delivered through YiA. By identifying the strengths and weaknesses of YiA EET, the country team can determine how better to support skill development of out-of-school rural youth in agriculture-dependent communities.

Methods

The research was conducted in two of the three regions where YiA is operational in Burkina Faso: Hauts-Bassins and Boucle du Mouhoun. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were used as the data collection tool in order to get a sense of agreements and disagreements as they emerged among participants in the study. These included:

- 10 FGDs for youth in Cohorts Two, Three, and Four;
- 4 FGDs for parents;
- 6 FGDs for mentors; and
- 2 FGDs for facilitators.

The researcher used thematic analysis to understand the most prominent and oft recurring themes, triangulating themes across respondents and locations.

Question 1: What are youth and community member perceptions of youth entrepreneurship in rural Burkina Faso?

Entrepreneurship is seen as an important livelihood option for youth.

- Youth in all ten FGDs reported that YiA has boosted their entrepreneurial aspirations and self-confidence.
- Parents, mentors, and facilitators noted that there was a perceptible difference between YiA youth and other adolescents in their communities.

Parents and communities contribute to and participate in youth entrepreneurship development.

- Parents and mentors reported the forms of support they provide – financial, moral, or otherwise – to help with youth entrepreneurship development.
- However, a persistent theme was the perceived inadequacy of financial support for youth to launch their enterprises.

There is a mixed perception of gender equity in entrepreneurship development.

- A prominent view (20 out of 22 focus groups) was that there are no gender-specific roles in entrepreneurship.
- At the same time, discussions revealed an underlying sociocultural expectation about what entrepreneurial activities girls and boys can and should do.

Question 2: What are the strengths and challenges of how YiA is addressing self-employment and entrepreneurship among rural youth in Burkina Faso?

Learning Phase is seen as a critical component of youth entrepreneurship development.

- Participants asserted the importance of helping youth develop foundational academic skills before they start an entrepreneurial activity.

Participants articulated the importance of literacy, numeracy, financial literacy, and transferable assets.

- In 21 of the 22 FGDs, participants cited literacy and numeracy as skills necessary for transferring other knowledge and capabilities.
- While emphasizing the importance of all these skills for entrepreneurship development, youth added that they were also essential for their personal growth.

Perceptions do not line up with actual skills gain; youth participants are still struggling with Dioula.

Parents, mentors, and facilitators wanted more training on the foundational skills, but they indicated that this should be done in a shorter time period.

Question 3: What community mechanisms can the project leverage to strengthen its entrepreneurship training, especially as related to the agricultural value chain?

The mentorship component is seen as an important piece of entrepreneurship development.

- Parents and youth, especially, cited the expertise and availability of mentors as indicators of their value.
- Mentors provide social support, technical guidance, and opportunities for hands-on experience.
- However, the mentorship component has had limited impact because of varying quality and qualifications of mentors.

Families and communities are committed to entrepreneurship development.

- Family and community members are the gatekeepers for youth livelihood development, and youth draw on these supports to start a business.
- Youth emphasized that they needed their parents' blessing to participate in entrepreneurial activities.

Additional Findings

- Facilitators expressed a desire to contribute more to the curriculum in order to adapt it further to the local context.
- The study also revealed external constraints that can influence the learning outcomes of YiA EET.

Recommendations

In light of the study findings, YiA should:

- Provide facilitators with additional support to train youth in Dioula.
- Improve mentorship qualifications and guidelines for working with youth.
- Make the ties between youth cash transfer and family/community contribution more explicit.

To read the full study, contact us at: amhanna@savethechildren.ca

For more information about the program, visit: <http://youthinaction.savethechildren.ca/>

