



MDF

EMPOWERING PEOPLE,
CREATING IMPACT

Local Employment for African Development (LEAD) II

Synthesis Study of Medium Term Evaluation Reports

Submitted to Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

October 26, 2023

Authors: Sally Adjetey and Kwaku Owusu Afriyie



MDF

EMPOWERING PEOPLE,
CREATING IMPACT

MDF West Africa Ltd.

124a Freetown Avenue
East Legon, Accra
Ghana

+233 307038546

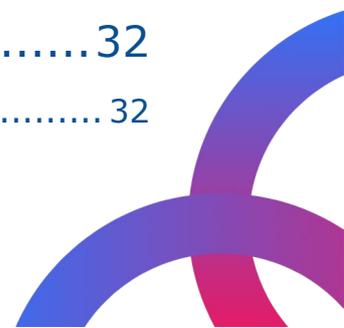
mdfwa@mdf.nl

www.mdf.nl

VAT C0006013317

Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
1 Introduction	7
1.1 Background	7
1.2 Projects Selected for Inclusion	7
2 Project Briefs – Context & Interventions	8
2.1 Regional Context	8
2.2 Project Briefs	8
3 3.0 Methodology	10
3.1 Data sources	10
3.2 Scope of MTRs/Impact Study	10
3.3 Key Research Questions	11
3.4 Limitations of study	11
4 FINDINGS	12
4.1 Relevance (Is the intervention doing the right things?).....	12
4.2 Sustainability (Will the benefits last?).....	14
4.3 Coherence (How does the intervention fit).....	16
4.4 Effectiveness (Is the intervention achieving its objectives?).....	21
5 Conclusions	27
5.1 Research Question 1.....	27
5.2 Research Question 2:	29
6 Annexes	32
6.1 Intervention Clusters	32





Acronyms and Abbreviations

ALMP	Active Labour Market Programmes
ATFP	Agence Tunisienne de la Formation Professionnelle
BDSO	Business Development Service Organisation
COVID	Corona Virus Disease
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DDE	Department for Sustainable Economic Development
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ILM	Institute of Leadership and Management
ICT	Information Communication and Technology
IP	Implementing Partner
KII	Key Informant Interview
LEAD	Local Employment in Africa for Development
MEL	Monitoring Evaluation and Learning
MEL	Monitoring Evaluation and Learning
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MSME	Medium, Small and Micro Enterprises
MTR	Mid – Term Review
NGO	Non-Governmental organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	Small to Medium-size Enterprise
TNE	The Next Economy
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TVET	Technical and Educational Vocation and Training
WIP!	Work in Progress



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background, Methodology and Scope

This report is a synthesis of four Mid-Term evaluations carried out in 2022 on the LEAD II programme of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The LEAD II follows the completion of an initial four-year programme implemented by NGO-consortia led by SOS, Oxfam, Hivos and SPARK in six African countries – Somalia, Nigeria, Mali, Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia. This second phase has three key objectives: a) Strengthening the institutional capacity of local partners and government agencies to better support SME development b) Enhancing the employability of youth 3) Creating new job opportunities through supporting start-ups and SME growth. The programme also has a strong gender focus and planned impacts on poverty reduction.

Four reports are synthesized, three of which are independently executed MTRs and the exception of Annual reports from SPARK, as well as data from interviews with key informants from the NGO. SPARK had carried out an initial impact assessment on a limited set of indicators.

Five regions in Africa are covered by the programme interventions: MENA, the Horn of Africa and West Africa. These are documented areas of high youth unemployment resulting from both supply and demand challenges and difficult socio-economic and political environments. The projects thus aim to address issues around youth under- and unemployment while tailoring interventions to specific local contexts.

The projects are being executed by a consortium of partners in at least 2 countries respectively with country overlaps: SOS' TNE is being executed in Mali, Nigeria and Somalia; Hivos' Green Works project in Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia; Oxfam's WiPI in Egypt, Somalia and Nigeria; and SPARK's Ignite Ambition in Somalia and Tunisia. Interventions are mixed but include Skills Development, Employment Services, Entrepreneurship promotion and Systemic Change influencing. These interventions followed the Theory Change developed for their respective projects which were aligned with the ToC of the DDE (2018). An addition to the TOC of the DDE revised in 2021 was effecting systemic change in the programme areas through influencing relevant stakeholders including governments. The intent is to improve the business environment for youth employability and entrepreneurship.

The methodology adopted for the synthesis report was largely a literature review of project documentation and MTR reports (LEAD I & II) as well as selected KII interviews to provide more information on SPARK's interventions. The analysis was also guided by the DAC OECD evaluation criteria to assess the activities carried out by the four projects in the period 2020-2022.

The scope of the synthesis report is defined by 2 key research questions: 1) What are the most important conclusions and lessons learned from LEAD II, that should be taken into account for future policymaking and programming on youth employment? 2) To what extent does this compare or contrast with the findings of the ILO systematic review?

The major limitation to the synthesis of the four reports was the incompleteness of the evaluation on the SPARK project that did not make for full complementarity of data provided on the four projects. However, being largely for the purposes of learning, the experiences of SPARK provided in its annual report and KII interviews were considered useful for inclusion. Other limitations related to the restriction to movement following the COVID-19 pandemic which may have affected complete data collection and a representative sampling of respondents to the MTRs in selected countries.



Findings

The **relevance** of the programme was considered in respect of a) its alignment with the DDE Theory of Change, with its focus on systemic change and b) the adequacy of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) systems for measuring programme objectives and systemic change. How MEL systems also generated useful lessons for learning and programme adaptivity was assessed.

The report noted that most of the projects had already been running for two years when the revised ToC was released and therefore systemic change had not been intentionally included in ToCs. However, one of the 2018 objectives of the programme was related to achieving change in the youth employability and entrepreneurship environment through institutional strengthening and this was considered a minimal effort to address systemic change. More intentionality would however be required in future to address systemic change with a clear strategy and indicators for monitoring progress.

MEL systems were found to be quite comprehensive for project monitoring at both output and outcome levels, at individual project level as well as at collaborative program level for joint learning. These included reporting systems, surveys to follow up on outcomes and joint learning platforms both off- and online. There were however limited systems for qualitative data collection on selected outcomes of interest, like gender-focused outcomes and this limited understanding of the underlying causes of some outcomes. Complaints made by interview respondents included the inadequacy of field visits to confirm sustainability of project outcomes.

MEL systems were inadequate to measure systemic change mainly because systemic change had not been a clearly stated objective in ToCs, and monitoring of their effects was not well planned.

Regarding the **sustainability** of the results of the programme after it ends, the synthesis report noted that the MTRs recognized that the four projects had engaged on the subject in different respects: a) Financial sustainability was the most common area of concern. The continuity of most components of the LEAD II appears to hinge on the ability of IPs and beneficiaries to raise funding through different sources. Various approaches were thus being used to achieve this including capacity building of IPs and service providers for fundraising, facilitating access to funding for start-ups and SMEs by project leads, among others; b) Institutional sustainability was concerned with building the capacity of local institutions to take up project activities for the future) Sustainability of social impacts; for example, providing soft and technical skills complemented by building links with employer platforms, thus creating sustainable jobs.

The effect of sustainability measures on strengthening local ownership was assessed and it was observed that not all efforts at building sustainable systems worked. Sustainability measures had to receive buy-in from relevant stakeholders. This requires early engagement of stakeholders in the design of these measures and development of strategies to put them in place. Clarity on the expectations of project beneficiaries and partners is also required. Closer partnership relationships are also important for local ownership as are follow up visits and systems of support to key partners through online networks and similar platforms.

The assessment of **coherence** focused on how interventions aligned with stakeholder interests and how synergies were built between LEAD II programmes in-country. An analysis of the mode of collaboration of different stakeholders was carried out, including the effect of the ways of collaboration on results. Some areas where improvements could be achieved were outlined. An important aspect of coherence assessed was the coordination between lead partners and other youth employment programmes, particularly in-country where multiple projects were implemented, e.g. in Egypt, Somalia and Tunisia. Examples of initiatives to achieve effective coordination were provided to the extent that they were noted in the MTRs and other reports.



The **effectiveness** of the programme interventions in achieving its objectives covered five specific areas: 1) A comparison of the intervention approaches in the projects evaluated. Comparisons were made of how partnerships were developed, covering the type of partnerships and the impact of these on specific programmes. They included partnerships with both public and private sector organizations. Other activities assessed were the selection processes for beneficiaries of the programme and sectoral focus of some of the projects. Specific programmatic reviews were made in the employability and entrepreneurship components as well as MEL systems. 2) The models that were most effective in creating systemic change and in which contexts – A typology of models that had impacted on systemic change in different countries was made and likely reasons for their effectiveness deduced. 3) Interventions /activities that contribute most effectively to increasing job opportunities for women and girls – Many of these interventions followed clear and targeted areas in their planning, based on an understanding of the context of gender relations in the respective countries. Focused monitoring of gender outcomes was helpful. 4) Main obstacles to women inclusion and possible ways of overcoming them – these included socio-cultural limitations, context specific issues, as well as programme-related barriers, like poor targeting. Suggestions made to address these included building gender sensitivity in programmes, and partnering with influential groups engaged in gender inclusion. 5) The common challenges and success factors of the four programmes – Key challenges to programme implementation included the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, resource limitations for follow up activities, ineffective engagement of influential government institutions, need for the design of relevant training to address capacity gaps of beneficiaries. Some overall success factors included diversification of funding sources for start-ups, involvement of employers in design of training programmes under employability component, alignment of programmes with government priorities, among others.

Conclusions

Research Question I

The conclusions of the synthesis study and lessons learnt are presented in relation to the three objectives of the Programme:

Objective 1 – Strengthening the institutional capacity of local partners and government agencies to better support SME development

The study concluded that:

- Partnerships with government institutions are critical to achieving policy change and environment for the youth.
- To achieve systemic change, careful planning with clear activities and results framework is needed.
- Sharing of programme tools and approaches enhances capacity building of local partners
- A rigorous selection process of IPs with clarity on roles and responsibilities of each reduces future conflicts.
- It is more effective for IPs to carry out joint learning events with government agencies rather than alone, for more impact on change in environment.
- Partnerships with the private sector can improve job and internship opportunities.
- Aligning programmes with government priorities makes for easier partnerships with public institutions.

Objective 2 – Enhancing the employability of youth

- Soft skills training to initiate employability programmes improve career choices for youth.
- Including mentorship and coaching in skills development programs is more effective for learning,



- Engaging employers in the selection of youth for employability programmes improves job placement.
- Matchmaking events and media campaigns create awareness for job creation as well as visibility for skills available.
- Effective inclusion of women in employability programmes requires specific targeting.
- Infrastructure and capacity support is critical for intermediary organizations to make them strong actors in influencing the youth employment and entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Objective 3 - Job creation through supporting start-ups and SME growth

- Focus on sectors with high impact potential and aligned with government priorities
- Market-based solutions addressing specific needs of start-ups are more likely to lead to growth
- Investment in understanding the labour market through research enhances effectiveness and relevance of entrepreneurship support
- Job placement is more successful with joint learning and networking of supply and demand side actors.
- Sustainability of start-ups and SMEs is enhanced through supporting them to engage with multiple financing mechanisms.

Conclusions were also drawn on differences in approaches of similar programmes within the same country. These differences were observed to relate to focusing on specific economic challenges eg climate change as Hivos did in focusing its interventions within the green economy; country-specific weaknesses as found in Somalia where due to the predominance of an informal sector for which tailored programmes are required to build internal capacity of SMEs. The level and depth of partnership engagement was found to affect policy influencing and scale of programmes in a given country. Selection criteria for inclusion of youth and other partners in programmes should take the local context into account to make support more effective. Specific targeting based on the realities of beneficiaries' context led to more relevant training design. Cultural systems can be used to achieve better results, as did the inclusion of family and friends in Somalia to raise funds for beneficiary businesses.

Research Question 2

The conclusions drawn from the synthesis report on LEAD II were compared to the ILO Systemic review on Youth employability programmes and found out similarities in conclusions regarding the positive effects of Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMPs) on outcome indicators, i.e., employment (jobs), businesses set up by youth and SMEs job creation, as well as the inclusion of women. These were validated by the MTRs; however, differences exist in the levels of success.

Regarding the types of intervention and their success on ALMPs, the synthesis report was inconclusive as the short period of implementation of LEAD II was not considered adequate to draw conclusions. Interventions were also carried out simultaneously as against the ILO systemic review that looked at them independently.

The conclusion on the positive effect of soft skills training was validated in some of the MTRs, especially in SOS' TNE that carried out Core Skills training to initiate its interventions.

The ILO systemic review's conclusions regarding success of ALMPs that exceeded 4month duration and engaging youth younger than 25years were not validated as these indicators did not form part of programmes' intervention design.



1 Introduction

This synthesis report collates the outcome of Mid-term Evaluations of four projects under the Local Economic Development (DDE) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. The projects were carried out in different regions in Africa and represent the second phase of the LEAD programme that addresses youth unemployment in Africa.

1.1 Background

The aim of the LEAD programme was to address root causes of irregular migration and radicalization by contributing to sustainable livelihoods for youth and young entrepreneurs. The first phase of the programme (2016-2019) focused on helping young people to start their own businesses, strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystem, increasing the employability of youth and by helping existing companies to grow further, so that new jobs are created for young people.

Following the success of the first phase, a second phase - LEAD II was initiated in 2020 for another five-year period with a total investment of €35million. LEAD II is implemented by four NGO-consortia led by Oxfam, Spark, SOS Kinderdorpen and Hivos, who work with various local partners in six countries: Somalia, Nigeria, Mali, Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia.

The overall development objective of LEAD phase II is to improve the economic prospects of youth through three main pillars:

- 1) Strengthening the institutional capacity of local partners and government agencies to better support SME development
- 2) Enhancing the employability of youth
- 3) Creating new job opportunities through supporting start-ups and SME growth

Gender is a focus area of LEAD II which targets young women to improve their position on the labour market and enhance their economic prospects. In addition to SDG8, LEAD II also contributes to SDG5 (gender equality) and SDG1 (poverty alleviation). This phase of the programme targets support to more than 14,140 direct jobs and 4,668 companies.

1.2 Projects Selected for Inclusion

All four programmes of LEAD II are included in the synthesis report. Generally, an attempt was made to ensure that there was uniformity in the scope of the MTRs and that there was adequate information to address the two research questions which are the subject of the synthesis report. Additionally, the report sought to ensure completeness of the assessment of the outcomes of interest (jobs created through SME growth & start-ups, youth employability especially of women etc.) and comparability with other projects evaluated in order to draw general conclusions. An exception was however made in the Ignite Ambitions project executed by SPARK.

The MTR /Impact Assessment of the project implemented by SPARK, in Tunisia and Somalia was based on counterfactual analysis, with a baseline survey and endline survey conducted over a 6-month period. The endline was a preliminary assessment, with inconclusive results on the key outcomes of interest. Further, there was more data on the social impacts regarding stability of local economies than were of the economic indicators relating to jobs, employment, entrepreneurship which form the larger part of the other MTRs. It was however considered, in consultation with the LEAD II Coordinator, that the key objective of this synthesis evaluation is to learn lessons. Experiences shared through Key Informant Interviews (KII) with selected implementing partners and the SPARK Regional Office would provide useful lessons for knowledge notwithstanding the absence of an independent assessment as the other MTRs provided. This limitation is further articulated below.



2 Project Briefs – Context & Interventions

2.1 Regional Context

The projects include countries in three regions of the African continent: MENA¹, (Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt), The Horn of Africa, (Somalia), and West Africa (Nigeria and Mali). The MENA region is reported to have the highest youth unemployment rates in the world over the last 25 years, stemming from both supply and demand challenges, including bloated public sectors, over-regulated private sectors, and weak education systems². It is at the same time a region very vulnerable to climate change and negative effects of this on economies affect youth development and opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship. The effects of political upheavals following the ‘Arab Spring’ still have negative impact on people’s confidence in leadership, resulting in increasing migration of youth and its consequences.

Similarly, the Horn of Africa suffers the effects of long years of internal conflict and ongoing insurgent activity, leading to limited investments in basic infrastructure particularly for youth education, the development of new businesses and growth of existing ones. Fragile economies with weak socio-political systems limit opportunities for private sector investment and therefore employment opportunities for youth, especially women.

In West Africa, although there is better public infrastructure for education and supportive systems to stimulate private sector development, recent insurgent activity in the northern parts of the Sahel region leave countries vulnerable to sudden attack and displacement of communities. Youth are the most affected as their lives are interrupted at a critical developmental stage, leaving many dissatisfied, and thus engaging in anti-social behaviour, often bordering on criminality.

In this very difficult socio-economic context, the youth development projects aim to address the major issues around youth under – and unemployment through interventions that are tailored to the local contexts and follow a well-articulated Theory of Change. Regional peculiarities also influenced the sectoral focus of the respective projects, as well as the intervention clusters which were prioritized.

2.2 Project Briefs

A summary of the projects included in the foregoing synthesis report is made below:

¹ MENA region – comprises 21 states in Middle East and North Africa. The region has vast oil, petroleum, and natural gas reserves. Due to these reserves, MENA is an important source of global economic resources.

² As reported in MTR of Hivos Consortium by Voluntas



Table 1 summary of the projects

Project Name	Lead Implementing Agency	Countries of Implementation	Skills Development	Employment Services	Entrepreneurship promotion	Systemic Change influencing
The Next Economy (TNE) for Youth and Entrepreneurship	SoS Kinderdorpen	Mali, Nigeria , Somalia	★	★	★	★
Green Works	Hivos	Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia	★	★	★	★
Work In Progress! (WiP!)	Oxfam	Egypt , Somalia, Nigeria	★	★	★	★
Ignite Ambition	SPARK	Somalia , Tunisia	★	★	★	★

The intervention clusters are further explained in Appendix 6.1

All projects were carried out by an alliance of local and international partners led by the organisations indicated in the table above.



3 Methodology

3.1 Data sources

The sources of data for the synthesis report were :

- The MTR reports – All the evaluations were commissioned by the respective implementing agencies to third party firms/organisations. The difference in approach to the evaluation was noted with Oxfam-led WiP! which was carried out by selected youth in the three countries of their project. The Hivos Green Works project evaluation also included an Impact Study.
- Project Proposals to the LEAD II Coordinating team
- The ILO Systematic Review Report of 2022³ - this forms the framework of this synthesis report, a requirement of the ToR.
- Discussions with the Coordinator of the LEAD II programme in the Netherlands
- LEAD I Evaluation – A synthesis report

3.2 Scope of MTRs/Impact Study

The MTRs were carried out on the basis of ToRs developed by the implementing agencies. While these were structured differently, essentially, the objectives of the MTRs were to :

- a. Assess the effect of the interventions carried out on the target group in line with the stated Theory of Change (ToC)– this is variously described as ‘impact’, ‘results’, ‘outcomes’.
- b. Documentation of the activities carried out in pursuit of setting up systems of learning from project experiences/lessons.
- c. Recommendations for improvement of the project outputs and outcomes for the remaining project period and beyond.
- d. The effect of the country context on the results was also assessed (Hivos).
- e. Influence of the intervention on eco-system partners (Oxfam). This has been considered within the context of the new DDE ToC with the aim of achieving systemic change.

The methodology applied for the evaluation was varied, as the ToRs submitted in some cases provided specific research questions (SOS /Cloneshouse), others carried out outcome studies based on a job validation exercise (Hivos/Voluntas), while still others were guided by the DAC/OECD Criteria (Oxfam/Youth alliance). An exception to the content of the reports is the report on the SPARK Ignite Ambition project, which is a limited impact assessment based on comparison of baseline and end line data on selected indicators between control and treatment groups over a 6-month period. To obtain additional data that enhances more objectivity in assessment of programme performance, more KIIs were conducted with major partners and annual reports reviewed. While this does not provide the full scope of work comparable to the other MTRs it represents valuable additional source of data for the focus of this synthesis report, ie lessons learnt so far in the implementation of youth development programmes. This exception to the report is explained under Section 3.3 below.

The projects were executed in the period; Jan 2020 – Dec 2021 which falls within the period of the COVID-19 pandemic and the evaluations were completed in early 2022 when restrictions to movement for many countries continued. Thus, most of the evaluation data were collected by document reviews, on-line surveys, interviews of project staff and Key Informants as well as participants. There was limited face to face interaction and field visits

³ ILO – “The impact of active labour market programmes on youth: An updated systematic review and meta-analysis”2022

in the process. This may account for some of the significant limitations of the process in all countries: low response rate of interviewees and survey participants.

3.3 Key Research Questions

The synthesis report is primarily focused on providing evidence to address two main research questions :

1. What are the most important conclusions and lessons learned from LEAD II, that should be taken into account for future policymaking and programming on youth employment?
2. To what extent does this compare or contrast with the findings of the ILO systematic review?

The ILO systematic review provides a broader context of lessons from numerous ALMP studies over a period of over thirty years. The assessment thus has a strong research -for -learning objective. The evaluative approach is based on the DAC/OECD criteria: relevance, effectiveness, coherence and sustainability of the LEAD programme and this is the approach adopted in presenting the findings of the research.

3.4 Limitations of study

There were some limitations to achieving optimal comparability of the MTRs arising from:

- a. Differences in scope and outcomes of interest in the MTRs
- b. Differences in the approach to data collection (SPARK) for the MTR indicated above.
- c. Period covered by the MTRs – The MTRs cover the first two years of LEAD II, during a difficult period of project implementation, particularly with respect to the restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the project activities slowed down as lock-downs in many countries limited effective engagement of partners and execution of planned activities. There was more traction on activities in 2021 and therefore it may have been too early to draw conclusions on the evaluation criteria applied. This report however also considers the outcomes of the 4-5year LEAD I feedback from the final evaluation as LEAD II builds on this.
- d. Significant questions of accuracy and completeness of the data collected for the MTR– In the case of Hivos’ project in Egypt, the response rate was less than 50% and of these a significant number did not recognise the project as they had not known the main partners involved. Validation of jobs created was a challenge for Voluntas on Hivos’ project and using an online survey was difficult. Other MTRs expressed similar difficulties with reaching respondents of surveys/interviews. In one scenario, the online survey was abandoned as only 4 out of the 31 named respondents were reached. The already indicated limitation of data collected for the SPARK assessment study also supports this observation.
- e. Some of the MTRs were focused on individual in-country assessments (Oxfam Novib’s youth team-led MTR) and thus lose the benefit of the findings with its focus on national results and less on the impact of global collaboration and alliance work. Furthermore, overarching activities that transcend the in-country dynamic and cross- country reference haven’t been assessed in the reports. The cross-country and global work might therefore not have been captured to the full extent.



4 FINDINGS

4.1 Relevance (Is the intervention doing the right things?)

The assessment of relevance specifically considered two areas of interest in the MTRs:

- i. the alignment of the four programmes with the DDE Theory of Change (2021), particularly with its focus on systemic change
- ii. the adequacy of the systems for monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) for measuring programme objectives and systemic change; generating useful lessons learnt and for programme adaptivity.

4.1.1 Alignment with DDE ToC

The four programmes were developed at the end of the LEAD I in 2019 and had been based on a DDE TOC of 2018 which focused largely on private sector development as a key vehicle to stimulate increased job creation and thus youth employment. The revised ToC of 2021⁴ introduced the stronger pursuit of systemic change, seen as a clear distinction from the direct result of strengthening MSMEs. The goal is to improve the business climate while building capacities of MSMEs to grow and create more jobs for youth and women, in particular. The ToC acknowledges that systemic change happens over a long time however it is expected that through public-private collaboration with multiple partners, donors and local stakeholders, changes in government engagement, relevant policy formulation to support MSMEs and stronger advocacy by interest groups, can achieve change within the business ecosystem.

Each of the 4 programmes had already developed their interventions prior to the publication of the revised DDE ToC , which to a large extent were aligned with the 2018 framework but some already adapted programmes to the 2021 ToC intentions. To a large extent, the objective of strengthening institutional capacity in the 2018 ToC also aimed at achieving change in the enabling environment in all programmes . This is considered a minimal effort towards the ambition of affecting systemic change. From the MTRs, it is clear that developing simultaneously interventions towards direct and system outcomes may make for more ownership by local governments and thus contribute to the sustainability of programme results over a long period. Shaqadoon's (SPARK's partner) collaboration with the Ministry of Trade & Tourism to develop its Xogsiye⁵ service was replicated by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and upscaled to federal level. This enabled many more enterprises to get critical information and immediate support for registration of their businesses and to achieve business growth.

SOS TNE's ToC includes a component for engagement of Governments and relevant key stakeholders in improving tax and other legislation to improve the MSME business environment. However, there was lack of clarity on what activities were specifically planned to achieve this. Intentionality in articulating activities needed to achieve systemic change is required (in programme ToCs), even when like TNE, this is already happening on the ground. On the other hand, Oxfam Novib set clear qualitative objectives towards inspiring and motivating young people to overcome their challenges, influence policies and attitudes in government. This would stimulate youth employment and the business environment. Hivos' focus on the green economy, a priority sector for government with significant public investments and interests facilitated partnerships between major stakeholder groups to influence policy influencing.

⁴DDE 2030 - Theory of Change for Decent Work and Economic Growth, October 2021

⁵ An information platform to support MSMEs to register their businesses and obtain updated business support services

4.1.2 MEL Systems

All project proposals included the design of clear MEL systems which had been adapted to address some of the LEAD I evaluation recommendations.

Monitoring systems covered output, process and outcome performance tracking. Output monitoring covered quantitative indicators of activity execution, supported by project narrative and financial reporting. Surveys after most activities (trainings, start-up support etc) were both qualitative and quantitative, with some partners (Hivos) introducing a web-based survey portal for simplification of data collection and analysis. Surveys also provided some evidence of the early outcomes of training and SME support given.

Evaluations were planned for outcome assessments with initial baseline data collected at the inception of the projects for comparison with endline data (Oxfam, SPARK,) on project outcomes. Mid-term and final evaluations were planned for execution by external organisations, with the innovation of OXFAM to have it carried out exclusively by youth groups.

Learning systems included collaborative learning approaches involving partners sharing initial lessons and cases, the set-up of online learning platforms (Oxfam) and communities for youth, online conferences and other face to face learning events. HIVOS introduced an online management tool to increase linkages between M&E, learning and activity adaptation.

The MTR found that systems for quantitative output monitoring were quite effective in getting program outputs of local partners tracked and keeping donors updated on progress of execution. Surveys conducted to follow up on beneficiaries' activities weeks after outputs were delivered enabled the harvesting of initial outcomes and collection of more qualitative information. Collaborative learning through face-to-face meetings and online platforms enabled dissemination of lessons and knowledge sharing, like Hivos' African Crossroads Event bringing regional stakeholders together.

MEL systems however were not always effective in generating qualitative outcomes on specific areas of interest e.g., gender focused outcomes say, in employment and business support. This does not allow an understanding of the factors affecting outcomes and to integrate these into service delivery and monitoring. One interesting approach is that of Hivos in formulating a Learning Agenda – 10 specific learning questions across user categories (stakeholders, grantees, and relevant players in the field of employment creation) to 'provide comprehensive insights on program improvement objectives and allow Hivos to validate or dismiss assumptions surrounding the Theory of Change'. Intentionally developing questions around key learning areas allows a better understanding of progress and provides more specific information to make programmes more adaptive to the context.

A common theme repeated among partners and the MTR is the inadequacy of field visits to monitor the outcome of programme activities so as to confirm sustained benefit of interventions to participants. This is attributed to the short project duration that keeps a focus on output delivery at the expense of ensuring learning is integrated into practice.

MEL systems however were found to be generally inadequate to measure systemic change . This stems from the fact that :

- some projects' contribution to a conducive ecosystem was not well defined in the activities and the ToC (SOS, Hivos)
- many of the projects had been effective in influencing policy and systemic change through building strategic partnerships with government institutions (SPARK), Universities and TVET institutions. This is seen in curriculum development and implementation (SOS in Hargeisa with the government entity, and in Mogadishu with SIMAD iLab providing TNE curriculum in the university). However the monitoring of the effects of this was not specifically planned for in MEL systems.



- ToCs have remained static at proposal development stage and not been updated as monitoring data has been collected.
- the objective of influencing policy and the ecosystem were found to be difficult to measure and rather vague (OXFAM)
- project objectives did not include any addressing systemic change and therefore no specific indicators were developed to achieve this (Hivos), although some activities relating to the scalability of the interventions and policy influencing were added.

4.2 Sustainability (Will the benefits last?)

4.2.1 To what extent has the programme put measures in place to ensure sustainability of results after the programme ends?

While most of the initial project proposals had sustainability components, plans were not clearly defined on how this was to be achieved specifically. The MTRs however indicate that sustainability was a topical issue and different responses to various aspects of sustainability had been initiated:

- Financial sustainability** – This was the most widespread perspective on sustainability in the programme. The ability of partners, start-ups and SMEs to continue their operations and for partners to continue to provide the services they engaged in during the LEAD II programme was seen as dependent on their ability to have continued funding for their activities. Funding was expected either through extending donor support, their own fundraising from grant -funding agencies or commercial sources, crowd-funding mechanisms or income-generating activities. The measures taken to achieve these included:
 - Capacity -building of partners to become self-sustaining i.e. have the ability to develop fund-raising proposals and engage with funding agencies;
 - Providing seed money for start-ups and supporting SMEs to access funding from different sources – formal institutions (banks, venture capitalists) and informal sources (SOS).
 - Packaging intervention outputs and materials for other organizations who want to carry out similar activities on sale basis ie commercializing outputs of the programme e.g. training materials, coaching and mentoring services. Shaqadoon’s online e-learning platform, ‘Koorso’ offers paid programs to companies and uses the revenue generated to support SMEs.
 - Hivos’ introduction of a ‘Matching Fund’ to support SMEs is seen as a way to increase sustainability through investments, create partnerships with the private sector ,
- Institutional sustainability** – Programmes also took the approach that enabling partners and beneficiary institutions to become stronger institutions and to deliver quality services would sustain their operations beyond the project period. These came in different forms:
 - Supporting SME and Start-ups to build strong business models
 - Selecting high growth potential SMEs and supporting them to be resilient
 - Facilitating continued networking among implementation partners
 - Engaging with larger IPs like CWW, Shaqadoon, Shuraako etc. who have their own funding sources and continue to run similar programmes, as this is part of their ‘core business’. Shuraako’s \$25million impact fund became an alternative funding mechanism for SMEs, with training support. The Innovate Equity model for incubated ventures was another funding innovation.
 - Partnering with large public institutions with wider coverage and legislative backing to take ownership of programmes and processes as SPARK achieved, working with the Government ministries to upscale some of their service products, or with public institutions like TVETs, or AFTP in Tunisia to develop and design a curriculum that is integrated into their own programmes.
 - Building local innovative clusters/knowledge networks for continued learning.



- Consulting services as provided under Oxfam's WiP! seems to have a more sustainable impact as it is more customized to the specific needs of each SME.
- iii. **Sustainability of social impacts** – This relates to the provision of soft and technical skills complemented by the facilitation of matchmaking platforms with employers. It is intended that with the enhanced capacities of SMEs and link to employer networks, a direct access to sustainable jobs is created. Similarly, reinforcing specific programme outputs/themes, like gender inclusion, with local partners to integrate these into their regular programmes of work makes for sustained attention to the issue in partners' own programming.

Within the specialized sector focus of the Green Works project (Hivos) the sustainability of green jobs was found to depend to a degree on the effort the state put in to facilitate the shift to a green economy, in terms of financial and regulatory incentives.

4.2.2 How has this or is this expected to strengthen local ownership?

The MTRs found that not all the sustainability measures worked as some did not always get the buy-in of the targeted beneficiaries. The Innovate equity model in which incubated ventures were to give 10% equity to Innovate was not successful as start-ups were not ready to give away part of the ownership of their businesses.

Strengthening local ownership is also tied to the weaknesses observed in the sustainability measures indicated:

- a. Early sustainability planning and awareness creation with relevant stakeholders fosters a better understanding of the need for sustainability and how this can be jointly achieved. SPARK partners report that there was a misunderstanding among local stakeholders of their respective roles in the project. Some expected the Implementing Partner to hand over project funds to local institutions to execute project activities. Similarly, across all country projects, Start-ups were dissatisfied with the initial capital provided to support the new businesses and thought that training sessions beyond 5 months were too long for the level of seed capital support provided. Clarity on expectations of project beneficiaries and partners has to be achieved right at the inception of the projects.
- b. While improvements were made in achieving more collaborative learning and close engagement between implementing partners in and across countries, this was not thought to be adequate for both knowledge sharing and long-term relationship building with local partners and beneficiary institutions. Some implementing partners of the different LEAD II programmes in-country asked for more frequent interaction among themselves. This can be achieved also with online networks and similar platforms. In some cases, follow up systems of support (eg through hubs and BDS providers) which are geographically closer to beneficiaries could enhance more frequent engagement, as is being tried by SPARKS in seeking local community organisations to support beneficiaries.
- c. Perhaps the single most important factor to achieve local ownership is the follow-up of interventions. Across the board, projects showed weak follow-up of project outcomes and establishment of local systems to sustain them. This is variously attributed to the short project period leading to a focus on getting projects outputs completed. Continued follow up after project completion has budgetary implications and not all partners can meet this added expenditure. Clearly, building collaborative relationships with public institutions with mutual interest in project interventions - as in the case of working with TVETs for training and coaching youth - bodies well for achieving local ownership.



4.3 Coherence (How does the intervention fit)

This section was very specific in assessing how interventions aligned with stakeholder interests as well as how synergies were built between LEAD-partner programs in the same country

4.3.1 How does the mode of collaboration with local partners and stakeholders affect results?

Mode of collaboration

The identification of stakeholders in the LEAD programme largely followed a process of selection, analysis of their influence in achieving the planned objectives and their relevance in doing so. Different categories of stakeholders were selected based on their roles and potential to achieve the desired results of the programme. These include key beneficiary categories (youth, women, start-ups, SMEs with growth potential), Government entities (Various relevant Ministries, Chambers of Commerce, Educational institutions, eg TVETS & Universities), other LEAD applicants, Implementation partners, Private Sector (Companies providing internship and employment opportunities, financial institutions, incubation centres). These are the direct stakeholders who are engaged in activities influencing the outcome of the programme. Other stakeholders, including social networks and families of female participants (SOS) play a more indirect role, but depending on the socio-cultural setting can affect the commitment of participants and level of their engagement with the activities of the programme.

Stakeholder engagement, depending on their intended roles in the programme followed different modes of collaboration.



Table 2 Stakeholders and their mode collaboration, effect on results and areas of improvement

Stakeholder category	Mode of collaboration	Effect on results	Areas of improvement
Key Stakeholders: Youth, Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specific targeting - Customized support – training, mentoring, coaching, internship - Feedback on programme activities - Matchmaking through job fairs - Alumni networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adaptivity of outputs to respond to specific needs and emerging context issues - Enhances linkage to employers and sustainable job access - Benefits in youth being advocates and lobbyist for policy change to improve employability and entrepreneurship environment - Alumni networks are creating visibility of programme outputs for future scaling and become a voice for influencing policy on youth development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitating employment agreements between employers and job seekers should consider context-specific conditions to reduce frustrations in accessing employment. - Large numbers of applicants to the programme can also be a pipeline for other employability and entrepreneurship programs. - There is need for more relevant skills to meet the current labour market needs – eg IT skills need to be incorporated in some programmes
Key stakeholders: Start-ups and SMEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specific targeting - Coaching in business ideation and planning + training - Support to growth and development - Seed capital (Start-ups) - Grant - Business Advisory - Joint learning events – spaces for knowledge -sharing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Clear goal setting and result indicators to monitor growth - Incentivized partnerships ie those in specialized sectors like the green economy stimulates broader interest including new investor interest. - Creation of innovation clusters and similar co-learning networks facilitates upscaling of program outputs and sustainability. - Grants facilitated early initiation of start-ups activities and achievement of project objectives even under unexpected interruptions caused by COVID-19. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Continuing mentoring/coaching after the projects have ended will be necessary for long term sustainability. A deliberate plan to build capacity of service providers to carry out follow up support is needed. -Strengthening capacity of SMEs and Start-ups to do their own fundraising will help achieve more sustainability of their operations.
Government (Public) Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information-sharing on programme activities through open events - Formal engagement (through MoUs) with key relevant institutions for joint implementation of activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engenders local ownership for sustainability - Ease of upscaling to other geographical areas not covered by implementing partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear programme and strategy for influencing ecosystem for employability of youth and entrepreneurship needs to be articulated.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capacity building of staff of Govt institutions for execution of joint programme activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integration of programme outputs into public institutions' curriculum - Alignment of programme activities with government priorities - Enables policy influence for conducive environment for entrepreneurship and youth development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indicators for tracking change at level of ecosystem level needs to be developed. - Stronger and more deliberate institutional anchoring of the programme needed for long term sustainability.
Incubators, Hubs, complementary service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formal engagement for service provision to beneficiaries (Start-ups, SMEs) - Joint learning and knowledge sharing events - Capacity Building support to enhance service delivery to beneficiaries and continue project interventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthening service provision eco-system - Scaling of project outputs and outcomes - Local embedding of project outputs - Enhances sustainability of programme outputs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capacity building to raise funding to support service provider operations will make them more independent and sustain their operations.
Other LEAD partners in-country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quarterly meeting for knowledge exchange and result sharing - Shared case documentation for learning and overall visibility of the LEAD programme - Cooperation in joint implementation eg OXFAM/SOS/SPARK in youth policy influencing in Somalia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Builds synergies into program – reduce repetition in activities in-country thus enhancing efficiency. - At partner level – enables each partner to focus on areas of competitive advantage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting up beneficiary databases that can be shared will improve accountability on programme outputs and facilitate joint impact monitoring in future. - Leveraging experiences and skills of IPs can improve learning, impact and efficiency of LEAD programmes - More frequent engagement with clearer intentions for shared learning and exchange of ideas on programme development is required.
Private sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partnerships for expanding internship opportunities - Match-making through job fairs and other match-making events - Facilitating access to finance (Banks, Venture Capital ,Microfinance Institutions - Building capacities of microfinance institution to support targeted beneficiaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expanded coverage of successful youth/women beneficiaries - Access to finance to grow SMEs and start-ups - Local ownership and institutional embedding of capacity building and SME support tools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More intense partnerships with the private sector is needed to improve placement of interns and recruitment of the right candidates. - Intensify joint recruitment with employers of trained youth, as well as input from labour market on needed skills sets.



Implementing Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capacity building for programme delivery - Learning events – knowledge and experience -sharing eg peer-to-peer learning activities; Virtual learning series (El Rehla in Egypt) - Development of recruitment committee with representation of all IPs in-country (SOS Somalia) - Online networking for continued sharing of lessons learnt and tools to deliver effectively outputs of programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More effective networking to improve outputs - Harnessing synergies between partners - Enhanced smooth recruitment process for programme participation - Shared learning and cross-pollination of ideas - Improvements in developing appropriate application processes within the respective contexts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Joint planning of interventions to ensure relevance at the local level. - Sharing pipeline of applicants to the programme to achieve effective and wider outreach of the programme.
------------------------------	---	--	--



4.3.2 How is the coordination between LEAD-partners (and other youth employment programmes), especially in the countries where two or more are active at once?"

In Somalia (3 Programmes), Egypt (2), Nigeria (2), and Tunisia (2) LEAD II youth employment programmes are active, led by different NGOs. Largely, the MTRs did not assess specifically how the respective programmes were coordinated in-country, although mention was made of some of the collaborations that were achieved with other youth employment programmes. In the annual report of SPARK (2021) there is a record of the efforts made to enhance synergies and communication with the LEAD Partners (Oxfam Novib, Hivos, SOS Children's Villages) with whom SPARK held regular monthly online meetings. The objective of these meetings was to understand the activities implemented by each organization, avoid duplication and reflect on joint converging interventions and synergies. In addition to these meetings, LEAD partners held a series of online discussions on monitoring, evaluation and learning methodologies of each organization. SPARK found these meetings a great exercise that allowed LEAD partners to share their learning approaches and reflect on the different ways the program was adapting to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some mention is made of coordination with other youth employment programmes as follows: To a considerable extent, at the individual and environment level, the tools and approaches developed by the SOS TNE programme have been piloted by implementing partners, and some are already being adapted by SOS offices that implement employability training. a) In Somalia, the TNE curriculum for employability is adapted by SIMAD iLab for university students.

b) At the policy level, in Hargeisa, OXFAM and its implementing partners influenced the implementation of the National Internship and Employment policies. This initiative and partnership have allowed for more internship placements in Hargeisa. c) In all programme locations, implementers of the employability stream have influenced other partner entities such as service delivery partners and companies that host interns. To some extent, also Government institutions have been influenced – a success story is the OXFAM-led collaboration's influence on Somaliland's internship and employment policy. OXFAM's project however seemed to have suffered from the lack of physical interaction from the international partners which had an adverse effect on the collaboration of the project in Somalia, while the same was not observed in Nigeria, for instance. Challenges highlighted included Hanze University's inability to be able to engage with and find local educators to train for the project. Concerns of unclear communication channels between local and international partners were also highlighted.

SPARK 's partner BINA developed a Business Incubator Operational Manual (BIOM) ⁶.which is a reference manual for current operations and projects of business incubators.

In Egypt, **Hivos**' alliance member Nahdet El Mahrousa (NM) is closely collaborating with local intermediaries on training and job placement support. NM has provided mentorship and coaching on both technical and financial matters as well as trainings on subjects ranging from monitoring and evaluation, to ensuring collaboration in carrying out project activities. The training also highlighted gender considerations to ensure that 50 percent of founders and employees of start-ups are female.

⁶ This is a reference document for incubators in various areas including project management, outreach management training, mentoring, and coaching, fundraising and proposal development, MEAL, marketing & event management, human resources Management, accounting, and Community Engagement



In Tunisia, Hivos' Green Works project was significantly different from the Ignite Ambition project of SPARK in respect of its sectoral focus on the green economy. While SPARK focused on high-growth sectors of Agriculture, Food industry and ICT. Spark's approach was also different in respect of partnership development as it made significant effort in engaging and supporting the capacity building of microfinance institutions to provide finance to SMEs and start-ups.

4.4 Effectiveness (Is the intervention achieving its objectives?)

Effectiveness assessed the extent to which the programmes met their objectives both in terms of output and outcome achievement.

4.4.1 How do the different intervention approaches evaluated in the four MTRs compare and contrast?

Overall, programmes had factored in their design and ToC recommendations from the LEAD I evaluation and made attempts to address weaknesses to achieve more effectiveness in meeting the three key objectives of LEAD II. The following observations were made:

- **Partnership Development** – A diverse selection of partner alliances for programme implementation was built of both local and international organizations, with varying levels of participation in the initial programme design. Some lead organizations like SPARK found that involving local implementing partners in the design of interventions improved the understanding of the local context and thus better developed relevant activities to reach the targeted outcomes. Similarly, engaging more local rather than international partners for some activities like mentoring and coaching was found to be more efficient in terms of building more sustainable relationships and meeting the needs of the target groups whose languages and environment were better understood. Similarly, Oxfam's programme was limited by the engagement of the external Hanze University which lacked local educators, limiting collaboration between local partners and, while sharing contemporary concepts, did not address local educational needs for job access. The outreach to more rural areas where the need for programme outputs was greater and had larger impact was in some cases achieved through partnerships with very local intermediaries.
- Other specific partnerships to achieve wider impact included *partnerships with public institutions* like government ministries and educational institutions like TVETs, Universities whose capacities were built to deliver programme outputs. This engenders more sustainability of programmes.
- *Private sector engagement* both to improve access to finance and opportunities for jobs was observed to stimulate more PPPs. To improve access to finance, partnerships with local financial service providers were increased. However, some programmes took this one step further, like Hivos' Green Works' creation of an Angel Investor Academy and manual to guide potential investors in the green economy. Also, capacity building under SPARK's partnerships with microfinance institutions to deliver training outputs improved support to SMEs and start-ups. Hivos' strategic targeting of Social Enterprises with high potential for job creation in the digital economy for programme delivery enabled more focused support towards targeted outcomes.
- Significant *capacity building of partners* was carried out, targeted not only at implementing partners but also intermediary organizations like BDSOs, Incubation Hubs etc. with varying intensity. Some examples were: Building on intermediaries' infrastructure, as Hivos did with grants to BDSOs and employability hubs. SOS' TNE built partnerships with 10 organisations to sustain its model/modules.
- **Selection Processes of beneficiaries of Employability and Entrepreneurship programmes** followed varying patterns – most followed open application processes



and follow up interviews with an interview panel. However, others were more rigorous. Hivos followed a more rigorous process of carrying out market research for specific targeting of innovative sectors within the green economy and enterprises that had potential to grow in this area. For other programmes, including employers in the selection process for employability training improved place rates as specific needed skills were targeted.

- **Sectoral Focus** – Many programmes sought to support youth to find jobs in SMEs and start-ups that generally operated in sectors with high-growth potential. Some programmes however had a specific sectoral focus based on local and even regional and government priorities and interest. Hivos' Green Works project is focused on sustainable jobs in the green economy where significant investments have been made in-country and in the MENA region as a whole. There was inadequate evidence to assess whether this approach was more successful in terms achieving the project objectives from the MTRs.
- **Employability and Entrepreneurship programmes** – Similar interventions for achieving the employability and entrepreneurship objectives included developing various training programmes, incubation support, coaching and mentoring. However, SOS' approach of giving youth the option to choose which track to follow after the more general Core Skills training was considered one of most effective approaches in the programme. *Core Skills training* was found to enable youth to become more confident and obtain the more general skill to look for jobs or start a business, and considered an exceptional mechanism to build their career path. Providing *grants* to Social Enterprises within the green economy in Hivos' Green Works project was considered effective in stimulating investor interest in start-ups in the sector.
- SOS also improved placement rates by carrying out a labour market scan to better inform job seekers and potential employers about the demand and supply of labour. Similarly, its alternative delivery approach of using local institutions rather than its own local offices allowed expansion of its SME and Start-up support to reach more rural areas where they were needed. Further, the TNE programme validated start-up ideas through crowdfunding, linking these ideas up with solving a social problem. Another innovation of the programme that appears to have made marked progress in improving employment of youth and development of start-ups is the inclusion of an informal system of support through engagement of family and friends to provide both moral support to beneficiaries but also financial support to initiate their businesses.
- Generally, due to the limitations of COVID-19, significant effort was made to introduce digitization of activities in local partner support. Online delivery of project outputs – training, mentoring/coaching, learning exchanges and information-sharing was introduced. This generally extended geographical coverage of activities.
- While quite a lot of technical skills training was carried out to support start-ups and SMEs and under the employability programmes, it is the provision of specific needed technical skills for setting up their businesses that improved the development of start-ups, rather than the more general skills training. Added value for instance was provided with BINA's (SPARK partner) development of an Incubator Operational Manual (not validated) as a reference guide in incubator operations.
- To achieve high quality standards in the delivery of programme outputs, SPARK benchmarked international standards as in funding the training of mentors. This was to achieve certification in the accredited UK ILM training programme in order to mentor other local mentors.
- **MEL** – All programmes created learning systems at different levels – within IPs, with multiple stakeholders, job fairs, etc. Creation of Innovation clusters to connect BDOs, and employability hubs with other stakeholders by Hivos further supported knowledge sharing and more widespread understanding on the green economy. Also setting a learning agenda with specific questions to stimulate engagement on key monitoring goals by Hivos helped to provide comprehensive insights on the programme objectives. SPARK appears to have been more intentional in the



continuous monitoring and evaluation and verification of outputs, enabling flexibility of adjusting programme to the needs of beneficiaries.

4.4.2 Which models are most effective in creating systemic change in which contexts, and why?

As indicated above, not all programmes had clearly articulated processes for achieving systemic change. However, activities under the objective of engaging stakeholders to influence the environment for increased job creation addressed this to some extent. The models that were observed to have been most effective in making progress in creating effective change were:

- i. Focusing on economic sectors where there is significant government interest and priority investment as in the green and digital economy of the Green Works programme of Hivos. Not only is there a country but regional focus which enabled wider stakeholder engagement and public regulatory and resource backing. Similarly, Oxfam was successful in getting a national Internship Policy drafted in Somalia as a result of close engagement on common area of interest.
- ii. The learning series of Rehla in Egypt under the Green Works programme enabled better networking of partners across the country. The meetings enabled Partners to present their progress, successes, challenges, and lessons learned. Smaller group conversations also allowed conversations on more detailed topics including the sustainability of the green economy in the target countries, appropriate qualifications to work in the green economy and opportunities for employment, to name a few.
- iii. Building the capacity of BDSOs and Employability Hubs and supporting them in networking through fairs and other events that include investors, public sector agencies and influencers in the green economy, has built a community that can have positive influence within the ecosystem.
- iv. Selection of the limited space of the green economy enables focused targeting of relevant stakeholders in the country and on a broader regional level to support wider and impactful engagement for change.
- v. Clarity in the objectives and activities to be achieved for systemic change is required to make any meaningful impact. Oxfam for instance set qualitative objectives of inspiring youth and changing policies and attitudes in government to stimulate youth employment and the business environment. The lack of a strategy in the Somalia programme led to low government interest in dealing with youth employment as this was not of immediate government interest when elections were underway. Concrete plans need to be articulated. On the other hand, in the same country the project influenced the drafting of the National Internship Policy, but again did not get clarity on getting it rolled out.
- vi. SoS's TNE appointed Partnership Builders to facilitate collaboration between ecosystem partners and IPs. Although this link between the programme partners and relevant stakeholders was not always effective, it was considered to have had the potential for stimulating a conducive ecosystem if a clear strategy had been outlined for how it could achieve those objectives.
- vii. The initiative by impact hubs in Mali (TNE) to hold one-day meetings with actors of entrepreneurial ecosystem enabled advocacy for improvement of conditions and economic opportunities for young people.
- viii. Working with the public media has played a significant role in creating awareness of programmes and encouraged participation in radio broadcasts, TV shows. Social media platforms also created awareness of the need for public investments in youth development, start-up and entrepreneurial development. It provided education to the youth also on the benefits of the programmes and enabled them to have a voice in sharing their experiences and make appeals for relevant stakeholder support.



4.4.3 What interventions and/or activities contribute most effectively to increasing job opportunities and retaining jobs for women and girls?

Many of the programmes, while monitoring inclusiveness of activities and tracking inclusion of women and girls through setting qualitative monitoring indicators, did not always have specific outlined activities and processes for ensuring inclusiveness based on gender. The key activities that were observed to contribute most effectively to increasing job opportunities and retaining jobs for women and girls were observed as follows:

- a. Ensuring equity in the relative percentage of participants admitted into the programme, as with SoS that set a target of 50% for women inclusion.
- b. Developing specific training /support programmes and selection criteria that targets women – SOS extended its outreach to women in rural and marginalised communities by developing a one-month training programme under its alternative delivery mechanism.
- c. Designing tailor-made solutions for women as in SPARK’s E-Sharika project to boost the sales of rural and artisanal women’s sales through e-commerce in order to address the challenge of mobility (see below).
- d. Specific targeting of women in programme design and achieving this through monitoring systems. This can be tracked through ensuring all M&E data is also disaggregated by gender at output and outcome levels.
- e. Ensuring that projects understand the limitations to increasing job opportunities and retention are known and specifically addressed within their ToCs and implementation plans – e.g., providing online training support for women in order to enable them to address geographical mobility challenges.
- f. Within specific contexts, understanding what skills-set women have and matching these with the available jobs. Under Hivos’s Green Works project the project partners found women to have more capacity to work within the Agriculture and food industry which attracted less men, so their capacities and job opportunities were focused in this sector. Also, the support to create ‘Necessity Entrepreneurs’ under Hivos’ programme within marginalized communities addressed their needs within their specific context. Very often these observations are context-specific and this peculiarity needs to be understood.
- g. Working with gender-sensitive Social Enterprises under Hivos’ programme enabled increased attention to their peculiar challenges. Additionally allocating 20% of the partners’ budget for gender sensitization of activities and targeted capacity building of partners obliged partners to deal with women-specific needs.
- h. Striking deals with employers to provide child-care services (Hivos)

4.4.4 What are the main obstacles and possible ways to overcome these?

Main Obstacles	How to address them
Socio-cultural limitations were the most significant limitation. These include child-care responsibilities, long distances from proposed work places and training centres.	Engage with gender-sensitive employers or build gender-sensitivity into program support to create more awareness among employers on addressing the needs of women.
Sector specific lack of interest – if training is limited to say, non-vocational skills, women who seek to acquire vocational skills have less interest	Provide customized training and support services (Oxfam). Engage with potential employers on areas where women can be employed and what specific skills they would need.
Inequality in wages between the genders is sometimes discouraging	Build partnerships with women groups and NGOs supporting gender-based programmes to develop advocacy project to change attitudes and perceptions about gender rights.



Many women work in the informal sector where there are no social security benefits, leaving women vulnerable to the pay gap and exploitation.	Support capacity building on both supply and demand side on the rights of employees and facilitate negotiating of contracting terms that ensure the rights of women are addressed.
Poor targeting of participants – The MTR survey of why a lower percentage of women were employed than men in spite of maintain equal proportion of selected applicants (SOS TNE) found that most had BSc and Masters’ degrees and were looking for opportunities to go abroad to continue their education, or were looking for jobs suited to their qualification, or found salaries low.	A more rigorous selection process is required that considers applicants with a real need for program outputs. Also engaging with employers in the selection process and in determining the content of training could improve targeting.

4.4.5 What are the common key challenges and success factors of the four programmes?

The **common challenges** that affected programme delivery of the four programmes are summarized below:

- i. The most significant challenge was the COVID-19 pandemic that led to delays in starting partnership development, rolling out activities, and movement. It also led to drop-out of participants in areas where, due to lack of internet connectivity, the could not participate in online sessions.
- ii. Inadequate planning and resources for follow up on key programme activities – most follow up for entrepreneurship and employability outcomes are inadequate due to lack of time to complete activities in the programme.
- iii. Most IPs complain about the inadequacy of initial capital provided (seed money) for start-ups as often this does not include working capital.
- iv. Limited engagement of key actors in government and public institutions as influencers to trigger more systemic change. This may stem also from the underlying challenge of not designing programmes with a strategic focus and clear activities towards systemic change.
- v. Trainings were not always tailored to specific technical capacity gaps of beneficiaries and were more generic. It appears more days may be required to carry out effective technical training programmes.
- vi. Engagement of public institutions, while beneficial for regulatory support and effective local ownership, can follow bureaucratic processes and delay programme outputs.
- vii. Inadequate IP engagement both in-country and across regions to make for deeper relationships building and cross-fertilization of ideas, as well as building synergies for efficient programme implementation.
- viii. Matching job vacancies with the skills set of job-seekers was not always effective, with some participants not retaining jobs after internship and others not getting internship opportunities are all. Some of the reasons for this are: Inadequate technical expertise of applicants who often have a more general formal education; Skills training programmes are not tailored to the specific competencies required for available jobs; Lack of engagement of skills training provider with the potential employer to understand staffing needs; Disinterest of applicants in jobs available; Perceived low compensation for jobs offered; geographical inaccessibility of jobs available (long distance from applicant’s place of abode).
- ix. The definition of ‘decent job’ was not always clear among programme implementers , job seekers and employers, leading to differing expectations regarding the available jobs. Invariably highly qualified candidates eg with University degrees have high expectations for job quality and expectation and do not accept jobs they consider below their qualification level.

Success Factors



- i. Building partnerships with government and other public institutional partners both for implementation of project activities and to facilitate policies influencing and change in environment for youth development.
- ii. Diversification of potential funding sources of start-ups and SMEs and building mutually beneficial partnerships with local finance institutions.
- iii. Closer collaboration between IPs for sharing of lessons, cross-pollination of ideas and long-term relationship building.
- iv. Involving employers in selection of participants for training helps to design relevant training content to enhance employability of youth and prepare them for available job opportunities. Job fairs were one of such mechanisms that brought job seekers and employers together.
- v. Carrying out a labour market assessment and similar research to understand labour dynamics in the target areas helps in designing more relevant training and other support.
- vi. Carefully crafted selection criteria for participation in employability track taking interest of employers into account in a rigorous and transparent selection process
- vii. Designing programmes that link the three overarching objectives of the programme enhances the opportunities for job creation and inclusiveness of women.
- viii. Flexibility in diversifying target regions of the programme in response to expressed need of target groups enhances impact.
- ix. Alignment of programme activities with government priorities.
- x. Intentionality in developing strategies and activities targeted at achieving systemic change.
- xi. Digitization of partner support activities and learning systems.
- xii. Providing jobs close to women's residences.
- xiii. Customized training responding to needs of entrepreneurs eg. addressing needs of service-based start-ups, online business for example



5 Conclusions

5.1 Research Question 1

What are the most important conclusions and lessons learned from LEAD II, that should be taken into account for future policymaking and programming on youth employment?

Based on the findings of the MTRs the conclusions and lessons learned from LEAD II are indicated per the stated objectives of the LEAD II programme.

1) Objective 1 - Strengthening the institutional capacity of local partners and government agencies to better support SME development

- Partnerships with public institutions and government agencies are critical to achieving influence in changing the policy and the environment for increased job creation and employment of youth.
- Effective partnerships for achieving systemic change require strategic planning and inclusion of clear activities and assumptions of how outcomes link to planned activities in the programme ToCs.
- Capacity development of institutional partners can be mutually beneficial if programme approaches and tools are shared by Programme IPs with local institutions carrying out similar programmes . This leads to local ownership and better sustainability of program deliverables.
- The selection of partnerships throughout the programme should follow a rigorous selection process, with clarity on expected roles and deliverables in order to avoid unmet expectations and reduce potential conflicts.
- When government agencies are involved in joint learning events with other programme stakeholders it is easier to engage on issues of policy and environmental change than IPs alone.
- Partnering with the private sector can be a significant vehicle to improve job and internship opportunities, as well as raising funding for SMEs and start-ups
- Designing programmes that align with the priorities of government make for easier partnership with public institutions

1) Objective 2 - Enhancing the employability of youth

- Initiating youth employability programmes with developing soft skills enables youth to better choose their career path and build confidence to pursue it.
- Much value is added to skills development programmes when they are coupled with mentorship and coaching as well as follow up to apply the respective skills learnt.
- The determination of selection criteria for employability skills training can include employers to ensure the relevant skills set are provided for needed jobs
- Job fairs and other matchmaking events, as well as media campaigns can create wide awareness of job opportunities and available skills in the market for employers to harness.
- Inclusiveness of women has to be intentional and must start at the planning stages to articulate how women are specifically targeted. The context-specific conditions that limit their opportunities for jobs must be defined so that tailor-made training programmes can be developed for them. Further, M&E systems should include gender-specific monitoring indicator to ensure that activities give attention to their issues.
- Supporting the infrastructure and capacity building of intermediary organizations, such as BDSOs, employability hubs can quickly expand programme outreach and lead to the emergence of new actors to influence the ecosystem. Skills development programmes need to be flexible and tailor-made to provide relevant technical skills to targeted beneficiaries. Digitization of partner support and training makes for wider



outreach and also addresses the geographical limitations participation in programmes, especially by women.

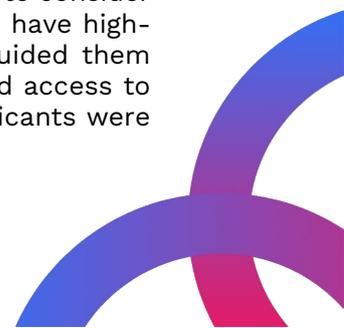
1) Objective 3 - Creating new job opportunities through supporting start-ups and SME growth

- There is merit in focusing on sectors that have high impact potential and fall within government priorities
- Support to start-ups should be flexible to address the needs of specific sectors in which businesses are operating with market-based solutions, tailored to their needs.
- Understanding better the labour market through scans and other research approaches could enhance the effectiveness and relevance of entrepreneurship support systems.
- Facilitating networking and joint learning of supply and demand side actors is an effective mechanism to enhance internship and job placement.
- Building capacity of start-ups and SMEs to engage multiple financing mechanisms to support their business makes for more sustainability of their businesses.

2) Specific Country Contexts

Within the same country, LEAD II programmes were adapted to situations in the respective contexts that needed to be addressed to achieve the programme objectives. IPs also adopted differing approaches across countries as the context dictated. These also provided some lessons for future programmes:

- i. Youth employment programmes can be tailored to take account of specific economic contexts to attract focused attention and investment by government and major stakeholders. This is what Hivos' Green Works programme focusing on the green economy in the MENA region sought to achieve. It enabled a focus on selected skills, investors, technical and other skills for SEs, BDOs and other support institutions. Similarly, as the green economy is broad, more labour market research enabled selection of key sectors to focus on to stimulate jobs in Algeria, Egypt and Somalia.
- ii. Intervention approaches can differ based on the objectives set in the different country contexts – Programs of SOS, Oxfam, SPARK in Somalia found that enterprises had fairly informal structures and many were still at a developmental stage. Thus, Oxfam stimulated start-ups in the food sector in Somalia while engaging more Hi-tech companies in Egypt for instance. Oxfam had to review its assumptions on the level of jobs that can be created by informal enterprises and thus improve internal support to make businesses more efficient. SPARK partnered with and supported the capacity building of microfinance institutions to provide credit to start-ups and SMEs with high growth potential.
- iii. Significant difference to the scale of programme outreach in different countries was influenced by the level of partnership engagement in-country. High level engagement of government engagement by SPARK in Somalia and with public TVET institutions in Tunisia had significant effect on outreach of its youth employability and entrepreneurship programme. Similarly the Oxfam/SOS/SPARK collaboration achieved influence in the setting up of the National Internship Policy following close engagement with government in Hargeisa. On the other hand, Hivos found that engagement of local intermediaries was more effective in strengthening capacities of partners and their skills to support program interventions in Egypt, while this had not been effective in Tunisia where the focus had been on PPPs. Oxfam's MTR advised engagement of more government institutions if its project is to achieve wider coverage and effect.
- iv. The selection process for partners/participants of youth programs needs to consider the local context to improve employability and support enterprises that have high-growth potential. Hivos in Egypt targeted high-growth start-ups and guided them through the entire investment process to support entrepreneurship and access to finance. Applicants were selected through hackathons; shortlisted applicants were



then supported to modify their applications and then given the opportunity to compete for grants and service contracts with private companies. In Algeria selection went through a 6-month sourcing phase, creating a sourcing department using an online approach on one hand to collect data from businesses on the web and social media platforms. The IP on the other hand used its own networks and connections to visit and reach out to potential local partners across the country. Other programs adopted open sourcing approaches through calls for proposals and then selecting based on an interviewing process (SOS).

- v. Employee participation and employability is more effective if the local context guides specific targeting. In Hivos' programme in Egypt female participation was low due to social restrictions on taking up jobs. The program therefore highlighted gender considerations to ensure that 50 percent of founders and employees of start-ups were female.

The inclusion of employers in the beneficiary selection process proved to be very effective in guaranteeing employment post-training. The case of Sylabs' specific technical training for local builders in Ghardaïa (Algeria) to maintain a UNESCO World Heritage Site led to employment of 51 people. Again, market-based solutions enhanced placement of job seekers in Egypt was successful while in Tunisia (Elife) job placement was difficult due to lack of relevant equipment and business opportunities in targeted organisations.

- vi. Innovations in enhancing challenges of youth employability and entrepreneurship can be found in engaging local cultural systems. SOS's use of friends and family in Somalia not only in motivating and sustaining youth participation in its programs but in raising funding for start-ups is based on the high value placed on these relationships culturally. It also used crowd-funding as a mechanism for validating start-ups while linking it to solving social problems.

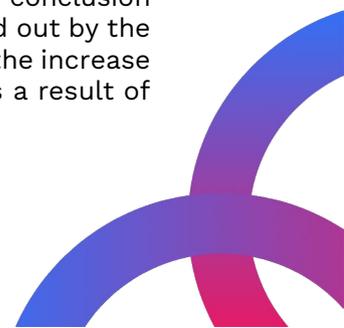
5.2 Research Question 2:

Comparison with conclusions of the ILO systematic review (2022)

The conclusions drawn in the ILO systematic review on Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMP) relate to observations on effects of interventions leading to employment and earnings a number of key areas, some of which are not relevant to the context of the MTRs (for e.g., conclusions about effects observed in high-income countries). Additionally, some conclusions are based on the results of detailed meta-analysis of effect levels for which comparable data does not exist from the MTRs. The conclusions for which evidence exists from the MTR are as follows:

1. **ALMPs have been effective in improving the labour market outcomes of young people. Major labour market outcomes for young people include improved access job opportunities and increased income. The study notes also that consistent positive effect of ALMPs is documented across all income groups, outcome categories and when analysing impact evaluations from Africa separately.**

The key outcome indicators assessed in the MTR were on employment (jobs), businesses set up by youth and SMEs job creation, as well as the inclusion of women. There was less data across the project on levels of income/revenue generated as a result of interventions, except an impact study carried out on SPARK's *Ignites Ambition* project that included income assessment. To a large extent the conclusion of the ILO review is validated by the MTR, in that the interventions carried out by the four projects had showed for the majority, positive outcomes in terms of the increase in jobs for the youth, as well as the creation of new job opportunities as a result of



new business set ups and growth of SMEs. Differences exist in the level of success across the different projects and countries. There are various reasons for this, including the selection criteria used in some projects that have not considered context-specific labour market demand, the gender dimensions of supply of labour which limit job opportunities for women, the skills gap for existing job opportunities among others.

- 2. The “what”, that is the type of intervention, plays an important role in determining the success of ALMPs. Overall, entrepreneurship promotion and skills training interventions report larger impacts than employment services and subsidized employment programmes. Further nuances are noted re: In the low- and middle-income countries, studies of entrepreneurship interventions report the largest impacts, followed by employment services and skills training interventions.**

The MTR examined the initial outcomes of the first two years of LEAD II implementation and thus provided more information on initial outcome effects. It is still early to assess the impact of these interventions, so in that respect the MTR does not provide enough evidence to fully validate the conclusions of the ILO review. Secondly, the MTR did not make comparisons of the effect levels of the individual types of intervention which in many instances were carried out simultaneously. The employment objective was very much dependent on the outcomes of the entrepreneurship component that sought to grow businesses that would lead to job creation and support high-potential SMEs also to create jobs.

- 3. “How” an intervention is designed and implemented is an important determinant of labour market outcomes: In low-and middle-income countries, studies of comprehensive, multipronged ALMPs and those that certify participation report larger impacts on youth labour market outcomes. ALMPs that offer various services are able to better address the many constraints young people face. This effect is also evident and strongly significant among programmes that integrate soft skills training and those that provide certification to participants.**

No report is made in the MTRs of the effect of providing certificates for participation in training. However, there is evidence to support the assertion that interventions that have multiple dimensions of support appear to have more positive outcome effects than otherwise. The findings in Section 4 show that skills training alone does not enable youth to access jobs without added mentoring and coaching to translate training into actions to be recruited. Many youth, notably women and those from marginalised communities, lack confidence and basic skills for engagement in the formal sector and face many socio-cultural limitations to accessing training, taking up jobs and setting up businesses. Even those with higher education eg BSc and MSc degrees had difficulty presenting themselves as professionals to potential job seekers (SOS TNE). All the projects in LEAD II therefore provide a combination of interventions to address the complex problems of youth. The SOS TNE project was commended for its inclusion of Core Life Skills training to all youth programmes , which aligns with the conclusions of the ILO review on integration of soft skills training. Core life skills training was found to build confidence in participants both from rural and urban areas as well as those with higher and lower educational levels.

- 4. Interventions in low- and middle-income countries are more successful when the programme duration exceeds four months.**

There is very limited evidence from the MTRs to support this conclusion as many of the employability and entrepreneurship programmes ran for more than 4 months. As indicated in the findings, some start-ups in the SPARK programme complained that the duration of capacity building programmes (5 months) had not been useful, as they had found the seed money provided inadequate to support their business



development. The duration of programmes varied and, in some cases, both employability and entrepreneurship programmes had lasted just a month (SOS' Alternative Delivery approach) and seemed to have addressed the need of women in marginalised communities to access jobs and business development services.

5. Impacts are larger for youth from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, young women and participants younger than 25 years, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.

There is no assessment in the MTR of the effects of interventions on youth younger than 25 years – programme beneficiaries are between the ages of 15-35yrs. Again, the LEAD II programme targeted youth in African regions that had very high unemployment rates, with significantly large numbers of economically disadvantaged youth, e.g., in the MENA region. The MTR found that even when women are specifically targeted, in some cases with up to 50% of participants in the project activities (SoS), fewer women found jobs and set up businesses than men. It is however interesting to note that SOS's experience in Nigeria confirmed that, following a survey of women who were largely educated (minimum BSc degree) and mostly lived in the city and came from middle-income household were asked why they could not find a job, the reasons included: the pursuit of further studies abroad, the low incomes of jobs offered, jobs not suited to their skills sets etc. However, with the introduction of the alternative delivery mechanism, SOS turned its attention to marginalised communities where its programme was very well received with outcomes in micro enterprises set up. This, to an extent, agrees with the conclusions of the ILO report.

6. Interventions with a local or regional scope lead to better outcomes than national level interventions.

Most of the projects under the LEAD Programme are carried out in selected geographical areas of the participating countries. The MTR did not provide any information regarding the effect of geographical scope on the project outcomes. What is noted though, is that to achieve the planned systemic change in policies that affect youth development, there is the need to engage with national level actors – ministries, influencers of government etc which require national level interventions. Lessons learnt from the MTR indicate that projects are effective when they are initiated locally, as more regular engagement of beneficiaries is required to support them effectively and follow up to ensure that interventions lead to change in behaviour.



6 Annexes

6.1 Intervention Clusters

Intervention	Description
Skills development	This includes skills training programmes offered outside the formal education system to enhance youth employability or facilitate the transition into employment. Employability skills range from job-specific technical skills to non-technical soft (or core) skills, such as self-management, teamwork and communication. Recent frameworks of core skills integrate basic digital skills and basic skills for green jobs (ILO 2021c). The review documented the specific skills provided by an intervention, for example, technical skills, digital skills, business skills, literacy or numeracy skills and a composite of behavioural, life or soft skills. The novelty is the inclusion of digital skills.
Entrepreneurship promotion	Entrepreneurship promotion interventions aim to provide advisory services and to facilitate access to finance and markets for the development or growth of a youth-owned business. The review clustered interventions across the following services: business advisory and/or mentoring; business skills; access to markets and value chains; direct credit or facilitating access to credit; monetary or in-kind (start-up or growth) grants; and micro franchising initiatives or mechanisms.
Employment services	Employment services generally focus on facilitating matching and intermediation to support the transition of young people into employment through targeted services for jobseekers and employers. The offers to young jobseekers include job counselling, job-search assistance and/or mentoring services for activation (or reactivation) purposes, which are often complemented by job placement and technical or financial assistance. The basic idea for providing employment services to youth is that young workers have difficulty signalling their skills and credentials and/or lack the networks or knowledge to search effectively for vacancies and connect with employers. As a result, these programmes often focus on improving job-seeking skills and the efficiency of the matching process. The review distinguished between the services focused on counselling, on placement and on financial support for the job search.
Wage subsidies	Wage and hiring subsidies provide incentives to employers to hire first-time jobseekers for a given period by reducing labour costs. In return, they allow young workers to build up their work experience and acquire job-relevant skills. The review distinguished between the programmes that reduce employers' social security contributions, those that reduce the labour or wage cost and those that provide direct payments (subsidies) to young people.
Public works	Public work programmes and labour-intensive public employment programmes offer direct, short-term employment to young people in infrastructure, social development or community projects. They are often considered a solution in times of crises, when there is not enough labour demand and thus as a temporary safety net. In addition to delivering useful public assets and services, these programmes create employment for the unemployed, provide



	supplementary employment to the underemployed and generate income and therefore smooth or boost consumption patterns.
Systemic Change Influencing⁷	All activities aimed at improving the enabling environment for youth employment and enterprise development – including policy-influencing activities with stakeholder engagement

Source: ILO Systemic Review 2022

⁷ These have been added to recognize the interventions that are expected to address systemic change, a necessary component of the ToC (2021)





Europe

MDF Netherlands

Ede, Netherlands
mdf@mdf.nl

MDF Brussels

Brussels
info@mdfbrussels.be

Africa

MDF West Africa

Accra, Ghana
mdfwa@mdf.nl

MDF Eastern & Southern Africa

Nairobi, Kenya
mdfesa@mdf.nl

MDF Afrique Centrale

Goma, DRC
mdfac@mdf.nl

MDF Bénin

Cotonou, Benin
mdfbenin@mdf.nl

Asia

MDF Pacific Indonesia

Bali, Indonesia
mdfpi@mdf.nl

MDF Myanmar,

Yangon, Myanmar
mdfmmr@mdf.nl

MDF Bangladesh

Dhaka, Bangladesh
mdfbg@mdf.nl





MDF

EMPOWERING PEOPLE,
CREATING IMPACT

Local Employment for African Development (LEAD) II

**Synthesis Study of Medium-Term Evaluation
Reports**

(Comments & Responses)

Submitted to Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

November 20, 2023

Authors: Sally Adjetey and Kwaku Owusu Afriyie

Local Employment for African Development (LEAD) II

Synthesis Study of Medium-Term Evaluation Reports

(Comments & Responses)

MDF West Africa Ltd
124a Freetown Avenue
East Legon, Accra
PMB CT 357
Ghana

+233 307038546
mdfwa@mdf.nl
www.mdf.nl

VAT C0006013317

Contents

1	Comments and Responses	0
----------	-------------------------------------	----------



1 Comments and Responses

This document details the comments that were given by implementing organizations of the Local Employment for African Development (LEAD) II programme during the Sense Making/Validation meeting that was organized as part of the Synthesis Study of Medium-Term Evaluation Reports. MDF has provided responses to the comments that were given. Amendments have also been made in the final report based on discussions at the validation meeting.

General Observations	
Comments	MDF Response
a) The timing of the MTR (covering the COVID period) and quality of MTR reports may, in part, be responsible for some of the omissions noted above. However, we do note a stronger mention of LEAD activities in Somalia and relatively less from other countries, and very minimal reference to work in Nigeria. Once again we recognize MDF's explanation that the intention was only to draw general observations and conclusions and that this was not a review or itemization of individual projects.	Noted.
b)	
Oxfam Comments	
1. A very well written report given the methodological limitations.	Noted . Thank you.
2. Methodology: We realize that the methodology limited the review to the period 2020-2021. This is unfortunate because the study was completed in October 2023 and could have benefited a great deal from a review of more recent reports or by interviewing key individuals about developments that have taken place since then. 2020-2021 was a highly unusual period given the pandemic and much has been put into motion from 2022 onwards. (Also noted by SOS)	Perhaps then it is the period of the MTRs that needed to be later as this is a synthesis of reviews already carried out. Point for DGIS to note.
3. We were pleased to learn of DDE's revised Theory of Change which now includes a focus on systemic change. WiP believes strongly in need to tackle	Noted



<p>these issues systemically. Unfortunately, of the three KPIs that were determined for Oxfam’s WiP, none of them address systemic change and nor were these adjusted following the new ToC. Nonetheless, Oxfam has been reporting on our system influencing work from the outset.</p>	
<p>4. Influencing/ecosystem change: We believe that Oxfam’s influencing work may not have been well understood. The study states that “the objective of influencing policy and the ecosystem were found to be difficult to measure and rather vague (OXFAM)” (p.14), whereas this is contradicted elsewhere in the report: “Oxfam Novib set clear qualitative objectives towards inspiring and motivating young people to overcome their challenges, influence policies and attitudes in government” (p.12). Also on p.23: “Oxfam for instance set qualitative objectives of inspiring youth and changing policies and attitudes in government to stimulate youth employment and the business environment”. It is possible that the MTR may not have reflected our monitoring systems effectively – especially during the covid-19 period – but we have in place several qualitative measures such as Stories of Change, Outcome Harvesting, written and video testimonies to asses influencing activities of the project.</p>	<p>The two incidences in which policy influencing had been achieved do not completely address the issue of adequacy of monitoring systems to measure systemic change. The assessment was very specific on monitoring systems and thus the conclusion of the MTR is not entirely contradictory in this regard. The objectives may have been set, however, clear indicators to track their achievement may not have been observed. This synthesis report summarizes the evidence that both qualitative and quantitative indicators provided to support the conclusions drawn. In this case the MTRs did not find them adequate.</p>
<p>5. Summary LEAD programs: On p. 20 and during the MDF presentation on 9 Nov it was mentioned that LEAD programs are active in Somalia (3 programmes), Egypt (2), and Tunisia (2). Actually, there are 2 programmes active in Nigeria as well (WiP and TNE).</p>	<p>Valid correction. Amended on page 20 of the final report.</p>
<p>6. Internship policy in Somalia: there is some confusion and misrepresentation about the work related to the internship policy in Somalia. On p.20 it is stated that “a success story is TNE’s influence on Somaliland’s internship and employment policy”. This is repeated on p.28 “SOS achieved influence in the setting up of the National Internship Policy following its close engagement with government in Hargeisa”. But on p.23(i) it is correctly stated that “Oxfam was successful in getting a national internship policy drafted in Somalia as a result of close engagement on common areas of interest”. Interestingly, according to Table 1 on p.9, SOS is not shown as being involved in systemic change/influencing. For the record, Oxfam/WiP has led the efforts on the internship policy while it invited SOS and Spark to collaborate in the efforts.</p>	<p>Changes have been made on pages 9, 18, 20 and 28 of the final report accordingly.</p>
<p>7. International partners: It is noted (p.20) that “Oxfam’s project seemed to have suffered from the lack of physical interaction from the international partners</p>	<p>Noted.</p>

<p>and which had an adverse affect on the collaboration of the project”. This is mentioned in reference to the challenges experienced by Hanze University and is repeated under the section on partnership development. Indeed, there was <i>zero</i> physical interaction between local and international partners, including Oxfam Novib, during the first two years of the project because of covid restrictions. This was overcome via online support. The case of Hanze in Somalia was an exception (reported to MFA), however, this was not the case in Nigeria or with other international partners who have been making strong contributions to the project.</p>	
<p>8. Private sector engagement: We find the report does not adequately reflect Oxfam’s private sector engagement (p.21). WiP has been working with incubators and accelerators, BDS providers, business networks including ABAN, and the Carbis Shaqo Coalition in Somaliland, we have also engaged private sector in job fairs, trainings and market assessments. WiP has also made significant contributions in the green economy space and circular business approaches but these are not mentioned in section 4.4.2.</p>	<p>A distinction is often made between private sector engagements with ‘third parties’, ie partnerships outside the program, ie not directly engaged in implementation and those who have been engaged as co-implementers. In the section referred to , the former is being referred to – indirect partners engaged to sustain or upscale program outputs/outcomes. Also other omissions may be due to their less than prominent mention in the MTR.</p>
<p>9. Interventions for women and girls: While section 4.4.3 mentions several examples of interventions by SOS, SPARK, and Hivos, the report does not reflect the significant focus of WiP on women-centered activities such as the Women’s Business Accelerator (Somalia), Ladies Startup League (Egypt), She Leads Africa (Nigeria), Tech4Women (Nigeria) and the women-only Mentor Driven Capital initiative of VC4A. It is possible that this omission was because these may not have been explicitly mentioned in the MTR report – another reason why it would have been good to supplement with KIIs.</p>	<p>You note rightly that perhaps these were carried out but the assessment criteria were not designed to highlight these activities in the MTR. This is not necessarily a gap – much of the synthesis report was around specific women-centred issues for which OXFAM’s experiences did not highlight. OXFAM’s MTR provided clear information for other issues which were adequate for the synthesis report which also outweigh those provided by other partners. It was not the idea to provide all examples but enough to demonstrate the general conclusions made.</p>
<p>10. Sector focus: Oxfam’s work with startups and SMEs has been largely sector agnostic resulting in a diverse mix of SMEs and startups in our program. However, on p.28 it is noted that “Oxfam stimulated startups in the food sector in Somalia while engaging more hi-tech companies in Egypt”.</p>	<p>The point being made is thus validated – the diversity of sectors also means that there are indeed choices to suit skill preferences, ecological differences and the like. Somalia and Egypt presented different skills and job needs than in Egypt, for instance and the programs responded to their respective needs. It does not deny that there was diversity in programs , but opportunity appropriate to the different contexts, according to the MTRs.</p>

11. Job Fairs: We feel a valuable way of bringing job seekers and employers together was via the job fairs in Nigeria and Somaliland. Interestingly, there is not much mention of the success of job fairs.	Amendment on page 26.
SPARK Comments	
12. How do you provide seed money sustainably?	DGIS?
13. The increase of institutional capacity to provide loans for microfinance institutions to increase their capacity and outreach seems to have been overlooked as one of the successful approaches to improving access to finance.	While this may have been the case for SPARK it would not have been subjected to third party assessment as that project did not have a full MTR. Most examples came from the MTR.
14. There appears to be a contradiction in the section on effectiveness and coherence in respect of collaborations between local partners. On the one hand mention is made of the facilitation of the co-design of project while the sub-section on 'mode of collaboration' of stakeholders is silent on this.	Corrections made on page 21 to align statements.
15. With regards to the selection of participants for the SME and start-up support , SPARK followed a robust selection process and did not focus on specific target groupings.	We did not receive an MTR that would provide more information on this.
16. Mention is not made (in the section on the extent to which program approaches would engender more stakeholder ownership)of examples in Tunisia, for instance where technical assistance to MSMEs was co-shared with employers.	Reference made on page 21 to the positive impact of co-design according to Spark. While Sparks' cost-sharing mechanisms with the private sector may very well have contributed to stronger local ownership, there was no specific data included on this in Spark's Impact Assessment Endline report, which we used as a base document for this synthesis study.
SOS Comments	
17. The timing of the MTR may have led to omissions (see comment a) above).	See MDF response under comment a) above.
18. The report provides a lot of insight into the other programs and ways in which they differed, which is useful.	Noted with appreciation.
19. It is difficult to compare 4 programs that do not come from the same 'mould' so some omissions are bound to happen. Many efforts were made to collaborate between 4 partners but did not always yield positive results.	Noted
20. The 'Learning Agenda' was a strong element of the SOS program (TNE) especially in 2022-2023 however it was only mentioned in passing.	The reference period for the MTR was 2020-2021 so explains why. Perhaps future MTRs could highlight the intervention more strongly.
HIVOS Comments	
21. Systemic Change and coordination between LEAD programs needs to be integrated in the program at the beginning	Noted.

22. Timing of the MTR and the consequences of Covid (programs changing quite drastically) have affected the outcome of the synthesis (see comment a) above).	See MDF response under comment a) above.
23. The organizational transformation within the Business Development Organisation infrastructure was not captured in the synthesis report.	In different parts of the report the capacity building of BDOs and the positive effect that had are noted. See for example section 4.4.1 – under partnership last bullet. Alsp under conclusions, Objective 2, last bullet.
24. The Hivos ‘Matching Fund’ was not mentioned as a best practice in the MTR, while it has been a way to increase sustainability through investments, create partnerships with the private sector (including investors) and promote our ‘Green Alliance’.	?Compromise: Inserted under 4.2.1 ‘Financial Sustainability’. Last bullet.



Europe

MDF Netherlands
Ede, Netherlands
mdf@mdf.nl

MDF Brussels
Brussels, Belgium
info@mdfbrussels.be

Africa

MDF West Africa
Accra, Ghana
mdfwa@mdf.nl

MDF Eastern & Southern Africa
Nairobi, Kenya
mdfesa@mdf.nl

MDF Afrique Centrale
Goma, DRC
mdfac@mdf.nl

MDF Bénin
Cotonou, Benin
mdfbenin@mdf.nl

Asia

MDF Pacific Indonesia
Bali, Indonesia
mdfpi@mdf.nl

MDF Myanmar
Yangon, Myanmar
mdfmmr@mdf.nl

MDF Bangladesh
Dhaka, Bangladesh
mdfbg@mdf.nl

