

Youth Empowerment Program Evaluation Report

SENEGAL

April 2010

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

FocusAfrica wishes to thank all those who contributed to the execution of this evaluation. We thank the organizations that shared their opinions and appreciation of the Youth Empowerment Program (YEP) with us, but also stakeholders for their important suggestions, which we did not fail to specify in the report. We equally wish to thank the implementing agency, Synapse Center, for their availability and their promptness in sharing information.

FocusAfrica thanks the International Youth Foundation (IYF) for entrusting us with the responsibility of implementing this evaluation. Our thanks equally go to the participants in the program, who were willing to be evaluated, while hoping that the outcomes will help to improve the future programs of IYF and those of the implementing agencies in the target countries of the program, in order to boost youth employability. We cannot end this acknowledgement without thanking Microsoft and IYF, thanks to whom the lives of many young Africans have been transformed for the better.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A. INTRODUCTION	11
B. SECTION I: DESCRIPTION OF THE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM IN SENEGAL.....	13
A. Objectives and context	13
B. General description.....	13
C. The YEP curricula.....	14
The Passport for Employment (PPE) program	14
The EMPACTO program	15
D. Recruitment and selection	16
E. Placement	16
F. Communications	17
G. Partnerships	17
C. SECTION II: EVALUATION METHODOLOGY	19
A. Sampling methodology	19
B. Data collection tools	19
C. Data capture and analysis approach.....	21
D. SECTION III: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS	22
A. Overall profile of program participants	22
B. Profile of the participants in the sample follow-up cohorts.....	23
C. Participants' educational attainment	24
E. SECTION IV: FINDINGS OF THE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM IN SENEGAL	25
A. General findings	25
B. Findings regarding the target cohorts	26
Placement analysis.....	26
Employment analysis	28
Quality of jobs.....	31
Program's effect on participants' perceptions of their life skills.....	32
Analysis of the quality of the training.....	35
The gender component.....	37
F. SECTION V: OBSERVATIONS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM	39
G. SECTION VI: RECOMMENDATIONS	40
H. ANNEXE: YEP TRAINING SCHEDULE FOR SYNAPSE	42
I. BIBLIOGRAPHY	43

TABLES

Table 1:	Main components of the YEP participant database
Table 2:	Socio-demographic profile of program participants at baseline
Table 3:	Educational attainment of participants in the database
Table 4:	Socio-demographic profile of sample follow-up cohorts
Table 5:	Educational attainment of participants in the sample follow-up cohorts
Table 6:	Statistical analysis of program participants' self-evaluations of their life skills at baseline and at exit
Table 7:	Participants in sample follow-up cohorts engaged in an activity after the training
Table 8:	Work status of sample follow-up cohorts after the training
Table 9:	Work status of sample follow-up cohorts at baseline compared to placement rate after the training
Table 10:	Sample follow-up cohorts' work status at the time of the evaluation
Table 11:	Principal reasons for not working at the time of the evaluation
Table 12:	Employment benefits or bonuses of employed participants in the follow-up sample cohorts
Table 13:	Salaries of employed participants in the sample follow-up cohorts
Table 14:	Statistical analysis of the sample follow-up cohorts' life skills assessment at exit and at follow-up evaluation
Table 15:	Analysis of the correlation between participants' self-assessments of their life skills and placement outcomes
Table 16:	Participants in the sample follow-up cohorts' assessments of the quality of the training at the time of the evaluation
Table 17:	Assessment of the tools used during the training at evaluation
Table 18:	Perception of quality of life in the sample follow-up cohorts
Table 19:	Educational attainment of the sample follow-up cohorts by gender, at the time of the evaluation

GRAPHICS

Graphic 1:	Self-assessment of life skills for the total trainee population at baseline (before program) and at exit (after program)
Graphic 2:	Self-assessment of skills at baseline, exit and evaluation for the sample follow-up cohorts
Graphic 3:	Employer evaluations with regard to the performance of interns and recruits
Graphic 4:	Comparison of life skills assessments between men and women in the PPE sample follow-up cohort at the time of the evaluation

Graphic 5: Comparison of life skills assessments between men and women in the EMPACTO sample follow-up cohort at the time of the evaluation

ACRONYMS

ANEJ	Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi des Jeunes or National Agency for Youth Employment
BTS	Brevet de Technicien Supérieur or Higher Technical Certificate
DTS	Diplôme de Technicien Supérieur or Higher Technical Diploma
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IYF	International Youth Foundation
MEDS	Mouvement des Entreprises du Sénégal or Movement for Enterprises of Senegal
OFEJBAN	Office pour l'Emploi des Jeunes de la Banlieue (Office for the employment of youth in suburban areas)
PPE	Passeport Pour l'Emploi or Passport for Employment
YEP	Youth Empowerment Program

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Senegal, it is estimated that more than 100,000 new Senegalese graduates enter the job market each year¹, which does not include the thousands of other job seekers who are not necessarily graduates or who have entered the informal sector or other jobs in the hopes of some day finding formal employment. Further, various analyses estimate the informal sector to represent anywhere from 80% to 90% of Senegal's active population. Yet, for the vast majority of Senegal's youth, the informal sector is not a preferred employment option but rather a temporary occupation until they are able to find formal employment. Several factors contribute to the youth employment challenge in Senegal including a high illiteracy rate (59.2% in 2007), a labor market that is difficult to penetrate particularly for first time job seekers, and labor legislation that is perceived to be unfavorable to employers and a deterrent to recruitment. Senegal's unemployment rate was estimated at 49% in 2008, of which 60% are less than 35 years of age. In addition, 10% of youth between 15 and 24 years old are not able to find employment despite looking for a job, 32% of youth are considered to be inactive², and 5% in the same age range are under-employed.³

In light of these challenges, which are shared across the African continent, Microsoft's Community Affairs Program in Africa (Microsoft) and the International Youth Foundation (IYF) joined forces through the Youth Empowerment Program (YEP) with a goal to enhance the employability of disadvantaged African youth ages 16 to 35. In Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, and Tanzania, YEP sought to adapt to the African context the comprehensive approach to youth employability developed by IYF through its successful *entra21* program in Latin America.

The study is an independent evaluation of the YEP program in Senegal, managed by IYF, funded by Microsoft, and executed in Senegal by Synapse Center (Synapse). The Senegal program received a US\$ 150,000 grant. Synapse is a non-profit organization, whose objectives are to promote leadership and entrepreneurship, and to encourage young people to actively participate in the development of Senegal. The objective of the YEP program in Senegal is to address the challenge of employability by training 2,200 young people in the Dakar, Thiès, Saint-Louis and Tambacounda regions. The program targets youth ages 16 to 34. The program consists of two types of training: (1) training aimed at strengthening the employability of young graduates called "Passeport Pour l'Emploi" (PPE) or Passport for Employment; and (2) an entrepreneurial skills development training called EMPACTO. The curricula for the two programs were developed based on an assessment of market needs, following extensive consultations with various stakeholders. The objectives of this two-year program are to:

- Train 1,500 young people in life skills, information and communication technologies (ICT), and job search techniques;
- Train 700 young people in entrepreneurship;
- Support the placement of at least 70% of the trainees through internships, employment, voluntary community service, and self-employment; and
- Develop an employment opportunity and internship data bank.

By program completion, Synapse had trained a total of 1,917 beneficiaries. The report describes the program participants, using the Synapse database provided in November 2009 which included information on 1,750 participants (1,099 PPE participants and 651 EMPACTO participants), and presents the results of the sample follow-up cohorts of 86 participants (45 PPE participants and 42 EMPACTO

¹ Friedrich Ebert Foundation Senegal; <http://senegal.fes-international.de/f-jeunesse.html>

² Meaning they are neither working, looking for work, nor in school.

³ "Understanding youth employment outcomes in Senegal," L. Guarcello, Working Paper May 2007.

participants) that were interviewed during the evaluation by FocusAfrica. In this regard, a questionnaire was developed so as to gather the opinions and suggestions of participants and employers of participants in the sample follow-up cohorts. Two focus group sessions were also organized with some participants in order to gather their views on the program and on their overall environment. The analysis also leverages the baseline and exit surveys completed by participants before and after the training.

The evaluation revealed the following findings:

- The evaluation of the 86 participants in the sample follow-up cohorts revealed a placement rate of 51.16%. Respondents who were placed after the training were employed or self-employed, participated in an internship, or community service⁴. One respondent continued with his studies after the training. In total, 52.34% of the respondents were employed, self-employed, participated in an internship, volunteered in their communities, and/or continued their studies after the training. With an overall unemployment rate of 48%, Senegal's difficult economic environment is such that the private sector does not offer significant opportunities for employment.
- Compared to respondents' employment status at baseline, more respondents were working or productively engaged after the training: 19.31% of the participants in the sample follow-up cohorts were employed at baseline compared with 51.16% of the participants in the sample follow-up cohorts who were placed after the training.
- Within the two sample follow-up cohorts that were evaluated, 47.67% were employed at the time of the evaluation - 39.02% from the PPE sample follow-up cohort and 60.98% from the EMPACTO cohort. The analysis reveals that the majority of the EMPACTO respondents in the sample follow-up cohorts prioritized obtaining employment and not creating a business. This explains the fact that 72% of the participants in the sample follow-up cohorts who were employed at the time of the evaluation were wage earners and 8% were interns, against 12% entrepreneurs. It is important to note that Synapse's strategy was to empower participants in either program to take full ownership of the process to secure employment, whether as employees or entrepreneurs.
- The data shows that approximately 52% of the respondents in the sample follow-up cohorts were not employed at the time of the evaluation. When asked about the reasons why they were not employed, 66% of the respondents indicated that they were awaiting responses to job applications. Further analysis revealed that there are underlying issues as to why placement has been difficult for some participants. Various factors contribute to these rates, including the low capacity of labor absorption of the labor market, the relationships with employers and program partners which were not always maximized, but also the wait-and-see attitude of young people caused, according to them, by discouragement with the system, but which is also deeply rooted in culture and tradition, and the strong belief that luck is a critical factor in becoming successful. Although the life skills training aimed to dispel such beliefs, it may be that ongoing and longer-term coaching or mentoring will be needed to address this challenge more fully.

⁴ Per terms of the Microsoft-IYF Youth Empowerment Program agreement and overall program objectives of empowering youth by enhancing employability as well as engagement/citizenship, placement is defined as dependent or self-employment or participation in an internship or voluntary community service activity. In this report, the placement rate is comprised of respondents who were engaged in an activity 'after the training and before the evaluation' and/or 'at the time of the evaluation'; each participant was counted only once. Participants who continued with their studies are not included in the placement rate. .

- The participants in the sample follow-up cohorts had a very positive appreciation of the quality of the training. Participants appreciated the clarity of the training and the comprehensiveness of the workshops. However, the training modules were considered to be too short in duration, and would provide more benefits if they could be extended.
- Participants in the sample follow-up cohorts perceived an impact on their skills, which were strengthened, thus providing them with the necessary tools and skills to better face the employment market.
- Also 54.65% of the participants confirmed having a better quality of life after the program compared to before the program.
- The analysis also shows that 89.53% of the participants indicated that they would recommend the program to other young people.
- Participants acknowledged that they acquired various skills from the training, which enabled them to empower themselves, improve their skills in writing CVs, raise their level of personal development and become better equipped with regard to communication techniques and the development of their networks. However, although the participants generally rated themselves well with regard to skills, the majority that evaluated themselves quite positively at baseline showed a regression in their self-perception of their skills at the time of the evaluation. The self-evaluations at baseline and exit showed similar patterns. The analysis found that the change from baseline to evaluation was statistically significant for the following abilities: work in groups, manage conflict, personal presentation, ethics in the workplace, be responsible and organize time, which were all rated lower from exit to evaluation.
- The evaluation revealed a lower remuneration for women (on average CFAF 140,000 per month for men or approximately US\$ 311, and CFAF 52,000 for women or approximately US\$ 115.5). The analyses also revealed higher self-evaluations for men compared to women, particularly with regard to the capacity to be responsible, to learn on one's own, to work in teams, as well as writing and communication skills. The data also shows that women have a higher capacity to access financing, an area where they are better equipped due to their involvement in savings and loans clubs, which are used to finance small income-generating activities.
- Concerning the implementation of the program, interviews with employers and stakeholders revealed a lack of sufficient information on the program. Suggestions were made to better market the program in order to increase the visibility of its offerings.
- The evaluation also revealed the efforts of Synapse to increase the placement rate by putting in place a pairing system consisting of PPE and EMPACTO participants working together to develop project concepts, up to business creation. Through this innovation, 77 PPE participants in total were able to accompany young entrepreneurs in the concretization of their projects.

For more effective implementation of future YEP programs, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Strengthen the candidate selection process. The selection criteria for the EMPACTO program should not have been limited to a project idea only, but should also require the prerequisites for a solid business plan, including entry tests to measure their engagement and motivation towards their project. This recommendation was made following the observation that the majority of the participants in the EMPACTO cohort were job seekers and not entrepreneurs.
- It would also be beneficial to group participants with the same level of education in the same sessions and avoid having participants who have primary school level education sharing the

same sessions with those that had completed higher education. As a result, the level of understanding could not be the same, notably with regard to making use of the training tools.

- Develop deeper partnerships with training institutions and universities in order to reach the targets of the training. Synapse already collaborated with training institutions and universities as sources of applicants for the training programs. However, these partnerships can be further developed and strengthened. For example, the training institutions can further integrate the training into their curricula, so that it is accessible to a much larger number of students. Such partnerships can even be on a fee-basis for students.
- Revise the target number of youth to be trained and focus more on increasing the training and coaching hours per participant. For example, whereas youth in the Kenya NairoBits program received a minimum of 496 hours of training, youth in Senegal received around 50 hours of training and coaching. The average spending per student should be increased for the Senegal program.
- Increase the duration of the coaching sessions. Approximately 76% of the participants in the sample follow-up cohorts considered the time devoted to the coaching sessions to be too short. Reactions during the focus group discussions also supported this observation, where participants indicated that they found the coaching sessions to be very beneficial because they contributed to a better understanding of the modules, to a customized exchange with the coaches, but also to further developing their confidence and helping them to advance in their careers.
- Better communicate the role of Synapse. Approximately 62.16% of the participants thought that they were guaranteed employment following the training, and 55.55% expected to receive financing. Despite the fact that Synapse stated the objectives of the training during each session, it is necessary to further state the role of Synapse as a facilitator and not a provider of employment.
- Create a dynamic system to monitor participants after they complete the program by organizing events such as end-of-training graduations which are publicized in the media and attended by private sector figures and decision-makers.
- Improve and better structure partnerships with the private sector, public sector entities and NGOs by:
 - Ensuring better follow-up of partnerships with private organizations to increase the placement rate of participants.
 - Building stronger partnerships with businesses so as to constantly be in tune with their skills needs and update the curricula as needed.
- Identify other sources of financing in order to reach a greater number of participants. It would be beneficial to approach financing organizations to raise additional funds to successfully carry out various activities.
- Develop a program to strengthen ICT skills. A significant number of suggestions were to offer more ICT training. Indeed, a significant number of participants thought that they were not well equipped in computers and technology.
- Train young women participants in salary negotiation techniques, in order to address the large gap between compensation for men and women. Women will also benefit from additional training to increase their self-confidence. Indeed, their lower self-assessments in personal skills, when compared to those of men, support this need.

Overall, the program has resulted in some very positive outcomes, and is unique in Senegal, where training in life skills or any other “soft skills” is limited. The program should be expanded through greater collaboration with the education sector and should seek opportunities to integrate the program into mainstream teaching at any level (higher education, vocational education, informal sector support initiatives, and others).

A. INTRODUCTION

In Senegal, it is estimated that more than 100,000 new Senegalese graduates enter the job market each year⁵, which does not include the thousands of other job seekers who are not necessarily graduates or who have entered the informal sector or other jobs in the hopes of some day finding formal employment. Further, various analyses estimate the informal sector to represent anywhere from 80% to 90% of Senegal's active population. Yet, for the vast majority of Senegal's youth, the informal sector is not a preferred employment option but rather a temporary occupation until they are able to find formal employment. Several factors contribute to the youth employment challenge in Senegal including but not limited to a high illiteracy rate (59.2% in 2007⁶), a labor market that is difficult to penetrate particularly for first time job seekers, and a labor legislation that is perceived to be unfavorable to employers and a deterrent to recruitment. Senegal's unemployment rate was estimated at 49% in 2008⁷, of which 60% are less than 35 years of age.⁸ In addition, 10% of youth between 15 and 24 years old are not able to find employment despite looking for a job, 32% of youth are considered to be inactive⁹, and 5% in the same age range are under-employed.¹⁰

In light of these challenges, which are shared across the African continent, Microsoft's Community Affairs Program in Africa (Microsoft) and the International Youth Foundation (IYF) joined forces to help address the challenges of youth employment and entrepreneurship in Africa, through the Youth Empowerment Program (YEP). In Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, and Tanzania, YEP sought to adapt to the African context the comprehensive approach to youth employability developed by IYF through its successful *entra21* program in Latin America. The program provides demand-driven training in information and communications technology (ICT), life skills, and entrepreneurship, with a goal to improve the employability of disadvantaged African youth ages 16 to 35. The specific objectives of this two-year program are to meet the employment needs of young people in the four target countries by:

- Strengthening the capacity of at least six implementing organizations to deliver high quality employability programs to reach at least 40,000 individuals, with 10,000 young people benefiting directly from ICT, life skills, entrepreneurship, and marketable job skills training;
- Achieving at least 70% placement of those who receive training under the project through internships, jobs, self-employment, and/or voluntary community service.¹¹ The program provides assistance with job placement in the formal or informal sectors, and enterprise development services including access to credit through alliances with other providers. The program also seeks to encourage continuing education and training.

In Senegal, the YEP program was implemented by Synapse Center, with a goal to train 2,200 young people over a period of two years. Of these, 1,500 young people were to be trained in employability

⁵ Friedrich Ebert Foundation Senegal; <http://senegal.fes-international.de/f-jeunesse.html>

⁶ National Agency for Statistics and Demography of Senegal (Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie du Sénégal).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "Understanding youth employment outcomes in Senegal," L. Guarcello, Working Paper May 2007.

⁹ Meaning they are neither working, looking for work, nor in school.

¹⁰ "Understanding youth employment outcomes in Senegal," L. Guarcello, Working Paper May 2007.

¹¹ Per terms of the Microsoft-IYF Youth Empowerment Program agreement and overall program objectives of empowering youth by enhancing employability as well as engagement/citizenship, placement is defined as dependent or self-employment or participation in an internship or voluntary community service activity. If a youth beneficiary has been employed in one or more jobs, has been self-employed, or has participated in an internship or community service activity since completing the program, the beneficiary is counted in the program's overall placement rate. In addition, the evaluation provides specific information on employment and self-employment placement rates and outcomes.

skills, and 700 in entrepreneurship. To implement the YEP, Synapse Center received a grant of US\$ 150,000.

In order to measure the outcome of the program on the participants, IYF, following an open tender, contracted FocusAfrica, a management consulting firm based in Senegal, to conduct an independent evaluation of YEP in each of the four target countries of the program. The objectives of the evaluation are to:

- Review the implementation process for the program pilot and its outcomes;
- Assess the outcomes of the training for the youth in terms of acquisition of skills, placement, and creation of businesses or income-generating self-employment;
- Gather the opinions of employers on the performances of trainees and employees, as well as gaps to be filled; and
- Gather recommendations from employers and stakeholders in order to improve the implementation of the program.

Subsequent sections of the report provide a description of the YEP program in Senegal and its different components (Passport for Employment, or PPE, and EMPACTO), followed by the methodology adopted for the evaluation. The outcomes of the evaluation are then presented, based on: (i) the characteristics and the outcomes of the entire participant population through the analysis of the full program database as provided by Synapse; and (ii) the characteristics and outcomes of the sample follow-up cohorts and employers of program participants that were interviewed at the time of the evaluation in December 2009-January 2010. Following this analysis, the report summarizes the feedback from the participants and various stakeholders on the implementation of the program. The report concludes with proposed recommendations to strengthen the program in Senegal.

B. SECTION I: DESCRIPTION OF THE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM IN SENEGAL

A. Objectives and context

In Senegal, the YEP program was implemented by Synapse Center in partnership with the International Youth Foundation (IYF), with a goal to promote the employability of youth between 16 and 35 years old. The program aimed to train 2,200 youth in Dakar, Thiès, Saint Louis and Tambacounda over a period of two years. The principal expected outcomes of the program were:

- 1,500 young people trained in employability skills, job search techniques, and personal development, of which 1,050 youth were to be placed in businesses, NGOs or local communities for internships or professional qualifications training, or employed at the end of the apprenticeship and internship.
- 700 young people trained in entrepreneurship, of which 40 business projects were to be supported, 200 business plans developed, and 200 young people placed in internships, jobs or as volunteers.

The YEP program in Senegal was based on partnerships with the government, the private sector, business schools and universities, as well as civil society. As such, it was projected that partnership agreements would be signed with various stakeholders, which were to focus on placement of youth in internships and jobs, and support in the creation and/or the management of micro and small scale enterprises.

B. General description

Synapse Center is a non-profit organization founded in 2003 with the objective to promote leadership, the spirit of enterprise—both personal and organizational—and community development. The objective of Synapse Center is to help youth to become leaders and entrepreneurs, or attain any other position that will enable them to contribute to the development of their communities and to the world. Synapse trains young people throughout Senegal in life skills, job search techniques, entrepreneurship, and leadership, and provides them with career guidance. The Center works in close collaboration with the Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi des Jeunes/the National Agency for Youth Employment (ANEJ) to provide training to youth in search of employment.

Since its creation, Synapse has developed a number of programs such as:

- **Passeport Pour l'Emploi or PPE** (Passport for Employment), a training program on personal development and job search techniques. The training provides participants with the skills and competencies to help them find a job. The program focuses primarily on training youth and placing them in jobs and internships.
- **IMPACTO**, a program designed to support youth in developing their entrepreneurial skills by providing them with the necessary tools to transform their ideas into concrete projects. The program focuses on developing the creativity and sense of responsibility of youth.
- **Promesse Sénégal**, a one-year program focused on the creation of sustainable enterprises and skills development for students and young entrepreneurs. Participants are selected based on how innovative their business projects are. The program contributes to the development and acquisition of entrepreneurial values and skills by encouraging and enhancing the potential and audacity of young entrepreneurs and students. It channels their energies and creativity in the area of sustainable self and business realization, focusing on both profitability and achieving a positive impact on society.

- **Leadership academy**, which has been held annually since 2004. This three-day event focuses on major trends, entrepreneurship, future prospects, leadership, innovation, or any topic around building the future while anticipating ongoing changes in organizations and communities. These themes are discussed in small groups, open fora, workshops, roundtables, shows, exhibitions and events.

In Senegal, the YEP program is composed of two Synapse programs, namely PPE (Passport for Employment) and EMPACTO. The YEP aimed to tackle the twin challenges of low youth employability and low entrepreneurship skills in Senegal:

- **Low youth employability:** Synapse Center had first-hand experience in confronting this issue and drew on lessons from earlier versions of Synapse programs implemented between 2003 and 2005 in collaboration with ANEJ, various business schools, universities, and the National Coalition for Youth Employment (Coalition Nationale pour l'Emploi des Jeunes). These lessons highlighted the lack of training in life skills, which largely contributes to the difficulties in integrating youth in the job market. Lessons also highlighted a gap between the recruitment needs of employers and the skills of the youth, which also led Synapse to contribute to drafting the first guide for young job seekers called « Goorboulot ».
- **Low youth entrepreneurial skills:** Based on the observation that entrepreneurship is not sufficiently developed in Senegal and is one of the causes of under-employment, Synapse developed an entrepreneurship component, which seeks to contribute to the development of the capacities of young entrepreneurs through a program – “**Promesse Sénégal**” – which is one year in duration. This program is focused on the development of sustainable enterprise creation projects, and the development of life skills for students and young entrepreneurs, so that they can better impact their economic and social environments. The program comprises three phases, namely:
 - The **observation phase**, which consists of an experiential expedition in places characterized by precarious economic conditions, the objective being to develop the spirit of enterprise among youth to better impact their social environment.
 - The **retreat phase**, which consists of helping young entrepreneurs to reflect and better understand themselves as individuals, and at the same time further develop and refine their project ideas.
 - The **implementation phase**, which consists of transforming “ideas” into “projects”. It is during this phase that tools such as thematic workshops are conducted, ideas and examples of good practices are shared, and mentoring and debriefs are provided.

C. The YEP curricula

The Passport for Employment (PPE) program

The PPE curriculum is the product of an extensive process of exchange and collaboration with experts in the sector, who took part in enriching the curriculum development process with their ideas, skills and examples of leading practices in training and counseling. The program included 24 hours of training, divided in three sessions of eight hours each focused on personal development and basic skills. The training was followed by coaching and job search support.

- **Personal development and basic skills (24 hours):** Training was focused on learning to know the environment, know oneself, and acquire job search techniques through mock interviews, preparation of cover letters and CVs, and portfolio development. Its objective was to help participants assess and strengthen their basic skills. The participants were also trained in public

speaking and communication techniques in preparation for job interviews. The training relied on mock interviews and role playing, as well as feedback sessions to participants on areas to strengthen.

- **Coaching:** This aspect of the program included group coaching sessions where participants were encouraged to role play various scenarios that can occur during a job search. The sessions included four modules:
 - Defining the success equation: analysis of the different players in the job search process;
 - Developing a strategy to promote oneself to potential employers;
 - Developing skills and techniques to approach potential employers; and
 - Practicing the skills mentioned above through role play.
- **Job placement support:** It consisted of providing participants with job advertisements, and sharing techniques to identify jobs that are not advertised. This was followed by assistance in preparing job applications, and finally support to participants in contacting organizations they wanted to apply to.

The use of ICT tools used for job searches and networking such as Facebook, Viadeo, Linkedin and others were added to the PPE curriculum to take into account new communications and networking techniques.

The EMPACTO program

EMPACTO is an abridged 40-hour version of the Promesse Senegal program. It is divided in three phases and five sessions:

- **Promotion and communication:** It consists of promoting the program to target youth and other potential stakeholders (youth promotion agencies, etc.).
- **Training workshops and formulation of projects:** During this phase, participants were trained in tools and techniques to develop and nurture their professional projects. It included a training package and project design workshops, including 14 complementary modules integrated into field activities. The training was focused essentially on:
 - *Personal development and the business creation concept:* This phase allowed participants to discover themselves as entrepreneurs, and to assess their skills, strengths and weaknesses. Following this phase, participants identified and evaluated their project ideas, followed by an analysis of the business opportunity to assess its feasibility.
 - *Market survey and marketing:* This phase consisted of an assessment of legal, technical, commercial and administrative information needs. The participants were trained in conducting competitor research and analysis, followed by a product or service development phase, as well as training on marketing techniques and strategies for microenterprises.
 - *Financial forecasts:* Participants were trained in financial and accounting management. Techniques to search for financing were also discussed in this session.
 - *Choice of business statutes and constitution:* A presentation of the different types of company legal structures and their characteristics was conducted, to allow participants to select the ones that are most suitable to them. Administrative processes were also presented, as well as the general outline of a business plan.
- **Support to young entrepreneurs:** A mentoring and coaching system was put in place to support program beneficiaries in their business creation process: 20 hours of group coaching were

provided. This coaching phase included brainstorming sessions, which served to discuss and further develop the business ideas of participants. During this stage, experts intervened to critique and share ideas on the business projects of the young entrepreneurs, and provided recommendations to them.

D. Recruitment and selection

For the PPE and EMPACTO programs, the selection criteria for the participants were as follows:

Participant selection criteria:

- Between 16-35 years of age
- Minimum of a baccalaureate (high school diploma) plus two years of higher education, or vocational training certificate (Brevet de Technicien Supérieur - BTS) or Higher Technical Certificate/ Diplôme de Technicien Supérieur (DTS) or Higher Technical Diploma: for participants in the PPE program
- Basic literacy skills (reading, writing, and ability to learn): for participants in the EMPACTO program
- A professional project: for participants in the PPE and EMPACTO programs
- A project/business idea: for participants in the EMPACTO program

Synapse Center developed and implemented a comprehensive strategy for the recruitment and selection of program participants. In order to reach its target number of participants that met the selection criteria, Synapse used: **newspapers** to provide information on the different programs offered; **program partners** such as ANEJ, NGOs and associations active in the youth employment sector to disseminate information on the programs. Synapse also identified program alumni and asked them to refer three young people who met the criteria of the program. Synapse then contacted the references and invited them to apply to the program. Synapse also relied on “**word of mouth**” to promote the program to the target group.

The selection of candidates was based on an evaluation of applications. A minimum level of a baccalaureate and two years of higher education or a vocational certificate (BTS: Higher Technical Certificate or DTS: Higher Technical Diploma) were prerequisites for participation in the PPE program. For EMPACTO the requirement was primary school completion to students in their final year of secondary school. However, the applicants were required to have at least a project concept that the training could help further develop. The less stringent criteria for EMPACTO were due to the fact that entrepreneurship is highly developed in the informal sector, which has a significant population with a low level of education or sometimes even no formal education at all. The program wished to offer an opportunity for training to this target group as well.

E. Placement

Synapse implemented a system to monitor opportunities using three main channels:

- **A job fair** to promote the PPE program and to help identify job and internship opportunities in enterprises, NGOs, and local communities in Senegal;
- **Partnerships** with organizations in the private sector to support the placement of young people in partner organizations (17 partners); and
- Assembling and disseminating **job opportunities advertised in the local newspapers**. For participants who were invited for job interviews, Synapse also provided customized preparation and coaching support upon request to help them prepare for interviews.

In addition, several support tools were provided to job seekers such as an Excel template to help participants keep track of job opportunities and contacts.

F. Communications

To increase the visibility of the program, Synapse invested in the development of various communication tools and initiatives such as:

- The production of 5,000 brochures on the program distributed to participants, partners and other target stakeholders.
- The production and placement of posters in business schools, universities, microfinance institutions, and other partner organizations.
- A subscription to Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com) and dissemination of a monthly newsletter to over 8,000 subscribers (students, entrepreneurs, employers, etc.).

In addition to this, various events were organized and co-organized with representatives from the private sector, the government, NGOs and youth, in order to develop and strengthen partnerships with organizations involved in youth employment. Examples of these events include:

- **Leadership talks** organized by Synapse each month with a business leader as a guest speaker to present his background and business to the youth, and discuss business opportunities with participants.
- **Breakfast sessions with the private sector:** In partnership with the National Association of Human Resources Directors and Managers (ANDCP), Synapse organized two meetings with approximately thirty human resources managers and directors from different companies to introduce the YEP program and build partnerships towards placement opportunities.
- Synapse was invited by the Youth Employment Network (YEN), the International Labor Organization (ILO) and EcoFinances to participate in the **Annual Finance Show** and present its programs, together with the ILO, employer organizations, the World Bank, Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE) and CISCO. The event helped to communicate about the YEP program to over 200 guests, and to forge ties with employer organizations such as CNES (National Confederation of Employers of Senegal).
- With Microsoft, YEN and PlanetFinance, Synapse **co-hosted an event on public-private partnerships** followed by a presentation of the program and a joint press conference (Microsoft, Synapse and ANEJ), which received wide media coverage (newspapers, Internet, radio and television). This event helped to forge links with many companies.
- To help entrepreneurs in the EMPACTO program connect with potential investors, Synapse organized **thematic workshops on project financing**. Synapse partnered with FNPJ, the Canadian Cooperation, Bank of Africa, PAMECAS (microfinance institution), and others to carry out this event.

G. Partnerships

Synapse invested significant time in developing partnerships with various government agencies, NGOs, associations, businesses, and others. These efforts included the following:

- Visits to trade unions, business associations and individuals – visits were conducted to over 50 enterprises, and over 100 were contacted by mail.

- Partnership agreements with certain government entities such as ANEJ, the National Fund for the Promotion of Youth (FNPJ), and the Directorate of Women Entrepreneurship, with whom training sessions were conducted.
- Partnership agreements with most of the business schools in Dakar and the University Cheikh Anta Diop.
- Synapse also worked with various community-based organizations and NGOs.

The following section describes the evaluation methodology. The evaluation included an analysis of the participant database as provided by Synapse, as well as face-to-face interviews with participants from one sample follow-up cohort for each program (PPE and EMPACTO). The approach used to select the sample follow-up cohorts is also described below.

C. SECTION II: EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

A. Sampling methodology

The evaluation targeted direct interviews with 97 participants from two cohorts – one PPE cohort and one EMPACTO cohort. The target PPE cohort was based in Dakar the capital (urban area) and had 53 participants who completed training on March 30, 2009. The target EMPACTO cohort was based in Bargny, a semi-urban and rural low-income area situated some thirty kilometers from the capital. This cohort had 44 participants who completed training on December 30, 2008.

The choice of the target cohorts to be evaluated for each program was guided by the requirement for a post-training period of approximately six months in all countries at the time of the evaluation to account for sufficient time for placement, as well as sufficient time for the participants to apply what they had learned.

It is important to note that the cohorts that were selected for the evaluation are in fact not a structured group and the youth beneficiaries who were interviewed were selected randomly. Baseline and exit forms from the organization's entire database of participants were used to draw comparisons between the sample follow-up cohorts and overall participants. A comparison of the profiles of the participants in the overall database and the sample follow-up cohorts (see Section IV) indicates that the sample follow-up cohorts are representative of all the trained youth in the Synapse YEP program.

B. Data collection tools

Document review

The evaluation was initiated by a review of program documentation and discussions with IYF and the Synapse team. The review provided the evaluation team with a better understanding of the program's objectives and served to modify the sample questionnaire provided by IYF to address the specificities of each of the country programs. The key documents that were reviewed for the Synapse YEP program include the following:

- Synapse Center Project Proposal;
- Synapse Center Project Description;
- Synapse quarterly reports to IYF;
- IYF quarterly "Africa Citizenship Project Status Reports" to Microsoft;
- Grant Agreement between Microsoft Community Affairs for West, East, Central Africa and Indian Ocean Islands and IYF; and
- Entra21 report (IYF youth employability program in Latin America).

Analysis of the program participant database

Program participants complete a baseline survey upon entering the program and an exit survey upon completion. IYF and Synapse adapted both surveys to specific program/country circumstances based on tested models IYF developed in its *entra21* program. Each survey includes the participant's unique identification number (assigned at baseline), personal and contact information, demographic and socioeconomic data, and self-assessments of participants' abilities in life skills. Capturing this data at baseline and exit enabled the program to assess changes from a participant's entry into the program to the time of program completion. The information from both surveys was captured in a participant database created by IYF and adapted by Synapse Center.

To verify the accuracy and validity of the database, the evaluation team compared sample entries from the database with hard-copy participant files. From this review, the Synapse team reviewed the hard-copy participant files and corrected the database to match the hard-copy files. Based on this activity, the database was considered to be accurate enough for analysis. The database comprises the sections described hereunder.

Table 1: Main components of the YEP participant database

Identification	This section included the participant code, as well as the first name and last name
Socio-demographic information	This included age, gender, contact address, matrimonial status, number of children, family income, level of education and area of study
Life skills at baseline	This section included the different training categories including: personal development, communication skills, capacity to work in groups, conflict management, organizing one's thoughts and ideas, creativity, personal presentation, time management and work ethics. The objective of this category was to capture participants' self-assessments of their life skills at entry into the program.
Training	This section identified the different modules that participants completed during the training
Technical skills acquired	This section assessed the level of the participant's knowledge and use of ICT, his /her capacity to prepare a CV, his/her behavior during interviews, and his/her level of expertise in job search techniques
Life skills at exit	The same life skills were measured at the end of the training in order to gauge the impact of the training on the participant
Placement	This section provides information on placement (employment, internships, voluntary work and business creation / self-employment)
Status at exit	This section provides information on the priorities of the participant: if he or she was in search of employment, an internship or financing

Participant questionnaire

The follow up evaluation included face-to-face interviews from December 2009 to January 2010 with participants from the PPE and EMPACTO sample follow-up cohorts in Dakar and Bargny using an adapted version of the validated and tested survey questionnaire from the *Entra21* program. The objectives of the questionnaire were to assess the outcomes of the program in terms of employment including work, internship, voluntary work, and entrepreneurship, as well as to gauge their overall perception of the program's achievements.

The questionnaire was structured as follows:

- Socio-demographic and background information about the participant;
- Quality of life;
- Educational attainment;
- Training outcomes;
- Employment profile;
- Perception of self; and

- Evaluation of the program.

Employer questionnaire

Employers of program participants were also interviewed to gauge their perception of the program, and to assess the skills of program participants from their perspective. An employer questionnaire also based on the entra21 survey was used to this effect and addressed the following:

- General information about the employer organization;
- How the participant was recruited (interview, the role of the implementing agency, etc.);
- The performance of the program participants who had interned or were employed within the organization;
- The willingness of the employer to continue and recruit participants from the program; and
- Recommendations from the employer to strengthen the program.

The purpose was mainly to collect opinions and suggestions from the employers in regards to the performance of trainees or recruits and recommendations for Synapse to improve the training. The employer questionnaires were administered both face-to-face and via telecommunications due to time constraints. A sample of 17 employers was interviewed.

Focus group discussions

In addition to the interviews with the participants, two focus group sessions were held (one with PPE participants and the other with EMPACTO participants) to gain further insights into the effects of the program on the participants, and gather participants' general impressions on the program, and potential areas of growth. Focus group participants were selected by FocusAfrica based on their level of engagement during individual interviews. The comments and findings from the focus groups are highlighted throughout the report.

Meetings with stakeholders

The evaluation included face-to-face meetings with Synapse to understand their experiences, perspectives, and the challenges they faced in implementing the program, as well as areas of improvement and strengths. The evaluation team also met with Microsoft in Senegal to understand their assessment of the program and gather recommendations on how it can be strengthened.

C. Data capture and analysis approach

The data was captured using a commercial online database. The data capture phase included three levels of quality control: (1) a review of the completed questionnaires prior to data entry; (2) a cross check of the hardcopies with the data entered in the database before transferring the data onto Excel; and finally, (3) an analysis of any other data inconsistency using a statistical analysis software after the data was transferred from the data capture software. The data analysis included two types of statistical analysis - univariate and bivariate descriptive analysis methods - as well as an analysis of correlations between two or more variables.

The sections below present the results of the program, including descriptions of the target participant population, the outcome of the training, an assessment of the implementation of the program, and recommendations. The data analysis is focused on the total participant database as made available by the implementing agency, as well as an analysis of the specific data from the target cohort that was interviewed.

D. SECTION III: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS

This section documents the general characteristics of the participants in the Synapse database, which includes the total population of participants trained as of February 2010, as well as the profile of the sample follow-up cohorts: one PPE cohort and one EMPACTO cohort that were interviewed during the evaluation.

A. Overall profile of program participants

By program completion, Synapse had trained a total of 1,917 beneficiaries. This section of the report describes the characteristics of 1,750 program beneficiaries (1,099 PPE participants and 651 EMPACTO participants) whose data was included in the Synapse database provided in November 2009. Program participants' socio-demographic characteristics are shown in the table below.

Table 2: Socio-demographic profile of program participants at baseline

Gender	Total (%)	PPE (%)	EMPACTO (%)
Female	49.20	51.96	44.55
Male	50.80	48.04	55.45
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
Age group			
24 years old and less	34.76	35.99	32.75
Between 25 and 34 years old (inclusive)	59.14	61.67	55.01
35 years old and more	6.10	2.33	12.24
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
Average age	26.80	26.14	27.87
Social status			
Single	87.00	88.80	83.80
Married	13.00	11.20	16.20
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

The analysis of the total population of trainees indicates that gender distribution was taken into account in the selection of the participants: 49.2% women and 50.8% men. There is also a higher number of participants in the 25 to 34 age group, or 59.14% of the total population, which indicates that the youth criteria was accounted for as part of the selection of program participants. In addition, the analysis of the employment status at baseline of participants in the total database is as follows:

- 11.1% were self-employed;
- 26.3% were unemployed;
- 60.9% were studying;
- 1.8% held jobs as employees.

The high rate of singles (87%) is understandable as the participants are relatively young with an average age of 26.8 years old.

Table 3 below provides a breakdown of the educational attainment of participants in the participant database.

Table 3: Educational attainment of participants in the database

Highest level of education	Overall (%)
Primary education only	2.86
Some secondary school education	10.11
Completed secondary education	2.98
Commenced university or tertiary education*	84.05
Total	100.00

* The database does not indicate completion.

The data shows that the majority of the participants in the program have post-secondary education (84.05%).

B. Profile of the participants in the sample follow-up cohorts

The evaluation was conducted on a sample of 86 participants from one sample EMPACTO program follow-up cohort, and one sample PPE program follow-up cohort. The analysis of the data from the sample follow-up cohorts is highlighted in the table below.

Table 4: Socio-demographic profile of sample follow-up cohorts

Gender	Overall	PPE	EMPACTO
Male	60.67	56.82	64.44
Female	39.33	43.18	35.56
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
Age group			
Between 20 and 34 years	88.76	97.73	80.00
35 years old and more	11.24	2.27	20.00
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
Average age	29.17	28.75	29.61
Social status			
Single	77.91	86.36	69.05
Married	22.09	13.64	30.95
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
Area of residence			
Urban	43.02	77.27	7.14
Suburban	53.49	20.45	88.10
Rural	3.49	2.27	4.76
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

The sample includes a high rate of participants from suburban areas (53.4%), which shows that the social aspect was taken into account in the selection of the participants, given the higher poverty incidence levels in these areas, which are characterized most of the time by precariousness and under-employment. Added to that is the fact that 66.38% of those who were interviewed do not have any health insurance, against 20.93% of the participants who are insured through their families.

The analysis of the correlation between household income and area of residence was not significant at the level of the sample, as well as family size. The average income in the rural and urban areas or in the

suburbs is often the same. As such, it was difficult to identify linkages between the income level and other criteria.

Although there were differences in the gender distribution between the total database (49.20% women) and the sample follow-up cohorts (39.33% women), as well as between the percentage of youth who were 34 years and below (88.76% for the sample follow-up cohorts versus 93.9% for the total database), the sample follow-up cohorts were considered to be reflective of the profile of the total database.

C. Participants' educational attainment

The analysis of the educational attainment of participants in the sample follow-up cohorts reveals that the majority of the participants (86.05%) reached university or other tertiary education level: 95.45% for the PPE sample follow-up cohort (31.82% had started tertiary level education and 63.60% had completed tertiary level education), and 76.19% the EMPACTO sample follow-up cohort (66.67% had started tertiary level education and 9.52% had completed tertiary level education).

Table 5: Educational attainment of participants in the sample follow-up cohorts

Highest level of education	PPE (%)	EMPACTO (%)	Overall (%)
Some secondary school education	0.00	14.29	6.98
Completed secondary education	4.55	9.52	6.98
Commenced university or tertiary education	31.82	66.67	48.84
Completed university or tertiary education	63.64	9.52	37.21
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

The table above shows that all the participants in the PPE sample follow-up cohort had completed secondary education, and 95.56% had reached university level education. This is reflective of the two selection criteria for the PPE program that were met, which required a baccalaureate (high-school) degree and at least two years of higher education. For the EMPACTO program, which is not as stringent with regards to educational attainment, the most important criterion was to have a project idea. This explains the disparate data with regards to educational attainment for the EMPACTO sample follow-up cohort, which included university level participants (76.19%), as well as participants who had not completed secondary level education (6.98%). Overall, 86.06% of the participants in the sample follow-up cohorts had post-secondary education. This is representative of the profile of the full program since 84.05% of the participants in the program database had post-secondary education.

In addition to formal education, the participants in the sample follow-up cohorts participated in additional training (50% of the sample) outside of formal education in specific areas such as sales, entrepreneurship, micro finance, management of small projects, personal development, and other areas.

The following section details the findings of the evaluation, based on the participant database as provided by Synapse, followed by the detailed analysis of the sample follow-up cohorts met through interviews.

E. SECTION IV: FINDINGS OF THE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM IN SENEGAL

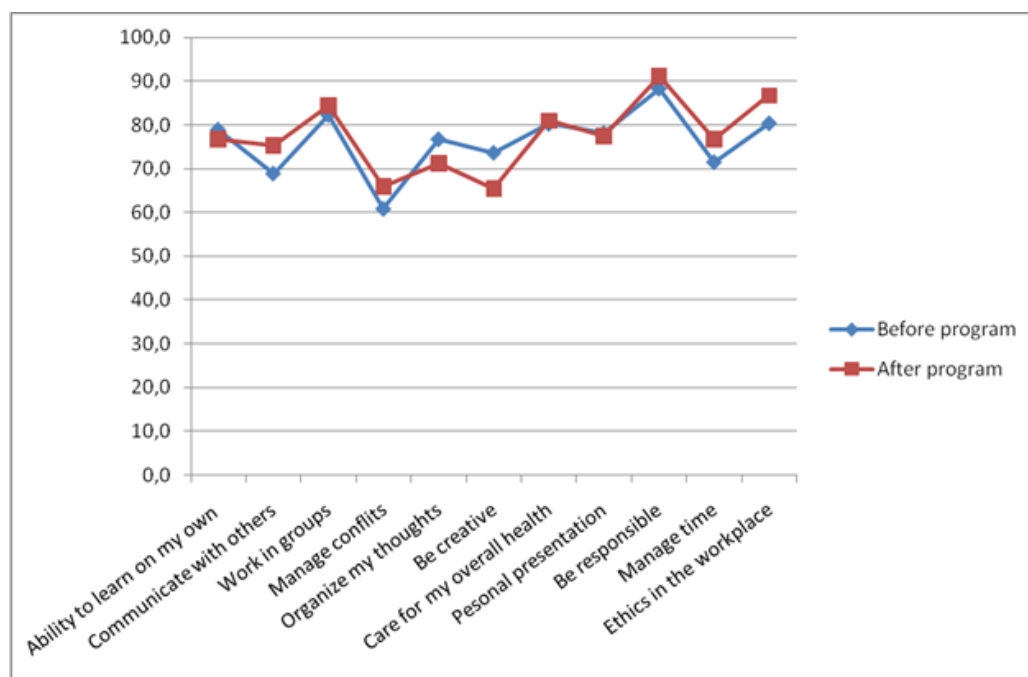
This section documents the analysis of the data from the total trainee population, as well as the sample of 86 participants in the PPE and EMPACTO sample follow-up cohorts. The training for these cohorts was held in March 2009 and December 2008 respectively. The results are all based on the specific number of respondents (n), which varies across tables and graphics. The section details placement and quality of jobs, quality of the training, the impact of the quality of the training on the skills of participants, and gender-related findings.

A. General findings

For each program implemented by IYF and its local partners, a set of life skills are identified for the beneficiaries of the training based on locally identified needs. To measure and understand the impact of the training on them, program participants are asked to evaluate themselves in the set of life skills in which they received training. A challenge in all the programs is developing instruments that capture changes in youths' knowledge, attitudes and behavior relating to skills such as being responsible and managing time. The below measures youths' perceptions of their abilities in various life skill areas through their responses to baseline and exit surveys, as well as at follow up. However the evaluation did not measure behavior change per se.

The comparison between participants' self-assessments of their life skills for the 1,750 participants in the program database reveals a more or less similar pattern from baseline to exit. There is a slight improvement with regards to the capacity to work in teams, and to act responsibly. The overall self-assessment of the capacity to organize one's thoughts and creativity are lower at exit (see graphic below).

Graphic 1: Self-assessment of the life skills for the total trainee population at baseline (before program) and at exit (after program)



* The X axis represents the different modules of the life skills training, whereas the Y axis represents the total percentage of students who indicated that their life skills were either very good or excellent.

The analysis (Table 6 below) shows that there is statistical significance in the change in self-assessments for ability to communicate with others, manage conflicts, be responsible, manage time and ethics in the workplace, which all indicate improvement between baseline and exit.

Table 6: Statistical analysis of program participants' self-evaluations of their life skills at baseline and at exit

Life skills	p
<i>Learn on my own</i>	0.2043
<i>Communicate with others</i>	0.0000*
<i>Work in groups</i>	0.1658
<i>Manage conflict</i>	0.0000*
<i>Organize thoughts</i>	0.2766
<i>Be creative</i>	0.066
<i>Care for overall health</i>	0.3274
<i>Personal presentation</i>	0.2861
<i>Be responsible</i>	0.0389*
<i>Organize time</i>	0.0002*
<i>Ethics in the workplace</i>	0.0009*

*Statistically significant if p is below or equals to 0.05 or 5%.

B. Findings regarding the target cohorts

The findings on the sample follow-up cohorts are based on interviews with 86 participants. Two focus groups were also organized for each of the two programs (PPE and EMPACTO) and provide some additional insights on the participants and the training. Finally, interviews with employers also contributed to broadening the feedback on the program, in the context of labor market expectations. This section addresses the following points:

- Placement analysis;
- Quality of jobs;
- Quality of the training;
- Program's impact on participants' skills;
- Gender differences.

Placement analysis

Under the YEP program, placement is defined according to the target placement outcomes set by the Microsoft-IYF Youth Empowerment Program agreement at the outset of the program. Placement includes participation in an internship, a job, self-employment (including enterprise creation), and voluntary community service, as the program sought to empower youth both in employability and employment outcomes as well as in youth engagement / productive activity following training. In addition, the YEP program sought to encourage further education and training as appropriate (based on youth needs and interests); therefore the evaluation has also assessed whether youth have continued their education or pursued further training following the program. The report therefore provides information both on general placement outcomes and on specific placement outcomes, including detailed information on employment and self-employment outcomes.

The evaluation of the 86 participants in the sample follow-up cohorts revealed a placement rate of 51.16%. Respondents were employed or self-employed, participated in an internship, and/or community service after the training¹². Only one respondent from the sample continued with his studies after the training. In total, 52.34% of the respondents were employed, self-employed, participated in an internship or community service, and/or continued their studies after the training.

Table 7: Participants in sample follow-up cohorts engaged in an activity after the training*

Engaged in an activity	PPE (%)	EMPACTO (%)	Total (%)	Total (n)
Yes	46.67	53.33	51.16	42
No	61.54	38.46	48.84	41
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	83

*This does not include further education/training.

Participants who had been engaged in an activity after the training stated they were either involved in an internship, worked in a job or independently, and/or performed community service. Table 8 below presents the breakdown of the various activities participants were engaged in at the time of the evaluation.

Table 8: Work status of sample follow-up cohorts after the training¹³

Work Status	PPE (%)	EMPACTO (%)	Total (%)
Internship	56.25	33.33	44.12
Worked in a job	37.50	55.56	47.06
Volunteered	6.25	5.56	5.88
Worked independently	6.25	11.11	8.82

It must be noted that respondents did not engage in one single activity, therefore the percentages in the table do not total to 100%. For example, some participants worked in a job while simultaneously working independently or volunteering in their communities or a range of other activities.

Of the 44 participants in the sample follow-up cohorts who were engaged in an activity:

- 44.12% participated in internships. These internships started on average 8.14 weeks after the training, and were on average 11.73 weeks long. The average salary was CFAF 70,208 (approximately US\$ 150) per month, for an average of 42.33 hours of work per week. The interviews also revealed that none of the internships turned into permanent employment.
- 47.06% were wage earners. These jobs took an average of five weeks to secure, and earned an average of CFAF 226,375, or approximately US\$ 490 per month.
- 5.88% or two participants volunteered, one for a total of 25 hours and another for a total of 100 hours.

It is important to note that the analyses did not identify any statistical correlations between engaging in employment, internships, voluntary services, and business creation, and the utilization of YEP placement services and coaching sessions. It is also important to note that the majority of the participants did not

¹² The placement rate is comprised of respondents who were engaged in an activity 'after the training and before the evaluation' and/or 'at the time of the evaluation'. If a participant was employed after the training and before the evaluation and was also employed at the time of the evaluation, he or she was counted only once. Participants who continued with their studies are not included in the placement rate.

¹³ Refer to footnote 7.

use the placement services (63.95%). The reasons given were mainly that they did not know about the service.

Table 9 below highlights the employment status of participants in the sample follow-up cohorts at baseline, compared to the placement rate after the training. The data at baseline was extracted from the participant database and focuses on the participants in the sample follow-up cohorts only.

Table 9: Work status of sample follow-up cohorts at baseline compared to placement rate after the training

Work status at baseline	%
Worked independently	11.36
Unemployed	44.32
Studying	36.36
Worked in a job or an internship	7.95
Total	100.00
Engaged in an activity after the training	%
Worked independently	8.82
Worked in a job	47.06
Internship	44.12
Volunteered	5.88

The table shows that more participants are working or productively engaged after the training. From a 19.31% employment rate at baseline (11.36% of the participants worked independently and 7.95% worked in a job or an internship), 51.16% of the participants in the sample follow-up cohorts were placed after the training.

Employment analysis

Interviewed participants were asked to classify their work status at the time of the follow-up evaluation. Table 10 below outlines the work status of the sample follow-up cohort.

Table 10: Sample follow-up cohorts' work status at the time of the evaluation (working participants)

Employment status	PPE (%)	EMPACTO (%)	Total (%)
Worked independently	6.25	12.00	9.76
Worked in a job	37.50	72.00	58.54
Internship	50.00	8.00	24.39
Worked in a family business (no remuneration)	6.25	0.00	2.44
Other	0.00	8.00	4.88
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Within the two sample follow-up cohorts that were evaluated, 47.67% or 40 participants (excluding the two who dropped out) were engaged in an activity at the time of the evaluation - 39.02% for the PPE sample follow-up cohort and 60.98% for that of EMPACTO. The analysis reveals the importance of the selection strategies and criteria of participants on the placement rate. For example, the majority of the EMPACTO respondents in the sample follow-up cohorts prioritized obtaining employment and not

creating a business, even when considering the three intra-preneurs¹⁴ included in the EMPACTO cohort that was evaluated. They indicated that they planned to become entrepreneurs but in the longer-term, after they have gained significant experience as employees. As such, they were not in a mindset of setting up businesses, but rather, they were in search of employment. This explains the fact that 72% of the participants in the sample follow-up cohorts who were employed at the time of the evaluation were wage earners and 8% were interns, against 12% entrepreneurs. It is important to note that Synapse's strategy was to empower participants in either program to take full ownership of the process to secure employment, whether as employees or entrepreneurs.

Approximately 52% of the respondents or 44 respondents in the sample follow-up cohorts who were not employed at the time of the evaluation were asked the reasons why they were not employed. Table 11 provides a summary of their responses.

Table 11: Principal reasons for not working at the time of the evaluation

Reasons why not currently working	%
He/she has just started searching seriously	13.33
Employers ask for more experience	2.22
The jobs are poorly paid	2.22
He/she is a student	15.56
He/she has submitted an application but did not receive any response/ did not follow up	66.67
Total	100.00

The data shows that approximately 66% or 29 of the respondents indicated that they were awaiting responses to job applications. Further analysis revealed that there are underlying issues as to why placement has been difficult for some participants. These challenges may include:

- **A low market absorption capacity** - The challenges of the Senegalese economy, characterized by a relatively high rate of unemployment (48%) with an addition of about 100,000 young graduate job seekers each year and a very low rate of absorption, have led the Senegalese Government and its development partners to invest in youth employment. Added to that is the fact that the private sector does not plan to offer a lot of opportunities in terms of employment for the years ahead. Indeed, a 2008 study on private sector employment in Senegal and Ghana carried out by FocusAfrica on behalf of the Youth Employment Network (YEN) and IYF highlights this mismatch. The study surveyed 400 companies in the private sector across 26 key sectors in Senegal, and found that only 10,264 jobs were anticipated in the next five years. Of these, 6,183 are temporary jobs. Compared to the annual demand for employment, estimated at about 100,000, the market does not lend itself to the achievement of the placement objectives of the program.

¹⁴ Synapse implemented a pairing system in order to help youth experience the professional world. The system consists of bringing together groups of two or three participants from PPE and EMPACTO – an entrepreneur with a PPE participant or an entrepreneur with two or three PPE participants – to jointly create a business or support a recently established one. This system starts with the development of a business plan up to the implementation of the project. The PPE participants in the system are referred to as intra-preneurs, who also participated in the EMPACTO training. This system allowed intra-preneurs to better understand the skills required to establish and run a business and better support entrepreneurs in the training, but also provided them with the skills to one day start their own business. The EMPACTO sample follow-up cohort included three intra-preneurs, two men and one woman.

- **The potential of partnerships has not been maximized** - Suggestions emanated from contacts with certain organizations approached by the executing agency, which urge for a better follow-up of partnerships. Indeed, these organizations indicated that they had received proposals from the executing agency, but that the follow-up on the proposals were not thorough. To address this issue, the recommendation is for Synapse to engage consistently through formal partnerships, so that at the end of each session a number of participants, even if limited, can be placed. They also suggested more interaction with companies in the private sector so that the latter could call on them for specific recruitment needs.
- **The wait-and-see attitude of youth does not encourage the search for opportunities** - The two focus group sessions organized with the participants for each of the two programs indicated a strong feeling of discouragement among the youth. In response to the question: “Is your future different from that of a young European, American or Asian?”, they were unanimous on the fact that the future of a young European, Asian or American was brighter than that of a young Senegalese or young African in general for purely systemic reasons. According to them, they evolve in two very different systems, and in very different economic contexts thus rendering the likelihood of realizing career plans very different. Asian, European and American countries have, according to the participants, better performing structures to accompany and guide youth in their job search activities, and business creation. As such, they find that the opportunities offered to youth for self actualization in the professional world are equal for everyone in other parts of the world, unlike Africa and especially Senegal where favoritism and connections have superseded competence.

However, they acknowledged having the same intellectual capacities as the youth from other continents, but felt that the organizational and financial capacities to support youth are lacking in Senegal. For example, they gave the example of excessive expenses devoted to the education sector in Senegal (40% of the annual national budget) without satisfactory results. One of the reasons that would also explain this inequality of opportunities elsewhere as compared to Senegal is the lack of confidence in youth on the part of enterprises and financing structures.

- **Difficult access to finance for business creation** - EMPACTO participants deplored the difficult access to financing, which according to them does not encourage business creation. Of the 12% of entrepreneurs, 80% had already set up micro enterprises before participating in the EMPACTO training. However, the impact of the training is more qualitative, because it allowed these entrepreneurs to better manage their companies, the majority of which are in the informal sector. They also stated that the training had provided them with management tools especially with regard to financial management, tools for accessing financing and competition management. The case of Mr. Ndiaye (not his real name) who created a company that provides design services is illustrated below. He was finding it challenging to manage his company, and decided to participate in the EMPACTO training to gain management skills.

Example of an EMPACTO success story

Mr. Ndiaye (not his real name) created his business, which is invested in interior design and construction. When he heard about the Synapse program to train entrepreneurs, he applied and was able to attend all the modules. Upon completing the training, he developed and formalized his business by registering it at the Chamber of Commerce and abiding by all the legal business creation procedures. Mr. Ndiaye, who earlier only secured small contracts, watched his activities develop. He currently employs 7 youth on a full-time basis, and sometimes hires up to 10 temporary staff. Since the training, Mr. Ndiaye takes out loans to strengthen his business, investing mainly in the purchase of tools and pre-financing certain activities. He stated that through the training, he had put in place sound financial management practices, and had better visibility for his activities. He recently carried out a project for a major government project, where he provided decorations with shells.

Quality of jobs

For those who were employed at the time of the follow-up evaluation, the quality of the jobs was assessed through several factors, including the type of contract, remuneration, benefits, and the number of working hours.

Types of contracts - The evaluation shows that out of the 47.67% respondents in the sample follow-up cohorts who were employed at the time of the evaluation, 38% or 14 of them held permanent jobs. They worked an average of 39.8 hours per week with an average salary of CFAF 105,000 or approximately US\$ 230 per month. Most of the jobs were in sales, and were strongly tied to premiums and commissions. The analysis also shows that over half of the participants in the sample follow-up cohorts who were employed at the time of the evaluation were engaged in temporary jobs (38%) and internships (24%). During the focus group discussions, participants indicated that employers tend to abuse the use of internships to avoid hiring staff on a full-time basis, although they are cognizant that internships and temporary jobs are valuable to gain experience, and can eventually lead to full-time employment. This is a constraint of the Senegalese labor market. The 2009 YEN and IYF study showed that out of a sample of 400 enterprises, 10,264 recruitments were planned for the next five years, out of which 6,183 (over 60%) are part-time or temporary. Further, employers in Senegal raise the administrative and financial challenges associated with hiring full-time staff including high taxes and a legal system that in their opinion strongly favors workers. A meeting with the employer organization representing the private sector in Senegal asserted that it is one of the major constraints to youth employment.

Benefits and bonuses - Among the participants who worked at the time of the evaluation, 57.89% did not receive any benefits. The few benefits that were provided included leave/vacation (10.53%), health insurance (26.32%) and performance bonuses. Health insurance and leave/vacation typically were generally received by those who held permanent positions. The “other benefits” category mainly includes commissions from sales positions, which are generally temporary positions.

Table 12: Employment benefits or bonuses of employed participants in the follow-up sample cohorts

Benefits or bonuses	%
No benefits or bonuses	57.89
Leave/vacation	10.53
Retirement	10.53
Health insurance	26.32
Performance bonus	10.53
Other benefits	10.53

Remuneration - Table 13 below provides a breakdown of respondents’ salary ranges by type of employment. The analysis shows that temporary jobs are better paid (on average CFAF 131,000 or approximately US\$ 285 per month) owing to a lower tax rate applied on these types of jobs. Permanent jobs had lower average net salaries at CFAF 105,857 or approximately US\$ 230 per month, but have the advantage of being stable and reassuring, as indicated by youth during the focus groups.

Table 13: Salaries of employed participants in the sample follow-up cohorts

Job category	Monthly average salary (CFAF)	Number of respondents
Permanent	105,857.14	14
Temporary	131,785.71	14
Internship	80,833.33	6

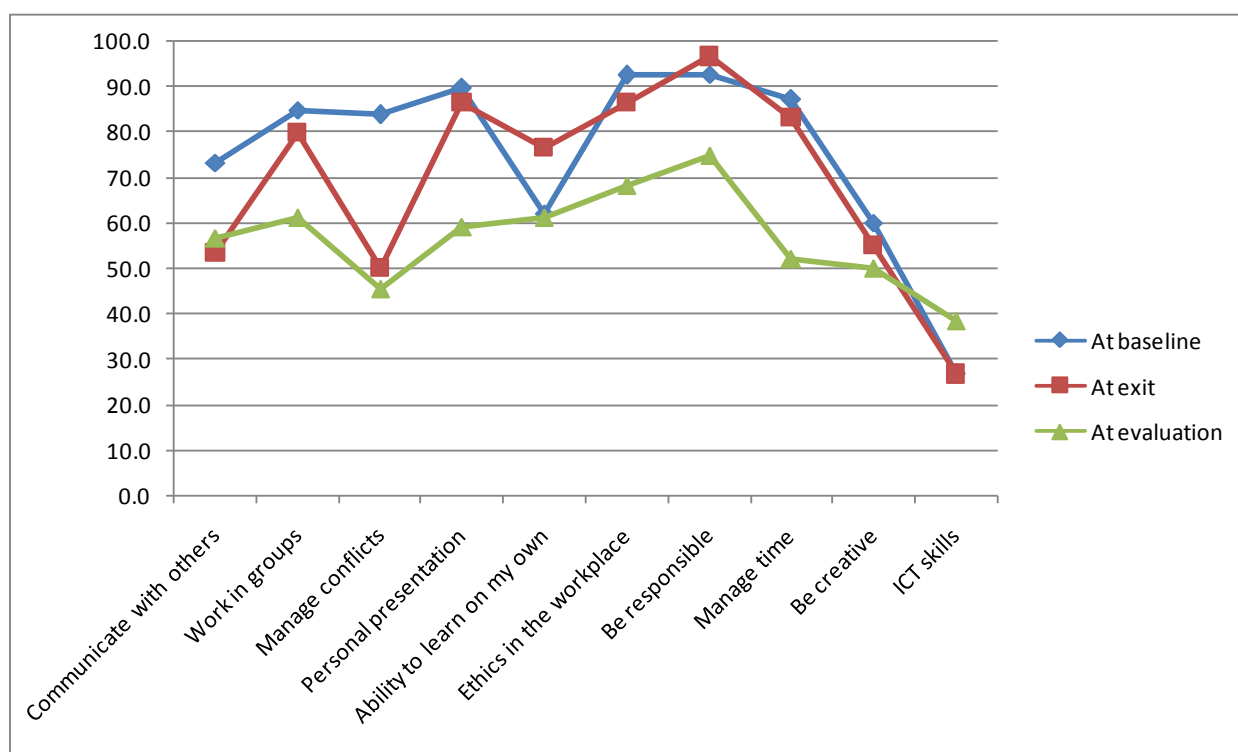
Youth perceptions of their jobs - Approximately 62% of the participants who were employed at the time of the evaluation were not yet satisfied with their jobs, mainly due to the salary levels or to the fact that the jobs were not permanent. Those in temporary jobs also stated that it is for the lack of better jobs that they had accepted these types of employment, which are typically in sales, cashiers, health workers, and others.

Program's effect on participants' perceptions of their skills

The YEP program implemented by Synapse was designed to equip participants with skills that would increase their employability in the labor market. These skills also include soft skills such as communicating with others, personal confidence, and time management. As mentioned above, taking into consideration the subjective nature of self-assessments, the challenges associated with measuring skill changes include a lack of a control group which would provide for a comparative analysis along with a lack of measured behavioral changes of program participants. The self-assessments were, therefore, corroborated through employer interviews, participant anecdotes, and conversations with Synapse's management team. This increased the validity of the life skills data collected through the Program.

Graphic 2 below outlines participants' perception of themselves at exit (after the training), and at follow-up (during the evaluation).

Graphic 2: Self-assessment of skills at baseline, exit and evaluation for the sample follow-up cohorts



Note: The percentages on the Y-axis are the proportion of the evaluations that are evaluated as excellent and very good.

The graph shows that less than 60% of the participants in the sample follow-up cohorts rated their basic ICT skills as excellent and very good at exit and at the time of the evaluation. It is important to note that the curriculum did not integrate ICT skills as a module, due to budgetary reasons. However, Synapse did try to impart ICT knowledge to participants in job search tools that use new media platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.). The majority of the participants mentioned that the training was not long enough to be able to provide them with the level of ICT skills they required. It is evident that with the limited number of hours of training, the possibilities to affect ICT skills are very limited.

The graph also shows that with time, participants' self-assessments of their skills were lower. Although the participants generally rated themselves well with regard to skills, the majority that evaluated themselves quite positively at exit showed a regression in their self-perception of their skills at the time of the evaluation, except for ability to learn on one's own and ICT skills.

Table 14 below outlines the statistical significance of these changes, for the following skills: work in groups, manage conflict, personal presentation, ethics in the workplace, be responsible and organize time, which were all rated lower from baseline to evaluation.

Table 14: Statistical analysis of the sample follow-up cohorts' skills assessment at baseline and at follow-up evaluation

Variable	Probability
Communicate with others	0.0897
Work in groups	0.0181*
Manage conflict	0.0005*
Personal presentation	0.0099*
Learn on my own	0.8132
Ethics in workplace	0.0178*
Be responsible	0.0177*
Organize time	0.0010*
Be creative	0.4146
ICT	0.5725

**Note: Statistical significance if $p \leq 0.05$ based on a marginal error of 5%.*

The decrease in respondents' perception of their skills is due to several factors:

- As noted above, it is challenging to develop instruments that capture changes in youths' knowledge, attitudes and behavior relating to skills.
- Participants with a more or less high education level often have the certainty that they possess the skills and the necessary tools to find a job (PPE), and for that reason, do not hesitate to give themselves high self assessments, for they are convinced of their skills. With regard to EMPACTO participants, the majority have several project ideas when they join the program, and discuss them openly. However, with the support of the trainers, they are able to reassess and conclude that a number of these project ideas are unrealistic.
- Others believe that they need to assess themselves highly during the entry evaluation, so that they are selected to participate in the training.

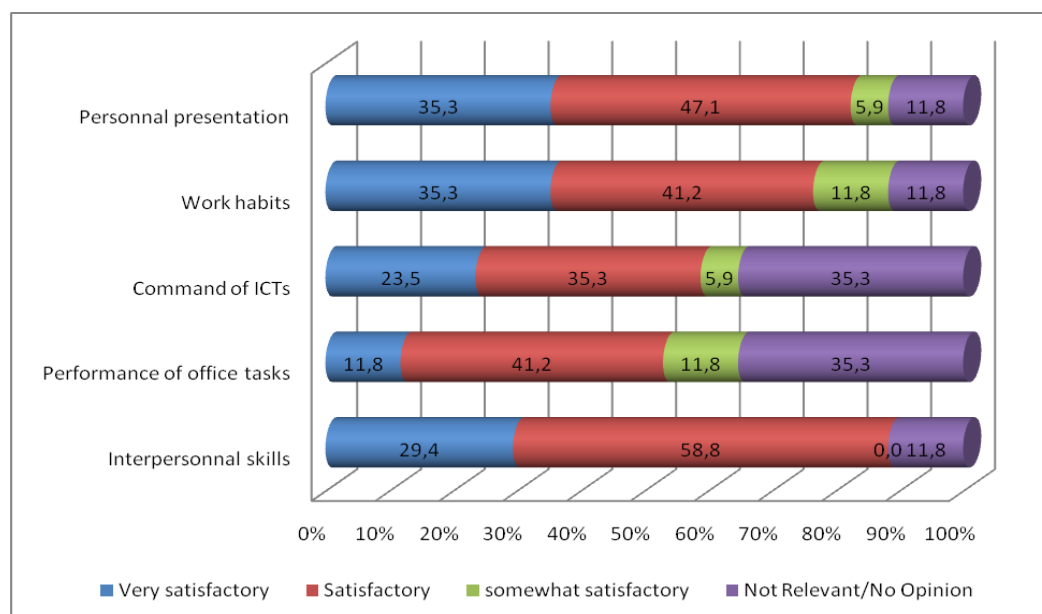
However, following training, participants often find out that their skills are not always adapted to the market, but also that their skills are not as high as they initially thought. Thus at the time of evaluation, the participants become more « reasonable » and more conscious of their capabilities. The lower self-evaluations at the time of the evaluation are also justified by the state of discouragement, which takes hold of the youth as time progresses and they have not found a job. Unable to make headway into the professional world, no longer sure of the validity of their skills or that they are even needed, and attributing obtaining a job to luck and the need to be sponsored or recommended, youth who have been unable to find jobs seem to show greater discouragement by the time of the follow-up evaluation.

Nonetheless, participants acknowledged that they acquired various skills from the training, which enabled them to empower themselves, improve their skills in writing CVs, raise their level of personal development and become better equipped with regard to communication techniques and the development of their networks. For example, although some EMPACTO participants were yet to set up a

business, they indicated that they came out of the training feeling motivated, and having a mastery of the different stages of business creation and the necessary technical and analytical skills, which will allow them to develop a business plan at a minimum. Several participants from both programs also indicated that the program has restored their confidence in themselves, and the desire to search for and find a job.

This has been all the more reinforced by the employers, who expressed satisfaction with the performance of the participants who are employed in their companies. About 88.23% or 15 of them ranked the capabilities of youth with regards to interpersonal skills as satisfactory. Also, six out of 16 employers (37.50%) thought that the interns from YEP were better than their other interns; five or 31.25% thought they were the same; and five or 32.25% indicated that they did not have enough information to compare. Professional skills and personal presentation were also well appreciated.

Graphic 3: Employer evaluations with regard to the performance of interns and recruits



Within the sample of the 17 employers met at the time of the evaluation, 12% or two of the participants were recruited by the organizations as interns, and 47% or eight participants were not retained at the end of their internship program¹⁵. The main reasons given were the lack of vacant positions in the enterprise but also lack of technical skills. However, 41% or seven participants are still in their internships. With regards to recruits, communication skills and the capability to learn were well appreciated by the employers.

Testimony of an EMPACTO program beneficiary

I have always dreamt without daring to launch my small clothing company. The fascinating experience that I have just gone through has enabled me to dare. I enjoyed the training experience, communion, exchanges, discoveries and team work. A lot of ideas and projects that I thought were difficult to concretize have started coming to life, thanks to the support of Synapse, to which I express my thanks.

Congratulations to the team for the beautiful work accomplished!

¹⁵ The employers that were met were not limited to participants in the sample follow-up cohorts. Hence the outcomes from the interviews with the employers do not necessarily reflect the analysis from the sample follow-up cohorts.

The analysis showed that a significant number of participants who were placed are those with higher self-assessments of their ICT skills. An analysis of the statistical correlation between placement and life skills assessments (rated as very good or excellent) presented in table 15 below supports this finding.

Table 15: Analysis of the correlation between participants' self-assessments of their skills and placement outcomes

Skills	Probability
Personal development	0.138
Skills for establishing relations with others/for communication	0.954
Skills for team work	0.242
Conflict management skills	0.086
Personal presentation (appearance)	0.728
Skills for learning by myself	0.907
Skills for writing CV	0.531
Behavior during an interview	0.541
Professional ethics	0.951
Time management	0.138
Capability to work independently	0.447
Creative spirit	0.531
ICT skills	0,014**
Analytical/technical skills	0.228
Mastery of the stages of business creation	0.414
Mastery of legal procedures for business creation	0.939

**Note: Statistical significance if $p \leq 0.05$ based on a marginal error of 5%.*

Analysis of the quality of the training

Participants had a positive opinion of the training, especially with regard to the clarity of the training and the comprehensiveness of the workshops. The table below is a summary of the perceptions of respondents in the sample follow-up cohorts.

Table 16: Participants in the sample follow-up cohorts' assessments of the quality of the training at the time of the evaluation

Clarity of training	%
Excellent	31.8
Good	57.6
Average	10.6
Poor	0.0
Duration	%
Sufficient	27.1
Fairly sufficient	21.2
Average	14.1
Somewhat sufficient	32.9
Not sufficient at all	4.7
Comprehensiveness of workshops	%
Excellent	14.1
Good	67.1
Average	17.6
Poor	1.2

One of the recurring points raised during the evaluation was the short duration of the training. Indeed, only 27.1% of the participants stated that the duration of the training was sufficient. Although the workshops were comprehensive and the information clear, the content was often very condensed/not detailed enough. The short duration of the sessions did not allow for in-depth explanations, which was not always helpful to certain participants, especially in the EMPACTO cohort where certain participants had lower levels of education. Synapse was cognizant of this challenge from the beginning of the program; however, program resources did not permit a longer duration of the training.

The tools that were used during the training were appreciated by the program participants. The instructions/guidelines during the training were considered useful with regard to the orientation of participants. Respondents also provided positive feedback with regard to the teaching style of the trainers, and indicated that the training methodology and exercises contributed to the understanding of the content.

Table 17: Assessment of the tools used during the training at evaluation in %

Assessment	Teaching aids	Instructions during the training	Exercises	Methodology	Presentation of modules
Excellent	27.91	24.42	16.28	22.09	26.74
Good	55.81	70.93	69.77	67.44	66.28
Average	16.28	4.65	13.95	9.30	5.81
Low	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.16	1.16
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

The quality of the training was considered to be good by the majority of the participants. About 55% of the participants indicated that the training had enabled them to improve their employment options. This was verified during the focus group discussions during which the participants acknowledged the positive impact that the training had on them, and indicated that it had provided them with the following skills:

- A clear vision of the professional world;
- An awareness of the environment and the realities of the professional world;
- Personal development (knowing oneself, marketing oneself, self confidence);
- A better understanding of job search techniques and business creation tools; and
- The importance of networking in the professional world and how to make optimal use of networks.

Further, the participants in the focus groups stated that after the training, they found that the tools they had been using to engage in their job search process were not the best, and that the training has helped them to use different and more adapted ones, and with support from mentors, to develop new tools that were more in line with the labor market. The support from the Synapse team left a strong positive impact on many of the participants. They indicated that their participation in the training had helped restore their self-confidence and their will to succeed, from a state of being discouraged.

During the follow-up evaluation, participants were asked to rate the quality of their lives after the training in comparison to before they started the YEP program at Synapse. Table 18 summarizes the feedback from this question.

Table 18: Perception of quality of life in the sample follow-up cohorts

Compared to when you started the training program, how would you now rate the quality of your life?	%
Much better	16.28
Better	54.65
Unchanged	27.91
Does not know / no response	1.16
Total	100.00

As the table shows, over 70% of the respondents in the sample follow-up cohorts found their lives to be better or much better. For those who responded unchanged (27.91%), it was mainly due to waiting to find employment. Further, approximately 16% of them declared that the quality of their lives had changed significantly, and 47.06% thought that they have a better quality of life. Furthermore, 89.53% of the respondents in the sample follow-up cohorts indicated that they would recommend the programs to other young people without hesitation.

The gender component

The evaluation revealed a lower remuneration for women (on average CFAF 140,000 per month for men or approximately US\$ 311, and CFAF 52,000 for women or approximately US\$ 115.5).

The YEN and IYF survey (2009) on private sector employment in Senegal revealed a gender bias when recruiting. Indeed, a number of companies visited during the survey reported an inability of women to work every day, and also noted the physical aspect required in certain jobs that women reportedly cannot perform as a reason for preferring to hire men into certain positions. This was noted in the case of the following sectors, among others:

- Agriculture, construction, logistics, industry and craft industry: trades dominated by men as a result of the physical capability required in the work.
- Health: the recruitment of men is favored as a result of their capacity to work late and at any hour.
- Leisure sector: where men are considered more receptive and more creative than women.

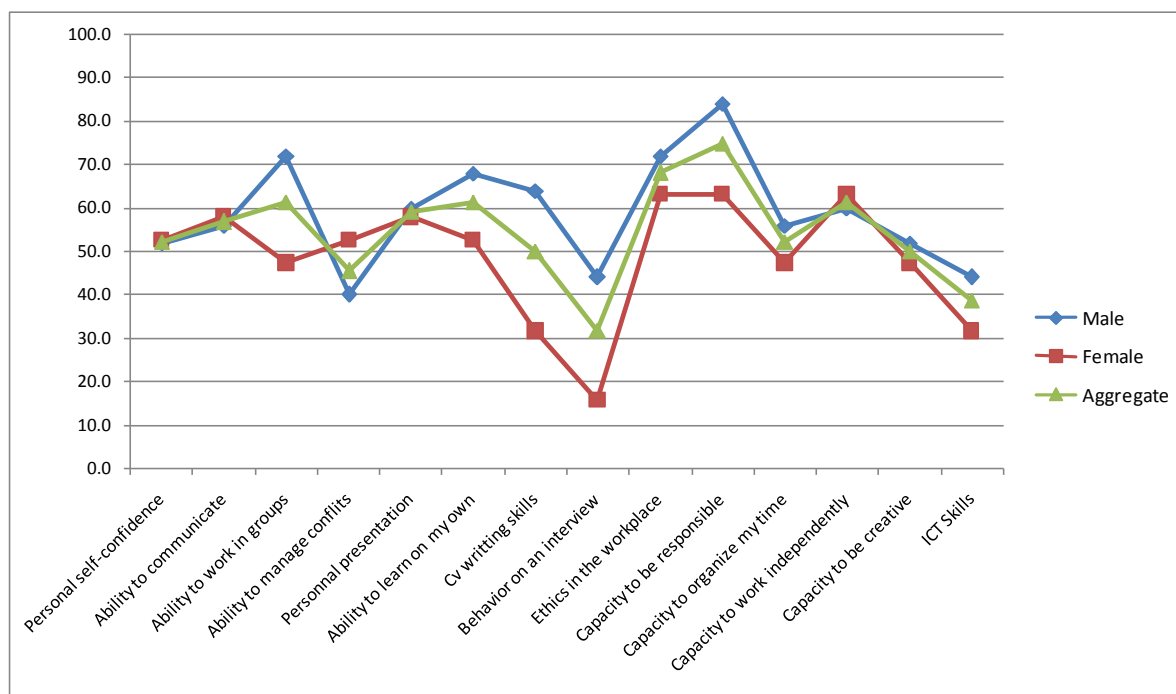
These arguments are also cultural, since it is often considered that at certain times a woman should be at home. Nevertheless, other sectors prioritize the recruitment of women—mainly the banking, food processing and education sectors (nursery school level).

The evaluation also found that women generally self-evaluate their life skills lower than men. The self-assessed skills for men are significantly higher than for women for a number of skills, including the capacity to be responsible, team work, the ability to learn on one's own, and creativity, despite comparable education levels. Writing and communications skills follow the same trend.

Table 19: Educational attainment of the sample follow-up cohorts by gender, at the time of the evaluation

Educational attainment	Male (%)	Female (%)
Less than secondary school	7.69	5.88
Completed secondary school	5.77	8.82
Some university/tertiary studies	50.00	47.06
Completed university/tertiary studies	36.54	38.24
Total	100.00	100.00

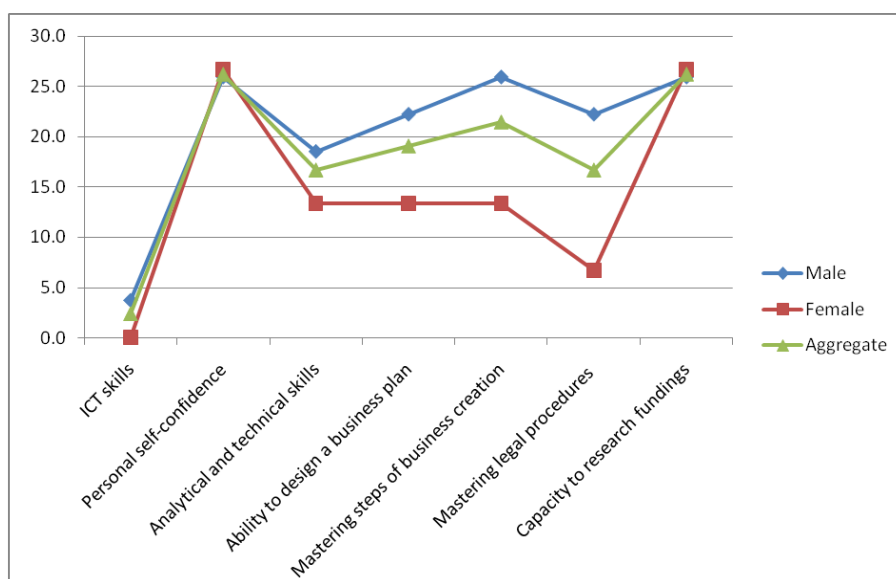
Graphic 4: Comparison of life skills assessments between men and women in the PPE sample follow-up cohort at the time of the evaluation



Note: The percentages on the Y-axis are the proportion of the evaluations that are evaluated as excellent and very good.

The observation is the same concerning the mastery of the different steps to establish a business, and the capacity to develop a business plan. However, the data shows that women have a high capacity to search for financing (EMPACTO), an area where they are better equipped, which is presumably due to their involvement in savings and loans clubs, which are used to finance small income-generating activities (see graphic 5).

Graphic 5: Comparison of life skills assessments between men and women in the EMPACTO sample follow-up cohort at the time of the evaluation



Note: The percentages on the Y-axis are the proportion of the evaluations that are evaluated as excellent and very good.

F. SECTION V: OBSERVATIONS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM

The implementation of the program inevitably has an impact on the results and the achievement of program objectives. One testament to the good implementation of the program is the low drop-out rate of participants. Indeed, 98% of the participants who were interviewed completed the training. The 2% drop-out rate was attributed to health problems. Moreover, participants were able to complete all the training modules. With regards to the implementation of the program, it is important to ensure good visibility to be able to attract the attention of both employers and financing institutions. This would require an “aggressive” marketing strategy and communication on the programs towards relevant organizations. Since the economic environment is not favorable to recruitment, it is important for organizations to be creative in helping youth to acquire valuable professional experience. In this vein, the executing agency, Synapse Center, developed a pairing system, with an objective to promote the placement of participants in the program. These issues are further described below:

- **The available resources did not allow for better marketing of the programs.** Interviews with employers revealed a lack of information with regard to the YEP program. Approximately 70% indicated that they were not familiar with the programs. Although Synapse had deployed efforts to increase the visibility of the program, it would have been beneficial to communicate more with various stakeholders on the training, particularly with employers in the private sector to promote placement and update the curricula whenever required.

The employer organization, which represents all private companies in Senegal and has identified youth employment as one of its key objectives, welcomed the initiative, but suggested better communication around the programs. The employer organization also suggested that Synapse build closer relationships with organizations that maintain constant visibility on the needs of the private sector, which could help update the contents of the training on a regular basis, as well as develop partnerships that support placement. In order to successfully carry out these actions, it would also be beneficial to approach financing institutions for funding support.

- **Creative initiatives were designed and implemented to raise the placement rate.** With the aim of boosting the integration of youth in the employment market, Synapse Center developed and implemented placement strategies such as partnerships with private and public sector entities, and employment fora such as the « marathon de l’emploi » (marathon for employment). However, it has been observed that the difficulties at the national level do not always support these objectives. As such, the pairing system developed by Synapse was an innovation designed to address these challenges. One example is described below.

Integration of the PPE and EMPACTO programs: the DIDO Project

Mrs Faye (not her real name) holds a degree in English, a certificate in restaurant management, and a diploma in design.

Through her participation in the Challenge program, she wished to start a garment-making unit that showcases Senegalese and African culture. She has a very innovative vision of the garment-making sector. An artist at heart, all her works speak about Africa, a continent that she loves.

Thanks to the support of Synapse and the pairing system, she worked with a PPE participant, and they were able to acquire skills in business creation and management, to develop a business plan, to launch a small garment-making unit at home, and to hire and manage a small group of four employees.

G. SECTION VI: RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout the evaluation, recommendations were made by the participants, employers, stakeholders, the implementing agency, and the consultancy firm charged with conducting the evaluation. The objective of these recommendations is to contribute towards the strengthening of the program in the future, and to further impact the youth.

- **Strengthen the candidate selection process.** The selection criteria for the EMPACTO program should not have been limited to a project idea only, but should also require the prerequisites for a solid business plan, including entry tests to measure candidates' engagement and motivation towards their project. This recommendation was made following the observation that the majority of the participants in the EMPACTO cohort were job seekers and not entrepreneurs, with 64.28% of them prioritizing finding a job and study after the training, whereas 35.72% of the participants prioritized the creation of a business.

It would also be beneficial to group participants with the same level of education in the same sessions. The differences between the levels of education of the participants were high in the target cohorts which were interviewed, leading to participants who have primary school level sharing the same sessions with those that had completed higher education. As a result, the level of understanding could not be the same, notably with regard to making use of the training tools.

- **Develop deeper partnerships with training institutions and universities in order to reach the targets of the training.** Synapse already collaborated with training institutions and universities as sources of applicants for the training programs. However, these partnerships can be further developed and strengthened. For example, the training institutions can further integrate the training into their curricula, so that it is accessible to a much larger number of students. Such partnerships can even be on a fee-basis for students.
- **Revise the target number of youth to be trained and focus more on the quality of the training for an even greater impact.** It would be beneficial to increase the training period and improve the quality of the training, notably by reducing the number of participants in each cohort and increasing the number of course hours.
- **Revise the target number of youth to be trained and focus more on increasing the training and coaching hours per participant.** For example, whereas youth in the Kenya NairobiBits program received a minimum of 496 hours of training, youth in Senegal received around 50 hours of training and coaching. The average spending per student should be increased for the Senegal program.
- **Increase the duration of the coaching sessions.** Approximately 76% of the participants considered the time devoted to the coaching sessions to be too short. Reactions during the focus group discussions also supported this observation, where participants indicated that they found the coaching sessions to be very beneficial because they contributed to a better understanding of the modules, to a customized exchange with the coaches, but also to further developing their confidence and helping them to advance in their careers.
- **Better communicate the role of Synapse.** Approximately 62.16% of the participants thought that they were guaranteed employment following the training, and 55.55% expected to receive financing. Despite the fact that Synapse stated the objectives of the training during each session, it is necessary to further state that Synapse is neither a job placement company, nor a financing institution, but exists to provide support to participants to realize their objectives through training.

- **Create a dynamic system to monitor participants after they complete the program** by organizing events such as end-of-training graduations which are publicized in the media and attended by private sector figures and decision-makers. This would allow Synapse to monitor the progress of the participants, and serve as a venue to share information about the program, its objectives, and especially its impact on youth employment and national development.
- **Improve and better structure partnerships** with the private sector, public sector entities and NGOs by:
 - Ensuring better follow-up of partnerships with private organizations to increase the placement rate of participants particularly since 82.35% of the organizations that were visited indicated that they are willing to offer internships to participants in the future.
 - Building stronger partnerships with businesses so as to constantly be in tune with their skills needs and update the curricula as needed.
- **Identify other sources of financing** in order to reach a greater number of participants. It would be beneficial to approach funding agencies and donor organizations to raise additional funds to successfully carry out various activities.
- **Develop a program to strengthen ICT skills.** A significant number of suggestions were to offer more ICT training. Indeed, a significant number of participants thought that they were not well equipped in computers and technology, including basic tools and software. It would be beneficial to teach them how to use these tools, and strengthen their employability profile.
- **Train young women participants in salary negotiation techniques, in order to address the large gap between compensation for men and women.** Further, Synapse could develop a guide or reference which includes salary grades for different sectors, to allow young people to better negotiate their salaries. Women will also benefit from additional training to increase their self-confidence. Indeed, their lower self-assessments in personal skills, when compared to those of men, support this need.

Overall, the program has resulted in some very positive outcomes, and is unique in Senegal, where training in life skills or any other “soft skills” is limited. The program should be expanded through greater collaboration with the education sector and should seek opportunities to integrate the program into mainstream teaching at any level (higher education, vocational education, informal sector support initiatives, and others).

H. ANNEX: YEP TRAINING SCHEDULE FOR SYNAPSE¹⁶

Cohort No.	Training start date	Training end date	No of participants	Areas	Hours		
					PPE (life skills)	Individual/group coaching	EMPACT O
1	10/04/2008	12/04/2008	47	Dakar	24	7	
2	07/05/2008	09/05/2008	42	Thiès	24	7	
3	19/05/2008	23/05/2008	49	Dakar		7	40
4	19/06/2008	21/06/2008	53	Dakar	24	8	
5	23/06/2008	27/06/2008	41	Dakar		7	40
6	16/07/2008	22/07/2008	58	Dakar		7	40
7	11/08/2008	13/08/2008	60	Dakar	24	7	
8	25/08/2008	29/08/2008	45	Dakar		7	40
9	08/09/2008	10/09/2008	36	Dakar	24	5	
10	16/10/2008	18/10/2008	41	Dakar	24	7	
11	10/11/2008	12/11/2008	30	Dakar	24	7	
12	17/11/2008	21/11/2008	43	Dakar		7	40
13	26/12/2008	30/12/2008	44	Bargny		7	40
14	14/01/2009	16/01/2009	54	Dakar	24	7	
15	20/01/2009	24/01/2009	44	Saint-Louis		7	40
16	25/02/2009	30/03/2009	35	Dakar		7	40
17	26/02/2009	28/02/2009	32	Dakar	24	6	
18	26/02/2009	07/03/2009	50	Dakar		7	40
19	18/03/2009	20/03/2009	53	Dakar	24	7	
20	23/04/2009	25/04/2009	81	Dakar	24	7	
21	24/04/2009	28/04/2009	25	Dakar		7	40
22	28/04/2009	16/01/2010	38	Dakar	20		
23	05/05/2009	07/05/2009	54	Dakar	24	7	
24	09/05/2009	16/01/2010	37	Dakar	18		
25	04/06/2009	09/06/2009	49	Médina		7	40
26	11/06/2009	16/01/2010	39	Dakar	18		
27	29/06/2009	30/06/2009	58	Dakar	24	7	
28	09/07/2009	11/07/2009	68	Dakar	24	8	
29	16/07/2009	18/07/2009	30	Dakar	24	8	
30	27/07/2009	31/07/2009	45	Dakar		7	40
31	08/08/2009	14/08/2009	35	Guédiawaye		7	40
32	27/08/2009	29/08/2009	48	Dakar	24	8	
33	01/10/2009	03/10/2009	43	Dakar	24	7	
34	05/10/2009	09/10/2009	54	Dakar		7	40
35	24/11/2009	09/12/2009	20	Dakar	24	8	
36	18/12/2009	20/12/2009	65	Dakar	24	7	
37	07/01/2010	09/01/2010	22	Dakar	24	7	
38	14/01/2010	19/01/2010	37	Guédiawaye		8	40
39	05/02/2010	08/02/2010	45	Dakar	24	7	
TOTALS			1,750		560	255	600

¹⁶ Through early February 2010; the program continued through end-March 2010 (after fieldwork for this evaluation was completed).

I. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A la Recherche de l'Emploi-Le chemin vers la prospérité: Mémoire économique sur le Senegal, World Bank (September 2007).
- Understanding youth employment outcomes in Senegal, L. Guarcello, Working Paper (May 2007).
- Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP II) 2006-2012, Republic of Senegal.
- Foire aux partenariats du secteur privé pour l'emploi des jeunes: Youth Employment Network (YEN) (2009).
- Grant Agreement between Microsoft Community Affairs for West, East, Central Africa and Indian Ocean Islands and IYF.
- Synapse Center: YEP program description.
- Youth Employment Network (YEN) and the International Youth Foundation: Private sector demand for youth employment in Ghana and Senegal; FocusAfrica (July 2009).
- International Youth Foundation Quarterly "Africa Citizenship Project Status Reports" to Microsoft.
- Friedrich Ebert Foundation Senegal: Summary of Youth and Employment Program, 2005 campaign perspectives (2005).