



LEARNING NARRATIVE

**MENTORSHIP FOR SUCCESSFUL
RURAL YOUTH LIVELIHOODS**



Save the Children

**YOUTHⁱⁿ
ACTION**
CREATING PATHWAYS TO OPPORTUNITY.

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Executive summary

The narrative focuses on exploring and analyzing the impact of Youth in Action's (YiA) mentorship strategy and how it has contributed to youth business development in rural areas of Africa. Key findings in this work include:

Support from community gatekeepers ensures smooth program implementation and minimizes program challenges: Parents can play a key role in mentorship programs, including monitoring mentorship relationships and serving as mentors themselves. Community stakeholders can also play a key role, including selecting mentors, verifying suggested mentors, and ensuring the safety of the youth.

Inclusive gender intervention is significant for the success of mentorship relationships: Gender is a vital consideration in youth livelihood programming. Intentionally designing and implementing mentorship programs with gender lenses is most likely to yield positive results. YiA findings show that access to both female and male mentors in a livelihood program creates an opportunity where youth can access positive role models within their communities to help them succeed in their businesses.

Peer-to-peer mentorship motivates and sustains youth's business drive: Peer-to-peer mentorship is a unique approach that provides added benefits as compared to singular adult business mentorship. Peer-to-peer mentorship was reported to be more popular and successful by many YiA youth.

Ensuring mentor competencies is key for program quality: Evidence from YiA shows that training of mentors is one of the key ingredients for the success of the mentorship relationship. Mentors need to be trained before they are matched with the youth and the programs should provide refresher trainings.

Monitoring is a key ingredient of successful mentorship: Monitoring mentorship relationships is vital because it ensures that commitments between mentors and youth are kept.

Successful mentorship relationships continue to exist after graduation: Findings show that there is a strong likelihood that YiA mentorship relationships continue after graduation.



Background

1.1 Youth in Action Program

Youth in Action is a six-year program implemented by Save the Children in partnership with Mastercard Foundation. The goal of YiA is to improve the socioeconomic status of 40,000 out-of-school young people (12-18 years), both female and male youth, in rural Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Malawi, and Uganda.

YiA's interventions are grounded in the Theory of Change (TOC), which organizes the program's interventions, assumptions, and outcomes, and frames its approach to activities and learning (Youth in Action, 2016). The TOC includes three programmatic pillars: Youth Learn, Youth Act, and Youth Connect, and two cross-cutting themes: Participation and Partnerships. The model allows YiA to support male and female youth to identify and explore livelihood opportunities through non-formal educational and practical learning experiences. For the majority of program participants, these opportunities are grounded in agricultural value chains or agri-business.

While there is a wide array of programs focusing on education for out-of-school youth or on youth employment, very few programs incorporate employability, social assets, literacy, numeracy, financial literacy, and real-life experience. YiA

integrates all of the above into a participatory learning cycle, designed to increase livelihoods opportunities through the acquisition of a broad spectrum of foundational and work-readiness skills.

The TOC is supported by a learning framework that outlines a set of defined and measurable research questions. These questions cover a range of subject areas relevant to youth livelihoods programming in rural Africa. Working within this framework has enabled YiA to continuously build and improve on evidence-based programming. The resulting learnings are organized into six subject-matter specific "Learning Narratives".

This narrative focuses on the broad question of:

“How successful has peer-to-peer and business mentorship been in providing youth with opportunities to grow their businesses?”

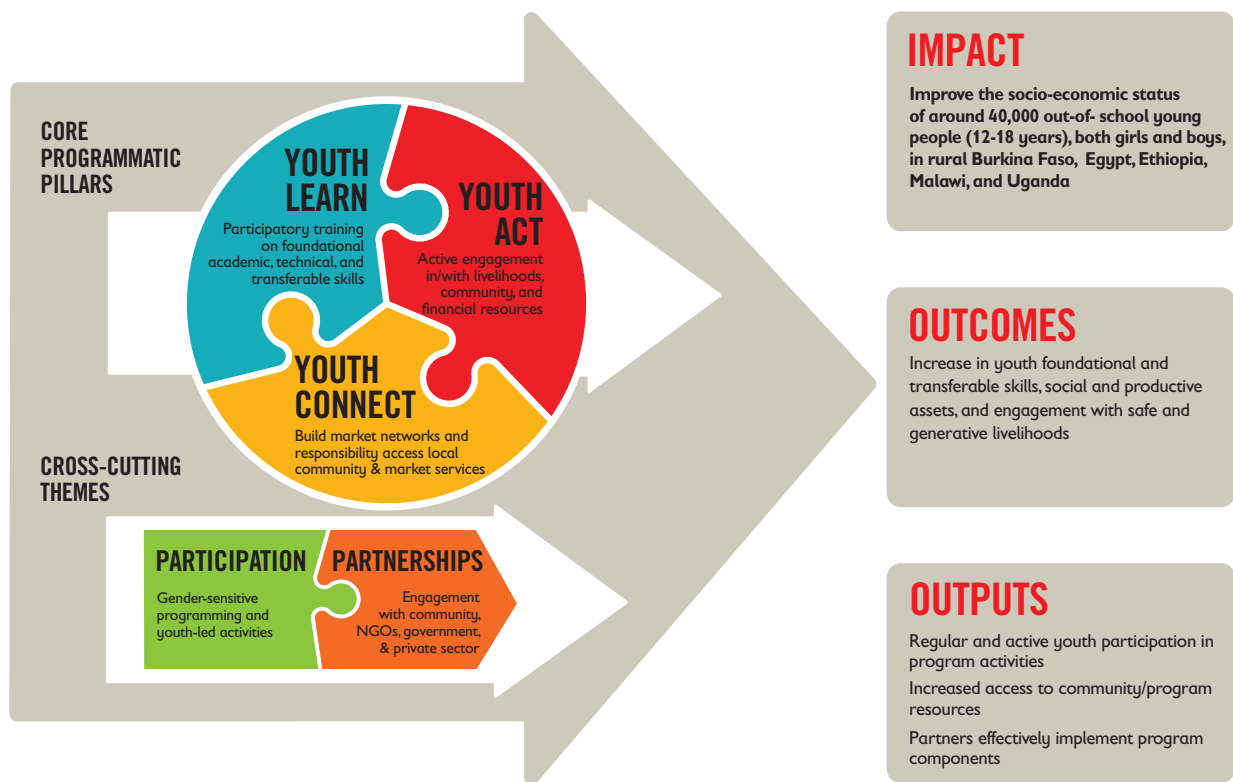


Figure 1. Youth in Action Theory of Change

1.2 Context of Mentorship

1.2.1 Definition of mentorship

Defining mentoring is not easy since a range of activities are classified as mentoring programs. Almost anything that involves one person helping another can be considered mentoring (Burchfield, 1998). However, Packard (2009) describes mentoring as a relationship between a less-experienced individual, called a mentee or protégé, and a more experienced individual known as a mentor. Mentoring is a powerful intervention for supporting people in various academic, employment, and community settings and it is described as a relationship between an experienced, wiser adult and a younger person (Leake et al 2011).

A mentor is a supportive adult who works with a young person to build a relationship by offering guidance, support, and encouragement to help the young person's positive and healthy development over a period of time (Bruce and Bridgeland 2014).

Much of the existing literature on mentorship looks at youth mentorship with gender lenses. For example, female youth-centered organizations like Population

Council and Adolescent Girls Initiatives (AGI) ground their mentorship experiences with young women. In her publication, *Girls first*, Austrian defines a mentor as a young woman (typically ages 18 – 30) from the community with whom the female youth can identify and serve as a role model. She also emphasizes that mentorship relationships foster personal bonds and provide a safe space for young people (Austrian 2012).

Further, a report on the effect of mentoring points out that there are two types of mentorship: formal (structured) and non-formal that organically occurs (Bruce and Bridgeland 2014). Individuals who engage in any of the above types of mentorship will benefit in one way or another (Leake et al 2011).

In his blog, Nguyen argues that mentors are advisers, teachers, sources of funding, guides about classes, careers, jobs, graduate schools and life choices, and above all, mentors are motivators and role models who believe in their mentees, see their potential and help them get to where they want to go (Nguyen 2015).

Mentors play different roles, one of them is to enhance the employability of youth in two key ways: providing guidance to address professional and personal challenges, and enhancing work readiness skills. Mentors further provide young people with the opportunity to shadow them at work to acquire different work experience and skills (Root Cause 2015).

Effective mentorship provides youth with effective opportunities to build leadership and life skills, which facilitates positive youth development in the areas of competences, confidence, connection, character, caring and contribution to self and society (MENTOR 2007).



1.2.2 Learning from existing youth mentorship programs

Most of the available literature looks at formal mentorship within schools and work environments in developed countries. The few available literature that focuses on mentorship in Africa is usually around urban programming, with little focus is on rural youth livelihood programs. Given the scarcity of directly applicable literature, this section focuses on a range of youth mentorship programs because while we recognize that the programming examples do not exactly match YiA's own activities, we hope that these examples will give context to the specific rural-based mentorship programming that YiA engaged in.

Mentoring is important for improving young women's economic standing in developing countries, but it is largely unproven as an intervention. Much of the existing mentoring literature in developing countries focuses on mentoring for and by adult female entrepreneurs, explicitly focused on creating networks for business women. For example, AGI, funded by the World Bank in eight countries, is aimed at supporting the transition of female youth from school to productive employment. To do so, it incorporates a mentorship component into the project design as a practical strategy for achieving project goals. Mentors in an AGI project in Laos provide support in business start-up and expansion (Adolescent Girls Initiative 2014).

The process of selection and recruitment of mentors is vital in ensuring a successful mentorship relationship. Population Council implements female youth-centered programs and advocates for female youth to have access to local leaders (mentors) within their communities so if they have a crisis, they should have a mentor to turn to for help. Austrian in, *Girl's leadership and mentorship*, discusses the importance of recruiting mentors from the community and warns against importing university students or young professional women to communities to act as mentors however motivated and caring they might be because they might provide an anchor of leadership within a disadvantaged community. These female youth are not the only ones who can serve as mentors. Talent and drive exists in every community, even the poorest (Austrian 2012).

Emerging literature shows that cross-age peer mentoring is a unique and somewhat different

approach to mentoring than the better-known adult-with-youth mentoring model (MENTOR 2007). Cross-age peer mentoring are programs in which an older youth (mentor) is matched with a younger student (mentee) for the purpose of guiding and supporting the mentee in many areas of her academic, social, and emotional development. (Garringer and Rae 2008). High school programs such as Big Brothers and Big Sisters in the United States are an example of an exemplary cross-age peer mentoring. This program give mentors significant autonomy in terms of selecting with the mentee what they will do together (MENTOR 2007).

Cassinath and Mercer in their synthesis report on agriculture value chains argue that where youth and adults are mixed, intergenerational learning and mentoring can play a role in connecting youth to the community and motivating them if there are strong and supportive role models. However, they also point out that in mixed groups (youth and adults) safeguards need to be in place so that youth are able to participate fully. In many countries and communities, cultural power dynamics make equal youth inclusion very difficult especially in mixed groups. (Cassinath and Mercer 2016).

Involving parents in mentoring services is one of the best things a program can do to ensure its success. Programs whose parents, guardians, and other caregivers work in concert with mentors and program staff are more likely to see positive changes in youth and improved program outcomes (US Department of Education, 2005). For example, in Nepal, in a program called *Household approach to reach youth* parents brought their adolescent children to trainings when they believed the subject matter and new technologies would suit their skills and interests (Cassinath and Mercer 2016).

Young entrepreneurs with mentors have more profitable businesses than those without mentors who find it difficult to start and sustain businesses (*Youth Business International*, 2016). Thirty-seven percent of young entrepreneurs globally consider their mentor more influential than money to the success of their business. (*Youth Business International*, 2016). An impact study conducted by *Big Brothers Big Sisters* school-based mentoring programs showed that mentors who reported receiving more pre-match training reported higher levels of effectiveness, or confidence, before being matched and were more likely to extend their

relationship into a second school year. Those mentors who reported receiving more individual training pre-match also reported having closer relationships with their mentees (MENTOR 2007).

Ayodele Ibrahim, a professor in Nigeria, points out that different partners within the Nigerian commercial organizations have put forward a number of justifications for investing in entrepreneurship mentoring. The Bank of Industry, for example, suggested that mentoring is necessary to improve the quality of life of aspiring young, nascent entrepreneurs. The Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) argued that mentoring is a means of investing in the future of Nigerian youths and the SABMiller Foundation claimed that through mentoring, the bright business ideas inherent in the teeming youths of south-east Nigeria can be turned into reality (Shittu 2017).

Spencer (2007) points out that several mentors

described entering the relationship with some clear expectations. If these expectations are not addressed, these adults struggled a bit with their relationships. It would be a mistake to assume that mentors gain nothing from the mentorship relationship. When mentors do not derive benefits, relationships are at greater risk for early termination. One-sided relationships drain mentors of enthusiasm and leave mentees feeling burdened by the imbalance (MENTOR 2007). In her publication, Austrian (2012) argues that mentors be compensated for their time since they are doing a job like other people in the communities. Programs should pay mentors a stipend to ensure quality of work, commitment and sustainability.

1.3 Mentorship in Youth in Action

YiA initially designed a mentorship component that involved both business and peer-to-peer mentorship. These components are described below. However,

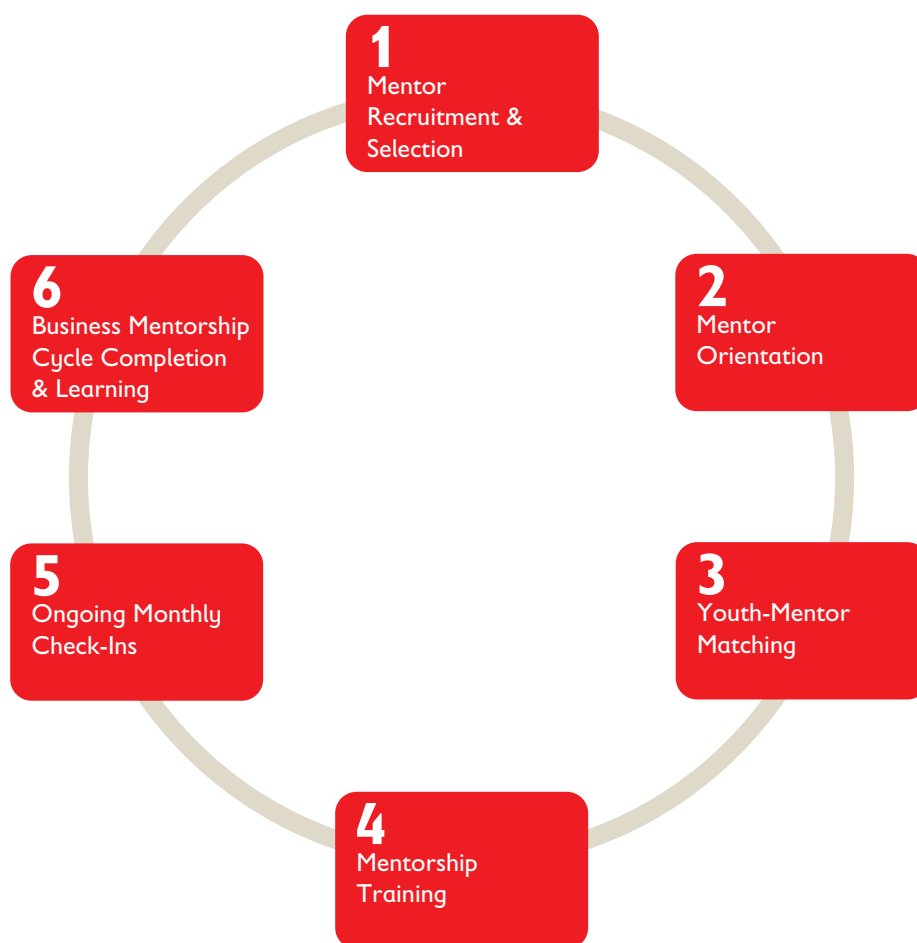


Figure 2. Key steps in establishing a mentorship relationship

from the inception, YiA encouraged country-specific adaptation. For this reason, we recognize and note where certain countries adapted mentorship to their needs. These differences will be explored further in the findings section.

The program defines mentors as individuals (females and males) with knowledge, skills, a positive attitude, and a willingness to support youth who choose to start a business. These individuals include: community business owners, government workers, artisans, YiA graduates (peer mentors) and other community stakeholders (including family members and project facilitators for the case of Egypt).

Business mentorship was designed as one of the key components of the YiA program where youth are connected to business experts within their communities in order to receive technical and emotional support, access market information, and promote youth business development. Business mentorship is understood as a formal process, facilitated by the program that involves one person (mentor) helping a group of youth to be successful in the business they are operating. Within the YiA program, mentorship is used as a means to enable youth to gain knowledge and skills about a certain business from an experienced business expert based within the community.

In order to have a strong mentorship component, the program envisioned that the above mentorship cycle be followed and adapted by the different country teams. To achieve this, the YiA team developed a business mentorship guide or orientation training manual that helped country teams to adapt different mentorship strategies.

1.3.1 Recruitment and selection of mentors

This business guide provided guidelines for recruitment and selection of mentors and different countries had to adapt them to their context. However, the criteria below formed the basis for mentor selection.

- Time availability and commitment
- Business type and knowledge
- Willingness to mentor
- Acceptance of Child Safeguarding Policy

- Location of the youth and mentors
- Permanence in the community

Different countries adapted different methods of mentor recruitment in the program. Some of these ways were similar while others were different. These methods included;

- Youth or youth groups identifying their own mentors (Uganda used this method especially by youth who were not involved in farm activities. They selected their own adult business mentors).
- YiA staff identifying the mentors (Uganda and Ethiopia involved government agriculture extension workers and community development officers as mentors which program staff selected).
- Combination of both YiA staff and youth identifying mentors (Egypt, Malawi, and Ethiopia).
- Initially in Burkina Faso, the program team targeted successful businessmen who had big businesses but then targeted smaller successful businesses that were operated by women who were respected in the community and had at least two years' experience in operating their business.

1.3.2 Mentor orientation, training, and matching

After the selection and recruitment of mentors, mentors are briefly oriented about YiA and invited for in-depth training.

Initially, if youth identified a mentor (and the YIA staff agreed to the mentor match), the match was deemed complete. However, this method posed challenges in some countries (Uganda and Burkina Faso) where it resulted in there being too many mentors to monitor effectively. This challenge led to the consequent introduction of group mentorship. Group mentorship involves matching of mentors to youth groups that are already formed in the YIA program at the learning center. The number of youth per group can range between 5-17 youth (with an average of 15-17).

Mentorship matches were typically based on type of business or income generating activities. Depending on how business mentors were identified, the method of matching to youth groups differed. YiA staff matches were based on the following criteria and included youth input.

- **Gender:** matching mentors by gender created trust and ensured gender-safe spaces for female and male youth
- **Business:** matching mentors with youth groups who have the same or similar businesses, products or services.
- **Location:** Matching mentors and youth groups in close geographic proximity increased accessibility of mentors.

The mentorship training was designed for low-literacy levels and included participatory interactive activities and methods. The training was designed for one day but different countries adapted this to their context and needs, and the training was sometimes expanded. For example, Ethiopia had a two-day training session for mentors.

The overall objectives of the YiA mentorship training were that business mentors would:

- Be introduced to YiA and learn basic business mentoring strategies and safeguarding principles.
- Understand responsibilities and expectations amongst mentors, youth, and YiA.

At the end of the training mentors had to sign the Business Mentorship Agreement and the Save the Children International Child Safeguarding Code of Conduct.



1.3.3 Duration of business mentorship relationship

YiA provided financial support for the mentorship relationship for a maximum of three (3) months during the cohort cycle. After this pre-determined period, the program's financial support for the business mentors ended. However, this did not mean the relationship between youth and their mentors had to end. In the ideal situation, the mentorship relationship continued without assistance from YiA. On the other end of the spectrum, a mentorship relationship would be terminated if:

- There was a poor match between a mentor and a youth, due to a mentor not having appropriate skills to help the youth, youth and mentor personalities not meshing, or the youth deciding to change their business selection when it was recommended.
- The business mentor was not suitable; for example, if the mentor did not show up for meetings with youth, did not communicate well, were no longer in business, or there was a breach of the child safeguarding policy.

1.3.4 Monitoring business mentorship relationships

YiA designed two tools to help in the monitoring of the mentorship relationship:

- **Monthly Check-Ins:** YiA or partner staff visit or call youth and mentors independently to check in on how the mentorship is going on a monthly basis.
- **Monitoring Attendance:** Youth and mentors sign their names each time they meet to ensure that the mentorship meetings are happening twice a month for a three-month period.

1.3.5 Mentorship of Very Young Adolescents (VYAs)

YiA established the above mentorship cycle primarily for the older youth in the program. However, the cycle was adapted as necessary to target VYAs in Uganda (age 12-13) and Egypt (age 12-14). In Egypt, mentorship for older youth in the first cohorts focused on linking individual youth with a business mentor, where the youth would visit the mentor's workplace twice a month for three months. However, this system

led to many visits being cancelled since youth were busy running their businesses. To overcome this, the YiA team in Egypt modified the approach and created YiA clubs at the learning centers, where biweekly meetings were hosted between the mentors and mentees within the center's safe environment and in the presence of YiA facilitators. This approach was consequently used for both VYAs and the older youth. It allowed youth to learn from each other at the same time as receiving business tips and good practices from their mentors. Further, the mentors conducted individual visits to youth's businesses to provide support as required.

In Uganda, the program targeted parents as mentors for the VYAs, who were provided with mentorship trainings and technical support to support their youth in implementing their small businesses.

1.3.6 Stipends for business mentors

Just as Austrian (2012) argues that mentors be compensated for their time since they are doing a job like other people in the communities, YiA integrated payment of a stipend into its formal mentorship cycle. To do so, the program formally recruited mentors and provided them with Terms of Reference (ToRs). YiA paid a stipend to ensure quality of work, commitment, accountability and sustainability. This stipend ranged from \$7.4 to \$117 USD¹ per person per month for a maximum of three months.



¹ Burkina Faso: 32 USD; Egypt: 113 USD; Ethiopia: 7.40 USD; Malawi: 35 USD; and Uganda: 117 USD.

Design and Methodology

This learning narrative is a review of reports and studies conducted by Save the Children and its partners to consider different aspects of mentorship in YiA.

2.1 Objectives

The objectives of this review is to explore the impact of YiA's mentorship strategy and better understand how it has contributed to youth business development. The specific objectives of Save the Children's research in this area were to:

- Provide like-minded NGOs, youth affiliated institutions and the wider public with a thorough and reliable knowledge base on the process and approaches used in implementing mentorship in YiA.
- Identify best practices, challenges and key lessons learned from YiA's use of mentorship, and thereby provide valuable insights and recommendations for future youth programming initiatives.

2.2 Research Questions

This narrative specifically focuses on the following research question:

“How successful has peer-to-peer and business mentorship been in providing youth with opportunities to grow their businesses?”

Within this broad question, additional sub-points were considered in order to provide broad context for the primary research questions. These included looking at the:

- Structure of mentorship in different countries
- Role of gender in shaping mentorship relationships
- Role that mentorship has played in the long-term development of youth businesses
- Effect of mentorship within the younger age group (12-13 year olds).

2.3 Data Sources

The data used in this narrative is primarily drawn from the Uganda “Tracer” qualitative mentorship study. The Tracer Study was designed to understand the added value of YiA in the lives of youth nine months or more after they had left the program. The Tracer Study was divided into two parts: (1) a quantitative survey carried out in Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Uganda, and (2) a qualitative study carried out in Egypt, Ethiopia, Malawi, and Uganda. The qualitative survey provided in-depth information on a topic selected by the specific country team. Because the Uganda country team selected mentorship for their qualitative study, YiA was presented with a unique opportunity to delve deep into understanding the meaning and impact of mentorship in its programming.

In addition to the Tracer research, the other YiA countries (Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Malawi) contributed to this review through sharing their mentorship experience in form of in-depth discussion and documentation with country office staff and YiA partners.

Description of Data Source	Burkina Faso	Malawi	Ethiopia	Egypt	Uganda
Documentation: The YiA Program Technical Team developed key questions to document the mentorship experience in the different countries.	Focus Group discussions with program staff from Save the Children and YiA implementing partners. June 2017	Focus Group discussions with program staff from Save the Children and YiA implementing partners. May 2017	Focus Group discussions with program staff from Save the Children and YiA implementing partners. June 2017	Focus Group discussions with program staff from Save the Children and YiA implementing partners. July 2017	Focus Group discussions with program staff from Save the Children and YiA implementing partners. August 2017
Quantitative Tracer Research	1:1 quantitative survey with youth who had graduated from YiA nine or more months prior to the study. August 2017		1:1 quantitative survey with youth who had graduated from YiA nine or more months prior to the study. Sept 2017	1:1 quantitative survey with youth who had graduated from YiA nine or more months prior to the study. July 2017	1:1 quantitative survey with youth who had graduated from YiA nine or more months prior to the study July 2017
Quantitative Tracer Research²					Focus group discussions and individual interviews with key informants conducted in Kasese and Ntorko, two districts in Uganda. The sample size included: 65 males and 55 females (120 respondents in total)
Mentorship Guide: The guide provides an overview on how to design and implement mentorship activities and systems. Different countries adapted the guide to fit their context.	Country team implementing the activities participated in the training of trainers using the guide.	Country team implementing the activities participated in the training of trainers using the guide.	Country team implementing the activities participated in the training of trainers using the guide.	Country team implementing the activities participated in the training of trainers using the guide.	Country team implementing the activities participated in the training of trainers using the guide.

Table 1. Description of data sources used

² All YiA countries were given an opportunity to carry out a qualitative tracer study. Different countries had different priorities and Uganda identified mentorship as a key area for further understanding. With this background the Program Technical Team worked with the Uganda country office to carry out a qualitative mentorship study in two districts with key stakeholders who were part of the mentorship intervention.

2.4 Limitations

Despite YiA's attempts at gathering a breadth of relevant and credible data supporting the impact and role of mentorship in the program, we recognize that there are a number of key limitations that, at times, hindered our ability to get as detailed information as needed. These include, but are not necessarily limited to:

Since an in-depth qualitative study was only conducted in one country (Uganda), there was a limited ability to draw deeper analysis from the other four countries.

Given time and resource constraints, the sample size for the Uganda qualitative study was small. This

meant that it is impossible to generalize findings from the Uganda qualitative study to apply broadly to the entire program.

Unlike other program interventions, the mentorship component had no prior studies that happened in the course of YiA's implementation which created a gap in the team's ability to review secondary data. Additionally, there was a lack of extensive material on peer-to-peer mentorship within all the countries, which further limited our ability to draw deeper analysis on this aspect of the program.

Because YiA works with Very Young Adolescents (VYAs) in only two of the five program countries (Uganda and Egypt), there was a very small sample size for VYA. Additionally, given the significant differences between program implementation in Uganda and Egypt, it was impossible to do cross comparison of the VYA in these countries.

Finally, YiA recognizes that there is an inherent limitation in the fact that Save the Children conducted interviews and focus groups. Two limitations that potentially arise from internal research are: a/respondents' potential conservative response bias when interacting with Save the Children staff, which could cause participants to potentially refrain from revealing problems/issues and only respond positively to critical questions and b/potential organizational biases from the survey team, which could, in some instances, make the findings less objective and consequently less informative. The fact that Save the Children conducted the research internally could have inhibited the development of fresh ideas and perspectives.



Review of Evidence

This narrative shares YiA findings on the impact of peer-to-peer and business mentorship to youth business development. While mentorship is needed by youth to access markets, business knowledge and skills, the program registered significant gaps especially around access of mentors in rural communities. Most countries experienced limited access of female mentors within the communities, while others had limited access to business mentors who could at least meet most of the selection criteria. However, the good news is community stakeholders and parents played a big role in ensuring the success of the mentorship program and peer-to-peer mentorship also registered positive impact on youth business development.

The key areas of emerging evidence include: impact of community gatekeepers to mentorship programs; value of mentorship training to youth business development; role of gender in shaping youth mentorship relationships; building effective peer mentorship relationships within rural youth livelihood programs; and monitoring as a key ingredient to the success of mentorship relationships.

3.1 Support from community gatekeepers ensures smooth program implementation and minimizes program challenges

Youth alone cannot succeed in transitioning to decent livelihoods without the contribution of key community gatekeepers. In this narrative, a gatekeeper is defined as a member of the community who has either formal or informal influence within the community. Gatekeepers can be formally elected or selected leaders, or they might simply be a community member who everyone can count on to get things done. The role of gatekeepers is underscored by the Interdependence Network, which has commented that “the only way new people, ideas, or products can successfully enter an existing community is when they are introduced and endorsed by a viable gatekeeper” (Interdependence Network 2014).

Community gatekeepers can include: parents or caretakers, community leaders, and representatives from key institutions, among others. Gatekeepers have played a significant role in the mentorship program within YiA. Informally, community gatekeepers pass on knowledge and skills from one generation to another, and play a critical role in initiating youth to different livelihood activities. With this background, YiA formally engaged community gatekeepers with defined terms of references (ToRs) and expected results that could contribute to the overall program goal.

3.1.1 Involving parents and caregivers is key to mentorship success

Involving parents and caregivers in youth mentorship program has led to successes in all five YiA countries. The YiA countries engaged parents and caregivers differently in mentorship given their varying contexts. This resulted in different learning outcomes for the program. For example, some parents played the direct role of being mentors (Uganda, Egypt), others were part of the recruitment processes of mentors (Malawi, Burkina Faso, Uganda and Egypt), and others participated in monitoring the work the mentors did with their children (Ethiopia).

In Uganda, parents played the role of mentors to the very young adolescents (VYAs) (age 12-13). The livelihood program for the VYAs was designed for them to engage in economic activities that are around their homes and could be supported by their parents or caregivers when the youth were in school. Therefore, by default, the youth selected one of their parents and caregivers to be their mentor. YiA trained parents and caregivers on their role as mentors and how it differed from their role as parents. Most of the youth reported engaging in businesses that their parents were already doing and that were close to their homes including: selling sweet bananas, vegetables, rice and cassava flour, palm oil and rearing goats. Most businesses where parents and youth worked together were reported to be successful, and some of these parents reported that there was improvement in their communication relationship with their children since they spent time planning and implementing the small businesses.

However, in some cases, youth reported difficulties in discussing with their parents about how the businesses were selected and funded. YiA recognizes that more work could have been done to sufficiently address how family dynamics would impact a mentorship relationship formed between youth and their parents.

“Parents in my community selected me to be a mentor of their children and they trusted me. They kept on checking on the progress of their children and this led to increased youth participation in mentorship activities.”

Female Mentor from Kasese District, Uganda

For the 14–18 year olds, parents in Uganda were engaged in recruiting the business mentors that their youth then chose. The program involved parents in endorsing mentors who were respected in the community. Involving parents in recruiting mentors meant that parents were more likely to support their children meeting with these individuals, and appeared to lead to the long-term viability of the mentorship relationship.

In Egypt, parents initially played a role in selecting their children’s livelihood options. Youth who chose to raise animals and poultry had their parents or guardians play a mentoring role of passing on knowledge and skills, and connecting them to markets. This role underscores the importance of youth livelihood programs capitalizing on existing knowledge and recognizing the ways that knowledge and skills flow within a community. However, in later cohorts, the Egypt team recruited business mentors who were not family members, but instead had experience in different businesses that youth engaged in. These mentors provided technical sessions about how to start and manage businesses. That said, it remained common in Egypt for parents to join their children in the learning sessions with their business mentor to learn new skills and knowledge. This ensured sustainability of the business since parents would provide follow-up monitoring of youth business in the absence of the mentors.

In Burkina Faso, parents and guardians were involved throughout the mentorship process. For example

during the first cohorts, youth undertook a community mapping exercise to identify possible business mentors in the community. Youth then shared their findings with their parents, who helped them make an informed choice on which person to select as a mentor. However, this method of mentorship selection usually led to each youth having a mentor which was hard for the program team to monitor. Therefore, the Burkina Faso office introduced group mentorship by technical business mentors.

It should also be noted that YiA also found that in Uganda, some parents did not involve their children in managing the businesses. In these cases, the parents and caregivers acted as though they owned the youth’s small business and thought their role was to make sure that the businesses made money that would pay for the youth’s school fees.

To address the above challenge, YiA carried out on-site technical support for parents, to help them learn how to mentor their children through passing on business knowledge and skills over the weekends and during holidays. The program further carried out workshops on the roles of parents and mentors.

3.1.2 Community stakeholders can contribute to mentorship programs

YiA designed and implemented a formal mentorship program where the roles and responsibilities of community stakeholders as mentors were clearly defined in ToRs. In Uganda, the mentorship program was designed to work with key government staff like community development workers and agriculture extension workers to provide mentorship services for youth who were engaged in farming. Community leaders provided technical advice to youth, and connected youth to government resources within their communities. As mentors, they guided youth in the selection of businesses and connected youth to markets within and outside their communities.

To address any conflict of interest, YiA provided stipends to help government workers reach out to youth who were not intentionally targeted within traditional government agriculture programs.

In most YiA countries, community stakeholders played a supportive role during the mentorship process where they were part of the team that selected the

mentors. For example, in Ethiopia, they were part of the procurement committee that helped? Mentors and youth procure goods from market. Further, in Uganda, community stakeholders were key in solving the challenges that came up between mentors and youth especially when parents, in limited cases, misused the business start-up capital for the youth. In such cases, community development officers would hold the parents accountable and in most cases ask them to pay back the money.

3.2 Inclusive gender intervention is significant for the success of mentorship relationships

A significant finding from the YiA mentorship program is the way gender affects both business and peer-to-peer mentorship relationships within youth livelihood programs. YiA, through its Mentorship Guide, recommended that countries have equal representation of female and male mentors as a way of ensuring that both female and male youth were exposed to role

models from their communities who they could access for technical support in managing their businesses. However, our findings show that apart from the issue of equal access of both female and male mentors, gender affected countries differently. Some countries intentionally designed their mentorship programs with a gender lens while others did not.

The Village Development Committee (VDC) and the Local Centre Management Committee were part of the team that selected mentors in Malawi. As key community stakeholders, they understand and command respect from communities better than the program team. Their role was to recommend mentors who would uphold child protection safeguarding policies and who were trusted by community members.

Program staff in Malawi

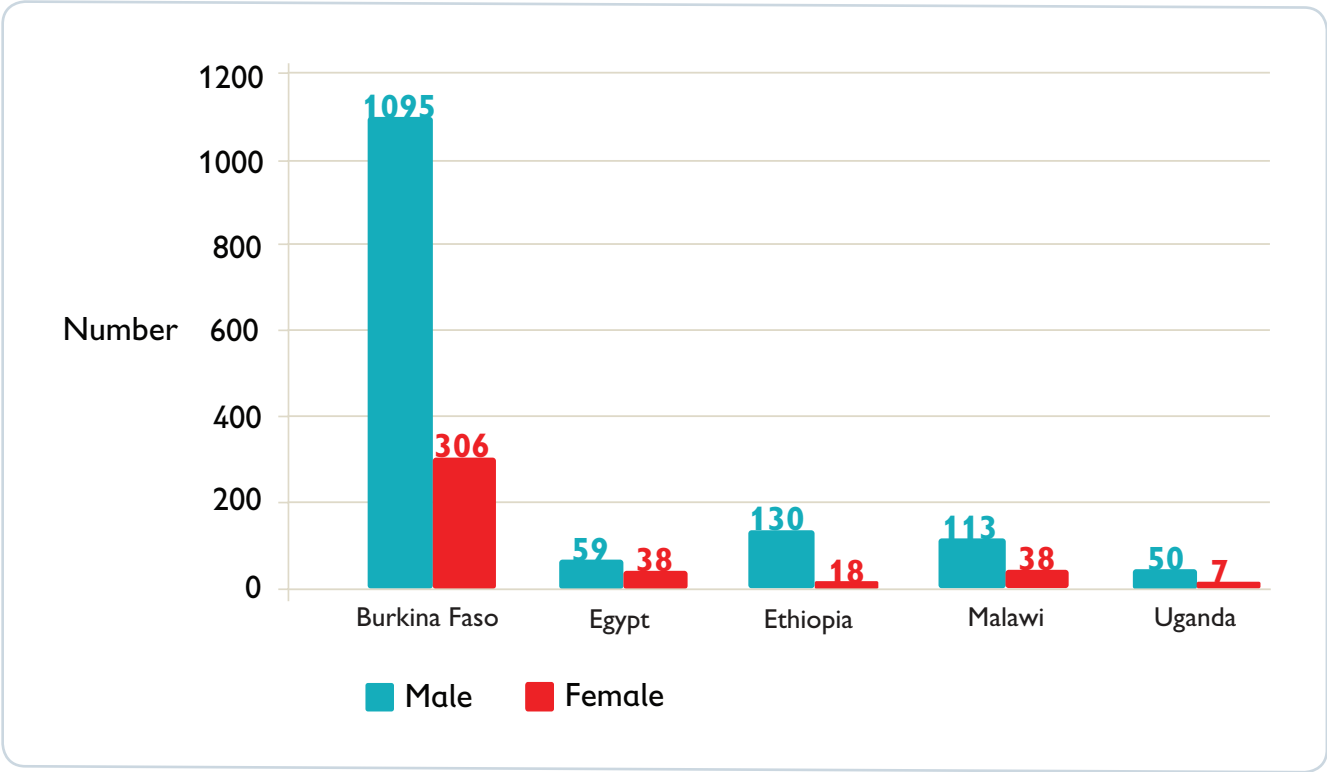


Figure 3. Mentor Number by Gender & Country

3.2.1 Gender norms in rural communities limit availability and accessibility of female mentors

In general, YiA country programs, especially Ethiopia, Malawi and Uganda, had more access to male than female mentors. This could be attributed to the existing gender role expectations within the communities where the program was implemented. In most YiA communities, women are expected to take on roles that fall within domestic spheres or to engage in businesses that are around their homesteads. These gender norms limit the scope of livelihood activities that women can engage in which subsequently denies women the experience and opportunity to become formal business mentors compared to their male counterparts.

Ethiopia and Uganda recruited government agriculture extension workers to play the role of mentors, especially for youth who were engaged in on-farm activities. Due to the fact that such individuals are disproportionately male, both countries consequently had more males participating as mentors as compared to females.

In order to address the challenge of limited access to female mentors, Malawi and Burkina Faso carried out a community mapping exercise of women in businesses within the communities where the program was being implemented. They further prioritized the recruitment of female mentors. As a result of these actions, much the percentage of male and female mentors was still skewed towards male mentors, but Malawi and Burkina Faso were able to increase the number of female mentors.

Gender balance in mentorship is critical and that is why YiA invested resources and time to increase the participation of women in mentorship. Within the communities where YiA was being implemented, women were under-represented in community businesses. This was not only worrying at the business perspective but also the message it was sending to female youth and women was that it is “A man’s job world” and this explains why most female youth were involved in businesses that were around their homes, and in most cases these businesses were not as profitable as those that were away from home.

In Uganda, some parents expressed the need of having female mentors to work with their daughters due to child protection issues or else they refused them to

The team observed that the mentors for prior youth cohorts were mostly males therefore the team carried out a youth-led market assessment while working with cohort 11 youth and they worked with the Village Development Committees to prioritize recruiting female businesswomen in the communities

YiA Program Staff in Malawi

work with male mentors. In countries like Egypt where the mobility of girls is restricted, it was important for the program to work with trusted women within the communities to offer mentorship services to girls. This greatly increased the participation of the girls and their families in the mentorship programs since the female mentors would reach out to the girls in their homes.

In places where female mentors were available and participated in the program, they were more engaged and the mentorship relationships were known to be more productive and lasted beyond the YiA program.

3.2.2 Female and male youth need tailored mentorship interventions

The findings indicate that in rural communities, girls spend most of their time doing domestic chores like child care, farming household chores among others, which greatly affects their contact time with the mentors. Further still, it was common for girls to get married and relocate from their communities to far-off communities where they had no contact with their mentors due to physical access challenges. This was a common challenge shared by program staff from Malawi, Burkina Faso, Uganda, and Ethiopia.

“I have been a mentor since cohort 1 of the program and I am still mentoring youth up to now. My objective is to mentor youth who can return to mentor their peers”

Female business mentor in Kasese District, Uganda

It was also observed that at the beginning of the mentorship program, most females selected to engage in businesses that were traditionally operated by women, by default called for female mentors. Such businesses include selling fruits and vegetables around homes, poultry, goat-rearing, and sewing; while the boys engaged in activities that were mostly male-dominated like animal rearing. This led to a challenge related to mobility and long-distances. Since both female youth and female mentors were more liable to stay close to their homes, it was difficult for female youth to meet with their mentors. Mountainous places like Ntoroko in Uganda, Woldeya in Ethiopia, and Ntchichi in Malawi were greatly affected by this. Thus, most girls were left with the option of working with male mentors who were mobile. This posed a challenge especially in Uganda and Malawi where some community members had negative perceptions on cross-gender mentoring relationships. Parents and spouses of female youth were more comfortable with their children or wives working with female mentors. Where this was not possible, most of the girls ended the mentorship relationships.

As a way of addressing this challenge, some countries like Uganda, Malawi, Egypt and Ethiopia promoted organic peer-to-peer mentorship especially in communities where there were successful female and male YiA alumni who could provide technical support to their peers.

3.3 Peer-to-peer mentorship motivates and sustains youth's business drive

YiA understands peer-to-peer mentorship as the process of matching older YiA alumni who have graduated from the program with younger youth who are still in the program to provide business advice and link youth to markets. In its trainings and in the Mentorship Guide, YiA highlighted the need to work with graduates who are older and successful in business because it was important to have a small age gap between the mentor and the mentee, which allows effective role modeling, but also because these mentors have had experience in YiA and have attained technical experience through practicing their small businesses. Additionally, peer mentors were normally based in the same community as their mentee.

Peer to peer mentorship within YiA commenced during the second half of the program because youth who

were in the program had graduated and had time to practice and ground themselves with their businesses. Youth who were still in the program naturally reached out to the program alumni who were successful with their businesses. For example, in Malawi, in some cases, peer mentors were selected by the youth and these only provided technical business support and linked youth to markets. When the program staff and community gatekeepers or youth selected the peer mentor, this led to increase youth participation in the program.

YiA recognizes that peer-to-peer mentorship was used differently from the mentorship definition that it shared but it had positive impact within the livelihood program. For example, programs teams recruited successful alumni, and their roles were not only limited to providing business knowledge and skills or linking youth to markets but they were diverse depending on the needs of the countries. In Malawi, peer mentors were used in the mobilization process and they would provide talks to youth who were still in the program to encourage them stay in the program. This led to the reduction in the drop-out rate of youth from the program. Egypt used their peer mentors to give talks to youth who were in the learning phase to help those who were struggling with literacy and numeracy, and they hosted visits to their businesses to motivate mentees to select their pathways. Furthermore, meetings at the learning centers during the Action Phase were implemented bi-weekly to provide peer-to-peer mentorship and create business linkages. In Uganda, peer-to-peer mentorship was also delivered through quarterly meetings at a sub-county level where a group of peer mentors would provide talks to youth who were going through the program. With this finding, the program recommends that future programs should not religiously adhere to the traditional definition of mentorship but can adapt the unique contributions of peer mentors.

YiA has observed some positive outcomes from peer-to-peer mentorship, such as:

- Increasing access to female mentors (Uganda and Malawi)
- Orienting youth on viable businesses within their communities and supporting youth in the process of producing goods and services (Ethiopia)
- In Egypt, the program organizes youth according to the different businesses they are implementing

and these meet at least once a month at the learning center to share their experiences in the presence of a mentor and facilitator. These business groups learn from each other and participate in visiting businesses of the different members. The groups also come together to set prices for their products and materials to avoid competition. They further select one person to procure materials for everyone from bigger towns at a discounted rate. Sometimes they invite vendors to their community to supply materials to their businesses at a discounted rate since they would be buying in large quantities.

It should be noted that with peer-to-peer mentorship, both the youth and mentor benefit from the program. The peer mentors reported gaining respect from community stakeholders and their families because of the role they were playing, they also reported being more committed to improve their businesses because they were role models for other youth in the community and thus their businesses had to be sustained. Peer to peer mentorship is valuable especially in rural communities of Africa where there is limited access to business mentors especially female business owners. Programs should be designed with lenses of building leadership within youth so that they can take up peer mentorship roles when they graduate from the program.

3.4 Ensuring mentor competencies is key for program quality

Continued training of mentors is key to improving their competencies. The intended objective of mentorship cannot be realized if the mentor is unprepared or under prepared for their mentoring roles.

YiA uses the cascading method of training where the Program Technical Team (PTT) at the regional level train country teams on mentorship through a train the trainers program and the country teams in return, train community partner staff and mentors. The trainer of trainers mainly focused on orienting the program staff on the mentorship guide and in return, the guide is adapted by the different country teams. During the training, staff are introduced to the YiA mentorship cycle, roles and responsibilities of mentors, mentees, program staff and the community, how to address expectations of mentors and youth, and child safeguarding policy issues.

In each YiA country, program staff prioritized training as one of the key ingredient of successful mentorship.

In Ethiopia, Uganda, Malawi, Burkina Faso and Egypt, adult mentors benefited from the initial trainings. The findings show that all mentors who had formal terms of references went through training at the beginning of the mentorship relationship before they were matched with the youth.

When I graduated from the vocational school where I was sponsored by YiA, I needed to improve my tailoring skills. So I started looking for someone in my community who had been through YiA and was successful in tailoring. I met my peer mentor in the trading center where he worked and we discussed the things I needed more training on and he agreed to mentor me and provide me with these skills.

Female YiA alumni from Malawi

In Uganda, discussions with mentors on their expected role in the mentorship program confirm the need for in-depth and repeated training. From the recently concluded qualitative mentorship research, there were mentors whose perceived role in the program totally disconnected from the concept of mentorship. For example, some parents who were mentoring 12 -13 year olds were not clear about their role in the program. Their expectation was that they would receive business start-up capital to set up business for their children and pay their school fees. However during the training, their expectations were reviewed, roles were shared, which equipped mentors with knowledge and skills to carry out their roles successfully. During the mentorship documentation process in the different countries, it was noted that mentors who did not have formal contracts with the implementing organizations were not provided with training. This was mostly common in Uganda, Malawi and Ethiopia. In Uganda, peer mentors, artisans and adult mentors who were not agriculture extension workers did not receive formal training at the onset and during the program. This greatly affected the quality of work they were doing with the youth.

In conclusion, it should be noted that training of all mentors in the program is very important for the mentorship relationship to be successful. It ensures that mentors are aware of the program goals and objectives, their roles, the roles of youth and other partners. Programs should prioritize refresher trainings for old mentors especially on issues around problem solving and communication skills.

3.5 Monitoring is a key ingredient of successful mentorship

Monitoring mentorship relationships is undeniably important. YiA envisaged monitoring activities conducted by the different stakeholders and thus developed tools that could be used in different situations. Different countries adapted these tools and arrived at different monitoring structures. In Uganda, district agricultural extension workers were expected to carry out monitoring visits to youth farming businesses as they provided technical support at least once a month for each youth; community leaders were supposed to monitor youth businesses once a quarter and at the end of these monitoring visits they provided Save the Children with reports.

“Partner project staff train parents (mentors) with the help of master facilitators. The trainings take place at the learning centre and one of the key objectives is to clarify the roles of parents as mentors”

Partner project officer for 12-13 year olds, Uganda

There were concerns from the mentors and mentees that the monitoring activities were not as frequent as desired. The mentors and mentees also thought that program staff from Save the Children should be more involved in the monitoring activities. They were not questioning the capability of other stakeholders in monitoring but they thought having Save the Children staff engage in monitoring would build youth and community confidence in the YiA program. The other recommendation was to have joint quarterly monitoring visits between government technical staff, Save the Children regional leadership and its partner leadership.

“One of the recommendations I would give to organizations that implement mentorship programs is to provide initial trainings for peer mentors so that there is clarity on our roles and those of other people working on the program”

Peer mentor, Uganda

YiA recognizes that there was pressure on key program staff to rollout new youth groups which limited their capacity to provide effective mentorship relationship monitoring. As a way of addressing this, joint quarterly monitoring visits between government technical staff, Save the Children regional leadership and its partner leadership was adapted.

Monitoring mentorship relationships is vital because it ensures that commitments between mentors and youth are kept and these contribute to program outcomes. In some countries like Ethiopia, Malawi and Burkina Faso, parents of the youth play a big role in monitoring the mentorship relationships. Parent's engagement in monitoring activities ensures minimum or no child protection concerns that can result from the mentorship relationships.

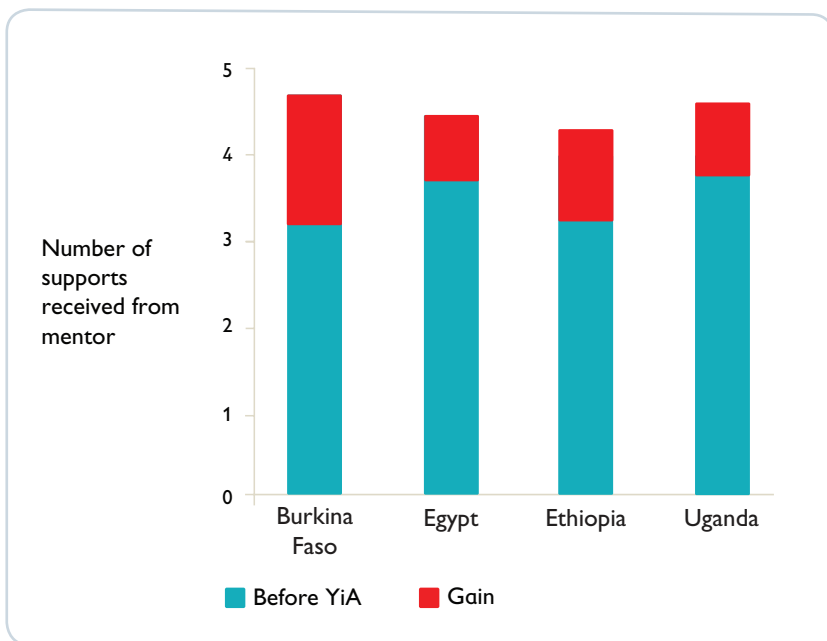
Monitoring the mentorship meetings in Egypt was carried out by YiA action facilitators regularly as the meetings were held at the learning centers. Furthermore, the facilitators undertook bi-weekly follow up visits to youths' businesses which provided the Egypt team with monthly updates on the progress of youths' businesses and their connections to their mentors. This provided the team with updated information and allowed it to take action when required.

3.6 Successful mentorship relationships continue to exist after graduation

YiA research shows that there is continued interactions between mentors and mentees even after the youth graduate from the programs for a minimum of nine months. Youth continue to get support from their mentors. The YiA Tracer study also asked youth about the types of support they received from mentors. On average, youth reported about one additional type of

support from their mentor after YiA – a small but statistically significant gain. There was no difference in reported support from mentors between male and female youth.

The graph below shows mentor support before and after YiA in Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia and Uganda.



Mentor support = Mentor shares information, provides emotional support, builds confidence, teaches skills, provides advice

Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Uganda: Average youth reported an increase of 1-1.5 types of mentor support >9 months after graduating from YiA

Ethiopia: Female youth reported greater gains in mentor support. But there remains a gap in support from mentors, with male youth reporting one more type of support from their mentors than female youth

Figure 4. Mentor support before and after YiA in Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia and Uganda.

Overall, the findings from the Tracer studies indicate that there is a strong likelihood that YiA mentorship relationships continue after graduation and that youth are more likely to have a mentor (whether or not that relationship originated during YiA) after the program

than they were before joining the program. While YiA recognizes that a variety of factors could contribute to this trend, it is likely that the skills, confidence, and connections that youth gained through YiA contributed to the growth of mentorship in YiA communities.



Conclusion

4.1 Summary of Findings

The findings show that parents played an important role in their children's mentorship program, including monitoring mentorship relationships and serving as mentors to VYAs. Program teams relied on parents to make sure that mentorship relationships were successful; for example, parents provided time and space for their children to participate in the mentorship program and escorted the mentor and youth to markets to procure business items.

Community stakeholders were also important in the selection of the mentors, they verified the suggested mentors to make sure that they were community members who were known and respected and were not threats to the safety of the youth. Further, District Community Development Officers monitored and provided support to the mentorship relationships in their communities.

Gender is a vital consideration in youth livelihood programming. Intentionally designing and implementing mentorship programs with gender lenses is key to yielding positive results. YiA findings show that access to both female and male mentors in a livelihood program allows youth to have positive role models within their communities and helps them succeed in their businesses. However, the evidence from research shows that there is limited access to female mentors in rural communities, especially in places where mobility of women is restricted by gender norms and mountainous physical terrain such as south-west Uganda, Ntchisi district in Malawi, and Amhara region in Ethiopia. Gender roles have also affected the type of businesses that the youth chose and that, in return, contributes to mentor selection. At the beginning of YiA mentorship program, most girls chose businesses that were traditionally carried out by females and as a default, sought female mentors.

Peer-to-peer mentorship is a unique approach to mentoring as compared to adult business mentorship. Peer-to-peer mentorship was reported to be more popular and successful by many YiA youth. In Uganda, peer-to-peer mentorship was organized around

quarterly meetings at sub-county level where youth would meet with their alumni and share knowledge and skills about different businesses. In some countries, peer mentors were used during community mobilization activities and to give talks to youth who had just joined the program and as a result, dropped out numbers were reduced. Peer mentorship bridges the gap of limited access to female mentors by increasing the number of female alumni who were playing the role of mentors in their own communities.

YiA evidence shows that mentor training is a key ingredient for successful mentorship relationships. Mentors need to be trained before they are matched with the youth and programs should provide refresher trainings. However much mentors have skill sets in managing their businesses, it is very important to provide them with training that introduces them on how to work with youth and to develop communication and problem solving skills.

Monitoring mentorship relationships is vital because it ensures that commitments between mentors and youth are kept. In some countries like Ethiopia, Malawi and Burkina Faso, parents of the youth played a significant role in monitoring the mentorship relationships. Parent's engagement in monitoring activities ensures minimum or no child protection concerns that can result from the mentorship relationships.

4.2 Recommendations

Based on program implementation and research, YiA has developed a number of key recommendations:

YiA intentionally engaged parents and caregivers and other community stakeholders throughout the mentorship program for both VYAs and older youth and had different learnings from this as illustrated above. Basing on the findings from the YiA program, livelihood programs should engage parents and other community stakeholders in the mentorship of their children and youth if they are to achieve program goals. Parents and caregivers and community stakeholders are key gatekeepers of youth who influence the lives and contribute to the success of their businesses. Reaching out to community stakeholders, parents and



caregivers enables mentorship programs to connect to key community services that are beneficial to youth business development.

From the YiA mentorship findings, peer-to-peer mentorship has remarkable potential to support the success of youth business development. Within the YiA program, there were many undocumented emerging peer mentorship relationships that formed organically as the number of youth graduates grew. It is therefore important for program staff to explore and document these unique structures and document their contribution to youth business development. For peer mentorship relationships to succeed, programs should prioritize the following:

- Provide clear ToR with clear roles, responsibilities and deliverables
- Training of peer mentors and providing logistical support like that given to adult mentors where needed
- Routine monitoring of peer mentorship activities

Program staff should always remember that peer mentorship can contribute to sustainability of the program and also increase youth participation if it is well designed and implemented. Programs such as YiA should design clear strategies to build youth peer-to-peer cascading leadership for alumni who would, in return, serve as mentors for the youth in the program.

Programs like YiA should invest in mentor training. Findings from YiA show that training of mentors was highly ranked by both mentors and youth. Therefore, both pre-service and refresher training should be designed within the program structure. It is important to note that training mentors at the beginning of the mentorship relationship may not mean the success of a relationship; there might need to be on-the-job coaching for peer-to-peer mentors and adult mentors in key activities or topics where they are struggling.

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