



# Barriers and Solutions to Youth Employment in the Ghanaian Construction Sector

## Lessons Learned from the Youth Inclusive Entrepreneurial Development Initiative for Employment (YIEDIE)

Unemployment among youth in Ghana continues to increase despite more than two decades of strong economic growth trends and a substantial expansion in education and overall human resource development. The World Bank estimates that of the total number of people who are unemployed, 65% are between 15 and 24 years. The most recent Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS) reports that three of every ten youth in Accra and 23% of youth in other urban areas in Ghana are unemployed.

Studies have shown that the labor-intensive construction sector offers great potential to address this challenge. While the industry's growth has been slowed by macroeconomic constraints, it remains an important source of job opportunities. The sector currently employs approximately 316,368 people, of whom 98% work in the informal sector. Micro- and small-scale firms (including self-employed workers) constitute 81% of all businesses in the construction sector, while large firms account for only 1%. The sector employs only 3.5% of working young people, 91% of whom are in the informal sector, according to the GLSS 6. Of those in the informal sector, 29% are employees while 27% are apprentices and 21% casual workers.

There has been growing concern of possible skills gaps in the construction sector over the next decades. The supply shortage is projected to be particularly pronounced for artisans and tradesmen. The **Youth Inclusive Entrepreneurial Development Initiative for Employment (YIEDIE)** was designed to assist economically-disadvantaged youth to fill this gap, offering a career pathway into Ghana's construction sector. Implemented from 2015 to 2020 by Global Communities in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, YIEDIE helped more than 25,000 youth, 30% of them female, develop skills needed in the construction sector. A skills gap analysis conducted at the beginning of the project identified 15 trade areas in which demand for skilled workers will likely outpace supply in the future, including masonry, plumbing, landscaping, air conditioner installation, machine operation, surveying, plaster of Paris design and painting.

This brief describes the barriers to youth employment in the construction sector and the YIEDIE project's approach to addressing these barriers. Finally, the brief draws out lessons learned for future programming.

## Barriers to Youth Employment in Construction in Ghana

According to the most recent Ghana Labour Force report, young people between the ages of 15 and 24 are three to four times more likely to face a barrier in their job search than adults. General barriers to employment in the sector include demand-side (such as economic constraints; labor market failures; poor access to credit) and supply-side factors (including educational and skills mismatch; lack of social capital such as personal networks). These are intertwined with a complex of social, economic and political biases against youth. For out-of-school youth and women especially, the barriers are substantial.



### Demand-side barriers

**Financial Services:** According to sector associations, most banks consider construction a high-risk business venture. High employee turnover rates also affect productivity and revenues. Most banks therefore require considerable collateral from construction-sector borrowers that many small and micro-firms do not have. Young people's ability to access financing to start their own businesses—in any sector, not just construction—is also disproportionately affected by their lack of credit history, banks' unwillingness to lend to start-ups, perceptions of youth as risky and unprofitable customers, and restrictive financial regulations. Many of the youth who participated in a focus group discussion in Kumasi at the end of the project stated that the high interest rates and conditions attached to loans make it practically impossible for them to access credit.

**Policy Environment:** According to stakeholders, while the government has always expressed its commitment to the growth of the construction sector, there have been very few policy reforms that would promote growth. The absence of a ministry that oversees the sector, and the lack of a sector-wide development policy or strategy along with issues of delayed payments on government contracts continue to hinder sector's growth. This is further worsened by agreements the government has signed which make it practically impossible to limit public contracts to Ghanaian construction firms or to restrict the free flow of labor from neighboring countries. The requirements of government contracts often prevent local firms from bidding, resulting in contract awards to foreign firms.

Related to the above is the neglect of youth employment as a core component of the construction sector promotion agenda. According to most construction sector stakeholders interviewed, employment for young people has been treated as a residual outcome of the growth of the sector. Even where policy statements do promote employment, there is very little focus and commitment in medium- to long-term plans to promote labor-intensive growth and participation of youth.

**Corruption:** Stakeholders interviewed by YIEDIE indicate that corruption and nepotism affect the construction sector significantly. This prevents the participation of young people who do not have the necessary connections or funds, as well as the ability of small and medium enterprises to compete fairly for contracts.

**Information:** Stakeholders noted the lack of an effective labor market information system for job seekers in the sector as a major barrier to youth employment. Youth are particularly affected by information asymmetry due to their limited labor market experience and weak networks within the sector. Consequently, most rely on word of mouth, referrals or showing up at work sites to get information on job openings.



**Attitudes:** A knowledge, attitudes and perceptions survey conducted at YIEDIE's inception revealed that while all the contractors interviewed expressed a desire to employ youth, 90% perceived youth to be lazy and as having little interest in working in the sector due to the work's physical nature. This perception has made most construction firms reluctant to invest in training young people when they could hire more experienced hands. Even for those willing to employ youth, 84% considered youth useful mainly for low-level tasks such as carrying water and concrete at construction sites. While poor perceptions of youth generally affect their opportunities for employment in the sector, women face even greater hurdles. Respondents saw construction as a "man's field" and unfriendly to women. As one put it, "We don't even provide washrooms or changing rooms designated for women".

## Supply-side barriers

**Skills:** In spite of the growing importance of the sector, there is a mismatch between the skills youth possess and what is required in the industry. Training (informal and formal) is not aligned with emerging trends and technological developments. Most skills training in Ghana takes place through the traditional apprenticeship model, and master craftspeople may have limited skills to teach others. A stakeholder in Accra noted that "Most of the youth lack the relevant training required to work in the construction sector because their masters don't upgrade their knowledge as often as is required."

**Perceptions:** Negative public perception of the construction sector was also identified as a barrier to youth employment. Construction is seen as undesirable due to poor health and safety standards and the misperception that it offers only short-term work opportunities. A career in the construction sector is not associated with high social status, a deterrent to young people. Stakeholders posited that for most Ghanaians, the construction sector is viewed as an option for those who could not further their education or who were academically weak. Most parents are upset to see their children work in the sector. According to some construction professionals, this aversion to construction has been influenced by the stereotypes of construction workers, including that they drink and smoke, which in most Ghanaian communities is considered irresponsible. The sector's image is an even stronger deterrent to women, who make up fewer than 3% of its employees. In addition, and contrary to actual earning potential, the perception is that construction is less lucrative than other sectors and professions.

**Opportunities:** Youth also believe that there are limited opportunities for career progression. Most informal workers work on a short-term and contractual basis, and there are few opportunities for artisans in the informal sector to improve their skills to enhance their competitiveness.



## YIEDIE's Response

In response to these barriers, YIEDIE implemented interventions to create opportunities for young people to start a business or secure a decent and sustainable job in the construction sector. YIEDIE took a market systems approach to address the host of barriers in an integrated manner while facilitating sustainable improvements in the employment ecosystem. This required partnering with local stakeholders rather than directly implementing activities, and increasing their capacity if needed.<sup>1</sup>

To increase youth access to financial products and services, YIEDIE supported Republic Boafo microfinance in **developing youth-friendly savings and credit products** branded as “Boafo Ye na”. Features included savings accounts with low minimum balance requirements, and a group credit product with interest rates lower than the market average. In later years of the project, Boafo linked the accounts to mobile money wallets to facilitate transactions outside its branches. In addition, YIEDIE introduced a competitive **Youth in Construction Enterprise Fund (YCEF)** to provide start-up capital to youth who had high attendance at training and a solid business plan. Through the YCEF, 336 youth enterprises were created. All youth received financial literacy education as part of their training, which taught them to manage money, emphasized the importance of saving and introduced them to financial products on the market.

To address the limited participation of local construction firms and integration of youth employment policies affecting construction sector growth, YIEDIE collaborated with sector associations to develop a **local content policy** that supported the growth of local

<sup>1</sup> For more information on YIEDIE's systems approach, please see the brief: [Taking a Systems Approach to Youth Employment in the Ghanaian Construction Sector](#)

firms. Specifically, the policy outlined key areas where local participation in construction could be promoted and the specific support and mandates needed to enable local construction firms to bid for contracts. The policy also listed specific strategies and aspects of existing local-content policies in other sectors that government can leverage to build the capacity of the local industry in order to be competitive. The policy also highlighted key areas in the sector for youth employment and included a commitment to allocate 30% of all Government of Ghana-funded projects to firms operated by youth and women. It is currently under review by the Ministry of Works and Housing and Office of the Vice President for validation and adoption.



At the city level, YIEDIE organized quarterly **policy roundtables** with local government representatives, training providers and the private sector to increase collaboration for youth employment in the sector. Most district assemblies have written mandates and are required by the Ghanaian constitution to promote employment of their citizens. YIEDIE leveraged this requirement and signed memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with local assemblies to enforce these local hiring mandates when awarding contracts for construction, maintenance or other public works, providing opportunities for artisans in those cities.<sup>2</sup>

To address the issue of lack of labor market information, corruption and nepotism, YIEDIE organized **job readiness and mentoring fairs** to connect youth to opportunities and networks capable of supporting their participation and growth in the sector. At each fair, youth who had completed training were connected with distinguished personalities in the construction sector for group mentoring sessions. The fairs were complemented with MOUs with sector-based associations to create internship and employment opportunities for young people. YIEDIE also supported the Artisans Association of Ghana (AAG) in developing an online and SMS-based job-matching platform. Through engagements with construction sector firms, homeowners and other businesses, AAG collects information on employment opportunities in the construction sector on a daily basis, and makes it available to member artisans participating in the **job-matching portal** who can then be linked to the jobs. YIEDIE also helped AAG strengthen its member services, increase its revenue, grow its partnerships and expand its footprint so that it could serve as a sustainable source of skills upgrading, networking and advocacy for artisans.

To improve public perception of the construction sector, YIEDIE instituted **community meetings** with influencers of youth career choices. At these gatherings, opportunities in the sector in terms of decent employment, career progression and income were explained in easy-to-understand language to opinion leaders, teachers, parents, traditional authorities, local assembly officials and youth group leaders.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on YIEDIE's policy engagements and their outcomes, see the brief: [Can Policy Engagement Create Youth Employment Opportunities?](#)

To help women access opportunities in the sector including pursuing non-traditional jobs, YIEDIE **incentivized** their enrollment in and completion of training. This included offering childcare support, covering health insurance premiums, a transportation stipend, and providing targeted support to their professional development and networks through women-only ‘boot camps.’ Boot camps provided female trainees of all trades the opportunity to work as a team on a short-term, real-world construction project, overseen and mentored by sector professionals; media coverage of these assisted in challenging social norms about women’s roles in the industry.

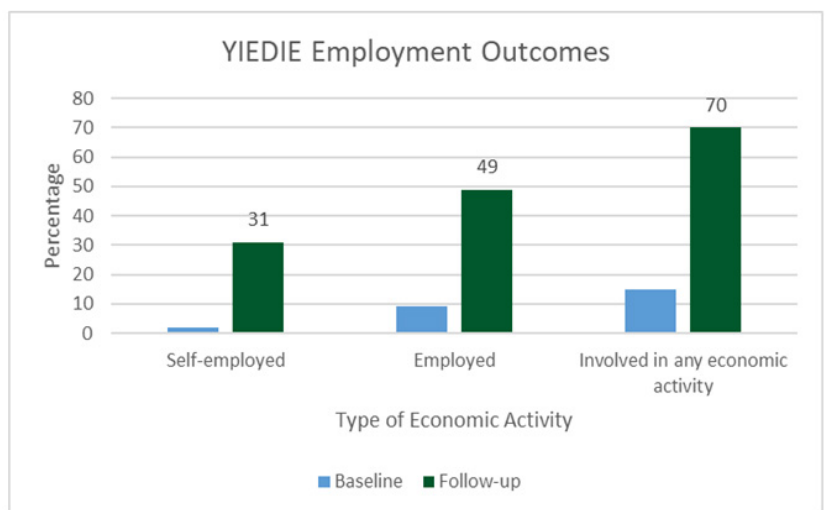
To address the perception of construction actors toward young people, YIEDIE **used the quarterly policy meetings and job readiness and mentoring fairs** described above to consistently share with stakeholders the skill sets and competencies of graduates of the project. These events offered opportunities for direct interactions between youth and other stakeholders, and YIEDIE used them to share youth success stories.

To address the issue of skills mismatch and create opportunities for career progression, YIEDIE provided **two streams of training: entrepreneurship and technical skills**. Technical skills training was delivered using an improved apprenticeship model, an intensive six-month course in which master craftspeople delivered a combination of theoretical and hands-on training based on a curriculum developed with industry actors, supervised by technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions.<sup>3</sup> Given the informal nature of the training, youth who successfully completed their apprenticeships were encouraged and supported to take the entry-level National Vocational Technical Institute proficiency examinations to document the skills acquired, assisting them in their job or client search.

## YIEDIE Outcomes

YIEDIE collected baseline data on all youth when they enrolled and measured youth outcomes through a follow-up survey with a representative sample of participants one year after completion of training. A small number of youth also participated in a tracer study in following years to learn about their medium-term employment trajectories. YIEDIE regularly collected qualitative data from youth and other stakeholders through focus groups and interviews. Findings from all of the above suggest that there have been some shifts in the barriers described earlier.

Between baseline and follow-up, the proportion of youth who reported having been self-employed in the previous 12 months increased from 2% to 31%, while those who were employed by others in the previous 12 months increased from 9% to 49%. Overall, the proportion of YIEDIE youth who had been involved in an economic activity in the previous 12 months increased significantly, from 15% to 70%; this increase was slightly more pronounced for youth who went through entrepreneurship training (from 18% to 75%) than for those who did technical training (from 13% to 67%). Youth in the tracer study sustained their one-year employment gains over the following 18 months. YIEDIE also included pursuing



<sup>3</sup> For more information on YIEDIE’s apprenticeship model, please see the brief: [Supporting Youth Employment through the Apprenticeship Model](#)

further education or training along with employment in its definition of successful transition, which was achieved by 82% of participants overall.

## Changing perceptions among youth on the construction sector

In focus group discussions, most youth noted that they had considered the sector to be dirty and reserved for people with little or no education, but realized the enormous opportunities construction provides through interactions with sector stakeholders. A young person from Kumasi said, *“If I had not joined YIEDIE, I wouldn’t have known that the construction sector has a lot of opportunities. With the skills I have acquired. I am now able to work and earn an income to cater for myself.”* Another participant added that, *“I initially hated the idea of working in the construction sector because of the way workers were treated. Having interacted with contractors in the sector, my perception has changed. I now consider the sector a rewarding one.”*

Parents and other youth influencers also expressed an increasing acceptance of jobs in the sector. As one parent noted, *“There is a lot of opportunity in there. It provides opportunities to learn and for young people the opportunities are enormous.”* Another added, *“The opportunities in the sector are too many. Government can indeed address the increasing unemployment by tapping into the sector.”* The changing perception is further demonstrated by the number of women who participated in YIEDIE. Female enrollment in the project increased from 11% at the end of the first year of implementation to 30% by the end of the project. Women also increasingly signed up for apprenticeships in trade areas other than interior décor, enrolling in machine operations, painting, tiling, electricals, metal fabrication and other areas traditionally dominated by men. Over the life of the project, 516 women (20% of the women in technical training) enrolled in trade areas other than interior décor.



## Increasing access to financial services

YIEDIE’s follow-up survey revealed increasing interest in saving but continued challenges in accessing credit. The proportion of youth who reported that they save increased from 20% to 57% over the life of the project. The proportion of youth who saved was higher among those who completed entrepreneurship training than those who completed technical training. This may be due to the fact that those who were establishing businesses made a quicker transition to an economic activity post-training than those who studied technical skills.

Only 10% of youth opened an account with Boafa over the course of the project. This is likely due in part to the significant challenges imposed by a Bank of Ghana directive that requires customers to have a Tax Identification Number to open a bank account and the annulment of the national health insurance card as a valid form of identification, which many youth used. Among those who opened accounts, focus group discussions revealed that the majority did so because it was a prerequisite for receiving funds from the YCEF which they had applied for. Once they received the funding, Republic Boafa found that only 10% continued to use the account for savings and other transactions. On the other hand, the percentage of youth who save in formal financial institutions did increase from 66% to 79%, potentially driven by the use of mobile money platforms, which rose from 72% at baseline to 96% at follow-up.

In spite of the increase in saving, access to credit remained low. Only 1% of youth had applied for a loan at baseline, and that only increased to 4% by the time of the follow-up survey. Youth cited cumbersome application processes, lengthy waits in bank

queues, language and literacy obstacles, requirements for legal documents and long waits for the outcome of their application as strong disincentives to borrowing from formal institutions. Both youth and master craftspeople in Accra revealed a preference for borrowing from local moneylenders, even if it meant paying higher interest rates. As a consequence, interest in the YCEF was significant. Over the course of the project, 2,218 applications were received of which only 336 could be supported.<sup>4</sup>

## Labor market information and sector support services

There has been an improvement in the delivery of timely information on job and internship opportunities in the sector to youth through AAG's matching platform, though it has yet to achieve a high volume of interest and placements, and the opportunities that it posts take significant resources to generate. Over the course of four years, 430 AAG member artisans—half of them youth—found jobs via the platform, and another 238 youth were placed in three-month industrial attachments to enhance their skill set. Over the course of the project, AAG achieved tremendous membership growth and organizational development; approximately 6,000 YIEDIE participants joined the association, making up the majority of its current membership of 10,000. Members see value in the training, certification and other benefits they receive, though AAG still has room to improve its governance, operations and financial sustainability.<sup>5</sup>

## Policy environment for youth employment

According to the youth who participated, YIEDIE's engagements with the local assemblies in their municipalities helped in removing doubts about their competencies and effectively positioned AAG as a reliable source of artisans. This has been particularly visible in the number of YIEDIE youth who reported having participated in government contracts over the past two years. The link between the two was made directly by a participant, "My association with YIEDIE got me to win a contract with my local assembly," and other youth had similar stories to share. Stakeholders in Accra and Takoradi noted that YIEDIE's engagement and convening contributed to bringing issues of youth workforce development and access to finance to the fore at the national level, which have since been reflected in government policy documents such as municipal Medium-Term Development Plans.<sup>6</sup>

## Sustaining youth businesses in the sector

Through the YCEF awards, 336 youth businesses were created. In addition to support from African Aurora Business Network through YIEDIE, youth entrepreneurs also began to receive assistance from municipal business advisors in some project cities. As a result, out of the 32 businesses created in the first two years of the project, YIEDIE found that 66% were still operational three to four years after they were started, significantly higher than the 15% survival rate beyond three years of SMEs in Ghana.<sup>7</sup>



4 For more detail on YIEDIE's access to finance work and its outcomes, please see the brief: [Increasing Access to Finance for Youth in Ghana](#)

5 For more detail on YIEDIE's work with AAG, see the brief: [Strengthening the Capacity of Business Associations to Support Youth Employment](#)

6 For more information on YIEDIE's policy engagements and their outcomes, see the brief: [Can Policy Engagement Create Youth Employment Opportunities?](#)

7 Ghana Business Development Review (2018), the University of Ghana Business School, Accra.



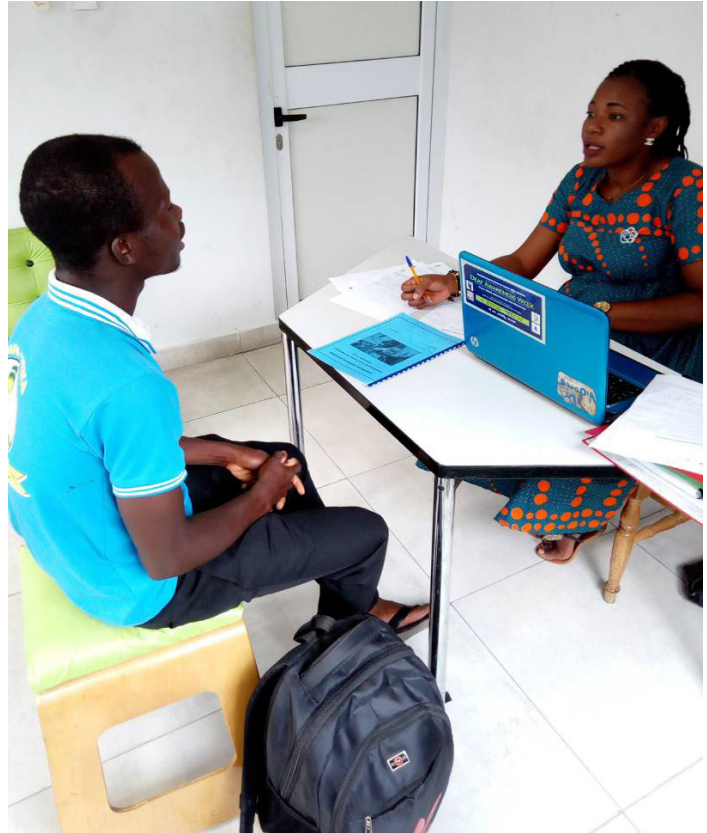
## Lessons Learned and Recommendations

YIEDIE's systems approach is promising, given the employment outcomes participants achieved without direct job placement assistance, and has the added benefit of increasing sustainability and the possibility for organic scaling without external support. In spite of the positive changes seen over the course of YIEDIE, youth who completed training with YIEDIE noted that they still face a number of barriers to sustainable employment in the sector. These include access to capital and the tools required to work, the lack of job security coupled with the irregularity of jobs, and difficulty in acquiring a site for a business. Some lessons learned in implementing the approach, along with related recommendations follow below.

**Access to Finance:** YIEDIE activities to increase access to finance were fairly narrowly designed to encourage saving at formal financial institutions that could also provide loans, and were not sufficiently flexible to fully adapt to market changes that occurred over the course of the project. The regulatory environment became increasingly restrictive, making access to bank accounts particularly challenging for disadvantaged youth. At the same time, mobile money wallets evolved to be more accessible and useful, able to function as business accounts to receive payments from clients as well as offering credit, though the latter is in amounts and terms that may be insufficient or inappropriate for construction business start-up or expansion.

**Recommendation:** Pursue multiple options simultaneously, both formal and informal, for increasing access to finance, piloting and adapting as needed. Future efforts could incorporate informal financial services such as savings groups, as a way to provide start-up capital for entrepreneurship activities. Financial service providers such as Boafa indicated their interest in developing products for savings groups, allowing them to access credit beyond their own savings and providing a stepping stone to opening an individual account. In addition, rather than providing start-up grants to some youth, a revolving loan fund, perhaps with zero interest, operated by a financial institution on the project's behalf will increase the number of people able to access such funds and provide a stepping stone to using commercial credit.

**Associations as intermediaries:** YIEDIE's approach to establishing a sustainable support system for artisans in the informal sector by working with an existing association is promising, though it did not result in a robust job-matching platform. This is likely due to multiple factors including insufficient grant funding which ended after three years, the slowness of social norm changes, and insufficient quality control by the association in its membership and job matching processes. In addition, youth participants requested support in starting their own alumni association at the end of YIEDIE, rather than utilizing AAG as an umbrella under which to continue to connect.



**Recommendation:** Identify and work with existing professional associations, particularly those that support informal-sector workers. If the existing capacity of such organizations is quite low, ensure that they have assistance in planning for capacity development and sustainability, and continue financial support as long as possible, though perhaps with decreasing amounts from year to year to incentivize their revenue growth. Engage stakeholders widely in designing a job-matching system that meets their needs, and make quality assurance a key aspect of that system.

**Training curriculum:** The streamlined curriculum that shortened the period of apprenticeship by months or even years successfully prepared young people to attain the first level of proficiency certification in many in-demand trades. Six months was not seen as sufficient by artisan trainers and some youth themselves to master the skills needed in some areas (e.g., metal fabrication), and some construction firms were reluctant to offer internships or hire youth participants based on the short training period. For employers, engagement in project advisory roles or mentoring relationships that increased their exposure to youth participants proved quite successful in changing mindsets.

**Recommendation:** To increase the effectiveness of apprenticeships, tailor the length of the training period more closely to the requirements of different trades in consultation with master artisans and national certification bodies. Consider developing pre-tests that allow implementers to identify the skill levels of project entrants to ensure that master trainers have an understanding of trainee levels.

**Policy engagement:** Working at the municipal level to create an enabling environment for youth employment and entrepreneurship was measurably successful. While it will take time to see if the national-level policy changes in the sector improve youth opportunities and employment, there were less tangible but equally valuable outcomes from YIEDIE's engagement in advocacy and dialogue, such as recognition by industry stakeholders of the need for youth voices in these processes, and the development of new YIEDIE champions and supporters.

**Recommendation:** Improving the policy environment is often crucial to sustainable systems change, but is not always supported by funding agencies. Define the needed policy changes as broadly as possible and, to the extent possible, identify concrete medium-term wins (such as youth receiving contracts and jobs via municipal public works contracts) that can be achieved alongside longer-term advocacy (such as including youth employment measures in Medium-Term Development Plans).

**Apprenticeship:** To provide technical skills training to youth, YIEDIE built on the traditional Ghanaian apprenticeship model, as it is accessible to those who haven't completed school, focuses on practical skills with opportunities to practice them on the job, and is cost-effective. Such informal training and work settings within a sector like construction require significant monitoring to ensure that young people are participating in safe and decent work. Accordingly, YIEDIE provided personal protective equipment to apprentices. However, procurement and logistics challenges, along with other factors, make it difficult to scale up the model more widely. In addition, while master trainers received orientation on issues of safety and protection which included the specific concerns of women, the construction sector as a whole is challenging for women pursuing non-traditional occupations within it, because of issues ranging from the lack of appropriate toilet facilities to sexual harassment by peers and clients.

**Recommendation:** Ensure that the TVET institutions that oversee apprenticeships have the mandate, staffing and budgets to allow for the necessary oversight of participants' work conditions. Devote significant time in the master trainers' orientation to educating them on protection, gender equality and workplace safety, and communicating standards and expectations. Include training and resources on rights, gender equality and safety in youth orientation sessions, and establish mechanisms for easy and anonymous reporting of workplace complaints.



**Monitoring, evaluation and learning:** Implementing a systems approach requires the ability to regularly and rapidly gather progress data and reflect on it for any needed adaptation. Evaluating the effectiveness of the interventions in a complex, integrated project requires the ability to disaggregate youth outcomes by services received. YIEDIE had robust measures of project outcomes through its baseline and follow-up surveys, but its data collection and management system did not allow for tracking youth participation in various project activities or to easily conduct rapid surveys via SMS to complement data collected from youth focus groups. Therefore, while its learning agenda posed important questions about project approaches and outcomes, most needed to be answered based on outcome data (along with qualitative follow-up with stakeholders and participants). Given the measurement protocols, this data was only available in sufficient quantity for valid reflection near the end of the project, when it was too late to adjust activities in ways that might have improved the results. YIEDIE's structure and targets made it challenging to answer more targeted learning questions on particular approaches by piloting them in real-time.

**Recommendation:** Ensure that the data collection and management system include the ability to track youth enrollment, completion and participation in various activities in real-time. Include in the system the ability to conduct SMS surveys in order to rapidly collect monitoring and feedback data. When possible, engage the funding partner in creating flexibility around timelines and targeting that will allow for shifting approaches through adaptive management. Establish overarching learning questions at start-up and supplement those with more specific, short-term and targeted ones throughout implementation that assist in measuring the effectiveness of interventions.

## Conclusion

As noted earlier, YIEDIE demonstrates the promise of a systems approach but more research is needed to determine which, if any, of the project elements had the greatest impact on youth outcomes. Key barriers that youth highlighted as still being challenges stem in part from the difficulty young people experience in accessing finance, an area in which continued innovation is needed, as well as the harder-to-change nature of the construction sector in Ghana in which work is generally informal and therefore irregular. While the construction sector presents much opportunity, it also presents challenges for project implementers in ensuring that work is safe and decent, especially in a market like Ghana's where the sector is not well regulated or existing regulations aren't enforced.



The choice of apprenticeship as the mode of technical skills training delivery was also made in large part because of the overwhelmingly informal nature of the construction sector in Ghana. While YIEDIE's scale was significant, reaching 25,000 youth, placing youth in informal apprenticeships is somewhat high-touch and therefore challenging to scale up beyond a certain point. Using formal TVET institutions to deliver skills training would increase the ability to scale, but this limits the inclusion of the poor, women and other marginalized groups. YIEDIE's hybrid model in which formal institutions provided oversight to master artisans using a designated curriculum while also offering support services and soft skills development to apprentices enabled the project to reach youth while working with formal institutions. However, there remains an important need to continue to develop innovative approaches for providing high-quality, practical short- to medium-term training to low-income, out-of-school youth at greater scale.



Youth  
Forward

*The Youth Forward initiative links young people to quality employment or entrepreneurship opportunities in the agricultural and construction sectors in Ghana and Uganda. This five-year partnership led by Mastercard Foundation, Overseas Development Institute, Global Communities, Solidaridad, NCBA CLUSA, and GOAL will reach more than 200,000 economically disadvantaged youth aged 15–24. The initiative uses an approach that combines market-relevant skills training, mentorship, internships, and access to financial services to help young people better their lives, transition to sustainable livelihoods, and contribute to social and economic change.*

*The Youth Forward Learning Partnership works across the initiative to develop an evidence-informed understanding of the needs of young people in Ghana and Uganda and how the program can best meet those needs.*



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