Monitoring and assessing Third Party Providers in Plan´s Youth Economic Empowerment Policy:
Towards quality standards and sustainability

1. Introduction

Plan International Inc. is a child rights organization working with communities in many countries to alleviate child poverty so that children, with a major emphasis on girls, can realize their full potential. Crucial themes for Plan are: child protection and participation, economic security, gender equality, education, sexual and reproductive health, water and sanitation, disaster risk reduction and climate change. Quality, commitment and transparency are cross cutting key concepts in its policy at all levels in the 70 countries where Plan is present.

2. Youth Economic Empowerment

Economic security for youth and for their families has become one of the new priorities in Plan’s child-centred community development (CCCD) approach. Youth Economic Empowerment can be defined as creating market-led economic opportunities for young persons in socially disadvantaged situations through the development of social, vocational and entrepreneurial skills from a gender equality concept, using modern technology (ICT4D) to create a dynamic local and national eco-system led by youth itself.

Plan International has built up a vast experience in soft skills training, which gives the organization a “competitive advantage” in the context of community-based development. But more than in other sector policies in YEE, Plan International needs to establish alliances to meet the targets of youth employed and/or youth in new small businesses. Not only is it very important to come to agreements with the corporate sector on for example job placement, but also with vocational training institutions in order to generate the right skills within the participants of the YEE Programs.

This means that a considerable amount of the available resources will be spent through 3rd party service providers, which consequently demands a well defined monitoring system to see if the aforementioned key aspects (quality, commitment and transparency) are met by the selected providers.

3. Towards a YEE Monitoring System for 3rd Party Providers

1 In many cases the concept is called Youth Employment Solutions (YES). There is no problem using both terms in a mixed way, although YES is considered in general as one of the aspects of YEE.
Within Plan’s YEE Pathway, there are various elements for which Plan needs to contract external experts. In some situations, the local Plan teams can learn from these experts; in other situations Plan will create YEE experience in training institutions as well as in the corporate sector to reach certain level of sustainability of the YEE process at the local or regional level. Although Plan has long-term commitments, its presence is not always guaranteed on the long run.

What are possible 3rd party providers in a YEE system:

1) Training institutions (public or private):
   - technical training
   - entrepreneurial training
   - ICT4D training
   - mentor training

2) Research institutions/ Individual consultants
   - labor market scans
   - market opportunities for value chain involvement
   - analysis of local / regional eco-systems
   - analysis of best practices in youth economic programs.

4. Quality criteria for service providers assessment and selection

What works and what does not work in YEE is not easy to define as it depends on the specific context at the macro, meso and micro level.

1) macro level: national economic and political context;
2) meso level: the presence of (high quality) public and private providers;
3) micro level: youth’s attitude towards their economic empowerment.

On the meso and micro level there is an important difference between urban and rural areas in relation to opportunities, supply and demand for skills development and gender relations.

Plan International has already built up experience in different geographical regions to define criteria for quality service delivery in YEE. These are benchmarks to select providers and install an effective monitoring system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEE element:</th>
<th>Criteria:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labor market scan</td>
<td>- Region or locality well defined</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Use of most recent information</td>
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<td>- Applicability for program design</td>
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Skills development / employability and entrepreneurship
- Based on market scan recommendations
- Theory to practice ratio
- Geographical accessibility for youth, especially girls
- Proven experience of instructors in specific fields and knowledge of local situation
- Use of modern ICT technology
- Gender equality as active cross cutting topic
- Special attention for youth with physical handicaps
- Individual mentoring capacity

Research
- Experience in conducting social and/or economic research with youth, government and the private sector in a development setting
- Experience in participative and applied research projects
- Proven track records in both criteria
- ICT data processing capacity

Cross-cutting
- Total costs per student
- Plan’s gender equality and child protection policy (CPP) in all levels and elements of the service providing
- Proven effective communication structure
- Scaling up and replicability oriented

For the assessment of technical and financial proposal for YEE services and products, the local and national Plan offices can use the methodology explained in annex 4.

5, Application of YEE monitoring system / “Youth building the Future”

The Plan YEE countries in Latin America (Colombia, Brazil and El Salvador) are currently using these criteria as benchmarks for the selection, contracting and monitoring of the 3rd party service providers. It has to be clear that in specific geographical settings not all criteria can be met at the highest benchmark level. Specifically in rural areas the supply of services will be more limited than in the (semi-)urban regions, although the aforementioned cross cutting criteria are applied in each setting.

Who are involved in the monitoring process of YEE programming and implementation in relation to the service providers selection?
- Local Plan Team, with YEE specialist taking the technical lead
- Country Director / Financial Administration
- Optional consulting actors: Board of Directors, private sector representatives, donors, ROA-YEE specialist, local independent external experts.
- Selected youth / ex – alumni

The applied instruments are conventional: monthly, quarterly and annual reports indicating progress and problems, as well as visits to training sessions and enterprises with employed YEE participants, etc.

Knowledge Management is very important for YEE; in each YEE country an individual database and monitoring system (IDMS) is in place, as well as a Learning Management System (LMS) in order to:
   1) scale up the existing YEE Programs;
   2) enhance replicability in the same or in new regions;
   3) reach gradually sustainability in local and national eco-systems.

6. Sustainability

Starting points:

- In order to reach a long-term sustainable ecosystem of YEE it is important that local and national stakeholders work together in the “Smart Business Alliances” (SBA). Plan assumes that after a grant period these alliances will continue their cooperation based upon shared value business cases among the members of the alliance and with Plan. In particular, Plan will lobby for access to skills trainings for vulnerable youth with public (and private) training institutions at reduced costs, as well as engage companies to support the activities.

- In each YEE project, Plan International will develop a ‘Smart Business Alliance’ (SBA), i.e. a network of companies, training institutions, community-based organizations, business organizations and (local) government institutions that will act as advocate for youth employment. These networks will be formalized through joint agreements about job placements, skills trainings, curricula, mentoring etc. which will be laid down in partnership and milestone agreements and will serve as key channels to facilitate job placements (preferably partners would recruit from the programme), identify business opportunities, mentoring, assure market driven curriculum development, and promote gender equality and the Decent Work Agenda among the alliance partners.

In annex 1, 2 and 3 the sustainability reports of Colombia, El Salvador and Brazil are presented.
Annex 1

YEE Sustainability process in Colombia

Smart Business Alliance promotion:

In 2015 Fundación Plan of Colombia started creating alliances, that include government institutions, the public-private institution “Caja de Compensación / COFANDI” and the private sector.

Fundación Plan has sought coordination with the national government and, therefore, an alliance has been arranged with the Department for Social Prosperity - DPS, a government agency conducting training actions to help in the hiring of Colombian youths in state of poverty and with COMFANDI, a public-private institution which has a training role. So far Fundación Plan and the DPS have signed a Memorandum of Understanding, by which the DPS identifies the vulnerable youth (targeted by the government’s programme for vulnerable youth), COMFANDI guarantees the training of the youths, while Fundación Plan is responsible for the identification and description of the vocational profiles demanded by the different companies in the business sector, training the young people in life skills, and promoting job placement for the youth in the local labor market. As a result Plan has created an alliance with two enterprises in the logistics sector REDETRANS and TRANPRENSA to facilitate the job placement of youth. So far, 29 ax-alumni of the training programs have signed a labor contract with one of these enterprises.

Recent and foreseen activities in the SBA promotion:

1. In December 2015 meetings were held with REDETRANS and TRANPRENSA to evaluate the results and to develop a second round of youth contracting.
2. In December 2015 a meeting was held with DPS and COFANDI to evaluate the results of the training program and to find more options to scale up the process of training and job preparation.
3. Recently new local authorities have been installed, which is a opportunity for Fundación Plan to present them the YEE program in order to include it in the local development policy.
4. More enterprises will be contacted in order to stimulate them to enter the SBA.
YEE Sustainability process in El Salvador

Public-private alliances / Smart Business Alliances

As the Plan intervention zone El Salvador is characterized by micro and small enterprises with little opportunities for employment increase, Plan has started a search strategy, using the enterprise database of the Ministry of Labor, managing an approach with production cooperatives within certain value chains such as honey, fruits, fish and clay ceramics. A shared value agreement has been negotiated in order to establish cooperation in entrepreneurship development. Additionally strategic agreements were reached with local authorities, governmental institutions, training centres, etc.

Among the established alliances are agreements with the Ministry of Labor and Social Prevision, the National Commission for the Micro and Small Enterprise (CONAMYPE), The Agricultural Technology Center of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. With the latter technical training curricula were designed and implemented in the aforementioned sectors. Additionally local governments helped with training space and seed capital. The investigation office of the Lutheran University and the SME Unit of the ILO assisted in the entrepreneurial training and investigation material. Four MoU’s were signed with different cooperatives in different sector to assist the young entrepreneurs in commercializing their products.

In order to assure the contributions of the aforementioned stakeholders a close follow up of the agreements in set in place. Every 2 months meetings take place to monitor and evaluate the process with its set of activities. Another important effort is made to include more enterprises in the local ecosystems to facilitate the entrance of young entrepreneurs in the different value chains. The signed MoU’s all have included annexes with the Plan policy on Child Protection, and Gender Equality.
Annex 3

YEE Sustainability process in Brazil

1) The Corporate Engagement Strategy

Plan International Brazil has recently started its corporative engagement strategy. The sustainability of this important action depends on an effective implementation of this strategy, and Accenture/ADP has been supporting us in this matter:

- Building a corporate engagement strategy, testing it and improving it until it achieves the proper quality.
- Developing technic abilities in Plan International Brazil’s team to implement the strategy.
- To disseminate the concept of shared value between YEE projects and companies.
- To establish partnerships with a group of companies, which provide support to Plan’s YEE actions – not only inserting youth in their own ventures, but also enabling the contact with other companies.
- To elaborate a business plan.
- To have a business leader to mobilize other entrepreneurs to join the initiative.

These actions will ensure the achievements of the project goals, making it sustainable when a business group recognizes the value added by Plan International Brazil regarding solutions for youth employment and join the initiative permanently.

2) Smart Business Alliances

The local and regional SBA´s, formed by private and public sectors, as well as the educative units, are crucial for the YEE sustainability, after the Project has ended. In order to the build up and strengthen the SBA´s Alliance and make a sound and solid commit to boost the strategic actions related to the Youth Employment, Plan Brazil will undertake the following actions:

- Plan will facilitate the dialogue between those different sectors, acting as an important discussion partner in the area and bringing visibility to the problem of youth unemployment.
- Plan will present the YEE evidences of success as a reference to the public policies or to improve the existing ones as young apprentices.
- Advocacy actions will strengthen alliance structure and its acting in defense of decent youth employment.
- Along with the Alliance, Plan will try to influence improvements in public policies related to youth employment.

Another sustainability strategy of the Project is about the Actions alongside the educative units, in order to transfer the knowledge obtained by Plan to the life skills field and influence the educative units to align their curriculums to the market needs. These actions allow that, once the Project is concluded, the units have better conditions as to the professional qualification aligned with the company’s needs.

These actions are:
- To share the life skills methodology with educational units
- To strengthen the educators’ capacities on the life skills methodology in their classes.
- To validate the curriculum of professional qualification along with the businesspeople from the related sectors.
- To influence the educational units to review their curriculums according to the marked demands.
- To promote a dialogue between the businesspeople and the educational units, so both sectors can understand the needs and possibilities of one another.

Alongside the work previously scored, Plan Brazil has done a rigorous process of monitoring as to the training quality provided by the educative units. As to the monitoring results, the institutions have received feedbacks that indicate the action points that should improve the processes when needed. The main monitoring tools are:

- A periodic assessment of the participants of the courses;
- Quarterly Focal groups meetings with the young participants
- Evaluation of the evasion results and harnessing of youth as a quality indicator.
- Technical and pedagogical assessment.
Annex 4

Technical and financial assessment methodology for training proposal of 3rd party service provider:

### Technical criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical criteria</th>
<th>Value 1)</th>
<th>Weight (%)</th>
<th>Pondered value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Based on market scan recommendations</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory to practice ratio</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<td>Geographical accessibility for youth, especially girls</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proven experience of instructors in specific fields and knowledge of local situation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender equality as active cross cutting topic</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual mentoring promotion</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total technical value (points)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>........ (1)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Financial criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial criteria</th>
<th>Total costs / participant</th>
<th>value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Financial proposal with lowest cost (of all candidates)</td>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial proposal of current candidate</td>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total financial value (points)</td>
<td>(b) / (a)</td>
<td>..... (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total value of proposal (sum of technical and financial values)**

(1) + (2)  

1) Average values given by local of national Plan Team