BOOSTING DECENT EMPLOYMENT FOR AFRICA'S YOUTH

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HOW EMPOWERMENT AND AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT MATTERS FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME EFFECTIVENESS

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Summary

Objective

Youth in Africa face a myriad of constraints that affect their access to and success in the labour market. The current COVID-19 pandemic, which disproportionally affects young people, is putting further pressure on the job market. Youth employment programmes try to tackle these constraints, e.g. by providing training and skills development (supply side) or promoting entrepreneurship and supporting the development of small and medium enterprises (demand side), or through a combination of these. Some youth employment programmes also aim to empower youth and create a more enabling environment in which youth can thrive in the labour market. However, the available literature often provides only scant discussions of the importance of youth empowerment and the enabling environment for employment and business outcomes.

This paper aims to address this gap by understanding how a focus on empowerment and an enabling environment matters for the effectiveness of youth employment programmes in Africa. By carrying out a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) and drawing on the experiential knowledge of practitioners on these topics, we aim to answer the following questions:

- How is individual empowerment operationalized in youth employment programmes, and to what extent are positive results found?
- How is an enabling environment addressed in youth employment programmes, and to what extent are these programmes effective in positively contributing to an enabling environment?
- What is the added value of youth employment interventions that include empowering youth and creating an enabling environment in terms of achieving business and employment outcomes?

Empowerment in youth employment programmes

For disadvantaged youth in particular, it is important to strengthen their empowerment – both social as well as economic – to address the intersecting barriers they face to successful pursuit of opportunities in the labour market. Despite the scarcity of studies on this theme and variations in the definition of outcomes, most studies which consider empowerment in relation to youth employment interventions report positive effects on young people's feelings of autonomy, self-confidence and self-esteem (social empowerment). Practitioners note that self-confidence and feelings of self-belief and autonomy generally precede any subsequent labour market or business success and are thus a prerequisite of economic empowerment. In turn, economic empowerment means young people no longer need to focus on daily survival, and can therefore approach the labour market more strategically in pursuing their dreams.

Creating an enabling environment

An 'enabling environment' comprises systemic influences beyond the individual sphere, involving both informal as well as formal factors. Formal factors refer to (government and private sector) policies as well as institutes and legislation. Informal factors mostly relate to social norms, including cultural values and beliefs. As this synthesis paper shows, there is a rather mixed picture regarding the effectiveness of interventions in changing informal aspects of the enabling environment. In particular, studies that employ a robust (quasi-) experimental approach find that interventions have very limited (long-term) impacts on social norms and attitudes, e.g. towards the division of unpaid care work or female labour market participation. All studies, as well as practitioners, note the heterogeneity of youth and advocate for approaches that adopt a gender lens in assessing the opportunities and barriers young people face.

The evidence synthesis finds that youth employment programmes are not closely linked to – and have little influence on – formal aspects of the enabling environment. Practitioners stressed that the formulation of government policies and programmes, their implementation on the ground, and their relationship to interventions by NGO actors is a gap that needs to be bridged.

Added value of a focus on empowerment and enabling environment

Youth employment programmes that consider empowerment and the enabling environment manage to improve employment and business outcomes at least to an extent similar to programmes that don't have this explicit focus. This finding is remarkable, as programmes which focus on empowerment and the enabling environment often target disadvantaged groups of youth, who are at a greater distance from the labour market than their peers. Attention to empowerment and restrictive social norms helps to remove the barriers that prevent these disadvantaged youth from entering the labour market in the first place.

Recommendations

The following recommendations for policymakers emerge from the REA and in-depth discussions with practitioners:

- **Focus youth employment programmes on empowerment, especially when targeting disadvantaged youth.** Youth employment programmes should take account of the need for social as well as economic empowerment, especially when targeting disadvantaged youth. Strengthening life skills, which contributes to empowerment of young people, can be easily integrated in skills training curricula. This will help youth to distinguish themselves in the job market and prepare them to become future active citizens.

- **Recognize diversity among youth to improve targeting.** Young people are not a homogeneous group. Diversity exists, for instance, in terms of gender, age, rural versus urban background, socio-economic status, ethnicity and ability. Intersecting barriers add to the diversity of young people's experiences. Youth employment programmes should recognize this diversity to tailor interventions to the needs of young people, and at a minimum should apply a gender lens to the design and evaluation of the programme, including its assessment of the specific barriers women face to accessing labour market opportunities.

- **Acknowledge, account for and aim to shift social norms to improve the enabling environment, especially for young women.** Social norms in communities have a bearing on the possibilities for youth employment. Young women in particular are often held back by restrictive norms that limit their opportunities in the labour market. Although it is very difficult to change social norms, employment programmes should acknowledge and account for the societal barriers that limit the participation of young women and other marginalized groups, for instance by organizing community discussion groups on gender norms.

- **Bridge the gaps between the supply and demand sides of the labour market to improve employment rates**. To improve the employment rate it is best to tackle both the supply and demand sides of employment simultaneously in relation to the policy realm, as this is where the conditions for youth employment are created. Social policies or subsidized employment interventions can be helpful in stimulating the employment of particularly vulnerable youth. In this respect, it is of utmost important to look at the legislative arena of the economy at large, to ensure that policies are not negatively interfering with each other.

- **Bridge the gap between policy and practice to tailor youth employment programmes to the needs of young people.** Government/private sector policies and programmes can appear to benefit youth on paper, but there remains a gap to be bridged between policy and practice. This is especially important given that informal sector jobs are the reality for the majority of Africa's youth. These informal sector job are less under scrutiny of government bodies and often overlooked in the implementation. To bridge the gap between policy and implementation, it is key to involve young people themselves in the policy-making process. Youth participation can take different forms, ranging from information-provision through to consultation, shared decision-making and co-management, all the way to autonomy. The nature and quality of participation determines the extent to which young people's voices are heard.

1. Introduction

Unemployment and underemployment are pressing challenges in Africa. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has estimated that in 2020, 10.7% of Africa's youth were unemployed (ILO, 2020b). This equals 27.6 million young women and men (calculated using World Population Prospects by UN DESA, 2019). There is no substantial gap between men and women in their unemployment rate (ILO, 2020b). However, when we look at youth not in employment, education or training (NEET), women are much more likely to be disconnected from opportunities compared to men (25.8% vs 15.7% respectively; ILO, 2020b).

The expected youth unemployment rate for 2020 is highest in Northern Africa (29.8%) and lowest in Sub-Saharan Africa (8.7%) (ILO, 2020c). Due to demographic transitions, often referred to as a 'youth bulge' (Mueller & Thurlow, 2019), between 10 and 12 million young people enter the job market in Africa each year (AfDB, 2018). While Africa's economic prospects continue to brighten – a 4.1% real GDP growth is expected for 2021 compared to 3.4% in 2019 (AfDB, 2020) – only three million jobs are being created every year (AfDB, 2018). The current COVID-19 pandemic puts further pressure on the job market. According to the ILO (2020a), youth are disproportionally affected by the pandemic. Estimates show that one in six young people have stopped working due to COVID-19, and working hours have fallen significantly among those still in employment (ILO, 2020a).

1.1 Problem statement and the aim of this paper

Young people in Africa aspire to have jobs that are steady and secure, pay well, offer benefits and social protections, and meet labour standards (Fields, 2010). However, they face a myriad of constraints to participation and success in the labour market. Barriers are often linked to lack of empowerment of the individual, in terms of their confidence, self-esteem and independence. It is also important to consider limiting factors in the wider environment and by changing these, to help create an 'enabling environment' in which young people can thrive. An enabling environment is made up of positive systemic influences such as a decent jobs market, social norms that accept and encourage youth employment (for young women as well as young men), and conducive policy and legal frameworks.

In Africa multiple actors have set up youth employment programmes to support youth in overcoming the barriers towards economic development. Civil society organisations (CSOs), multilateral organizations, and government institutions implement the majority of the youth employment programmes. CSOs often focus on grass roots initiatives in deprived areas, while multilateral organisations often work in partnerships with government organizations aiming at national reach (ILO 2012).

Given the wide variety of barriers to economic development, it is insufficient for employment programmes to focus solely on strengthening an individual's skillset – even the most skilled youth cannot succeed if no jobs are available, and even if jobs are available, youth will not benefit if they lack the confidence to take them up or if negative social norms or discriminatory policies prevent them from doing so. Thus, employment programmes must take a holistic approach – one that ensures individual empowerment and an enabling environment in which young people can thrive personally as well as professionally, in addition to building young people's skills. This is recognized by various organizations, including NGOs, in their employment programmes. Many organizations, including Oxfam,[1] have moved from a narrow focus on job creation to include individual empowerment (e.g. through soft skills training) and attention to the environment in which job creation takes place, i.e. the social constraints and/or contextual factors that influence youth employment. Often this is done implicitly, as part of a context analysis, but more and more youth employment programmes are actively trying to influence the environment to support youth employment. In the literature, we see an increasing focus on the accessibility of employment interventions for various and diverse sub-groups of youth, and to the barriers in their environment that limit their participation (e.g. Filmer & Fox, 2014; Sorensen et al., 2017).

1 Analysed youth employment programmes include the following Oxfam programmes: Youth Participation and Leadership (YAC), Work in Progress (WiP), Empower Youth for Work (EYW), Youth Participation and Employment (YPE), and Enhancing Social Entrepreneurship and Inclusive Growth in the Southern Neighbourhood (MedUp).

To study the effectiveness of youth employment programmes, the literature generally creates a typology of intervention strategies and then studies the extent to which these are effective in improving employment outcomes (e.g. (un)employment levels, wages, decent jobs) or business outcomes (e.g. turnover, employees, profit) (see, for instance, Kluve. et al., 2019). Outcomes related to empowerment and the enabling environment are not systematically assessed in these evidence syntheses and systematic reviews.

The above leads to the objective of this evidence synthesis: to understand how a focus on individual empowerment and an enabling environment contributes to the effectiveness of youth employment programmes in Africa.

We assess this as follows:

- First, we explore how individual empowerment in youth employment programmes is operationalized, and the extent to which these programmes achieve positive results regarding youth empowerment.
- Second, we look beyond the individual level at the formal and informal factors that thwart or contribute to an enabling environment, and the extent to which youth employment programmes are effective in positively contributing to an enabling environment.
- Third, we synthesize the evidence in the literature and investigate the added value of youth employment programmes that include empowering youth and creating an enabling environment in achieving business and employment outcomes.

2. Conceptual framework

In this conceptual framework, we expand on our understanding of individual empowerment and the enabling environment, and their important role in realizing youth employment. First, we zoom in on the concept of empowerment – looking at individual factors that may influence employment outcomes. Second, we explore the concept of the enabling environment – looking at the formal and informal factors that are present in the context of youth employment programmes.

2.1 Empowerment

Empowerment can be understood as autonomy and self-determination in people and in communities. Amartya Sen defines empowerment using the language of capabilities: people's potential to live the lives they desire and to achieve valued ways of 'being and doing' (Sen, 1985). This enables people to represent their interests in a responsible and self-determined way, acting on their own authority (Adams, 2018). It is the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life (Rappaport, 1984). But empowerment is not a resource that can be acquired, reached and lost in a linear process. Rather, it is about power and the process of negotiating power divisions that are present in all social and formal relations throughout society (Eyben et al., 2008). Hence, individual empowerment refers to the continuous process of negotiating and changing power relations that sustain marginalization and subordination (Eyben et al., 2008).

For youth employment programmes, it is useful to distinguish between social empowerment and economic empowerment. Many development actors refer to the interrelation between social empowerment, economic empowerment and youth employment. For example, Oxfam Novib,[2] Unicef,[3] Plan International[4] and UNFPA[5] show case studies or programmes on their websites that emphasize this link. Academics understand social empowerment as the process of developing a sense of autonomy and self-confidence, and acting individually and collectively to change social relationships and the institutions and discourses that exclude people and perpetuate poverty (Blomkvist, 2003; Combaz & Mcloughlin, 2014; Eyben et al., 2008).

Economic empowerment 'is the capacity of poor women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes on terms which recognize the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible for them to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth' (Eyben et al., 2008, p.9). Naila Kabeer (1999) emphasizes the importance of resources – including material resources – as an essential underpinning of women's empowerment. Economic empowerment allows people to think beyond immediate daily survival and to exercise greater control over both their resources and life choices (Combaz & Mcloughlin, 2014; Eyben et al., 2008). Both social and economic empowerment strengthen people's ability to recognize and exercise agency and choice (Eyben et al., 2008). Whereas empowerment refers to a process of change, agency refers to a state of affairs: the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices (Luttrel et al., 2009).

Political empowerment is also mentioned in empowerment conceptualizations. This is about people raising their voice and being represented in institutions and decision-making bodies (Eyben et al., 2008). As this goes beyond the individual gains of empowerment, we will discuss this as part of the enabling environment.

2 https://www.oxfamnovib.nl/donors-partners/about-oxfam/projects-and-programs/empower-youth-for-work
3 https://www.unicef.org/jordan/stories/empowering-women-and-youth-employment-skills-and-hope
4 https://plan-international.org/eu/Youth-Economic-Empowerment-Main
5 https://www.unfpa.org/news/youth-empowerment-education-employment-key-future-development

2.2 Enabling environment

The (enabling) environment in which job creation does (or doesn't) take place comprises systemic influences that are beyond the individual sphere, which may hamper or enable youth's agency and employment prospects (Rao and Kelleher, 2010). Bronfenbrenner (1979) highlighted the importance of an enabling environment in his ecological systems theory that discussed human development in relation to individual characteristics as well as societal, cultural and institutional influences. In short, he emphasizes the importance of social and institutional factors for individual actions and growth (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The enabling environment is thus a broadly defined concept – that is based on systems theory which examines individuals' relationships to both informal and formal factors within the wider society that together can create an enabling environment for youth employment. These factors are described in greater detail below.

Informal factors include social norms, attitudes, family support, peer pressure etc. that help or hinder young people's development. Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes how people's actions are influenced by direct interactions with other people in their social network that support or discourage growth. Social norms are of particular importance: these are the informal, mostly unwritten, rules that define acceptable, appropriate and obligatory actions in a given group or society (Cialdini et al., 1990). Saha et al. (2018) describe how social norms related to women's participation in the labour market influence employment outcomes for women. If society is open for women (and other marginalized groups) to participate on an equal footing in the labour market, more opportunities will arise. Interventions targeting informal factors related to youth employment include community discussion groups on social norms. These stimulate dialogue between youth, communities and duty-bearers relevant to labour markets, and more indirectly strengthen the capacity of youth groups and movements to influence institutions working in the realm of youth employment.

Formal factors that influence the possibilities for youth employment include the policies, legislation and institutions that set the ground rules for labour market participation. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – in goal 4 on education and goal 8 on decent work and sustained economic growth – stress the importance of enabling policies and legislation for youth employment (Baah-Boateng, 2015). Formal factors can enable youth employment when supportive institutions and policies allow young people to access the job market. Rao and Kelleher (2010) describe the importance of challenging the formal structures that perpetuate inequalities in the labour market to achieve structural change. Political empowerment can be part of this change, as people start raising their voice and being represented in institutions and decision-making bodies (Eyben et al., 2008). Hence, examples of intervention strategies that aim to create an enabling environment include advocacy (with youth and on behalf of youth) towards institutions that have stake in young people's labour market prospects.

Favourable informal factors in society, together with formal, institutionalized change, create an enabling environment in which youth can thrive. This requires systemic change that is not easy to accomplish; it is also very broad in nature and therefore difficult to capture. In this evidence synthesis, we explore whether attention by youth employment programmes to creating an enabling environment leads to better results in the short and long run. However, it is challenging to isolate the different aspects of how an enabling environment is contributing to youth employment, which makes it difficult to compare the effectiveness of different programmes. We therefore focus on showing the general effects of attention to the enabling environment, rather than examining the impacts of specific formal and informal factors.

3. Methodology

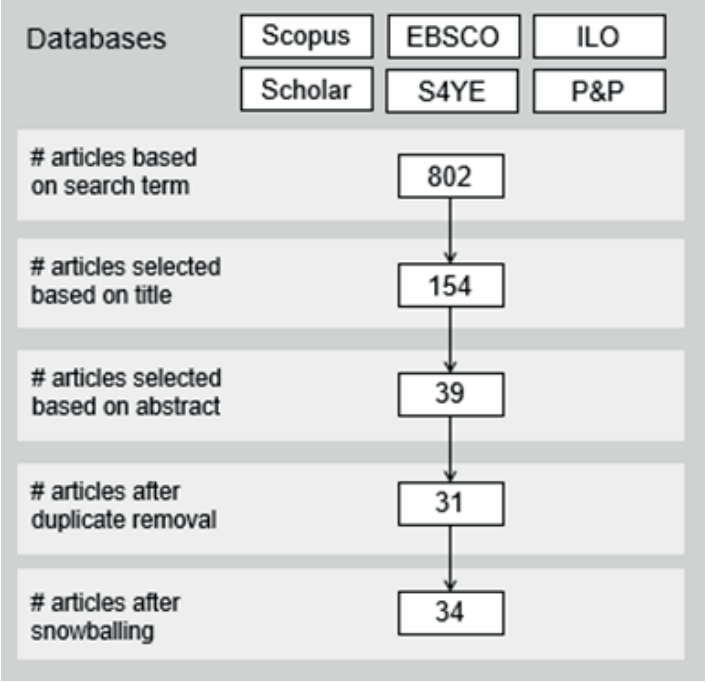
3.1 Rapid Evidence Assessment

The evidence synthesis employs a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA). This allows the researcher to combine elements of a systematic review, including the key principles of rigour, transparency and replicability, with a more reflective form of evidence-focused literature review. The REA involves a stepwise process: identification of a clear review question; a structured literature search with a clear protocol and rationale; appraisal of the quality of the evidence; and finally, synthesis of the evidence base (Barends et al., 2017).

3.1.1 Literature search

The REA literature search resulted in the selection of 34 articles for analysis. They include peer-reviewed academic articles as well as grey literature. Databases used to search academic literature include: Scopus, EBSCO host, ILO Labour Discovery Database and Google Scholar. For the grey literature, databases include: ILO Labour Discovery Database, Oxfam Policy & Practice website and S4YE Knowledge Repository. In some instances, supplementary articles were included to provide additional contextual information. Please see the References for a full list of articles used for this paper.

Figure 1: Overview of selection of articles



Search terms varied per database. For each database, we tested and documented several strategies and identified the preferred search term that yielded a comprehensive yet precise enough set of potentially relevant literature. Search terms included exposure terms, outcome terms, subject terms and impact terms. Figure 1 shows an overview of the selection of studies for analysis. The operationalization of the search, appraisal of the quality of the studies, and a list of studies selected can be found in Annex I.

3.2 The Sounding Board

Outcomes from the literature review were shared with an expert panel of practitioners – the 'Sounding Board' – to assess the extent to which the mechanisms and outcomes described in the literature resonate with their experience in practice. The Sounding Board members bring together experiential knowledge from CSOs, youth movements, youth activists and young entrepreneurs. In the next chapter, results in the sections 'from the Sounding Board' are drawn from discussions with these practitioners. See Annex I for more information on the composition of the Sounding Board.

3.3 Study limitations

We translated our understanding of an 'enabling environment' into search terms by assessing the outputs and outcomes in the monitoring and evaluation frameworks of youth employment programmes implemented by NGOs. This assessment revealed that most of these outcomes refer to formal or informal aspects of the (enabling) environment. Our definition is still rather broad. However, even using this broad definition of the enabling environment, the resulting number of employment programmes that consciously address it is rather limited. Hence, we also incorporated studies that highlighted aspects around the enabling environment without describing specific programme interventions that aim to influence the environment for youth to thrive.

Moreover, there is huge variation in the youth employment programmes included in the analysis, in terms of their set-up and outcomes. In addition, the studies that evaluate the impact of these programmes use a wide variety of assessment methods. It is therefore very difficult to compare the relative effectiveness of these interventions. We tried to counter this by reporting only on signs of significant effects, and by reflecting on added value and not on the magnitude of impact.

We find that most of the literature on youth employment programmes describes interventions implemented in the Western Hemisphere; the number of evaluations focusing on interventions in Africa is limited. This means that the sample of evaluations that address empowerment and the enabling environment in the context of youth employment programmes, and that employ a (quasi-) experimental design, is small.

It is also important to note that the analysed studies are extremely diverse in terms of their contexts and their target groups. As we recognize that youth is a heterogenous group, it is not possible to make like-for-like comparisons. Furthermore, the African continent exists of a great variety of countries, each with their own distinct culture and traditions. Last but not least, some papers explicitly focus on urban areas, while others are concerned with rural areas or deal with both. The practitioners of the Sounding Board explained the considerable differences in the reality of youth employment programmes in rural versus urban areas – again making it impossible to directly compare one programme with another.

4.1 The vast variety of youth employment programmes

Youth employment programmes aim to decrease constraints at the demand and/or supply side of the labour market, or take an approach that combines interventions on both the demand and supply side (Datta et al., 2018; Flynn et al., 2017). Supply-side interventions target youth who are already in (or are about to enter) the labour market. Examples of supply-side interventions include training and skills development, and job-search assistance. Demand-side interventions focus on job creation through supporting business growth in particular and economic growth more generally. Typical examples include the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)6 and providing capital and grants to these SMEs (Ismail & Mujuru, 2020). A bridge between the supply and demand sides is sought when skills-building employment programmes reach out to private companies to encourage and support them to recruit young people (often by means of internship programmes).

Systematic reviews of Kluve et al. (2017 and 2019) report positive effects of entrepreneurship promotion and skills training (i.e. supply-side interventions) on employment and earnings. Although the effects are small, they estimate bigger programme effects in low- and middle-income countries (e.g. in African countries) than in high-income countries. They also emphasize the importance of profiling and individualized follow-up for different types of youth groups.

Using a meta regression of 37 impact evaluation studies of entrepreneurship programmes, Cho & Honorati (2014) find that these have a positive and large impact on business knowledge and practice. However, these do not immediately translate into new venture creation or increased incomes. Fox & Kaul (2017) argue that impact evaluations of training programmes show mixed results, at best, and state that increases in employment are often driven by self-employment.

4.2 Relevant studies

The body of evaluations that look at youth employment programmes with a component on youth empowerment and/or a focus on creating an enabling environment, is small. The studies we found with a quantitative experimental or quasi-experimental approach focus on five programmes: Economic Empowerment for Adolescent Girls (EPAG) in Liberia, Empowerment and Livelihood for Adolescents (ELA) in Uganda, GET Ahead in Kenya, Empower Youth for Work (EYW) in Ethiopia, and the Neqdar Nesharek ('We can participate') programme in Egypt. An overview of these key (youth) employment programmes is presented in Annex II.

Other studies from youth employment programmes with a (light) focus on empowerment or the enabling environment include Banks (2017), who reviews lessons from (again) the ELA programme in both Uganda and Tanzania, based among others on findings from Bandiera et al. (2012); Iseselo et al. (2019), who review a training intervention in Tanzania that focuses on entrepreneurship, beekeeping and health; Bukuluki et al. (2020), who analyse an article on enablers in the transition of youth from care into employment in Uganda, based on the Uganda Youth Development Link (UYDEL; Youth Business International (YBI) (2018), who present lessons learned from their mentoring programmes for young people in 42 countries; ILO (2015), who offer lessons from five case studies on boosting the employability of young men and women in Egypt; International Youth Foundation (2014), who review lessons from the Jeunes Agriculteurs (JA) project, which aims to improve rural livelihoods in Senegal; Blattman et al. (2013), who evaluate lessons from the Youth Opportunities Program in Uganda; and Gregoire & Badaoui (2020), who present lessons from a training to improve socio-economic integration of vulnerable youth in Morocco. Lastly, in their systematic review of studies evaluating youth employment programmes, Mawn et al. (2017) include some findings on mental health related outcomes.

6 Medium-sized entreprises generally have fewer than 250 staff (headcount annual work unit) and an annual turnover below 50 million euros, while small enterprises generally have fewer than 50 staff and an annual turnover under 10 million euros (European Comission, 2020). Entrepreneurship promotion and SME development contribute to self-employment of entrepreneurs, while also contributing to wage employment of those who are employed as staff.

Some studies that the evidence synthesis draws on are not evaluations of specific youth employment programmes or interventions; rather, they emphasize the contextual constraints and solutions related to youth in the labour market in general, and make reference to empowerment and/or the enabling environment for youth employment.

Most research regarding youth employment in Africa focuses on urban employment or does not consider urban and rural differences (Mueller & Thurlow, 2019), even though the economic and contextual differences are vast. Studies that do focus on rural and urban differences in youth unemployment are scarce, and the findings are mixed. Ismail (2016), Kilimani (2017) and Geest (2010) assert that youth unemployment is higher in urban than rural Africa, whereas Fox & Kaul (2017) state that in lower-middle-income countries, including some African countries, unemployment tends to be concentrated in urban areas. Other evidence suggests that a large share of the workforce in rural areas of Africa is employed in informal jobs (ILO, 2018; Mueller & Thurlow 2019, ILO 2020a). This group is particularly vulnerable to economic crises and shocks (ILO 2020a). According to Kalu Ude (2020), high unemployment in rural areas is blocking Africa's economic transformation.

4.3 Empowerment outcomes

In this section, we explore how individual empowerment in youth employment programmes is operationalized, and the extent to which programmes achieve positive results regarding empowerment. First, we describe the findings of the REA in this respect; we then provide additional insights from the programme practitioners in the Sounding Board.

4.3.1 Empowerment: evidence from literature

Empowerment can be understood as autonomy and self-determination in people and in communities. We distinguish between social and economic empowerment, as defined in section 2.1. To summarize, social empowerment is about building autonomy and confidence, while economic empowerment is about developing the financial independence that enables young people to make their own choices in life.

Sixteen out of the 34 studies included in the REA academic literature review report on outcomes related to economic empowerment. Several of the contextual papers also emphasize the importance of empowerment for youth employment outcomes.

The evidence synthesis shows that ***most studies consider aspects of social empowerment at an individual level.*** Herein we see that youth employment programmes contribute to individual changes related to empowerment – such as improved self-esteem (Banks, 2017; ILO, 2015), wellbeing (McKenzie, 2019; Mawn et al., 2017), mental health (McKenzie, 2019; Mawn et al., 2017), self-worth/identity (Bukuliki et al., 2020; King, 2018), life skills (Bandiera et al., 2012, 2015 and 2020) and confidence (Adoho et al., 2014; Bukuliki et al., 2020; ILO, 2015; International Youth Foundation, 2014; YBI, 2018). These individual changes support youth in the labour market, as they develop the soft skills that an employee needs to function well in a job.

Several studies also describe changes in social empowerment at a collective level. This is about people feeling more confident to act with others. In the literature we find examples of youth expanding their social networks (Banks, 2017; Bukuliki et al., 2020; ILO, 2015), which helps young people to connect to the labour market, either as an individual or with a group of peers. Collective change related to social empowerment is prevalent in the work of Banks (2017), who describes how participation in training (in Uganda and Tanzania) expanded women's friendship groups and social networks. This social empowerment can be helpful in enabling youth to start up a new business (Bukuluki et al., 2020, Uganda). Furthermore, we see that young people in employment programmes that focus on aspects of empowerment gain respect in their community (Iseselo et al., 2019, Tanzania). For example, Oxfam's EYW programme in Ethiopia shows positive impacts on community acceptance of young female entrepreneurs, which makes young women feel supported and increases their customer base (Oxfam Novib, 2019). Iseselo et al. (2019) describe a similar change, where participation in youth employment trainings increased respect for and recognition of participants in their wider community.

Furthermore, there are suggestions of improved agency, i.e. an individual's feeling of being able to change things in their community or youth group (Oxfam Novib, 2019; Bukuliki et al., 2020), and in terms of women's association and efficacy (McKenzie et al., 2019). Oxfam's EYW programme in Ethiopia shows a positive impact on agency for both young women and young men. The other programmes mentioned in this section either focus solely on women or on men, or do not use gender-disaggregation in their evaluation.

Economic empowerment is discussed in less detail by the studies included in the REA analysis. When included, economic empowerment is linked to control over financial resources (Adoho et al. 2014; Bukuliki et al., 2020) and improved decision-making skills or life choices (Adoho et al., 2014; Iseselo et al., 2019; YBI, 2018). A study in Ethiopia found programme impact on economic empowerment, although this only increased between baseline and midline (Oxfam Novib, 2019). In terms of young people having more control over life choices, we primarily see results in the areas of food security and healthy lifestyle. Adoho et al. (2014, Liberia), for instance, mention improved food security and dietary composition, which is consistent with their hypothesis that increased earnings due to income-generating activities are partly spent on food. Furthermore, we see increased control over assets in the improved saving culture reported by Bukuliki et al. (2020) and in the greater control over resources reported by Adoho (2014).

4.3.2 Empowerment: reflections from the Sounding Board

Practitioners in our Sounding Board affirmed the findings from the literature review, particularly the positive effects of programmes on young people's increased autonomy, and confidence within youth employment interventions. They recognize the mechanism where participation in such programmes resulted in feelings of greater autonomy, self-confidence and self-esteem. This enhances young people's ability to discover what they are good at, which in turn increases their labour market prospects and economic empowerment. Confidence is especially important in contexts where jobs are scarce and where personal connections are often needed to find employment. In these situations especially, according to practitioners, knowing who you are and what you want can prove helpful.

Practitioners particularly noted that while bridging a skills gap is a common approach, in practice it is only a small part of many interventions. ***Increasing self-confidence, autonomy and psychosocial wellbeing is instrumental in achieving the 'hard' objectives of youth employment programmes, such as increases in skills, access to the labour market or business success***. This is especially the case when working with marginalized groups – who are already further removed from the labour market, with less self-esteem and self-confidence than their peers – and when working in contexts where violence and conflict may have influenced youth's capabilities. The Sounding Board stated that ***social empowerment is a prerequisite for economic empowerment, as confidence and wellbeing need to be at a certain level before agency and economic independence can be developed.*** In the literature included in the REA analysis, this relationship has not been clearly described and researched.

Furthermore, the Sounding Board noted that there is ***considerable heterogeneity and intersectionality in the barriers faced by youth in aspects of both social and economic empowerment.*** Factors like gender, ethnicity, rural vs urban background, and experience of violence and conflict play an important and intersecting role in blocking or enabling social and economic empowerment. For example, a young woman living in a rural area is less empowered than her male peer in an urban area who has more freedom of movement to develop himself and build his confidence. In some contexts, social norms and customary laws regarding (early) marriage are particularly stringent in rural areas, and impact girls more and earlier in their transition to adulthood than they do boys. Ethnic minorities often have low levels of self-esteem due to their experience of structural exclusion. The practitioners noted that marginalized groups in particular need tailored interventions that take into account these diverse barriers to social and economic empowerment. A gendered lens helps to assess the full range of barriers faced, and the gendered nature of these barriers needs to be addressed more prominently in youth employment programmes, in both their design and evaluations. This is further discussed in the next section, on the role of the enabling environment.

4.4 Role of an enabling environment

In this section, we look at the composition and role of an enabling environment, and consider the extent to which youth employment programmes are positively contributing to an enabling environment. First, we describe the findings of the REA before providing additional insights from practitioners in the Sounding Board.

4.4.1 Enabling environment: evidence from literature

As described in section 2, the enabling environment generally comprises systemic influences beyond the individual sphere, involving both informal as well as formal factors. Informal factors relate to social norms, including cultural values and beliefs. Formal factors relate to policies, institutional practices and legal frameworks. Youth employment programmes that recognize the importance of the enabling environment include interventions aimed at changing these factors in favour of youth employment.

In the REA, the studies that refer to the enabling environment do so in different ways (see Table 1 below). In total, 15 out of 34 studies report on youth employment programmes that include interventions to influence the enabling environment. We also found relevant articles that were not linked to particular youth employment programmes.

The studies analysed in the REA ***focus mainly on informal components of the (enabling) environment.*** Within this, ***gender equity is a main point of attention*** (Adoho et al., 2014; Bandiera et al., 2012, 2015 and 2020; McKenzie et al., 2019; Bukuliki et al., 2020; Elsayed & Roushdy, 2017a and 2017b; Oxfam Novib, 2019). Gender equity is proxied in various ways, including norms around the division of paid and unpaid work, the acceptability of women working, and intra-household decision-making. Bandiera et al. (2012, 2015, Uganda) report increased scores on their gender empowerment index – referring to people's attitudes to the intra-household division of household chores, unpaid care work, education and earning money. Although the programme did not explicitly aim to change these attitudes, it is believed that attitudes may have shifted alongside increases in women's economic empowerment and knowledge of their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) (Bandiera et al., 2020). Attitudes to gender equity may also have changed due to the life-skills trainings implemented by the programme, which included SRHR, family planning, gender-based violence, negotiation and conflict resolution, leadership, and legal knowledge on women's issues. However, improved scores in the gender empowerment index were only seen in the short term – i.e. from baseline to midline. At endline, four years into the programme, these improvements had tailed off (Bandiera et al., 2020). This highlights the challenge of shifting norms and attitudes permanently. The authors state that the results 'serve to highlight the great challenge in being able to permanently shift aspirations, even when girls' economic and social empowerment has improved in treated communities.' (Bandiera et al., 2020, p.238).

The study of McKenzie et al. (2019) in Kenya is equally cautious around claiming gender equity gains. Gender empowerment is proxied by 10 different outcomes related to decision-making around finances and business, including spending decisions, needing to have someone's permission to sell business assets, and having sole control over money. They do not find changes in household decision-making dynamics. Similarly, Elsayed & Roushdy (2017a and 2017b, Egypt) do not find positive impacts on gender equality attitudes and intra-household decision-making. Unfortunately, we did not find any studies that compared regional or contextual differences, as we assume these aspects are highly influenced by the local cultural and religious context.

In Oxfam's EYW programme, social norms that are restrictive for young people's – and particularly young women's – labour participation are addressed through community interventions such as discussions, theatre and other forms of 'edutainment'. These sessions raise awareness on the various factors that hamper women's economic participation, such as gender-based violence, lack of access to family planning, and unfair division of unpaid care work (Oxfam Novib, 2019).

Many other papers also refer to improving SRHR in relation to youth employment (Bandiera et al., 2012, 2015 and 2020; Banks, 2017; Oxfam Novib, 2019). Improving SRHR is important for women's employment outcomes, as early childbearing and marriage are two of the biggest barriers preventing young women from acquiring human capital and fully participating in the labour market (Bandiera et al., 2015 and 2020). Social norms on SRHR, as well as on the division of housework and what type of occupation is 'suitable'

for women, generally limit women in their economic aspirations and opportunities for employment (Fox & Kaul, 2018). Therefore, improving freedom of choice in family planning and limiting gender-based violence requires a community approach and broad acceptance, creating a more enabling environment for young women's economic aspirations (Bandiera et al., 2012, 2015 and 2020; Oxfam Novib, 2019; Banks, 2017). However, as mentioned above, changing social norms permanently, including norms on SRHR, is a long and challenging process.

Restrictive norms are mentioned in various other studies on employment programmes (Banks, 2017; Campos et al., 2015; Datta et al., 2018; King, 2018; Oxfam Novib, 2019) and in articles that reflect on the enabling environment but aren't linked to specific employment interventions. For instance, Datta et al. (2018) argue that social norms may prevent companies and businesses from hiring poor or at-risk youth. Fox & Kaul (2018) state that in some countries, women in particular face strong barriers to employment and income-earning opportunities, referring to norms and traditions that limit women's economic activities and behaviour. These include norms and customs around acceptable behaviour in public; laws, norms and traditions about what jobs women can do or are 'suitable' for women; norms around unpaid care work; as well as policies and practices that endanger women's safety and security. Because of norms and expectations that affect, and usually constrain, women's opportunities in employment, Fox & Kaul (2018) advocate that 'all employment programs must address the gender dimension explicitly' (p.23).

Other informal factors that help or hinder youth employment include family or community support (Banks, 2017; Bukuliki et al., 2020; King, 2018) and peer pressure or support (Banks, 2017; Bukuliki et al., 2020). The International Youth Foundation (2014), for example, focuses on rural entrepreneurship in Senegal and highlights the importance of changing attitudes and raising awareness among the community regarding new farming techniques and innovations. Traditional experience can manifest as scepticism of innovations, which in turn can prove to be a barrier for rural youth to engage in agricultural entrepreneurship. In the International Youth Foundation's Jeunes Agriculteurs (JA) project, local councils – comprising representatives of chambers of commerce, government bureaus, technical institutes and educational institutes – were important for creating community buy-in and increasing intervention take-up (International Youth Foundation, 2014). The councils helped with identifying young participants, hosting training activities, and facilitating young people's access to credit and other resources. This assisted youth in connecting with business leaders or agricultural cooperatives which could share insights into the ups and downs of the local business environment. The connections with government ministries were useful in ensuring support for rural training programmes and making links with policies (International Youth Foundation, 2014). By involving key stakeholders in the local councils, the JA programme facilitated broad community awareness of and support for the intervention.

Formal factors aspects of the enabling environment mentioned in the REA studies refer to private sector policies (potential employers) (Banks, 2017; Moore, 2015; Kluve et al., 2019) ***and government responsibilities*** (Banks, 2017; Moore, 2015; King, 2018; Datta et al., 2018). They include, for instance, regulatory environments favourable to businesses and job creation (e.g. labour regulations and tax and benefit systems that encourage work), a stable macroeconomic environment, reliable infrastructure, human capital and the rule of law (Datta et al., 2018), as well as combatting corruption and other social injustices (King, 2018). In general, Kluve et al. (2019) define four types of active labour market policies and programmes in which governments work towards youth employment, as follows: 1) training and skills development; 2) entrepreneurship promotion; 3) employment services; and 4) subsidized employment interventions. Governments can strengthen formal aspects of the enabling environment by means of subsidized employment interventions, e.g. wage subsidies and entrepreneurship promotion, ensuring finance and market access. Most of the literature that discusses formal factors do not have an explicit link to youth employment interventions, but rather look at the wider youth labour market.

4.4.2 Enabling environment: reflections from the Sounding Board

Practitioners affirmed the importance of informal factors that create an enabling environment for young people's labour market participation and success. Once again, they highlighted the importance of using a gender lens to assess barriers, particularly those related to informal factors. As stipulated in the literature, young women's labour market participation is often more constrained by informal factors, such as social norms, or in some contexts even customary/traditional laws that prevent women from working at all. When young women are employed, this can lead to conflicts within the household. The examples discussed by practitioners emphasize the discouraging role that families and communities can play in

youth employment. Some young people feel that elders think they are being disrespectful if they try to access the labour market in a different way than the elders used to do. This is hindering young people in making their own choices. However, the Sounding Board also gave examples of where the family and community do support young people on their way to employment. Advice, connections, and financial and moral support from family or community members are recognized and appreciated by youth as contributing to positive employment outcomes.

Members of the Sounding Board found it rather striking that the literature review finds a lack of evaluations of programmes that take into account formal aspects of the enabling environment, notably policies on youth employment and youth policies in general. Practitioners noted that the organizations involved in the implementation of youth employment programmes, especially NGOs, have relatively little influence in the formulation of these policies. This results in a disconnect between youth employment programmes of NGOs and government initiatives to boost youth employment. Although there is increasing interest in participatory approaches to policymaking, in reality this is only the case for a very small part of policymaking. Practitioners also noted a disconnect between the objectives set out in formal aspects of the enabling environment, e.g. youth employment policies, and their implementation on the ground. This lack of coherence among actions of different actors that relate to boosting youth employment is a missed opportunity to advance youth's position at the labour market.

The practitioners emphasized that this disconnect between policy and practice is not the only problem in the formal factors of the enabling (or non-enabling) environment. They stressed that a disconnect exists between all important actors, such as educational institutes, government and businesses that should be working together to advance youth employment towards a strong economy. In reality, even actors that would be expected to be closely related (such as educational institutes and the private sector) are often not linked to each other. This leads to sub-optimal outcomes, for instance where youth engage in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) which builds skills that are not in demand in the labour market. Lack of political will to perform better is also blocking progress, according to members of the Sounding Board. Solving this general disconnect could potentially create an enabling environment that boosts youth employment. The practitioners currently see these as 'different worlds' that it is difficult for a single actor to connect to each other.

Members of the Sounding Board also mentioned the role of corruption in hampering an enabling environment. A practitioner from Uganda described a situation where youth need to pay a six-month salary to get a one-year job. Other formal factors obstructing an enabling environment include unfavourable policies; an example was given of tax waivers for international companies which make it difficult if not impossible for local and national SMEs to compete in the market, let alone to grow and employ (more) youth. Minimum eligibility criteria (e.g. business registration) required by government and private sector employment programmes can in reality be prohibitive for youth. Practitioners emphasized the importance of bridging the policy and implementation gap – especially since three-quarters of Africa's employed youth work in the informal sector – and addressing the supply and demand side of youth employment simultaneously.

Finally, practitioners stressed the need to distinguish between rural and urban areas when it comes to youth employment programmes and their evaluations. Both have a distinct nature and context, especially in terms of the enabling environment. At the same time, youth employment in rural and urban settings cannot be viewed in isolation, as agricultural commodities link both settings, and as rural youth often migrate to urban areas for employment. These young people still experience restrictive social norms from their rural background that hamper their participation in the labour market.

A distinct difference between urban and rural employment programmes is their labour market focus. Rural youth employment programmes are often, if not always, linked to agricultural businesses and/or entrepreneurship opportunities (e.g. in handicrafts or tourism). Practitioners mentioned the importance of access to land for enabling most of these businesses to get started. Again, they highlighted the need to apply a gender lens, as men have more opportunities to access or own land than women, and this is exacerbated in contexts where child marriage is still common. This shows that urban and rural settings have different constraints to the enabling environment, particularly in terms of informal factors, that may require a totally different approach.

4.5 Added value of attention to empowerment and the enabling environment in youth employment programmes

In this section, we look at the added value of youth employment programmes that incorporate youth empowerment and creating an enabling environment, in terms of achieving the intended business and employment outcomes. First, we describe the findings of the REA in this respect, before sharing additional insights from practitioners in the Sounding Board.

The results of the literature review are subject to some limitations in terms of comparability (also see Study limitations in section 3.3). It is not possible to compare the effectiveness of youth employment programmes that include specific attention to empowerment and/or the enabling environment and those that do not, because of the sheer number of studies analysed as well as the number of different ways in which these are understood, addressed and evaluated in these programmes. Comparison is also difficult because the enabling environment is highly context specific. Furthermore, we cannot assess which theme – youth empowerment or the enabling environment – adds most value to youth employment programmes, as not all studies in the REA include both.

However, we can look at the general effects that the programmes in the REA analysis have on traditional employment and business outcomes. We find that including a component on the enabling environment and/or youth empowerment does not come at the cost of interventions' effectiveness on these traditional outcomes. The studies of Adoho et al. (2014), Bandiera et al. (2012, 2015), McKenzie et al. (2019), Banks (2017) and Blattman et al. (2013) find a significant increase in income and, in some cases, savings, as a result of the interventions. Adoho et al. (2014, Liberia) estimate a positive impact on savings, as well as on youth having access to formal loans and repaying loans. The study of Campos et al. (2015) had a slightly different, but interesting, focus – they looked at the experience of Ugandan women who had chosen to work in male-dominated sectors, and found that this sharply increased their profitability. This means that ***in addition to the results these programmes have on empowerment and the enabling environment, they also achieve positive results in traditional business and employment outcomes.***

Furthermore, the REA analysis shows positive results in terms of business survival – which may hint at sustainable change. The study by McKenzie et al. (2019, Kenya) finds increases in business survival and profits. Effects are stronger three years after the start of the intervention than they are after one year. Participants' income increases as well, particularly for the group that received mentoring in addition to trainings, and the programme has positive impacts on business practices. Campos et al. (2015, Uganda) describe that women with a business in a male-dominated sector make similar profits to their male peers and make three times as much as their female peers who own a business in a traditionally female sector. Generally, the studies analysed show positive results in outputs conducive to business survival and increased profits, such as increased entrepreneurial skills, or knowledge and (professionalization) of business practices (Bandiera et al., 2012, 2015 and 2020; McKenzie et al., 2019; Elsayed & Roushdy, 2017a and 2017b; Iseselo et al., 2019; Blattman et al., 2013) and improved financial management (Iseselo et al., 2019). These results hint at a positive effect of programmes that include aspects of empowerment and/or the enabling environment on sustainable youth employment outcomes. ***This supports our assumption that focusing on empowerment and an enabling environment results in more sustainable and durable changes.*** However, the variety and number of the programmes included in the REA analysis and programmes included in other effectiveness reviews is too vast for us to be able to draw definite conclusions.

This point was further emphasized by the members of the Sounding Board. They stated that it is difficult to compare different youth employment programmes, particularly given that those which include empowerment and the enabling environment often target disadvantaged youth. This is indeed the case with most of the (quasi-) experimental evaluations included in the REA. The fact that these programmes achieve similar results to traditional youth employment programmes was considered remarkable by the practitioners in the Sounding Board. They would have expected more limited results from the former, given that their target groups face many more barriers to accessing and succeeding in the labour market.

In conclusion, we can say that youth employment programmes that incorporate empowerment and the enabling environment add value to the vast variety of employment interventions. For marginalized groups in particular, work to empower youth and to shift restrictive social norms is vital to remove the barriers that prevent young people from entering the labour market in the first place. Based on the REA analysis and the inputs from the Sounding Board, it is not possible to differentiate between the impacts of interventions on youth empowerment and those focused on the enabling environment, as most programmes studied do not include both themes, or do not include them in the same way.

Table 1: Results on business and employment outcomes per study

Type of study	Authors	Target population	*Empowerment*		*Enabling environment*		*Business and employment outcomes*	
			Social empowerment *Autonomy & confidence*	**Economic empowerment** *Agency and choice in life*	**Informal factors** *Attitudes and social norms*	**Formal factors** *Services and policies*	**Employment outcomes**	**Business outcomes**
(Quasi-) experimental evaluations	Adoho et al. (2014)	Young women between 16 and 27 years old with basic literacy and numeracy skills, who are not enrolled in school, and who reside in target communities around Monrovia (EPAG-Liberia)	Increased feeling of control, feeling comfortable, positive attitudes Increased confidence	Increased control over own resources Improved food security	Shift toward more egalitarian attitudes to division of unpaid care work		Increase in employment (waged employment and self-employment) Increase in income and savings	
	Bandiera et al. (2012, 2015 and 2020)	Young women between 14 and 20 years old in Uganda, especially those who are out of school. (ELA-Uganda)	Increased control over own body, e.g. in terms of condom usage, choice about having children, and not having sex against will		Increased gender empowerment index (referring to intra-household division of household chores, unpaid care work, education and earning money), but not in the longer run (2020) Less restrictive social norms for young women's employment (only reported in 2015 study) Positive changes in aspects of girls' SRHR supportive of employability – e.g. decrease in early marriage and GBV		Increase in self-employment No impact on wage employment Increase in expenditure (as proxy for income), but not in the longer run (2020)	Increase in entrepreneurial ability

Type of study	Authors	Target population	*Empowerment*		*Enabling environment*		*Business and employment outcomes*	
			Social empowerment *Autonomy & confidence*	**Economic empowerment** *Agency and choice in life*	**Informal factors** *Attitudes and social norms*	**Formal factors** *Services and policies*	**Employment outcomes**	**Business outcomes**
	McKenzie et al. (2019)	Low-income women of 55 years or younger who are engaged in small-scale businesses. Additional eligibility criteria include reporting profits that do not exceed sales, having a phone number, not attending school, having at least one year of schooling, and not running a business that only deals with phonecards or M-Pesa. (GET Ahead-Kenya)	No significant impact on individual decision-making power Improved wellbeing Positive impact on mental health	Positive effect on entrepreneurial self-belief Positive impact on women's association – discussing with others	No change in household decision-making dynamics No significant impact on empowerment index (NB: this index comprises 10 outcomes, including not needing permission for a variety of actions and having access to and control over money)		Increase in income	Increase in business survival Increase in profit Positive impact on business practices Increase in weekly customers Positive trend in sales value, inventory value and capital stock value

Type of study	Authors	Target population	*Empowerment*		*Enabling environment*		*Business and employment outcomes*	
			Social empowerment *Autonomy & confidence*	**Economic empowerment** *Agency and choice in life*	**Informal factors** *Attitudes and social norms*	**Formal factors** *Services and policies*	**Employment outcomes**	**Business outcomes**
	Oxfam Novib (2019)	Young people (especially young women, 15-29 years old) in rural climate change affected areas of Ethiopia (Oromia and Somali) (EYW-Ethiopia)	Positive impact on social empowerment for women only. The trend in social empowerment from baseline to midline is negative Positive impact on SRHR knowledge	Positive impact on agency (i.e. one's feeling of being able to change things in the community or youth group) Positive contribution to economic empowerment (although impact is insignificant)	No impact on average perceived level of social restrictions (i.e. one's feeling on whether it is harder for young people/young women/young men to find a paid job or to start up a business because of age or gender) to employment or entrepreneurship Positive trend for men on social norms related to female youth employment, while both men and women see a negative trend for social norms related to male youth employment No impact on gender equality index (NB: this index comprises 7 statements on male privilege)		Positive contribution to new or improved employment or entrepreneurship opportunities (although impact is insignificant) Positive contribution to average income of youth (although impact is insignificant). Positive impact on income for men only No contribution to average household income	Positive contribution to business ownership (although impact is insignificant) No contribution to getting initial credit to start up a business
	Elsayed & Roushdy (2017a and 2017b)	Women between 16 and 29 years old who can read and write and live in rural communities of upper Egypt. (Neqdar- Egypt)			No impact on intra-household decision-making (NB: this index comprises 7 types of decisions made in the household, including spending decisions and choices about occupation) No impact on gender equality index (NB: this index comprises 4 male privilege statements and 4 gender equality statements)		Positive impact on self-employment No impact on wage employment	Positive impact on business knowledge Positive impact on future business aspirations

Type of study	Authors	Target population	*Empowerment*		*Enabling environment*		*Business and employment outcomes*	
			Social empowerment *Autonomy & confidence*	**Economic empowerment** *Agency and choice in life*	**Informal factors** *Attitudes and social norms*	**Formal factors** *Services and policies*	**Employment outcomes**	**Business outcomes**
Other evaluations	Banks (2017)	Young women between 14 and 20 years old in Uganda, especially those who are out of school. (ELA - Uganda & Tanzania)	Improved self-esteem and confidence Expanded social network Increased control over own body, e.g. in terms of condom usage, choice about having children, and not having sex against will Decreased early entry into marriage/cohabitation		Building a supportive peer network that shifts social norms around youth employment More positive attitudes towards women's labour market participation among peers, parents and other community members		Increase in girls' income from self-employment	
	Iseselo et al. (2019)	Young men between 18 and 35 years old in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) who were unemployed and interested in entrepreneurship and beekeeping	Gained respect in community	Improved healthy lifestyle				Increase in entrepreneurial ability Improved financial management
	Mawn et al. (2017)	Youth between 16 and 24 years old who were not in employment, education or training (NEET) at the start of the intervention	Improved wellbeing and mental health				Increase in employment	

Type of study	Authors	Target population	*Empowerment*		*Enabling environment*		*Business and employment outcomes*	
			Social empowerment *Autonomy & confidence*	**Economic empowerment** *Agency and choice in life*	**Informal factors** *Attitudes and social norms*	**Formal factors** *Services and policies*	**Employment outcomes**	**Business outcomes**
	Bukuliki et al. (2020)	Youth between 14 and 25 years old who were enrolled in the UYDEL rehabilitation and transitional shelter in Uganda (Kampala and Wakiso districts)	Expanded social network Increased self-confidence and self-worth	Improved self-reliance Improved saving culture Improved agency	Building positive social support networks Decrease in stigma and discrimination Family and community support for youth employment			
	ILO (2015)	Women, particularly those who are disadvantaged and vulnerable (e.g. divorced, widows, from poor areas) in Egypt	Increased self-confidence and self-esteem Expanded social network	Increased independence				
	International Youth Foundation (2014)	Young people between 16 and 29 years old in the cities of Dakar, Saint-Louis and Thiès, Senegal	Life skills development is important for building self-confidence, creative thinking, risk-taking, and decision-making		Rural entrepreneurship specifically: building broad awareness and support among key stakeholders to change attitudes towards new farming techniques and innovations		Positive contribution to self-employment	
	YBI (2018)	Youth between 25 and 35 years old in 42 countries (including Uganda)	Positive contribution to self-confidence	Positive contribution to understanding personal strengths and weaknesses and decision-making skills				Positive contribution to turnover Positive contribution to business improvements

Type of study	Authors	Target population	*Empowerment*		*Enabling environment*		*Business and employment outcomes*	
			Social empowerment *Autonomy & confidence*	**Economic empowerment** *Agency and choice in life*	**Informal factors** *Attitudes and social norms*	**Formal factors** *Services and policies*	**Employment outcomes**	**Business outcomes**
	Blattman et al. (2013)	Youth in Uganda between 16 and 35 years old who are rural farmers, on average had reached eighth grade, earned less than $1 a day, and worked less than 12 hours a week	Little to no effect on measures of individual community integration, local and national collective action, and engagement in antisocial behaviour or violent protest				Increase in earnings	Increase in capital stock Increase in formalization of business practices
	Gregoire & Badaoui (2020)	Moroccan youth between 18 and 35 years old. Other eligibility criteria include: local residential status, economic vulnerability and in immediate need of a job or income					Positive contribution to youth's integration into formal employment	
No evaluations	King (2018)	Kenyan youth in their late teens	Importance of self-identity		Importance of community belonging – to address limiting social structures (norms)	Addressing structural challenges for youth employment in governance, school drop-out, corruption, hierarchical societal roles, poverty and injustice		
	Fox & Kaul (2017)	Low- and low-middle income countries		Possibly vocational training accelerates entry for women relative to men (in some cases) by improving agency and character skills, but this does not imply that vocational training is the preferred intervention for women				

Type of study	Authors	Target population	*Empowerment*		*Enabling environment*		*Business and employment outcomes*	
			Social empowerment *Autonomy & confidence*	**Economic empowerment** *Agency and choice in life*	**Informal factors** *Attitudes and social norms*	**Formal factors** *Services and policies*	**Employment outcomes**	**Business outcomes**
No evaluations	Moore (2015)	Young men and women in Sub-Saharan Africa				The challenge of youth employment can only be adequately addressed via the meaningful engagement of a range of stakeholders, including the private sector, government and civil society, and especially youth themselves		
	Campos et al. (2015)	Female entrepreneurs in Uganda			Bridging gender segregation of labour through women working in male-dominated industries			Women who choose to work in a male-dominated sector (a.k.a. 'crossovers') are 3 x more profitable than their female peers who work in traditionally female sectors Women with a business in a male-dominated sector make similar profits to their male peers
	Datta et al. (2018)	N/A				Creating a regulatory environment favourable for businesses and job creation Role of supportive policies for youth employment seems favourable in terms of impact – but the relationship is not well researched		

5. Conclusion

This evidence synthesis set out to explore the assumption that young people's participation and success in the labour market is not only a matter of strengthening their individual technical skills and linking them to a job – which is the focus of most youth employment interventions. Personal strengths, such as individual agency and empowerment, as well as an 'enabling environment' that accepts and actively fosters youth employment, are very important. An enabling environment comprises both informal factors (such as social norms and attitudes) and formal factors (such as policies and legislation) that can support young women and men to thrive in the labour market.

Some NGOs therefore take a more holistic view to youth employment programmes, by combining skills development and job creation with efforts to empower young people socially and economically, and working to create an enabling environment. These interventions typically target marginalized youth who face additional, often intersecting, barriers to the labour market. This evidence synthesis seeks to understand the added value of these more holistic youth employment programmes.

Our analysis found that most evaluations of youth employment programmes that include social empowerment report positive effects relating to improved autonomy, self-confidence and self-esteem among youth. There is also contextual evidence from several countries in Africa, including both rural and urban areas, which suggests that these aspects of empowerment help youth to join the labour market. Practitioners working on youth employment in Africa confirm that social empowerment generally precedes any subsequent labour market or business success. As such it is a prerequisite of economic empowerment, which in turn leads to increased financial independence and freedom to make life choices.

Social empowerment appears to be particularly important for marginalized youth, who are more disadvantaged in the labour market than their peers. For these groups, the strengthening of confidence and autonomy underlies the development of the soft skills necessary to gain successful and decent employment. This group needs support to be able to put aside their daily struggles of survival and think more strategically about their employment opportunities. It is also important to consider the diversity of youth when assessing the intersecting barriers they face, based for instance on gender, age, education, ability, rural versus urban background, ethnic group, etc.

A more mixed picture emerges from our analysis of the effectiveness of youth programmes in contributing to an enabling environment. In particular, programme evaluations that employ robust (quasi-) experimental methods find that the interventions had very limited impacts on informal aspects of the enabling environment, such as social norms and attitudes towards the division of unpaid care work and female labour market participation. Where there were some effects, these were not found to be sustained. While the support of community and family members is an important driver for change, our findings show the difficulty of shifting social norms around youth employment. Yet despite the limited impacts they found, all studies – and practitioners in the Sounding Board – note that a focus on informal aspects of the environment is still vital in understanding the barriers (and opportunities) youth face in accessing the labour market. All stressed the importance of using a gender lens to assess these barriers and opportunities.

We found that most studies (and youth empowerment programmes) don't consider the formal aspects of the environment, particularly in terms of youth employment policies. Some studies refer to youth policies as being 'pro-change' but do not consider their lack of implementation on the ground. Most studies do not mention a relation between youth employment programmes and related policy frameworks. Other bodies, such as youth organizations, do try to influence policy makers, but these organizations are not well connected to the youth employment programmes. This disconnect between youth employment programmes and formal policy making/government practices was affirmed by practitioners. They recognize that the formulation of government policies and programmes, their implementation on the ground and their relationship to NGO interventions remains an important gap to be bridged.

Finally, we discussed the added value of youth employment programmes that place an emphasis on youth empowerment and/or creating an enabling environment. We find that these programmes manage to improve traditional business outcomes at least to an extent similar to programmes that don't have this explicit focus. As underlined by the practitioners in the Sounding Board, this is a remarkable finding, given that programmes which include aspects of empowerment and/or the enabling environment often target disadvantaged groups, who face many more barriers to the labour market than their peers. Furthermore, these programmes deliver additional outcomes for young people – namely the increased confidence and autonomy that helps them to make their own choices in an increasingly enabling environment. These life skills and support towards acceptance in society are especially important for marginalized groups. The interplay between these individual, relational and systemic factors goes far beyond income-generation, to help young people thrive independently and become responsible citizens, contributing to a more just and sustainable economy.

6. Policy recommendations

The following recommendations for policymakers emerge from this review of the literature on youth employment programmes that address empowerment and the enabling environment, as well as from in-depth discussions with the Sounding Board.

6.1 Focus youth employment programmes on empowerment, especially when targeting disadvantaged youth

Youth employment programmes should take into account the need for social and economic empowerment, especially when targeting disadvantaged youth. Youth who are furthest removed from the labour market are most in need of interventions related to social and economic empowerment, as they face more – often intersecting – barriers to opportunities. Social empowerment interventions help young people to develop their confidence and autonomy, enabling them to think more strategically about their employment opportunities and achieve economic empowerment. Strengthening of life skills, which contributes to young people's social and economic empowerment, can easily be integrated in skills training curricula. This will help youth to distinguish themselves in the job market and become active citizens.

6.2 Create an enabling environment that supports young people to thrive

Attention to the informal factors (e.g. social norms) and formal factors (e.g. policies and legislation) in the environment in which youth employment programmes are situated can help to create a broader support base for young people's participation in the labour market. In terms of informal factors, the evidence synthesis found that whether or not youth perceive their families/peers/wider social sphere as supportive is an important driver of or barrier to change. Shifting social norms towards supporting young women and men to pursue economic activities can thus help to create an enabling environment for young people to thrive. This is particularly important when working to improve the employment prospects of girls in conservative areas. However, we recognize that social norms change is difficult and requires long-term engagement. It is important to better connect formal aspects of the enabling environment (such as employment policies and access to finance) to employment programmes, and to ensure that policies and practices towards youth employment support each other.

6.3 Recognize diversity of youth to improve targeting

Youth is not a homogeneous group. Diversity exists, for instance, in terms of gender, age, rural versus urban background, socio-economic status, ethnicity and ability. Intersecting barriers add to the diversity of young people's experience. In their design, implementation and evaluation, youth employment programmes should recognize this diversity to tailor their interventions to the differing needs of young people. At a minimum, these programmes should apply a gender lens and focus on the specific barriers to labour market opportunities faced by young women. In their evaluations, all programmes should disaggregate their findings by gender.

6.4 Acknowledge, account for and aim to shift social norms to contribute to an enabling environment, especially for young women

Social norms have a direct bearing on the possibilities for youth employment. Young women in particular are often hampered in their development by restrictive traditional norms. Youth employment programmes should acknowledge and account for the societal barriers that limit the participation of young women and other marginalized groups in the labour market. This can be done, for instance, by organizing community discussion groups on gender norms. Programmes aiming to contribute to social norms change often work with role models or gender equality 'champions', promote examples of 'positive deviance' (i.e. where people have experienced benefits as a result of digressing from norms), and work with representatives of the wider community (including peers, family members, teachers, leaders etc.) who can support young people to thrive.

6.5 Bridge the gap between the supply side and demand side of the labour market to improve the employment rate

The majority of youth employment programmes evaluated in this evidence synthesis focus on the supply side of youth employment. This is reflected in the absence of any link between these programmes and the formal aspects of the enabling environment (such as government responsibilities/legislation and private sector policies). Too concerted a focus on youth themselves ignores the fact that young people are part of a broader system where policies can prevent them from accessing jobs, or where jobs simply aren't available. It is thus best to tackle both the supply side and demand side of employment simultaneously in relation to the policy realm, as this is where the conditions for youth employment are created. This can be achieved, for instance, by assessing what skills are required by the job market before developing training curricula, or by engaging the private sector to stimulate job creation, which ultimately should contribute to a stronger economic system. Further, social policies or subsidized employment interventions that enhance supply-side characteristics and promote youth employability can prove helpful, particularly in stimulating the employment of especially vulnerable or disadvantaged youth. In this respect, it is of utmost importance to look at the legislative arena related to the economy at large, so that policies are not negatively interfering with each other.

6.6 Bridge the gap between policy and practice to tailor youth employment programmes to the needs of young people

Government policies and programmes can appear to benefit youth on paper, but there remains a gap to be bridged between policy and practice. This is especially important given that informal sector jobs are the reality for the majority of Africa's youth. These informal jobs are often under the radar of already weak policy implementation programmes. To bridge the gap between policy and implementation, it is key to involve young people themselves in the policy-making process. Lack of youth participation in the formulation of policies and programmes may lead to skills mismatches and reduce their impacts, particularly on marginalized and vulnerable groups of young people (Ismail, 2016; Glassco & Holguin, 2016). Youth participation can take different forms, ranging from information-provision through to consultation, shared decision-making and co-management, all the way to autonomy (YEN, 2009). The nature and quality of participation determines the extent to which young people's voices are heard.

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Annex I

Literature search and search terms

The literature search was carried out in English as well as in French.1 Generally, the following search filters were applied: published between 2010-2020, and African context. Sometimes this meant excluding all non-African countries instead of including only African countries, as not all literature is labelled. For the academic literature search, we searched for peer-reviewed articles only. Evidently, this filter was disregarded in the grey literature search. However, although applying this peer-review filter whenever possible, the academic search entries did also yield relevant papers that are non-academic. Therefore, we present the results from the academic and grey literature search track jointly instead of making a clear distinction between the two.

Table 2: Operationalization of search terms

Search terms	Operationalization
Exposure terms	program, programme, project, intervention, retraining, training, skill, entrepreneur, scheme, activation, subsidy, subsidies, subsidized, subsidised, upgrade, assistance, apprenticeship, traineeship, internship, intern, business, counselling, mentor, ment, ship, advisory, coaching, placement, insertion, tvet, work-based learning
Outcome terms – Employment and business	employed, employment, unemployed, unemployment, labour, labor, participation, earning, job, wage, income, salary, profit, revenue
Outcome terms – Empowerment	empowerment, motivation, confidence, awareness, self-esteem, power, control, change, agency, capacity, capabilities, independence
Outcome terms – Enabling environment	enabling, social norms, social values, attitudes, policies, practices, legal framework, systemic, transformative, systems change, narratives
Subject terms	youth, young adults, young people, adolescent, adolescents, school leaver
Impact terms	impact, effect, evaluation, random, assessment, assess, measurement, measure

Appraisal of relevance and quality of the evidence

Articles were rated based on their title (1= low relevance; 3= high relevance). When doubts existed, we consulted the keywords and abstract of the article. Articles with a rating of 2 or 3 went for a second round of appraisal. These articles were rated based on their abstract (again, 1= low relevance; 3= high relevance).

We considered the following exclusion criteria:

- Context of the study is outside Africa;
- Type of study is not a programme evaluation;
- Programme under study does not focus on youth;
- Study does not include a reflection on the enabling environment;
- Study does not include outcomes related to empowerment.

If the study scored on the majority of exclusion criteria, we rated the study as 'low relevance'. Studies that were rated as 'high relevance' were selected for the literature review. This means that studies focusing on

1 The French search did not yield additional articles that were not already included in the study.

either the enabling environment or empowerment could be included, as long as they did not score on the majority of exclusion criteria. From this list of studies duplicates were removed, leaving us with 31 articles in total. We expanded this list of articles using a reference 'snowballing' search method. Only articles that are publicly available were added to the selected list. This adds up to a total of 34 articles that were included in the literature review.

Composition of the Sounding Board

The Sounding Board consists of eight individuals, including Oxfam colleagues, staff from youth organizations, youth activists and youth entrepreneurs in Oxfam's networks. All Sounding Board members are active in their own way on the topic of youth employment. The aim is to make the most out of the diverse backgrounds of practitioners and the practical experiences each member brings in. Therefore, they were encouraged to provide a specific 'lens' in their review of the research. For example, they could place the findings in a rural perspective, take an explicit gender-transformative lens, reflect on the findings from the perspective of a young participant in an employment programme, or relate the findings back to local entrepreneurial experiences.

The Sounding Board met online three times during the research exercise, including: 1) an introduction to the research with reflection on the research objective; 2) reflection on the results; and 3) reflection on the conclusions and support in the formulation of policy recommendations. Each online session engaged in an interactive reflection with the Sounding Board members:

1. To support on the interpretation of (preliminary) findings and place them in a contextual perspective where relevant.
2. To guide on the literature synthesis focus areas and connect these to practical experiences and knowledge needs on youth employment activities.
3. To support in the provision of additional evidence, case studies and/or other reporting available from their own direct activities.

Table 3: Constitution of Sounding Board

Sounding Board	
Background	**Country**
INGO staff	Ethiopia
INGO staff	Nigeria
Youth organization	Uganda
Youth activist	Malawi
Youth activist	Zambia
Youth entrepreneur	Somalia

Annex II

Overview of key youth employment programmes

The EPAG project

The EPAG project in Liberia, which is part of the larger Adolescent Girls Initiative (AGI) administered by the World Bank with support from the Nike Foundation and the Governments of Australia, the UK, Norway, Denmark and Sweden, is implemented by four NGOs. It targets young women between 16 and 27 years old with basic literacy and numeracy skills, who are not enrolled in school, and who reside in target communities around Monrovia. The project thus has an urban focus and, because of the literacy requirement, may be out of reach for many of the most vulnerable young women in Liberia (Adoho et al., 2014).

Participants of the project receive a six-month classroom-based training, followed by a six-month placement and support phase. Upon recruitment, the participants are assigned to a 'Job Skills (JS)' track or a 'Business Development Services (BDS)' track. In the JS track, participants could receive training in six areas: 1) hospitality, 2) professional cleaning/waste management, 3) office/computer skills, 4) professional house/office painting, 5) security guard services, and 6) professional driving. The BDS track included training on entrepreneurship principles, market analysis, business management, customer service, money management and record-keeping. The project does not have a pillar or track focusing on empowerment and/or the enabling environment specifically. However, the study does measure impact on these outcomes, hence its inclusion in the analysis.

The conclusions of the study of Adoho et al. (2014) are based on a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT). Results follow from a panel data set of baseline (2010) and midline (2011) respondents to a quantitative household survey. The panel consists of 1,273 treatment and 769 control respondents. Using a difference-in-difference (DID) approach, the intention-to-treat (ITT) effects are estimated.

The ELA programme

The ELA programme in Uganda, implemented by the NGO BRAC, focuses on simultaneously tackling the economic and health challenges faced by adolescent girls in Uganda. The programme targets young women between 14 and 20 years old. It is delivered through 'adolescent development clubs', which have a fixed meeting place within each community. Club participation is voluntary and is based on age and gender only (Bandiera et al., 2012, 2015 and 2020).

The programme has two type of training components: 1) life skills training, and 2) vocational skills training. The life skills training component includes topics such as sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), menstruation and menstrual disorders, pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS awareness, family planning, rape, management skills, negotiation and conflict resolution, leadership, and legal knowledge on women's issues. The vocational skills training aims to enable participants to start small-scale income-generating activities. Topics in the curriculum include hairdressing, tailoring, computing, agriculture, poultry-rearing and small trades operation.

Two years after the initiation of the ELA programme, the curriculum was expanded to include a microfinance component. Bandiera et al. (2012 and 2015) evaluate the impact of the ELA programme solely over its first two years – when the provision of life skills and vocational skills training took place. In both studies, results are based on an RCT with a two-year panel of over 4,800 adolescent girls (2008 and 2010). Using a DID approach in 2012, Bandiera et al. estimated the ITT and average-treatment-effect (ATE) estimates; in 2015, the ITT and treatment-on-treated (TOT) effects are estimated. Bandiera et al. (2020) use the endline survey (2012) to measure the impact of the ELA programme four years after the intervention. At endline, half of the treated sample should have been randomly assigned to additional microfinance offers. In practice, a very limited microfinance offer was made and take-up was near zero. When estimating the four-year impacts of the ELA programme, Bandiera et al. (2020) thus compared the outcomes between the original set of treated communities (with and without microfinance) and the control communities. They later confirm that the results are not driven by the microfinance offer. Using a DID approach, Bandiera et al (2020) estimate ITT effects.

Banks (2017) reviews lessons from the ELA programme in both Uganda and Tanzania. Unlike the programme in Uganda, as described above, in Tanzania the programme was unable to secure adolescent development club houses in many of the villages. This caused implementation and retention problems (Banks, 2017).

The GET Ahead programme

The GET Ahead programme, among others implemented in Kenya, is a programme by the International Labour Organization (ILO). It targets low-income women who are engaged in small-scale businesses. Eligibility criteria include being 55 years or younger in age, reporting profits that do not exceed sales, having a phone number, not attending school, having at least one year of schooling, and not running a business that only deals with phonecards or M-Pesa (McKenzie et al., 2019). Although the programme does not specifically target youth, we found it relevant to include in the analysis because of its gender lens on enterprise development.

The GET Ahead programme has four key modules: 1) basics on gender and entrepreneurship; 2) the businesswoman and her environment; 3) the business project; 4) people organization and management. Next to more typical topics for business development trainings, such as bookkeeping and marketing, the programme also includes topics around gender equality promotion and cultural constraints. The programme is delivered through a five-day training. Two years after the baseline study (2013), a mentoring intervention was added to the curriculum for half of the sample. With the goal of reinforcing the intended business training outcomes, selected women received personalized, hands-on problem-solving support and peer learning (McKenzie, 2019). Mentoring sessions were individual as well as group-based.

The design follows a two-stage randomized experiment (randomization took place first at the market level, then at the individual level within the market). Five rounds of surveys were conducted to measure outcomes approximately one year and three years after the intervention. The baseline was conducted in 2013; in 2014, two follow-up surveys were conducted to measure short-run effects (1x long format, 1x short format); in 2016, another two follow-up surveys were conducted (again, 1x long format, 1x short format). Data from both the short- and long-run was pooled to obtain average effects at respectively one and three years after the start of the intervention. A sample was constructed consisting of 3,537 women divided over 157 rural markets. A DID approach estimated the ITT effects at one- and three-year horizons. Although the main analysis focuses on these ITT effects, local-average-treatment-effects (LATE) are also estimated.

The EYW programme

The EYW programme is a five-year programme (2016-2021) funded by the IKEA Foundation and implemented by Oxfam and its partners. The programme focuses on enabling young people (especially young women, 15-29 years old) in rural climate change affected areas of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Ethiopia to seek and obtain economic independence. In Ethiopia, EYW is implemented in Oromia and Somali (Oxfam Novib, 2019).

To realize the goals mentioned above, the EYW programme applies a holistic approach to effectively drive young people's economic and overall empowerment through: 1) working on agency, capacity and skills; 2) linking young people to existing and new economic opportunities, including access to finance; and 3) creating an enabling environment by influencing social norms and policies that facilitate young women and men's economic and overall empowerment.

In 2017 and 2019, a baseline and midline survey respectively were conducted in Ethiopia. The surveys were conducted with both a target and comparison group, and with both youth respondents as well as community respondents. The baseline sample consisted of 733 youth respondents; this was 897 at midline. Using both Propensity Score Matching (PSM) and a DID approach, early impacts were estimated (Oxfam Novib, 2019). The analysis focuses on ITT effects.

The Neqdar programme

The Neqdar programme, launched by the Population Council-Egypt office with funds from USAID, kicked-off in January 2013 in rural communities of upper Egypt. The programme, which continued until mid-2014, targets women between 16 and 29 years old who can read and write. Women self-selected into programme participation.

The programme had three main training components: 1) business skills training; 2) vocational training; and 3) life skills, health awareness, legal rights and civic education. The business training consisted of a total of 72 hours, where participants either directly searched for employment opportunities or prepared a market study to develop a business plan. This was followed by the vocational training, which covered topics including accessory making, sewing, hairdressing, livestock-raising, making dairy products, perfume making, making cleaning supplies, mobile phone repair and computer hardware/software training, first aid/paramedic training and catering services. The third component of the programme consisted of a total of 28 hours. Trainings venues were safe public spaces offered by local NGOs at the village level. Programme participants were also supported with obtaining proper identification and with opening personal saving accounts (Elsayed & Roushdy, 2017a and 2017b).

Elsayed & Roushdy (2017a and 2017b) use findings from a midline (December 2013/January 2014) and endline (November/December 2014) survey to estimate impacts of the Neqdar programme. Surveys were conducted with women in the target group, comparison group, and women living in target villages who did not participate in the programme (so-called 'untreated'). A panel was formed consisting of 5,704 respondents in total. Using a combination of PSM and DID, Elsayed & Roushdy (2017a and 2017b) estimate the programme's impact on outcome areas of interest, including labour market outcomes, women's economic aspirations, and social empowerment. Using PSM should control for self-selection of programme participants. Elsayed & Roushdy (2017a and 2017b) estimate the average effect of treatment on the treated (ATT).

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About INCLUDE

INCLUDE was conceived in 2012 by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to promote evidence-based policymaking for inclusive development in Africa through research, knowledge sharing and policy dialogue. INCLUDE brings together researchers from African countries and the Netherlands who work with the private sector, non-governmental organizations and governments to exchange knowledge and ideas on how to achieve better research-policy linkages for inclusive development in Africa. Since its establishment, INCLUDE has supported more than 20 international research groups to conduct research on inclusive development and facilitated policy dialogues in Africa and the Netherlands.