



Kingdom of the Netherlands



UNDP SOUTH SUDAN

Final Evaluation of Youth Empowerment through Agricultural and Value Chain Development Project (YECP)

Final Report

John Kimote, International Consultant

November 2023

Project information			
Project title	Youth Empowerment through Agricultural and Value Chain Development Project (YEEP)		
Project ID	UNDP Project Number: 00113334		
Corporate outcome and output	UNDP Strategic Plan Outcome: Advance poverty eradication in all its forms and dimensions UNDP South Sudan CPD Outcome: Local economies are recovered, and conditions and coping strategies are improved to end severe food insecurity.		
Country	South Sudan		
Region	Africa		
Date project document signed			
Project dates	Start	Planned end	Actual end
	December 2018	December 2022	December 2022
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Implementing party	UNDP		
Evaluation information			
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Period under evaluation	Start	End	
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Interviews were conducted with various stakeholders including UNDP staff, implementing partners, vocational training centers, service providers, local community structures, YEEP project recipients, national and state-level government officials, the Kingdom of Netherlands (Donor), the Chamber of Commerce and Industry as well as national and local CSOs. I appreciate all persons who participated in KIIs and FGDs as well as those who were interviewed as Survey respondents.

I would also like to express my gratitude to UNDP field officers and implementing partners who facilitated and coordinated field missions in Yambio, Bor, Juba, Torit, and Rumbek. Finally, I thank the Survey enumerators for their commitment and dedication during field data collection.

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Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	III
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	V
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	VI
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE EVALUATION SUBJECT.....	1
1.2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT	1
1.3 THEORY OF CHANGE.....	2
2. PROJECT GOAL AND OBJECTIVES	3
3. OBJECTIVE, PURPOSE, AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION	4
3.1 EVALUATION PURPOSE	4
3.2 EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE	4
3.3 EVALUATION CRITERIA AND QUESTIONS.....	4
4. EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	5
4.1 EVALUATION DESIGN.....	5
4.2 SAMPLING METHOD AND SAMPLE SIZE DETERMINATION	5
4.3 DATA ANALYSIS.....	6
4.4 CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS.....	6
4.5 ENSURING QUALITY	7
EVALUATION RANKING SCALE.....	7
5. EVALUATION FINDINGS	8
5.1 RELEVANCE AND COHERENCE	9
5.2 EFFECTIVENESS	14
5.3 EFFICIENCY.....	37
5.4 SUSTAINABILITY	41
5.5 IMPACT.....	42
5.6 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES.....	45
5.7 GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED	46
6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	47
6.1. CONCLUSIONS.....	47
6.2. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	48
ANNEXES	51
ANNEX I: EVALUATION MATRIX.....	51
ANNEX II: LIST OF DOCUMENTS	56
ANNEX II1: PERFORMANCE OF PROJECT INDICATORS.....	56
ANNEX IV:.....	59

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AfDB	African Development Bank
BDS	Business Development Services
CAPS	Career Advice and Placement Service
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease
CPD	Country Program Document
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
DAC	Development Assistance Criteria
EQ	Evaluation Questions
ERG	Evaluation Reference Group
EU	European Union
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
IDI	In-Depth Interviews
IR	Inception Report
KII	Key Informant Interviews
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
R-ARCSS	Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan
RBA	Rights-Based Approach
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SSCCIA	South Sudan Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture
TGoNU	Transitional Government of National Unity
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TVET	Technical, vocational education and training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
VTC	Vocational Training Colleges
YEEP	Youth Empowerment and Employment through Private Sector and Value Chain Development Project

Executive Summary

The Youth Empowerment and Employment through Agricultural and Value Chain Development Project (YEEP, was implemented by UNDP with support from the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the Government of South Sudan (GoSS). This four-year initiative (December 2018-December 2022) focused on providing young people with vocational, entrepreneurship, market-linked, and soft skills training, provision of small and micro-enterprise start-up kits, and job and employment creation through the development of inclusive value chains and private sector enterprises. The project was implemented in Jonglei State, the Central Equatorial State, the Lakes State, the Eastern Equatorial State, and the Western Equatorial State.

This evaluation is summative and assesses, as per the OECD/DAC criteria, the relevance and coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact prospects of the project. The evaluation serves as an important accountability and learning function by providing an overall independent assessment of the performance of the intervention in terms of the overall results against stated objectives and the reasons underpinning such results. Specifically, evaluation findings will inform planning and decision-making to improve UNDP and stakeholders' youth-focused interventions at the country level. Moreover, the evaluation supports greater accountability to UNDP, donors, national stakeholders, local communities (end beneficiaries), implementing partners, and other stakeholders.

The evaluation utilized mixed methods of data collection and analysis to respond to the evaluation criteria and questions. Both primary and secondary data collection methods were applied during the data collection phase. The review process was participatory and involved consultations with the primary stakeholders through key informant interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). A survey was conducted in all five states where the project was implemented to measure outcome, impact, and some output level indicators to collect end-line data and evaluate the project's performance. The Survey design applied a two-stage stratified cluster sampling method, where each of the five States was considered as strata and types of training as clusters. The overall sample size was calculated using Yamane's Formula: $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$ *Where;* n = Sample size; e = Margin of error (level of precision); and N = Population size. A total of 400 survey questionnaires were successfully administered.

Evaluation findings:

Relevance and Coherence: Given the country context, the focus of the YEEP project on; a) supporting the youth and women to improve their socio-economic conditions by providing vocational, technical, and soft skills, nurturing an entrepreneurship culture to enhance their

chances to secure employment and involvement in economic activities; and b) creating business and job opportunities for the youth by boosting the productivity and labor absorptive capacity on local institutions was appropriate and responsive to the needs of the youth and the development aspirations of the South Sudan. Skilling and empowering youth are fundamentally critical to sustaining peace, stability, and sustainable development in South Sudan. Vocational training provides an alternative pathway for young South Sudanese to acquire skills and competencies that make them more responsive to the increasing demand for a skilled work force in emerging job opportunities such as hospitality and construction. The project's focus on creating new and promoting existing private sector enterprises was in line with the South Sudan Transitional Constitution which prioritizes private sector development as a pathway towards recovery, resilience, and peace. The YEOP project contributed to South Sudan's National Development Strategies (2018-2021 and 2021-2024), particularly due to its emphasis on economic recovery, economic diversification, empowerment of women and youth, improving the quality of education, and expanding training opportunities. As a good practice, the YEOP project was formulated through a consultative process and the design was informed by good practices, lessons learned, and experiences from the implementation of other similar projects, especially those implemented by UNDP.

Effectiveness: The YEOP project supported the training of 19,228 youth (11,329 women) who successively completed skills, entrepreneurship, and value chain development training, through institution and community-based training modalities in 22 trades. The project interventions of combining skills training, career advice, and placement services as well as services provided by i-hubs increased the employability and engagement of young men and women in economic and livelihood initiatives in South Sudan. The project established and operationalized a total of five (5) i-Hubs in each targeted location and the i-Hubs were equipped with computers and provided internet access. The i-Hubs provided career guidance and counseling, including CV writing and interview techniques, entrepreneurship skills, and business development services to youths who graduated from skills training, out-of-school and unemployed youths, and university graduates. By providing training, start-up kits, linkages for loans/credit, internship, and job placement services, the project increased productivity and incomes for young men and women in targeted areas in South Sudan. The project completed the rehabilitation of the VTC in Rumbek, and Torit as well as business development services (BDS) training centers for youth in Juba, Bor, Torit, Rumbek, and Yambio. The Project enhanced local private sector enterprises, agriculture, natural resource-linked value chains, and services for young men and women in the targeted areas in South Sudan.

The project contributed to increased economic activities and job opportunities in the local markets as a result of new businesses established, increased agricultural production, effective market

linkages, and application of the business/entrepreneurship skills provided by the project. Supported youth and women established and registered with the local authorities at least 1,734 new Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs). The project linked agriculture value chain-based skills training to MSEs development by providing entrepreneurship training, start-up kits, working capital, productive assets, marketing support, and business registration support. The project created a collaboration with the private sector to develop links between skills training and job skills demanded in the labour market. A total of 12,050 (7,398 women) graduates were able to secure regular income from jobs and value-chain livelihood initiatives. The income secured by project beneficiaries offered an important step towards their independence and self-reliance; increased their coping, adaptive, and resilience capacities by allowing them to provide for the needs of the family (for example food, school fees, medical bills); improved their socio-economic status; promoted social integration, intergenerational dialogue; influenced their choice of further education and training, and decisions regarding marriage; and increased productivity and sustainable local economic growth.

Efficiency: The YEOP project implementation arrangements, management, and coordination mechanisms were well-articulated in the project document. To effectively and efficiently deliver skills training, the project collaborated and worked closely with other UN agencies and local CSOs to expand reach, increase participation, and provide equal opportunities. The project minimized the cost of maintaining its field operations through partnerships with UNMISS and other UN agencies. Through application of adaptive programming the project identified opportunities to leverage project activities and the role of women in supporting COVID-19 prevention and control which not only mitigated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic but also created income-generating opportunities for the vulnerable population, especially women.

Sustainability: The skills training, start-up kits, and other support that were provided to youth and women will most likely continue to stimulate private sector development and cost-effective service delivery in their communities and this promotes a sense of social inclusion and participation in private sector development. UNDP in partnership with Stanbic Bank (a financial institution) with funding from AfDB supported the establishment of a financing platform that provided interest-free financing/loans to youth and women MSEs and VSLAs to grow and sustain their businesses. The community-based skills provided to beneficiaries of training of trainers (ToT) will ensure the availability and ad hoc transfer of skills to other beneficiaries at the community level, although these benefits would have been accelerated if mechanisms for cascading skills to other beneficiaries were put in place. The implementation of field activities through local NGOs and CSOs partners helped empower them and build national capacities.

Impact: The project offered an opportunity to restore hope and inspire youths to create a positive momentum for their future by enhancing their entrepreneurship, technical, and social skills. This has contributed to overall peace through the reduction of negative outcomes such as crime, violence, perception of injustice, and protection of youth against mobilization to violence. The improved status, particularly for women, had contributed to increased access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services, and involvement in community decision-making, and served as an instrument for the elimination of structural gender inequalities. Through the project beneficiaries, families that were in constant conflict were able to reconcile, contributing to peaceful co-existence, stability and social cohesion among their families and communities.

Recommendations

A. Strategic Level

1. To consolidate the gains of the project in the area of peace, stability, and social-economic development of South Sudan, the project interventions should be replicated and upscaled to maintain the momentum as the country undertakes stabilization and recovery initiatives for sustainable development. UNDP in collaboration with the relevant national and state-level government ministries and other actors should mobilize resources to support VTCs to continue providing skills training for more youth and women within and beyond the five targeted states in South Sudan. - *(GoSS, UNDP)*.
2. The Government of South Sudan should consider providing more budgetary allocations and other resources to VTCs to effectively continue providing vocational training for youth and women. Without government and/or alternative funding, it is unlikely that VTCs will continue providing skills training. The GoSS should prioritize strengthening the institutional capacities of VTCs to effectively deliver skills training by allocating funds for rehabilitation, repair, and maintenance of training facilities, procurement of training materials, hiring more tutors, staff salaries, etc-*(GoSS)*.
3. There is a need to invest more in supporting new and existing private sector enterprises, particularly in terms of access to finance/credit, capacity building, etc. to enhance their labour absorptive capacities. The GoSS should consider giving tax concessions for new businesses and existing MSEs that employ a minimum number of people - *(UNDP, GoSS)*
4. The GoSS should ensure the governance of all VTCs is placed under one specific/distinctive ministry at the national and state level for effective management, coordination, and ownership of skills training. In addition, a strong regulatory framework for VTCs should be developed, and effective monitoring mechanisms established, including regular inspections for compliance with policies and guidelines. This will ensure harmonization of their operations, standardization of training and avoid administrative bottlenecks -*(GoSS)*.

5. The GoSS should review the vocational training curriculum to ensure standardization of vocational training programs and certifications. The training duration of each vocational training programme should be reviewed and where necessary revised to ensure quality training. Certificates issued to training graduates should be standardized across all the states and VTCs. The competency-based curriculum should be printed and bound as one volume for ease of reference and for effective supervision - *(GoSS, UNDP)*

B. Programme Level

6. UNDP should strengthen its M & E system for effective and timely monitoring/tracking of project outcomes. This should include regular monitoring and field visits to enhance the follow-up and support given to training graduates especially those provided with start-up kits and/or established new businesses - *(UNDP, local CSOs)*
7. The provision of community-based training should be standardized and institutionalized for effective transfer of skills to other beneficiaries. This can be done by training more youth and women as ToTs establishing mechanisms and providing resources for the cascading of training to other beneficiaries- *(GoSS, UNDP, CSOs)*
8. Training graduates should be vetted and linked to financial service providers to enable them access credit/loans to establish or strengthen their businesses. UNDP should continue identifying private sector enterprises that require additional capital and have the potential to repay loans and link them up to financial service providers/credit *(UNDP)*.

1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of the Evaluation Subject

UNDP, with support from the Kingdom of Netherlands, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) implemented the Youth Empowerment and Employment through Agricultural and Value Chain Development Project (YEAP). This four-year Project (December 2018-December 2022) sought to empower youth in five targeted locations in South Sudan namely; Jonglei State, Central Equatorial State, the Lakes State, Eastern Equatorial State, and Western Equatorial State through nurturing their entrepreneurial culture and market-linked skills to enhance their employability and productive engagement in economic activities. The total budget of the Project was USD 14,507,286, including a contribution of USD 9,424,953 from the Kingdom of the Netherlands; USD 3,285,800 from UNDP; and USD 1,796,533 from the AfDB. An external International Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) consultant, supported by a team of eight national data collection enumerators were engaged to independently evaluate the project using the OECD/DAC¹ evaluation criteria.

An Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) which composed of Representatives of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands in South Sudan, a representative of the Ministry of Labor, a representative of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative (programme), UNDP Head of PMSU, UNDP senior Programme Advisor, Chamber of Commerce, and Civil society representative was established to provide quality assurances of the evaluation process. The project implementation was guided by the South Sudan National Development Strategy, the United Nations Cooperation Framework (UNCF), the Partnership for Recovery and Resilience (PfRR), the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Strategic Plan of 2019-2021, and the UNDP Country Programme Document 2019-2021 (CPD) Outcome 2: 'Inclusive and risk-informed economic development. The project was implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour; the Ministry of Trade, Industry, and East African Community Affairs; the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security; the Chamber of Commerce and Industry; UN Agencies; and Civil Society Organizations.

1.2 Background and Context

South Sudan became an independent nation in July 2011. While independence was a major milestone in the history of South Sudan, conflicts in December 2013 saw the onset of civil war in the Country, and the Country is yet to reap the benefits of independence and peace is yet to come to its estimated 12 million inhabitants. The country has enjoyed relative stability since the Revitalized Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) in September 2018, raising cautious optimism for durable peace and the return to sustainable development. The

¹ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee

Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU) aims to restore peace, security and stability in South Sudan ensuring the reintegration of IDPs, instilling and implementing policies, and seeking institutional and legal reform. While South Sudan is rich in terms of natural resources, approximately 50 percent of the total 64.7 million hectares of land is suitable for cultivation.

The country is endeavouring to transition, however inevitably high unemployment, particularly amongst the youth, tends to compound the situation, and turning to violence and criminal practices thrives in such an environment. Given the context and environment and high levels of poverty, the so-called “youth bulge” may pose a threat to the volatile peace and security situation should the youth not be able to engage in their communities and contribute to their livelihoods and those of their families. The YEOP project aimed at contributing to the progressive transformation of South Sudan towards durable peace and sustainable development by supporting the youth to earn a living by providing vocational, technical, and soft skills, nurturing an entrepreneurship culture to enhance their chances of getting employment and involvement in economic activities, and creating business and job opportunities for the youth by boosting the productivity and labor absorptive capacity on local institutions.

1.3 Theory of Change

The original Theory of Change (ToC) states; ***IF** local private sector enterprises, agriculture, natural resource-linked value chains and services for young men and women are enhanced, and **IF** youth are provided with vocational, technical and entrepreneurial skills, psychosocial and business management advisory support; **THEN** new business and income generating opportunities will be created whilst productivity and labour absorptive capacities of new and existing local private sector enterprises and value chains will be boosted; and **THEN** employability and engagement in economic and livelihood initiatives **AND** productivity and incomes for young men and women in targeted areas will be increased resulting in improved well-being, resilience, and peaceful co-existence among youth in and around targeted areas in South Sudan.*

While the original ToC was found to be well stated and with all good intentions and expectations, the unforeseen advent of the COVID-19 pandemic impacted project implementation resulting in delays in the implementation of some activities (e.g. job and opportunities fairs), closure of vocational training centers, suspension of training and public gatherings, imposed movement restrictions, among others. Based on the desk review of project documents and preliminary consultations with key stakeholders, the original ToC underpinning this initiative was reviewed and revised/reconstructed to take into account the implementation of project activities that were not planned in the initial project design and to anchor emerging issues and context, particularly COVID-19 prevention and control (see Annex IV for the diagram of the reconstructed ToC).

2. Project Goal and Objectives

The expected impact/goal of the project is improved well-being, resilience, and peaceful co-existence among youth in and around targeted areas in South Sudan. The following two project outcomes and corresponding outputs were expected to contribute to the achievement of the intended impact.

1. Outcome One: Increased employability and engagement in productive economic and livelihood initiatives for young men and women in targeted areas.

- **Output 1.1: Young men and women in Bor, Jubek, Rumbek, Torit, and Yambio are provided with vocational, technical, and entrepreneurial skills.** This output aimed to establish business development services (BDS) training centers informed by studies on market-linked labour skills gaps. State-level youth were provided with business start-up support, business skills development training, mentoring, and career advisory services. The project also nurtured entrepreneurship culture and enhanced market-linked skills among youth through targeted training and advocacy, reinforced existing and created new enterprises through developing the capacity of youth to create or grow existing MSEs and providing them with start-up capital and innovation awards.
- **Output 1.2: Technical, vocational education and training (TVET) and university graduates have increased access to career development and employment opportunities.** This output focused on creating collaboration with the private sector to develop links between skills training and job skills demanded in the labour market. The project focused on two areas; a) link skills training to the job skills demanded in the labor market. b) establish Career Advice and Placement Service (CAPS) centers in the five target areas to offer a full range of career advice and job placement services. The CAPS were to be used to enhance the employability of youth by matching job-seeker skills to employer needs and facilitating internships and placements for graduates in the private and public sectors.

2. Project outcome 2: Increased productivity and incomes for young men and women in targeted areas.

- **Output 2.1: Young men and women in targeted areas benefit from jobs, livelihood, and income-generating initiatives created through strengthened private sector enterprises and local value chains.** Amongst other activities, this output envisaged the creation of economic zones and providing spaces for youth entrepreneurs to start and expand businesses, project innovation labs, and business development hubs; and give tax concessions for start-ups and SMEs employing a minimum number of people. The project planned to engage the South Sudan Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture (SSCCIA) and state-level governments for institutional support in vocational and skills

training (venue, security, etc.), community access, and selection of project participants as well as in creating a conducive environment for viable value chains and private sector enterprise.

3. Objective, Purpose, and Scope of the Evaluation

3.1 Evaluation Purpose

This evaluation is summative and assessed, as per the OECD/DAC criteria, the relevance and coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact prospects of the project. The evaluation serves as an important accountability and learning function. Specifically, evaluation findings will inform the planning and decision-making to improve UNDP and stakeholders' youth-focused interventions at the country level. Moreover, the evaluation supports greater accountability to UNDP, donors, national stakeholders², local communities (end beneficiaries), implementing partners, and other stakeholders.

3.2 Evaluation Objectives and Scope

This evaluation provides an overall independent assessment of the performance of the intervention by independently examining the extent to which progress was made towards the achievement of results, and assessing the emerging impact and success of the intervention. In addition, the evaluation assessed the efficiency and effectiveness of project management and to what extent the management was able to adapt to changes in context and challenges during the project implementation. The evaluation covers the entire project implementation period from December 2018 to December 2022, in all the project locations: Bor, Juba, Rumbek, Torit, and Yambio.

3.3 Evaluation Criteria and Questions

The project was evaluated against OECD/DAC evaluation criteria, namely Relevance and Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and Sustainability. At the inception phase of this evaluation, the indicative questions under each of the evaluation criteria (outlined in the TOR) were regrouped and consolidated into the following eight overarching main areas to delimit the data collected as evidence base for the evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Criteria	Main Area/Issue Raised
1. Relevance and Coherence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The extent to which the project was relevant, responsive and adaptive to the context, needs and priorities of youth, young women, private sector development, and South Sudan national development priorities 2. How the project fits with other similar projects/ programmes implemented by UNDP and other actors

² Relevant ministries and institutions of the Government of the Republic of South Sudan

2. Effectiveness	3. The extent to which the project has achieved its intended goals and objectives/ outcomes 4. How and to what extent the project enhanced local private sector enterprises, agriculture, natural resource-linked value chains, and services for young men and women in targeted areas in South Sudan
3. Efficiency	5. The extent to which the project implementation was efficient in generating the expected results
4. Sustainability	6. The extent to which the project initiatives and achievements are sustainable beyond the project period- considering potential risks in the context
5. Impact/Impact prospects	7. Identifiable changes that have occurred or are likely to occur as a result of the project interventions
6. Cross-cutting	8. The extent to which relevant cross-cutting issues (gender, youth, conflict and HRBA) were integrated into Project design and implementation

4. Evaluation Design and Methodology

4.1 Evaluation Design

The evaluation utilized mixed methods of data collection and analysis to respond to the evaluation criteria and questions. Both primary and secondary data collection methods were applied during the data collection phase. The review process was participatory and involved consultations with the primary stakeholders through key informant interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The evaluation methods included a thorough desk review, qualitative data collection (Focus Group Discussions, Key Informant Interviews, in-depth interviews, observations, case/success stories), and quantitative data collection (survey or secondary data analysis. The methodology was gender-sensitive, conflict-sensitive, and respected “Do No Harm” principles. A survey was conducted to measure the outcome, impact, and some output level indicators based on the project results matrix to collect end-line data and evaluate the project’s performance. The design of the survey mirrored the major focus of the qualitative information to give coverage and enable triangulation of data. To administer the survey and to gain a deeper understanding of the project intervention through observation, the evaluation team visited all five project locations. Narrative and pictorial information was collected that helped to explain and triangulate information with the one obtained from other data collection methods.

4.2 Sampling Method and Sample Size Determination

Purposeful sampling was used to select KII/IDI/FGD respondents for the evaluation to maximize the diversity of opinions represented in the study. The survey was conducted in all the five states³

³ Bor, Juba, Yambio, Rumbek and Torit

where the project was implemented. A non-experimental design was used to measure the magnitude of changes over the period of project implementation with pre (baseline) and post (end-line) tests. The Survey design applied a two-stage stratified cluster sampling method, where each of the five States was considered as strata and types of training⁴ as clusters. The overall sample size was calculated using Yamane's Formula: $n = N / \{1 + N(e)^2\}$ *Where;* n = Sample size; e = Margin of error (level of precision); and N = Population size. Based on the above formula, a sample size of 391 respondents⁵ was adequate to obtain disaggregated data (e.g. by location, gender, age, education level, etc.) across the entire population of youths who completed various training and/or benefited from the project initiatives. However, to take into account the possibility of non-responses and outliers during analysis, the evaluation used a sample size of 405 respondents but 400 survey questionnaires were successfully administered. The number of respondents for each cluster was selected from the sample size of each stratum using Probability Proportional to the Size (PPS) procedure.

4.3 Data analysis

Survey data was captured in MS Excel and exported to statistical analysis software (SPSS) for descriptive analysis and cross-tabulations. Analysis of qualitative data involved the identification of broad ideas, phrases, and themes, looking for the most common responses to questions, identifying observations or patterns that answered the evaluation questions, and including areas that could be explored further. Data analysis involved triangulation, and the interpretation of results/findings was objective and factual.

4.4 Challenges and limitations

- Due to logistical challenges and delays in the hiring of national data collection enumerators, the evaluation could not be completed within the stipulated timelines as per the approved inception report. To mitigate this challenge, UNDP revised the evaluation timelines to provide time for the evaluation team to complete data collection.
- Most of the training graduates lived or worked in far locations from each other and therefore it was difficult for the evaluation team to schedule some of the planned FGD sessions. In addition, due to unavailability or conflicting schedules in their work places, some of the potential key informants were not available for scheduled interviews. To mitigate this challenge, the evaluation team was patient and flexible, rescheduling interviews to accommodate the schedules of key informants.

⁴ 1) institution-based vocational training; and 2) community-based agriculture value chain skills

⁵ A total of 19,228 youth completed skills, entrepreneurship, and value chain development training along 22 trades

- Phone contacts for some of the sampled project recipients were either not available in the databases or were unreachable when contacted for interviews. The evaluation team substituted them with other beneficiaries to ensure the sample size was achieved.
- The evaluation team worked closely with UNDP and the local implementing partners (service providers) to ensure challenges were addressed and the degree of limitation was reduced throughout the evaluation.

4.5 Ensuring Quality

The evaluator used best evaluation practices to ensure quality, including adherence to the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards and conducting regular consultations with the evaluation manager. The evaluation inception report, data collection tools, and evaluation report were shared and received input from the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) established for this evaluation.

Evaluation ranking scale

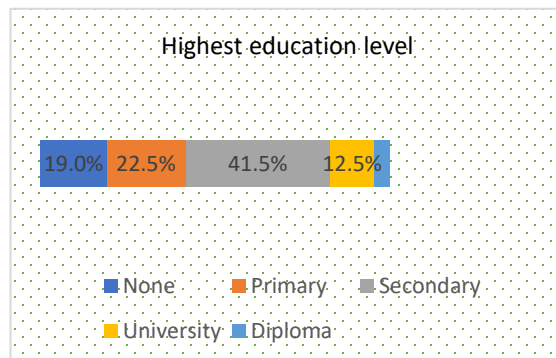
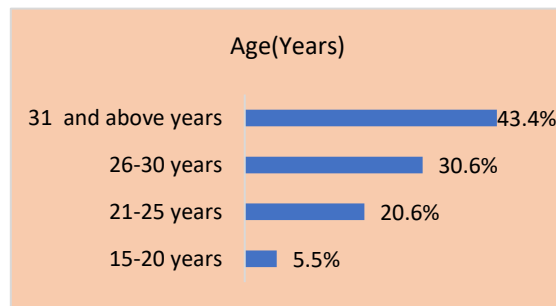
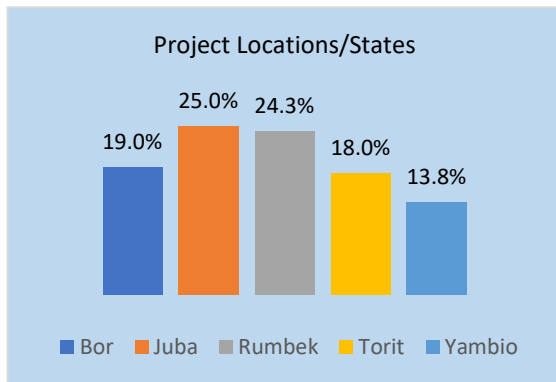
The evaluation used a rating scale to rank each evaluation criterion – relevance and coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and Impact. The evaluation used a 4-fold rating scale as follows: *Highly Satisfactory (4); Satisfactory (3); Moderately satisfactory (2); Unsatisfactory (1)*

Table 1: Scoring of Project Performance:

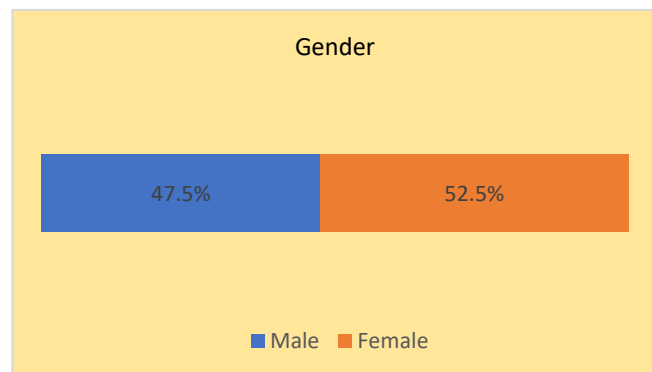
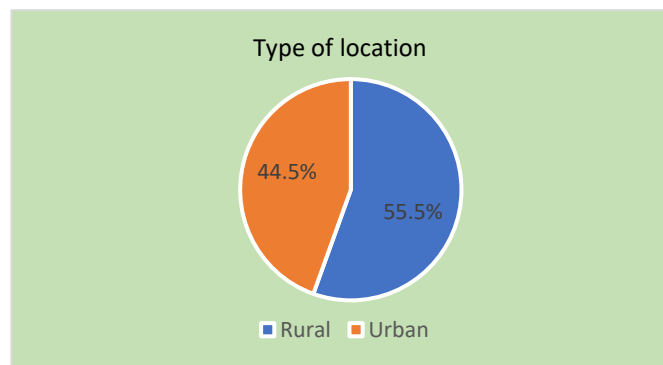
Rating	Performance description
4 Highly satisfactory (Always/almost always)	Performance is clearly very strong in relation to the evaluation question/criterion. Weaknesses are not significant and have been managed effectively.
3 Satisfactory (Mostly, with some exceptions)	Performance is reasonably strong on most aspects of the evaluation question/criterion. No significant gaps or weaknesses, or less significant gaps or weaknesses have mostly been managed effectively.
2 Moderately satisfactory (Sometimes, with many exceptions)	Performance is inconsistent in relation to the question/criterion. There are some serious weaknesses. Meets minimum expectations/requirements as far as can be determined.
1 Unsatisfactory (Never or occasionally with clear weaknesses)	Performance is unacceptably weak in relation to the evaluation question/criterion. Does not meet minimum expectations/requirements.

5. Evaluation Findings

Demographics data of Survey respondents:



The majority of survey respondents were located in Juba (25%), followed by Rumbek (24.3%), Bor (19%), Torit (18%) and Yambio (13.8%). The majority (55.5%) of survey respondents were located in urban areas. In terms of gender, a majority (52.5%) of the project beneficiaries were female while 47.5% were male. The highest number of survey respondents (43.4%) were aged 31 years and above; 30.6% were aged between 26 and 30 years while 20.6% were aged between 21 and 25 years. The lowest age



category was those aged between 15 and 20 years (5.5%). The highest number of survey respondents (41.5%) had a secondary school level of education, while 22.5% had a primary school level of education. 12.5% had a university level of education and 4.5% had college education level (diplomas). However, 19.0% of the survey respondents were illiterate. The majority (69.8%) of survey respondents were married while 24.5% were single.

5.1 Relevance and Coherence

Under the Relevance criterion, this evaluation assessed the extent to which the project was appropriate, relevant, responsive, and adaptive to the context, needs and priorities of youth, young women, private sector development, and South Sudan national development priorities. The Relevance and Coherence of the YEOP Project was rated **Highly Satisfactory**.

Finding 1: The project design and focus was in line with and responsive to the Country's context, needs of youth, women, private sector development, and South Sudan's national development priorities.

Given the country context, the focus of the YEOP project on; a) supporting the youth to improve their socio-economic conditions by providing vocational, technical, and soft skills, nurturing an entrepreneurship culture to enhance their chances to secure employment and involvement in economic activities; and b) creating business and job opportunities for the youth by boosting the productivity and labor absorptive capacity on local institutions was both appropriate and responsive to the needs of the youth and the development aspirations of the country. Besides, unemployment and lack of sustainable income-generating activities made most young people vulnerable and allowed themselves to be used by politicians as instruments of violence and conflicts for financial gain. Skilling and empowering youth are fundamentally critical to sustaining peace, stability, and sustainable development in South Sudan. The project helped address issues of insecurity by providing young men and women with vocational skills in various trades and community-based training in agricultural value chains which increased their access to economic empowerment opportunities thus creating improved sustainable socio-economic conditions.

Vocational training provides an alternative pathway for young South Sudanese to acquire skills and competencies that make them more responsive to the increasing demand for a skilled work force in the emerging job opportunities such as hospitality and construction. The project provided the young men and women who dropped out of school an opportunity to advance their skills despite their low literacy levels. Although South Sudan has a huge agricultural potential, the Country continues to be food insecure, import-dependent, and low in productivity. The Country imports many of its foods including staple cereal crops (the agricultural sector has mostly been subsistence-based). To boost local agricultural production there was the need to stimulate existing and create new natural resource and agriculture-linked value chains and local enterprises, creating livelihood and income-generating opportunities for the predominantly youthful local population. While farmers possess the knowledge and experience of production, the low levels of education affect their capacity to enter the market. Community-based training in agricultural value chains and soft skills provided to young men and women sought to enhance their skills in order to contribute to increased productivity and labour absorptive capacities.

To ensure skills training and benefits of the project were appropriately aligned and packaged to meet the labour demand and supply in each state, the project conducted two separate studies in 2020- a labor market analysis and an agricultural value chain analysis. The two studies identified skills that were mostly required by employers in various sectors including the gaps, opportunities, and priorities for private sector development as well as other income-generating (self-employment) activities for youth in each of the targeted states. The findings of the labour market assessment demonstrated that South Sudan suffers from structural unemployment whereby youth either possess skills that are not in demand, or they lack skills that are in high demand (skills mismatch). The project sought to address the mismatch between the demand and availability of skilled labour. Findings from the agricultural value chain study confirm that the development of high-potential agriculture commodities could facilitate local, inter-state, and regional trade, improve food security, support recovery, and sustain peace in South Sudan.⁶ Findings from the two studies were used to inform the design of courses for both IBT and CBT in each state and ensured training programmes were tailored to meet the specific needs and priorities of the targeted groups of trainees.

As a result of the protracted armed conflicts in South Sudan, the infrastructure in most of the vocational training centers was dilapidated rendering most of them nonoperational. Besides, due to the limited budgetary allocations from the government, most of the VTCs lacked the necessary training materials to provide practical training skills in various trades. The few qualified tutors/instructors employed by the government were not adequately remunerated in terms of salaries and this contributed to reduced morale thus affecting the quality of skills training. Due to extreme poverty, most of the students (and their parents) could not afford to pay minimal fees for the running of the vocational training institutions. The majority of interlocutors indicated that the YEPP project was timely since it was implemented at a time when South Sudan was in dire need of skilled manpower and local capacity to contribute to South Sudan's economic recovery and the reconstruction of the country's infrastructure.

The project's focus on creating new and promoting existing private sector enterprises was in line with the South Sudan Transitional Constitution which prioritizes private sector development as a pathway towards recovery, resilience, and peace. It also stresses that equitable economic development should be based on the agricultural, and agro-industrial sectors and the promotion of the private sector within a framework of transparent and accountable governance. There has been minimal private sector development in South Sudan due to several factors, mainly recurring

⁶ South Sudan Agricultural Value Chain, UNDP (South Sudan), 2020

conflict.⁷ The conflicts, mainly taking ethnic dimensions leads to the exclusion of certain groups including youth and women from the few available economic opportunities.

Finding 2: The YEEP project objectives and results contributed to South Sudan's national development strategies, outcomes, policies, and priorities.

The YEEP project contributed to South Sudan's National Development Strategies (2018-2021 and 2021-2024). The NDS 2018-2021 was guided by the following principles: i) Peace, Security, and Rule of Law; ii) Democracy and Good Governance; iii) Socio-economic Development and iv) International Compacts and Partnerships. The principle of Socio-economic Development is particularly relevant due to its emphasis on economic recovery, economic diversification, empowerment of women and youth, improving the quality of education, and expanding training opportunities. By providing skills and creating job opportunities and other income-generating activities for the youth, the project contributed to poverty reduction and eradication of hunger; economic recovery; economic diversification; empowerment of women and youth; improving the quality of education and expanding training opportunities; inclusive and equitable economic growth, service delivery, social safety nets for the vulnerable creation and development of markets; support to scientific and socio-economic research; and provision of vocational technical training.

Under the fourth principle⁸, coordination of development aid, humanitarian work should go hand in hand with development and public-private partnerships for sustainable development. This principle promotes national ownership of development assistance. Furthermore, the NDS (2018-2021) includes a number of cross-cutting issues, including empowering youth to address unemployment challenges. To this end, one of the key strategic priority actions in this area is to “coordinate and train all the targeted groups (staff, youth, and women) in the relevant fields for efficient and effective participation in nation-building and state-building. The Revised NDS (R-NDS) reinforces South Sudan's Vision 2040: towards freedom, equality, justice, peace, and prosperity for all, which remains the national vision towards which all national development strategies should contribute. Skills training for young men and women contributed to the outcome of micro, small, and medium enterprises particularly economic diversification for sustainable growth. The project also contributed to gender, youth, and other cross-cutting issues cluster particularly the outcomes of vocational training; employment creation; and women's empowerment.

⁷ Transitional Constitution of South Sudan

⁸ International Compacts and Partnerships

By providing training opportunities and resources for youth in the five targeted states the project facilitated employment creation and opportunities and thereby strengthened the capacity of beneficiaries to support their families, contributing to the economic growth of the country. Through investment in the rehabilitation and building of new infrastructure in vocational training facilities, the project contributed to the social development cluster particularly the outcome of empowering women and youth. By strengthening the institutional capacity of vocational training centers (e.g. building and/or rehabilitation of VTC infrastructures, equipping of VTC centers, competency-based vocational training modules, and i-hubs, hiring and incentivizing tutors, providing training, etc.), the project contributed to the outcome of capacity-building for infrastructure development.

The United Nations Cooperation Framework (2019-2021) had the overall aim of building resilience, capacities, and institutions needed to achieve four priority outcomes: i) Building peace and strengthening governance; ii) improving food security and recovering local economies; iii) strengthening social services; and iv) empowering women and youth. The framework focused on long-term sustainable development which is in line with African Union Agenda 2063 and Development goals, including “the promotion” of goal 16 to leave no one behind (LNOB). The YEPP project contributed to outcome areas; 2) improving food security and recovering local economies; and 4) empowering women and youth.

In addition, the project was fully aligned with the following development frameworks:

- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); Goal 1: No poverty, Goal 2: Zero hunger, Goal 8: Decent work and economic growth; Goal 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure, and Goal 16: Peace, justice, and strong institutions.
- UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks [UNSDCF] (2023-2025) Outcome areas; 1) Sustainable Economic Growth and Diversification; 2) Women and Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development
- South Sudan Partnership for Recovery and Resilience⁹ Pillar 3: Restore productive capacities, agenda 7: Increase production and value of key agricultural commodities and 8: Close skills and capacity gaps of vulnerable women and youth.
- UNDP Country Programme Documents (2019-2021) Pillar 2: Strengthened institutional and community resilience, and Outcome 2: Local economies are recovered, and conditions and coping strategies are improved to end severe food insecurity.

⁹ The South Sudan Partnership for Recovery and Resilience (PfRR) is a collective of donors, UN Agencies and NGOs working together to increase resilience and reduce vulnerability of the South Sudanese people and the institutions who represent them.

Finding 3: As a good practice, the YEEP project was formulated through a consultative process and the design was informed by good practices, lessons learned, and experiences from the implementation of other similar projects.

The design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project was inclusive and participatory. Key stakeholders consulted during the project design and implementation included the relevant national government ministries, state governments, local communities, the National Chamber of Commerce, the private sector, civil society organizations (CSOs), and other actors. The design and implementation of the YEEP project drew from lessons learned from the recovery and stabilization pilot initiated by UNDP in Northern Bahr el Ghazal (Aweil) state that targeted women and youth especially those engaged in doing business through supporting vocational skills development, and entrepreneurship training to enhance the competitiveness of youth (men and women) in the labour market as well as prepare and train them to engage in self-employment. The design of the YEEP project was also informed by lessons learned from the implementation of “State Integrated Recovery and Stabilization” Project in Aweil (2017-2018).

The project design was also inspired and guided by the framework of the global UN policy on Post Conflict Employment Creation; Income Generation and Reintegration and the Opportunities for Youth Employment (OYE) approach; and the State Integrated Recovery and Stabilization Project implemented in Aweil (2017-2018). The project conducted regular field monitoring visits, beneficiary follow-ups, and tracer studies to assess the implementation of the project and to identify good practices, lessons learned, and any operational challenges. For instance, tracer studies were conducted in Yambio, Rumbek, and Juba in order to generate information and knowledge with regard to the employment, self-employment, unemployment of training graduates and the challenges they faced. In addition, the studies assessed longer-term changes that had occurred in the lives of project recipients and how the intervention contributed to these changes.

The Project harnessed the humanitarian-peacebuilding-development nexus by fostering partnership arrangements with different projects and units within UNDP in South Sudan. It provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Labour in preparing the National Occupational Health and Safety Policy, National Labour Regulations, and the Minimum Wages Policy in close coordination with the Governance and Economic Management Support Unit. Similarly, the project harmonized its interventions with the Access to Justice and Rule of Law Unit and the Peace and Community Cohesion Unit in the areas of women’s socio-economic empowerment, sensitization on community cohesion, pathways to community security, human rights as well as vocational skills training among inmates and remandees. The project also partnered with the Accelerator Lab in supporting and following up with the innovation challenge winners in the development and testing of prototypes.

5.2 Effectiveness

Under effectiveness, this evaluation examined the extent to which the project achieved or was expected to achieve its objectives and its results at Outcome and Output levels. The Effectiveness of the YEEP project was rated **Satisfactory**.

Finding 4: By providing Institution-based training and Community-based training, The YEEP project enhanced the vocational, technical, and entrepreneurial skills of youth and women in five targeted states in South Sudan

According to the end of project final report, the YEEP project supported the training of 19,228 youth (11,329 women) who successively completed skills, entrepreneurship, and value chain development training, through institution and community-based training modalities in 22 trades.¹⁰ UNDP provided the list of trainees from each of the five locations with details of the training they received, their locations, gender, and phone contacts. Due to the large number of training participants and the fact that some of the trainees either did not provide phone contacts or the contacts they provided were out of service, the evaluation team was unable to independently verify the information provided for each of the trainees. The evaluator conducted various tests to ascertain the validity and credibility of the data provided, including reviewing the list of trainees to ensure there was no duplication of records and comparing the data provided with trainee registration records at the vocational training schools. In addition, survey respondents, KII and FGD participants who had been randomly selected for interviews were asked to state the type of training they undertook and information provided by all the 400 survey respondents, as well as KII and FGD participants, matched the information contained in the list of trainees provided by the project team. Based on the results of these tests, the evaluation concluded the information provided in the list of trainees was credible and valid. The achievement of 19,228 training beneficiaries exceeded the targeted number of trainees (6,250) by 12,978 (308% of the project target). Of the total number of youths trained, 35% (6,727 youth) graduated from institution-based vocational training, while the remaining 65% (12,501 youth) completed community-based agriculture value chain training.

The YEEP project completed the rehabilitation of the VTC in Rumbek, and Torit as well as business development services (BDS) training centers for youth in Juba, Bor, Torit, Rumbek, and Yambio. The construction and renovation work for the different VTC facilities underwent environmental impact assessments to minimize damage to the environment. Most wastes arising from training consumables and materials were collected and disposed of in an environmentally friendly manner. The project also provided five youth-oriented facilities with clean energy

¹⁰ YEEP Project Final Report 2023

solutions (solar power solutions) that were installed and have enabled the participants to produce products that are cost-optimized, with lower carbon emissions. The Project used a rights-based and gender-sensitive approach to programming to curb inequalities, confront discrimination, and fast-track progress for those who are the furthest behind. In an effort to implement the principle of “leave no one behind”, mobile community-based training was introduced to bring training opportunities to rural areas where youth have difficulty accessing VTCs located in the states. The majority (73%) of training graduates were either employed and/or had started new businesses which contributed to their improved livelihoods and economic capacities. For instance, after the training, youth who were previously unemployed and relied on support from their families managed to get employment in the existing private sector enterprises such as carpentry workshops and restaurants. Others, especially those who benefited from CBT and/or acquired entrepreneurship skills jointly formed new businesses and/or agricultural value chains. The tables below show the number of trainees who undertook various trainings (disaggregated by gender).

Institution-based training trade areas by gender

Trade Areas	Female	Male	Grand Total
Automotive	186	811	997
Carpentry and Joinery	28	349	377
Computer	478	669	1147
Electricity	185	709	894
Hospitality	1488	75	1563
Masonry and Construction	192	914	1106
Tailoring	291	94	385
Welding & Metal work	22	236	258
Grand Total	2870	3857	6727

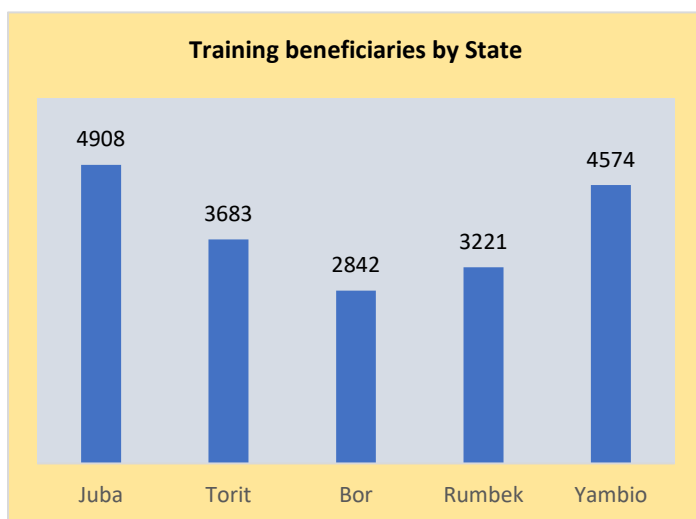
Community-based training categories by gender

Categories	Female	Male	Grand Total
Basic driving	108	70	178
Catering and Hospitality	2436	615	3051
Food production, processing, & marketing	2791	2425	5216
Garments & Tailoring	154	0	154
Introduction to brick production	31	192	223
Introduction to piggery production	129	175	304
Introduction to Poultry Production	316	192	508
Introduction to processing of animal hides and skins	0	39	39
Introduction to small livestock production	930	322	1252
Introduction to soap production	92	5	97
Personal care services	504	7	511

Trading & other retail services	968	0	968
Grand Total	8459	4042	12501

Summary of type of training by gender

Type of training	Total number of trainees		
	Male	Female	Total
Institution Based training	3,857	2,870	6,727
Community-based training	4,042	8,459	12,501
Total	7,899	11,329	19,228

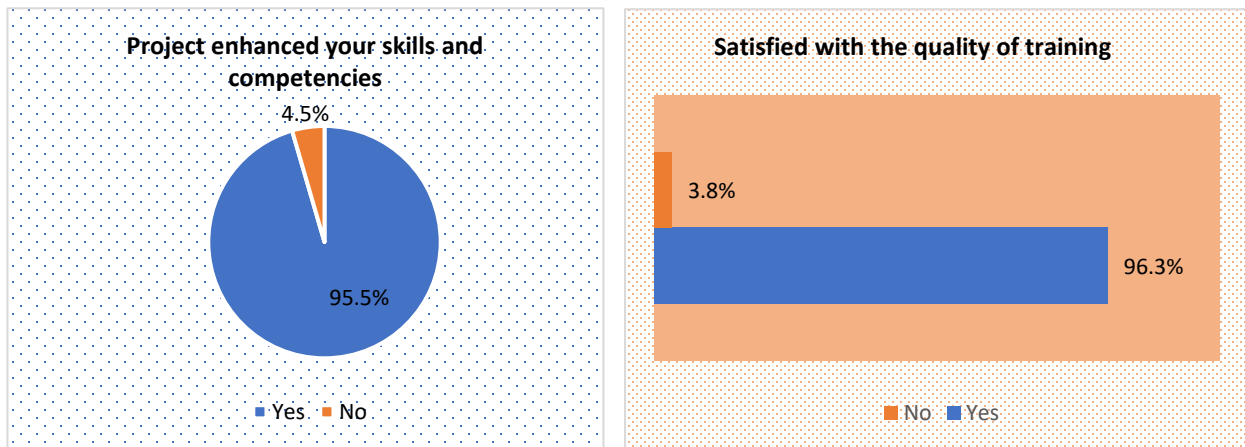


The graph below shows the number of training beneficiaries in each of the 5 states. The Project completed the rehabilitation of the VTC in Rumbek and Torit as well as business development services (BDS) training centers for youth in Juba, Bor, Torit, Rumbek, and Yambio. In addition, the project provided training materials and equipment to the VTCs in Juba, Bor, Torit, Rumbek, and Yambio which provided the foundation for the delivery of quality vocational skills training to vulnerable

youth and women in the 5 states. 18 competency-based vocational training modules were developed incorporating the following 5 non-core technical skills: 1) Basic Literacy and Numeracy, 2) Work-Life Skills, 3) Human Rights, 4) Entrepreneurship, and 5) Peace and Development. This upgraded an institutionalized delivery of competency-based vocational skills training. The project also established and operationalized a total of five (5) Integrated Business, Employment, and Innovation Hubs (i-Hubs) in Juba, Yambio, Torit, Bor, and Rumbek. The i-Hubs were equipped with computers and provided internet access to reduce the digital divide among youth in South Sudan, especially in the remote states. The i-Hubs provided career guidance and counseling, including CV writing and interview techniques, entrepreneurship skills, and business development services to youths who graduated from skills training, out-of-school and unemployed youths, and university graduates.

Survey respondents were asked if the project had enhanced their skills and competencies and whether they were satisfied with the quality of training received. 95.5% (10% at baseline) of the trainees felt that the training had enhanced their skills and competencies (exceeded the target of 80%) while 96.3% were satisfied with the quality of training. However, when probed further

regarding what extent they felt the action (project) had strengthened their ability to gain employment, 51.5% indicated somehow while 45.8% indicated very much.



Most of the key informants and FGD participants indicated that the YEEP project had enhanced their technical skills in their areas of training such as beekeeping, agribusiness, animal husbandry, food processing, soap making, plumbing, crop production and farming, mechanic and driving, tailoring, hairdressing, carpentry, fishing, welding, bakery and catering and electrical wiring. Women and youth who were trained secured employment improved their socio-economic status, gained positive social life skills, and strengthened social cohesion through the enhancement of their employability and engagement in productive livelihoods and income-generating initiatives. Local entrepreneurs who acquired business skills training were working in the local markets, either in employment or had established their own retail businesses thus offering unique services to the public and that increased their capacity to enhance their livelihoods. Because of the technical skills acquired during the training that was provided by the project, many young people were confident of securing jobs either in their local markets or elsewhere. Others were planning to become self-employed by establishing their businesses.

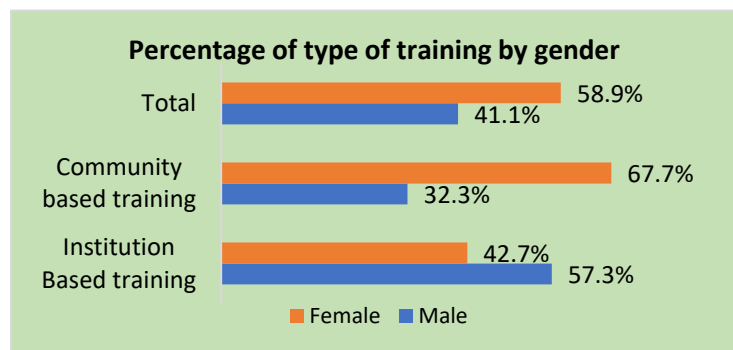
One of the challenges in the delivery of vocational skills training in South Sudan was the lack of a standardized training curriculum and certification. Most of the VTCs were using the old training curriculum and awarding different certificates for the same training. For example, in Bor, some certificates issued to vocational training graduates were co-signed by the undersecretary, the Ministry of labour, and the director of the VTC while others were signed by the undersecretary of labour and Industrial relations and the country director of the funding international NGO. As an interim measure and to ensure the standardization of the training curriculum, the project supported the updating of the existing competency-based training curriculum to standardize the conduct and quality of training. This involved customizing the curriculums to the context of South Sudan as it includes modules on life skills, peace, numeracy

and literacy, and human rights. The curriculum seeks to enhance the technical skills of the youth that would make them economically productive as well as to improve their social behaviour and understanding to be better citizens who respect the rights of others.

According to most of the service providers and strategic level stakeholders, the updating of the curriculum was consultative and participatory. However, a few of the service providers and VTCs (20%) felt the process was not inclusive since they were not consulted or involved in the updating process. 45 vocational training tutors/instructors (6 women, and 39 men) from Juba, Aluakluak, and Bor completed a five-day training of trainers (ToT), which enhanced their technical and professional capacities to implement the competency-based curriculum. The YEPP project provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Labour during the development of relevant national guidelines, policies, and knowledge products. The four major policy and planning documents drafted and finalized under the Project, included, the National Vocational Training and Skills Development Policy, National Occupational Safety and Health Policy, National Vocational Labour Regulations and Minimum Wages Policy, and the Ministry of Labour Strategic Policy Framework and Strategic Plan.

Finding 5: The Project promoted gender equality, the empowerment of women, and the human rights-based approach. The program initiatives were beneficial to women, including vulnerable groups such as women living in rural areas, and/or those living with disabilities.

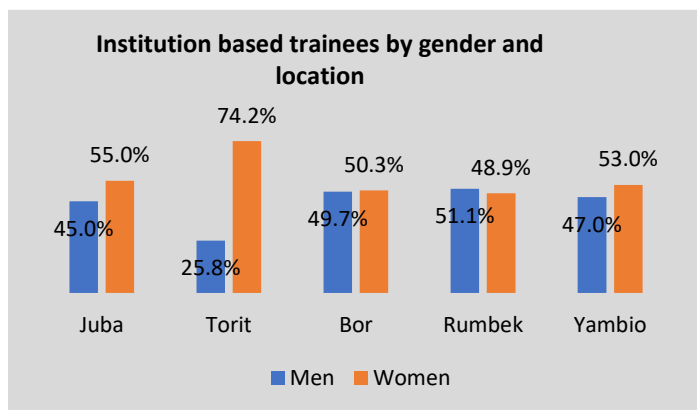
The YEPP project was assigned a gender marker of two (GEN 2)¹¹ thus gender equality should have been adequately integrated as a cross-cutting issue by the rationale, activities, indicators,



and budget. Although the project theory of change and the results framework did not include gender-specific references/ indicators, where possible, project recipients have been disaggregated by gender. There was equal participation, rights, and benefits for young men and women in the provision of various project

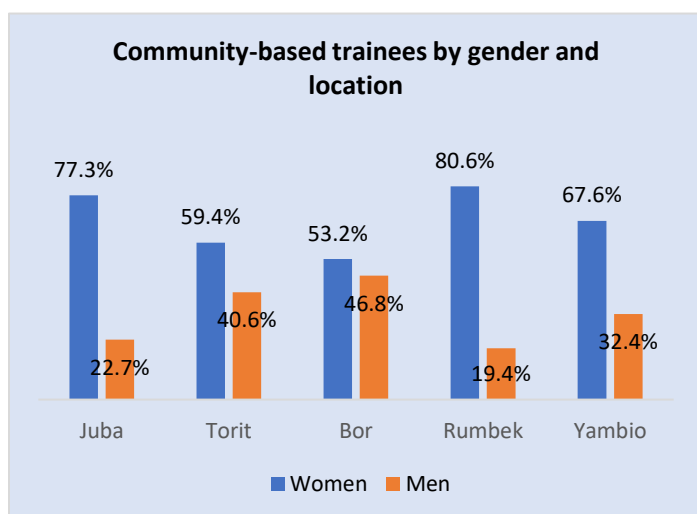
interventions regardless of their gender roles. Out of 19,228 persons who were trained in both vocational training and community-based training, 11,329 were women accounting for 58.9% of the total recipients of the training. The project contributed to the social and economic

¹¹ Significant contributions to gender equality (gender equality is adequately integrated as a cross-cutting issue by the rationale, activities, indicators, and budget)



empowerment of women who benefited from the training. A significant number of those interviewed had secured job opportunities and/or established new private sector enterprises and other income-generating activities. According to the end of project final report, out of 12,050 graduates in the 5 targeted locations who benefited from jobs, livelihood, and income-generating

initiatives created through strengthened private sector enterprises and local value chains, 7,398 (61%) were women.¹² Project recipients indicated that the income they earned contributed to their financial independence as most of them were able to meet their financial needs, provide for their families, and save part of their income for emergencies and other future needs.



Although the percentage of women who benefited from institution-based training was lower (42.7%) than that of men, the majority of community-based training beneficiaries were women (67.7%). A total of 6,727 youth and women benefited from vocational training provided in all five States and the number of women trained in each state was: Juba (55.5%), Torit (74.2%), Bor (49.7%), Rumbek (48.9%), and Yambio (53.0%) accounted for 42.7% of all the trainees. Torit had the

highest percentage of women participants. Under the community-based training in total of 8459 women were trained out of a total of 12,501 representing 67.7% of the trainees. In all five states, the number of women beneficiaries surpassed the number of males. The tables below show the number of training beneficiaries in each state disaggregated by gender.

Institution-based training beneficiaries by gender and location

State	Juba	Torit	Bor	Rumbek	Yambio
Men	1486	325	362	251	446
Women	1814	934	366	240	503
Total	3300	1259	728	491	949

¹² YEEP end of project final report, 2023

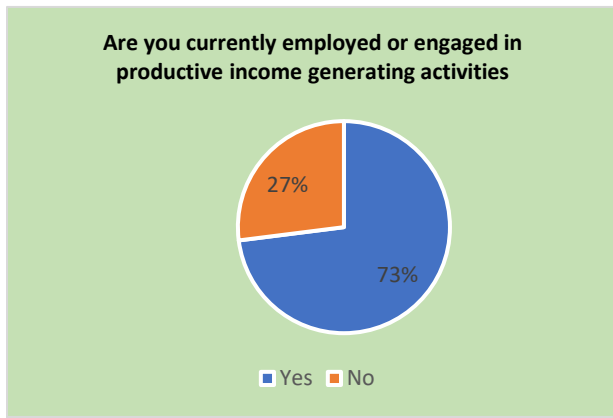
Community-based training beneficiaries by gender and location

Gender	Juba	Torit	Bor	Rumbek	Yambio
Women	1243	1440	1124	2201	2451
Men	365	984	990	529	1174
Total	1608	2424	2114	2730	3625

Western Equatorial had the highest number of females trained (2,451 against a total of 3,625 beneficiaries). Lakes State had the highest percentage of females who received community-based training with 2,201 women being trained out of a total of 2,730, accounting for 80.6% of the recipients. In Jonglei state (Bor), 1,124 women against a total of 2,114 were trained, accounting for 53.2% of the training beneficiaries. 77.3% of the training beneficiaries in Juba were women. While women were selected to undergo both institution-based and community-based training courses (individually and in groups), many of the systemic barriers towards gender and women's employment were not altogether addressed in the design of the project. There was no affirmative action in the project design to encourage women to register for male-dominated courses such as mechanics, carpentry, welding, etc. In an effort to implement the principle of "leave no one behind" and ensure equal participation of men and women, the Project adopted a mobile community-based training approach that brought training opportunities to rural areas where youth had difficulty accessing vocational training centers, which are located in the state capitals. The Project used rights-based and gender-sensitive approaches to programming to curb inequalities, confront discrimination, and fast-track progress for those who are the furthest behind. This approach helped to provide equal opportunity and meaningful participation of young people and women in hard-to-reach areas.

Further, to increase and ensure equal participation of women, the project conducted career guidance and counseling and introduced training that appealed to female preferences; conducted sustained awareness and engagement of communities and institutions to attract more women into male-dominated trades and ensure negative practices are eliminated; targeted messaging towards women during mobilization activities; provided affirmative action and facilitated enrolment of female youth in male-dominated trades(though not included in the project design); and Provided start-ups to female training graduates. Through application of adaptive programming the project identified opportunities to leverage project activities and the role of women in supporting COVID-19 prevention and control. The project produced and distributed a total of 1,685,898 units/pieces of triple-layered, reusable face masks to the front liners. By doing so, the project was not only able to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic but also created income-generating opportunities for the vulnerable population, especially women. 3,749 women benefited from emergency assistance.

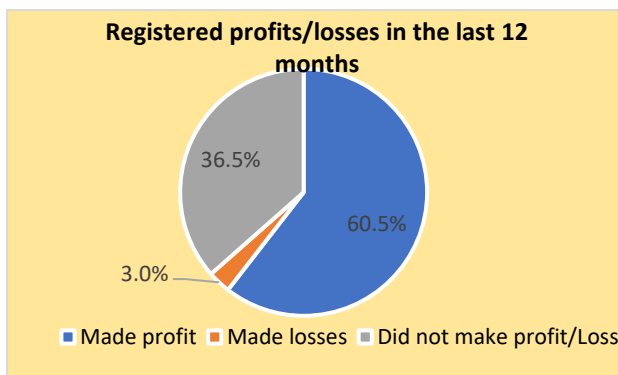
Finding 6: The YEEP Project enhanced local private sector enterprises, agriculture, natural resource-linked value chains, and services for young men and women in the targeted areas in South Sudan.



Supported youth and women established and registered with the local authorities at least 1,734 new Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) that were organized around viable agricultural value chains and supported access to markets, finance, and credit.¹³ The established MSEs enhanced private sector development at the local level and also prevented the collapse of the private sector following significant business closures due to COVID-19. According to the end

of project final report, a total of 1,153 (654 women) new jobs were created from the MSEs established and that are operational. 73% of surveyed youth and women were productively engaged in part-time, full-time, or self-employment (an increase of 33% from the 40% at baseline). Those interviewed indicated that they applied the technical skills acquired and used the start-up kits provided to establish new private sector enterprises (individually and/or in groups) such as carpentry workshops, mechanics, hairdressing salons, etc. 45.8% of surveyed youth and women who benefited from the various training programs provided by the YEEP project were working in the private sector, especially in the hospitality and construction industry sectors while 27.3% of surveyed youth and women had established new private sector enterprises.

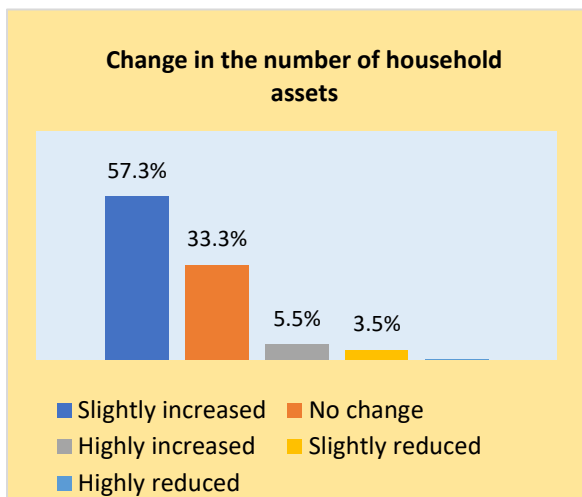
36.8% of the survey respondents who indicated that they were actively engaged in productive income-generating activities, were in self-employment, and the remaining 63.2% were in either



full-time or part-time employment. Those who were in self-employment were asked if they had registered profit from their businesses or investments in the last 12 months and 60.5% of businesses indicated that they had recorded profit, with 100% of them attributing the profits to the support they received from the YEEP project. 3% made losses while 36.5 did not register any profit/losses.

¹³ YEEP Project EoP report, 2023

Survey respondents were asked if they had employed other youth in their businesses or income-generating activities and 17% answered in the affirmative (zero at baseline). Some of the businesses that project recipients have established and employed other youths include carpentry, hair salons, restaurants, shops (vegetable and general), etc. Survey respondents were further asked to state the number of people they had employed, and the analysis shows that a total of 273 youth and women were employed either on a full-time or part-time basis (The number of those employed ranged between 1 to 25). If in a sample size of 400 respondents, the number of jobs created was found to be around 273, based on job multiplier effect, the project likely contributed to 13,123 jobs (some trainees secured jobs in national and state governments) which corroborates the 12,050 jobs indicated in the end of project final report. These survey results show that a significant number of project beneficiaries are actively contributing to local private sector development. The evaluation noted that there were indirect beneficiaries of the project because youth and women who were not training beneficiaries partnered with their friends who had received start-up kits and they jointly started new businesses. This was a major achievement considering that businesses were just recovering following the devastating economic impact brought about by the COVID-19 Pandemic.



During the interviews, agricultural value chain individuals and groups that were trained and given start-up kits reported increased farm production (harvest) which had contributed to an increased supply of agricultural products such as maize, sorghum, vegetables, and dry fish to the local markets, especially the restaurants. They attributed this increase to their application of the technical and entrepreneurship skills as well as other support the project provided. For instance, the project provided barbed wires and chain linked that were used by supported farmers to

fence off cattle from damaging their crops. Fishermen were trained in preservation methods and techniques and provided with fishing equipment such as fishing gear, and nets among others. The project helped to link the private sector with agriculture value chains. Youth and women who were trained in crop production and food processing sold their farm products to those running restaurants within the local markets which contributed to the enhancement of local enterprises and incomes for youth and women. For instance, in Bor, due to the increased supply of agricultural commodities and the availability of services provided locally by graduates of the vocational training, the distance people travelled to access local markets and other services had reduced.

Finding 7: The project boosted the productivity of agricultural value chains and enhanced labour absorptive capacities of new and existing local private sector enterprises in targeted areas in South Sudan

The project contributed to increased economic activities and job opportunities in the local markets as a result of new businesses established by skilled youth and women, increased agricultural production, effective market linkages, and application of the business/entrepreneurship skills provided by the project. The job opportunities created in new and existing local private sector enterprises and value chains absorbed training beneficiaries. For instance, Young men and Women trained by the project opened new businesses in their respective areas of training, creating employment for other trained youth and women. As explained earlier, a total of 12,050 graduates (7,398 women), representing an achievement of 753% of the project target, secured regular income from jobs and value-chain livelihood initiatives including internships, job placements; and post-internship job retention. Survey respondents were asked whether they were currently employed or involved in income-generating activities. As stated earlier, 73% of the trained youth had started new businesses or were engaged in productive livelihood and income-generating activities (IGAs), which were boosted by internship and job placement opportunities, post-internship job retention, and the expanded value chain networks. 46% of the Project beneficiaries secured jobs with the existing private sector enterprises, especially in the construction industry and other private sector areas such as mechanics, electricians, and plumbing. To diversify their income sources, entrepreneurship training beneficiaries who were already employed in the private sector, NGOs, or the government started their businesses and employed other youths with whom they had been jointly trained.

60.3% of surveyed youth and women received start-up kits. Using the start-up kits provided by the project, 27% of the training beneficiaries established their own businesses in the areas they were trained in such as hair-dressing salons, carpentry workshops, restaurants, bakeries, retail shops, vegetable shops, and boutiques. The entrepreneurship skills provided by the project have enabled people to open businesses closer or within residential areas reducing the time and distance people have to travel to access markets. Training beneficiaries who acquired entrepreneurial skills and established their own business indicated that they were able to record their daily transactions and maintain accurate financial records, which helped them to keep track of their businesses in terms of income and expenditure. This was validated through observation during interviews. Youth and women who were equipped with entrepreneurship skills further indicated during interviews that they were applying those skills to manage their business enterprises and/or were hired to work in new and existing private sector enterprises. Training graduates such as carpenters, welders, and tailors produced high-quality products and/or services that were readily available and accessible to the local markets e.g. blacksmiths,

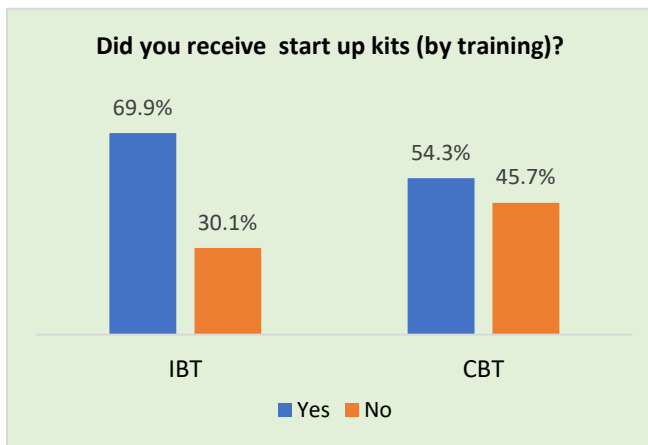
carpenters, etc. This was also validated through observation during the field mission. The survey conducted (sample size of 400 respondents) established that the project recipients who had started businesses employed 273 youth and women.

Survey results show that the project contributed to the availability and accessibility of cost-effective skilled labor locally (mechanics, electricians, plumbers, carpenters, etc.), contributing to the profitability of new and existing private sector enterprises (60.5%). Beneficiaries of vocational training (e.g. mechanics, electricians, plumbers, masons, etc.) who did not manage to get employment or establish their own businesses (32%) utilized the skills acquired and the tools provided as start-up kits to provide services by engaging in freelance income-generating activities in their respective areas of trade. According to multiple stakeholders in the private sector interviewed, the availability of skilled labor locally which is cost-effective has contributed to a decline in the foreign labour force, thus trained youth take up most of the created job opportunities, especially in the construction and hospitality sectors. The technical skills offered through community-based training and start-up kits provided (e.g. farm inputs, tools, and equipment) enabled beneficiaries to improve their farming activities/value chains which boosted productivity. Embracing crop rotation and food preservation methods were among the training topics covered during CBT. With the increased productivity, more job opportunities for young men and women were created enhancing labor absorptive capacities of private sector enterprises and value chains.

The new businesses and engagement in other income-generating activities created job opportunities training beneficiaries, contributing to the economic growth of the targeted locations. The majority of the key informants and FGD participants indicated that the economic activities in all five states had significantly improved after some of the training beneficiaries started their own businesses, creating employment opportunities and this contributed to improved livelihoods and enhanced economic capacities of training beneficiaries. According to employed youth and women interviewed, the income they secured offered an important step towards their independence and self-reliance; increased their coping, adaptive, and resilience capacities by allowing them to provide for the needs of the family (for example food, school fees, medical bills); improved their socio-economic status; promoted social integration, intergenerational dialogue; influenced their choice of further education and training, and decisions regarding marriage; and increased productivity and sustainable local economic growth.

Finding 8: The YEOP project interventions contributed to the creation of new private sector enterprises and income-generating opportunities in the targeted areas in South Sudan.

The project linked agriculture value chain-based skills training to micro and small enterprises (MSEs) development by providing entrepreneurship training, start-up kits, working capital, productive assets, marketing support, and business registration support. According to available project documents and interviews with programme level stakeholders, the project supported the establishment and registration (with local authorities) of a total of 1,734 new MSEs. These MSEs were organized around viable agricultural value chains and supported to access markets and finance/credit. Through the e-commerce platform, MSEs have access to new business opportunities: conduct business/trade online; provide trade/ e-commerce business development services; and access to local, regional, and global markets were enhanced.¹⁴



The YEEP project equipped youth and women with entrepreneurship skills that they used to start and manage their own business enterprises and other income-generating activities. The enhanced entrepreneurship skills motivated women and youth to create their businesses and income-generating activities. For instance, after undergoing one month of technical and business skills training in Small Enterprise

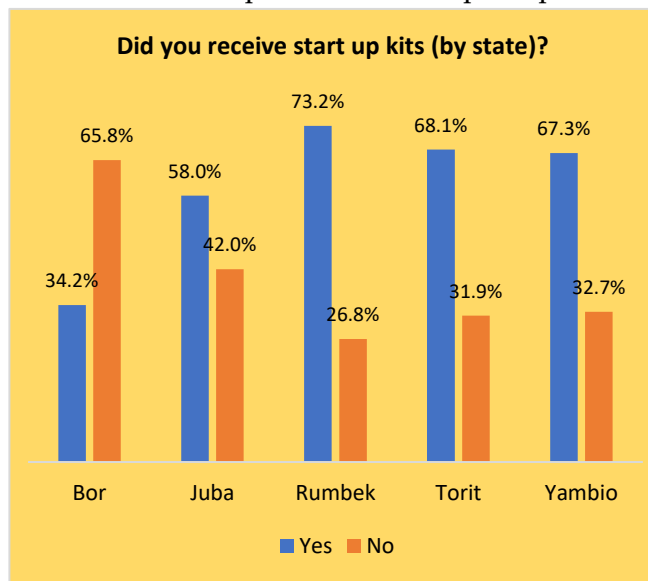
Management in phone charging, five women graduates created a group that they named “Big Light Women’s Group”. The group was supported by the project to find a shop in Kapoeta town and provided with start-up kits which included among other things, a generator, box chargers, and airtime. According to group members interviewed, this project provided them with alternative livelihoods and incomes because many of them had never been empowered to start businesses and were only focused on marriage and bearing children. Group members appreciated the project for supporting their business to take off, by renting them the shop for three months. They further indicated that they chose this business because it was easy to manage and the demand for services was high since they always had power by using a generator that was provided by the project.

Survey results show that 60.3% of the total beneficiaries of institution-based and community-based training were provided with start-up kits in the form of tools, productive assets (sawing machines, posho mills, peanut butter machines, etc.), animals, seeds, and startup capital (cash). The start-up kits were important because due to limited financial capacity, training graduates needed seed capital in the form of tools, equipment, and cash to enable them to start new

¹⁴ <https://dukaanye.com>

businesses (individually or in groups) and income-generating activities. A higher percentage (69.9%) of IBT beneficiaries were provided with startup kits compared to CBT beneficiaries (54.3%).

The type of start-up kits provided to training graduates was informed by the type of training they had undertaken. For instance, those trained in tailoring were provided with sewing machines, fabric, and seed capital while startup kits provided to farmers included seeds, farming tools, oxen,



and fencing wire. The majority of survey respondents who received start-up kits were women (54.4%). The graph shows the percentage of beneficiaries who received start-up kits in the five states. Most of the trainees in Rumbek (73.2%) received start-up kits followed by Torit (68.1%) and then Yambio (67.3%). According to the local service provider/CSO, all training graduates in Bor received a start-up kit, individually or in groups. However, 65.8% of surveyed youth and women in Bor indicated they did not receive start-up kits.

Although all the training beneficiaries appreciated the support provided by the project in the form of start-up kits and seed capital, some important items/tools were missing. Due to the high number of training beneficiaries (19,228 against a target of 6,250) and the limited resources, key informants interviewed indicated that the membership of some of the groups that received large machines and equipment as startup kits (e.g. posho mills) was huge (up to 40 members) limiting their individual usage of the kits. Groups that were unable to immediately start using their start-up kits kept them with one of their members (mostly the leader) as they engaged in other IGAs to generate income for purchasing the missing items or additional start-up capital. In a few instances group members who lived far from each other sold off their start-up kits and shared the proceeds to enable each of them to purchase their own kits/tools. In consultation with other group members, one or a few of the group members partnered with non-beneficiaries of the training and used start-up kits provided to their groups (e.g. hairdressing), contributing to the creation of new business and income-generating activities

Survey respondents were asked if they were currently employed or involved in productive income-generating activities and from the analysis, 61.6% of training beneficiaries who received start-up kits were either employed or engaged in income-generating activities. In terms of

gender, 65.8% of women who received start-up kits created their own businesses and income-generating activities while 57.1% of men who received start-up kits either created their own businesses or were engaged in income-generating activities. The new businesses and income-generating activities created job opportunities contributing to the economic growth of the targeted locations. 17% of survey respondents had employed 273 youths either on a full-time or part-time basis (the number of employees ranged between 1 to 25).

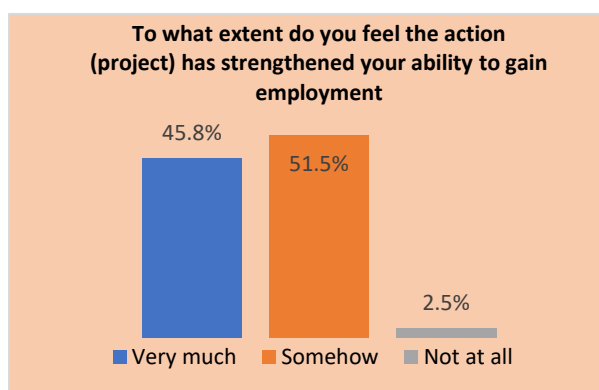
Finding 9: The project increased the employability of young men and women and their active engagement/participation in economic and livelihood initiatives in South Sudan

The project interventions of combining skills training, career advice, and placement services as well as services provided by i-hubs increased the employability and engagement of young men and women in economic and livelihood initiatives in South Sudan. The trained women and youth improved their economic conditions and acquired positive social and life skills through the enhancement of their employability and engagement in productive livelihood and income-generating initiatives. The majority of the interlocutors indicated that the project enhanced their technical skills in various areas of training including beekeeping, agribusiness, animal husbandry, food processing, soap making, plumbing, crop production and farming, mechanic and driving, tailoring, hairdressing, carpentry, fishing, welding, bakery and catering and electrical wiring. Of the total youth surveyed who were initially unemployed, 33% (73% minus

40% at baseline) were productively engaged through employment in new and existing industries/businesses or self-employment.



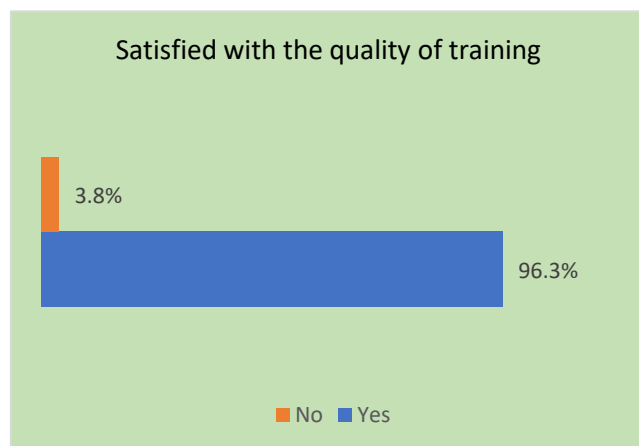
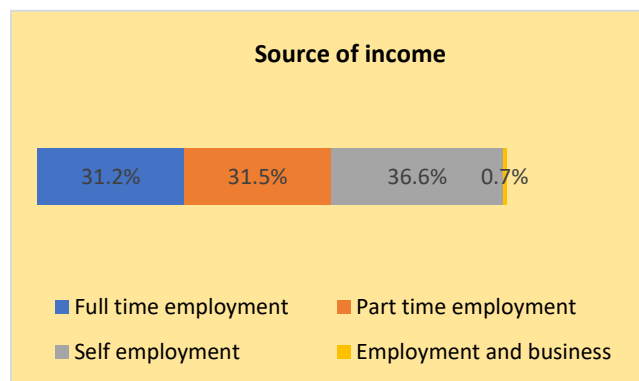
72.4% of the surveyed women and 73.7% of the surveyed men who benefited from vocational and community-based training secured employment, improved their socio-economic status, gained positive social life skills, and strengthened social cohesion through the enhancement of their employability and engagement in productive livelihoods and income-generating initiatives. Survey respondents were asked if the project had enhanced their skills and competencies and whether they were satisfied with the quality of training received. 95.5% of the trainees felt that the training had enhanced their skills and



competencies (exceeded the target of 80%) while 96.3% were satisfied with the quality of training.

When probed further regarding what extent they felt the action (project) had strengthened their ability to gain employment, 45.8% indicated “very much” while 51.5% indicated the project had “somehow” strengthened their ability to find gainful employment.

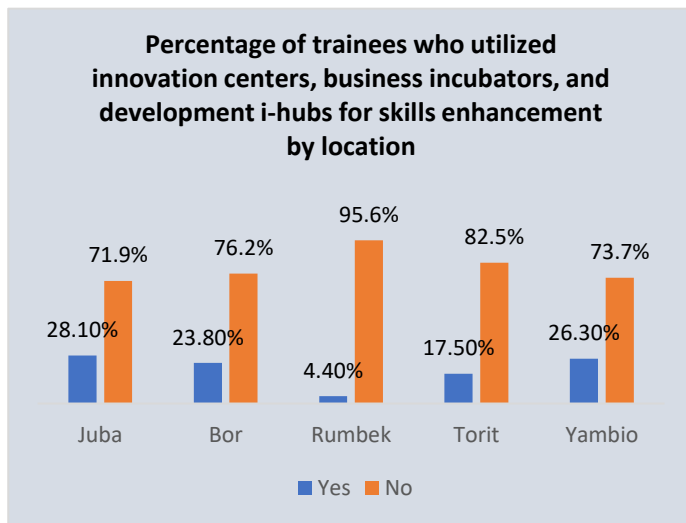
A majority of key informants interviewed indicated that before the YEOP project, there was an insufficiency of skilled labor across the targeted locations but after the training, beneficiaries had become financially independent after they got employed or established their own businesses/income-generating activities. The project provided an opportunity for more young women and men who dropped out of school to advance their skills through vocational training and community-based training. Survey respondents were asked if they were currently employed or engaged in productive income-generating activities and 73% of them indicated that they were either engaged in full-time employment, part-time employment, or self-employment. Although the end target of 85% was not achieved, this shows a significant increase from the 40% at baseline.



A total of 3,358 vulnerable youth (530 ex-combatants, 326 Persons with Disabilities (PwD), 1057 returnees, and 1,445 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) were enrolled and graduated from the skill development programs under the YEOP. Of this number, 54% (1,822) were women. Survey respondents were asked if they had previously been involved in armed conflict in their area or anywhere within South Sudan and 7.8% of the trainees indicated that they had previously been involved in armed conflict. These youth were provided soft skills related to community conflict management and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) to strengthen interdependence, social cohesion, and peaceful co-existence in their communities. The training empowered them with self-confidence and positive social skills

to integrate and unlock their full entrepreneurship potential and engage in income-generating initiatives. This has contributed to overall peacebuilding efforts through the reduction of negative outcomes such as crime, violence, perception of injustice, and protection of youth against mobilization to violence.

The Project traded a total of 1,360 jobs during the “Job and Opportunities Fairs” conducted in the four (4) states.¹⁵ The Job and Opportunities Fairs facilitated the matching of potential employers with those who had the relevant skills needed in the labour market; made the recruitment process easier and more cost-effective; supported potential entrepreneurs to start and grow their businesses; increased the opportunity for youth to network with prospective employers; and enhanced self-confidence among job seekers. According to multiple stakeholders interviewed the career peer counselling and mentorship offered during the job fairs restored hope and inspired youths to create a positive life, enhanced social skills, and encouraged them to start livelihood and income-generating initiatives. There was increased confidence among young people about the possibility of getting jobs because of the skills gained from the training. A total of 446 (38% women) participants attended the five business-to-business linkages events (150- Juba, 79- Torit, 68- Yambio, 82- Rumbek, and 79- Bor) that were supported under the project. The events explored possible business promotion opportunities to create employability in the local economy. The linkages also provided an opportunity for young South Sudanese entrepreneurs to network and strengthen their businesses, thus enabling them to establish MSME linkages and explore investment opportunities and business relationships. The 5 Business-to-Business (B2B) events brought together 217 small businesses and linked 26 businesses as suppliers and retailers.

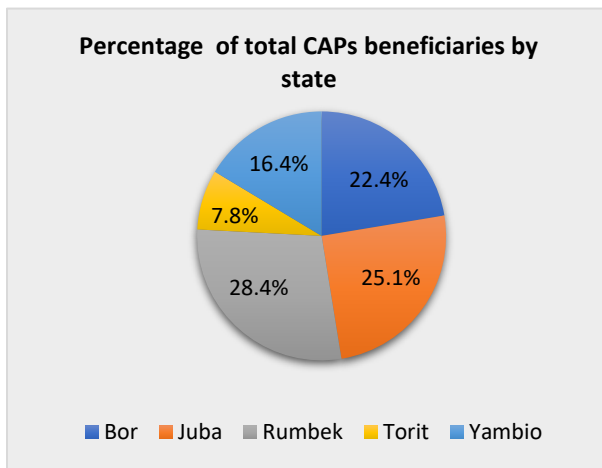


The project established and operationalized a total of five (5) i-Hubs in Juba, Yambio, Torit, Bor, and Rumbek. The i-Hubs were equipped with computers and provided internet access to reduce the digital divide among youth in South Sudan, especially in the remote states. The i-Hubs provided career guidance and counseling, including CV writing and interview techniques, entrepreneurship skills, and business development services to youths who

graduated from skills training, out-of-school and unemployed youths, and university graduates. The i-Hubs continue to provide a space for youth to acquire and exchange information on employment, business, and innovation. Career peer counseling and mentorship restores hope and inspires youths to create a positive life, build social skills, and encourage them to start livelihood and income-generating activities.

¹⁵ YEEP Project Final Report, 2023

Survey respondents were asked if they had utilized the established innovation centers, business incubators, and development i-hubs for skills enhancement and 40% of survey respondents indicated they had. Access to i-hubs services was open to all project beneficiaries and “walk-in youth” who had not gone through the skills training offered by the Project. The analysis of the five targeted locations shows that the trainees who had utilized the innovation centers were: (Juba (28.1%); Bor (23.8%); Rumbek (4.4%); Torit (17.5%); and Yambio (26.3%).

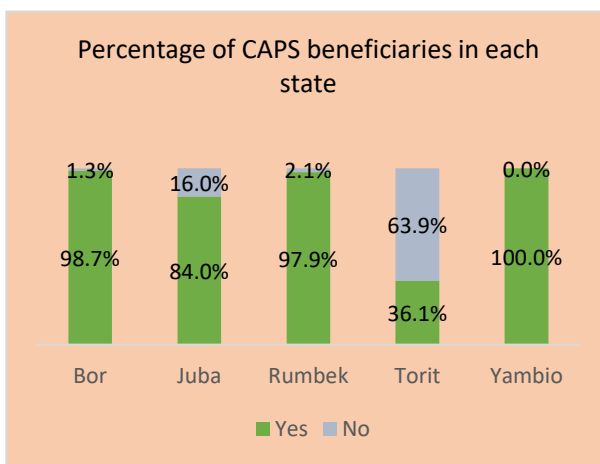
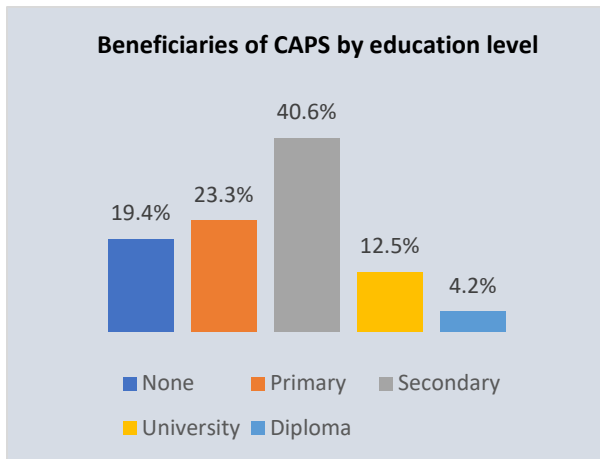


The project created a collaboration with the private sector to develop links between skills training and job skills demanded in the labour market. To achieve this, the project established Career Advice and Placement Service (CAPS) centers in the five target areas to offer a full range of career advice, internship, and job placement services. Besides allowing the youth access to e-learning courses and employment support, the i-Hubs served as the facility for the provision of Career Advice and Placement

Services (CAPS). The CAPS were used to enhance the employability of youth by matching job-seeker skills to employer needs and facilitating internships and placements for graduates in the private and public sectors.

Survey respondents were asked if they had received CAPS provided by the YEEP project and 83% of all the institution-based trainees answered in the affirmative. The percentage of women who received CAPS was 78.1% of the total number of women beneficiaries while for young men it was 90% of the total young men. As shown in the graph above, Rumbek had the highest percentage of CAPS beneficiaries. Of the 50 youth entrepreneurs facilitated to benefit from global coaching, mentoring, and networking through the partnership between UNDP and the Tony Elumelu Foundation (TEF), 30 youth entrepreneurs (60%) completed the training in the first quarter of 2020.

The highest education level of the majority of CAPs beneficiaries was secondary education (40.6%) followed by primary education (23.3%). Tertiary education (university and diploma) accounted for 16.7% (4.8% women) of those who received career guidance and mentoring through CAPS. Although the Project made significant achievements in the provision of CAPS, the assumption that 60% of tertiary students would avail of the service was overly optimistic. The proportion of basic education graduates who benefited from CAPs was very high (63.9%) compared to the proportion of tertiary students.



The number of tertiary beneficiaries was further aggravated when CAPS was opened to all youth and vocational training graduates who comprised the bulk of those who availed the services. Those who did not have basic education accounted for 19.4% of those who benefited from the service. According to the available project documents a total of 9,666 youth or 215% of the project target benefited from CAPS services.¹⁶ 43.1% of the total beneficiaries of CAPS (4,163 youth) were placed under internship programs.

In addition to MSE development, the Project established 1 business portal, and 1 employment portal, and launched 1 digital marketing platform with 741 MSEs (386 owned by women) registered on the platform. The operationalization of the two portals bridges the gaps between employers and employees and connects private sector stakeholders which is critical to effective networking and enhanced

results. Through the e-commerce platform, the digital capacity of MSEs to conduct business/trade online; promote online business operations and e-commerce opportunities; provide trade/e-commerce business development services; and access local, regional, and global markets was enhanced. The project also supported South Sudan’s first Business Expo in Juba to facilitate business networking opportunities and provide market access to the MSEs supported by the project.

Finding 10: By providing training, start-up kits, linkages for loans/credit, internship, and job placement services, the project increased productivity and incomes for young men and women in targeted areas in South Sudan

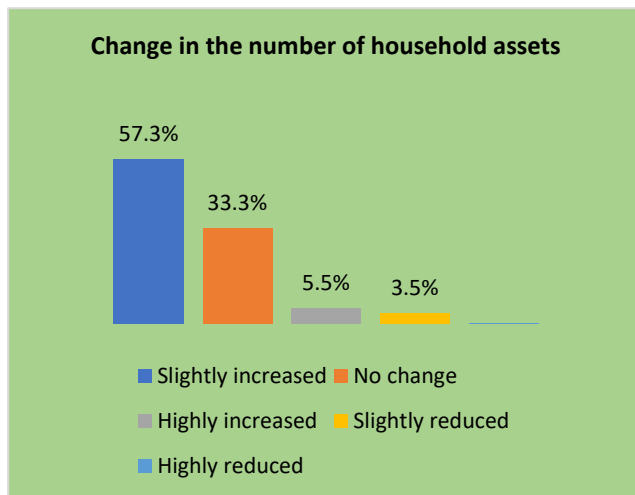
The project contributed to improved service delivery and earnings by trained youth employed in the private sector such as in the hotel industry, plumbing, and construction industry. As indicated earlier, a total of 12,050 (7,398 women) graduates were able to secure regular income from jobs and value-chain livelihood initiatives including internships, job placements; and post-internship job retention, contributing to incomes for young men and women in targeted areas in South

¹⁶ YEEP project final report 2023

Sudan. Youth and women recipients of the project who established new businesses or were engaged in other Income-generating activities registered profits (60.5% of survey respondents). Survey respondents were asked if they had employed other youth in their businesses or income-generating activities and 17% answered in the affirmative. Some of the businesses that have been established and employed other youths include carpentry, hair salons, restaurants, shops (vegetable and general), etc. Survey respondents were further asked to state the number of people they had employed and from the sample size of 400 respondents, 273 people were employed by training beneficiaries: either on a full-time or part-time basis.

The entrepreneurship skills provided by the project have enabled training beneficiaries to open new businesses closer to or within residential areas reducing the time and distance people had to travel to access markets. Bringing businesses closer to the customers contributed to increased sales and profits. In addition, youth and women who acquired entrepreneurial skills and established their own businesses were able to record their daily transactions and maintain accurate financial records, which helped them to keep track of their businesses in terms of income and expenditure. Training graduates produced high-quality products that were readily available in the local markets (e.g. blacksmiths, carpenters, welders, etc.) at competitive prices. Most of the interlocutors especially at the state level indicated that agricultural value chain groups registered increased productivity (harvest) which contributed to increased supply and income from agricultural food items such as maize, sorghum, vegetables, and some more dry fish in the market.

The training contributed to the availability and accessibility of a cost-effective skilled labour force that provided services that were previously hard to get such as mechanics, electricians, plumbers, carpenters, etc. which contributed to a reduction in operational costs and increased incomes (profits). The project contributed to the diversification of incomes as young men and women who benefitted from various trainings were engaged in more than one income-generating activity, making themselves more resilient and adaptive to economic shocks. Through diversification of income sources, trained young men and women earned more income. The project helped to link the private sector with agriculture value chains. For instance, youth and women who were trained in crop production were able to sell their farm products to those who were running restaurants in the market. The majority of the key informants and FGD participants indicated that the economic activities in all five states had significantly improved after training beneficiaries started their own businesses, creating employment opportunities and income-generating activities that contributed to improved livelihoods and enhanced economic capacities of training beneficiaries.



The income secured by project beneficiaries offered an important step towards their independence and self-reliance; increased their coping, adaptive, and resilience capacities by allowing them to provide for the needs of the family (for example food, school fees, medical bills); improved their socio-economic status; promoted social integration, intergenerational dialogue; influenced their choice of further education and training, and decisions regarding marriage; and increased

productivity and sustainable local economic growth. To measure the change in socioeconomic status, Survey respondents were asked how the number of their household assets had changed since 2018. Most of them (57.3%) indicated that their household assets had slightly increased. This shows the YEEP project contributed to the improved socioeconomic status of the beneficiaries. Majority of the key stakeholders interviewed indicated that the project contributed to increased trade activities in the local markets, which they mainly attributed to the business/entrepreneurship skills provided by the project as well as the availability of skilled labor locally which is cheaper compared to the imported labour force, which has been gradually declining.

Case Studies/Success Stories



Photo: Akuei Malang Carrying out Plumbing

YEEP Project Beneficiary Providing Plumbing Services in Yambio: After completing plumbing and pipefitting vocational skills offered by the nearby Vocational Training Centre, Akuei Malang began offering plumbing services within Yambio State. This IGA has enabled him to earn income for himself enabling him to support himself and his immediate family. This story highlights one among many where young people across the YEEP project target locations acquired plumbing and pipefitting skills enabling them to either gain employment or start their income-generating activities.

“I joined Vocational Training Centre because I wanted to learn and understand how plumbing and pipefitting is done. I am thankful to the YEEP project because of the support it gave to me, I not only acquired the skills that I needed but I also have a plumbing start-up kit that has enabled me to carry out plumbing work. I am able to earn my own income from the various plumbing and pipe fitting services that I offer” – Akuei Malang

“I will always be grateful to the UNDP project that significantly changed what I do for a living. The lifelong skills I have acquired with will remain with me forever, and will enable me to continue tailoring and dress making which generates income for me” Adeng Nyakuer



Photo: Adeng Nyakuer carrying out tailoring and dressmaking IGA in Torit

The story of Adeng Nyakuer in Torit is an example of what is possible whenever young women and girls are empowered. Before the YEEP project, Adeng Nyakuer had no vocational skill to enable her generate income for herself. Considering she had her own family and children to support, Adeng benefited from vocational training tailoring skills provided by the YEEP project and after certification, she was also equipped with a start-up sewing machine to enable her carry out tailoring and dress making opportunities. Adeng Nyakuer acquired tailoring and dress making skills that have now enabled her to start her small enterprise that generates some income for her. This is in sharp contrast to what she was doing before implementation of the YEEP project in South Sudan because she practically had no other vocational training skills.



Photo: Bakara Women Cooperative (Soap making) in Torit

Soap Making Income Generating Activity for Bakara Women Cooperative: Empowering Women in Torit. Whenever



Photo: Soap samples made by Bakara Women Cooperative

"The Bakara Women Cooperative has brought us together as women in Torit. We are now able to work together carrying out various income generating activities such as sopa making. We hope to continue growing, and become a larger organization able to reach more women in South Sudan" FDG with Bakara Women Group

women come together, great things happen. This is more pronounced when support and empowerment is provided to women to empower them, and enable them to start enterprises of their own, especially when in groups. Thanks to the YEEP project, women in Torit who had acquired IGA skills came

together and formed their own cooperative known as "Bakara Women Cooperative". Through this cooperative, they are able to make soaps among other activities that has increased their economic earning abilities and improved their sources of livelihoods.



Photo: Inside Mumbejia Beauty Shop in Rumbek

Hair Dressing and Beauty Shop: Mumbejia Beauty Shop in Rumbek. The YEEP project trained several young men and women in hairdressing and equipped them with the requisite skills to start their own small enterprises. In Rumbek, the Mumbejia Beauty Shop is an at testament to what trained youth have been able to do with the skills that they acquired from the YEEP project. The Mumbejia Beauty Shop is one among many in Rumbek, that has enabled many youths to start their own income generating activities and earn money to support themselves as well as their families.



Photo: Mumbejia Beauty Shop in Rumbek

"We started our own beauty shop to offer hair dressing and beauty services to residents of Rumbek. This is because of the support that we received from the YEEP project. They trained us, and supported us to start the beauty shop. Since we now have an income generating activity that we run by ourselves, it has improved our daily sources of livelihoods because we are able to serve different people who come to the beauty shop. This earns us income which we use to support ourselves and family" Beauty Shop Owners in Rumbek

Agricultural Value Chain Skills Acquisition: The YEEP project provided various agricultural value chain skills to youths in the target locations. Youths who benefitted from the agricultural skills were able to start various agricultural production activities such as cereal farming. For example, maize production has increased in target locations as witnessed by various farms that have maize crops. This is a testament to the effectiveness of support provided by the YEEP project including various farming inputs that were provided to beneficiary youth to enable them start various agricultural production activities. This not only contributes to improved food production in target locations but it also improves the overall food security in South Sudan. Further, youth can earn some income from the farming activities which contributes to improving their living



Photo: A youth beneficiary in Bor standing inside a maize plantation farm Photo: A maize farm in Bor for YEEP project beneficiaries (youth)

standards because they now have sources of livelihoods that they can use to support themselves, their families and communities.

Sawa Sawa Women’s Cooperative Group: Women in Torit came together and have developed their own cooperative group to with support from the YEEP project. The women are engaged in the production of various flours such as sorghum and maize and are able to sell this to



Photo: Cereal Posho mill for Women Cooperative in Torit

“The cooperative has changed our lives. We now have our own sources of income; we are able to come together and raise money for various activities because we are a group. We feel more empowered because the cooperative is a major income earner for us. We now know better how we need to manage agricultural products from the farm. Rather than simply selling raw harvested agricultural products such as cereals and maize, we now add value to the products and this allows us to generate extra income compared to if we just had to sell raw agricultural products” Women Cooperative Members

local and neighboring communities. Through this they have generated income for themselves contributing to increased women empowerment among beneficiaries in Torit.

“The YEEP project trained us on how to run and operate the milling machine and other machines. They also gave us start-up support in the form of various equipment and some start-up capital to enable us start the cereal milling business. We thank the YEEP project immensely for the major support that they have given to us and we aim to share what we have learnt with other women within and outside our community” **Women Cooperative Members**

5.3 Efficiency

Under efficiency, the evaluation examined the extent to which the project implementation, management, and coordination mechanisms were efficient in generating the project results. The project efforts in ensuring value for money were also assessed and the efforts made by the project in choosing better alternatives during project implementation. Under the Efficiency Criterion, the YEEP Project was rated **Highly Satisfactory**.

Finding 11: The YEEP project implementation arrangements, management and coordination mechanism were well-articulated in the project document and were efficient in generating the achieved results.

The project was managed by UNDP under the Direct Implementation Modality where UNDP acted as the implementing partner for the project. UNDP worked closely with the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) at the national and sub-national levels. The overall structure of the Project was designed to emphasize and ensure GoSS ownership of the project and its activities. Under the leadership of the Ministry of Labour, UNDP worked in partnership with the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, State Governments, the Ministry of Gender and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, among others. The project board comprised relevant government ministries, the South Sudan Chamber of Commerce, UNDP, and the Kingdom of Netherlands provided oversight during the project implementation. While the number of project board meetings was not stipulated in the project document, the project board, chaired by the Minister of Labour, met at least annually to assess the performance of the project, review and approve the Multi-Year Work Plan. The first board meeting took place on the 28th of October 2019, the second one on the 1st of July 2021, the third one on the 21st of December 2021, the fourth one on the 19th of January 2022, and the last one on the 24th of October 2022. As a direct result of the COVID pandemic, a board meeting did not take place in 2020.

The project management team demonstrated significant flexibility and responsiveness and effectively adapted to changing conditions which improved the efficiency of project implementation. Through application of adaptive programming the project identified

opportunities to leverage project activities and the role of women in supporting COVID-19 prevention and control which not only mitigated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic but also created income-generating opportunities for the vulnerable population, especially women. According to multiple stakeholders interviewed, the project governance structure, management, and coordination mechanisms were consultative, efficient and provided timely communication flow to ensure transparency of actions and accountability towards stakeholders and in generating the achieved results. The project planned to recruit for the following positions: 1 Programme manager; 4 Field Coordinators (one each in Bor, Torit, Rumbek and Yambio); 1 M & E officer; 1 Senior Programme Advisor (cost-shared); 1 Programme Associate (cost-shared); 1 Finance Associate (cost-shared); 1 Admin/Logistics Assistant (cost-shared) and 4 Drivers(one each in Bor, Torit, Rumbek and Yambio).

The project deployed qualified and experienced UNV field staff to coordinate its activities in all five states. In the initial implementation period, the project experienced some difficulties in recruitment, and it was not always easy to find key persons to be deployed in the field, and the recruitment of the field coordinators took time, which inevitably impacted on the overall efficiency of the project. A Juba/Project Coordinator arrived in May 2019 but moved to another project by November 2019. Attempts were therefore made to find a new Project Coordinator, and, in the meantime, the STARR team led by the Senior Programme Coordinator, and the Team Leader provided leadership in project implementation. A Project Coordinator (detail assignment) was deployed in January - July 2021 with remote support continuing until the arrival of the new Programme Coordinator in September 2021. The recruitment of a project coordinator/manager and an M & E specialist in 2021 improved the efficiency of the project implementation.

To effectively and efficiently deliver on project results, the project collaborated and worked closely with other UN agencies in the project implementation. UNIDO was an implementing partner under the YEEP for the provision of vocational and entrepreneurial skills up to July 2021. UNDP partnered with UNICEF and IOM on the COVID-19 pandemic response through face mask production and distribution. YEEP and WFP have been collaborating on IGNITE Food Systems Youth Innovation Challenge since the end of 2021. Area-based modalities of mutual support and partnerships have been forged in hard-to-reach areas to increase participation and provide equal opportunity. The project worked closely with local CSOs in the delivery of skills training in the five states. The partner CSOs were Vocational Skills Development Organization (VOSDO) and Lukluk Community Association for Development (LCAD) in Central Equatorial, Star Trust Organization (STO) in Western Equatoria, WAP in Eastern Equatoria, Mile Again Africa Development Organization (SAADO) in Jonglei, VOSDO in Lakes as well as South Connect in the 5 states.

Finding 12: Project resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) were sufficient, appropriate, and allocated economically and efficiently to achieve project results and to provide value for money.

Financial management and disbursements of project funds progressed more or less as planned and UNDP's procurement procedures and guidelines were adhered to throughout project implementation. Most of the available budget had been used by the end of the implementation period. The total Project budget funded by the Kingdom of the Netherlands was USD 9,424,953.00 and the total actual expenditure was USD 9,251,047.40 giving the project a delivery rate of 98.15%. The total budget for the co-funded by UNDP was USD 3,285,800.00 and the total expenditure was USD 3,916,300.11 giving a delivery rate of 119.19%. The total Project budget for the co-funded by AfDB was USD 1,796,533.00 and the total expenditure was USD 1,579,046.00 giving a delivery rate of 88%.

Table 2: Budget and Annual Expenditure by Output

Outputs / Activity Result	Budget	Expenditure 2022	Expenditures 2021	Expenditures 2020	Expenditures 2019	Total Expenditures	%
Output 1	6,321,200.00	1,409,453.00	1,736,664.00	2,285,061.00	1,996,758.00	7,427,936.00	118%
Output 2	2,684,133	605,717	511,852	841,265	120,281	2,079,115	77%
Output 3	1,251,066	1,057,217	44,975	29,521	0	1,131,713	90%
Project Management	4250887	1311595	900304	1140745	754985	4107629	97%
Total	14,507,286.00	4,383,982.00	3,193,795.00	4,296,592.00	2,872,024.00	14,746,393.00	102%

The project minimized the cost of maintaining its field operations through partnerships with UNMISS and other UN agencies. This included occupying common grounds, sharing common services, utilizing UNMISS logistics especially air travel, and bulk procurement of some goods like fuel. The project worked closely with the GoSS and other partners at national, state, and local levels including the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ministry of Gender and Social Welfare, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Ministry of education, Ministry of peacebuilding, implementing partners (service providers), the private sector, State government and Community leaders and local CSOs. These partnerships leveraged existing capacities in achieving common development outcomes particularly to expand reach and coverage to areas inaccessible by UNDP. Further, there was close consultation with other actors and UN agencies. The project signed implementation agreements with Vocational training centers, and local implementing partners (service providers) to minimize costs and strengthen national ownership of project interventions. The project reduced the cost of training per capita from USD 400 to USD 205 (48.8% reduction).

Finding 13: The Project exceeded the achievement of project targets despite the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic that resulted in border closures, almost total collapse of business, increased unemployment, and stoppage in the operation of learning institutions, including VTCs.

The project effectively adapted to contextual challenges during its implementation. By identifying opportunities to leverage project activities to support the COVID-19 prevention and control, and with the flexibility exhibited by the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the project produced and provided 1,685,898 reusable face masks to the front liners. By doing so, the project was not only able to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic but also created income-generating opportunities for the vulnerable population. In essence, adaptive programming not only provided the project the opportunity to continue to pursue the achievement of its project objectives and targets but, more importantly, to contribute significantly in responding to a major health emergency that had gravely impacted the country and the world. The Project supported mobile community-based training to bring training opportunities to rural areas where youth have difficulty accessing vocational training centers, which are located in the state capitals. Using the mobile training approach, the project conducted outreach training for displaced and host communities in three counties of the western equatorial that were affected by inter-communal conflicts. To accommodate the large number of trainees using the limited training facilities, training materials and tutors, the project adopted shift learning sessions (morning/afternoon and evening sessions at MTC).

Finding 14: The monitoring and reporting of project results at the output level (annually) was conducted effectively and efficiently, although the project could have benefited from more robust tools for tracking outcomes and impact-level indicators.

The theory of change as well as the project's results framework and the underlying assumptions were well articulated, and the domains of change from outputs, outcomes, and goal were clear. Due to the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant mitigation measures undertaken, the original assumptions that informed the project design did not hold up throughout the Project's implementation and therefore adjustments were made to include some project activities that were implemented to adapt to the changing context. Project monitoring and evaluation was based on the components of the project results framework (outputs, outcomes, goal, indicators, baseline data, annual targets, and end-line targets). The project invested in documentation and reporting as well as ongoing monitoring and strategies that ensured project resources were allocated based on the needs and priorities of end beneficiaries. Project databases were maintained for all recipients of the project (names, age, gender, phone contacts, location, and training provided) and the annual progress reports provide comprehensive information and data on the implementation of project activities and corresponding outputs.

Knowledge, good practices, and lessons learned were captured regularly, as well as actively sourced from other projects and partners and integrated back into the project implementation. Data and evidence from monitoring actions was used to inform decision-making. The mid-term review was delayed significantly which was a missed opportunity to revise the project indicators and targets. Annual progress reports were presented to the Project Board and key stakeholders, consisting of progress data showing the results achieved against pre-defined annual targets at the output level, the annual project quality rating summary, an updated risk along with mitigation measures. Risks were identified by project management (quarterly) and actions were taken to manage risk. Annual audits were conducted in accordance with UNDP's audit policy to manage financial risk.

5.4 Sustainability

Under this Criterion, the evaluation examined the extent to which the project initiatives and achievements were sustainable beyond the project period, considering potential risks in the context. The Sustainability of the YEPP Project was rated **Satisfactory**.

Finding 15: The skills training, start-up kits and other support that were provided to youth and women will most likely continue to stimulate private sector development and cost-effective service delivery in their communities and this promotes a sense of social inclusion and participation in private sector development.

Trained youth and women were able to start their own enterprises and employed other youths, contributing to the creation of decent jobs. Project recipients secured jobs opportunities that were created by new and existing private sector enterprises, contributing to local economic development. UNDP in partnership with Stanbic Bank (a financial institution) with funding from AfDB supported the establishment of a financing platform that provided interest-free financing/loans to youth and women MSEs and VSLAs to grow and sustain their businesses. The community-based skills provided to beneficiaries of training of trainers (ToT) will ensure the availability and ad hoc transfer of skills to other beneficiaries at the community level, although these benefits would have been accelerated if mechanisms for cascading skills to other beneficiaries were put in place.

The implementation of field activities through local NGOs and CSOs partners helped empower them and build national capacities. The project's interventions such as the rehabilitation of VTCs in Torit and Rumbek; the training materials provided for practical training and the construction and equipping of business development training centers for youth in all the targeted locations contribute to sustainable local capacity development. The developed policies, guidelines, and knowledge products such as the updated training curriculum, competency-based modules, labour market assessment, and agricultural value chains analysis will continue being used in the

design and delivery of skills training. Project primary stakeholders¹⁷ demonstrated strong ownership (commitment, interest, and part of) of the Project interventions and achievements and therefore there is a likelihood that accrued benefits and results of the project will continue to be useful and will remain even after the end of the Project.

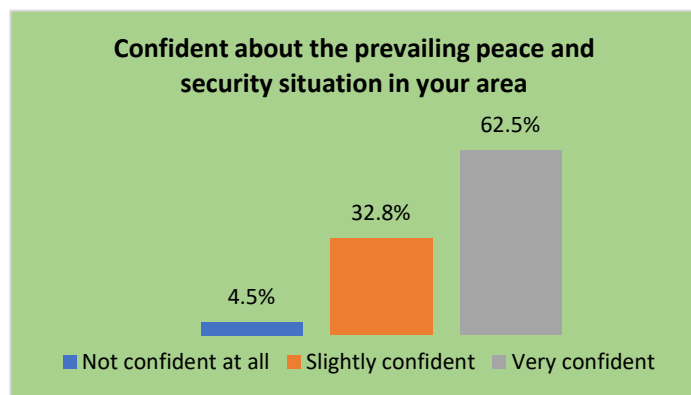
However, without increased budgetary allocation from the government or alternative funding to support training programmes (e.g. hiring and training of tutors, training materials, etc.) it is unlikely that VTCs will have the capacities to continue delivering vocational training programmes. Although the Ministry of Labour and other relevant national government ministries exhibited strong ownership of the project interventions, VTCs were run by different ministries at the state level, which means the issue of ownership varied depending on the state. This was particularly pertinent after the reconstitution of governments whereby a number of persons were replaced and were therefore not as familiar with the project. Political instability and/or the recommencement of hostilities could negatively affect the business environment and private sector development leading to loss of job opportunities. Changes in political leadership may impact the commitment to and ownership of projects by local governments. Regional crisis especially in Sudan may contribute to a massive number of returnees impacting on changes in government priorities.

5.5 Impact

The Impact criterion assesses the difference the intervention makes in the lives of the target groups. The evaluation examined identifiable changes that had occurred or were likely to occur as a result of the project interventions. This Impact criterion of the YEPP Project was rated **Satisfactory**.

¹⁷ Primary stakeholders are those that stand to be directly affected, either positively or negatively, by the project, decisions, or actions of the project

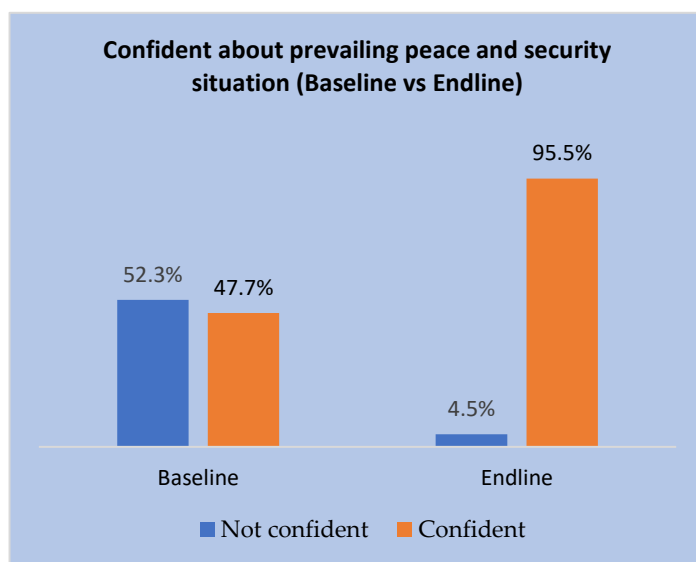
Finding 17: The project contributed to improved earnings/incomes from employment, businesses, and agricultural value chains for 60.5% of surveyed youth and women, enhancing their livelihoods and economic well-being.



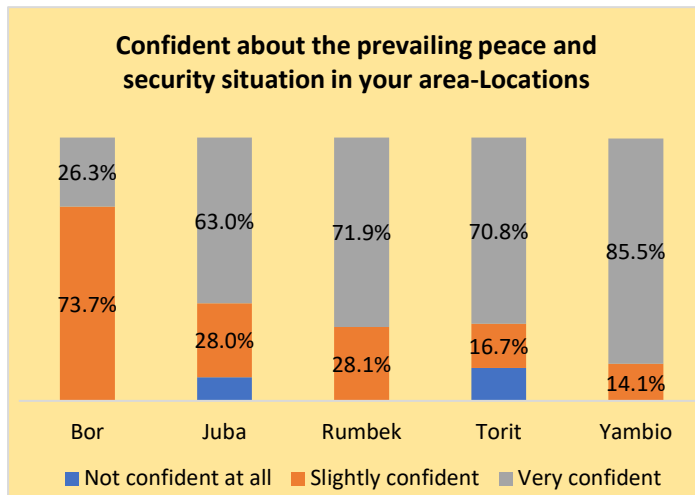
Project recipients indicated that the project contributed to peaceful coexistence and social cohesion among young men and women who were trained together despite belonging to rival ethnic communities. Through the project beneficiaries, families that were in constant conflict were able to reconcile, contributing to peaceful co-existence, stability and social cohesion among their

families and communities. 9.0% of young people who were previously engaged in conflict activities for financial gain were able to engage in alternative livelihoods and productive income-generating activities which contributed to self-sustenance, reduced dependency, and improved peace. Market linkages and involvement in interdependency initiatives/activities among youth contributed to peace and social cohesion.

The project offered an opportunity to restore hope and inspire youths to create a positive momentum for their future by enhancing their entrepreneurship, technical, and social skills. During the data collection phase, the evaluation team observed many YEEP project beneficiaries who were actively engaged in productive income-generating activities, contributing to reduced dependency on relatives and increased social cohesion. By developing MSEs, women and youth enhanced their entrepreneurship skills and created platforms for increased community interaction, community-based savings, building trust, and paved the way towards improved economic inter-dependency, social cohesion, and peaceful co-existence in their communities.

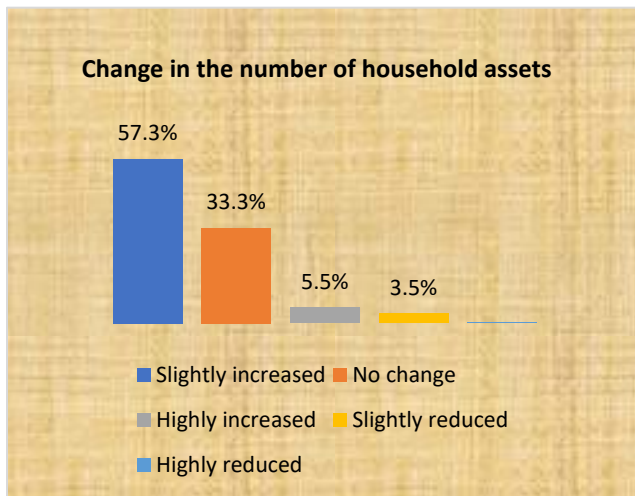


The soft skills provided to 3,358 vulnerable youth (530 ex-combatants, 326 Persons with Disabilities (PwD), 1057 returnees, and 1,445 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) strengthened the interdependence, social cohesion, and peaceful co-existence in their communities. This has contributed to overall peace through the reduction of negative outcomes such as crime, violence, perception of injustice, and protection of youth against mobilization to violence. Survey respondents were asked how confident they were about the prevailing security situation in their area. 95.5% of surveyed respondents were confident compared to 47.7% at baseline. The majority of them (62.5%) indicated that they were very confident while 32.8% stated that they were slightly confident. Only 4.5% were not confident at all. The majority of survey respondents in Yambio (85.5%), Rumbek (71.9%), Torit (70.8%) and Juba (63%) were very confident about the security situation in their areas. However, in Bor, most of the respondents (73.7%) were slightly confident. Torit had the highest percentage of respondents who were not confident at all (12.5%) followed by Juba (9%). None of the respondents in Bor and Rumbek were not confident at all.



The project contributed to the diversification of incomes as young men and women who benefitted from various trainings were engaged in more than one income-generating activity, making themselves more resilient and adaptive to economic shocks. The improved status, particularly for women, had contributed to increased access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services, and involvement in

community decision-making, and served as an instrument for the elimination of structural gender inequalities. Women and youth enhanced their entrepreneurship skills through the creation of MSEs and the creation of a platform for increased community interaction, community-based savings, trust building, improved economic inter-dependency, social cohesion, and as an instrument to reaching gender impact. Women participated with confidence in economic opportunities in their communities leading to shifts in social norms, where women are stepping up and becoming more appreciated for their contributions to their households and communities.



Project recipients used the income earned from employment and other income-generating activities to purchase household assets such as beddings, utensils, furniture, etc. Survey respondents were asked whether there was a change in the number of their household assets. 63.8% reported the number of their household assets had increased. Only less than 4% reported a reduction in the number of their household assets. To measure the change in socioeconomic status, Survey

respondents were asked how the number of their household assets had changed since 2018. Most of them (57.3%) indicated that their household assets had slightly increased, an indication that the YEEP project contributed to the improved socioeconomic status of the beneficiaries. According to key stakeholders interviewed, the local markets had changed dramatically, and they attributed this to the business/entrepreneurship skills provided by the project as well as the availability of skilled labor locally which is cheaper compared to the imported labour force, which has been gradually declining.

5.6 Cross-cutting issues

Under this criterion, the evaluation examined the extent to which relevant cross-cutting issues (Gender equality, Human rights and the Covid-19 pandemic) were integrated into Project design and implementation. There was strong involvement and participation of women in the project interventions. The majority (58.9%) of the total training beneficiaries were women while the majority (52.3%) of business skills training beneficiaries were women. Out of 12,050 young men and women who benefited from jobs, livelihood, and income-generating initiatives created through strengthened private sector enterprises and local value chains women accounted for 60.5% (7,398). Although the implementation of project activities was impacted by the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in massive delays and cancellation of events (like job fairs), the Project was able to exceed the achievement of project targets. The devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in border closures, almost total collapse of business, increased unemployment, and stoppage in the operation of learning institutions, including VTCs.

A total of 3,358 vulnerable youth (530 ex-combatants, 326 Persons with Disabilities (PwD), 1057 returnees, and 1,445 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) were enrolled and graduated from the skill development programs under the YEEP. Of this number, 54% (1,822) were women. Through

the application of adaptive programming, the Project leveraged the assets (VTCs, machines, etc.) and human resources (trained youth) and embarked on a massive production initiative of 1,685,898 reusable face masks which served as a major contribution towards the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The project successfully took advantage of opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic to create jobs that resulted in the engagement of 523 vulnerable persons (78% women) in the production of face masks. 3,749 women benefited from emergency assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of women who registered for male-dominated courses was low and therefore required affirmative action.

5.7 Good practices and lessons learned

1. Combining vocational, technical, and soft skills as well as nurturing an entrepreneurship culture among training graduates enhances their employability, and involvement in economic activities, and creates business and job opportunities.
2. CAPS promotes the professional development of trainees after graduation and enhances upward mobility, which contributes to increased labour absorptive capacities and provides more employment opportunities.
3. Working with the private sector creates opportunities for employment through internship and job placements, increased labour market participation, and local economic contribution.
4. The engagement of national CSOs as implementing partners strengthens national capacities and ensures local ownership of project initiatives. Such partnerships leverage existing capacities and expands reach and coverage to areas inaccessible by UNDP.
5. The rehabilitation and equipping of VTCs with tools and equipment, standardized modules and assessment methodology, training of trainers to instructors, and management capacity enhances their capacities to continue providing more training.
6. Adaptive programming and flexibility in project implementation ensure projects continue to pursue the achievement of their objectives and targets while also contributing significantly to responding to emerging challenges and contexts within the operating environment.
7. Cultivating and nurturing the spirit of teamwork among the youths, enables them to work in joint ventures, creating synergies and contributing to higher potential of growth.
8. Innovative ways to ensure gender balance and improve access were employed including the community and mobile-based/outreach training modalities where livelihood skills training was brought to communities and more rural areas to ensure access, especially for those who cannot attend town-based training centers due to physical access and social obligations.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. Conclusions

1. **Relevance and Coherence: Highly Satisfactory.**

The YEEP project appropriately responded to the main gaps and barriers to sustainable youth employment and empowerment in South Sudan. The project was in line with the United Nations Cooperation Frameworks, South Sudan Partnership for Recovery and Resilience, UNDP Country Programme, and the Sustainable Development Goals. As a good practice, the YEEP project was formulated through a consultative process and was informed by lessons learned from other similar projects especially those implemented by UNDP in South Sudan.

2. **Effectiveness: Satisfactory**

Through the delivery of institution-based and community-based training programmes, the YEEP project significantly contributed to the enhancement of the vocational, technical, and entrepreneurial skills of young men and women in the five targeted areas in South Sudan. The project interventions of combining skills training, career advice, and placement services as well as services provided by i-hubs increased the employability and engagement of young men and women in economic and livelihood initiatives in South Sudan. To a large extent, the project contributed to the enhancement of the local private sector enterprises, agriculture, natural resource-linked value chains, and services for young men and women in targeted areas in South Sudan. The Project boosted productivity and labour absorptive capacities as many of the training beneficiaries got employment in the new and existing private sector enterprises and value chains in the targeted states. By providing training and start-up kits, the project supported the establishment of new businesses and income-generating activities which created job opportunities contributing to the economic growth of the targeted locations. The establishment of MSEs, the creation of new job opportunities, and networking contributed to the enhancement of the local private sector enterprises, agriculture, natural resource-linked value chains, and services for young men and women in targeted areas in South Sudan. Young people who were previously engaged in conflict activities got engaged in income-generating activities which contributed to reduced dependency, and improved peace. The project contributed to the diversification of incomes as young men and women who benefitted from various trainings were engaged in more than one income-generating activity, making themselves more resilient and adaptive to economic shocks.

3. **Efficiency: Highly Satisfactory**

The project design, management structure, and implementation strategies outlined in the project document were efficient in generating the achieved results. Although the implementation of project activities was impacted by the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in massive

delays and cancellation of events (like job fairs), the Project was able to exceed the achievement of project targets. The project effectively adapted to changing conditions to improve the efficiency of project implementation. Knowledge, good practices, and lessons learned were captured regularly, as well as actively sourced from other projects and partners and integrated back into the project.

4. Sustainability: Satisfactory

Project primary stakeholders demonstrated strong ownership (commitment, interest, and part of) of the Project interventions and achievements and therefore there is a likelihood that accrued benefits and results of the project will continue to be useful and will remain even after the end of the Project. The community-based skills provided to beneficiaries of training of trainers (ToT) will ensure the availability and ad hoc transfer of skills to other beneficiaries at the community level, although these benefits would have been accelerated if mechanisms for cascading skills to other beneficiaries were put in place. The project's rehabilitation of VTCs in Torit and Rumbek; the training materials provided for practical training and the construction and equipping of business development training centers for youth in all the targeted locations contribute to sustainable local capacity development. The developed policies, guidelines, and knowledge products such as the updated training curriculum, competency-based modules, labour market assessment, and agricultural value chains analysis will continue being used in the design and delivery of skills training. The implementation of field activities through local NGOs and CSOs partners helped empower them and build national capacities. However, without increased budgetary allocation from the government or alternative funding to support training programmes (e.g. hiring and training of tutors, training materials, etc.) it is unlikely that VTCs will have the capacities to continue delivering vocational training programmes.

5. Impact: Satisfactory

The accrued benefits of the project interventions contributed to improved well-being, resilience, and peaceful co-existence among youth in and around targeted areas in South Sudan. The project offered an opportunity to restore hope and inspire youths to create a positive momentum for their future by enhancing their entrepreneurship, technical, and social skills. The soft skills provided to 3,358 vulnerable youth (530 ex-combatants, 326 Persons with Disabilities (PwD), 1057 returnees, and 1,445 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) strengthened the interdependence, social cohesion, and peaceful co-existence in their communities. This has contributed to overall peace through the reduction of negative outcomes such as crime, violence, perception of injustice, and protection of youth against mobilization to violence.

6.2.Recommendations

A. STRATEGIC LEVEL

1. To consolidate the gains of the project in the area of peace, stability, and social-economic development of South Sudan, the project interventions should be replicated and upscaled to maintain the momentum as the country undertakes stabilization and recovery initiatives for sustainable development. UNDP in collaboration with the relevant national and state level government ministries should mobilize resources to support VTCs to continue providing skills training for more youth and women within and beyond the five targeted states in South Sudan - *(GoSS, UNDP)*.
2. The Government of South Sudan should consider providing more budgetary allocations and other resources to VTCs to effectively continue providing vocational training for youth and women. Without government and/or alternative funding, it is unlikely VTCs will continue providing skills training. The GoSS should prioritize strengthening the institutional capacities of VTCs to effectively deliver skills training by allocating funds for rehabilitation, repair and maintenance of training facilities, procurement of training materials, hiring more tutors, capacity building of tutors, staff salaries etc-*(GoSS)*.
3. There is a need to invest more in supporting new and existing private sector enterprises, particularly in terms of access to finance/credit, capacity building, etc. to enhance their labour absorptive capacities. The GoSS should consider giving tax concessions for new businesses and existing MSEs that employ a minimum number of people - *(UNDP, GoSS)*
4. The GoSS should ensure the governance of all VTCs is placed under one specific/distinctive ministry at national and state level for effective management, coordination, and ownership of skills training. In addition, a strong regulatory framework for VTCs should be developed and effective monitoring mechanisms established, including regular inspections to ensure compliance with policies and guidelines. This will ensure harmonization of their operations, standardization of training and avoid administrative bottlenecks -*(GoSS)*.
5. The GoSS should review the vocational training curriculum to ensure standardization of vocational training programs and certifications. The training duration of each vocational training programme should be reviewed and where necessary revised to ensure quality of training. The competency-based curriculum should be printed and bound as one volume for ease of reference and for effective supervision. Certificates issued to training graduates should be standardized across all the states and VTCs - *(GoSS, UNDP)*

B. PROGRAMME LEVEL

6. UNDP should strengthen its M & E system for effective and timely monitoring/tracking of project outputs and outcomes. This should include regular monitoring and field visits to enhance the follow-up and support given to training graduates especially those provided with start-up kits and/or established new businesses - *(UNDP, local CSOs)*
7. The provision of community-based training should be standardized and institutionalized for effective transfer of skills to other beneficiaries. This can be done by training more training

graduates as ToTs and establishing mechanisms and providing resources for the cascading of training to other beneficiaries- (*GoSS, UNDP, CSOs*)

8. Training graduates should be vetted and linked to financial service providers to enable them access credit/loans to establish or strengthen their businesses. UNDP should continue identifying private sector enterprises that require additional capital and have the potential to repay loans and link them up to financial service providers/credit -(*UNDP*).

Annexes

Annex I: Evaluation Matrix

Criteria evaluation criteria	Overarching/Evaluation Questions	Specific Questions	Data sources Data collection methods tools	Indicators/success standards	Methods for data analysis
Relevance and Coherence	<p>1. To what extent was the project relevant, responsive, and adaptive to the context, needs, and priorities of youth, young women, private sector development, and South Sudan national development priorities?</p> <p>2. How does the project fit with other similar projects/programmes implemented by UNDP/other actors?</p>	<p>1. To what extent was the project designed in line with the needs of youth, young women, private sector development, and South Sudan national development priorities?</p> <p>2. To what extent did the project contribute to the theory of change for the national development outcomes?</p> <p>3. To what extent were lessons learned from other relevant projects considered in the project's design?</p> <p>4. To what extent did the project contribute to gender equality, the empowerment of women, and the human rights-based approach?</p>	<p>Source Secondary data: (Project document, gender and need assessment report, project design consultation report, Project progress report, publications, knowledge products, country development strategies and policies, youth policy, UNDP strategic plan and program document, SDGs, donor priorities)</p> <p>Primary data from target beneficiaries, major stakeholders, and donors</p> <p>Method:</p>	<p>Degree of alignment and coherence/ and complementarity to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. national development goals and targets 2. Community needs 3. Donor and UNDP priorities 4. UNCT Priorities and Goals 5. SDGs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Context analysis 2. Contribution analysis to examine how far the project design and implementation consider key development agendas and community needs. 3. Summarizing and measuring different group attitudes on how the project is addressing their and the community's needs

			Secondary data guiding and summarizing checklist		
Effectiveness	3. To what extent did the project achieve or is expected to achieve its objectives and its results at outcome and output levels	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent did the project contribute to the enhancement of the local private sector enterprises, agriculture, natural resource-linked value chains, and services for young men and women in targeted areas in South Sudan? 2. To what extent did the project contribute to the enhancement of the vocational, technical, and entrepreneurial skills of young men and women in targeted areas in South Sudan? 3. To what extent did the project boost productivity and labour absorptive capacities of new and existing local private sector enterprises and value chains in targeted areas in South Sudan? 4. To what extent did the project contribute to the creation of new business and income-generating opportunities in targeted areas in South Sudan? 5. To what extent did the project increase the employability and engagement of young men and women in economic and 	<p>Secondary data: All relevant documents</p> <p>Primary data: (KII, FGD, and Observations)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The degree of the project result achieved as intended. 2. The unintended results achieved. 3. Major success factors and challenges 4. Key Lessons for Success and not thereof 5. Progress towards high-level results in the lives of the beneficiaries and overall policy and country development process 	<p>Data analysis methods could include, but are not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. content analysis and thematic analysis 2. secondary data analysis of qualitative data 3. case/ success studies to identify stories of significant positive and negative changes 4. comparative analysis to measure the views across groups 5. a gender-focused analysis by disaggregating and targeting women and men

		<p>livelihood initiatives in South Sudan?</p> <p>6. To what extent did the project increase productivity and incomes for young men and women in targeted areas in South Sudan?</p>			
Efficiency	<p>4. To what extent was the project implementation, management and coordination mechanisms efficient in generating the expected results?</p>	<p>1. To what extent was the project management structure as outlined in the project document efficient in generating the expected results?</p> <p>2. To what extent did the project deliver results in an economic and timely manner in a fragile manner?</p> <p>3. To what extent was the UNDP project implementation strategy adaptive in a fragile context?</p> <p>4. To what extent did the M&E systems utilized by UNDP ensure effective and efficient project management?</p>	<p>Secondary data: All relevant documents</p> <p>Primary data: (KII, FGD, and Observations)</p>	<p>Degree to which</p> <p>1. The project consciously implemented value for money for all the interventions. Any alternative approach to ensure better value for money.</p> <p>2. The degree to which the project operation arrangement support/ accelerates the project result given the context</p> <p>3. The project time planning and respecting schedules, major factors affecting/contributing to implementing the project intervention within the intended time frame; any consequence due to delay or unintended result because of time sensitiveness</p>	<p>1. Content analysis</p> <p>2. Financial and logistical analysis</p> <p>3. Analyzing action plan Vs implementation for major intervention</p> <p>4. Gap analysis</p>

Sustainability	5. To what extent are the project initiatives and achievements sustainable beyond the project period-considering potential risks in the context?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent did the project contribute to the creation of decent jobs and local economic development? 2. To what extent were good practices and lessons learned documented and incorporated during the project implementation? 3. What are the main recommendations that can guide the development of future programming focusing on youth and women empowerment? 4. To what extent did UNDP interventions contribute to sustainable local capacity development? 5. Are there any social or political risks that may jeopardize the sustainability of project results? 	<p>Secondary data: All relevant documents</p> <p>Primary data: (KII, FGD, and Observations)</p>	<p>The degree to which:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The project design considers sustainability and how it is implemented 2. Level of the capacity of stakeholders to extend the project results 3. community and stakeholders' views on result sustainability 4. Major factors that impede the project sustainability and the project effort to address the barriers. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Content analysis 2. Financial and logistical analysis 3. Analysing action plan Vs implementation for major intervention 4. Gap analysis
Impact Prospects	6. What identifiable changes have occurred or are likely to occur as a result of the project interventions?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To what extent did the project increase the employability and engagement of young men and women in economic and livelihood initiatives in South Sudan? 2. To what extent did the intervention increase productivity and incomes for young men and women in targeted areas in South Sudan? 	<p>Secondary data: All relevant documents</p> <p>Primary data: (KII, FGD, and Observations)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The degree of the project result achieved as intended. 2. The unintended result achieved. 3. Major success factors and challenges 4. Key Lessons for Success and failure thereof 	<p>Data analysis methods could include, but are not limited to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. content analysis and thematic analysis 2. secondary data analysis of qualitative data 3. case/ success studies to identify stories of significant positive and negative changes

		3. To what extent did the interventions lead or are likely to lead to improved well-being, resilience, and peaceful co-existence among youth in and around targeted areas in South Sudan		Progress towards high-level results in the lives of the beneficiaries and overall policy and country development process	4. comparative analysis to measure the views across groups 4. a gender-focused analysis by disaggregating and targeting women and men
Crosscutting issues	7. To what extent were relevant cross-cutting issues (Gender equality, Human rights and the Covid-19 pandemic) integrated into Project design and implementation?	<p>1. To what extent did the poor, indigenous, physically challenged, women, and other disadvantaged and marginalized groups benefit from the project?</p> <p>2. To what extent were women involved or uninvolved during the intervention?</p> <p>3. To what extent were the intervention modalities adapted as a result of COVID-19, effective in enhancing the vocational, technical, and entrepreneurial skills of young men and women in targeted areas in South Sudan?</p>	<p>Secondary data: All relevant documents</p> <p>Primary data: (KII, FGD, and Observations)</p>	<p>Degree to which</p> <p>1. project design considers gender, human right, and other cross-cutting issues</p> <p>2. Results on gender and other cross-cutting issues</p> <p>3 lessons and challenges</p>	<p>1. thematic analysis</p> <p>2. disaggregating of data per beneficiary groups</p> <p>3. gap analysis</p>

Annex II: List of Documents

1. UNDP, Youth Employment and Empowerment through Private Sector and Value Chain Development, 2018
2. Transitional Constitution of South Sudan
3. UNDP, YEEP Project Final Report, 2023
4. UNDP, YEEP Annual Progress Report, 2020
5. UNDP, YEEP Annual Progress Report, 2021
6. UNDP, YEEP Annual Progress Report, 2022
7. UNDP, South Sudan Labor Market Analysis Report (2020)
8. UNDP, Agricultural Value Chain Analysis Report (2020)
9. UNDP, Tracer Survey Reports (Yambio, Rumbek and Juba), 2022
10. UNDP, Mid Term Evaluation, YEEP Project 2022

Annex I11: Performance of project indicators

Progress towards achievement of Results

Rating	Shading
4 Highly satisfactory (Always/almost always)	
3 Satisfactory (Mostly, with some exceptions)	
2 Moderately satisfactory (Sometimes, with many exceptions)	
1 Unsatisfactory (Never or occasionally with clear weaknesses)	
0 Not Applicable (Data not available)	

EXPECTED IMPACT /OUTCOMES/OUTPUTS	Indicator	Baseline	End of Project Target	Achievements	Comments
Impact: Improved well-being, resilience and peaceful co-existence among youth in and around targeted areas in South Sudan.	1. Percentage of individual respondents in targeted areas with confidence in peace and security disaggregated by gender.	47.7%	65%	95.3%	Exceeded target Women (94.3%) Slightly confident (32.8%) Very confident (62.5%)

	2. Proportion of households in targeted locations with increased asset ownership.	0	30%	62.6%	Exceeded target-Slightly increased (57.3%) and highly increased (5.3%)
Outcome 1: Increased employability and engagement in productive economic and livelihood initiatives for young men and women in targeted areas.	1.1 Proportion of youth graduates that are productively engaged in part-time, full-time, or self-employment disaggregated by gender.	40%	85%	73%	Below target Women (72.4%)
	1.2 Percentage of trained youth demonstrating increased competencies in training programme skills, disaggregated by gender and type of skill.	10%	80%	95.5%	Exceeded target Women (94.3%)
Output 1.1: Young men and women in Bor, Jubek, Jubek Rumbek, Torit and Yambio are provided with vocational and entrepreneurial skills.	1.1.1 Number of enrolled youths that complete the vocational, technical and entrepreneurship skills training, disaggregated by gender and location.	250	6, 250	19,228 (11,329 women)	Exceeded target Bor (2,842), Torit (3,683), Juba (4,908), Rumbek (3,221), Yambio (4,574)
	1.1.2 Proportion of young entrepreneurs utilizing innovation centers, business incubators and development hubs for skills enhancement.	0	70%	215%	Exceeded target
	1.1.3 Proportion of youth previously involved in conflict recruited for skills training disaggregated by gender.	0	30%	36%	Exceeded target
Output 1.2: Technical vocational education and training (TVET) and university graduates have increased access to career development and employment opportunities.	1.2.1 Number of skills training graduates who secure jobs from UNDP-supported private sector enterprises and value chains. Disaggregated by gender.	0	1,600	12,050 (7,398 women)	Exceeded target
	1.2.2 Proportion of tertiary education students in the targeted locations receiving career guidance and mentoring through the CAPS disaggregated by gender.	0	60%	16.7%	Below target Women (9.8%)
	1.2.3 Number of jobs traded through jobs fairs.	0	600	1,360	Exceeded target
Outcome 2: Increased productivity and incomes for young men and women in targeted areas.	2.1 Proportion of supported youth registering positive returns from their investments disaggregated by gender.	0	60%	60.5%	Achieved target Women (63%)
	2.2 Proportion of supported youth paying back disbursed loans	0	95%	N/A	

	within prescribed timeframes disaggregated by gender.				
	2.3 Proportion of supported youth entrepreneurs that employ other youth in their businesses.	0	40%	17%	Below target
Output 2.1: Young men and women in targeted areas benefit from jobs, livelihood, and income-generating initiatives created through strengthened private sector enterprises and local value chains.	2.1.1 Number of new jobs created through value chains and private sector enterprises supported by UNDP.	0	2,700	1,153	Partially Achieved
	2.1.2 Number of new MSEs created by supported youth.	0	100	1,734	Exceeded target
	2.1.3 Proportion of trained youth engaging in livelihood and income-generating activities (individually or in groups).	0	60%	73%	Exceeded target
	2.1.4 Number of youth-oriented facilities benefiting from clean energy solutions.	0	16	5	Below target (31% achievement)

Annex IV: Re-constructed Theory of Change

