



END OF PROJECT REPORT

Scaling Up Youth Employment in Agriculture Initiative OYE

Period covered: November 2019 – December 2023

Submission Date: 30 April 2024



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
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Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC



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Executive Summary

The report presents Phase 1 proceedings of the OYE project, implemented in Zambia and Zimbabwe by SNV Netherlands Development Organization and partners. The project aimed improved livelihoods and future prospects for 20,000 underprivileged young people between the ages of 15-35 among whom at least 50% are young women. The project focused on opportunities in the Agriculture, Energy, and Green Jobs sectors to achieve three intermediate results:

- Out-of-school youth secured dignified and fulfilling (self-) employment.
- Employment ecosystem actors provided opportunities for youth (self-) employment.
- Knowledge development and improved youth policy coordination.

By utilizing market-based, participatory, and innovative approaches, the project equipped young people with essential tools, skills, and networks for enterprise development and employment. The project facilitated linkages between the labour market and skilled youth and supported the development of inclusive markets, policies, and financial access. Key outcomes of the project include:

Acquisition of productive assets: 13,830 youth in Zimbabwe and Zambia acquired assets such as land and agricultural equipment, improving production and generating income.

Improved transition to employment: Zimbabwe witnessed a youth employment transition rate of 56.29%, while Zambia boasts an impressive rate of 85%. Employability skills training programs, mentorship, and coaching sessions contributed to these positive outcomes.

Increase in average incomes: In both Zambia and Zimbabwe, targeted youth experienced significant income growth, particularly in the agri-food sector. The project achieved an annual average income of USD 1,404 in both countries, exceeding the target of USD 720. Additionally, females earned USD 1,284 per annum. Income diversification, targeting of profitable value chains, and education level were identified as key drivers for income increase across the countries.

Securing dignified and fulfilling (self-) employment: The project positively impacted 15,553 young individuals, exceeding its target of reaching 12,000 youth. It actively engaged ecosystem actors to contribute to creating an enabling environment for youth employment.

Agri-food sector as the prominent source of employment: Approximately 90.8% of females and 89.7% of males were employed in the agri-food sector. The energy and green jobs sectors showed lower employment proportions.

Success in knowledge development and policy coordination: Collaboration with 122 organizations and development of 22 knowledge products exemplified compliance with core components of National Youth Policies.

The OYE project demonstrated resilience in adapting to challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, through digital platforms, virtual training, and increased financial support. Efforts were made to engage the private sector through credit guarantee facilities and mentorship programs. The project prioritized gender and social inclusion, addressing gender-based violence and promoting women's participation in economic activities. Looking ahead, the project aims to ensure sustainability through the establishment of youth champions, integration into government structures, and collaboration with TVETs, knowledge institutions, and the private sector. By leveraging partnerships and existing initiatives, OYE strives to create lasting impact and promote youth employment in Zambia and Zimbabwe.

List of abbreviations

ABS	Advanced Business Skills
AFCTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
BLS	Basic Life Skills
CDF	Constituency Development fund
COP	Conference of Parties
DQA	Data Quality Assurance
FCDO	Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GESI	Gender and Social Inclusion
HIT	Harare Institute of Technology
ILO	International labour Organisation
INCREASE	Increasing Climate Resilience in Energy and Agricultural Systems and Entrepreneurship
IPTT	Indicator Performance Tracking Tool
IYF	International Youth Fellowship
JCTR	Jesuit Centre for Theological reflection
LSP	Local Service Provider
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
NGOS	Non-Governmental Organisation
NOP	National Organic Produce (Pvt) Limited
NUST	National University of Science and Technology
OYE	Opportunities for Youth Employment
PMPE	Push-Match-Pull-Enable
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation
SEEDCO	Seed Company
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SNV	Netherlands Development Organisation
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
TDC	Techno preneurship Development Centre
TEI	Team Europe initiative
TVET	Technical, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training
USD	United States Dollar
WB	World Bank
YSAL	Youth Saving and lending
ZADT	Zimbabwe Agricultural Development Trust
ZAMSTATS	Zambia Statistics Agency
ZIMSTATS	Zimbabwe Statistics
ZITF	Zimbabwe International Trade Fair
ZMK	Zambians Kwacha

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1. Introduction

This report presents the proceedings of Phase 1 of the Opportunities for Youth Employment (OYE) project. The OYE project has been implemented in Zambia and Zimbabwe by SNV Netherlands Development Organization and partners from May 2019 to October 2023 with a no-cost extension of two months up to December 2023 with funding from the Embassy of Sweden (SIDA) and the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC). The report summarizes project achievements, challenges, learnings and shared recommendations for future programming. The goal of the project in Zambia and Zimbabwe was to improve livelihoods and prospects for 20,000 underprivileged young people between the ages of 15-35 among whom at least 50% are young women. The project sought to contribute to an enabling and inclusive ecosystem for sustainable youth employment and to more effective policy implementation in the two countries. Overall, the project contributed to sustainable and upscaled employment and enterprise opportunities for young people, with priority given to “green” opportunities in and around the climate smart agriculture and renewable energy sectors. To achieve the goal, the project targeted opportunities in the Agriculture, Energy and Green Jobs sectors to achieve three inter- mediate results:

1. Out of school youth have secured dignified and fulfilling (self-) employment.
2. Employment ecosystem actors provide opportunities for youth (self-)employment.
3. Knowledge development and improved Youth Policy Coordination.

The project applies market-based; participatory and innovative approaches to provide out-of-school, underprivileged, underemployed, and unemployed young women and men with the tools, skills, and networks to identify enterprise development and employment opportunities. It facilitates linkages between the labour market (demand side) and skilled youth (supply side) to stimulate employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. The project supports the development of inclusive markets and policies (Enable), applied a market-based approach in creating linkages for financial access and creating employment and entrepreneurship opportunities (Match and Pull) and provision of social, leadership, financial literacy, and business development skills (Push). Through these approaches, the project addresses youth unemployment and lost hope which results in risky behaviour exposing both male and female youth to HIV, substance abuse, early pregnancy, and marriage.

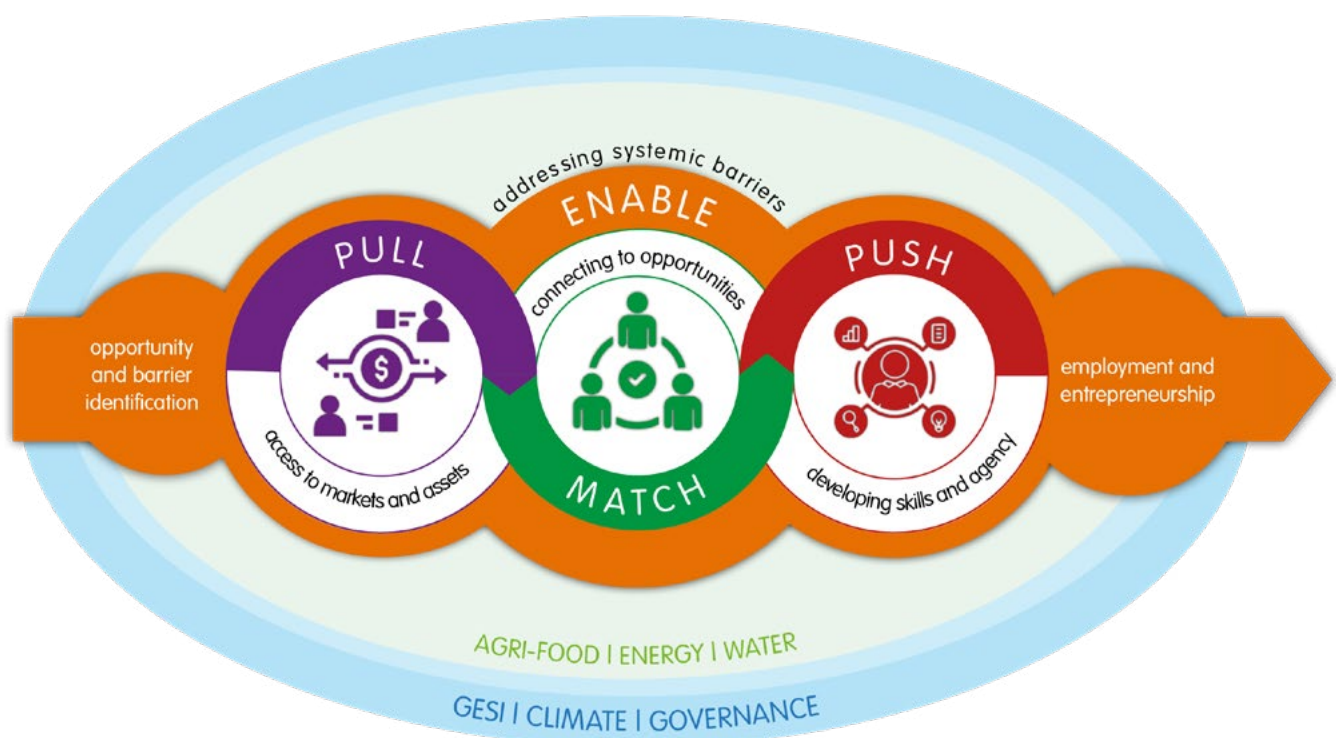


Figure 1 YEE Push-Match-Pull-Enable model approach to youth employment and enterprise development

2. Context of Zimbabwe and Zambia

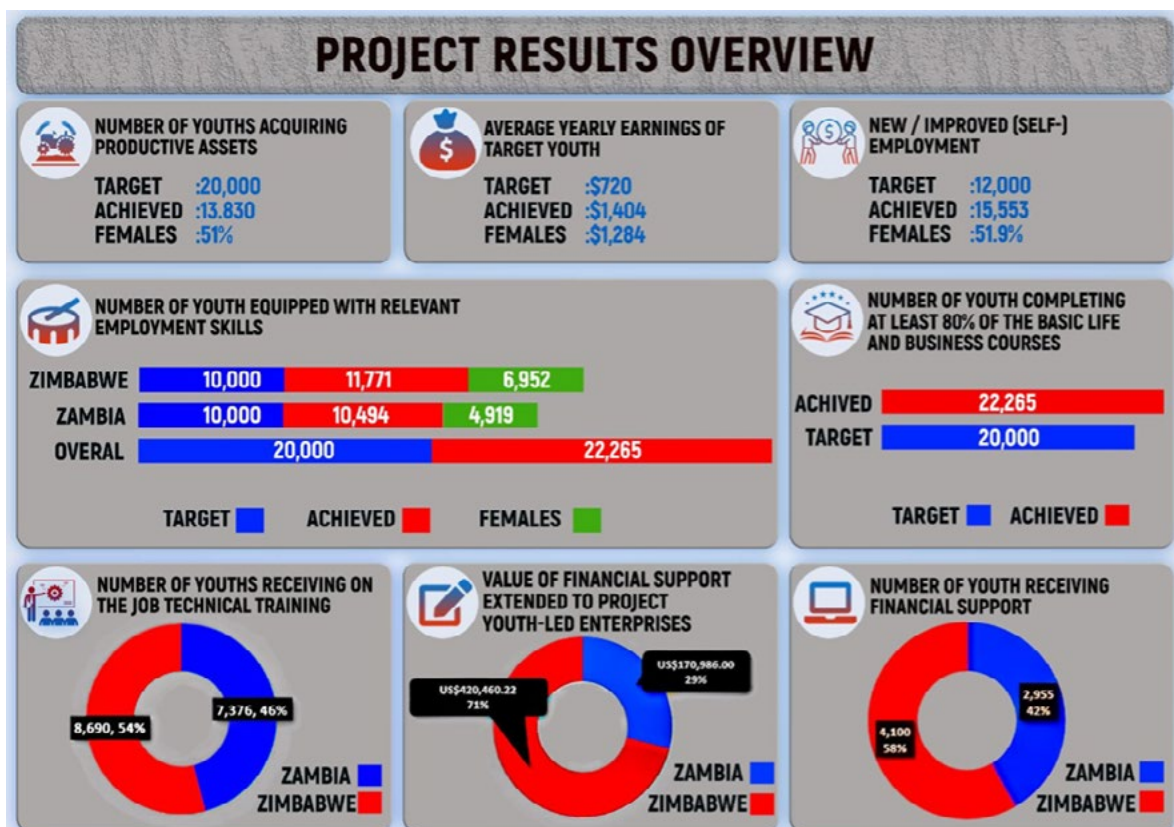
Zambia and Zimbabwe have political systems that allow for the dispensation of the rule of law. In Zambia, the 2021 landmark elections ushered in an opposition United Party for National Development (UPND) into office. Youth participation in the elections was equally impressive in Zimbabwe. Out of 150 members of parliament in Zambia, 6 (4%) are youth, of which 1 is female. The 2020 and 2021 shift witnessed an average exchange rate in Zimbabwe of approximately 1 USD to 321 ZWL in 2021 (XE, 2024). Following Zambia's debt burden, the 'new dawn' government entered a USD 6.3 billion debt restructuring with the International Monetary Fund. This led to an upsurge in petrol prices to 21.16 kwacha (\$1.29) per litre from K17.62 per litre, and diesel prices rose to K20.15 per litre. The cost of living for a family of 5 in Zambia rose from K5,395 in January 2019 to K9,267.3 by 2023 (JCTR, 2023).

Zimbabwe's population in 2021 was estimated to be approximately 15,993,524 (Worldometer, 2024). One measure by the Zambian government to create employment and reduce poverty was the introduction of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) (25.7 million USD per constituency). Financial inclusion among youth in 2020 was 69.4% in Zambia (World Bank, 2020).

The cellular network coverage in Zambia stands at 69.9%, with Zimbabwe at 97.2% residing where there is network (ZimStats, 2023). In 2022, Zambia experienced floods

which led to crop destruction and loss of livelihood, especially in the southern province. In 2020, both Zambia and Zimbabwe were affected by disruptions in small business operations and most business owners went out of employment.

The operational context for both Zimbabwe and Zambia reveal unique economic and social challenges facing these nations, and the cost of living increased significantly due to an inflation rate of 98.55% in 2021 and 193.4% in 2022, reaching 314.5% in 2023 (Trading Economics, 2023). COVID-19 has intensified youth unemployment in both Zimbabwe and Zambia, aggravating already high rates. Economically, the pandemic led to significant contractions in both economies, affecting sectors that largely employ youth such as tourism and small-scale businesses. The lockdown measures also stifled entrepreneurial ventures, further limiting job creation opportunities for young people. As a result, many young people faced reduced income, increased poverty, and heightened economic instability. On the social front, the absence of employment and income security for youth led to increased vulnerability and a risk of social ills such as crime, drug use, and mental health challenges. Furthermore, educational disruptions due to school closures compounded these problems, threatening the longer-term employment prospects for many young people.



3. Impact

3.1. Description of intended and unintended effects (outcomes / impact)

Project Impact: Improved livelihoods and prospects for 20,000 youth

Indicator 1: Number of youth acquiring productive assets

The project recorded a total of 13,830 youth in Zimbabwe and Zambia who acquired productive assets, with a female-to-male ratio of 49.9% to 50.1% respectively. Productive assets, generate income or appreciation in value, thereby improving production for youth in both countries. Key tangible assets include land and agricultural equipment, such as ploughs and livestock (cattle, goats), that were acquired by young people in Zimbabwe and Zambia. Some young women and young men in both countries utilized cattle to cultivate their land and engaged in the business of renting out their services for land cultivation to clients. This highlights that the future of youth having productive assets in Zimbabwe and Zambia points towards mechanization, which will enable scalability and further development.

Indicator 2: Improved transition from unemployment to employment for out of school youth

Zimbabwe and Zambia have placed significant emphasis on equipping youth with essential employability skills such as basic life skills, technical training, mentoring, and coaching. In Zimbabwe efforts have been made to provide young individuals with comprehensive training programs that cover not only technical skills but also essential life skills. These initiatives include mentorship opportunities and coaching sessions, helping youth develop the necessary competencies to thrive in the

job market. Similarly, Zambia has implemented robust technical training programs, imparting practical skills to out-of-school youth. Alongside technical training, mentorship and coaching have played a pivotal role in guiding and supporting young individuals, enhancing their employability prospects. Through these concerted efforts, Zimbabwe has witnessed remarkable progress in the youth employment transition rate, which currently stands at 56.29%. This reflects the positive impact of imparting employability skills and creating opportunities for young people to thrive in the workforce. Likewise, Zambia's success story boasts an impressive youth employment transition rate of 85%, the variance in transition is as result of positive enabling environment being currently obtained in Zambia.

Outcome 1: Average increase in incomes for 20,000 targeted youth

Indicator: Average yearly earnings target of USD720/annual

Both Zambia and Zimbabwe achieved an impressive increase in average income for both males and females. The average income for males in both countries reached USD 1,404 per annum, while females youth had an average income of USD 1,284 per annum. This exceeded the target income of USD 720 per year. In Zimbabwe, males earned an average income of USD 1,548, with females making USD 1,238. Zambia, on the other hand females earning USD 1,330 while males earned USD 1,500. The agri-food sector played a significant role in boosting income, surpassing the contributions of the green jobs, and energy sectors with horticulture being the most profitable value chain. Furthermore, young people who received secondary education experienced a higher increase in income compared to those with



Figure 2 Average annual earning for employed youth(USD)

Sekani Manda – Solutions to community Challenges after acquiring a productive asset

Sekani Manda, a male youth from Longwe village in Chasesfu district, Eastern Province of Zambia, did not have any hope of life changing in the village. Initially he sought employment in the capital city of Lusaka, but he could not find any prospects. In the village he relied on small-scale farming for survival. However, he joined OYE project and in December 2021 he attended training in basic life skills which opened his eyes to numerous opportunities in his community. Despite limited capital, Sekani identified gaps, particularly the community's challenge in accessing cooking oil, and saw it as a profitable opportunity. Using his earnings, from the field crops, he invested in a vegetable oil making machine, realizing a monthly income of \$416 per month. With accumulated profits, he expanded his land, and he now employs other youth for farming, and delved into poultry farming. Sekani, is now seen as a role model and employer, attests, "Through the OYE program, I have become an individual others look up to. That I am able to be an inspiration for young, unemployed people, I am happy." OYE training not only enabled Sekani to seize opportunities but also inspired him to uplift others and create a positive impact in his community. Sekani's vision is to own a bigger oil processing machine and extend his business to other villages beyond. He wants to be the main supplier of cooking oil in his region



primary or other education levels, mainly because they could quickly understand concepts, read and keep better records. Most of the youth relied on 1 to 2 sources of income to sustain their livelihoods, demonstrating the importance of diversifying income streams. In both countries, young women and men engaged in agricultural activities alongside other businesses like cosmetology, baking, and petty trading, creating stability and minimizing risks. Income diversification also served as a response to seasonal variations, as certain agricultural practices were tied to specific seasons. For instance, the agricultural calendar kicks off with the rainy season from November to March. During the period from April to October, young people explore alternative businesses to generate income. In cases where agripreneurs youth have access to irrigation systems, they can venture into agricultural production throughout the year.

Outcome 2: Out of school youth have secured dignified and fulfilling (self-) employment.

Indicator: Number of youth with new/improved (self-) employment as a result of project initiatives

The Project has surpassed its target of reaching 12,000 youth by positively impacting an impressive total of 15,553 young individuals over four years. When we examine the gender breakdown, we find that in Zimbabwe, 2,920 males and 3,706 females experienced new or improved self-employment opportunities¹, whereas in Zambia, 4,561 males and 4,366 females benefited from similar opportunities. Combining the numbers for both countries, it is evident that the initiatives positively impacted 7,481 males and 8,072 females. Furthermore, in terms of cumulative employment figures, 6,626 youth in Zimbabwe and 8,927 youth in Zambia secured new or improved employment opportunities. Altogether, this showcases the remarkable achievement of the OYE

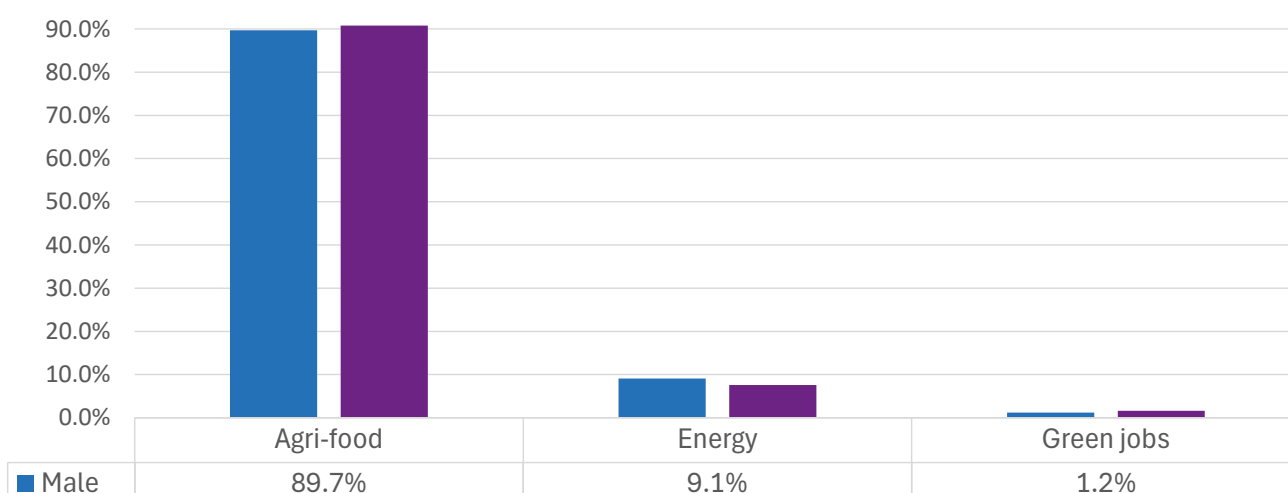


Figure 3 Proportion of youth employed by sector type

¹ Improved self-employment under the projects entails youth who have increased incomes, volume of sales and client base.

Project in empowering and supporting youth, while also highlighting significant gender inclusivity.

The data above in figure 3 reveals that the agri-food sector is a significant source of employment for both males and females. Approximately 90.8% of females and 89.7% of males are employed in this sector. On the other hand, the energy sector shows relatively lower employment proportions. Only 7.6% of females and 9.1% of males are engaged in this sector. This suggests that the energy sector might not provide as many employment opportunities compared to the agri-food sector. Most of the project participants were rural based and most opportunities were found in the agrifood sector. When it comes to green jobs, the labor market indicates limited opportunities in this sector. Merely 1.6% of females and 1.2% of males are employed in green jobs. This suggests that green job initiatives are still in their early stages or face challenges in gaining traction within the labor market. These initiatives have not only created new job opportunities but also fostered greater inclusivity and gender equality. The success achieved thus far encourages us to continue our efforts in empowering youth and driving sustainable economic growth in the future.

3.2. Intermediate Results

Intermediate Outcome 1.1: Number of youth equipped with relevant employability skills.-

Indicator: Number of youth equipped with relevant employment skills

A total of 22,265 youth gained employability skills through a combination of soft and technical skills training. In Zimbabwe, 56.2% of the youth transitioned into employment after receiving soft and technical skills training (6,626 youth in total). Similarly, in Zambia, 85.5% of the youth (8,927 in total) found employment after the trainings with much of the employment found in the Agri-food value chain. The data analysis revealed that both basic life skills training and technical skills training individually contributed to a higher number of young people transitioning to employment. When these two types of training were combined, the effect was even greater. Approximately 63.55% of young people who attended at least two training courses found employment, resulting from improvements in self-esteem, networking, and personal and interpersonal skills gained from the soft skills training. On the other hand, the acquisition of certified hard skills, which often involved practical experiences such as on-the-job training and internships, increased the chances of youth securing wage or self-employment in specific trades. Business skills were identified as crucial for sustaining young people in their entrepreneurial endeavors. Therefore, investing in a combination of basic life skills

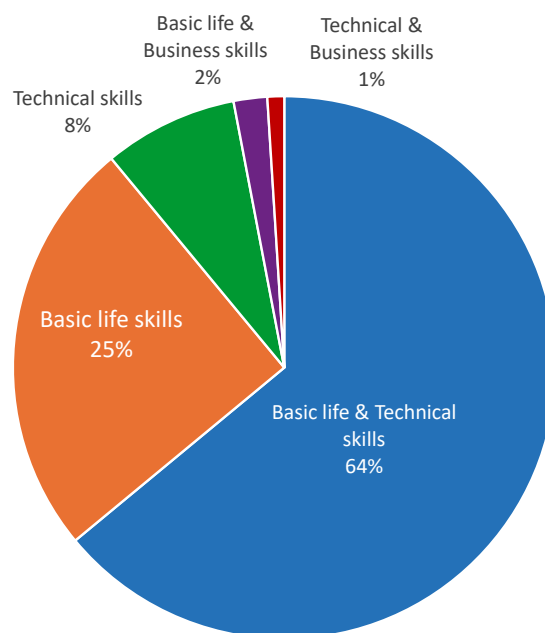


Figure 4 Employability Skills contribution to employment in Zimbabwe

and technical skills training proved to be highly effective and yielded significant results.

Furthermore, targeted Advanced Business Skills (ABS) trainings were provided to youth enterprises with high growth potential, those moving towards formalization, or those with a strong desire to access commercial funding from financial institutions. A further analysis of data for youth transitioning to employment in Zimbabwe after training reveals that basic life and technical skills (64%) together had a higher impact in contributing to youth transitioning to employment, followed by basic life skills (25%) and technical skills (8%). The figure below highlights the data analytics for the employability skills' contribution to employment totals for Zimbabwe.

Intermediate Outcome 2.1: Employment ecosystem actors provide opportunities for youth (self-) employment

Indicator: Employment ecosystem actors (public and private sector) engaged in providing opportunities for youth (self-) employment.

The success of the OYE Push, Match, Pull, Enable (P-M-P-E) approach hinged on the effective engagement of ecosystem actors in contributing to creating an enabling environment for the implementation of the project and making economic opportunities for youth accessible and sustainable. Collaborations were established with several stakeholders, including the Governments of Zambia and Zimbabwe, civil society organizations, academic institutions, financial institutions, and private sector companies. The project engaged 81 (51 in Zimbabwe and 30 in Zambia) Private Sector Companies, 9 Financial Institutions (3 in Zambia and 6 in Zimbabwe), Grassroot Organizations (13 in Zambia and 6 in Zimbabwe), as

well as 11 Knowledge Institutions (3 in Zambia and 8 in Zimbabwe), and the Government, who acted in various capacities providing several opportunities for the youth. In Zambia for example the Good Nature Agro provided youth with an outgrower scheme in Soya beans in Katete and Lundazi Districts while Tree Tops Honey in the honey value enabled youth to participate in the production of honey. The two companies provided market and employment for youth. This resulted in 15,553 youth benefitting from these arrangements [Zambia: 8,927 (4,366 females); Zimbabwe: 6,626 (3,678 females)]. The detailed list of the ecosystem players is explained in detail in the Annexes. The opportunities were presented through policy development and/or adjustments, trainings, and support in social areas not fully covered by SNV, such as SRHR and GBV, and recogn certificates of completion of training, respectively.

Systems transformation elements:

1. **National Youth Policy:** In Zambia, the project contributed to knowledge generation in line with the Zambia National Youth Policy through the Ministry of Youth and Sport. The Ministry of Youth and Sport recognized the OYE project (SNV and its partners) role in youth employment and was actively engaged in some of the policy events, such as the Africa Continental Free



Amplifying youth voice through advocacy

Elizabeth Phiri, an OYE youth participated in the Africa SDG summit held in Lusaka from 14th to 18th August 2023. Basic Life Skills from the OYE project equipped her with leadership skill and the ability to represent fellow youth. During the SDG conference, she added her voice on the challenges faced by youth in accessing various services through a panel of discussion with distinguished guests. Her submissions were picked up by the international and national community for inclusion in key policies. Being part of the OYE project cultivated Elizabeth's advocacy and leadership potential. In her community, she represents fellow youth in civic spaces

empowerment footprint of the OYE project, it has been included in the list of projects which are seen as contributing to advancing the objectives of the "Team Europe Initiative- TEI- on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment" in Zimbabwe – an initiative spearheaded by several European donors and Switzerland.

2. **LSPs Receive Capacity Building to Implement the OYE Market-Based Approach** – With most localized grassroots organizations solely focusing on youth training, through providing technical and mentorship support, six local organizations in Zimbabwe and thirteen in Zambia were supported to effectively implement the OYE market-based approach in a total of 32 districts (11 in Zimbabwe and 21 in Zambia). These LSPs are now offering market-based youth economic empowerment solutions in various districts in Zambia and Zimbabwe. In Zambia the LSPs linked youth to private companies such as SEEDCO, and also supported them to access the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), through capacity building to become legally registered and linkages. The list of LSPs and Districts is found in the Annexes.
3. **Financial inclusion** – Various de-risking mechanisms and youth-friendly financial products (including digital finance) were tested during the activity phase and are being embedded by financial institutions beyond the OYE project duration. For instance, through the Credit Guarantee Facilities in Zimbabwe established by the project and being administered by Empower Bank for both OYE and non-OYE youth, now have better access to affordable and youth-friendly loans to grow and expand their enterprises, even beyond the OYE project duration. In Zambia, a credit facility was developed together with the INDO Zambia bank to offer credit to the youth/ youth groups to boost their businesses; however, this will be implemented in phase 2 of the OYE project.
4. **Improved youth integration by private companies** – The quantum of youth integrated or embedded in the supply chain of large and more established private companies increased due to various project strategies. For instance, in Zimbabwe, more youth managed to be engaged as solar agents and installers, leading to them accessing consignment stock from Solar Shack and Natfort Energy, which was not common due to youth stereotyping by some private companies. Contract farming arrangements were realigned and brokered by the project, leading to more than 2,000 youth being contracted as out-growers, unlike in previous

situations where these arrangements would only benefit the household head. In Zambia, Good Nature Agro and Seba Foods engaged 3,600 youth under the Soybean out grower schemes in central and eastern provinces, while Treetop Honey Company Limited engaged 300 youth under the Bee Keeping value chain. In Zimbabwe, SeedCo contracted youth for sorghum and pearl millet, whilst Shumbatafare engaged youth for African Bird's Eye Chillies.

Intermediate Outcome 3.1: Knowledge development and improved Youth policy Coordination

Indicator: Number of organizations engaged with OYE complying with core components of the Youth policy.

The OYE project worked with a total of 122 organizations, including private companies, NGOs, grassroots organizations, Local Service Providers (LSPs), and knowledge institutions. These organizations complied with the core components of the 2020-2025 National Youth Policies for both countries. The private sector played a significant role in implementing the National Youth Policy by offering on-the-job training and internship opportunities to the youth. They also provided access to input and output markets. Financial institutions collaborated with the OYE project to provide youth-friendly financial products that address the financial needs of young people in line with the National Youth Policy. The project focused on building the capacity of grassroots organizations to adopt the OYE approach, which goes beyond training and promotes youth entrepreneurship. This aligns with one of the main goals of the National Youth Policy. Additionally, the project emphasized the implementation of dual vocational training to equip young people with hands-on technical skills that meet the demands of the labor market.

Indicator: Knowledge products developed on youth employment

During the project, 22 knowledge products were developed, exceeding the initial target of 20. These included four action research papers focusing on Access to Finance, Private Sector Engagement, Gender, and Youth Savings and lendings.

3.3. Detailed summary of activities and achievements (outputs)

Output 1.1.1: Youth receive basic life and business skills training focusing on concrete identified (self-) employment opportunities.

Indicator: Number of youth completing at least 80% of the basic life and business courses

A total of 22,265 youth, comprising 51.7% females, received training in basic life, business, and leadership

skills over the four years, against a target of 20,000. In Zimbabwe, 52% of the total number of trained youth were in urban districts, while 48% were in rural areas. In Zambia, over 90% of the trained youth were in rural areas, while 10% were in urban areas. Basic life skills were offered as a core course for employability to all participating youth. The 5-day Basic Life Skills training manual was adapted to contextual realities during the inception phase, with relevant stakeholders from the departments of Technical and Vocational Education and Training in the Ministry of Youth, the National skills qualification framework from the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, and sector experts from academia participating in the adaptation.

In Zambia, the training was facilitated by government



Coaching and mentoring

Mentorship offers opportunities for access to information, business advisory, networking, access to markets among others. As result, the project has seen young people and their business grow in leaps and bounds. Notable successes include five OYE youth businesses being recognized for having grown from micro- to small enterprises during a graduation ceremony that was organized by the Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises. Ronald Ngwenya, Brian Mpofu, Ambrose Sibanda, Melisa Tshuma, and partner Sibongumenzi Bhang. 'My business has grown since I joined OYE, I now employ 8 other youth in my business' says Ambrose, a mushroom farmer who has received support that includes a matching grant, market linkages, mentorship and coaching for his mushroom enterprises. This has seen him expand scale of his operations from producing 300kg of oyster mushroom per cycle to producing around 3 tons and 2 tons of button and oyster mushrooms per cycle, respectively. 'Since SNV introduced me to mushroom production I have discovered mushroom is gold' Ronald another mushroom farmer weighs in. Ronald started off his mushroom production from rented quarters in Bulawayo. However, seeing the potential and his entrepreneurial spirit he has set up bigger production site at his rural home in the outskirts of Bulawayo.

officials from the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Community Development. In Zimbabwe, the training has been adopted by the TVET system to complement the Training for Enterprise curriculum. During the Covid-19 pandemic, innovative ways of delivering the training, such as the use of digital enhanced methodologies like podcasts and WhatsApp, were piloted in urban areas such as Bulawayo, Harare, and Goromonzi in Zimbabwe. The training was offered by LSP staff, local extension, TVET staff, and youth representatives. In Zambia, youth were trained in basic life skills in collaboration with government officers such as district administrative officers and provincial youth coordinators, who undertook an important role in facilitation. In specific settings, basic life skills were delivered in youth resettlement schemes under the Ministry of Youth and Sport.

Agro-entrepreneurship training model.... Celebrating the successes and adapting to lessons

Delivering the skills training to meet the needs of the labour market, and the aspirations and key constraints faced by the unskilled youth is at the heart of 'Push' arm of OYE. Several models that sought to offer more systemic and transformative solutions were piloted with key partners. Key lessons and successes were realised in the agro-entrepreneurship training model piloted in partnership with the City of Bulawayo Vocational Training Centre. The pilot tested the delivery of shorter courses targeting short turnaround value chains that are attractive to youth such as horticulture, mushroom, rabbitry, and poultry as compared to the traditional 3-year knowledge-based curriculum that is offered by the VTC. It also tested production-based financing model where the financing of the training, income and start-up capital post training was to be bankrolled by the production activities during training based on a 50:25:25 profit sharing model. This ensured that training and recurrent costs are covered, and the youth do not leave the training empty handed but are supported with the funds generated during training to start-up their businesses. Ronald Ngwenya who enrolled under the mushroom training is now an emerging mushroom guru after using the \$113 he received after training towards business start-up. Khuphukile Mlotshwa, also from the mushroom invested his share into a poultry that he has always been running. The mushroom group produced 237kg of mushrooms and made an income of \$791 during training. Owing to the low income generated City of Bulawayo waived their training fees and the funds were shared to cover recurring costs, income, and start-up by the youth. The poultry group went through two cycles of birds per cycle generating \$835. City of Bulawayo waived the fees, 25% was retained to cover recurring costs and the youth decided to use their share to continue producing as a group after the training.

Output.11.2 Youth will receive technical training, mainly in market settings, internships/on-the-job, and other practical settings.

In Zambia and Zimbabwe, a total of 16,066 youth (52.2% females) received technical skills training, surpassing the target of 14,000. The training was delivered through various methods, including collaboration with ecosystem actors. The training was facilitated through youth hubs, private sector-led internships, on-the-job training, learning exchange visits, and peer-to-peer training. Additionally, government extension workers used demonstration sites for practical training.

Output 1.1.3: Youth integrated in innovative financial solutions (including matching grants, blended finance, credit guarantees, etc.).

Indicator: 1. Number of youth receiving financial support

Indicator 2. Value of financial support extended to project youth-led enterprises

A total of 7,055 youth received various forms of financial assistance through the OYE project, amounting to \$533,133.66. The highest amount of funding was delivered through starter kits, which served a dual purpose. Firstly, the starter kits enabled the establishment of demonstration sites used as centers of excellence for skills and technology transfer in a practical way. Secondly, the kits provided start-up capital to the youth, generated from production during practical training. The income was shared by the trainees in a pre-determined profit-sharing model and used to support individual start-ups after the training. In total, \$200,689.61 was disbursed to youth as training kits. Additionally, 146 youth successfully accessed the matching grant fund, while 9 youth accessed commercial funding from the Zimbabwe Agricultural Development Trust. In Zambia, a total of 3,600 youth participated in the out-grower schemes co-financed by the OYE project (\$32,608.7) and Good Nature Agro, receiving technical support from local organizations: Katete and Lundazi District Women Development Associations. The scheme began with 1,100 youth accessing seed loans of 25KGs of soya beans and repaying 75KG each, leading to an increase in the number of participating youth to 3,600. Other products such as beekeeping targeted 300 youth in Copperbelt and northern provinces. Seven Youth Groups, each having an average of 15 members, accessed CDF amounting to K134,000 (\$6,872) from Southern, Northern, and Eastern Province.

Youth Saving and Lending

Overall, the project trained 8,848 youth in youth saving and lending schemes, with a total of 565 groups comprising 8,848 youth, of which 4,988 had 53% women participation. In Zambia, a total of 6,327

Saving to grow their business

Internal savings and lending groups have proved to be an accessible and innovative source of funding for youth businesses. Sunshine group from Mangwe district is one of the groups established under the OYE project whose members have benefitted immensely from the saving and borrowing activities. The group is composed of 8 young women that run various small businesses that include goat farming, poultry, hair salons. The members used funds they were borrowing to grow and diversify their businesses. Providence a goat breeder managed to diversify into poultry and built a fowl with a capacity for 400 birds, Lane Maphosa grew her poultry businesses from keeping 50 to 150 birds per cycle, while others also funded different items in their businesses. The group accumulated a total savings of R38,569.00 (USD2,023.33) by the end of December 2023 and at sharing out each member received a share-out of R4331 that they injected into their business and left R490 each as the initial contribution for the next saving cycle. 'ISAL funds have helped us a lot in businesses, if it was not for the ISAL I would not have been able to build this fowl run' says Providence group has been one of the members.



youth were trained in savings and lending schemes, after which they formed savings groups with an average of 25 youth per group. A survey on savings and lending schemes revealed that 53.3% of females were participating in the schemes in the 205 Savings groups and the entire Savings portfolio at the close of 2023 was \$108,695.7. Savings and lending groups created an opportunity for members to access finance for investment into their businesses with flexible requirements that from the traditional banks.

In Zimbabwe, the YSAL methodology was promoted, resulting in the training of 2,521 youth and the formation of 360 groups. An assessment in February 2023 showed that 74 groups were actively engaged in saving and lending activities, with 471 youth participating. Furthermore, a total of \$15,625 was raised in savings, and \$45,974 was borrowed by the youth to fund their business activities.

Output 1.1.4: New youth-led enterprises mentored towards lasting profitable economic activity, enterprise registration and maturing, as well as leadership.

Indicator: Number of new youth-led businesses and support services facilitated by the project, that exist for >1 year.

A total of 3,964 new youth-led enterprises in Zambia and Zimbabwe received support from the project that focused on providing training and mentorship sessions in areas such as enterprise governance, business management, and access to markets. Mentorship services were delivered to facilitate the growth and maturity of these enterprises, and support included advancing access to markets. The project linked the enterprises to input suppliers and output markets through various platforms, such as national trade and

exhibition forums, virtual fairs, and solar fairs. In addition to the above, the project organized virtual and localized entrepreneurship fairs to create avenues for youth entrepreneurs to exhibit their products, network with industry professionals, and establish connections with local markets. These efforts included district

entrepreneurship fairs in Zimbabwe and district and national fairs in Zambia. The fairs attracted significant participation and provided opportunities for the youth to showcase their products and establish connections.

Furthermore, the project facilitated solar fairs in Harare and Mutare, providing a platform for youth entrepreneurs and solar companies to showcase and market solar products. These efforts also led to one of the youth entrepreneurs exploring the export market through participation in the 95th Zambia National Agricultural and Commercial Show. The project played a crucial role in linking youth-led enterprises to markets, financial services and provision of mentorship. Organizing virtual fairs, and creating opportunities for youth to showcase their products and network with industry professionals enabled youth to be connected to

Output 1.1.5: Establish / Strengthen youth hubs which offer "Bongo Hive"- like products and services to youth in demand of market information and job opportunities' prospects.

Indicator: Number of youth hubs established or strengthened

A total of 5 youth hubs were established, meeting the target of 5. These hubs include the Jairos Jiri Nguboyenja Youth Hub in Bulawayo, the Mabutweni Youth Hub hosted by the Bulawayo City Council, and the Nyamutsahuni Youth Hub in the Nyamutsahuni rural ward of Mutoko in Zimbabwe. The project in Zambia worked with the Ministry of Youth and Sport

to resettle youth and provide basic life, business, and leadership skills at both Mbabala and Mwange Youth resettlement schemes. Additionally, the youth at the resources centers were provided with linkages to private sector companies for marketing purposes, including Treetop in the beekeeping sector and Seba Foods in organic production of soya beans. The youth were also provided with land offered by the government and other productive equipment such as tractors, ploughs, and facilities for learning, such as classrooms and fishponds.

In both Zambia and Zimbabwe, the project focused on developing and strengthening the capacity of the hubs to deliver market-driven youth employment services. These services included life and business skills training, business incubation, and business development support in the sectors of agro-processing, value addition, horticulture, fish farming, and small livestock (poultry and rabbitry), as well as mushroom growing. The capacity development aimed to equip the youth with skills and connect them to the latest technological innovations in agricultural production and opportunities across various nodes in the agriculture and energy value chains.

The hubs facilitated collaboration among various ecosystem players to provide technical training for the youth. Private companies, local development organizations, and government ministries and departments contributed to the trainings. Notable companies involved included Seedco, Neabow, Kindly Rabbits, Zim Agro Solutions, Kutsaga, Rabbit Factory,

solar installations. The hubs also provided Business Development and Incubation services to advance youth enterprises. Examples of such beneficiaries are Ntombifikile Ncube and Ronald Ngwenya in Zimbabwe, who accessed land and business development support for their projects funded through the OYE Matching Grant Facility. In Zambia, youth resettlement schemes provided opportunities for youth to access training facilities and expertise, acting as a bulking center for various agricultural commodities produced by the youth.

Moreover, the hubs played a key role in providing safe training, production sites, and produce aggregation points, promoting gender equality and social inclusion. They were managed by locally known organizations and were located within close proximity to the youth, making it easy for youth, people with disabilities, and young women to access training services. The inclusive approach created opportunities for gender equality and social inclusion. Additionally, individuals with physical challenges were also able to access the services in alignment with the policy. The hub in Mutoko significantly contributed to the economic productivity of the area, offering solar drying services. The establishment of a horticulture seedling nursery at the hub was commended by the Ministry of Agriculture. Additionally, government empowerment programs for youth were accessed in resettlement schemes and other locations. While some youth benefited directly from financial products, the hubs were established to run independently without additional financial support. In Mutoko, all youth completing training at the hub received starter kits comprising of does and bucks as seed for the new enterprise. In Zambia, the youth resettlement schemes availed youth with land, training, and mentorship. Beyond the project, the youth will continue to be supported by the government officials seconded to the scheme.

Output 2.1.1: Relevant products and services on youth (self-) employment developed.

Indicator: Number of new/ improved products enabling youth employment developed by private sector actors and government

Indicator: Number of new/improved products enabling youth employment.

The main mandate of the project was to develop youth employment products that improve the prospects of youth in accessing opportunities, ultimately leading to youth employment. A total of 61 products were achieved, surpassing the target of 61. The following products were developed: Energy/Sales (12), Horticulture Contract Farming (11), Small Livestock Contract Farming (3), Financial Services (8), Youth Centers (5), and Excellence Ecosystem-Led Training (22). These products were created to establish an enabling environment for



Private sector linked for youth

Mutian Simango (centre) was linked to ImpiPower (right) and engaged as a sales agent for Mutoko. Through a linkage to one of the already established OYE Sales Agent working with ImpiPower, Winfrey Munyurwa (left), Mutian received training to do solar installations for SHS. With this training she now is able to do all things installation, including going up the roof using a ladder. Mutian is adamant that disability is not inability.

youth to access opportunities leading to either formal employment or the establishment of enterprises. The development of the employment products was guided by the OYE Market scan commissioned prior to the implementation of the project, which highlighted some key barriers to youth employment, including lack of financial resources, lack of technical skills, and lack of information on markets and opportunities.

Output 2.1.2: Private sector firms and value chain actors collaborate with OYE to provide opportunities for young men and women as suppliers, service providers, retailers or employees thereby developing their youth inclusive business.

Indicator: Number of private sector firms collaborating with OYE to provide opportunities for youth.

A total of 96 private sector firms and value chain actors (69 in Zimbabwe and 27 in Zambia) collaborated with SNV towards providing opportunities for youth. This contributed to the achievement of results by 112%. One of SNV's key strengths is the ability to influence the market and enabling environment through a market systems approach, targeting private sector, government, academic institutions, and civil society organizations among other stakeholders. The project engaged 66 Private Sector Companies, 8 Financial Institutions, 19 Grassroot Organizations, 13 Knowledge Institutions as well as government who acted in various capacities and provided several opportunities for the youth, resulting in 15,553 youth benefiting from these arrangements. The



Hubs benefiting youth: Mwange Youth Resettlement Scheme Northern Province

The OYE project collaborated with the Mwange Youth Resettlement Scheme to support 200 youth, providing them access to land, water, and comprehensive training in basic life skills, technical expertise, and entrepreneurship. Linked with Tree Tops Honey company for participation in the honey value chain, and gaining practical knowledge in poultry, aquaculture, piggery, and horticulture through the scheme, the youth witnessed significant improvements in their incomes. Despite their challenging backgrounds, including experiences on the streets, their resilience and determination led to transformative changes in their lives, inspiring hope and showcasing the power of collaboration and empowerment.

private sector companies contributed through provision of quality inputs, markets and on the job trainings, while the financial institutions provided financial support, LSPs offered Soft and Technical Skills trainings, mentorship and backstopping, public actors contributed through policy provisions that address some youth challenges particularly on the issue of access to land and lastly the academic institutions offered certified trainings. It is important to note that while some of these partnerships came about at the initiation of the project, there have been several instances of building ons. Some of the value chain actors have gone on to collaborate amongst themselves for example Green Impact Trust in Zimbabwe has cemented their relationship with the local authorities in Mutoko and following the end of the project the community has employed the organization as a Manager for the Youth Hub to ensure sustainability. In Zambia Good Nature Agro went on to expand its reach with Katete District Development Women Association by increasing the number of youth benefiting from the out-grower scheme.

Output 2.1.3: Local training institutions and business development service providers are connected with private sector and local markets thereby developing their youth-market matching capacity.

Indicator: Number of local training institutions / Business Development Service Providers (BDSP) connected with private sector

The project successfully connected 50 institutions with the private sector and local markets to enhance their capacity for matching youth with the job market. These institutions included 29 LSPs, such as the Katete District Women's Development Association and the Lundazi District Women's Development Association in Zambia, Boost Fellowship Zimbabwe, and Women in Agriculture Zimbabwe. Additionally, 13 Academic/Research Institutions were involved, including the Nanga Irrigation Research Station and Msekera Research Centre in Zambia, as well as the Harare Institute of Technology and National University of Science and Technology in Zimbabwe. Lastly, 8 Youth Hubs were part of the initiative, such as the Mwange Youth Resettlement Centre and Mbabala Youth Resource Centre in Zambia, and Jairos Jiri and Mutoko in Zimbabwe.

Partnerships were forged between training institutions and the private sector to offer relevant skills training

within a dual-vocational context. The private sector provided resource persons during the training, offered testimonies, internships, and business linkages. The project collaborated with two higher learning institutions, NUST and HIT in Zimbabwe. NUST provided training under the Solar thermal Roadmap project, while HIT offered skills training under the community

Empowering Youth through solar training and enterprise development - Mangwe District - Zimbabwe

Seven youth from Mangwe formed a group after completing the NUST Basic Solar Installation training in close collaboration with Crano Technology, a private solar company. Armed with these industrially relevant skills, the group successfully bid for and won a tender to design and support the completion of applications for 633 households under ZESA rural solar programme. Charging R30 per household enrolled, they realized a total revenue of R19,000 (USD1,152). This smart collaboration between knowledge institutions such as NUST and HIT and solar companies such as Tulasi-so, ImpiPower and Natfort Energy, among others, resulted in the training of 201 youth from Harare, Mutare, Bulawayo, Mangwe, Umzingwane, and Matobo districts. Remarkably, more than 80% of the youth chose to establish their own enterprises as solar agents and installers, achieving varying levels of success. Additionally, approximately 7% secured formal employment using the certificates. Source: OYE monthly reports.

outreach program. A total of 201 youth received certification after completing Basic Solar Installation Training, with many launching their own solar installation companies or securing employment. In Zambia, 31 youth received certification after a 6-month TVET General

Agriculture apprenticeship, leading to improved farming management and increased incomes.

Partnerships were also established with six vocational skills training/research centers in both Zambia and Zimbabwe. Additionally, 19 business development service providers in Zambia and Zimbabwe were linked with the private sector to deliver market-relevant trainings and internship opportunities, connecting emerging youth entrepreneurs to markets. Furthermore, Natfort, Zim-Agro Solutions, Crano Technology, and others actively participated in the collaborations. A detailed list of these partnerships is available in the Annexes.

Output 2.1.4: Financing institutions and (local government) funds collaborate with OYE to craft innovative financial products to suit youth needs and adopt more inclusive and youth friendly strategies to improve the accessibility of financial service support to youth.

Indicator: Number of youth financial products developed

The market scan revealed that financial products were a key requirement for the success of youth enterprises. To address this need, the project collaborated with financial institutions and local government to craft innovative, affordable, accessible, and inclusive financial products. The project developed 10 financial products, surpassing the set target of 6, to satisfy the various

Table 1 Policy implementation and knowledge development

Output	Indicator	Target	Actual	Details
3.1.1	Indicator: policy reviews and policy aspects implemented	4	4	Participated in NYP review & crafting., Advisory board, Urban and Rural councils and Enterprise Registrations. Through Advisory Board, Community of practice, SDG and African Continental Free Trade area platforms
	Indicator: Number of learning events held.	4	4	Zambia, Zimbabwe, Kenya ,Internal SNV Community of Practice ,LSP-SNV Conference in Addis, Ethiopia: SNV organized a conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in collaboration with LSP (Landscape for People, Food, and Nature).
3.1.3.1	Indicators: Number of policy briefs developed.	4	4	GESI Transformative Approaches Paper:Private Sector ,Access to finance
3.1.3.2	Indicator: number of policy conferences	2	2	Nyanga Conference, Ministry of Youth and Sport meeting to discuss youth related issues
3.1.4	Indicator: Number of exchange programmes facilitated	4	4	"1 OYE International Conference 1 (Mali): 2. OYE International Conference 2 (Ethiopia 3. Extended OYE Steering Committee: 4. ZIM/ZAM Exchange Programs: "
3.1.5.1	Indicator: Regional network equipped with D-group established Indicator: Number of youth employment papers developed and shared	1	1	Community of Practise in both Zambia and Zimbabwe were successfully formed
3.1.5.2	Indicator: Number of youth papers developed	3	3	GESI Transformative Approaches Paper; Private Sector and Access to finance paper developed and shared

needs of youth-led enterprises, ranging from start-ups to small enterprises. In addition, financial products were developed to address the youth at different stage of growth in business (from infancy, prototype to growth stages). The total value of financial support extended to youth-led enterprises for the project was \$533,133.66. This fell short of the target of \$750,000 in the U.S. The breakdown of the financial support was \$170,986 for Zambia and \$420,460.22 for Zimbabwe.

Immediate outcomes 3.1: Progressive level of collaboration on policy enhancement with government partners working with OYE

The OYE project has been collaborating with government partners to enhance policy and practice in the area of youth employment. They have advocated for the increase of youth employment opportunities under the Youth Employment policy 2020-2025. The project aims to create an information system for youth job seekers and employers, including information on employment opportunities, apprenticeships, and job training. The project achieved the following highlighted below.



4. Risk analysis

The project identified potential risks at the start of the project. The risks were profiled according to three categories namely context/market/political, operational, and fiduciary, and delivery. These were monitored throughout the duration of the project with a regular analysis being made on the likelihood of each of the

risk occurring, the severity of the impact in the event of occurrence and possible risk mitigation measures. The table below summarises some of the risks encountered, and the mitigation measures undertaken by OYE.

Table 2 Risk analysis

Risk	Risk Description	Mitigation
A. Context/Market/Political Risks		
A1	High levels of inflation and deteriorating local currency	Month-on-month inflation affected youth businesses and uncertainty in exchange rates The project scaled up its support to the formation of YSLAs which save in foreign currency as a store of value. Greater shift of most informal business (mainly youth enterprises) towards usage of stable currencies.
A2	changes in political, legal, and regulatory environments	Uncertainties that arise from changes in political, legal, and regulatory environments such as change of government or regime which results into change of policies The project team has been keen to monitor changes in policies and regimes and adjust programming accordingly. Staying abreast on any changes by engaging closely and building relationships with government Staying connected with other and similar organisations to stay informed on any updates
B. Delivery Risks		
B1	Lack of willingness by financial institutions in both Zambia and Zimbabwe to credit to youth led enterprises.	Youth did not meet collateral requirement to access loans. High rates of loan repayment default Project provided with a guarantee facility to cover the risk to financial institutions. Signed MOU with Financial Sector Deepening Zambia on financial inclusion partnership. Supported youth to access CDF The project tightened Due-diligence procedures and youth screening.
B2	Stakeholder engagement and management	Inadequate stakeholder involvement or conflicting interests among stakeholders The project team built strong relationships with stakeholders through regular updates and consultations. In addition, coming up with the Project advisory board also helped to mitigate the risks o Spear headed formation of the community of practice bringing together like minded organisations
C. Operational and Fiduciary Risk		
C1	Covid 19 Pandemic	Delayed Implementation of activities Re-allocation of activity budgets to meet PPE and other covid related expenses. Loss of opportunities previously secured prior to the pandemic era. Limited mobility due to lockdown restrictions The project gave out Covid Grants to OYE youth which contributed to youth establishing enterprises and ultimately employment. Usual implementation was stalled due to lockdowns that went on for extended periods. The Covid Grants enabled the project to continue operating on the ground as these were considered essential services. As per government requirements the project was able to secure clearance letters in some districts and trainings could be done in compliance with social distancing protocols.
D. Force Majeure		
D1	Natural Disasters	Floods resulting into crop damage The project team monitored weather conditions using advisory from Meteorological Department. This information was being extended to OYE youth for preparation. Droughts resulting into crop failure The project has been promoting climate change adaptation using models such as Climate Smart Agriculture.

5. Project monitoring, evaluation and learning

5.1. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Strategy

The Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) strategy in the OYE project is crucial for managing project performance and making informed decisions.

- Data management systems like online databases and the LogAlto platform are used to track progress and ensure data accuracy.
- Quality assurance mechanisms, such as competency assessments and data cleaning, are implemented to maintain reliable data.
- Performance monitoring is done through a results tracking framework and Indicator Performance Tracking Table (IPTT).

Data Management Overview

The project implements a dual data management system, adhering to requirements set by SNV and SDC for effective data handling and analysis. SNV mandates that all project data should flow through the LogAlto system, while SDC specifies the use of Results Data Management (RDM) for result tracking and management within the OYE project.

Results Data Management (RDM)

Results Data Management (RDM), introduced by SDC in 2022, is a pivotal tool for modernizing results management within the project. Acting as the centralized system for OYE project log frames, targets, and results, RDM ensures streamlined processing of annual results, enhancing efficiency and maintaining data integrity.

LogAlto

The OYE project seamlessly transferred its data sets to the LogAlto platform since the project's inception. LogAlto functions to create log frames, measure results, monitor progress, and facilitate online data collection linked to a central database. This platform simplifies project reporting and data collection processes, including mobile data entry capabilities.

Evaluations

Evaluations provide insights and recommendations for decision-making and project improvement.

- The mid-term evaluation led to revisions in targets, the log frame, and the Theory of Change, enhancing support for LSPs and strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems.
- The endline evaluation provided recommendations, including ward focus, financial service access, engagement with local authorities, gender inclusion, and private sector engagement.
- Income and employment surveys revealed increased earnings for youth, variations across sectors, gender disparities, and the impact of education on income levels.

Knowledge Management

The OYE project has focused on knowledge management and learning through various activities and publications.

- Evaluations have been conducted to assess impact and effectiveness, and the findings have influenced decision-making and adaptive programming.
- Action research has been commissioned to generate new insights and knowledge related to youth entrepreneurship and sustainable development.
- Regional knowledge exchange conferences, such as the OYE Southern Africa Regional Knowledge Exchange Conferences, have facilitated sharing of experiences, best practices, and lessons learned.
- Youth Entrepreneurship Fairs have provided platforms for young entrepreneurs to showcase their businesses, network, and gain exposure as well as gain customers.
- Community of Practice platforms have been established to foster collaboration, knowledge sharing, and learning among project stakeholders.
- National Advisory Board meetings have brought together policymakers and experts to discuss youth entrepreneurship, policy coordination, and provide strategic guidance.

6. Challenges, innovations and adaptations

6.1. Challenges and innovations

Overall, the project proactively addressed challenges by adapting implementation approaches, engaging stakeholders, exploring partnerships, and seeking flexibility in response to the complex implementation environment. By implementing these mitigating measures, OYE aimed to ensure the continuation and effectiveness of their youth empowerment initiatives.

6.2. Lessons learnt and Recommendations.

The OYE project continuously learns from project interactions, generating valuable insights across key areas such as skills development, access to finance, gender equality, and market system development. These

lessons guide adaptation strategies to address evolving operational conditions and enhance youth employment in the energy sector. Efforts include solar fairs and the importance of integrating end-use financing within projects to foster sustainable impacts. Some key lessons are highlighted as follows:

Access to Finance: The project recognized that the limited availability of appropriate and timely loans from participating financial institutions was not meeting the demands of the youth. To address this, SNV accelerated disbursement of finance through training kits and matching grants, supporting youth entrepreneurs in establishing or expanding their businesses. Matching grants and training kits, combined with financial skills training and coaching, now assist over 70% of the youth who have received funding from the program. Different

Table 3 Challenges and adaptations

Challenge	Project adaptation
1. Disruption of implementation of project activities due to COVID-19:	SNV utilized online and SMS registration, virtual training and monitoring, and community radio sessions to continue project activities during lockdown periods. The project encouraged LSPs to expedite work by increasing advance payments and explored electronic learning platforms to deliver training when physical sessions were not possible.
2. Hesitation from private sector to engage youth	OYE initiated the development of credit guarantee facilities in both Zimbabwe and Zambia to reduce risk and encourage private sector engagement in youth-inclusive business models. In Zambia, OYE collaborated with the private sector using a prefinancing model, which bolstered the willingness of private sector involvement. In some cases it was 50:50 investment. OYE implemented mentorship and leadership development interventions to assure the private sector of reduced risk when engaging with youth.
3. Complex policy environment and youth access to resources:	SNV strategically engaged at various levels to support government policy implementation and identify impactful entry points with both public and private sectors. The project also explored partnerships with relevant organizations to address challenges faced by youth, especially women, in accessing critical resources.
4. Lack of operational space/land for urban youth:	The project engaged local authorities as well as TVET institutions to find a solution to the issue of lack of access to land for the youth. A robust youth hubs model was established with the City of Bulawayo and Jairos Jiri to pilot agri-entrepreneurship training that included business incubation support through access to land and operational space provided by the two institutions. In Zambia youth had access to land with limited or no ownership. The project innovated by also engaging with local leaders for youth to be allocated traditional land.
5. Increased costs and reduced internship	SNV closely tracked and mitigated potential impacts from government policies. The project provided PPE intensified the disbursement of training kits when internships were not possible. Private sector companies were able to support youth within their districts during this time.
6. Gender-based violence (GBV) faced by OYE youth	Gender-based violence (GBV) faced by OYE youth to address challenges faced by youth, especially women, and promoted household dialogue to raise awareness and support for the project.
Ensuring the sustainability of youth hubs. ? sustainability of savings and lending groups... ?	SNV pursued well-thought-out models for the establishment of youth hubs, considering factors such as resource availability, management structure, and revenue generation avenues and such example is the Mutoko hub which is now under the management of the LSP. Seek guidance and input from the private sector to develop sustainable value chains that can support and sustain the functioning of youth hubs, for example Mutoko Kutsaga Research Station for nursery establishment, care and marketing

financial products will continue to be promoted to cater to the varying financial demands of youth at different stages of their entrepreneurial journeys. In Zambia, the implementation of Youth and Savings Lending Schemes has proven instrumental in mitigating the financial access disparity that persisted in the absence of support from formal financial institutions, owing to various constraints. A noteworthy outcome of this initiative is that more than 60% of the youth in the project have successfully established small businesses as a direct consequence.

Access to Markets: Has been facilitated through contract farming arrangements and providing platforms for youth to market their products beyond local markets, such as solar fairs, entrepreneurship fairs, agricultural shows, and the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF). In Zambia, the main ways for accessing markets were through strategic partnerships with the private sector. The involvement of youth in out grower schemes, participation in youth entrepreneurship fairs, and engagement in agricultural shows were ways in which these market access opportunities were realized.

Partnership Management: The effectiveness of using Local Service Providers (LSPs) has been acknowledged, emphasizing the importance of their selection, performance assessment, and capacity building in areas like data management, governance, financial management, and resource mobilization. Strengthening partnerships with the government has also been recognized as crucial, aligning with government priorities such as youth economic employment and national development strategies such as NDS1.

Gender and social inclusion (GESI)

During the inception phase, the project aimed to “Leave-No-One-Behind” by identifying young women, marginalized youth (including persons living with disabilities), and those from disadvantaged backgrounds as target groups for inclusion.

- **Gender Action Research:** The project commissioned Gender Action Research, which guided the development of the OYE Gender Strategy and GESI Action Plans in Zambia and Zimbabwe which focused on prioritized x.y,,,z
- **Financial Inclusion:** The project partnered with

ZADT and Empower bank to develop project-initiated products, resulting in 53.2% and 46.8% participation in lending and savings schemes in Zambia. Under the IGNITE facility, ZADT worked towards achieving a 50:50 accessibility to both females and males, with the proportion of women recipients growing from 0% in June 2021 to 44% by June 2023.

- **Gender Strategic Partnerships:** The project developed key gender-related partnerships with organizations such as the Non-Governmental Organization Coordinating Council and the Ministry of Community Development. These partnerships led to the participation in key gender-related events and the celebration of the 2023 Women's Day.
- **Gender Awareness Campaigns:** Through partnerships with other NGOs, the project celebrated International Women's Day as well as HeForShe campaigns.
- **Promotion of Women-Friendly Value Chains:** The project promoted women-friendly value chains and ensured gender sensitivity in all interventions, including youth selection, targeting, and trainings. At least 56% of the total youth reached were women, showcasing deliberate efforts to promote the enrolment and participation of young women.
- **Policy Level Engagement:** At the policy level, the OYE project promoted GESI inclusion in the crafting of the 2020-2025 National Youth Policy. Additionally, the project facilitated youth participation at the UN Climate Change Conference 2017: COP27 and the International Cooperation Forum Switzerland 2023, where it amplified youth voices through representation by Vimbai Kaitano, an OYE young female from Zimbabwe. This reorganization and restructuring of the content aim to present the information logically and thematically.

7. Project sustainability and exit strategy

Building blocks towards project sustainability)

To ensure the sustainability of the gains achieved in OYE Phase I and support the growth of youth enterprises, several building blocks were established, through the following initiatives:

Piloting the Youth champion model: SNV piloted the youth champion model. Passionate youth entrepreneurs with potential for business growth were deployed to mentor and coach other youth, even beyond the project lifespan, with the aim of creating a sustainable support system.

Integration of OYE approaches into government structures and programs: OYE approaches have been integrated into government structures and programs. Localized extension officers from various government departments provide technical support and monitor established youth enterprises in their districts. Collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of SMEs and Ministry of Youth has led to the replication and amplification of the OYE youth hub model, with the establishment of youth hubs across the country.

Collaboration with other donors: Collaborations with other donors, such as FCDO and SDC, have provided opportunities for OYE youth to access funding, trade promotion technical assistance, and international forums. Export-ready youth entrepreneurs have been recommended to FCDO for potential funding and support in entering export markets.

Continued promotion and scaling of innovative financial mechanisms: Building on the pilot phase, the IGNITE loan facility, managed by ZADT will continue targeting emerging youth entrepreneurs who are not yet ready for commercial lending. Empower Bank Zimbabwe and the Zambia Development Bank will also continue to provide guarantee cover to support funding and consignment stock for OYE youth and other private actors beyond the project duration.



8. Looking ahead- building on insights

In Phase I, we have seen that collaboration with the government and wider ecosystem actors is key for sustainable youth programming. For example, the success and traction we have had through the collaboration with local government authorities have enabled some youth to access CDF. However, we see a huge opportunity for Phase II to link even more youth because our youth, who have undergone key skills training, are well positioned to access these funds.

Establishment and strengthening of youth champions: identified promising youth leaders from Phase I will be further developed as youth champions. They will receive capacity-building support to engage, coach, and mentor other young people in value chain activities. Innovative and sustainable incentives will be explored, such as commission-based models for mentoring, as seen in the Tree Tops Honey model piloted in Zambia. Intensifying support on the ground for both youth chains as well as LSPs

Strengthening Local Service Providers (LSPs): Building on the evaluation findings, Phase II will focus on increasing the capacity of participating LSPs. This includes establishing sustainable models for service delivery, improving governance and financial systems, resource mobilization/ fundraising, and people and talent management.

Documentation, learning exchange, and influencing: SNV will place a greater emphasis on knowledge development, collaborative learning, influencing, and evidence-based advocacy. This includes empowering youth, grassroots communities, community-based and civil society organizations to advocate for local and national policies that facilitate access to services and productive resources for youth. We will also aim to

develop a Practice Brief in the next phase.

Collaborating with TVETs and knowledge institutions: SNV will strengthen collaboration with Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and knowledge institutions. This will involve accrediting and certifying the improved OYE Green Basic Life Skills and technical skills curricula with reputable institutions, as well as integrating youth friendly OYE+ courses into formal TVET programs. The goal is to provide industry relevant skills training, particularly for youth with low educational qualifications.

Private sector collaboration enhanced: OYE Phase 1 engaged 99 private companies to offer a number of opportunities for youth across many value chains. As we transition into OYE Phase it will be necessary for the project to streamline the partnerships to the selected value chains. In addition as part of the inclusive value chain development, the project will need to develop financial products and/or partnerships that target the improvement of private sector capacity to work with youth.

Collaboration with government initiatives and ecosystem actors: Phase II will focus on integrating OYE graduates into larger government initiatives for continuous support and growth. SNV will leverage partnerships with private sector actors established in Phase I, such as loan facilities and financial service providers. New partnerships will be forged with youth organizations, hubs, and other value chain actors in a bid to increase access products such as finance and technical skills.



About SNV

SNV Netherlands Development Organisation is a not-for-profit international development organisation that makes a lasting difference in the lives of people living in poverty by helping them raise incomes and access basic services. We focus on only three sectors: agriculture, renewable energy and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), and have a long-term, local presence in more than 25 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.