EDITORIAL

This edition of OPENPlan brings to you recent research and evaluation initiatives from offices across Plan International on the topic of Skills and Opportunities for Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship, one of the six global priority areas for Plan International. It has a strong focus on gender and the ways in which gender dynamics affect young people’s economic empowerment.

The first article highlights findings from a meta-evaluation of Plan International France’s Youth Economic Empowerment (YEE) portfolio. Looking at seven YEE projects supported by Plan International France across the globe, this meta-evaluation gathers evidence on successes and areas for improvement, and particularly focuses on outcomes for young people and gender-transformative aspects of the YEE portfolio.

The second article presents findings from a scoping study on the gender norms that exist in two districts in Tanzania in relation to young women’s economic empowerment. Focusing on seven key gender norms, findings reveal the multiple and cumulative structural and cultural barriers to young women’s access to savings groups, self-employment and decent work.

The third article summarises findings from a research study commissioned by Plan International Asia Pacific Hub on young female migrants in Thailand’s seafood sector and their access to decent work. It looks at the socio-economic situation in source communities in Cambodia and destination communities in Thailand, and particularly highlights gender roles, norms and stereotypes.

Finally, the fourth article looks at the final evaluation of a multi-country programme in Latin America, ‘Youth Building the Future’. The evaluation, commissioned by Plan International Netherlands, Plan International Americas Hub, and in partnership with Accenture, highlights findings on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of the programme.

We hope that you enjoy this edition of OPENPlan.

META-EVALUATION:

PLAN INTERNATIONAL FRANCE’S YOUTH ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME PORTFOLIO

Written by Claire Dijoux for Plan International France and F3E

BACKGROUND

Demographic transitions and structural socio-economic factors compound to make youth unemployment one of the critical issues in today’s world. According to the ILO in 2018, young people under the age of 25 experience an unemployment rate three times higher than adults across the globe (13% vs. 4.3%).1 Globally, unemployment affects young women (aged 15-24) more than young men.2 Drivers and triggers of youth unemployment are numerous and intersectional; vulnerability to unemployment and socio-economic marginalisation cuts across age, gender, ethnicity, disability and other factors, with inequalities widening alongside these intersections.

Against this backdrop, skills and opportunities for youth employment and entrepreneurship has become a global strategic priority for Plan International. Plan International France has adopted Youth Economic Empowerment (YEE) as one of their two organisational objectives for the period 2018-2022, with a specific emphasis on those children and young women particularly vulnerable or marginalised.

**PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES**

Plan International France, in partnership with the F3E network, commissioned this meta-evaluation with a view to gather stronger evidence and organisational learning and improve YEE programmatic effectiveness. The objectives for the meta-evaluation were:

- To characterise, describe and discuss Plan International France’s ‘YEE model’ through a meta-evaluation and meta-analysis of a portfolio of selected projects;
- To analyse the existing M&E framework and derive lessons and recommendations towards improvements in YEE-specific monitoring, evaluation and learning in the future.

**METHODOLOGY AND ETHICS**

A set of seven projects (in Cameroon, China, Colombia, Egypt, India, Tanzania and Togo) with an exclusive or substantial focus on YEE and supported by Plan International France, were identified for this meta-evaluation based on inclusion/exclusion criteria. In total, eight evaluation documents constituted the portfolio analysed in the meta-evaluation. Overall, the meta-evaluation went through two consecutive stages:

1. **QUALITY ASSESSMENT OF EVALUATION REPORTS:**
   - Assessment of each report against checklist criteria
   - Aggregation of scores and overall assessment
   - Inclusion/exclusion of reports

2. **THEMATIC MACRO-ANALYSIS OF EVALUATIONS:**
   - Coding of extracts/valid documents on Excel
   - Thematic qualitative analysis
   - Data mining and triangulation of gaps
   - Report writing

The ethical considerations that guided this meta-evaluation – including the protection and safeguarding of vulnerable children and young people, a duty of care, as well as key principles of human subject research – fully complied with Plan International France’s Child Protection Charter.

**LIMITATIONS**

A number of limitations are considered in the meta-evaluation. These include, but are not limited to: varied quality of evaluation reports and a single perspective in their assessment; multi-linguistic environment and the interpretation of translations; limited portfolio of YEE projects and limited scope of findings; limited opportunities for the engagement of young people in the meta-evaluation.

**FINDINGS**

The top-level findings from the meta-evaluation report are presented below. For full details on the findings, refer to the full report or reach out to the contact provided at the end of this article.

**THE PERTINENCE OF PLAN INTERNATIONAL FRANCE’S YEE PORTFOLIO**

According to the meta-evaluation, whilst the footprint of Plan International France’s support to youth economic empowerment has been limited to date, the focus of the YEE interventions appears to be, at a macro level, broadly pertinent. YEE interventions have been implemented in a broad range of countries and contexts (see below), including across different poverty profiles, urbanisation rates, protracted crises, or macro-economic and per capita wealth.

Young people have been a dominant demographic group in the majority of these seven projects and in countries where youth unemployment is usually higher than the national average, highlighting the relevance of Plan International’s YEE interventions. Additionally, the meta-evaluation finds that on all key macro-indicators of gender equality in relation to employability or employment in the considered portfolio, there is evidence of systemic disadvantages for women, particularly young women. Whilst there are variations in each context, this observable gender gap confirms the pertinence of Plan International France’s portfolio of YEE projects from a gender perspective, according to the report.
**PLAN INTERNATIONAL FRANCE’S ‘YEE MODEL’**

A YEE model emerges from the meta-evaluation of Plan International France’s global YEE portfolio. It centres around ‘core elements’ which have existed in nearly all projects, and variable components which might be more context specific (as illustrated in the figure below). The three core components comprise: (i) a youth-oriented labour market survey called market scan, followed by (ii) skills-based and practical training, which leads to (iii) employment support services such as job seeking support, mentoring and individualised follow-up after placement. These elements are recognised by international research as the most effective in yielding positive results on youth employment and earnings.

**REPRESENTATION OF THE YEE MODEL AS EMERGING FROM THE META-EVALUATION PORTFOLIO**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Components</th>
<th>Variable Components</th>
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<tr>
<td>Market Scan</td>
<td>Partnerships</td>
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<td>Skills-Based and Practical Training</td>
<td>Gender Mainstreaming</td>
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<td>Employment Support Services</td>
<td>Alumni Engagement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Variable Training</td>
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<td>Financial Literacy</td>
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<td>SRHR</td>
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**Plan International’s value add and critical success factors and challenges**

The meta-evaluation report identifies two elements through which Plan International adds value to the YEE sector:

- Plan International’s strong community-level presence and rapport with children and young people, which allows for the targeting of the most marginalised, less visible young people.
- Plan International’s strategic emphasis on gender transformative programming, which places Plan International in a leading position in comparison to peers in the sector.

Critical success factors and challenges in the model are also identified in the report, including:

- The *market scan* sets the foundations of projects, provided it is timely, collaborative, multi-party and gender-responsive;
- A *model based on condensed training cycles* of two to three months duration on average is effective in promoting rapid transition to entry level occupations, but generates debates about benefits for longer-term employability;
- *Combining soft/social and technical skills* in training is overwhelmingly appreciated by participants and stakeholders and evidence suggests that soft skills increase employability and positive self-concept.

*Young women learn new skills during beauty training course (China).* (©Plan International)
OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Age profiles of beneficiaries

The meta-evaluation finds that the age profile of beneficiaries (18 to 22 on average) is in line with Plan International’s objectives and definitions of “youth”. However, the report recommends that some level of flexibility that aligns with local contexts and cultures is required, including in contexts where transitions into adulthood, including entry to the labour force, takes place earlier than the age of 18.

Reaching marginalised and vulnerable groups

According to the findings, there is a gap between project objectives to serve the most vulnerable children and young people and the reality. The projects which successfully reached out to and mobilised socio-economically vulnerable youth appear to have used indirect targeting strategies, focusing on marginalised localities rather than individual vulnerability profiling. However, the meta-evaluation report states that disability and other possible factors of vulnerability, such as ethnicity, have rarely been taken into consideration, preventing projects from reaching some of the most marginalised and vulnerable youth.

Additionally, the absence of intersectional perspectives in YEE projects led to binary approaches to gender and an implicit judgement that all girls and young women are in a situation of “inherent” vulnerability, rather than taking into account how various segments of the female youth population are differently affected by unemployment.

Transition to and retention in employment

Overall, the rates of transitions to employment referenced in the evaluation reports of projects are high: they vary from 62% (Colombia) to 94% (Cameroon). According to the information available, transition into self-employed appears higher than transition into waged employment. The meta-evaluation report infers from this that, broadly speaking, projects have been successful and effective in achieving their main objective around access to employment. However, longer-term benefits and outcomes are not systematically assessed by evaluations and there is no systematic gender disaggregation of data.

Decent work and economic outcomes

Across evaluations, the formality of employment is commonly used as a proxy for decent work. The meta-evaluation report argues that this proxy does not suffice as it does not cover all dimensions of decent work; in fact, the meta-evaluation finds some evidence in evaluations of breaches to legal obligations on the part of employers. The meta-evaluation also finds that economic outcomes and income gains are not systematically assessed in evaluation reports and those that do assess only report on average monthly salary or daily profit at first employment. By probing further and identifying relative comparison points (e.g. sectoral or national minimum wages, GDP per capita, poverty levels), the meta-evaluation finds that it is difficult to assess the dimension of “fair income”. Indeed, evidence from China and India revealed that whilst incomes earned by project beneficiaries were substantial, they did not necessarily match up with applicable minimum wages or average salaries.

GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE ASPECTS OF YEE PROJECTS

Equitable access to vocational education and employment support for young women

The YEE projects’ effectiveness in meeting their gender distributive targets and indicators is commonly reported in evaluations; this is one of the key achievements highlighted by the meta-evaluation. A number of good practices are documented across evaluation reports around the tactics deployed to remove or overcome barriers limiting girls’ skills development and access to employment – particularly around distance, community perceptions and occupational choices. However, the meta-evaluation notes that the lack of gender disaggregation limits the evidence and analysis on retention in employment, mobility and pathways.

Challenging gender stereotypes in the world of work

The meta-evaluation report finds that the projects which have strongly embedded gender equality in their design and implementation plans or practices (e.g. SAKSHAM in India, FISONG-funded project in Togo) have done particularly well in starting to address gender stereotypes in the world of work – an issue which is widely acknowledged as a major structural factor which perpetuates gender inequality in employment. However, these efforts are not visible across the whole portfolio, according to the meta-evaluation. This suggests that more attention to gender stereotypes needs to be paid in project design, market scans and employment services to avoid limiting women’s occupational choices to traditional female-dominated sectors.

Non-economic gender outcomes

In line with current evidence in international research, the evaluations which assess a projects’ effects on young women’s agency and empowerment highlight positive results including increased sense of self-worth, self-awareness and self-reported improved social status and position vis-à-vis male members of the community. A “first timer” effect appeared to place a number of these young women as role models in their locality. However, overall, these effects remain however under-explored by evaluations.
Gender-specific barriers

The urban-focused evaluations all report the issue of safety and mobility as a strong barrier hindering girls’ and young women’s entry to and retention in the labour force, according to the meta-evaluation. However, safety and mobility is not well covered by evaluations of projects in rural areas despite evidence from international research suggesting that the issue is still prevalent in these settings. Similarly, the meta-evaluation finds that YEE approaches are yet to effectively respond to the specific needs of young mothers who must balance learning/working with caring for their families.

A gender transformative agenda must be more systematically mainstream and pursued

The meta-evaluation commends the evidence on positive effects of training, promising results in combating gender stereotypes in the world of work and boosts in girls’ and young women’s agency and empowerment. However, it identifies weaknesses in evaluation methods and approaches, which are likely to be the explanatory factor for such effects not being more systematically and coherently documented at outcome-level.

Evidence of some elements of gender transformative programming, as defined across Plan International, are identified in the YEE portfolio including (i) responses to discriminatory gender norms through awareness raising; (ii) advancing the economic condition of young women through skills development and access to employment; (iii) responding to young women’s specific needs and barriers and (iv) strengthening young women’s agency and empowerment. However, the meta-evaluation finds a need to strengthen this evidence base and address the remaining evidence gaps around (i) working with boys and men around positive masculinities and (ii) fostering an enabling environment for young women in their families and communities and at the workplace.

Key Recommendations

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Recommendation Cluster</th>
<th>Specific Recommendation</th>
<th>Importance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enhance the strategic focus on the most marginalised youth</td>
<td>Focus on contexts with critical needs (Female employment, secondary cities, rural areas, humanitarian settings)</td>
<td>Medium</td>
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<td>Improve the quality of evaluation reports</td>
<td>Systematically undertake more participatory vulnerability assessments with an intersectional perspective</td>
<td>Important</td>
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<td>Proactively guide evaluators with broader resource packs</td>
<td>Important</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Enhance compliance with internal evaluation guidelines and monitor evaluation quality</td>
<td>Important</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transition to an effectively transformative gender equality agenda from project design to project evaluation</td>
<td>Test and promote more creative, gender-responsive and diverse evaluation designs and orientations</td>
<td>Essential</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Encourage the sharing of experience of good gender practices</td>
<td>Desirable</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Root project design in systematic, thorough and robust gender analysis frameworks</td>
<td>Essential</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Revisit scope of life skills training to cater more specifically to the varied needs of groupings of young people</td>
<td>Important</td>
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<tr>
<td>Make provisions for greater flexibility in the model and effective documentation of its effects and outcomes</td>
<td>Strengthen indicators and evidence of decent work outcomes, counterfactual measurements of income gains</td>
<td>Important</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Read the full meta-evaluation report here.

For any questions on this article, please contact

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SCOPING STUDY REPORT ON GENDER NORMS IN SELECTED WARDS OF ILEMELA AND NYAMAGANA DISTRICTS, MWANZA REGION, TANZANIA

Report written by Dr Jacqueline Mgumia, submitted to Plan International Tanzania, April 2018

Mylène*, 16, wants to be a doctor when she is older (Tanzania). (©Plan International)

*Name has been changed to protect identity
INTRODUCTION

As part of Plan International Tanzania’s commitment to achieving gender equality and tackling youth unemployment, a scoping study was commissioned with the view to revising Plan International’s A Working Future (AWF) program in line with a more gender transformative intervention model. The study sought to examine the gender norms that contribute to gender inequality through their negative impact on the participation of young women in economic activities, particularly credit savings groups and self-employment initiatives.

The report presents findings of the scoping study carried out in two selected districts of the Mwanza Region, Tanzania. Importantly, the study identified seven gender norms, short-listing four which pose a significant barrier to women’s economic progress, as well as a number of beliefs and cultural values that inhibited young women’s empowerment more broadly.

GENDER NORMS REFER TO “INFORMAL RULES AND SHARED SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS THAT DISTINGUISH EXPECTED BEHAVIOUR ON THE BASIS OF GENDER”. THESE NORMS OFTEN INFORM ACCESS TO DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS SUCH AS HUMAN, SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL CAPITAL.

1. Overseas Development Institute (2015), Social Norms, Gender Norms and Adolescent Girls: A Brief Guide

RESEARCH QUESTION AND METHODOLOGY

The research was guided by the overarching question:

“DO GENDER NORMS CONSTITUTE A BARRIER FOR YOUNG WOMEN IN ILEMELA AND NYAMAGANA DISTRICTS TO ENGAGE IN AND BENEFIT EQUALLY FROM THE PROJECT INTERVENTIONS UNDER AWF AND ULTIMATELY ENGAGE IN DECENT WORK THROUGH SELF-EMPLOYMENT?”

The study employed a qualitative approach through focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIs) which took place across four wards in Tanzania. The sites selected in Nyamagana District and Ilemela District were chosen through being implementation sites of the AWF project and covered rural and semi-rural areas. Overall the research involved 104 participants, out of which 51% where young people (defined as aged between 15-24 years old) with young women comprising 49% of the young respondents.

The field research was conducted over two months and data was collected in three phases. Phase one considered the structure of youth saving groups. Phase two involved in-depth discussions with young women, parents, and traditional leaders on issues related to traditional institutions and its role in defining gender norms. The final phase acted as a validation workshop to consolidate findings and initial intervention suggestions.

The data collected was subsequently analysed through a gender norms framework influenced by ODI (2011-2015) which intended to assess research respondents’ values of what constitutes ‘good or bad girls’ and associated social expectations including activities, practices and behaviours.

FINDINGS

The report identifies and maps gender norms that hinder young women’s participation in self-employment and/or Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA). Despite the research being conducted across diverse locations, encompassing different ethnic backgrounds, there appeared little variation in the gender norms determined; the report suggests that this could be attributed to the Sukuma ethnic community’s strong cultural and social influence in these locations.

Gender norm-related proclamations

Following the KIs and FGDs, fifteen key assertions were highlighted that related to gender norms, referred to as ‘gender norm related proclamations’ by the study report. Overwhelmingly these detailed restraints and expectations for women to remain in domestic settings and, significantly, the denial of equitable autonomy and freedoms as enjoyed by male counterparts. The proclamations included: women’s exclusion from decision-making processes, leadership, income generation and financial decisions, land ownership, mobility outside of the home, and transient positions within the family. They also included prescribed expectations on young women such as early marriage, dependency on men, and upholding characteristics of obedience, respect and being softly-spoken.

Interestingly, these norms were articulated differently between generations. Whilst young people tended to describe these in terms of complaints against women’s role and treatment within society, older men and women asserted these as socially correct standards of behavior.

1. The AWF program intends to support youth economic empowerment through innovative methods in collaboration with the private sector. Plan International Tanzania aims to address underlying structural barriers to facilitate 55% participation of young women in the program and, ultimately, create a ‘gender responsive environment that enhances opportunities for young women to transition into and maintain decent work’ (Plan International Tanzania’s Terms of Reference for the Scoping Study, p.3).

2. In Sukuma culture girls are perceived as a temporary member of their family, as it is understood that they will instead become a member of their husband’s family through marriage. Girls and young women are therefore understood as temporary/ transient members of a family, which contributes to the patrilineal structure of Sukuma culture.
The report subsequently derives seven gender norms from the proclamations, all of which are identified as barriers to young women’s economic advancement. These are described below.

1. *‘WOMEN MUST BE SILENT IN THE PRESENCE OF MEN AND NEVER TALK BACK TO MEN’*

The gender norm makes an important link between the denial of freedom of speech and the lack of respect given to individual opinions or ideas. One young woman from Ilemela stated; “men don’t think we have something important to say. So we don’t talk as we know they won’t listen”. Fieldwork evidence suggests the root of this norm is in power and importance placed on male clan lines in Sukuma culture.

2. *‘YOUNG WOMEN CAN’T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT PERMISSION’*

This norm widely places women within the home with limited and controlled activity and mobility. Young women’s movement, for example, is dependent on parental consent and further contingent on being accompanied by a guardian. Evidence from FGDs and KIIs suggest that in Sukuma society it is believed that young women may ‘easily succumb to sexual temptation’, with parents particularly concerned for men’s behaviour in public spaces. Young women are, therefore, expected to be either in school or married. The report finds that women are denied the opportunity to organize themselves independent of parental or marital structures, which poses substantial limitations on the types of economic activities or opportunities women can engage in.

3. *‘GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN CANNOT BE TRUSTED TO BE INDEPENDENT’*

This gender norm is inherently related to the belief that girls and women cannot be trusted alone, and it specifically denies girls and women the freedom to live independently and their right to autonomy. The norm is closely linked to the former gender norm which limits young women’s mobility related to appropriate sexual behavior, as it is believed that young women living independently are ‘promiscuous’. As such, young women must live with their parents until they get married or the time for them to marry has passed.

4. *‘WOMEN MUST NOT HARVEST FISH’*

Fieldwork evidence highlights a significant gender disaggregation between job roles. This appeared to be disproportionately harmful for women who suffer the double restriction from being excluded from main income generation activities whilst simultaneously being confined to the household to undertake domestic responsibilities.

5. *‘YOUNG WOMEN SHOULD BE DOMESTICATED’*

This gender norm is premised on the idea that a good woman is a married woman, something all women should aspire to. Marriage was highlighted as one of the most important cultural practices by respondents in both districts. Additionally, women are expected to do domestic chores - washing utensils, clothes, cleaning compound, washing, cooking, collecting firewood, and caring for any children. Consequently, this limits opportunities and time for developing economic skills and access to economic opportunities, in favour of developing household skills. This barrier has been identified even within the AWF project where young women’s attendance is limited due to the huge amount of time consumed by household chores.

In addition, the report suggests that women who explore opportunities in the public sector are often stigmatized as ‘morally inadequate’. They are therefore seen as less suitable marriage partners and risk being disowned by their family.

6. *‘WOMEN SHOULD NOT OWN LAND OR INCOME’*

In general, women and girls are denied the opportunity to work in order to earn an income or own their own property. Respondents stated that they are unable to exercise control over resources, and even in circumstances where women may have an income it is seen as the property of the male head of a given family. According to the report, such beliefs stem from male dominance in Sukuma culture where women, and by extension their resources, are objectified as property of men either within family or marital structures. Interestingly, law permits land ownership of women if they have bought or inherited it. However, evidence from FGDs and KIIs highlight that in reality men often own family land, whilst women provide labour for the land through farming activities.

7. *‘YOUNG WOMEN ARE DEPENDENT ON MEN AND MARRY YOUNG’*

Evidence from fieldwork suggests that, due to the patrilineal structure of Sukuma culture, women are viewed as transient members of their biological family, as they will later join their husband’s patrilineal family. In this context, a young woman’s gender role is to become a ‘good young woman’, suitable for marriage and motherhood; engaging with economic and financial activities is a typically male role and sits outside of the ‘domesticated role’ of a wife or mother.
Gender norms and reinforcing unequal gendered relationships and barriers to economic opportunities

These seven gender norms, as highlighted by the report, reinforce the unequal gendered relationship towards ownership of resources, properties, sources of income and self-development. The link between such barriers and its impact on young women’s economic empowerment is highlighted by two interesting findings. Firstly, the report states that under 10% of around 600 girls in a baseline study were found to have employment. Second, when considering saving patterns, the report found that the majority of young men who joined saving groups had plans to buy resources for farming such as land and animals. Comparatively, the majority of young women had no plans for their savings at all. This highlights two important interrelated spheres, of earning potential and financial management, where women were shown to be less engaged in economic activities.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from this research attest to the existence of gender norms which prohibit the economic freedom of young women and girls. The seven gender norms, highlighted in the report’s findings, contend significant cultural and structural barriers to women, particularly young women, enjoying the same opportunities as male counterparts. The male dominated culture limits women’s autonomy, decision making, mobility, ability to generate, accumulate and manage income or resources. It also sets expectations for their behaviour which posit them within domestic settings. Such structures fundamentally place women in a secondary and dependent role, whether this be within patrilineal families or marital structures, and ultimately limits women’s economic advancement and broader empowerment.

As such, multiple conclusions for interventions were drawn from the research respondents which focused on developing a culture of saving among young women. This required a comprehensive approach which would consider: developing sources of income for women; organizing time away from household responsibilities to enable participation in economic activities; developing self-esteem through public engagement initiatives; and developing creativity in how to engage with and develop economic opportunities.

Three levels of action were identified by the research report as necessary to secure social transformation that would promote the empowerment of women and girls:

1. Targeting young women on an individual level
2. Targeting men (including husbands and fathers) at a family level
3. Targeting relevant institutions at a community level, such as the Nzengo

For further information on this study, please reach out to:

NEEMA KISWAGA
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3. The Nzengo is a traditional institution that brings together different neighbourhoods. It is understood as a traditional communal network geared to addressing social challenges and the development affairs of a respective area. The chairpersons and secretaries are always male, due to gender bias in Sukuma culture for male leadership.
INTRODUCTION

Current migration trends are evidence to unprecedented human mobility around the globe. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 258 million migrants were counted globally in 2016, out of which over 32 million were between the ages of 15-24. Estimates show that women make up a high proportion of these young migrants in developing countries, at nearly 45%.

One of Plan International’s priority research themes outlined in our global Research and Evaluation Agenda (see page 14) is the impact of economic migration on women, especially young women. As young female migrants are often overlooked by support interventions, Plan International is interested in exploring the gender-specific division of labour and the related risks and consequences, as well as opportunities, safety nets and challenges for young female migrants. This study contributes some evidence under this priority research theme.

Full report published by Plan International Asia Hub, June 2018

Pa cleaning preparing fish for sale at her home in Rayong (Thailand). (©Plan International)

**RESEARCH PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES**

Plan International Asia Pacific Hub commissioned this research study as part of the ‘Stopping Exploitation through Accessible Services (SEAS) of Change’ project. The study seeks to shed light on the often-overlooked population of migrants with a focus on a group of young Cambodian migrant women in Thailand working in the seafood sector, a sector known for being heavily reliant on migrant workers and for creating harsh working conditions.

This research had three main objectives:

1. Illustrate the socio-economic situation of Cambodian young women in source communities in Cambodia and in destination communities in Thailand;
2. Identify relevant gender roles, norms and stereotypes that affect young Cambodian women in deciding to migrate and in accessing education, training and decent work opportunities in both countries;
3. Provide programmatic and advocacy recommendations to enhance the economic advancement, and specifically, young women’s access to decent work in the seafood sector and fishing industry.

**FINDINGS**

**Limited access to education and economic opportunities in Cambodia**

Research respondents in Prey Veng spoke about girls frequently dropping out of education before they reach secondary school, leaving them vulnerable to early marriage and starting work early. This high dropout rate for girls mirrors wider trends in Cambodia where only 24.9% of girls and young women aged 15-24 were estimated to be in school in 2016. The report finds that girls and young women lack access to information on the available training courses run by Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training in Cambodia, and vocational skills development.

The findings suggest that there were very limited options available to young women even if they had the appropriate skills; the economic opportunities available to young women are heavily reliant on agriculture and farming. The main alternative occupational options available to girls and young women were small vendors or domestic helpers. With limited career opportunities outside of this sector, young women earn very low incomes and become trapped in a cycle of early marriage and poverty, according to the report.

**Gender norms and stereotypes in Cambodia**

Research findings show that girls and young women are expected to be home-bound and focused on care-related work. However, girls and young women are also expected to contribute to the family economically. The research finds that girls’ and young women’s mobility is restricted due to stigma and their families’ fears for their physical safety and violence.

“I love my daughter and I am worried about her safety [so] I can’t send her far away to study. A woman should be around the kitchen.”

– KEY INFORMANT, PREY VENG PROVINCE

With such restrictive gender norms, girls and young women drop out of school early and are discouraged from building a career; respondents said they were only encouraged to partake in unskilled labour to support their husbands, parents and families.
Deciding to move and the migration process

With limited opportunities and low incomes, migration can be seen as an economically beneficial option for young women in Cambodia. However, migrating to Thailand is not just a livelihood option: according to respondents, by earning an income and supporting family members financially, migration is also a way to build a sense of pride and gain respect and love with the family and community.

“I feel that my grandparents love me more now because I send money for them.”

– YOUNG FEMALE MIGRANT, 18, THAILAND

All respondents interviewed said that at some stage they were ‘undocumented’, and respondents overwhelmingly stated the high cost of official documents, such as pink cards and work permits, as the reason for this. Being undocumented not only leaves young women vulnerable, it also restricts their options for decent work. With most employers refuse to employ undocumented workers, undocumented young female migrants are forced to seek ‘irregular’ and informal places of work, increasing their risk of violence, trafficking, harassment, and exploitation. Yet despite these risks and irrespective of the cost, all young female migrants interviewed in Thailand agreed that their husband or father had managed to obtain a work permit, highlighting gender-based discrimination.

The research study finds that the most viable option for migrants to obtain legal status in Thailand is for their employers to register them and obtain a work permit on their behalf. More than 70% of respondents said that they had taken a loan from their employer for expenses or work permit costs which was subsequently deducted from their wages. However, only two women could specify their total loan amount; the rest relied on their employers to keep accounts. This complicated process leaves young female migrants vulnerable to exploitative relationships with their employers, or ‘debt bondage’, as stated in the report.

The socio-economic situation in Thailand

Overall, the findings from this study indicate a better socio-economic situation in Thailand compared to Cambodia. Respondents said that friends and relatives were able to introduce them to work almost immediately after they arrived in Thailand, mostly in the seafood sector. The research also finds that, generally, young female migrants earn higher wages in Thailand.

However, the seafood sector presents harsh working conditions; long working hours are common, with most respondents reporting 12-16-hour days with low and unfair terms of payment. Young female migrants also reported little knowledge or access to information on social protection and benefits, including free education, school lunches, migrant health insurance schemes, legal migration routes and police protection.

Gender stereotypes in the seafood sector

The study highlights the gender segregation and stereotypes that exist within the seafood and fishing industry in Thailand. It is seen as more appropriate for men to take up jobs as seafarers whilst young women are limited to irregular jobs close to home, including sea food processing, fish sorting and mending nets. Men in the seafood sector earn far higher wages than women, with the study stating that the maximum that women can earn per month is almost the minimum that men can earn at sea in a month.

The absence of men at sea for months at a time enhances the vulnerability of young migrant women in terms of their safety at home, at work and on the road, according to the report. To mitigate these risks, respondents reported living with their extended families or friends and always travelling to and from work in small groups. This strategy, whilst helping to build up a strong social network amongst migrants in Thailand, significantly restricts young women’s mobility in public spaces.

Social expectations and gender norms

Mirroring the situation in Cambodia, young women in Thailand are expected to take care of their siblings or their children at home. However, respondents also reported an expectation to financially support their family – whether in Thailand or back in Cambodia. However, a young migrant woman’s income is always viewed as supplementary and secondary to that of a man, the research finds. This further reinforces the notion that men’s work is more important than women’s work. Young female migrants’ earnings are used to directly support the family, restricting the space for women to exercise their own agency and make their own decisions.

However, respondents stated that whilst their husbands are away for months at sea, all decisions with respect to children are taken by women, including their healthcare and education. The study suggests that, in this way, young female migrants in Thailand gain a level of individual autonomy and often unprecedented decision-making power in this aspect of their lives. However, being entirely responsible for childcare in addition to household chores and income generation means that young female migrants must manage a ‘triple burden’.

Limited access to opportunities for upward mobility in Thailand

Whilst the economic situation facing young female migrants might be better than in their source communities in Cambodia, findings show that young female migrants still face challenges with regards to upward mobility. Firstly, gender stereotypes within the seafood sector and the social expectation that daughters should support their families are found to restrict career options for young female migrants and their access to decent work.

Secondly, mirroring trends in Cambodia, respondents in Thailand do not have access to education and vocational training. Young female migrant respondents, and particularly those who had migrated to Thailand as children, had particularly low literacy levels and language abilities: only 30% had completed grade 2-3 and all had started working by the age of 10.

Additionally, due to the precarious and irregular nature of their work, young female migrants were found to lack control over their own time. This lack of control in turn prevents young female migrants from being able to access training and to improve their skills to move towards better pay and decent jobs.

“We have to go to work anytime the employer calls, so we cannot go anywhere. Sometimes, they call us at 2 or 3am, other days they call us 9am. We have to be here at all times when a boat comes.”

– YOUNG FEMALE MIGRANT, 21, THAILAND
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from this research shed light on the gender norms, roles and stereotypes that shape and limit the occupational choices available to young women in Cambodia and young female migrants in Thailand. In both contexts, there is limited access for young female migrants to education, training, social services and protection or decent work. Girls and young women drop out of school before secondary education and give up on pursuing higher education or training opportunities. Young women in Cambodia and young Cambodian migrant women in Thailand are under pressure to meet the expectations of their family and society, who perceive their role to be obedient, home-bound and care-giving sisters, daughters and wives, who are also supporting the family financially. This not only affects their income and self-esteem, but it also reinforces a culture of devaluing the economic rights and potential of young women.

In order to foster an enabling environment for migrant women workers in the fishing supply chain, the study recommends the following for Plan International’s advocacy and programmatic work on this issue:

• Developing and working with the private sector to drive the business case for investing on women in the fishing sector;
• Garnering investments and support for skills development training and the successful transition of young women into formal employment in the fishing sector;
• Working with governments to support and enable young migrant women to obtain legal status in destination countries; and
• Building the capacity of civil society organizations, communities, and women and men to champion gender equality and challenge prevailing gender norms and stereotypes in the fishing sector.

For further information on this study, reach out to:

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Phanna from Cambodia lost two years of her education when her parents migrated to Thailand. (©Plan International)
GLOBAL RESEARCH AND EVALUATION PRIORITIES FOR SOYEE

Created to support quality and evidence-based programmes and influencing aligned to the Global Strategy, Plan International’s Global Research & Evaluation Agenda outlines priority themes which should help offices in choosing relevant and appropriate topics for research and evaluation (R&E) studies. The below is a summary of the R&E priorities under SOYEE which were developed in consultation with subject matter experts and were shaped by an Annotated Bibliography on SOYEE.

**01** IMPACT OF ECONOMIC MIGRATION ON WOMEN AND COMMUNITIES, ESPECIALLY YOUNG WOMEN

This theme focuses on the increased number of women migrating, and growing concerns regarding their security and human rights in the locations to which they are moving. At every stage of their migratory experience, women migrant workers may be more exposed to human rights violations such as discrimination, exploitation and abuse compared to their male counterparts. R&E studies could focus on:

- gender-specific division of labour (migration for domestic work, sex industry, marriage) and related risks and consequences.
- opportunities, safety nets and challenges for economic empowerment of young female migrants and young female returnees.

**02** PLAN INTERNATIONAL’S ROLE IN INFLUENCING PRIVATE SECTOR PRACTICE FOR EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

R&E studies could focus on testing interventions with different private sector actors, especially in terms of: influencing practices and outcomes for gender equality; women’s labour force participation in traditionally male positions; and inclusion of people with disability. Studies may also include a review of practices by other NGOs, assessing effective modalities for addressing barriers to the participation of women in decent work. Studies could also look at the methods, benefits and costs of incorporating gender-responsive and decent work principles into business operations.

**03** ECONOMIC RECOVERY FOR COMMUNITIES AFFECTED BY DISASTER OR CONFLICT, WITH A FOCUS ON GIRLS

To inform our work on YEE in emergencies, there is a need to assess gender-responsive economic recovery for communities affected by disasters or conflict and how such recovery specifically affects girls, young women and marginalised groups. These assessments should focus on factors like household resilience, social protection and economic empowerment. It is important to understand how interventions can be implemented across the humanitarian–development nexus in order to contribute to emergency recovery and to longer term development goals in communities.

**04** TRANSITION TO EMPLOYMENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE GRADUATING FROM NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

This theme is focused on the equitable transition to work for marginalised groups, and specifically those who have followed alternative routes in training or education. There is little comparable data on alternative learning programmes. In particular, R&E studies should seek to understand whether qualifications from non-formal provision: are comparable to formal qualifications; are valued by employers; and are accessible to women and marginalised groups. Studies could also focus on how provision of skills could be made more relevant, or how demand for such skills could be increased through employer sensitisation. Relevance to young women may also focus on additional skills required for work, such as job search techniques or self-confidence.

**05** BARRIERS AND ENABLERS TO YOUNG WOMEN’S ASSET CREATION AND LABOUR FORCE ENGAGEMENT

This topic seeks to investigate how cultural contexts and the influence of gender norms affects women’s asset creation or labour force engagement. This is particularly relevant in largely informal markets, looking at social and structural barriers or blockages to women’s mobility to better jobs, and the roles of family, peer groups, communities and workplaces in maintaining or transforming the status quo. R&E studies could focus on norms, practices and behaviours that either discriminate against or empower girls and young women.

*https://plan-international.org/publications/research-evaluation-agenda*
FINAL EVALUATION OF THE YOUTH BUILDING THE FUTURE PROGRAMME OF PLAN INTERNATIONAL

By Consultants: Patricia Lindo Jerez and Mieke Vanderschaeghe
BACKGROUND/INTRODUCTION

In Latin America, youth unemployment in 2015 was more than double that of adult unemployment and 6 out of 10 jobs held by young people were reported to be without benefits, social security rights or contracts.¹ In response, Plan International Netherlands and the Plan International Americas Hub, in partnership with global consultancy firm Accenture, conducted a three year programme called “Youth Building the Future” (YBF) between 2015 – 2017. This programme aimed to equip marginalized young people with market-driven technical training and life skills and provide them opportunities to engage in decent work as entrepreneurs and employees in targeted regions of Brazil, Colombia and El Salvador. YBF is part of Plan International’s larger Youth Economic Empowerment (YEE) approach, with programmes implemented in over 40 countries.

The programme was aimed at 4,000 young people age 18 - 29 years old, in conditions of economic and social vulnerability, to provide them with life skills and technical/vocational or business training according to market demand, as well as mentorship assistance. Of the targeted beneficiaries, 60% were girls and young women. The programme aimed to have at least 75% (3,000) of the trained youths enter decent employment (as defined by ILO), either in a job or establishing/strengthening their own company, ensuring future economic security for them and their families.


YBF PROGRAMME DESIGN

The programme design consists of three mutually reinforcing components:

1. Private sector engagement and youth employment enabler networks
2. Training, placement and start-up
3. Research and evidence gathering

The final evaluation of the YBF project was carried out in November - December 2017, based on a sample of youth and allies of the project in the localities of implementation: i) El Salvador: Department of Cabañas; ii) Colombia: Departments (provinces) of Cauca and Valle del Cauca, including the metropolitan area of Cali, Padilla, Buenos Aires, and Suarez; iii) Brazil: Department of Pernambuco that includes, among others, Recife and Cabo de San Agostinho.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

The objectives of this study were to evaluate the results of the YBF programme regarding the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the programme; effectiveness of the organizational structure; and management of the programme. Also, this study sought to analyse the outcomes of the programme, especially for adolescent girls and young women. Finally, this study aimed to provide clear recommendations for Plan International Country, National and Regional Offices on programme relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact.
**Methodology**

The study used a variety of methods in the evaluation process: a desk-based research analysis of project documents; interviews with partners or allied actors of the public sector and private companies in each country; focus groups and interviews with youth involved in the project; and an online survey. A total of 107 people participated face-to-face while 126 young people participated through the online survey. In total, 233 people were involved in this final external evaluation of YBF.

**Key Lessons-Learned Regarding Management of the Programme**

1. In all three countries the facilitating factors and environment for the employability and entrepreneurship of young people were used successfully.

2. The experiences in the three countries demonstrate the importance of involving expert staff in Plan International, with expertise in employability and youth entrepreneurship issues.

3. Projects should also engage local staff with enough experience to negotiate, establish relationships and partnerships, and interact with the private sector using the language and arguments that convince the business sector.

**Key Findings**

Overall, the evaluation found the YBF to be **relevant in its purpose and design**. Findings suggest that the project was highly relevant in responding to the employment and income needs of marginalised young people in territories of high social and economic vulnerability – including young people who have been impacted by violence, especially in El Salvador and Colombia.

A great result noted by the evaluation was the **number of alliances established with organisations**, companies and private sector actors in each country, with respect to the goal of achieving at least ten (10) alliances. Approximately thirty (30) smart alliances were established or strengthened in all three countries. It was expected that these alliances would generate employment for 1,943 young people within partner companies, plus other contributions in kind. The total number of jobs placements at the end of the programme was 3560, of which 537 through entrepreneurship (see the figure below for the total number per country) – higher than anticipated.
Nevertheless, there were some challenges. The findings show that in Brazil it was difficult to identify companies with real interest in committing to youth employment. The results of these alliances were, therefore, disappointing in terms of number of jobs relative to the high investment of project time and resources. In Colombia, a key lesson was that the market scan conducted to identify employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for youth was not useful enough as it provided a too static ‘picture’ and information on a macro-level without providing information on local opportunities and key actors and organizations. In El Salvador the work focused mainly on the field of youth entrepreneurial ventures rather than job placements.

A total of 4,744 young people received vocational/technical and/or entrepreneurship training: 154 in El Salvador, 1,621 in Brazil, and 2,969 in Colombia, which was beyond the established goal. An added value of these trainings were that young people reported having strengthened personal skills, greater emotional intelligence and were more motivated on building their future. Moreover, the evaluation notes the success of involving young mentors: the YBF project managed to involve 43 young mentors in El Salvador and Brazil.

There are some particularly notable findings on gender equality. The YBF programme aimed to achieve greater awareness of gender equality in the workplace by creating at least 60% of employment opportunities for women and at least five strategies in partner companies that improve working conditions for women. In total, the number of job placements (including entrepreneurship) for women across all countries was 2,217 (62%). The affirmative action of gender was successful as the leading teams of the project in each country committed themselves to promoting higher inclusion of women in the processes of training and job placement. Colombia highlights as an achievement having strengthened content and methodology to address gender equality in the life skills training modules, which included a session on prevention of gender violence in group mentoring with women. Furthermore, overall there was a low drop-out of female participants. Only in El Salvador this was higher due to long distance to reach the places of training and lack of safety (from the presence of gangs).

There were some achievements in terms of the impact of YBF and sustainability. The evaluation found that there was an improvement in the personal attitude and self-esteem of young people. The evaluation also found that there was a change in terms of a greater commitment from actors to the employability and entrepreneurship of young people.

Furthermore, for the component of research and evidence gathering, two important result have been achieved: the applied research “Critical factors for skills based youth employment programs” and the YEE online toolkit “Plan por la Juventud”. This online toolkit supports YEE practitioners in Latin America to design and implement more effective gender-transformative YEE programs. Following a step-by-step approach, the toolkit offers recommendations, tools and guidelines for all stages of designing and implementing a YEE project.
Recommendations

Some recommendations are organised under each of the objectives:

Relevance of the project

Enough time for implementation should be considered to achieve labour insertion and development of ventures with young people in conditions of vulnerability which are complex processes with very different dynamics in each territory.

Effectiveness of the project

Improve the incidence and achievement of value partnerships: Take up the experiences of partnership with public and private training centres and the successes achieved in each country.

Mentoring: Combine individual mentoring with young people (online or by telephone) with monthly collective mentoring sessions to socialize progress, identify problems, and reinforce young people in particular aspects.

Sustainability of the project

Hold advocacy work with private actors. Strengthen partnerships as these constitute a source of technical, human, and financial resources. In each country there is a conglomerate of actors with high expertise in the issues of employability and entrepreneurship that must be promoted.

On gender equality and transformative approach:

Publish a manual of measures or commitments to negotiate and commit partners to: establish labour insertion quotas to benefit women; improve specific working conditions for women; and establish alerts mechanisms for the prevention of gender violence and sexual harassment in the workplace.

For further information on this evaluation or any questions, please contact:

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NOTICEBOARD

Read the guest editorial written by Melanie Swan (Global Technical Lead, Early Childhood Development Network) and Kate Doyle, Senior Programme Officer at Promundo in the International Journal of Birth and Parent Education, which looks at realizing the potential of fathers to improve the wellbeing of families.

You can find this related issue of the journal here: https://ijbpe.com/index.php/journals/past-issues.vol-6-issue-3-contents

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