

Research Report

on



Netherlands

Development

Organisation

SNV Opportunities for Youth Employment In Zambia and Zimbabwe

Prepared and submitted by



**The Centre for development and Research
in Evaluation International, Africa**

Table of Contents

List of Acronyms.....	iv
Executive Summary	v
1. INTRODUCTION TO PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT	1
1.1. Research objectives.....	3
2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	3
2.1. Data Collection Tools and Data Sources	3
2.2. Training of research assistants	4
2.3. Pilot Testing	5
2.4. Selection of communities for enumeration	5
2.5. Data collection strategy.....	5
3. RESEARCH FINDINGS	6
3.1. Aspects that SNV is doing well in preparing youths for private sector engagement	6
3.2. Challenges being faced in the private sector engagement with the youths	8
3.3. Additional efforts expected of SNV to prepare the youths before placement with the private sector companies	10
3.4. Expectations by stakeholders and the youths on private sector engagement	12
3.5. Characteristics of organizations that can effectively engage with the youths	14
3.6. Other strategic stakeholders to enhance private sector engagement	15
4. CONCLUSIONS	18
5. Emergent private sector engagement model for youth employment.....	18
Reference list	19
1 Appendices.....	20

List of Tables

Table 2.1:1: Data collection tools and data sources 4
Table 3:1: Research participants..... 6

List of Acronyms

FDGs	Focus Group Discussions
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ILO	International Labour Organisation
KII	Key informant interview
KPC	key informant, private company
LEED	Local Economic and Employment Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SNV	Netherlands Development Organization
TORs	Terms of Reference
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education Training

Executive Summary

The study focused on private sector engagement for youth employment in Zimbabwe and Zambia. An action research methodology was employed utilizing qualitative methods of interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). The interviews were administered to representatives of private sector companies and service providers while the FGDs were conducted with the youths. The main objective of the study was to explore the experiences, of the private sector companies and the youths and the findings can be used to guide, improve and reshape the private sector engagement in the two countries to ensure sustainability. Furthermore, the study looked at how existing and future engagements can be best structured to be relevant and responsive to the financial and business needs of young women and young men for their empowerment, while optimizing the longer-term business interest of private sector companies.

The major findings are that the SNV is playing a crucial role in preparing the youths for placement in the private sector companies like the life skills training. On the same, it was noted that there are some areas SNV can strengthen towards improving or reshaping private sector engagement in the two countries. Key among them is the selection criteria used to enroll the youths, skills training in savings and investment and introduction of career counselling component in the private sector engagement process.

There are some challenges that were mentioned with regard to private sector engagement in the two countries. They include that, generally, the youths are limited in customer care communication, marketing and market linkage skills and adaptability to the business environment.

The youths expressed expectations in the private sector engagement which include improvement of commissions for the agents, to move to higher level of agricultural value chain and this being value addition. In addition, they proposed that a revolving fund be establish and the expectation is that it will accelerate funding for projects and more youths can benefit from it beyond the commercial loan facilities. Also, the youths pointed out that the private sector engagement can be more meaningful and mutually productive if the private companies involved have certain attributes like passion for youth development, good communication, accountability, transparency and social inclusion.

The conclusion is that the private sector companies have a potential and play an important role in youth employment in the two countries studied. However, there are some shortcomings which, if addressed, can even make the private sector engagement more effective, productive and absorb more youths. Based on the findings presented and discussed, it appears that the private sector engagement can be reshaped through introduction of the career counselling component with specific elements of mentorship, performance appraisal, monitoring and evaluation.

1. INTRODUCTION TO PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognizes private sector companies as key players in productivity, inclusive economic growth and job creation including having a comparable capacity to absorb the youth into various employment opportunities. This suggests that engaging with private enterprises in a country is an important endeavour for the realization of all sustainable development goals. Most importantly, engagement with private sector for youth employment is of particular relevance to SDG 8 (*Decent Work and Economic Growth*) with one of its objectives that “By 2020, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training”) and SDG17 (*Partnerships for the Goals*). In fact, in 2013, the African Development Bank (AfDB) stated that “A vibrant private sector is the engine of growth which generates decent jobs...” (AfDB, 2013b, p. 1). This statement emphasizes the centrality of private sector companies in their contribution to employment in a country, generally, and by implication, the youth proportion of the population.

International Labour Office [ILO] (2012) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] (2013) and World Bank (2015) concur that around the world governments are constantly in a mood to devise strategies that can increase and sustain youth employment. In fact, the African Development Bank [AfDB] (2017) has estimated that 43% of the global youth labour workforce is “either unemployed, or working but nonetheless living in poverty”. The AfDB goes further to state that on the African continent, 12 million young people enter the labour force annually, while each year only 3 million new jobs are created. It is noted that this situation is worse in sub-Saharan Africa and as a coping mechanism, many young people are mainly engaged in informal employment and entrepreneurship initiatives with low productivity, insecure incomes, and low rates of pay (AfDB *et al.* 2012). The large proportion of the youth population in Africa provides a natural urgency to get the youth into productive formal work to leverage on this ‘demographic dividend’. This is aptly captured by Canning, Raja & Yazbeck (2015) when they say policymakers, with reference to Africa, should “seize the potential ‘demographic dividend’ of a comparatively young population. This is buttressed by Fox & Thomas (2016) who emphatically states that “private sector evidently has a key role to play in the eventual structural transformation of African economies”. From these scholars of youth employment and economic strategies, it can be seen that there is no doubt that any attempt to promote youth employment without private sector engagement would highly likely to fail because there is plenty of evidence that “the most effective employment services rely on private providers (ILO, 2017b; IZA, 2015).

Even if the young people venture into entrepreneurship activities for their livelihoods, it has been well documented that they are less likely to successfully access credit. This is due to a number of factors that work against them such as age limitations for opening a bank account, low financial literacy and lack of collateral security (Donor Committee for Enterprise Development, 2018). However, others have argued that Africa’s youth employment challenge is not about too few jobs but their unemployability due to lack of knowledge and skills required in the industries (Glover & Oosterom, 2018).

It should be noted that there are challenges in the private sector engagement for provision of youth employment. A number of factors constrain private companies from their effective and large-scale participation in youth employment that include financial resources and time. For

smaller companies, they may experience higher costs relative to benefits as well as limited information and technical competences. In addition, companies have a natural fear that after they invested in the youth, a large proportion of them would leave the company before the 'return on investment' is realized and other companies or organizations benefit (Glick, Huang & Mejia, 2015). The authors go on to shed more light that even if a private company may desire to employ the youths, they do not have the skills or the skills may not match what is required in the firm. This brings out a dimension that there is actually no such a thing as perfect matching of youths to the companies. It has also been noted that another constraining factor in the private sector engagement is lack or weak career counselling/guidance in the programme resulting in less motivated and committed youths placed in the various companies.

From the preceding discussion, it is important then to outline facilitative factors for private sector engagement in youth employment. Four enabling factors for successful private sector engagement are discussed and are partly borrowed from Glick, Huang & Mejia (2015) and ILO (2009): Firstly, the youth development/training in the right skills is vital to ensure that the skills are matched to employer needs. Secondly, close and active engagement with employers to understand their needs is another crucial aspect to unlock value for companies to provide employment to the youths. In other words, if the needs of the company are little known or understood, this would result in a misalignment of matching the youths to the company and the relationship becomes less meaningful or useful. Thirdly, the youths should undergo career counselling/guidance to help them reflect and connect their passions, calling or interests to options presented to them. In the case of SNV, the options that would be presented as part of the career counselling are broadly agriculture and renewable energy. Lastly and related to the career counselling, the programme design to have volunteer business mentor or job coaches for the youths to ensure that the initiative strongly relates to their interests. This was a key success factor of the Companionship of Works Association in Kenya and the Sunraysia Indigenous Project in Australia and the Artisans d'Angkor project in Cambodia as documented in ILO (2009, pp. 3 - 4). The case studies presented on pages 3 to 10 in ILO (2009) illustrate the following about the nature of private sector engagement:

- a) Career counselling services is a vital success factor in private sector engagement for youth employment;
- b) Importance of adapting to local needs and mobilising local assets and opportunities.
- c) 'One size does not fit all';
- d) Multi-stakeholder participation is a vital principle;
- e) The need to pay attention to both demand and supply factors in specific sectors and contexts;

This section has demonstrated that private sector engagement is a complex undertaking which requires careful planning, coherent execution, results-based monitoring and evaluation in order to attain the desired mutual value in the relationship. Furthermore, it is clear that the engagement equally demands commitment from the funding partner, private sector company and the youth themselves.

It is against this background that this study sought to gather private sector engagement information in Zimbabwe and Zambia from the youths themselves, participating private companies and service providers regarding youth specific needs, skills and business enterprise preferences. The findings are expected to guide, improve and reshape the private sector

engagement in the two countries. Further the study will look at how existing and future engagements can be best structured to be relevant and responsive to the financial and business needs of young women and young men for their empowerment, while optimizing the longer term business interest of private sector companies.

1.1. Research objectives

The main objectives of the study were to:

- Deepen the understanding of issues from the youth perspective with regard to (self-) employment in agriculture including agribusiness and renewable energy in Zambia and Zimbabwe; that is, the demand side.
- Deepen the understanding of issues from the private sector companies' experience in the OYE project in Zambia and Zimbabwe, that is, the supply side.

In line with the main objectives, the study was guided by the following specific objectives and these being to:

- a) Establish the nature of private sector engagement in the OYE project,
- b) Determine the best model that can be considered to effectively respond to the youth unemployment issue,
- c) Identify issues youths have with the private sector engagement
- d) Establish other strategic stakeholders' views on the private sector engagement
- e) Examine the ideal organizational characteristics that enable private companies to be effective to engage with youth livelihood issues.
- f) Examine the ideal personal characteristics that enable youths to benefit more sustainably to their engagement with the youths

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This was action research and as characteristic of its nature and in respect of the study, the focus was on lived experiences of the participating private companies, young women and men engaged in this employment initiative as well as those who had not yet been engaged. Undoubtedly, qualitative research approach was used and this allowed for extensive interaction with the private company representatives, service providers, young women and men on the subject matter of youth in the business relationship or engagement of youths with the private sector. In addition, the qualitative approach provided deeper understanding of the research participants' experiences, views, feelings and suggestions they had on the private sector engagement in the two countries. Extensive semi-structured qualitative data collection tools, namely key informant interview guide (KII) and Focus Group Discussion guide (FGD) were used as discussed in the next section. In addition, observations were conducted on selected youth's business enterprises.

2.1. Data Collection Tools and Data Sources

The KIIs and FGDs were carefully designed to collect data in a complementary manner guided by the research objectives that are outlined in section 1.1. A face-to-face method was used to conduct key informant interviews, focus group discussions and observations. In cases where it was absolutely impossible to meet with key informants for interviews, the interview guide was sent through email for the individual to complete online. Table 3.1 below outlines the data collection tools to be used and the respective data sources:

Table 2.1: Data collection tools and data sources

	Data collection tools	Data sources (target groups)	Sampling techniques applied
a)	<i>Key Informant Interview Guide:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selected representatives of participating private companies in the OYE project Selected representatives of service providers in the OYE project selected government officials from the line youth ministries and departments Representatives of selected youth associations	A combination of <i>Purposive and random sampling</i> The target informants had to be holders of knowledge/information on youth livelihood issues or had direct experiences on the OYE project
b)	<i>Focus Group Discussion Guide (FGD)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selected young women and men already involved in the project plus those who are yet to be engaged separately. 	<i>Convenient sampling</i> was applied taking advantage of the youth participating in their regular activities or those in close proximity to the FGD venue. Of the 8 to 15 FGD participants, it was important to ensure that group was gender balanced.
c)	Semi-Structured Observation Checklist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selected business enterprises the youth are implementing under the OYE model 	<i>Purposive sampling</i> to ensure that business enterprises that were doing well and those struggling were included in the sample for observations.

The gender balance applied in the sampling of the FGD participants was in line with the SNV philosophy to promote gender equality, gender inclusion and gender justice. Mindful of the socio-cultural dynamics between male and female members in the communities, the research team ensured that equal opportunity was provided to both male and female youths to freely contribute their ideas during the focus group discussions. It should be pointed out that separate focus group discussions were conducted with the youth already engaged in the OYE project and those who were not yet engaged. This is because the youth in these two categories obviously had different experiences and viewpoints on the subject matter of employment and livelihoods, hence, the decision to conduct FGDs with them separately.

In addition to the primary data to be obtained as outlined in Table 3.1 above, secondary data/information was gathered from the relevant documents in line with the requirements of the study. Given that this was an action research, qualitative data obtained from the research respondents outlined in Table 3.1 above formed the data set for the study.

2.2. Training of research assistants

The research assistants for Zimbabwe and Zambia were different. In each country, the research assistants were trained in the morning of the day before fieldwork data collection process

focusing on explaining the focus of the research, data collection tools and data collection techniques. The training also covered community socio-cultural protocols that were necessary for consideration with respect to the different countries and communities enumerated.

2.3. Pilot Testing

In order to ensure that the research methodology worked according to plan, a pilot test-run was conducted in the afternoon following the training of the research assistants. The pilot testing was carried out in each country with selected 2 to 3 key informants under each category of representatives of private companies and service providers. Furthermore, one Focus Group Discussion was held with the youths already engaged in the program and another with the youths who were not yet engaged in the program. One business enterprise was also observed in each country to pilot-test the observation tool. In other words, the planned procedures and all the data collection tools were pilot-tested in each country under the facilitation of the country SNV advisor in each country. Following the pilot testing exercise, the necessary adjustments were made to the research procedures and data collection tools. Thereafter, a full-scale data collection process followed in each country.

2.4. Selection of communities for enumeration

Except for the Metropolitan cities, the unit of data collection was the district and there were one or more districts selected for enumeration in each province and this largely dependent on where the OYE activities were concentrated. In other words, the inclusion criteria for the selection of districts to enumerate were as follows: (i) there are relatively high number of youths engaged in the program; (ii) the district has a relatively high number of private companies and other stakeholders who were actively participating in the OYE project; and (iii) district is not too far from the other active districts. In both countries, there was a deliberate effort to ensure a proportional fair balance of urban and rural districts were selected for enumeration in the study.

2.5. Data collection strategy

SNV, directly or through its local partners, mobilized all the stakeholders required for one-on-one or group interviews to gather at the agreed venue in the district. The entire research team in the country met the stakeholders at that venue and collect data accordingly. The point to note here is that all the stakeholders may not be scheduled to be at the venue at the same time but at intervals in relation with the team's capacity to handle a given number of stakeholders. Where required, more than one day could be scheduled for data collection in a particular district. Before the data collection process began at the venue, the team leader provided an introduction to the stakeholders highlighting why they were selected and how the data collection process would proceed. Following the introduction session, some two team members conducted FGDs while others focused on the one-on-one interviews. The research team used a combination of writing and recording responses from both the interview and FGD research participants.

The research team started with Zimbabwe to collect data and when they reached about 75% completion, they moved to Zambia. The decision to start with Zimbabwe was quite natural in the sense that the core team members were all Zimbabwean and it was also convenient.

3. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings are presented and discussed guided by the research objectives. Given the nature of the data gathered being qualitative, some selected verbatim statements from private sector key informants were used and they are denoted as KI (Key Informant) followed by the name of the company.

Thematic data analysis was applied together with text and word frequency analysis methods. These methods of analysis were used in a complementary or reinforcing manner in order to achieve rigor and comprehensive understanding of the issues that emerged from the data sets. Furthermore, verbatim statements were integrated in the discussion of findings and this was done to bring out the power of views expressed by the research respondents. It was also important to interact the findings with literature in order to ascertain corroboration or contradiction to earlier studies on the same subject matter of youth unemployment.

Table 3.1 below is a summary of the research participants in both countries disaggregated by their categories.

Table 3.1: Research participants

Countries	Categories of research participants						
	Private company key informants	Service Providers and Government officials	Total KIs	Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	Youths who participated in the FGDs		
					Male	Female	Total
Zimbabwe	9	7	16	14	105	328	433
Zambia	16	8	24	7	39	43	82
Total	25	15	40	21	144	371	515

As shown in Table 3.1 above, a total of 40 key informants and 515 youths participated in the study. Of the 40 key informants, 25 (62.5%) were private company key informants while 15 were service providers. Out of the 15 service providers, seven were government officials and this being five in Zimbabwe and two in Zambia. With regard to the youths who participated in the Focus Group Discussions, 28% (144) were male while 72% (371) were female. It should also be pointed out that of the 21 FGDs conducted, seven were with the youths who had not yet enrolled into the OYE project and this being four in Zimbabwe and three in Zambia.

The next sections focus on the specific findings in relation to the research objectives.

3.1. Aspects that SNV is doing well in preparing youths for private sector engagement

Given the fact that the success of the private sector engagement depends on multiple factors including the extent of preparatory work on the youths before they are matched/placed to the identified companies, the study revealed four key aspects SNV is doing well in this regard. Firstly, the signed memoranda of understanding are flexible and this allows the private sector to adjust accordingly. Private sector companies are comfortable with the understanding because it accommodates the private sector model. SNV has not prescribed models to the private sector companies but the modes of operation are based on how best:

The SNV allowed us to use our model and not impose a model on us. We already into honey production and have been running schemes within communities already. (KI-Treetop).

Secondly, from the interviews conducted with the private sector companies in Zimbabwe and Zambia, they expressed that the youths are well trained in life skills and general business skills and this featured prominently from both the private sector companies and the youths themselves as shown in Figure 3.1 below.



Figure 3.1.: Skills training

This finding was mostly emphasised by the key informants from Treetop, Masimbi Farm and Good Nature Agro. The key informant from EasiSeeds buttressed this notion saying that “*the young people are groomed from a very tender age to be technical and entrepreneurial*” which was concurred by another key informant from AgriSeeds who pointed out that “*the training that youths receive from SNV enables them to start up agricultural businesses anywhere along the value chain.*” The finding appears to address a concern noted earlier by Mejia (2015) and Glover and Oosterom (2018) that Africa’s youth employment challenge is not about too few jobs alone but their unemployability due to lack of knowledge and skills required in the industries.

Thirdly, the private sector company key informants, with operations in the rural areas stated that SNV’s inclusion of youths from the rural areas who are often marginalized or excluded from economic opportunities resonates with the fact that employment is an ‘equal opportunity’ practice. This is powerfully noted by Impi Power and Masimbi Farm representatives respectively who shed more light that:

“The approach of SNV working with the youths at grassroots level and targeting the marginalized especially those who are in search of jobs, shows that there is no segregation in the programme and the criteria is not based on performance at school which may be a hindrance to many youths who might want to participate in the project The project (KI - Impi Power).

SNV does well by targeting the youth who are the most vulnerable and marginalized with regards to issues of unemployment (KI - Masimbi Farm).

Lastly, the private sector key informants also mentioned that their engagement in the programme is made easier because of the SNV’s good and effective communication with the engaged private sector companies and the other stakeholders in the youth employment efforts.

3.2. Challenges being faced in the private sector engagement with the youths

From the interviews conducted with the private sector, they shared six challenges they regularly face with the youths in the engagement process and they are discussed here in turn:

The first one is limited customer care communication and marketing skills among the youths. The Impi Power key informant expressed this dimension this way, “*sometimes, the youths express their negative emotions and frustrations to the customer/clients* (KII – Impi Power). This is buttressed by another key informant from Zambuko as presented below.

Youths not confident in selling solar products as a sources of income, hence sales are low. Youths are weak in terms of marketing the products. More so, the youths appear like they do not yet view their placement in various companies as employment, but more of a side livelihood activity. This means that they continue to look for formal employment or other sources of income hence affecting their commitment in terms of time and eventual profitability (KI-Zambuko)

The second challenge relates to the fact that some youths are rarely punctual to meetings or appointments with management or event with potential clients. This point was emphasized by one of the key informants who said that the “*youths do not easily avail themselves for meetings, the issue of punctuality is a serious cause for concern*” (KI - Impi Power). They noted limited regard to punctuality also linked to the fact that some youths view their placement in the companies as some kind of transition to their professional ambitions as the statement below reveals.

To promote a mind shift that the youths should be made to understand that these projects are not a destruction to their other professional ambitions and dreams, but if anything this is exposing them to the world of business and making them productive. (KI-Kindly Rabbits).

It is quite clear from the quotation above that it concurs with Zambuko’s observation in the first challenge, which implies that this is not only an issue in one sector.

The third one is to do with the fact that some youths struggle to adapt to the business dynamic environment. This aspect was stressed by one of the key informants who said that:

For instance, we started with the commission model but discovered that it was very limiting and have now changed business strategy to require the youths get the products at dealer price and then they can put their own make-up (KI – Solar Shack).

The above statement implies that the youths may need reinforcement on business orientation that flexibility to respond to the changing business environment is one of the vital success factors in profit-making enterprises.

The fourth challenge is about limited focus and commitment to work among some youths and this requires a “*close and continuous engagement to ensure that they become steady and committed to their assigned business responsibilities*” (KI – Good Nature Agro). Another informant underscored saying, “*they [the youths] are simply not committed* (KI - Impi Power). The said lack of commitment might suggest that the youths concerned are less interested in the work they are doing or they are not clear about how business functions in real life. This finding resonates with ILO (2009) who earlier noted that career counselling should be a vital

component of any private sector engagement process for youth employment in order to instil a sense of commitment, among other things.

The fifth challenge mentioned was that some youths actually expect to be paid for their participation in the companies' activities like to attend organisational meetings or workshops as the statement below indicates.

For every gathering conducted, the youths want to be paid and this is not a good business culture. In Mumbwa, the youths actually wanted to be paid to assemble their own beehives which was to their benefit (KI -Treetop).

The sixth challenge is market linkages for the youths to help them increase sales of their products. On this aspect, it was pointed out by both the key informants and the youths themselves that it would also be helpful if business expos could be designed for youths to showcase their products.

The seventh challenge is that there are middle persons (also known as *makoronyera* in Zimbabwe) who impose buying prices on the youth's business products/goods especially agricultural produce for those in the rural areas. Unfortunately, this is taking advantage of the fact that the young farmers often do not have own vehicles to transport their produce to the market of their own choice and that they have limited knowledge of the markets in towns. A close examination of this situation shows that it is highly probable that the youths concerned are adversely affected as far as entering into commercial relationship with the private sector. In fact, the private sector companies view this situation as a blockage to the functional commercial business relationship. From the findings, this is because, usually, the young farmers make little profit margin while the middle persons make huge profits, thereby making it an unfair trading.

The last challenge pointed out was the limited coherence/coordination among the private sector companies in their efforts to provide youth employment and business opportunities. This is especially a concern among companies that are in the same sector because leveraging on sharing opportunities and challenges for the benefit of making the engagement more productive is compromised when coherence is limited. The quotations below shed more light on this issue.

Communication and activities which are done through the local service providers are sometimes not well communicated and coordinated. *Program not well coordinated, there is an information gap between us as Zambuko and the implementing partner Empretec (KI-Zambuko).*

We receive incomplete and second-hand information and this limits their participation (KI-Alliance Gineries).

Need for competitive team work. At one time Zambuko found itself in a training session with Solar Shack who also deal with solar without prior knowledge and this affected the flow of the session (KI-Zambuko).

SNV and Empretec should give private sector companies adequate information timeously. To illustrate this point, sometimes a training is announced and there is not sufficient time to prepare. In addition, the youths would also not be available because of short notice (KI-Kindly Rabbits).

A close examination of the statement above reveals limited appreciation of work among the youths concerned and an attitude that they just want to benefit from other people's efforts.

3.3. Additional efforts expected of SNV to prepare the youths before placement with the private sector companies

Generally, from the interaction made with the representatives of the private sector companies in this research, it is quite clear that they are committed to sustain the engagement for youth employment. In this regard, there are some aspects they wish if SNV could do in order to adequately prepare the youths before their placement in the various private sector companies and these are outlined below.

a) Skills training in savings and investment

Prioritizing savings and investment as one of the major components of the business/entrepreneurship skills training. It is expected that when the youths are well grounded in savings and investment, growing their businesses would be highly likely to guide their entrepreneurial commitment. The statement below illustrates this notion.

This will encourage the youths to save their money after they have sold the harvest and do meaningful things with the profits (KI - Treetop).

Encourage savings prior to starting the programme so that the youths are better prepared at least to contribute and have a sense of belonging prior to their placement in the companies (KII – Masimbi Farm).

Also, due to weak comprehension of capital and investments issues, there is very little uptake of loans by the youths from Zambuko despite the fact that the facility is available. The finding also demonstrates that private sector companies have “a key role to play” in the economic transformation of African societies through youth placement in the various companies for employment and business development (Fox & Thomas, 2016).

b) Mentorship and refresher trainings

On this dimension, it is expected that a mentorship framework be included in the engagement programme to allow for business coaching and close monitoring and evaluation (KI– AgriSeeds; KI –Good Nature Agro & KI – Solar Shack). Some of the private sector key informants expressed it this way:

SNV should consider providing mentorship when the youth start their business...(KII - Masimbi Farm).

Continuous engagement with the youths to receive direct feedback from them about their experiences in the areas they are engaged (KI -EasiSeeds).

SNV should design and conduct regular refresher courses to keep the youths bonded to the program and amongst themselves for their own synergies (KI – Solar Shack).

Ensure the youths become responsible and are serious since they are the beneficiaries (Good Nature Agro).

There are no tight engagements as yet, youths come once in a while. This situation affects the sales and this might disturb their sustainability since they (youths) won't be

able to make as much income to resemble at least a basic employment. There are also very few active agents (KI-Zambuko).

More business interactions/exposure with role models in the area of business interest would also be helpful (KI-Kindly Rabbits)

Furthermore, Zambuko noted that its own representatives are not well connected to the youths, a situation that makes the relationship between the youths and the organisation to remain at economic and transactional level with limited social capital development. To bridge this gap, Solar Shack initiated a WhatsApp group where they post training materials, new products and challenge youths to teach one another about the products. Beyond sharing business related information, the WhatsApp group has provided the youths a social platform in which a sense of belonging is developed indirectly.

The statements above show that the private companies, generally, desire close and continuous engagement with the youths under their placement to ensure growth of their business ideas and profitably. This argues alongside ILO (2009) that observes that mentorship is one of the key success factors in the private sector engagement process.

c) Parental/guardian support

On this aspect, the private sector companies' representatives interviewed believe that the parental support is currently a missing link. The belief is that if the parents/guardians are also engaged especially at the induction level, this can instil a sense of commitment in the youths and at the same time, creates a family level monitoring and social support provision. The quotations from some of the private sector key informants substantiate this notion.

The major problem facing the youth is lack of parental guidance, SNV need to come up with a three-pronged approach to train the youth, we need to work on the Parent so that they are seen supporting their children by involving them in most house hold planning and implementation of projects" (KII – AgriSeeds).

Some parents and elderly people and from cultural perspectives are not very comfortable that their children be given the bee hives whilst they do not have. This might result in some parents hijacking the operations and also demand the proceeds (KII - Treetop).

The above statements appear to suggest that private companies should be given space to be fire uncommitted youths based on performance appraisals. This way, placement of the youths in the various companies would truly resemble a typical employment. This point is emphasised by a key informant from Kindly Rabbits who retorted that *"some of the youths work as when they want to and this is not helpful at all. On this issue, I suggest that all stakeholders come together and develop a disciplinary protocol to guide in the human resources management of the youths under our placement"* (Kindly Rabbits)

From the statements above, it is quite clear that parents are seen as key stakeholders in ensuring that the youths maintain their commitment and achieve the desired productivity in their chosen areas of focus in the private sector companies. In addition, the second statement discloses that if parents/guardians are not officially engaged, there could be conflicts between them and their adolescent children over the business enterprises.

d) *Etiquette and deportment*

The private sector companies have noted that some of the youths do not know or do not practise the desired etiquette and deportment in their business undertakings as emphasized by the key informant from AgriSeeds who expressed that “*there is also a need to work on the youth about etiquette in business and personal life*” (KI–AgriSeeds). It was also noted that effective customer care communication would be a necessity for inclusion in the etiquette and deportment training as a component of pre-placement preparatory efforts.

e) *Transport for the business agents*

It has been observed that for the youths who work as agents in the various private companies, transport is one of the constraining factors and motorbikes or bicycles are proposed to facilitate efficient transportation of products. This is particularly so for youths whose markets of products are in the rural communities where they have to travel long distances because of there is lack or infrequent public transport. The statement below from one of the private sector key informants summarizes this dimension quite well.

Capital is needed to invest in purchasing bicycles and motorcycles because some of the youths who are agents have to travel long distances to sell their products. For example, an agent in Murehwa had to travel to Mutoko servicing the market before the company had reached the area. This means that the agent had to travel 40 kilometres to get there. In India, they implement the bicycle model and this should be ideal for implementation here too (KI – Impi Power).

The responsibility to purchase the bicycle or motorbike as discussed above could be either the responsibility of the private company or the youths themselves, utilising part of their savings.

3.4. Expectations by youths and stakeholders on private sector engagement

Apart from the private sector companies’ views that were presented and discussed in the preceding sections, the analysis of the data obtained from the focus discussions conducted with the youths and interviews held with service providers revealed some expectations they have about the private sector engagement. In their view, if the expectations are considered, they believe that the private sector engagement can become more attractive and mutually productive and sustainable for both the companies and the youths themselves. Five expectations emerged as outlined and discussed below.

a) *Low remuneration*

Generally, the youths, especially those who are agents, complain about low remuneration like the commissions and any other allowances they receive from the private companies. This issue probably explains the youths’ low motivation and commitment highlighted earlier in this report. From the private sector perspective, they do not have the financial capacity to pay high rates because of stressed economies especially those in Zimbabwe. It would be prudent for SNV to have consultations with the private companies in the same sector, that is, those in agriculture value chain and energy separately to gain an appreciation of their situations and suggestions they might have on the subject matter.

b) *Increase more placement opportunities*

The youths desire that more placement opportunities and attachments are made available especially to those who would have gone through the SNV basic trainings. In other words, the

youths expect that following the training, they should immediately get absorbed, even on short term basis, into the practical experience on what they would have learned as underscored in the statement below.

Arrangements should be done with the private sector to allow those trained to even do short t attachments like even a month do bridge the gap between theory and practical (CSK)

c) Introduce a Revolving Fund

Whilst the savings group are helpful in funding youths' activities, to establish a revolving fund might accelerate design and implementation of projects. These sentiments by the youths were also echoed by other stakeholders.

The private sector engagement model for youth employment is incomplete and not sustainable if avenues of funding are not readily available after the training (KI-Alliance Gineries)

Have a loan fund to be able to exploit livelihood opportunities for the benefit of the youths. Trying to raise funds at the point of the opportunity is not effective. Also borrowing money in the market is very expensive and will not see the youths grow their business at the level and magnitude expected (KI-Onmark).

Obviously, the idea of a revolving fund is expected to increase absorption rate of the youths for employment in the private sector engagement. This is given the fact that there is a high proportion of the youths seeking employment in Zimbabwe and Zambia, this being an Africa's problem in general (AfDB, 2017).

d) Introduce value addition initiatives

The value addition expectation was more widespread among the youths in agricultural value chain in rural communities as shown in a statement below in one of the focus group discussions conducted with the youths in the rural communities of both countries like in Murehwa, Mutoko, Lundazi, Katete, Choma and Mumbwa.

Improving the value chain to our products like establishment of a slaughterhouse will be quite beneficial since we will be able save time and cost and prepared and packaged chickens will attract high prices thereby making more profit. Having grown up in a horticulture-based environment a processing plant is the best business enterprise (FGD04-OP-ZIM).

The view on this aspect was that the private sector companies should not only provide and facilitate markets for raw produce, but also value add through acquisition and training the youths on the use of the equipment. This strategy is expected to result in increased employment for the youths and they can make more money for their produce when value-added. Generally, the private sector is interested to get into the value addition value chain with or in support of the youths' initiatives. In fact, this is something they would like to support through training and provision of the relevant equipment/machinery but of course this requires some significant capital injection.

e) Integrate corporate social responsibility in the private sector engagement for youth employment

The other expectation is that the private sector companies should consider the youths as part of their corporate social responsibility. The logic on this is that it will allow them to provide other youths' needs like tools and infrastructure for various trades. For instance, they can drill boreholes, set up water tanks and irrigation system, purchase livestock, agricultural inputs and then bring in the youths to proceed with crop and livestock production, of course, following an intensive training.

3.5. Characteristics of organizations that can effectively engage with the youths

The reason why it became necessary to explore organizational characteristics that facilitate effective engagement with the youth is that the right characteristics are directly linked to the effectiveness of the youth-based interventions (USAID, 2014). Tabulated below are the characteristics that emerged from the key informants and the youths. The tick (✓) denotes that the characteristic was mentioned by the study participants category shown while the double tick (✓✓) indicates that the characteristic was emphatically mentioned by the study participants category specified. The 'X' means that the study participants category did not mention the characteristic listed.

Table 3.2: Organizational characteristics for effective engagement with the youth

Characteristics	Study participants who mentioned the characteristic	
	Youths	Key informants
Good communication including being sensitive to the level of the youths	✓✓	✓
Accountability	✓	X
Transparency	✓	X
Social inclusion driven	✓	X
Honesty	✓	X
Bottom-up approach driven	✓✓	✓
Passion in youth development	✓	X

The characteristics outlined above are explained in turn below.

a) Good communication including being sensitive to the level of the youths

This referred to the fact that the youths in the private sector engagement are quite diverse in terms of their educational backgrounds and orientation to formal employment. Furthermore, some of the youths have special needs like those living with disabilities. These issues require a responsive communication which may be slightly different from the typical employees in the private sector companies.

b) Accountability

Here the youths meant that if SNV or private sector companies promises something to them, the promise should be fulfilled within the timeframe expected. If circumstances delay fulfilment of the promise or the promise becomes impossible to fulfil, the party concerned should accept the responsibility. Furthermore, if the promise failure is directly linked to adverse performance of the youths, the party concerned should take the blame and not just discredit the youths.

c) Transparency

In all dealings in the private sector engagement, to ensure that communication is open and complete information is shared to all the youths concerned. If this becomes a norm, it promotes coherence of actions and reduces a feeling that certain youths are more favoured than others in the private sector engagement process.

d) Social inclusion driven

This relates to the fact that private sector engagement should not exclude other youths on the basis of gender, religion, age, level of education, ethnicity, living with disability and whether one lives in urban or rural areas.

e) Bottom-up approach driven

Private sector companies to also invest in listening and evaluating ideas and strategies proposed by the youths on particular matters in the business operations.

f) Passion in youth development

This characteristic was mentioned from the background that companies that have youths ‘at heart’ are more likely to understand youth issues and systems and procedures that have a high propensity to propel success in the youths’ endeavors during the private sector engagement process.

While SNV does not have organizational characteristics in its selection criteria of private companies and service providers, the findings shown in Table 4.1 above imply the youths view this aspect as an important one in the private sector engagement. It can be seen that the characteristics were generally mentioned by the youths already engaged, which suggests that either they had experienced organisations with or limited set of these characteristics. The good communication and the bottom-up approach characteristics featured prominently and mentioned by both the youths and the key informants. This can suggest a mutual view of the centrality of these characteristics in private sector engagement.

3.6. Other strategic stakeholders to enhance private sector engagement

The private sector companies, the youths and service providers enumerated in this study concurred that there are strategic stakeholders that can be considered to feed into the private sector engagement process to address some of the challenges, additional efforts required, and expectations highlighted in the previous sections. The strategic stakeholders mentioned outlined in Table 3.3 on the next page. The tick (✓) denotes that the strategic stakeholder was mentioned by the study category of the participants shown while the double tick (✓✓) indicates that the stakeholder was emphatically mentioned by the study participants category specified. The ‘X’ means that the study participants category did not mention the strategic stakeholder listed.

Table 3:3: Other strategic stakeholders necessary for the youth unemployment response

Strategic stakeholders mentioned	Categories of the study participants who mentioned the strategic stakeholders			
	Zimbabwe study participants who mentioned the strategic stakeholder		Zambia study participants who mentioned the strategic stakeholders	
	Private sector key informants	Youths	Private sector key informants	Youths
Ministry of youth	✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓
Ministry of agriculture through the relevant departments like veterinary services, Agritex services, etc.	✓	✓✓	✓	✓
Local authorities	✓	X	✓✓	x
Micro-financial institutions	✓	✓✓	x	x
Traditional leaders	✓✓	✓	✓✓	x
Religious organizations	✓	✓	✓✓	✓
Ministry of health	✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
Schools and vocational training centers	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓
Other strategic NGOs	x	✓	x	✓

A close look at the findings shown in Table 3.3 above, one can see that the stakeholders suggested represent a general cross-section of the societal vocational support system, that is, the government, civil society and private sector. It is also noted that there are some strategic stakeholders that were strongly mentioned by the private sector key informants but not by the youths like local authorities, religious organizations, schools and vocational training centers and traditional leaders. The possible explanation for this is that the youths were either not aware of the stakeholders or could not make a logical link on how they could be useful in the private sector engagement process. This is also linked to the earlier finding that most of the youths had low level of education and this has an implication in understanding how certain things in business and social life operate. One of the key informants shed more light on the rationale to involve more strategic stakeholders in the private sector engagement process and said that *“There is an African adage that goes, ‘it takes the whole village to raise a child and this means everyone in the community has a role to play for the youths to succeed in their endeavors’”*. Table 3.4 on the next page profiles the justifications for the necessity of these strategic stakeholders in the private sector engagement process.

Table 3:4: Justification for the identified other strategic stakeholders

Strategic stakeholders mentioned	Justification for consideration of each strategic stakeholder mentioned
Ministry of youth	The ministry links the youths to Government facilities and funding. The ministry connects youths to other developmental agencies and run trainings. Youths can even access training opportunities outside the country through exchange programs. The ministry also addresses other aspects of the youths like sexual reproductive education and drug abuse which are key in molding the person.
Ministry of agriculture through the relevant departments like veterinary services, agritex services, etc.	The youths engaged in agricultural activities can benefit from the ministry in terms of technical services and perhaps affordable inputs. Help with price negotiations for the produce.
Local authorities	Most local authorities are in charge of land which is a basic unit of production for any type of business enterprise. Also, some of the business operation requirements/policies are administered by the local authorities.
Micro-financial institutions	Almost all the youths who participated in the study, indicated that they lack or have limited start-up capital. To involve micro-financial institutions will allow for some youths to get the loans for their business enterprises
Traditional leaders	For the youths in the rural areas, it crucial to involve the traditional leaders for two main reasons: (a) they are the owners of land which is needed by the youths for their business enterprises; and (b) they are custodian/gatekeepers of community moral compass which is important for the youths to run their business morally.
Religious organizations	The religious organizations are vital for three main reasons: (a) there are youths in these organizations who can be identified to benefit from the OYE initiative; and (b) the religious leaders can be helpful to mould the character/behaviour of the young women and men so that they conduct business ethically. C) provide free decent venues for meetings
Ministry of health	The general health welfare of the youths is crucial as they conduct their business
Schools and vocational training centers	Some of the skills that are currently not being provided by the private companies and the service providers, involving carefully identified local schools and vocational centers will be used to augment the required skills. Certification is key as it opens doors for youths elsewhere.
Other strategic Organizations and NGOs	There are NGOs include youth-based ones that focus on youth issues including provision of internships and employment. Could partner in providing basic facilities like boreholes to the community. The community is key in improving the commitment of the youths to the program. Then there are trade and market-related organization such as ZimTrade which are key in providing links to regional and international markets.

It can be seen that the stakeholders outlined in Table 3.4 above clearly indicates that the issue of the youth employment should leverage on a multi-sectoral approach. This is because no one entity can address the varied needs of the youths and challenges they are facing. In fact, ILO (2012) argues that fragmented interventions are less likely to achieve sustainable livelihood options and decent work for young people but involvement of a wide range of stakeholders. So, what is key is to adapt or develop a framework to guide the coordination of the various strategic stakeholders in the private sector engagement process for youth employment.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The findings presented and discussed clearly indicate that private sector companies, together with other strategic stakeholders remain key players in youth employment and business development. This is because they: (a) provide practical solutions in their areas of business operations like in agriculture and renewable energy like solar; (b) are competent to empower the youth financially through training in savings and investment and also provide loans; and (c) knowledgeable and experienced to link the youth to the relevant suppliers and markets for their products. Generally, private sector companies, if adequately supported in preparing the youths before placement, have a potential to contribute meaningfully to youth employment and business development. The support is needed because the reality is that the private sector companies are operating in the same stressed economy where the youths are struggling to be employed or have viable business enterprises.

5. EMERGENT PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT MODEL FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

From the study findings presented and discussed in the preceding sections, it is quite probable that an emerging private sector engagement model for youth employment would be anchored on Career Counselling and Mentorship (CCM) with the following key elements:

Identification and selection: A selection criteria is vital with clear inclusion-exclusion parameters to ensure that the youths with the passion/interest and the right attitude in agriculture and renewable energy are recruited into the programme. Having passionate and interested persons is likely to increase commitment and productivity.

Savings and investment: The principles and practice of savings and investment to be included in the Career Counselling and Mentorship model.

Business etiquette and deportment: To include business communication, personal effectiveness and emotional intelligence including on the use of modern technologies for customer engagement and relationship.

Value addition: Particularly in the agriculture value chains, to explore opportunities for value addition.

Results-Based Monitoring and evaluation framework (RBMEF): This will have both quantitative and qualitative indicators to track progress of the youths placed in the various private sector companies. This RBMEF will be at two levels, these being at the private sector company and SNV; where the former feeds into the latter. Capacitation on this aspect to include the use of online computer-based tools.

Reference list

Will be inserted in the final version of the report

1 Appendices

Will be inserted in the final version of the report