

AGYW Employment

DREAMS Programming Considerations

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Activity Background

- **How can DREAMS programs increase employment for older AGYW?**
- Rapid examination of employment programming for AGYW aged 15-24
- Reviewed select literature
- Interviewed targeted practitioners and experts
- Interest areas: sequencing/layering interventions, promising models, cost considerations



Background on what prompted this research: Late last year, USAID asked YouthPower Action to investigate the question of how DREAMS programs can better support employment for AGYW, since greater income has a protective role against HIV. The goal of the activity was to provide economic strengthening programming considerations to OGAC for COP guidance.

It was a limited timeframe & quick investigation. We sought out recent relevant literature, especially literature synthesizing multiple studies and sources of evidence – not an exhaustive literature review.

We interviewed: practitioners from programs OGAC identified as being of interest, other programs that emerged from the review as highly relevant to DREAMS populations, selected other experts with experience in workforce programming for AGYW.

Areas we were particularly alert to in our investigation were insights about sequencing or layering interventions, promising programming models, and cost considerations.

We focused, in our research and this presentation, on economic strengthening with the understanding that this would take place within the context of holistic DREAMS programming that creates an enabling environment around AGYW that supports their transition to healthy adulthood consistent with USAID's approach to positive youth development.

In DREAMS Contexts

- **Wage employment is a narrow pathway**
 - Promote employment in profitable microenterprises
 - Build self-employment skills for all AGYW
- **Access to non-traditional, male-dominated sectors of the economy** offers the greatest potential for increasing AGYW income
 - Creates a strong protection responsibility for programs
- **Employment programming for vulnerable AGYW is a high-resource endeavor.**
 - YouthPower Action found estimated per-participant costs ranging from \$220 to \$6,000.



What quickly emerged from reviewing the literature is that waged employment, especially in the formal sector, is a narrow pathway in DREAMS countries for youth in general, and even more so for highly vulnerable AGYW.

Self-employment in profitable microenterprises will benefit a greater number of AGYW than focusing on wage employment alone. Vulnerable AGYW are unlikely to rely exclusively on wage employment for the duration of their working lives. They will probably have a shifting portfolio of concurrent economic activities, mostly in the informal sector, so building self-employment skills will maximize participants' ability to benefit from training.

Increasing access to non-traditional, male-dominated sectors of the economy offers the greatest potential for increasing AGYW income. The literature suggests women in male-dominated sectors can achieve economic results comparable to male peers and they outperform women in female-dominated sectors, which are lower value. Supporting young women in entering male-dominated sectors creates a strong protection responsibility for programs, as the risk of exposure to sexual harassment and gender-based violence increases.

Building vulnerable AGYW's capacity while ensuring their protection means that employment programming for vulnerable AGYW is a high-resource endeavor. Our cost research focused on programs for AGYW in sub-Saharan Africa, although we included general youth programs as well. We found that programming costs ranged from \$220 to \$6,000 per participant. The *Jovenes*

programs in Latin America are a popularly cited benchmark for the costs of youth employment programming, and they had per-participant costs of \$600-\$2,000, so our range overlaps with theirs.

Recommendations

- Skills-building interventions need to:
 - **address missing skills**
 - **impact enterprise performance**, and
 - **respond to needs in the market.**
- **Building skills in growth-oriented sectors of the market** will have the greatest impact on employment and income.
- **Soft skills associated with entrepreneurship** can be taught effectively
 - Evidence of disproportionate impact on women's businesses, possibly offsetting key constraints



Some of our particularly key findings were around what kinds of skills AGYW need to have built.

Technical or vocational skills are going to vary according to the economic and educational context. It is critical to understand what skills are needed in the local market, what skills AGYW have, and where the gaps between market needs and AGYW skills are.

Vulnerable youth need to see rapid return on the investment they make in training, so skills that they can quickly apply to economic returns are important. Small, specialized niches in growth-oriented sectors of markets are most likely to reliably provide rapid returns.

There is a very interesting body of research around the more intangible skills associated with entrepreneurial success indicating: People can learn to be entrepreneurs, it's not just a set of inborn traits some people get and others don't, and that women may benefit even more than men from learning these skills, possibly because they offset substantial constraints like less access to capital and professional networks.

Recommendations (continued)

- Comprehensive programming for AGYW should **include financial literacy and savings as foundational skills**.
- Vulnerable AGYW are unlikely to be able to **offset the costs of job-seeking or initial business investment** with their own savings.
- Training programs need to create **appropriate incentives and enabling environments** to support AGYW participation.



Work that many DREAMS programs are already doing around financial literacy and savings are important foundational skills that definitely should continue and be built upon, but the amount of savings that AGYW are able to generate, even with the assistance of savings groups, is small. Preparing for employment and entering entrepreneurship are expensive undertakings and lack of financial resources are a major obstacle for AGYW. Programs need to consider how they can effectively address these obstacles within the local context.

AGYW encounter various other obstacles to participating in programming. Common themes were lack of safe spaces and safe transportation, need for child care, and managing conflicts with domestic responsibilities.

Recommendations (continued)

- **Extended engagement around employment** (6 months or more)
- **Engage market actors** (employers, training institutions, financial service providers) at outset and on an ongoing basis.
- **Trainer quality** is a key determinant of success.
- **Experienced business/employment mentors**
 - Male mentors may be critical for AGYW entering male-dominated fields.



Incentivizing and enabling participation in training is important because our investigation indicates that moving vulnerable AGYW into employment should be an extended engagement. Six months or more is needed to build participant skills, support them as they start to apply these skills, and ensure that they're in safe working situations. This applies to both wage employment and self-employment.

Programs need to plan time and resources to engage market actors at the outset of a project and continue engaging with them throughout the life of the project to understand their needs and how to match them up with participants effectively.

In youth employment programming, as in any youth engagement programming, quality interactions with adults are important. "Invest in quality trainers" was a strong theme that emerged from the research.

Professional mentorship is important to help address vulnerable AGYWs' lack of workforce experience and low professional social capital. There are strong indications that AGYW entering male-dominated fields benefit significantly from having male mentors.

Wage & Self-Employment Programs for AGYW Should:

- **Be informed by a growth-oriented labor market assessment.**
- **Build on a club/safe space platform.**
- **Introduce soft skills early and reinforce them frequently.**
- **Build entrepreneurial mindset skills, core business skills, and technical skills in a relevant market sector.**
 - All participants should receive entrepreneurial mindset and core business skills training, even if aiming for wage employment.



If we boil down our findings and recommendations to some key principles and consider what has already been successful for DREAMS participants, the heart of our recommendations are that wage and self-employment programs for this population should:

- 1) Be informed by a growth-oriented labor market assessment
- 2) Build on a youth club/safe space platform, given their history of success with AGYW and the opportunities the platform offers for supportive engagement with peers and adults.
- 3) Build entrepreneurial mindset skills, core business skills, and technical skills relevant to a productive market sector. Even participants who are training for wage employment should receive skills that enable them to be productively self-employed because they are likely to engage partly or entirely in self-employment over the course of their working lives.

Why labor market assessment (LMA)?

- Identify constraints to labor market or employment outcomes
- Identify areas of economic growth, employment or self-employment opportunities, and priority skill needs.
- Examine industry structures and value chain relationships and how they influence employment opportunities
- A quality LMA should be guided by an economist familiar with the country context and regional/local economies
 - Engage youth directly in gathering information about micro-value chains and market niches relevant to their employment

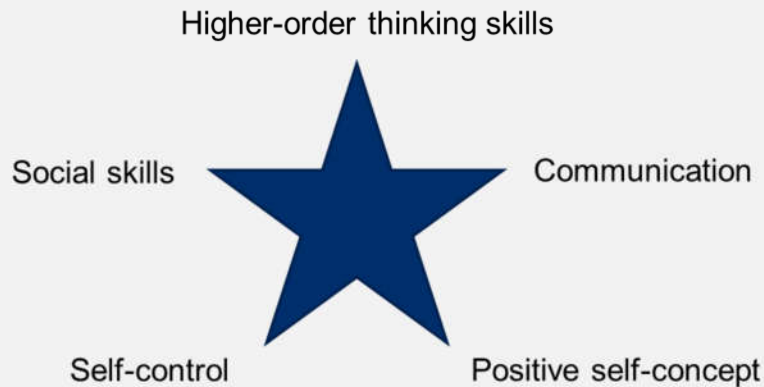


We emphasize the labor market assessment or LMA because it is critical to understand which sectors are growing in the economy and have the most self-employment or employment opportunities for AGYW. The LMA also helps identify economic and social challenges that AGYW may face when entering the labor market. By gathering this information, implementers can design demand driven programming that will give participants the greatest chance of self-employment or employment.

LMAs are typically led by a local economist familiar with the context. An LMA may already exist for your target region, but an AGYW focus may need to be added to it. If you need to conduct an LMA, Youth Power has a Key Approaches to LMAs guide that can be used as a reference (link at the end of presentation).

As an example, in Zimbabwe, the USAID ASPIRES project conducted an LMA on market opportunities and constraints for AGYW. If you would like to see what an AGYW focused LMA looks like, we will share a link at the end of the presentation. This LMA informed a pilot project, which had a particularly successful youth-led LMA component. Participants received questions from the economist and went out in small groups to ask business owners about the skills need and opportunities in their sector. Participants reported this was one of the most eye opening and informative activities of the program because it helped them understand the micro-value chain and identify self-employment opportunities.

Key Soft Skills for Youth Workforce Success



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Moving on to soft skills, research conducted by the Workforce Connections project identified five key soft skills that foster youth workforce success. These are:

Social skills: such as respecting others, using context-appropriate behavior, and conflict resolution

Higher order thinking skills: which include problem solving, critical thinking, and decision making

Communication skills: including oral, written, non-verbal and listening skills

Self-control: which is about the ability to delay gratification, exercise impulse control, direct focus and attention, and practice emotional management and behavior regulation

Positive self-concept: which means having self-confidence, self-efficacy, self-awareness, and self-esteem

Citation: Lippman et al. (2015) Workforce Connections: Key “Soft Skills” that Foster Youth Workforce Success: Toward a Consensus Across Fields. (p. 5-6)



DREAMS programs are already helping participants build many of these skills, since they're also valuable in health and violence prevention programs. Using them in employment programming reinforces these skills and helps AGYW learn how to apply them in the workforce.

Citation: Gates, S., Lippman, L., Shadowen, N., Burke, H., Diener, O., Malkin, M. (2016). Key Soft Skills for Cross-Sectoral Youth Outcomes. Washington, DC: USAID's YouthPower: Implementation, YouthPower Action.

Entrepreneurial skills

The skills needed to:

1. Identify an opportunity
2. Mobilize resources to exploit the opportunity
3. Execute the business model

The “**entrepreneurial mindset**” involves soft skills including: creative thinking, perseverance, motivation, negotiation, learning from errors



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Entrepreneurial skills can be thought of as the set of skills needed to:

- 1) Identify an opportunity
- 2) Mobilize resources to exploit that opportunity
- 3) Execute the business model

We discussed entrepreneurial mindset training earlier in the presentation – these are soft skills associated primarily with identifying and exploiting opportunities. They include skills like:

Opportunity analysis and creative thinking
Perseverance, focus, and learning from mistakes
Self-motivation and planning
Negotiation and communication

There is a training curriculum called STEP that combines entrepreneurial mindset with other entrepreneurship skills that has demonstrated evidence of success at the university level and is currently being tested with secondary students through Makerere University. We think this is a promising approach worth exploring. Look for a link to it at the end of the presentation.

Citation: Psilos, P. & Galloway, T. (2018). What Works in Entrepreneurship Education and Training Programs for Youth? Evidence Report. (p. 9-10).

Core business skills

- Financial management
- Basic accounting/bookkeeping
- Customer/client service
- Marketing



Finally, because they are vulnerable, and haven't had a long period of time to build experience, we do feel that AGYW in DREAMS programs are likely to benefit from some basic business skills. We think the core set of skills are likely to fall in these areas, but strongly recommend confirming this with an assessment.

BASE PACKAGE

of interventions for both pathways

- Adolescent clubs/safe spaces as the platform
- Financial literacy training
- General soft skills training
- Access to financial services, with an emphasis on savings
- Training incentive/participation support



We propose that both wage employment and self-employment pathways should come out of the same base package of interventions.

In our research, we found that the ELA program that BRAC implemented in Uganda shows distinct promise with this population. It's an approach that's similar to Population Council's safe spaces programming that provides AGYW with a safe space to socialize with their peers under the guidance of a mentor. ELA includes financial literacy and vocational training opportunities as well as education in topics like health and nutrition, sexual and reproductive health and family planning, and soft skills.

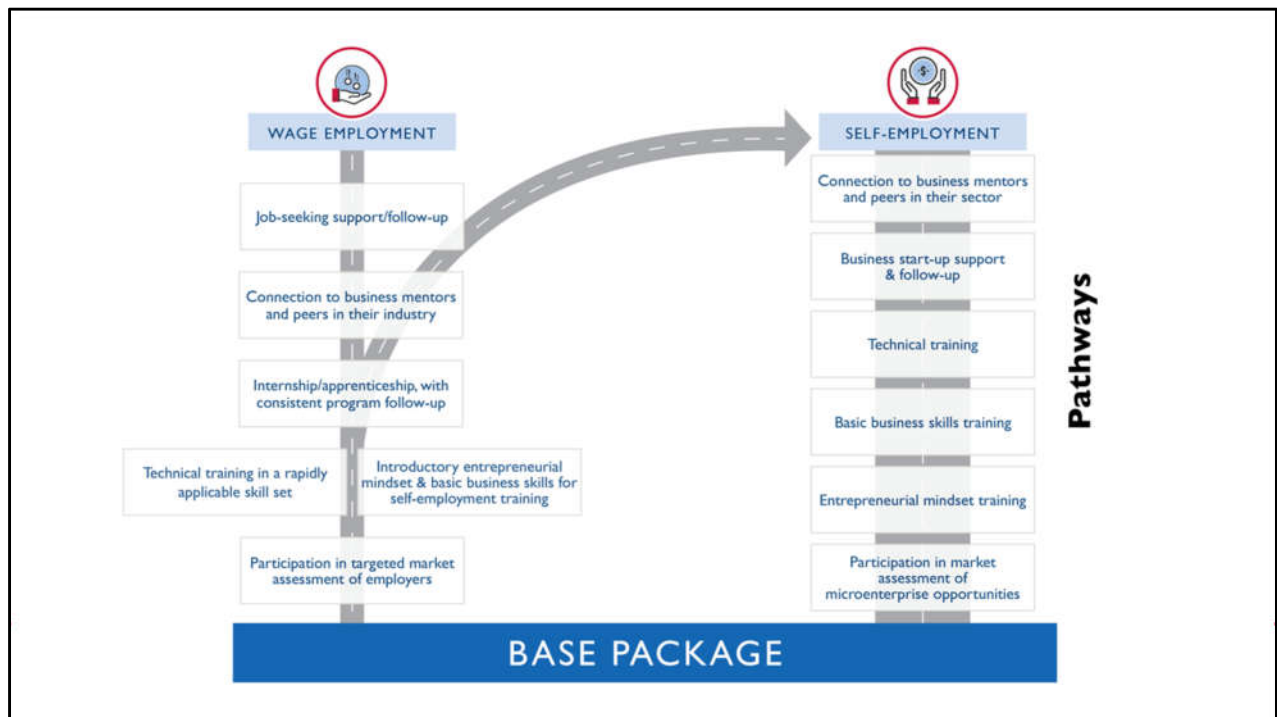
We recommend clubs or safe spaces as either the platform on which to deliver employment training or as an associated opportunity that participants have access to.

We recommend that all participants have access to financial literacy training and opportunities to practice savings behaviors, such as savings groups.

General soft skills training helps establish a foundation on which participants can build – leadership, communication, negotiation, teamwork, self-confidence and agency can all start to be built in this setting and then applied to workforce preparation later.

Programs should offer a training incentive and/or participation support that is appropriate to the

local context, the target population, and the duration of the training.



These are the programming pathways that we recommend. As we discussed earlier, participants who start on the wage employment pathway are likely to find their way to self-employment at some point – there is no significance to the point where the pathway branches. Participants might go all the way through the pathway and even obtain wage employment before they would have an opportunity to make use of self-employment skills. We’re just trying to visually represent the fact that the majority of vulnerable AGYW in DREAMS programs are going to engage in self-employment as a livelihoods strategy.

The pathways are generally pretty similar in their broad strokes. We recommend engaging participants in assessing market opportunities so that they have an opportunity to learn market assessment skills and start engaging with relevant professionals. As noted previously, we recommend that all participants received entrepreneurial mindset and basic business skills training. We recommend technical training for participants on both pathways and we think the progressions and combinations proposed here make sense, but it is a common-sense recommendation, not an approach that has necessarily been tested and confirmed.

Once the training segment is completed, we recommend that participants receive support and accompaniment as they apply their new skills. In wage employment, this looks like internships or apprenticeships with ongoing close contact with program staff to ensure participants’ safety in the workplace and support negotiating challenges. In self-employment, this involves business start-up support such as access to finance or start-up materials and follow-up from program staff to assist

with challenges.

Programs should facilitate participants' connection to business mentors and peers in their industry as they're establishing themselves. And participants on the wage employment pathway who do not convert their internships/apprenticeships to employment opportunities and want to seek jobs rather than enter self-employment should receive support from the program through this process, since it can be very isolating and discouraging. Access to the club/safe space platform is helpful here and there may be opportunities, depending on the context, to have follow-up take place electronically.

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Models, Tools and Resources

Safe space/club platform + vocational training example: BRAC ELA program in Uganda

<https://www.bracinternational.nl/en/what-we-do/empowerment-livelihood-adolescents-ela/>

Entrepreneurial mindset/entrepreneurship training for youth: STEP is currently being piloted with secondary school students through Makerere University

<https://step-training.com/>

Key Approaches to Labor Market Assessment Guide

<https://www.youthpower.org/key-approaches-labor-market-assessment-interactive-guide>

Key Soft Skills that Foster Youth Workforce Success Report

<https://www.youthpower.org/resources/key-soft-skills-foster-youth-workforce-success-toward-consensus-across-fields>

What Works in Entrepreneurship and Education Programs for Youth: Evidence Report

<https://www.youthpower.org/sites/default/files/YouthPower/files/resources/2.%20Entrepreneurship%20Programming%20for%20Youth%20-%20Evidence%20Report.pdf>

Zimbabwe Employment Market Opportunity Analysis

<https://www.marketlinks.org/post/zimbabwe-employment-market-opportunity-analysis>



Here are some models, tools and resources that we'll leave up for your reference as we go to Q&A.