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# AKAZI KANOZE YOUTH LIVELIHOODS PROJECT

RWANDA

## FINAL REPORT

2009 - 2016

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# USAID AKAZI KANOZE YOUTH LIVELIHOODS PROJECT FINAL REPORT

September 2009 to September 2016

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The author's views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development nor the United States Government.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Established in 2009, the Akazi Kanoze (AK) Youth Livelihoods Project was funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by Education Development Center, Inc (EDC). Akazi Kanoze meaning “work well done” in Kinyarwanda, has created linkages for the Rwandan economy by connecting youth (ages 14-35) and the public and private sectors. Through a networked collaborative approach, AK established a sustainable model for providing youth with more opportunities for productive engagement in society. Originally designed to be a 5-year project, AK was extended by two years, which allowed for the incubation of a local non-governmental organization, Akazi Kanoze Access (AKA), to continue to build the AK youth livelihood support network. Over the lifetime of the project, Akazi Kanoze reached 21,039 youth (9,996 Males and 11,043 Females) in 19 Districts across Rwanda through the partnership of 63 local civil society organizations (implementing partners).

## Theory of Change

Akazi Kanoze’s theory of change has two key elements: 1) Build systems to increased connections between key stakeholders in the public and private sectors and 2) Build capacity for youth directly. The theory emphasizes the connections between improving the ecosystem for youth development and improving youth livelihoods longitudinally and at scale. Livelihood opportunity, or employment<sup>1</sup>, is comprised of formal and non-formal work for wages, entrepreneurship, and self-employment. Consequently, Akazi Kanoze views employability<sup>2</sup> as an intermediate result in the theory of change, and employment outcomes and a thriving youth-support system, as the long-term goals of the project. These key elements of AK’s theory of change are reflected in the results areas and have guided implementation throughout the project life cycle (see text box).

### Akazi Kanoze Result Areas

#### **Result 1: Increase Livelihood Opportunities for Youth**

Akazi Kanoze empowers youth with the necessary tools and resources to enter a positive development pathway that leads to increased livelihood opportunities;

#### **Result 2: Develop a Thriving Youth Livelihood Support System**

Akazi Kanoze builds capacity and creates linkages between youth, the Rwandan economy, and public and private institutions so youth gain access to increased opportunities to engage productively in Rwandan society.

<sup>1</sup> Categories of employment include: self-employed, working for an employer part-time or full-time, working for your family, or working for a cooperative

<sup>2</sup> Employability is defined as “a set of achievements, skills, understandings and personal attributes that make a person more likely to gain and retain employment, be successful in their chosen occupation and be professionally and personally satisfied with their employment.

## Systems-Level Interventions

From the planning stages, the project considered that a multitude of stakeholders are involved in youth development and all are needed to foster a generation of self-reliant youth. Consequently, EDC employed a systems-level networked approach to AK, bringing together many youth-serving entities, including employers, non-profit organizations, and government ministries, to identify appropriate connections and increase scale and ensure sustainability.

## Capacity Building of Implementing Partners (IPs)

The goal of the capacity building for IPs (including non-subgrantee partners) was two-fold; to ensure quality delivery and also, to increase long term sustainability for IPs to engage youth in relevant and meaningful ways.

From the onset of the project, EDC used a rigorous and competitive selection process for identifying partners. Given that a broader goal of the project was to develop a workforce development support system for youth it was important to bring on partners that brought something to the table and could immediately contribute to positive youth development. EDC created an environment where it was recognized that each organization felt like a partner. Since IPs were to be the conduit to training youth it was imperative IPs joining the project had a combination of the following qualities; market relevant technical skills training, training experience, experience working with youth, job placement services, sufficient organizational capacity and a willingness to collaborate and learn.

### **Akazi Kanoze's networked collaborative approach**

included public and private sector engagement as part of an iterative process built into the design and incorporated throughout the life of the project. The project worked with 60 local implementing partners (including youth-serving organizations, private sector partners, and training providers).

## Private Sector Linkages

Akazi Kanoze has engaged the private sector throughout the life cycle of the project. At the design stage, EDC worked with employers to ensure that curriculum was market relevant and that trainings reflected the skills in demand. As the project progressed, EDC's strategy was to engage companies of all sizes to take AK interns and employees. As EDC and implementing partners expanded the Akazi Kanoze employer network, these internships provided important on the job experience to AK youth and a trained labor pool for employers, developing trust between the project and the private sector. AK also began providing trainings to company employers, demonstrating the private sector's recognition of the value of AK curriculum.

## Public Sector Engagement

Partnerships with key government agencies laid the foundation for institutionalization and long term sustainability of the program. From the beginning, EDC worked to raise the profile of AK with the Government of Rwanda. The project advocated with the senior levels of the government to create policy champions and aligned the AK brand and results with government policy priorities, utilizing the incentives of individual agencies and actors. AK created a direct partnership with the Ministry of

Education (MINEDUC) and the Work Development Authority (WDA), the MINEDUC institution responsible for technical and vocational education, leading to the integration of AK's work readiness curriculum into all of Rwanda's TVET curricula, greatly increasing program reach and furthering sustainability.

## Youth Level Interventions

The AK network was intentionally designed to be youth-centric, with all stakeholders collaborating towards the shared objective of improving youth livelihoods in Rwanda. EDC incorporated youth perspectives from AK project design to implementation. In 2009, an initial assessment found that youth, employers and other stakeholders wanted the following:

1. A flexible curriculum that could be adapted to meet the needs of poor and vulnerable beneficiaries
2. An asset-driven training that builds on existing youth assets and helps youth identify and implement realistic personal goals
3. A wide range of employment opportunities for basic entry-level work, with a specific focus on building opportunities for young women
4. Inclusion of employers and other organizations to guide curriculum development, mentor participants, and provide internships and work experience opportunities

Incorporating this feedback, Akazi Kanoze implemented a variety of core youth trainings and support activities focusing on these five areas:

1. **Work Readiness Curriculum (WRC):** All AK participants completed a modular work readiness curriculum that included topics such as personal development, communication, professional conduct, financial literacy, personal health and hygiene, entrepreneurship, and worker rights and responsibilities. EDC trained and monitored local implementing partners to conduct these trainings. All youth were administered a completion exam and passing students were awarded with a nationally recognized certificate signed by the Workforce Development Authority.
2. **Entrepreneurship Training:** To supplement WRC training, Akazi Kanoze provided youth with training to support starting a business and other self-employment opportunities. This included the Income Generating Activities (IGA) and Cooperative Management training.
3. **Complementary Training:** AK also offered youth access to a tailored menu of specialized skills training including technical training, Functional Literacy, and exposure to Savings Groups.



4. **Workforce Linkages and Support:** AK provided all participating youth with access to workforce linkage opportunities (internships and apprenticeships) including formal sector jobs and entrepreneurship and other livelihood opportunities. After youth finished the in-class and technical training, the majority of the Akazi Kanoze graduates went onto a three-month internship in their trade of choice. Other youth launched their own businesses after training.
5. **Job Placement and Business Coaching:** In addition to internships, the implementing partners liaised with private sector partners to find job placements for youth. Sometimes internships transitioned into permanent employment, but implementing partners were also responsible for seeking partnerships and MoUs with companies that would hire the AK youth after graduation.

For youth that started their own businesses, both IPs and Akazi Kanoze entrepreneurship specialists provided business support and coaching. This support ranged from access to finance, market assessment coaching, market linkages, and other technical assistance.

## Scaling Up AK

Over the course of seven years, the project expanded and scaled-up to reach more than 21,000 in-school and out-of-school youth in urban and rural areas. The major driver of EDC's scale up approach has been to focus on leveraging partnerships and opportunities, constantly identifying institutional, political, and organizational potential for collaboration and expansion of AK interventions.

### Scaling into Rural Areas

Geographic scaling occurred as the program spread from urban to peri-urban and rural areas, expanding from Kigali to the Southern and Eastern provinces of the country. EDC made it a priority to connect with local government leaders, introduce the project and particularly the IPs in a collaborative and engaging manner. This allowed for government feedback at the district level, which facilitated government buy in and in turn led to greater engagement of youth.

### Demographic Expansion into TVET System: Pathway to Institutionalization

AK interventions also expanded to reach in-school youth populations through TVET institutions. EDC established strong relations with WDA, including to co-chair a technical working group on market driven TVET and private sector engagement. This paved the way for EDC to support WDC to integrate the WRC into the TVET system. AK expanded the number and types of institutions the program was implemented in – conducting training of WDA School Managers and TOTs for WDA Master Trainers.

### Expansion into General Secondary Schools

Through developed relationships with key ministries and other stakeholders, programming was expanded into general secondary schools across 151 schools through Akazi Kanoze 2 (AK2) funded by The MasterCard Foundation, and also implemented by EDC with local IPs.

## Result Highlights

### MORE THAN 20,000 YOUTHS PREPARED FOR WORK

The USAID-funded Akazi Kanoze work readiness training has successfully prepared 21,000 youth for work. These youths have come together to develop the work and life skills necessary to become productive citizens with life-long livelihood opportunities.

### 2,500 NEW BUSINESSES CREATED

Across Rwanda, the Akazi Kanoze method has been used to start nearly 2,500 new businesses in sectors from agro-processing to computer repair. Many employed youths also participate in Income-Generating Activities (IGAs) or participate in savings groups with their fellow Akazi Kanoze graduates.

### 66% EMPLOYMENT RATE

Akazi Kanoze enables youth to ensure their skills are market-relevant and up-to-date. 66% of youth are employed six months after graduation, either running their own business or at a Rwandan company. Akazi Kanoze graduates report income nearly twice the national average.

### Akazi Kanoze's Impact

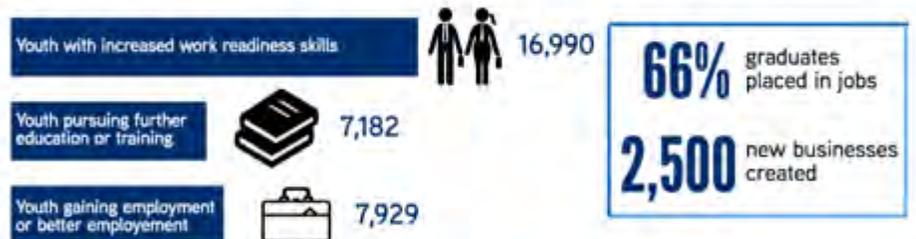
Akazi Kanoze's impact was measured through a 2014 randomized controlled trial<sup>3</sup>. The impact evaluation found

## AKAZI KANOZE Results at a Glance

2009-2016



### Increasing Livelihood Opportunities and Learning



### Building Local Capacity & Sustainability



Akazi Kanoze Work Readiness Curriculum has been embedded in the TVET and General Secondary School curricula



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<sup>3</sup> RCT is on the EDC website at: <https://go.edc.org/AK-RCT-study>

that Akazi Kanoze youth had increased their competency in key work readiness skills, found mentors and role models, and saved more frequently than youth who did not go through the program. Both treatment and control group youth increased their knowledge of key work readiness skills over time, but the youth who participated in Akazi Kanoze had larger gains in three skills:

1. Akazi Kanoze youth reported **significant increases in the ability to apply for a job or improve their current position**. Their knowledge gains were much larger than the control group's even though both groups reported the same at baseline;
2. Akazi Kanoze youth reported a **significantly higher level of comfort with business plan development** at the endline. At baseline, only 15.8% of the treatment group knew about the formal elements of a business plan. At the endline, over 55% of treatment youth reported having this skill;
3. Akazi Kanoze youth reported a **higher understanding of marketing techniques and attracting customers**. At the endline, the number of Akazi Kanoze youth who had mastered these skills had almost tripled from 28% to over 76%.

## Impact Studies

Akazi Kanoze conducted a number of studies to provide further analysis on work readiness skills attainment and the overall program approach (see Appendix 4). In fall 2015, 113 Akazi Kanoze graduates who had taken the post-training credentialing test were surveyed, as well as their employers to test the predictive validity of the test. The results showed:

- 73.5% of these graduates were still employed. The largest percentage (31%) was self-employed.
- One to two years after graduating, 70% of employers rated the Akazi Kanoze-trained employee better than their work counterparts on overall job performance.

## Sustainability

Akazi Kanoze project has shown a demonstrated sound approach to sustainability. An April 2014 Scale and Sustainability Study by JBS International commissioned by USAID, identified how the program had grown and how it can go to scale by building on Akazi Kanoze foundations. In 2015, Akazi Kanoze Access (AKA) was initiated as a Rwandan NGO to continue providing and expanding the services offered by the Akazi Kanoze Youth Livelihoods project. AKA now mobilizes funding from other development partners such as DFID, a Belgium cooperation, MasterCard Foundation to continue these youth development activities. The Rwanda private sector also provides in-kind and cash contribution through WBL opportunities for youth and paid internships.

The experience of AK illustrates the vital importance of partnerships. [AK] established several successful partnerships with different types of stakeholders who contributed value to the effort. The political support of MIFOTRA was important for obtaining the buy-in of the RDB, and beneficiaries (among others). The RDB recognized the importance of the AK "brand" by integrating the WRC into its internship program. Beyond being simply a training program, it was then aligned with the RDB's flagship efforts to improve the business enabling environment in general and the quality of the labor force in particular.

— Akazi Kanoze Scale and Sustainability Study, 2014

## Conclusions and Lessons Learned

The USAID Akazi Kanoze Youth Livelihoods Project in Rwanda reach all of its targets and institutionalized work readiness into the Rwanda Education System. Working with partners at all levels, Akazi Kanoze established an iterative process of reviewing accomplishments, challenges, and lessons throughout the life cycle of the project. These lessons learned can inform future youth workforce development programming in Rwanda and other similar contexts.

- **Engage with the local community and district level government officials from the onset.** It is important to take family and the support of the surrounding community into account when working with youth.
- **Youth coaching and monitoring is difficult, but necessary.** Youth are looking for more moral and technical support after the program to overcome challenges, and it is important to develop a process and system for follow up.
- **Monitor fidelity of implementation, especially during scale up.** A key lesson learned was that monitoring and quality assurance of trainings decreased as time went on. In order to maintain the Akazi Kanoze brand name, AKA will need to strengthen service delivery standards and train staff to apply and monitor the quality of implementing partners.
- **Stronger partnership with the private sector is needed.** While great strides have been made in private sector engagement, further work is needed to achieve full buy-in from private sector partners.
- **Economic constraints of vulnerable youth affect more than just attendance.** As AK has expanded into rural areas, the remoteness of trainings, low literacy level, and economic vulnerability of youth resulted in a more challenging implementation environment than the original urban focus of the project, and further contextualization is necessary to meet the needs of rural youth.



Akazi Kanoze youth take part in a training hosted by an implementing partner.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

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ABE	Adult Basic Education
AK	Akazi Kanoze
AKA	Akazi Kanoze Access
AK2	Akazi Kanoze 2
ALP	Accelerated Learning Program
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DQA	Data Quality Assessment
EVI	EcoVentures International
EDC	Education Development Center
EDPRS	Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy
GIZ	German Society for International Cooperation
GoR	Government of Rwanda
GSS	General Secondary Schools
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IGA	Income Generating Activity
ILO	International Labor Organization
IPs	Implementing Partners
LMIS	Labor Market Information System
LOP	Length of Project
MoE	Ministry of Education
MIFOTRA	Ministry of Public Service and Labor
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NuPITA	New Partners Initiative Technical Assistance Project
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PSC	Private Sector Champions
RDB	Rwandan Development Board
REB	Rwandan Educational Board
SACCO	Savings and Credit Co-operatives
ToT	Training of Trainers
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education Training
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WBI	World Bank Indicators
WDA	Work Development Authority
WRC	Work Readiness Curriculum

# PROJECT OVERVIEW

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The Akazi Kanoze (AK) Youth Livelihoods Project, financed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) began in September 2009. Originally designed to be a five-year project to engage Rwandan youth and support them to obtain new skills and employment, AK was extended by two years to close on September 30, 2016. This extension continued the successful activities of the original project, in addition to ensuring sustainability through the incubation of a local non-governmental organization, Akazi Kanoze Access, to continue to build the Akazi Kanoze youth livelihood support network and provide youth with quality workforce development opportunities beyond the lifetime of the project.

Akazi Kanoze has always been entrepreneurial in nature, evolving in response to the needs of youth, the private sector, and government partners. EDC employed a networked approach, bringing together many youth-serving entities in an attempt to scale-reach and better coordinate youth workforce development initiatives. Whether it was training, existing placement strategy, or a business' willingness to take interns, EDC worked with partners that were already in familiar territory and whose work was enhanced by AK's innovative interventions. This approach increased local ownership and investment in the long run. Recognizing and building on the existing strengths of the partner organizations, EDC designed program interventions to improve livelihood opportunities and develop a thriving youth livelihood support system for youth.

Over the course of seven years, with youth at the center of the project, EDC has built an ecosystem of support for furthering workforce development opportunities in Rwanda. The activities within each of the project results evolved to meet various stakeholder needs, but the networked approach with a high level of engagement from all levels of stakeholders has remained at the core of implementation. From youth to high-level decision makers, EDC tried to make sure that all voices are heard so the project can be responsive to the rapidly changing educational and socioeconomic needs of Rwandan youth.

## Akazi Kanoze Result Areas

### **Result 1: Increase Livelihood Opportunities for Youth**

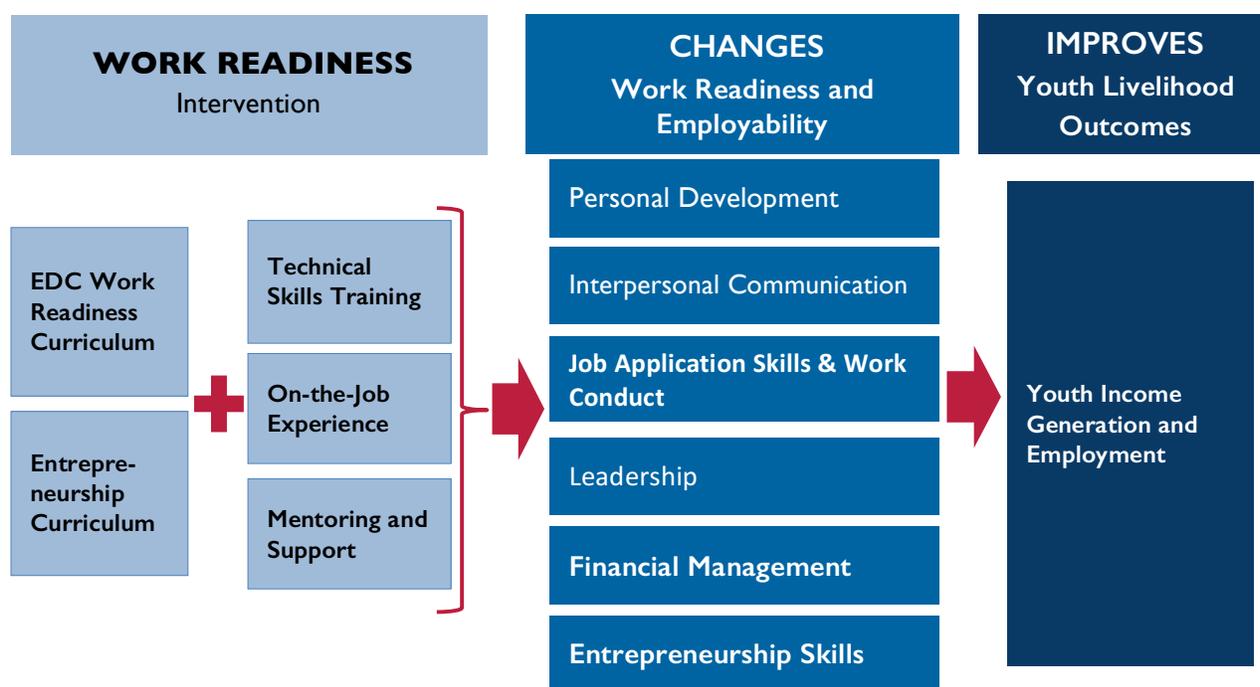
Akazi Kanoze empowers youth with the necessary tools and resources to enter a positive development pathway that leads to increased livelihood opportunities;

### **Result 2: Develop a Thriving Youth Livelihood Support System**

Akazi Kanoze builds capacity and creates linkages between youth, the Rwandan economy, and public and private institutions so youth gain access to increased opportunities to engage productively in Rwandan society.

## Akazi Kanoze Theory of Change

The project’s theory of change has two key elements – one that emphasizes building systems through increased connections between key stakeholders in the public and private sectors and the second that emphasizes the capacity building efforts for youth directly. The theory of change shows the interconnectivity between creating a youth support system and success in improving livelihoods longitudinally and at scale. Livelihood opportunity, or employment<sup>4</sup>, is comprised of formal and non-formal work for wages, entrepreneurship, and self-employment. Akazi Kanoze’s interventions target work readiness skills and improve the level of employability among youth, thereby improving livelihoods in the long-term (see *Figure 1: Theory of Change* below). Additionally, Akazi Kanoze views employability<sup>5</sup> as an intermediate result in the theory of change, and employment outcomes and a thriving youth-support system, as the long-term goals of the project.



**Figure 1: Akazi Kanoze Theory of Change**

There are several critical assumptions in this theory of change: 1) The quality of training will be high enough to produce employable youth, 2) The private sector will want to hire Akazi Kanoze graduates, and 3) The policy environment is one which will support youth skills acquisition and the promotion of young entrepreneurs. These assumption areas were important for EDC to focus on from the beginning to make sure that the project was on track to achieve its goals.

<sup>4</sup> Categories of employment include: self-employed, working for an employer part-time or full-time, working for your family, or working for a cooperative

<sup>5</sup> Employability is defined as “a set of achievements, skills, understandings and personal attributes that make a person more likely to gain and retain employment, be successful in their chosen occupation and be professionally and personally satisfied with their employment.

From the beginning, EDC actively worked to build the capacity of local youth-serving organizations, engaging the private sector in curriculum and project design to ensure AK was market relevant, and partnering closely with the Ministry of Education and relevant ministries. These organizations also served as entry points for EDC to engage directly with youth. Strategic approaches will be elaborated on in subsequent sections of this report, but they are important to mention upfront, as the theory of change may not have held true if these stakeholders had not played such a large part in the creation and scale-up of Akazi Kanoze. All these actors make up the youth livelihood support system that EDC has created and which Akazi Kanoze Access will sustain and grow.

## Underlying Principles of Akazi Kanoze

In order to effectively reach, engage and support Rwandan youth to be more capable of earning a livelihood, EDC identified appropriate and relevant connections with both the public and private sectors. Akazi Kanoze was designed to enable youth to be more capable of earning a livelihood, through appropriate and relevant connections to life and work readiness training opportunities, the development of technical and other necessary skills, and linkages to key market actors. Building a self-reliant generation is not possible alone and a multitude of youth supporting organizations, business, and institutions were engaged from the beginning of the project in order to establish strategic linkages and increase the scale and sustainability of the youth-level training.

## Systems-Level Interventions (Result 2)

EDC's commitment to youth development included a significant ecosystem building effort. Akazi Kanoze was designed to ensure sustainability of the youth training and support in which the program activities could be achieved and sustained past the lifetime of the project. In order to achieve the second project result, Akazi Kanoze implemented the following system-building activities:

1. **Building Capacity of Local Implementing Partners:** EDC used a networked collaborative approach and built capacity of over 60 IPs many of which are continuing AK to allow greater access to WRC training. Implementing Partner organizations had direct contact with beneficiaries rather than EDC staff, ensuring sustainable ownership.
2. **Engaging Employers:** Private sector engagement included the recruitment of employers to become interested in taking interns, internship placement, and capacity building of employers in the areas of human resources, and other guidance to ensure a beneficial relationship for both the youth and the employer. Employers were surveyed to evaluate how internship placements turned out and for follow-up.
3. **Partnership with the Government of Rwanda:** The GoR is vested in translating the capabilities of its young people into productive employment and creating new businesses. Key policy priorities to absorb new labor market entrants include skills development, generating off-farm jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities through private sector development, and strengthening urban centers, among others. Through strategic partnership and collaboration to help Rwanda meet youth workforce development goals, EDC strengthened the GoR's ability to institutionalize the work readiness curriculum.

## Youth Level Interventions (Result 1):

Akazi Kanoze implemented a variety of core youth trainings and support activities. All participants received Work Readiness training plus a selection from a menu of complementary trainings as outlined below.

- **Work Readiness Curriculum (WRC):** All AK participants completed a modular work readiness curriculum that included topics such as personal development, communication, professional conduct, financial literacy, personal health and hygiene, entrepreneurship, and worker rights and responsibilities (See Figure 6: Work Ready Now! Curriculum). EDC trained and monitored local implementing partners who conducted the trainings. The training materials were developed for the Rwandan content and adapted for both urban and rural regions. All youth were administered a completion exam and passing students were awarded with a nationally recognized certificate signed by the Workforce Development Authority, the arm of the Ministry of Education responsible for technical and vocational education.

After work readiness training, participants selected from a menu of complementary services depending on their interests and level of education.

- **Entrepreneurship Training:** To supplement the foundational WRC, Akazi Kanoze provided youth with training to support starting a business and other self-employment opportunities. This included the Income Generating Activities (IGA) and Cooperative Management training.
- **Complementary Training:** In addition to the core work readiness curriculum, AK offered youth access to a tailored menu of specialized skills training including technical training, functional literacy, and introductions to savings groups. After conducting market assessments in project districts, EDC selected implementing partners that offered in-demand technical trainings in trades such as hospitality, masonry, carpentry, welding, hair-dressing, bee keeping, ICT, and food processing. Based on various youth needs, additional complementary trainings were also made available. For example, ECD caregiver training for female youth was offered as an alternative to tailoring which was a less marketable skill.



An Akazi Kanoze youth at his apprenticeship.

- **Workforce Linkages and Support:** AK provided all participating youth with access to workforce linkage opportunities (internships and apprenticeships) including formal sector jobs and entrepreneurship and other livelihood opportunities. After youth finished the in-class and technical training, a number of Akazi Kanoze graduates went onto a three-month internship in their trade of choice. Other youth launched

their own businesses after training. During the transition process, youth received mentoring from their trainers ranging from moral support to business plan development.

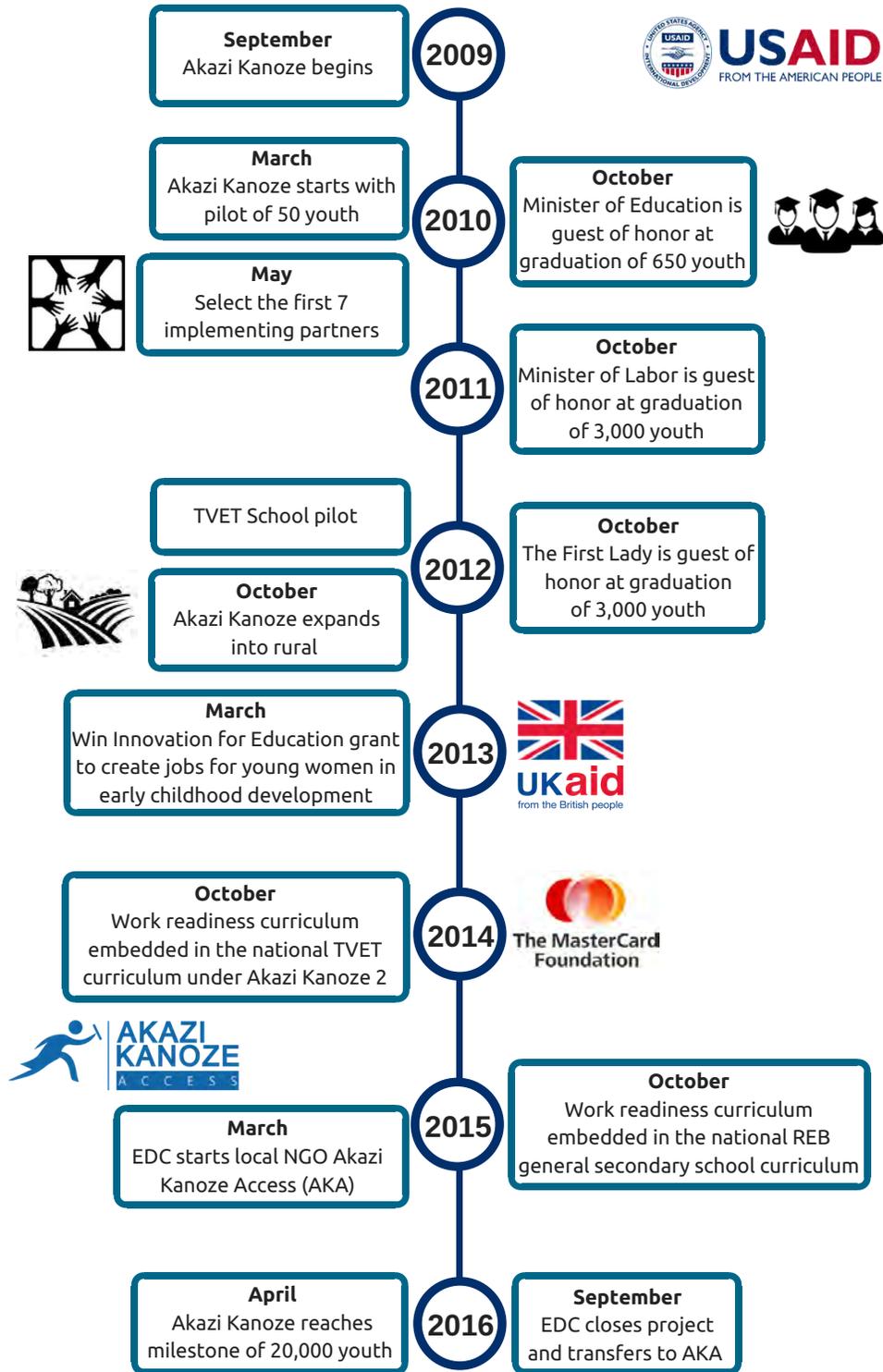
- **Job Placement and Business Coaching:** Implementing partners liaised with private sector partners to find job placements for youth. Sometimes internships transitioned into permanent employment, but implementing partners were also responsible for seeking partnerships with companies that would hire the AK youth after graduation.

For youth that started their own businesses, both Implementing Partners and Akazi Kanoze entrepreneurship specialists provided business support and coaching. This support ranged from access to finance, market assessment coaching, market linkages, and other technical assistance.

## Project Timeline

The Akazi Kanoze project began in 2009 and ran for almost seven years. During this time, AK developed and refined strong training materials, IP engagement processes and support activities, along with relations with the GoR. The project expanded and scaled-up to reach more than 21,000 in-school and out-of-school youth in urban and rural areas, and institutionalized the Akazi Kanoze Work Readiness Curriculum in the national TVET and General Secondary School curricula. The progress made during Akazi Kanoze will be sustained by Akazi Kanoze Access, the local NGO incubated by EDC.

The evolution of Akazi Kanoze is summarized in the following timeline. Highlights show the dimensions of project scale-up, including the numbers of partners engaged, geographic expansion and overall numbers of youth reached.



**Figure 2: Akazi Kanoze Timeline.**

## Project Scale Up

Akazi Kanoze has increase impact by scaling up in 3 dimensions: (1) geographically, (2) demographically, and (3) within the government system. The major driver of EDC's scale up approach has been to focus on leveraging partnerships and opportunities, constantly identifying institutional, political, and organizational potential for collaboration and expansion of AK interventions. EDC Leadership joined a number of relevant sub-sector technical working groups which gave AK visibility, helped develop the AK brand recognition, and created opportunities for collaboration and expansion.

EDC successfully concentrated efforts on advocacy, while aligning program efforts with Ministry of Ministry of Public Affairs and Labor (MINOFTRA), Rwanda Education Board (REB), and Workforce Development Authority (WDA) priorities, facilitating a two-way discussion engaging key government officials and adjusting program strategies and approaches to meet government needs EDC ensured that all relevant ministries were aware of program activities, keeping the GOR informed of project accomplishments, progress, and opportunities for close communication and collaboration at every stage of the program cycle – design, implementation, monitoring, closeout.

### **Expansion into Rural Areas**

Geographic scaling has occurred as the program spread from urban to peri-urban and rural areas, expanding from Kigali to the Southern and Eastern provinces of the country. By the project's end, Akazi Kanoze reached 19 of the 30 districts in Rwanda. EDC made it a priority to connect with local government leaders, introduce the project and particularly the IPs in a collaborative and engaging manner to allow for government feedback at the district level which facilitated government buy in and in turn led to greater engagement of youth.

### **Demographic Expansion into TVET System: Pathway to Institutionalization**

AK expanded interventions to reach in-school youth populations through TVET institutions. The WDA had been partnering with another international organization to develop an entrepreneurship curriculum, but due to delays in efforts, the WDA reached out to EDC, given their knowledge of EDC's quality and responsive efforts. As EDC established strong relations with WDA, this paved the way for AK to support the WDA with integrating the WRC into the TVET system. AK expanded the number and types of institutions that implemented the program, and conducted training of WDA School Managers and TOTs for WDA Master Trainers.

### **Reaching More Youth by Radio**

In 2013, the project partnered with Search For Common Ground (SFCG) and developed 62 episodes of the Akazi Kanoze soap opera and aired them on 5 community radios (Izuba, Ishingiro, Isangano, Isango Star and Salus Radio) in order to provide work readiness and entrepreneurship knowledge to a wider Rwandan audience.

To assess the effect of the radio program SFCG conducted a survey in the first quarter of FY14. Results show that most of the respondents who said that they listened to the program (strongly) liked it and found it relevant to their lives. A significant number of respondents said that they learned livelihood development skills from the radio program.

### **Expansion into General Secondary Schools (MasterCard Foundation funded project)**

EDC focused on developing relationships with key Ministries and other stakeholders including implementing, private sector, and training partners to pave the way for expansion institutionally. This gradual scale up of interventions with a variety of public and private partners resulted in the launch of a new project called Akazi Kanoze 2 (AK2) funded by the MasterCard Foundation. EDC is implementing the AK2 project with IPs in General Secondary Schools across and TVET Schools across 11 Districts in Southern Province and Kigali. A total of 151 schools are receiving direct IP support, but since the institutionalization of the WRC in the national entrepreneurship class syllabus, all secondary school students in the country are receiving the work readiness modules in school.

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As I saw throughout my visit, all levels of the education system—parents, communities, teachers, principals, publishers, vocational schools, and government officials—Rwandans coming together to support learning.

—Christie Vilsack, Senior  
Advisor on International  
Education, USAID

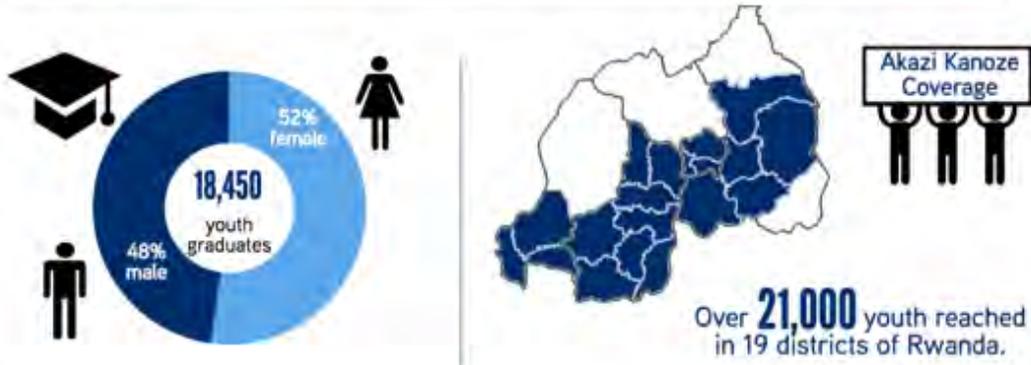
<https://medium.com/usaieducation/rwanda-reads-36741b1a09ef#.swcw7pu35>

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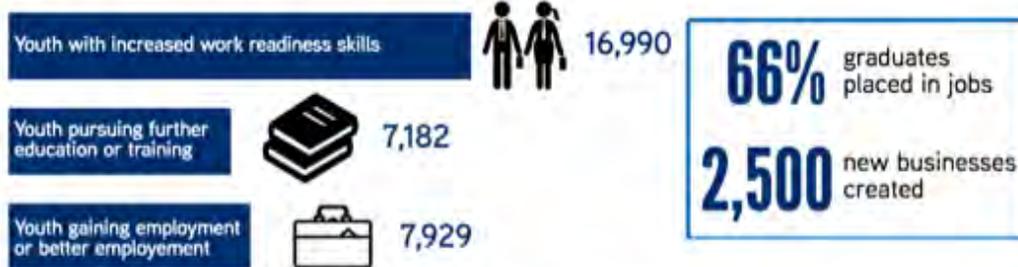
# Results at a Glance

## AKAZI KANOZE Results at a Glance

2009-2016



### Increasing Livelihood Opportunities and Learning



### Building Local Capacity & Sustainability

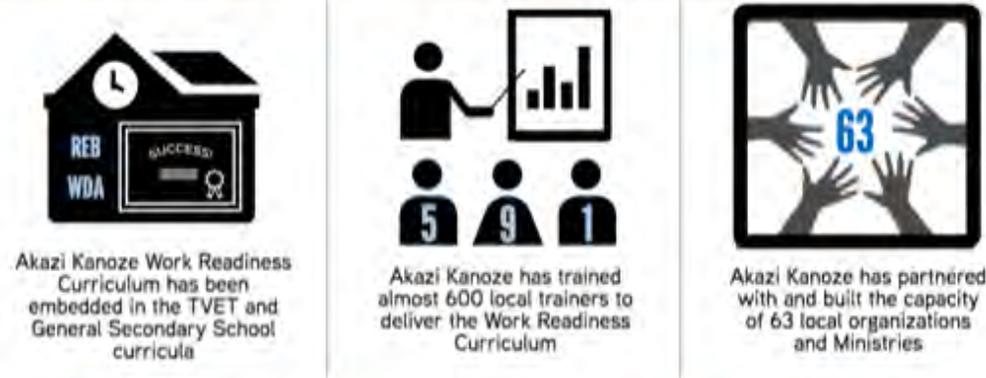


Figure 3: Akazi Kanoze Results at a Glance.

# THE ROAD TO SCALE AND SUSTAINABILITY

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Akazi Kanoze's success is grounded in its entrepreneurial and adaptive approach, allowing it to respond to the needs of youth, the private sector, and government partners. As a result, all of the key interventions that span the journey of an AK youth have been informed by stakeholders at all stages in the project lifecycle, which has allowed for increased impact and reach. At the project design stage in 2008, EDC conducted a comprehensive needs assessment with youth to understand their training priorities and with the private sector to identify the skills demanded by the market.

## Training

### Work Readiness Training

**EDC's curriculum specialist team developed the project's Work Readiness Curriculum in 2009.** The team, composed of international and local specialists, incorporating best practices from local and international workforce development materials. The curriculum materials were then further localized and translated over multiple iterations to ensure materials were appropriate for the different levels of education and backgrounds including adaptation for urban and rural contexts.

A 2014 impact evaluation found that **Akazi Kanoze youth had increased their competency in key work readiness skills, found mentors and role models, and saved more frequently than youth who did not go through the program.** Both treatment and control group youth increased their knowledge of key work readiness skills over time, but **the youth who participated in Akazi Kanoze had larger gains in their ability to apply for a job, develop a business plan, and understand marketing techniques.**

### Complementary Trainings

Youth selected from a menu of complementary trainings, depending on their background, interests in employment or entrepreneurship and the current market demand.

- A. **Technical trainings** were mostly concentrated in the hospitality, construction, agribusiness, and services sectors.
- B. **The Akazi Kanoze Accelerated Learning Program (ALP)** aimed to prepare low skilled, minimally educated Rwandan youth for active engagement in economic and civic life, and trained over 800 youth in five districts. The Adult Basic Education (ABE) program provided one year of non-formal basic education and vocational training along with six-months of livelihood accompaniment services such as coaching, mentoring and on-the-job work experience. **ALP**



Akazi Kanoze graduates at their internship.

### **students improved their reading fluency and comprehension to surpass national standards for primary school students.**

- C. **IGA and Cooperative Management Training** was designed to support youth transitioning to self-employment. The module aims to equip youth with the information and skills needed to identify, establish and manage an IGA or cooperative, including solid record keeping and financial management.
- D. **Health training.** In addition to safety at work, health modules were designed to support initiatives targeting HIV/AIDS outreach in high schools through anti-AIDS clubs.<sup>6</sup> In these clubs, students are trained on basic sexual health, reproduction, HIV/AIDS prevention and transmission, contraception, and importantly, peer counseling. Clubs are led by a trained guide; however, the goal is to empower students to run the clubs on their own. Ownership of the clubs is left to the students, who are proud to teach the same message to their peers.

## Linkages to Private Sector

Some AK youth were provided with internship and apprenticeship opportunities. After youth completed the in-class and technical training, some of the Akazi Kanoze graduates went onto a three-month internship in their trade of choice. They spend this time with an employer, gaining practical experience and skills in the world of work. During the internships, youth are monitored and mentored by their trainers and receive assistance in developing CVs, learning interview skills, and understanding how to connect with employers.

## Results

**Over the lifetime of AK, a total of 5,432 youth reported being employed in formal sector jobs.** The findings from a 2014 RCT showed that about one-quarter of AK youth work for someone else and only 15% of AK graduates reported not working. The study also showed a significant relationship between participation Akazi Kanoze and employment, with AK having a positive impact on the employment outcomes of rural youth.

## Working with the Public Sector

Through Akazi Kanoze's introduction of work readiness skills to the GoR in 2009, the partnership with the various ministries and other public sector partners has resulted in widespread growth of recognition that these skills are valuable and needed by everyone to build the economy. AK has assisted GoR in reaching their Vision 2020 and Education goals, while building a critical mass of recognition for the AK value and brand among the public and private sector. This partnership has led to the support for the WRC being institutionalized within secondary schools.

AK's Work Readiness Curriculum has been embedded into the entrepreneurship subject at the S4, S5, and S6 levels at GSS and TVET schools around the country, enabling the approach to reach significantly large numbers of youth. This achievement is the result of AK's critical public-private partnerships with

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<sup>6</sup> The module on HIV/AIDS mainstreaming and sexual and reproductive health was adapted from the Prevention of HIV/AIDS and HIV/AIDS in Rwanda through Education project (PHARE) program curriculum approved by Rwanda National Commission to fight against HIV AIDS /CNLS.

the Rwandan Education Board (REB) and the Workforce Development Authority (WDA), and with funding from the Belgian and United Kingdom governments as well as private funding from the MasterCard Foundation.

## Entrepreneur Mentoring and Support Services

For young entrepreneurs, Akazi Kanoze has provided business mentoring and support services to help them start and grow their businesses. Since 2009, **2,482 AK graduates have started businesses within six months of graduation.**

According to a recent CRS study on AK youth, 68% of AK graduates have an income generating activity and 93.5% of those businesses were reported to be running well.

The AK entrepreneur support package includes practical business skills training, individualized mentoring to address particular challenges youth encounter, and linkages to financial mechanisms to help them expand their businesses.



Clarissa, a small business owner in Kigali, attended Akazi Kanoze trainings and hired 2 program graduates to expand her veterinary business. Both Clarissa and her most recent employee, Isabelle (also featured in this report) reported great experiences with the skills they've gained through the program.

## Connecting Beyond the AK Program

Akazi Kanoze has made concerted efforts to keep in touch with participants after they graduated from the program, to follow up and see how they are succeeding.

The AK Alumni Network was established to empower and motivate AK alumni to take an active role in Rwanda's workforce development. The Alumni Network provides a mechanism to follow up with youth who are grouped together based on their specific trades and locations. By joining an AK Alumni Network Chapter, AK alumni achieve the professional and personal growth they desire by sharing experiences, making professional connections, and pioneering professional opportunities in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.

In addition to the Alumni Network, Akazi Kanoze established a monitoring system to track youth beyond AK graduation. With the youth tracker system, the project identified a young leader at an IP who was then contracted as part-time employee to find other youth and collect information about what they were doing now. This was an effective way of gathering information about graduates' employment status. At each IP, the organization had a database which was aggregated at a national level.

AK implemented the Employer Satisfaction Survey to gather information from employers of youth in collaboration with the RDB which allowed the program to share data directly with the government on how youth were performing in internships and employment opportunities.

Souktel supports EDC Rwanda's Youth Livelihood Program (Akazi Kanoze) by providing an SMS-based job-matching and youth-tracking platform. The platform is used to send alerts and surveys out to Akazi Kanoze youth, as well as to link graduates of the Akazi Kanoze training programs with internships and job opportunities.

## Gender Sensitivity in Akazi Kanoze Programs

From the beginning of the project, EDC has prioritized an equal sex-ratio and the empowerment of female participants. In communities where AK operated, there were often existing cultural attitudes that discouraged females to participate in training and education. There are several key gender mainstreaming strategies that Akazi Kanoze used that helped the project stay gender sensitive.

### Reproductive health and gender-based violence awareness curriculum

In order to supplement the Work Readiness Curriculum, EDC adapted the Prevention of HIV/AIDS in Rwanda through Education project (PHARE) program curriculum. The new module of 12 hours raises youth's awareness of important health issues such as sexually transmitted infections, family planning, and stigma. The module also has a section on sexual violence with two case studies and a group discussion.

### Required sex-ratio

Since the first implementing partners, EDC required that at least half of participants are female. During the course of AK, it was common for less female than male participants to be interested in technical training programs. Families more frequently wanted their sons to enroll than their daughters. EDC built the capacity of implementing partners to encourage youth, their parents and communities to better understand the purpose of the program and support young women to attend. The project ended having trained more young women than men.

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52% of AK  
graduates are  
female.

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### Encouraging non-traditional professions

The first round of partners offered tailoring as the trade that would most appeal to young women, but EDC found that there was no economic demand for tailors in these areas. This lesson learned propelled EDC to require implementing partners to only offer market-driven technical trainings and to prove the need in their proposals. EDC coached implementing partners to encourage young women to pursue male-dominated professions such as welding, carpentry, and mining, as they were in high demand. Implementing partners advocated heavily for inclusion of young women in these industries and found apprenticeships and job placements with employers who welcomed the diversity in their workplace.

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“They know that I can do the work and do it well, so I am no different from that boy over there.”

— Honorine, a graduate of the AK ALP, who loves welding and has felt encouraged and supported by her peers and trainer to pursue a non-traditional career for a woman, Bugesera District

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## Developing new economic opportunities for young women

In an effort to create more jobs for youth in Rwanda, EDC developed a program with DFID funding to train 200 young women in early childhood development. The participants were received work readiness, early childhood education, and English training. The long-term goal of this program was to include this new profession in the national TVET system. This effort is being continued by Akazi Kanoze Access and should become a reality in 2017. Today, implementing partners are continuing to train young women and men as early childhood caregivers and AKA in coaching those who start their own centers. A prime example of the opportunities created by the early childhood development program is Juliet Nyirangendahimana, who has launched two pre-schools since graduating. Juliet graduated from the AK-run Early Childhood Development program and learned about using playing as a tool to help children in their learning process. The management skills she learned from the AK program enabled her to increase her enrollment and revenues. Growing demand for her services required her to open 2 other centers with over 100 children between the ages of 3 and 6. She now employs 3 other AK classmates. USAID Senior Advisor for International Education, Christie Vilsack, visited Juliet in June 2016<sup>7</sup>.

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“I learned to tread children as children and deal with all sorts of personalities in parents.”

— Juliet, AK Graduate and pre-school business owner

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## Gender trainings for the Akazi Kanoze team

Project staff participated in several gender awareness and integration workshops. In March 2016, Annie Alcid, DCOP of Akazi Kanoze, and facilitators from the Ugandan, girl empowerment organization, Just Like My Child Foundation led a training for all Akazi Kanoze EDC and Akazi Kanoze Access staff. The workshop included sessions on gender roles, equality versus equity, gender integration and mainstreaming, and experience sharing with Just Like My Child Foundation (See training photos below).



**Photos:** (Left) AK DCOP facilitating a session on gender mainstreaming, (Right) Participants during an activity on gender roles

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<sup>7</sup> <https://medium.com/usaied-education/rwanda-reads-36741b1a09ef#.6zfdg5xhr>

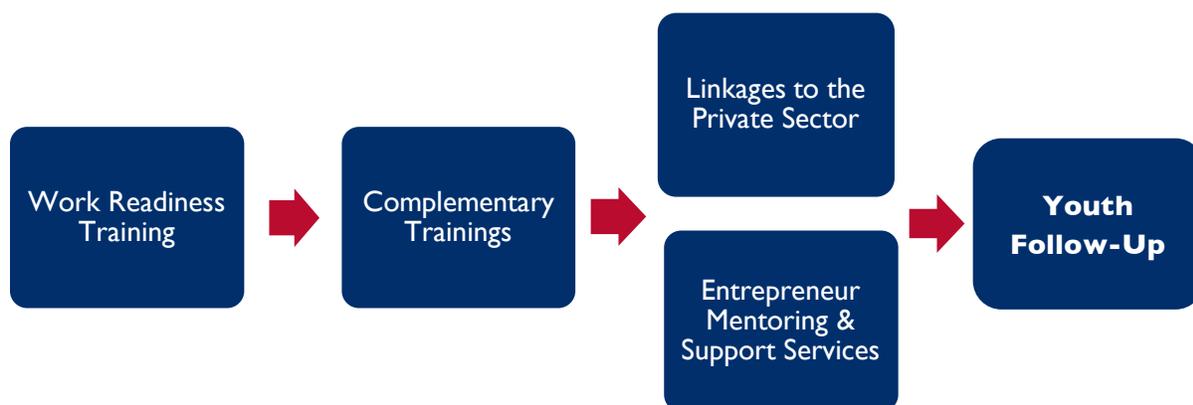
## YOUTH

**At the center of EDC's Akazi Kanoze approach are youth.** When the AK project began, EDC recognized that there was no common thread between youth initiatives, no coherent system for identifying and engaging vulnerable youth, and few linkages between youth and the private sector. There was a great deal of youth development work taking place in Rwanda, but many youth remained unserved by existing programs. However, there was a set of organizations with access to and commitment to youth that showed an interest in expanding services to include employability and work readiness. With this insight, the Akazi Kanoze network was intentionally designed to be youth-centric, with all other stakeholders collaborating with the shared objective of improving youth livelihoods in Rwanda. EDC leveraged the best of what already existed and created more effective programmatic linkages and synergies among youth-serving organizations in order to improve the livelihoods of thousands of youth.

**EDC has incorporated youth perspectives in designing and implementing Akazi Kanoze.** An initial assessment conducted in 2008 showed that youth wanted the following:

5. An asset-driven training that builds on existing youth assets and helps youth identify and implement realistic personal goals
6. A wide range of employment opportunities for basic entry-level work, with a specific focus on building opportunities for young women
7. A flexible curriculum that could be adapted to meet the needs of poor and vulnerable beneficiaries
8. Inclusion of employers and other organizations to guide curriculum development, mentor participants, and provide internships and work experience opportunities.

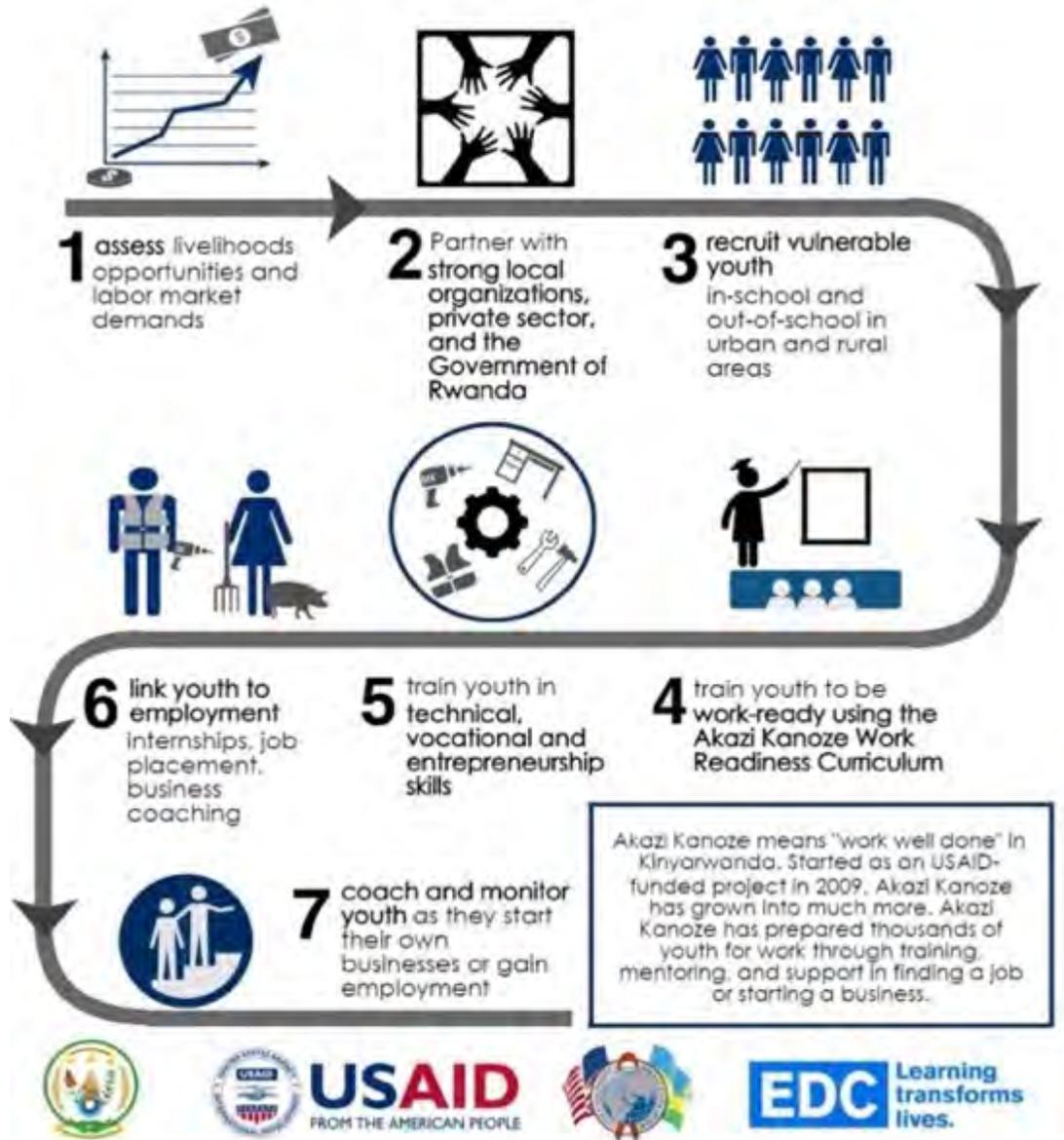
These key principles, combined with the findings from the employer needs assessment, guided the design of the Work Readiness Curriculum and the overall approach to creating a sustainable youth support system.



**Figure 4: Akazi Kanoze Youth Training and Services Flow Chart.**

# THE AKAZI KANOZE MODEL

Improving youth livelihoods across Rwanda



**Figure 5: Akazi Kanoze Program Model.** This diagram details the typical path of participant youth.

Through AK's work, 3,871 Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) were served, exceeding the target by 21%. The following section moves through the components of the AK youth workforce development approach and gives examples of outcomes within each. Additionally, the stories of Chantal, Seth, Nelson, and Isabelle, four unique AK graduates, are introduced.

## Work Readiness Training

EDC's curriculum specialist team developed the project's Work Readiness Curriculum in 2009.

International and local specialists from EDC's technical team and partner organization EcoVentures International (EVI), developed modules 7 and 8, and incorporated best practices from local and international workforce development materials. Based on stakeholder needs, the curriculum specialists developed eight modules of transferable skills (See Appendix I for more details on the curriculum content and objectives):

1. **Personal Development:** Teaches how to set goals and track your progress towards accomplishment.
2. **Interpersonal Communication:** Explores effective communication techniques and how to provide quality customer service.
3. **Work Habits and Conduct:** Develops time management skills alongside more generally positive attitudes towards work.
4. **Leadership:** Introduces qualities of an effective leader and helps to develop problem solving and conflict resolution skills.
5. **Safety and Health at Work:** Helps youth to develop safe workplace habits to avoid injury.
6. **Worker and Employer Rights and Responsibilities:** Teaches youth about their rights as workers as well as the Government of Rwanda's labor laws.
7. **Financial Fitness:** Instills the importance of savings, managing money and budgeting as well as provides insight into how financial institutions work.
8. **Introduction to Entrepreneurship:** Focuses on the cycle of a business, the importance of record keeping, marketing, negotiating and how to plan for unexpected events.



**Figure 6: Work Ready Now! Modules.**



training was interactive, which allowed him to understand different scenarios that may arise in operating a business. Fabian, another entrepreneur, appreciated how games were used that made the training both fun as well as easy to understand. Each module ended in an activity that was supposed to mimic a real-life experience, so youth feel like they know what to expect when applying these concepts themselves.

**After finishing the WRC, youth know how to save in order to reach their goals.** Before AK training, Pierre, an entrepreneur in Huye District, thought that he did not have enough money to save anything. But after going through the financial fitness module, he realized that even with a little money he could learn to save and that in time it could grow to be enough to start a business. Chantal expressed the same sentiment; she stated that before AK she did not know how to save money. However, today after several successful years running her sorghum beer business she has saved enough to buy a piece of land and plans to use it as collateral to get a loan from a local bank.

The findings from the 2014 randomized controlled trial <sup>9</sup>validate the above anecdotal claims. The impact evaluation found that **Akazi Kanoze youth had increased their competency in key work readiness skills, found mentors and role models, and saved more frequently than youth who did not go through the program.** Both treatment and control group youth increased their knowledge of key work readiness skills over time, but **the youth who participated in Akazi Kanoze had larger gains in three skills:**

4. Akazi Kanoze youth reported significant increases in the **ability to apply for a job or improve their current position.** Their knowledge gains were much larger than the control group's even though both groups reported the same at baseline;
5. Akazi Kanoze youth reported a significantly higher level of comfort with **business plan development at the endline.** At baseline, only 15.8% of the treatment group knew about the formal elements of a business plan. At the endline, over 55% of treatment youth reported having this skill;
6. Akazi Kanoze youth reported a higher understanding of **marketing techniques and attracting customers.** At the endline, the number of Akazi Kanoze youth who had mastered these skills had almost tripled from 28% to over 76%.

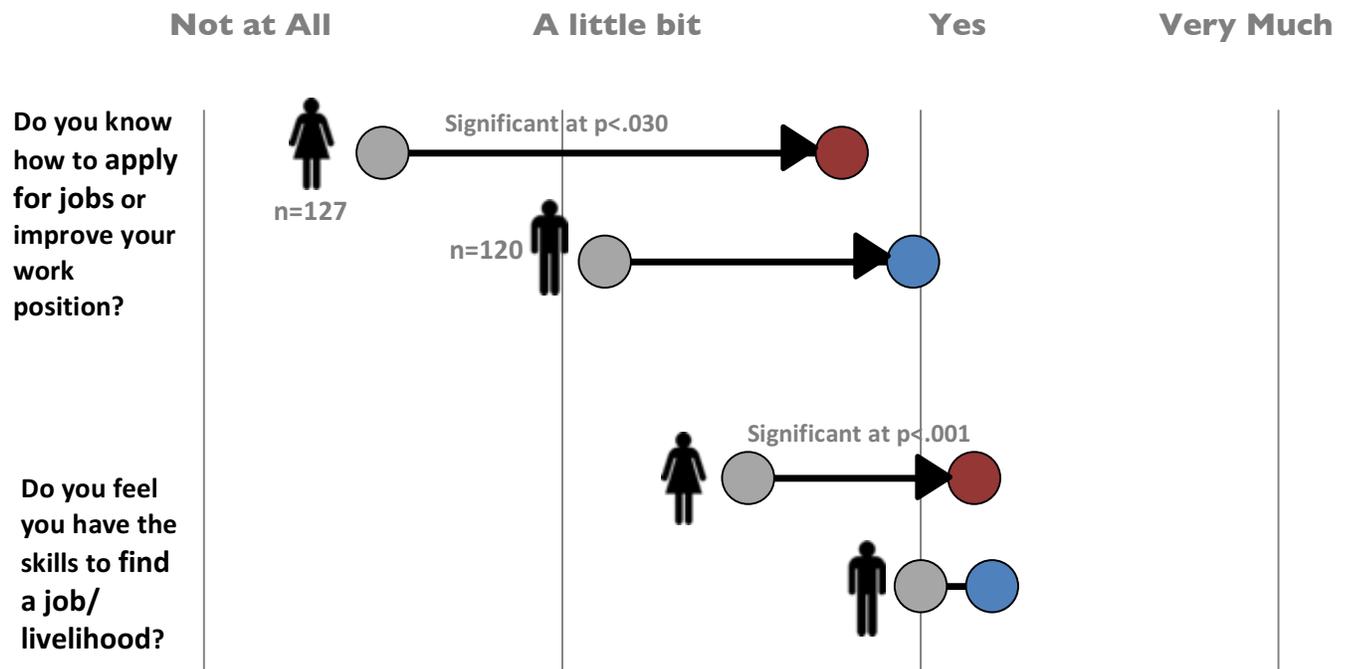
**The evaluation showed that while young women started much further behind male participants, they caught up over the course of the year by having higher gains in work readiness compared to the young men.** There were no differences between young men and young women in the control group. Young women in Akazi Kanoze had significantly higher increases in knowledge of how to find a job/livelihood and apply for work (see Figure 7).

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<sup>9</sup> RCT on EDC website at: <https://go.edc.org/AK-RCT-study>

## Akazi Kanoze young women make more significant gains in work readiness skills

**AK young women** made more gains in these skills from baseline to endline than **young men**



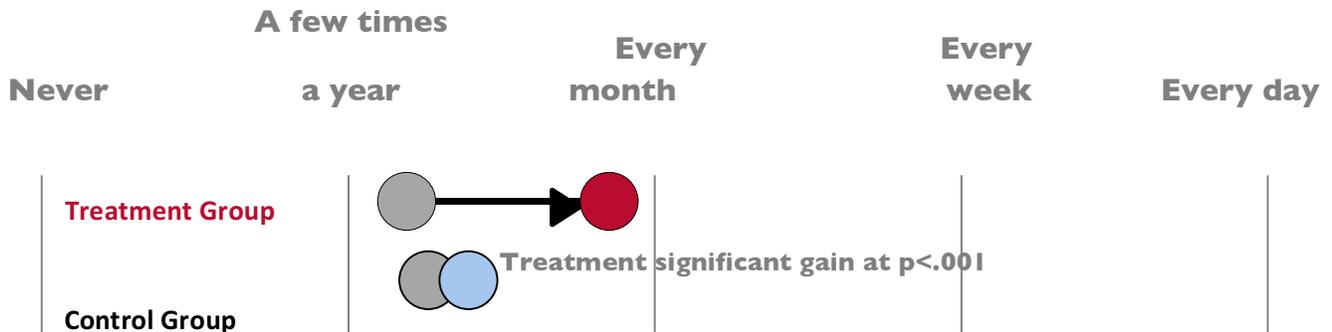
**Figure 7: Gains in Work Readiness by Gender.**

**As mentioned above, the financial fitness model is very important for youth.** The findings from the impact evaluation showed that AK youth are more likely to save and practice good financial management than youth who did not do AK. If youth participate in Akazi Kanoze they were 20% more likely to have savings ( $p < 0.001$ ).<sup>10</sup> One of the most significant differences between Akazi Kanoze youth and non-Akazi Kanoze youth was the increase in frequency of saving. After the WRC, Akazi Kanoze youth reported a large gain in frequency of saving, which can be seen in the figure below.

<sup>10</sup> R-squared equal to 0.1646

## Akazi Kanoze youth save more frequently

**Akazi Kanoze youth** increased their frequency of saving from baseline to endline more than the control group ( $p < .001$ )



**Figure 8: Savings by Group.**

The WRC is just the beginning of the Akazi Kanoze journey for youth, yet one can see the lasting impact that the training has on graduates. In addition to the WRC, complementary trainings are offered that are tailored to the needs of the youth.

## Complementary Trainings

After receiving trainings in work readiness, a menu of complementary trainings, including technical training, is offered to youth, depending on their path of interest, whether in employment or entrepreneurship, their education level and the current market demand. EDC reassessed local demands together with IPs each year to identify best programming for youth.

### A. Technical Training

For mostly urban and peri-urban youth with primary or secondary school educations, the combination of WRC and technical training prepared them for formal employment opportunities. With this said, there are still many participants that complete this combination of trainings who go onto start their own income generating activities. The vocational trainings have concentrated mostly in four main sectors: hospitality, construction, agribusiness, and services. Many of the implementing partners that offered the WRC and vocational training package, referred to as “AK Urban Classic,” are NGOs, but some small and medium enterprises and social enterprises also delivered the program. Some IPs provided only one vocational track, while others offered several. Many of the graduates who participated in focus group



An AK graduate works on her agri-business.

discussions conducted by JBS in 2014, wished that they had been offered more than a few tracks to choose from, especially students from those IPs offering more traditional occupations rather than ICT<sup>11</sup>.

In EDC's experience, the technical training is often the motivation for less educated youth to join Akazi Kanoze. "Poverty is what makes them desperate for the technical skills," explained Verdiane, the Executive Secretary of Benimpuhwe Organization, an AK IP. Technical skills training is tangible for the youth from the beginning and in their opinion, is what will result in an income generation opportunity. In retrospect, youth need to understand why technical skills are offered in addition to the transferable skills offered in the WRC. Due to limitations in the formal economy, especially in rural areas, there are often not enough jobs to support the youth in their area of vocational training. For example, youth trained by Centre de Promotion des Jeunes pour Sortir de Pauvrete (CPJSP-Kamonyi), an implementing partner in rural Kamonyi District, studied carpentry, hairdressing, masonry, and agri-business, had difficulties working in their respective trades. A staff member at CPJSP noted that many of the youth end up working in agri-business even if they did not receive that vocational training in that program. "Due to the rural nature of this place, many of these youth apply their Akazi Kanoze skills to agriculture related work," he explained. Youth's newly acquired work readiness skills can add much value to agriculture-related work, he noted, and the transferable skills from the WRC can help support them to identify agriculture and non- agriculture related opportunities as well. While youth often think that the technical training is what is going to secure them a job, in reality, it is the transferable skills that help them navigate an economy with limited opportunities that requires resilience and innovation to succeed.

## B. Accelerated Basic Education

The Akazi Kanoze Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) was a component created under the broader Akazi Kanoze project that aimed to prepare low skilled, minimally educated Rwandan youth for active engagement in economic and civic life. Running from 2011 to 2014, the seven implementing partners of the ALP trained 812 (413 male, 399 female) youth in five districts. Focusing on youth who had dropped out of school between the Primary 4 (P4) and Primary 6 (P6) grades, the program provided one year of non-formal basic education and vocational training along with six-months of livelihood accompaniment services such as coaching, mentoring and on-the-job work experience.



ALP students look over their Mathematics student guides.

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<sup>11</sup> Scale and Sustainability Study on EDC website: <https://go.edc.org/AK-scale-sustainability-study-jbs>.

The accelerated basic education curriculum was comprised of approximately 600 instructional hours (300 hours for literacy in Kinyarwanda, 200 hours for math and 100 hours for English) and was taught over a 12-month period. The goal of this accelerated basic education curriculum was for youth to reach a literacy and numeracy level equivalent to P6 education.

Overall, youth interviewed during a retrospective study<sup>12</sup> were highly satisfied with the program’s level of academic and on-the-job learning and facilitation. **ALP students improved their reading fluency and comprehension to surpass national standards for primary school students.** By the end of the project, youth had high levels of comprehension and were reading at an average pace of 60 words correct per minute with a grade-level text. **The youth who were largely unemployed before the start of the program were able to find at least part-time work after completion.**

### ALP students have better employment outcomes

P6 ALP students with no prior work experience have over double employment level of similar P6 AK youth.



Figure 9: ALP Students Have Better Employment Outcomes.

## C. IGA and Cooperative Management Training

The Small Business and Cooperative Management training was created in 2012 to support youth transitioning to self-employment during the Akazi Kanoze expansion into rural areas. The training provides youth who have successfully completed the Work Readiness Curriculum with the foundational skills and knowledge necessary to become a successful income generating activity (IGA) owner or cooperative member. The module aims to equip youth with the information and skills needed to identify, establish and manage an IGA or cooperative, including solid record keeping and financial management. Like the work readiness curriculum, this was designed in a way that is participatory, active and hands-on so that the youth are actively engaged in the learning process, have the opportunity to practice and enhance new skills and gain the self-confidence necessary to establish and maintain work in an IGA or cooperative. Central to several of the activities is bringing in IGA owners and cooperative members from the local community to share first hand



An AK graduate tends to her retail business.

<sup>12</sup> ALP Report link on EDC website

with learners their experiences in establishing, maintaining and growing their business activities. The main topics of the module include:

- **Session 1: Getting Ready for Business:** Identifies businesses and activities in the community while also exploring characteristics and traits of an entrepreneur
- **Session 2: Finding & Establishing a Good Business Idea:** Identifies business ideas and key factors to consider when deciding if a business idea is a good opportunity. This session also emphasizes marketing, developing a sales plan, and calculating costs.
- **Session 3: Record Keeping & Financial Management:** Helps youth develop a business plan and highlights the importance of record keeping and profit and loss statements.
- **Session 4: Cooperative Management:** Identifies different types of business and the registration processes and documents needed

Over the lifetime of the project, a total of 2,946 (1,211 M, 1,735 F) received IGA training from eleven implementing partners<sup>13</sup>.

## D. Health Training

To promote health and HIV/health awareness among youth, Akazi Kanoze adapted the Prevention of HIV/Aids in Rwanda through Education (PHARE) program's curriculum into a 54-page module that integrates relevant topics such as reproductive health, HIV, sexual violence and gender into AK's existing work readiness curriculum. In this last fiscal year, Peace Corps Volunteers attached to the project finalized the adaptation of the HIV&AIDS prevention and reproductive health training curriculum. Through a series of meetings, the VSO (Volunteer Service Organization) HIV/AIDS and reproductive health curriculum was adapted to better suit the Akazi Kanoze graduates' needs. HIV/AIDS related topics covered by this module include but are not limited to: Reproductive Health, HIV/AIDS Epidemiology, and Gender-Based Violence. The HIV/AIDS sessions were included in the Work Readiness Curriculum, which is being delivered with module 5 on safety and healthy at work. Lessons included in this curriculum are covered in approximately seven hours. Additionally, a series of trainer instructions have been written in order to better adapt the curriculum to various literacy levels of the youth as well as for urban and rural graduates.

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<sup>13</sup> Health Poverty Action (HPA), Union of Saving and Credit Cooperatives (UCU), Mibirizi Coffee and Food Stuffs (MICOF), Initiative pour la Promotion de la Famille et du Genre (IPFG), African Evangelistic Enterprise (AEE) (Huye), Collectif des Association des Technicien du Bâtiments (Huye) (COATB Huye), Action Technique pour un Developpement Communautaire (ATEDEC), Jeunesse Ouvrière Chrétienne (JOC), Centre de formation des Travailleurs Rwandais (CEFOTRAR), and Association des Etudiants et Elèves Rescapés du Genocide (AERG).

## Akazi Kanoze Health Study

During the program, some participants received training related to personal health. Two modules were introduced including the WASH module on hygiene and a module on HIV/AIDS prevention and attitudes.

A study conducted by the AK research team found that AK youth reported higher levels of consistent healthy WASH behavior. **Findings show the benefit of incorporating the importance of a safe and hygienic work environment more explicitly into the overall curriculum.**

Youth in intervention and control groups demonstrated similar levels of HIV/AIDS knowledge, answering basic questions correctly. As well, **both groups found questions dealing with the specifics of testing and treatment challenging**, and this perhaps indicates that HIV/AIDS prevention curriculum should cover these topics in more detail. Results indicate that future HIV/AIDS prevention curriculum strongly emphasizing role play and problem-based approaches involving real life scenarios may help to reduce personal stigma around living with HIV.

Overall, youth have high rates of HIV testing and returning to clinics to get test results, indicating that youth are comfortable with receiving test results.

Lastly, it was found that AK youth were more comfortable than control group youth to use health information to advise others. Literacy appears to be a barrier in accessing family planning, sexual and reproductive health knowledge. Future programming should consider diverse information channels to include more mixed media and be accessible to vulnerable populations, especially as radio is the most widely access source of family planning messages in Rwanda.

## Linkages to the Private Sector

### Job Placements

**On the job experience is extremely important to apply the lessons learned from the WRC in a real-work setting.** A number of AK youth participated in internships from one to six months. They spent this time with an employer, gaining practical experience and skills in the world of work. Some internships are paid, some offer transportation reimbursement, or in-kind payment (e.g. meals), or nothing at all. During the internships, youth are monitored and mentored by their trainers and receive assistance in developing CVs, learning interview skills, and understanding how to connect with employers. As the project progressed, EDC realized that a considerable number of internships were leading to permanent job opportunities and started to emphasize this strategy in request for applications for new IPs. For example, Rwanda Organization for Development Initiatives (RODI), formed a partnership with a mining company in Ruhango District, which was willing to hire on well-performing youth after a short technical internship. This resulted in 26 out of 76 their graduates being hired by the mining company, and the AK program being integrated into their business.

## CASE STUDY: SETH, KIGALI CITY

Seth heard about the Akazi Kanoze Work Readiness Training Program while studying finance at the University of Rwanda. Knowing he was about to graduate, and would need some skills to find a job, he decided to join. Throughout the training he learned practical skills such as financial fitness, setting and pursuing goals and most importantly, how to write a CV and interview effectively for jobs.

After completing AK's WRC and his degree, Seth found a 6-month accountancy internship with a local NGO, ASPIRE Rwanda, which aims to provide urban women with the tools they need to earn a living and to improve their quality of life. This opportunity allowed him to gain experience in a real workplace.



Through learning about setting smaller steps in order to achieve larger goals in AK's WRC, Seth applied to a large number of jobs, one of which was with Deloitte, an international consulting firm, which has a rigorous application process that included an online application, a written exam and an in-person interview. Seth was hired as an auditor, was quickly promoted upwards and recently becoming Senior Associate in the Business Support Services (BSS) department in the Rwanda office.

When asked to explain how all this happened, he replied, "My supervisor had confidence in me from the beginning and wanted to see me grow. I could not say no to someone who had trust in me. It gave me motivation."

As Seth's supervisor is based in Kenya, Seth sends daily reports. The distance requires strong communication skills to ensure things remain on track, which is something he feels he developed through AK's WRC, and set him apart from other candidates. Where others might rely on company trainings to help boost their interpersonal communication or work skills, Seth feels he already has a strong foundation that was built by AK.

When asked why he thought that was the case, he paused and then responded carefully that the university system, and probably the secondary schools as well, focus mostly on technical skills. They forget how important the soft skills are to help you grow as a person and thus are applicable to all spheres of life. This is also why he believes, despite already being highly-educated, that he drew significant benefits from the training. AK teaches skills that are not necessarily taught in the public school system in Rwanda, and yet are extremely vital for securing employment.

IPs also used other methods to place youth in jobs. Because the majority of the IPs are embedded in the community where they work, they are able to cultivate good relations with local employers. EDC built the capacity to leverage their networks to find youth graduates job placements in their respective sectors. For example, CPJSP has strong relationships to the construction companies working in Kamonyi District and knows how many local construction jobs are available. Not only does this give CPJSP information on potential job placements with these partnering companies, but their relationship with the

private sector feeds them valuable information on the saturation of the market. In order to avoid training youth on skills that are not relevant, the saturation and needs of the market were of concern for every IP and EDC. We strived to keep the curriculum and trainings market relevant, which required ongoing market assessment at EDC and the IPs' levels.

### Mentoring for Employment

Jean Claude, aged 29, graduated from Akazi Kanoze in 2011. He is currently a cook in a hotel in Butare City, Huye District. He studied hospitality in VTC Rwabuye. When asked about how he found a job, he remembers one of his two Akazi Kanoze trainers, Placide. For Jean Claude, a mentor is someone "who has more knowledge and experience than you, and he/she is willing to guide you through a patient process. A mentor is a good listener and gives advice where needed." He enjoyed the support from Placide during Akazi Kanoze, especially on time management.



He said, "It's amazing how much we apply what we've learned through the AK program in everyday life. I can still hear Placide talking to us about the importance of time management, and it has helped me a lot." When asked if he is still in touch with Placide, he said they stayed in touch for about a year after the graduation, but then Jean Claude moved to Huye, and he lost Placide's phone number. He recommends that AK graduates should stay in touch and they should also call their trainers once in a while, so the trainers can keep following up on them as well.

## Results and Findings

**Over the lifetime of AK, a total of 5,432 (2,997 M, 2,435 F) youth reported being employed in formal sector jobs.** About 72 percent of these youth reside in urban or peri-urban areas. Akazi Kanoze youth report higher daily income compared to a control group.

**The results from the 2014 RCT showed that about one-quarter of Akazi Kanoze youth are working for someone else.** Working for a cooperative and working for their family went down after doing the training, as they embarked on starting their own businesses or seeking formal employment instead. While over one-quarter of control group youth (youth not receiving AK interventions) were unemployed two and a half years after graduation, only 15 percent of AK graduates reported not working<sup>14</sup>.

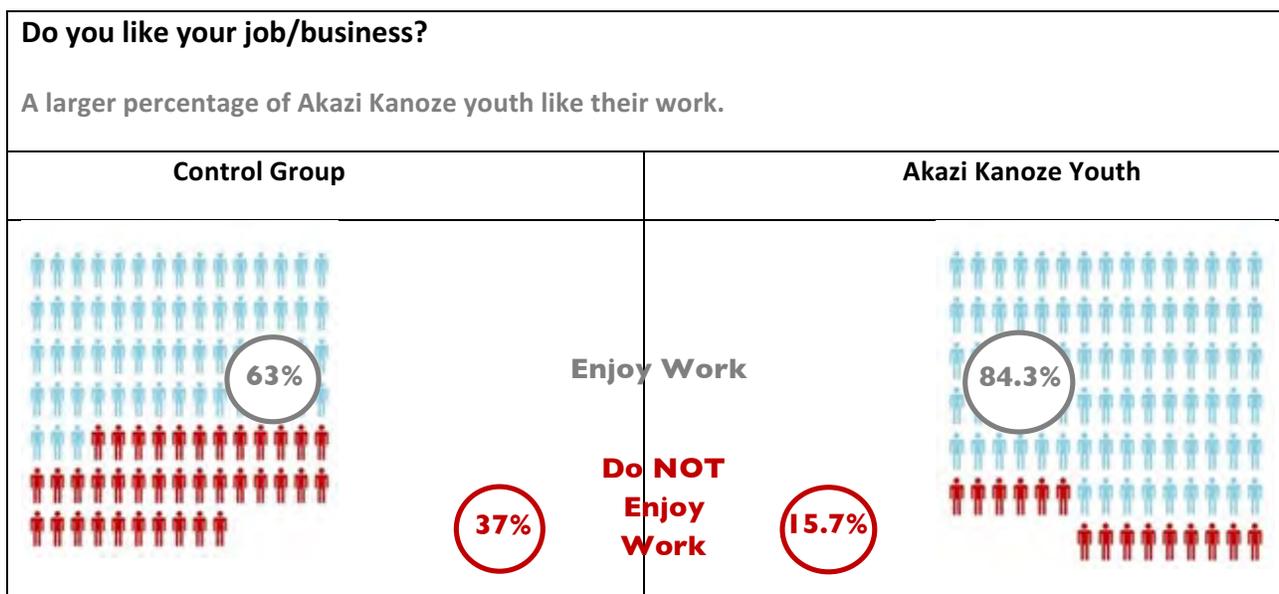
**The findings from the RCT also confirmed that youth employment in Rwanda is transient.** Due to economic, social, and climate volatility, youth can switch jobs often. It was found that while AK youth were changing jobs just as often as control group youth, they were better at finding

<sup>14</sup> This is statistically significant at the  $p < .01$  level.

employment when a job ended. At the time of the endline, about 70% of employed youth in both groups were involved in a different type of work than at the baseline. This statistic demonstrates that youth are often employed on a part-time or temporary basis and that they move in and out of the workforce. Qualitative research was done to explore the impermanence of youth employment. Interview participants mentioned that work is often temporary. All of the 11 youth interviewed were unemployed at endline, but just two months after data collection, six of these youth were employed. While IPs can place a youth in a permanent or temporary job after training, with the transient nature of employment, there is a high likelihood that the youth will change jobs and it is AK's job to ensure that if they switch jobs or lose employment, they are equipped with the skills to find the next opportunity.

**Regression findings showed a significant relationship between participation in Akazi Kanoze and employment** at the  $p < .025$  level. The regression model estimates the effect that participation in Akazi Kanoze has on employment outcomes. If rural youth go through Akazi Kanoze, their chances of getting a job or starting their own business increase by 12% when compared to a rural youth who does not go through the program. In other words, participating in Akazi Kanoze has a positive impact on employment outcomes of rural youth.

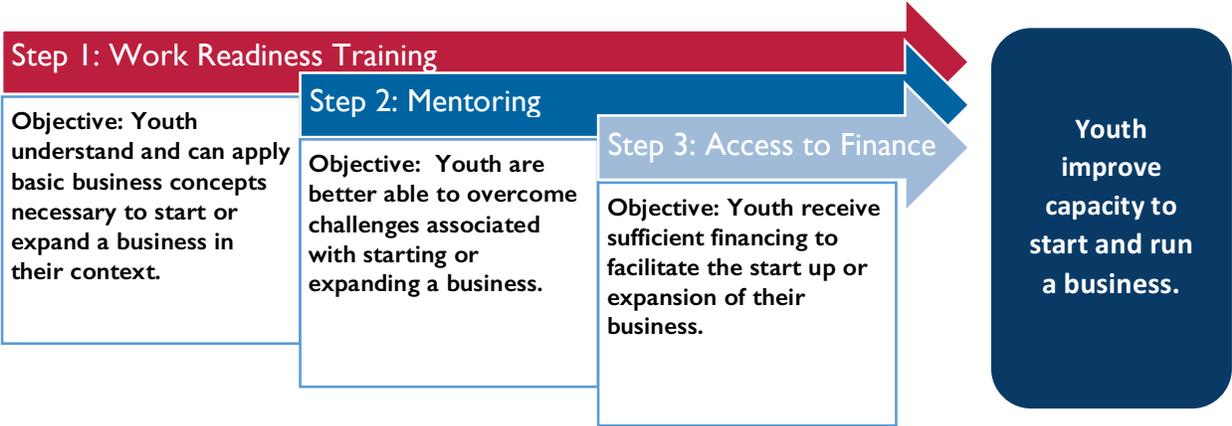
Youth were asked if they like their job or business and **Akazi Kanoze youth reported higher levels of satisfaction with their jobs**. This is important to mention, as the aim of the project was not to simply get youth jobs, but to triangulate market needs with youth skills and interests. A higher level of satisfaction shows that the project made progress towards this goal. See figure 10 below.



**Figure 10: Job Satisfaction by Group**

# Entrepreneur Mentoring and Support Services

For young entrepreneurs, Akazi Kanoze has provided business mentoring and support services to help them start and grow their businesses. Since 2009, at least 2,482 (1,010 M, 1,472 F) AK graduates have started businesses within six months of graduation. According to a recent CRS study on AK youth, **68% of AK graduates have an income generating activity and 93.5% of those businesses were reported to be running well.** Additionally, an externally conducted follow-up to the 2014 randomized controlled trial shows that there is a statistically significant difference in self-employment two and a half years after graduation between AK youth and non-AK youth. **Akazi Kanoze youth are more likely to be self-employed longitudinally than other youth who did not go through the program.** The AK entrepreneur support package includes practical business skills training, individualized mentoring to address particular challenges youth encounter and linkages to financial mechanisms to help them expand their businesses.



**Figure 11: AK Entrepreneurship Support Model.**

## Step 1: Work Readiness Training

Using engaging participatory teaching methods, youth apply the skills being taught in simulations activities that are supposed to mimic real-world challenges entrepreneurs face in a business context. For example, in the entrepreneurship module, youth are introduced to different entrepreneurs and various approaches to business. Their trainer moves youth through a series of hypothetical situations and youth are expected to explain what each entrepreneur would do in that instance. By the end of the game, youth need to decide which entrepreneur has the most successful approach to business.

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“After completing the work readiness training, I felt more than ready.”

—Jean Baptiste, 34,  
Tofu producer

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## Step 2: Business Mentoring

### Market Analysis

During the conception phase of starting a business, AK Entrepreneurship coaches support youth in identifying what type of business they want to start as well as help them to analyze the market to determine if there is enough geographical demand for the products or services they will offer.

### Business Plan Development

Akazi Kanoze Entrepreneurship staff support youth and Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) field agents in business plan development upon request. Project staff provide feedback so that youth and SILCs can present a high-quality business plan to a financial institution.

### Capacity Training

Recognizing the need for on-going professional development in particular technical areas, AK's Entrepreneurship Team offers various trainings that are particularly pertinent to youth entrepreneurs. Trainings that have been offered include:

1. Business Tax Codes
2. Financial Management
3. Bookkeeping
4. Income Generating Activities Planning and Management
5. Savings and Internal Lending Communities Methodology

Trainings are offered based on the direct feedback provided by the entrepreneurs themselves, which assures that they are relevant and purposeful.

## Step 3: Linkages to Financial Mechanisms

### Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC Groups)

Before completing AK's WRC, many youth entrepreneurs self-selected into SILC groups where EDC and its partners helped youth develop a culture of savings. EDC ensured that partners who had a mandate to support the SILC groups were also well oriented in the work readiness concepts and understood how key concepts such as communication, teamwork, and leadership would support the establishment and growth of the savings groups. SILCs were found to work well in rural areas, where in urban settings it was not as successful.

Groups came together based on their geographical sector and the type of businesses they were working on to meet either weekly or monthly to solve problems, collaborate on businesses or other income generating activities as well as to pool savings to offer small loans to its members. SILC supervisors and field agents train and support SILC groups on how to best manage savings and monitoring loan repayments.

SILC groups provide youth with access to capital to facilitate investments to both start and expand their businesses. Members possess shared objectives, which helps to provide them with moral support when challenges arise.

Given that youth must regularly save money to participate in SILC groups and their membership permits them to take and repay loans, the SILC groups provide far more than just access to small amounts of capital, the activities associated with these groups provide a sense of solidarity for members and teaches youth financial management skills that are applicable to all aspects of their lives.

EDC worked with partners including CRS and AVSI to provide saving and lending services to a number of youth. In July 2016, CRS surveyed 91 SILC to reach 2,084 former AK beneficiaries. The survey gathered detailed information about AK graduates' income-generating activities. It found that 1,419 or approximately 68% of all former AK beneficiaries surveyed had at least one income-generating activity. Furthermore, CRS reported a 100% loan repayment rate and 93% youth attendance to SILC meetings, indicating youth are both financially responsible borrowers and full participating members of their savings groups. SILCs are proving to be a positive method for youth to obtain capital in that this year CRS SILC members received 31% return on their principal.

The SILC groups helped prepare youth to take risks while instilling in them a culture of savings. The group dynamic, with social collateral, is a more attractive client to SACCO as it's less likely that the group will default. EDC played a critical role in advising youth to invest their money and work with SACCOS to determine next steps after saving. EDC pushed CRS to think about next steps after saving.

### **Recommendations:**

- It is important to recognize the complementarities between work readiness skills (communication, leadership, teamwork, basic business concepts, etc.) and the skills and activities necessary to establish and sustain a SILC group
- To establish sustainable SILC groups, it is important to engage with both government and youth at the local district and sector levels – this includes youth leaders, youth council representatives and others who can follow up and support the SILC groups.
- It is important for savings groups to set clear goals, determine how much they need to save in order to achieve their goal and plan how they will use their saved funds.

### **Linkages with youth-serving MFIs and other formal institutions.**

AK serves youth from vulnerable, impoverished households who struggle to access financing, largely due to their lack of collateral. Securing capital remains one of the biggest obstacles AK youth interested in starting a business face.

AK Entrepreneurship staff encouraged and supported youth to open accounts in local commercial banks, microfinance institutions or with government-run Savings and Credit Co-operatives (SACCOs) in order to begin linking them to formal financial institutions. A history of proper financial management is

required to be eligible for formal loans, and opening an account typically is the first step in the process. According to a recent CRS study for EDC, 37.3% of AK Graduates with income generating activities reported that they had a bank account and 12% had obtained a loan from a bank or microfinance institution (MFI). There is a significant range in the amount borrowed by youth, with the largest loan size being 800,000 RWF, which was used to build a hairdressing salon, in comparison to the lowest amount borrowed, which was 10,000 RWF to buy agricultural seeds.

It is important to recognize the tremendous effort required to develop relationships with MFIs, and the importance in supporting them to support youth. MFIs and formal financial institutions are interested in youth who understand how to save, who understand basic business concepts, and who will repay their loans on time. While EDC supported youth to access information about MFIs, a lot more needs to be done to raise awareness among the MFIs of their client base in youth, particularly AK graduates who have the right skill set to obtain and repay loans in a timely manner.

### **Recommendations:**

- It is crucial to recognize youth's willingness and readiness to take out a loan; if they are not ready, taking the loan may be the bigger risk than not taking out a loan. AK's IGA and Cooperative Management training provides youth with an opportunity to assess their strengths and weaknesses related to business and helps them understand their appetite for risk.
- Youth have much to gain from microenterprise start up or 'grow your business' kits
- Need to develop a systematic approach and process to link youth with financing opportunities.
- There is a critical need to raise awareness among the lending community about the opportunities and client base in the youth population. Continuous capacity building efforts for both banks and youth will allow entrepreneurs access funds to grow their businesses enterprises.
- The first loan is just the beginning of the story – in future programs, it will be important to plan for systematic follow-up with young entrepreneurs to see how their businesses were launched and are growing. By demonstrating the success of youth IGAs, we may be able to open more doors with MFIs.

### **Business Advisors**

As part of the National Employment Program (NEP), the Government of Rwanda created two positions in each sector to support local businessmen and women. While this support is outside of Akazi Kanoze's programmatic model, AK entrepreneurship staff started referring youth entrepreneurs to their local business advisors in the last year of the project as an additional support mechanism with specific local knowledge of markets and demand.

## Case Study: Business Development Advising

Sitting in a dusty, unused classroom at a local secondary school, where Sylvère is the head of discipline, he describes his role as a local business advisor under the GoR's National Employment Program. The NEP program, which began in 2014, has the goal of creating 2,000 jobs per year through the creation of small businesses. As a business development advisor (BDA), his role is to help entrepreneurs write their business plans and to then link them to the government sponsored financing program, the Business Development Fund, as well as SACCOs, and other finance institutions.



A local bar owner himself, Sylvère received training from the government to become a business advisor. Now, he advises around 5 people per month, most of which are men, who own local boutiques and agri-businesses. After meeting Chantal, an AK graduate who owns a local sorghum beer making business, at a local community service day called Umuganda, they decided to start their own neighborhood SILC group. As the local BDA, he began to offer her advice on how to improve her business plan, how to develop a client base by not running out of supplies and how to create a clean, comfortable place for customers to enjoy her products.

Seeing Chantal's financial management skills, their SILC group nominated her to be their secretary to keep track of all the transactions that take place. Sylvère describes her as a courageous woman, who has worked hard to accomplish her dreams. She is one of only two females in their SILC group, and one of the only female clients he has as a business development advisor. When asked why that was the case, he said women are often times afraid to go into business, to be independent. But he continued, when they are not afraid and give it a shot, they always have positive results.

Impressed with the skills and drive of Chantal, Sylvère believes that AK should partner more closely with BDAs in the future. Given his close proximity to the youth, and his contextualized knowledge of markets, he believes a partnership would allow more youth, like Chantal, to get the support they need to operate successful businesses and to continue to positively impact their communities.

## Outcomes of Entrepreneur Support Services

**Resiliency in a Challenging Environment:** With the support from Akazi Kanoze, youth employ a variety of innovative techniques in order to overcome the obstacles they encounter to starting and expanding a business. For example, youth pose an innovative entrepreneurial spirit that allows them to see community problems as an opportunity for a business to tackle. They also form SILC groups in order to gain access to capital to start and expand their businesses as well as to provide each other the moral support needed to remain resilient.

- **AK entrepreneurs use lessons learned to improve their businesses in the future.** After two failed businesses, Pierre, a young entrepreneur in Huye District decided he should offer free trials of his sambosas in order to spread the word of his business and to attract a loyal client base. Now, he employs six additional youth to help him make enough sambosas to meet daily demand.
- **Akazi Kanoze graduates know how to set and pursue their goals.** According to Janvier, a local business advisor, youth who have completed Akazi Kanoze's Work Readiness Curriculum have changed their mindset. They seem to know what they want to achieve, how it can change their lives and that motivates them to work towards it relentlessly. Additionally, they seek support and are motivated to work with others he said. Chantal, a successful entrepreneur in Nyamagabe District, shared her view on youth who are not Akazi Kanoze graduates. She said a lot of youth do not think about saving to start a business, they simply cultivate a little. They also can dream too big and do not set small achievable goals that will lead them to be successful. Setting and pursuing goals is one module tackled in Akazi Kanoze's Work Readiness training, which helps youth to make realistic goals and to identify the piecemeal steps needed to achieve them.



Nelson, an Akazi Kanoze graduate opened his cyber-café business as a result of the skills and connections he gained through the program.

- **AK youth start SILC groups that increase financial inclusion and develop leadership skills and a supportive peer network.**

SILC groups increase resiliency by providing access to capital for youth without large collateral to get a formal loan. Clarisse, an AK alumnae as well as an employer of other AK graduates, said the best advice she got was to join a SILC group and begin to save. Being part of a SILC group teaches them responsible saving and financial management skills. According to Innocent, a SACCO manger, when AK entrepreneurs come to him in search of a loan he can tell there is a difference in their skills. He explained that they already were a member of a savings group, had given loans to each other and learned how to pay back well. This makes it easier for them to get loans as they have a history of good financial management skills.

- **SILC groups offer a supportive network of peers for moral and professional support.** Pierre and his SILC group were committed to opening a bar/resto as a group, and followed the advice of the AK entrepreneur specialist to visit another AK graduate, Regis who makes mandazi from sweet potatoes for his bar/resto. Regis described his challenges in opening and running his own bar/resto, which helped Pierre and his SILC group to learn from his lessons so that they can adequately prepare for the similar challenges they may encounter. Pierre

articulated that this cross-collaboration within and between SILC groups had taught him that in groups you can achieve things that individually is simply not possible. The support the group dynamic offered him kept them motivated to save towards achieving this goal.

### Case Study: Determined to be her Own Boss

After graduating from AK with a certificate in construction, Isabelle, 28, could not find a job. She tried her hand at selling fruit, but she had no means to keep an inventory. Determined and head strong, she kept looking and asking around for opportunities, until she found Clarisse, another AK graduate.



Clarisse owned a small veterinary pharmacy across the street that sold medicines for animals and plants and was looking to expand her business into the market and offered Isabelle a job as saleswoman. Although she now had employment, Isabelle was still focused on being her own boss. Based on her own observations that rubber shoes were in high demand and non-perishable, she set her own goal of opening her own stand to sell them.

Through work-readiness training, Isabelle had learned the importance of setting a big goal and determining the steps needed in order to make that goal a reality. Isabelle had received AK training on SILC methodology, and with her business plan prepared, she formed a savings group along with other AK graduates to begin to work towards achieving her goal.

In the meantime, Isabelle's employer let her use part of the market stall to sell her products. For several months, she sold both her own products (which she had bought with all of her first month's salary) and the veterinary medicines for Clarisse. In the first month, she made 20,000 RWF in profit, which motivated her to invest her energy full-time in her own business.

Using her personal savings and a loan from her SILC group, Isabelle purchased a place in the market. The customer care and bookkeeping skills she developed in AK's WRC, helps her calculate profits to determine how much to pay herself. Keeping personal and business finances separate was another important skill taught by AK, a skill she uses consistently to ensure her business remains viable. **When asked, what she thought had made her successful, she responded that she believes AK's coaching gave her the confidence to give herself a chance.** Isabelle persevered and is able to better support herself and her family. Like so many youth entrepreneurs, the success of Isabelle's business has not only improved her own livelihood but that of those around her.

**Successful AK Businesses Positively Impact their Community:** The ultimate outcome of supporting hundreds of AK entrepreneurs is that they are in turn positively affecting their local communities. They are doing this through employing other youth, and building the capacity of their staff with lessons learned from AK.

- **Akazi Kanoze youth positively impact their community by employing other vulnerable youth to help operate their businesses.**

According to a recent CRS study, 216 Income-generating activities were found to have at least 2 permanent staff, indicating their capacity to create additional employment opportunities for others. For example, Pierre, the sambosa maker in Huye District, employs the poorest youth in his neighborhood as salesmen and saleswomen.

As the youth leader in his Sector, Pierre feels that it is his civic responsibility to model good behavior and give back to his community now that he has the means, knowledge, and attitude. Jean Bosco, of Panovita, employs 16 additional youth to help run his nutritious infant food business, and he hopes it will continue to expand in the future allowing him to hire more.

- **AK youth build capacity among their employees and in their community.** For example, Veronique teaches knitting to others in her community who desire to learn the skill or to start their own business. Pierre offers another unique example, as he offers his employees on-the-job training and has helped coach them through starting their own SILC group. Pierre and many other AK youth do not only improve their own livelihoods through their businesses, but strive to positively impact their communities as well. With new self-confidence, financial and personal resiliency, these young entrepreneurs are changing their communities and redefining what it means to be an entrepreneur in Rwanda.

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“I know that I have people behind me who believe in me. This encourages me and helps me continue my business.”

—Alphonsine,  
Nyamagabe District

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### Case Study: Gaining Transferrable Skills

Chantal is one of many Akazi Kanoze graduates who was placed in an internship after work-readiness training in March 2014. She secured a position interning at an insurance company, applying the skills she picked up in the work-readiness training provided by AK. Chantal found that customer care, interpersonal and time management were the most helpful skills, and she’s been applying them ever since graduating. She shows up to appointments on time and gets to her workplace before her normal starting hours; she knows how to relate with clients, listen and respond to them. As well, Chantal found the lessons on goal setting in financial management especially useful.

Looking beyond her internship, Chantal made plans to open her own office stationary shop and attend university. Although aware that it could be challenging to start her business due to lack of sufficient capital, she was ready to start small and look for other sources of funding later. She had wished Akazi Kanoze had a program that provided start-up capital or sufficient information on start-up financing.

## Staying Engaged Beyond AK

### Alumni Network

The AK Alumni Network was established to empower and motivate AK alumni to take an active role in Rwanda's workforce development by supporting one another, leveraging Akazi Kanoze alumni and Akazi Kanoze Access, while improving Rwanda youth livelihood opportunities.

With the vast number of AK alumni spread across the country, the Alumni Network provides a mechanism to follow up with youth who are grouped together based on their specific trades and locations. In some cases, the youth organize into groups on their own and in other cases AK supports the identification of Alumni Chapters based on location, specific trades and interests. Each Alumni Chapter elects an ambassador who checked in with EDC quarterly to provide updates and identify opportunities for EDC to support the alumni by linking them with local business owners, MFI representatives, and other key stakeholders in the value chain.

Each chapter will provide a channel of communication for AKA to remain connected to alumni accomplishments and what additional support they may need. By joining an AK Alumni Network Chapter, AK alumni will achieve the professional and personal growth they desire by sharing experiences, making professional connections, and pioneering professional opportunities in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. The Alumni Chapters identify common needs/challenges and AK can support them or connect them with other organizations for further support.

Alumni support each other and can work together to identify solutions to common or unique problems they face. For example, some AK alumni identified that they needed to further improve their English language skills in order to capitalize on job opportunities or be able to expand their existing businesses. Within an alumni chapter, participants discovered that they had an English language trainer among them and leveraged his expertise to improve the groups language skills. The alumni chapter members used money from their savings group to pay for the English language trainer's transportation costs to provide English language training to the interested alumni.

The AK Alumni network is a resource for youth to connect to their network and continue to build skills for employability and business growth. To strengthen and sustain the Alumni Network its recommended to organize chapters to connect with and learn from other chapters so that AKA can leverage this group going forward.

### JobMatching SMS System

With partner Souktel, Akazi Kanoze provided an SMS-based job-matching and youth-tracking platform. The platform is used to send alerts and surveys out to Akazi Kanoze youth, as well as to link graduates of the Akazi Kanoze training programs with internships and job opportunities.

Overall, Akazi Kanoze programming via the SMS platform was successful; the SMS JobMatch and alerts modules engaged many youth jobseekers, who used the service regularly and actively searched for jobs via SMS and the user interface. EDC staff dedicated additional resources towards training their youth graduates in use of the JobMatch SMS platform.

Local employers are generally aware of the Akazi Kanoze program, appreciate the quality and skill level of the program alumni, and had previously hired AK alumni for internships and full-time position. As such, they were aware of the SMS JobMatch platform but used it less than the local youth. However, when asked, employers did express strong interest in working with the Akazi Kanoze team to demo the SMS JobMatch platform and explore the ways they can use the platform in their hiring processes. Additionally, since local employers typically announced their openings via newspaper ads and job board postings, AK program staff posted those announcements directly on the JobMatch interface so youth graduates could access the job postings via SMS. Future recommendations include conducting pilot programs in target communities to ensure uptake by local employers and youth through training, strategic advising and technology enhancements for usability.

## Youth Tracking

Through the “youth trackers” component, graduates of Akazi Kanoze are enlisted or hired to keep in touch with their peers and track them down for data collection, or follow-up support, as needed. Youth naturally stay in touch with each other through the connections they make in the program and leveraged this social cohesion to help EDC support and monitor youth after graduation. IPs collected information with the help of AK interns, and data was aggregated at a national level, establishing a system for keeping in touch with graduates.

## IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

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Local implementing partners played a crucial role in project delivery, these local NGOs and private sector businesses were the direct link empowering Rwandan youth to achieve success. The project engaged over 60 implementing partners to deliver WRC training and place youth in work opportunities. Implementing partners reinforced local connections by recruiting youth from their communities, investing in their success and linking with other private sector businesses to provide internships and jobs for trained youth. IPs received a sub grant to implement the Akazi Kanoze program to youth in cohorts of 50 to 100 youth. Trainings lasted from 3 -9 months depending on the participant’s level of education. An additional 3-6 months were required to place and follow up on youth in their work opportunities. The average time for a cohort to finish the training was 12 months (18 months for the ALP program). Successful IPs received extensions and an increased obligation of money to train more youth. EDC worked to build the capacity of each IP in technical delivery, financial and subgrant management and monitoring and evaluation. The goal of the capacity building for IPs (including non-subgrantee partners) was two-fold; to ensure quality delivery and also, to increase long term sustainability for IPs to engage youth in relevant and meaningful ways.

From the onset of the project EDC used a rigorous and competitive selection process for identifying partners. Given that a broader goal of the project was to develop a workforce development support system for youth it was important to bring on partners that brought something to the table and could immediately contribute to positive youth development. EDC created an environment where it was recognized that each organization felt like a partner. Since IPs were to be the conduit to training youth it was imperative IPs joining the project had a combination of the following qualities; market relevant

technical skills training, training experience, experience working with youth, job placement services, sufficient organizational capacity and a willingness to collaborate and learn. EDC utilized a two-step selection process with a call for an expression of interest and then a full RFA to qualified organizations. In total EDC issued RFAs 7 different times over the life of the project.

Capacity building, a large part of our relationship with the IPs, starts as we evaluate the organization during the selection process. EDC evaluates written responses and follows up with site visits to assess a potential partner's technical, management and financial capacity. These initial assessments play a key role in the selection process but also act as starting point for capacity building activities once selected. Each implementing partner received a 15-day training of trainers to prepare the organization to deliver the work readiness services to youth. IPs also received a two-day training on financial management and monitoring of project activities and youth follow-up. EDC technical and financial staff were in constant communication with partners monitoring progress toward deliverables, the budget and overall implementation, including ongoing visits from AK field agents and direct coaching by AK staff on administrative, M&E or technical issues, depending on one-on-one needs expressed by the partners. This hands on coaching approach contributed to the growth and overall success of Akazi Kanoze implementing partners and youth involved in the program.

### **Finance and grant management training:**

Provides an overview of how to use and account for the grant funds during implementation period, and harmonizes the financial management procedures between EDC and implementing partners. The following is the content of the training:

- Procurement procedures of materials and equipment
- Petty cash management
- Payroll
- Bank reconciliation
- Financial and technical reporting

### **Monitoring, evaluation and database training:**

Introduces IPs to key M&E concepts and tools, the project's database, and the importance of continuous monitoring and evaluation during the lifetime of the project. IPs implanted a database and aggregated data across partners at a national level. The M&E and database training includes:

- M&E concepts and definitions
- Project theory of change and logic model
- AK indicators, targets and data collection tools and timeline
- Data quality assessments

### **Transition to work services training:**

Trains IPs in the various support services and mentoring activities that AK provides to its graduates to assist them in transitioning to work and finding meaningful livelihoods. The following topics are covered:

- Internship and job placement strategies (including engaging the private sector)
- Linking youth to financial institutions
- Saving group creation and cooperative management

## **WR Curriculum Training of Trainers:**

The 15-day ToT prepares WR trainers to teach the 100-hour Akazi Kanoze work readiness curriculum. The training includes:

- Learner-centered, interactive teaching methodology
- Objectives of the curriculum
- Going through the activities in the 8 modules of the WR curriculum
- Working in groups and individually to practice training
- Assessment to test content knowledge gained during the training

## **Implementing partners were responsible for the following:**

- Recruiting youth with an average of 50% women
- Delivering the 100-hour work readiness curriculum
- Complementary training - Training youth in a market relevant technical skill such as computer repair, carpentry, hotel services, etc, Savings and Internal Lending practices or income generating activities training
- Place youth in work opportunities – jobs, internships or assist youth in starting a business or cooperative
- Monitoring and follow up with youth after training

As part of the project’s sustainability strategy Akazi Kanoze developed partnerships with organizations that offered the Akazi Kanoze training package without project funds. During the extension period Akazi Kanoze Access managed the implementing partners who were not subgrantees. AKA certified organizations to implement the *Work Readiness Curriculum* (WRC) and Income Generating Activity (IGA) and Cooperative Management without the issuance of sub-grant funds. The non-subgrantee partners were responsible for all costs associated in the project implementation. Akazi Kanoze ACCESS provided Master Trainers to conduct a training of trainers (TOT) for new non-subgrantee trainers and provide official certification to participants who successfully complete the program. Over the life of the project non-subgrantee implementing partners trained 2329 youth.

### **Implementing Partner Case Study**

#### **Akazi Kanoze Makes Business Sense: BDSS takes a turn into youth workforce development**

##### **Implementing Partner: Business designing, services, supplying ltd. (BDSS)**

The original concept for BDSS was not to be a youth-serving organization, but their experience implementing the Akazi Kanoze work readiness curriculum changed everything. Established as a business for the co-founders’ personal profit, they focused on

technical training in ICT maintenance and repair and consultation services for IT maintenance. In 2012, they decided to incorporate the work readiness curriculum into their business to strengthen the employability skills of the young consultants they hire out to clients needing IT support.

**It was not only work readiness that the students gained, but the Akazi Kanoze experience gave BDSS a new perspective on the importance of positive youth development.** After the first cohort graduated, there was a huge demand from youth and their parents for the Akazi Kanoze curriculum and BDSS immediately decided to shift their focus and integrate more youth into the company. “We felt like we were missing out not working with youth. Even after they graduate, they still keep the ties and they feel like friends to us,” commented Fabrice Gatete, the BDSS Manager. “You can see the difference between Akazi Kanoze youth and those who did not participate in the training. All of the youth from the first group now have jobs and this created a high demand for the training.”

**With a new focus on youth and drive to continue Akazi Kanoze, BDSS used the knowledge and skills gained during the AK capacity building trainings to improve their financial management, develop for-fee services, and apply for new grants.** They started selling technical trainings incorporating the work readiness component. “Of all the capacity building trainings, the proposal development training was especially useful,” said Fabrice. After applying for several new grants, including to WDA, BDSS received funding to train returned military veterans from Kigali City and the Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Commission.

**From a business perspective, hiring an Akazi Kanoze technically trained youth is “a good business decision,”** explained Fabrice. “Hiring AK youth is cheaper than someone from an IT university. Many times, they can do the same things and AK youth are very eager to work since they were unemployed before.” Akazi Kanoze makes sense from a business perspective, according to BDSS, and as more employers recognize the Akazi Kanoze certificate, they hope to be able to rise to meet the demand and interest from employers.

## PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

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AK worked with a highly-engaged network of more than 300 private employers and 60 local implementing partners across Rwanda. A key to success was that the project found various ways to engage these private sector partners. AK developed a variety of effective strategies to ensure their interest and continued participation, and guarantee that program activities aligned with private sector needs and demands.

These strategies became known as AK's **networked collaborative approach**. AK forged strategic and unique partnerships that maximized impact on youth and contributed to the capacity development of local organizations, including youth-serving organizations, local training providers, TVET institutions, private sector companies, government institutions, among others. The networked collaborative approach included:

- **Labor Market Assessments.** These were designed to ensure that AK programs were relevant and responsive to private sector requirements. This critical “intel” from the field formed the basis of collaborative planning and program design, eventually aiding in the selection of effective implementing partners.
- **Pairing of Technical and Work Readiness Skills.** This pairing led to high levels of employer satisfaction and demand for AK graduates. At its core, the AK training program exposes youth to essential work-related skills such as leadership, interpersonal communication, teamwork, ethics, and more. These attributes prepare youth for the challenging process of seeking –and keeping – a job.
- **Localized Curriculum Design.** AK organized a series of consultative workshops that included private sector companies, international and local education and workforce experts, government officials, and other stakeholders. Through this process, AK was able to localize the curriculum and align learning goals with the specific skills demanded by private sector companies.
- **Employer Satisfaction Surveys.** These surveys completed by employers enabled AK to learn about youth's performance and to identify skill gaps that needed to be addressed in AK's training package. Feedback from these surveys over the lifetime of the project informed AK about the need for additional training in English, IT skills and gender sensitivity.
- **Capacity Building.** Critical components included economic sector-specific workshops, an Internship Management Training Tool, and other capacity building strategies improved both implementation and employment outcomes for youth. Implementing Partners were responsible for providing services directly to youth and other partners and gained extensive experience in operating internship programs and building their network.

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Seventy percent of employers rate AK graduates' performance as better than other employees.

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## PUBLIC SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

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A huge success factor for AK's results has been the creation of partnerships with key government agencies that laid the foundation for institutionalization and long term sustainability of the program. Rwanda youth constitute the majority of the population and represent a steadily growing share of the workforce. Over 85 per cent of the population lives in rural areas, yet farming can no longer absorb the growing workforce. Many lack both the technical and soft skills to work in emerging and growing non-farm sector and so there is a large skill gap.

The GOR has recognized these trends in numerous policy documents and strategies and has placed a very high priority on providing better youth livelihoods training and education so that youth can find work in non-farm activities. Government policy and programs have focused on improving and expanding the technical vocational education and training system (TVET), and this effort has received substantial financial and capacity building support from a large number of donors. Particularly important has been the introduction into the TVET system in 2009 of a learner-centered, participatory, experiential, competency-based pedagogy that is closely aligned with the pedagogy of AK. In the same trajectory, in 2013, the GOR undertook a major reform of its secondary education curriculum, to turn it into a competency based curriculum. This also provided an opportunity for AK to imbed its highly participative and successful work readiness curriculum into the Entrepreneurship subject.

The project developed evidence that is convincing and has emotional appeal, advocating at the most senior levels of the government to create policy champions, and aligning the AK brand and results with the government's policy priorities and the incentives of individual agencies and actors.

### Working with the Ministries

These political considerations showed up in a number of strategic choices the project took through the years that proved vital for its success. The first choice involved the selection of which line ministry to register with – the Ministries of Youth (MYICT), Labor (MIFOTRA), and Education (MINEDUC) – were all viable options. The EDC team evaluated the choices by working with a consultant with extensive understanding of each Ministry, its capacity, mandate, culture and quality of leadership and by meeting with the potential lead contacts in each Ministry -- Ministers, Permanent Secretaries (PS), and Director Generals (DG). That year, in 2009, the Workforce Development Authority (WDA) was just created, under MINEDUC. While all ministries indicated their interest in hosting the AK project, this recent reform allowed the project to strategically position its program within a new and growing institution. It was therefore decided that the MINEDUC would be the line ministry of the project, with a direct partnership with WDA, who remained a major supporter of the AK program throughout the entire life of the project. WDA is the public sector entity responsible for certification, including the AK certificate, has had input into the implementation of the program, and has integrated the WRC into all its TVET curricula.

Meanwhile, also in 2009, MIFOTRA had a strong minister committed to livelihoods training and was launching an internship program for university graduates. The project used this opportunity and expressed support by the Minister to pilot its intervention with the first cohort of the national internship program. Many of the graduates from this cohort ended up becoming Master Trainers and

Trainers of the following lower educated youth cohorts. However by 2011, employment responsibilities were reorganized by the government so that the RDB was given control of the university graduate internships. This illustrated for the project a second strategic choice that involved adjusting to changing government responsibilities. AK smoothly navigated this transition, developing new partnerships with RDB, while remaining a key advisor to MIFOTRA on issues related to youth employment. For the RDB, AK agreed to provide WRC training for 400 participants annually. These both proved to be key relationships, as the RDB is seen as the lead agency in economic development and linkages to international private investors.

The foundation established with associations with MIFOTRA, RDB and WDA was reinforced by ongoing advocacy and building those relationships. The COP and DCOP joined a number of relevant sub-sector Technical Working Groups (TWGs) that gave AK visibility and identity. This created a number of opportunities for credibility. For example, the WDA DG had asked another donor to develop an entrepreneurship curriculum to include in TVET trainings, but that donor lacked the technical expertise for this type of curriculum. The DG encouraged an alliance between this donor and the AK team who had the expertise. The AK COP agreed to take on the responsibility, with funding from the same donor, in exchange for the WDA DG agreeing to consider including the WRC in the revised curricula being developed for all TVET Level I training. This proved to be the key to the eventual integration of WRC into all TVET training. This alliance continued through the years, the AK team participating regularly in the Development Partners (DPs) consultations about the creation of a qualification framework for the TVET sector (the Rwanda Technical Qualification Framework/RTQF), going beyond the advocacy for soft skills training within the sector and taking the time to support the development of policy papers, guidelines and strategies for content development, alliance with private sector, and training of trainers standards and systems across the TVET system.

## Working with WDA

EDC was able to leverage this consultative process, developing early on a relationship with WDA leadership and providing them with important technical assistance. This was leveraged in the short-run into accreditation of AK programs implemented by IPs; in the medium-run by getting the WDA to integrate WRC into its new curricula; and in the long-run/future has very high potential ensuring successful, quality implementation of WRC in the future. The keys to this whole sequence were AK's constant and active engagement in the technical working groups involved with the WDA, the ability to offer WDA something they wanted (in this case an Advanced Entrepreneurship curricula), and, perhaps most importantly, aligning with and supporting the WDA's institutional incentives. AK leadership recognized early on that the WDA, like most GOR agencies, needed quick wins and evidence supporting that. It was able to use its rapid implementation of WRC and resulting data on livelihood opportunities to help WDA leadership show that they were achieving GOR goals. In fact, this same data was valued by other GOR actors – local governments, MYICT, RDB, MIFOTRA – and allowed AK to become a valued partner. Finally, EDC aligned AK's language and evidence with the messaging of the various GOR agencies. At the time, no one in the GOR cared about work readiness; the language used was about customer service, leadership, communication, entrepreneurship, good work habits and financial management skills. AK leadership was quick to reframe the content and outcomes of its training and to use that language.

By coordinating with WDA and aligning with development partners (especially with the PAFP project supported by the Belgium Cooperation which provided funding), Akazi Kanoze piloted the model within 24 TVET schools. This helped AK reframe its approach within the formal TVET system and create a strong strategy for national scale-up within the education system. In 2013, EDC was ready to apply for a highly competed grant process launch by a consortium of private foundations, the PSIPSE initiative ([www.psipse.org](http://www.psipse.org)). EDC proposed the national institutionalization of the AK model within the TVET and formal secondary school system. This project, Akazi Kanoze 2, was awarded and financed by the MasterCard Foundation in 2014. To date, it remains the only project that was able to demonstrate its capacity to scale to the PSIPSE initiative, and therefore the only project to receive a \$5 million grant for a national scale-up, among thousands of applications received by PSIPSE through the years. In 2013 alone, it was the only one awarded for a scale-up grant among over 650 applications received. AK2 was launched in 2014. Within the same year, the AK WRC curriculum was formally imbedded within the TVET RTQF Level 3 national curriculum certified by WDA. By 2015, it was formally imbedded within the REB secondary school curriculum.

Beyond a close and continuous collaboration with MINEDUC and MIFOTRA agencies, the AK team also regularly supported and participated in the ministry of youth (MYICT) activities, as a way to share and exchange with youth serving organizations and support MYICT policies and strategies. AK team provided capacity building and Master Training to several operational Youth Centers launched by MYICT and succeeded to support over several years one Youth center in particular (Kimisagara Youth center).

However, since the youth portfolio and ICT were merged to becoming one Ministry, MYICT focus has been more on ICT than on youth; leaving the coordination of youth development/empowerment interventions in the hands of INGOS. The project also tried multiple times to develop alliances with the National Youth Council. These efforts were not as successful as with WDA, due mostly to a lack of sustained strategy and efforts to go beyond an initial demonstrated interest, so that there is enough “buy-in” and resources that would allow AK programming to take root into these initiatives. Despite this mitigated success, the most successful collaboration with MYICT were in co-organizing industry days, such as ICT and others and supporting MYICT annual events in favor of young entrepreneurs. AK helped identify and communicate on successful youth entrepreneurs to motivate others; organized boot camps with for MYICT selected youth on entrepreneurship, and various competitions and awareness campaigns events on entrepreneurship.

### **Another example of AK’s innovation in partnering with the GOR**

Under a DFID-MINEDUC initiative, EDC succeeded to get a grant from the Innovation for Education, creating a program for training and certification as Early Childhood Development (ECD) care givers. This project, a direct spin off of the AK project, allowed the EDC/AK team to offer new technical training with market economic opportunities for youth (especially girls) who didn’t or only completed secondary education, while helping the MINEDUC solve a crucial issue: offering community based affordable quality ECD care to Rwandan families, thus better preparing young children to enter the primary school system. The project was selected by MINEDUC as one of the most innovative program, aligned to their policy and priorities.

## Transition of Partnerships to AKA

In the 2-year extension, the project has managed to transition some of the government partnerships to AKA. For instance, the project facilitated a partnership between AKA, MYICT through the Kigali Employment Services Center (KIESC) hosted by the Kimisagara youth center and GIZ. This partnership resulted in 300-youth receiving the AK packages under GIZ funding AKA also built the capacity of KIESC trainers as part of this partnership.

Furthermore, as part of this transition MYICT is represented by the National Youth Council has as an advisor to the AKA board and attends regularly the board quarterly meetings.

This strong support and buy-in by the GOR national institutions reflected through the annual graduation ceremonies organized by the project, that were presided by the highest representatives of the government and the First Lady herself:

- March 2010: AK pilot cohort graduation ceremony presided by the Minister of Labor (50 youth graduates part of the National Internship Program)
- October 2010: First AK cohort graduation ceremony presided by the Minister of Education (650 youth)
- October 2011: Second AK cohort graduation ceremony presided by the Minister of Labor (3000 youth)
- October 2012: Third AK cohort graduation ceremony presided by the First Lady (3000 youth)

Beyond 2012, as the AK youth cohorts continued growing across the country, AKA moved to the organization of regional graduation ceremonies to save costs while continuing strengthening the relationships and partnerships with the local districts and networks of stakeholders.



## Working with Districts

Another crucial aspect of the success of the AK project has also been the close collaboration with the districts of implementation. In the majority of the districts of interventions, the project activities were embedded in the annual districts development plans (DDPs) and a close monitoring was jointly conducted with IPs and districts officials. As part of districts involvement in project implementation, districts officials and lower administrative entities participated in the selection of youth beneficiaries as well as jointly monitoring of the project activities such as trainings and other services delivery. In few districts, officials in charge of youth and cooperatives were trained on WRC then co-facilitated with local partners trainings for youth in their respective districts. In some of these districts, officials in

charge of cooperatives linked AK youth to other existing government entrepreneurship development initiatives such as business the competition from MINICOM and/or from other DPs.

In order to systematically to follow up with each district, the AK team was organized in a way that AK technical staff was assigned districts to follow up so that there was always representation of an AK staff member in the JADF and important event, such as open days, organized by the districts.

The project also made sure to communicate their results of the project, district by district, especially in term of number of youth graduates and number of youth gaining employment or self-employment. These data allowed the districts to report on youth employment in their annual performance reports at national level. As the project expanded in rural areas and in numbers of Implementing Partners (IPs), the AK team also delegated some of the responsibilities to link with the district officials to the strongest partners, who were representing their respective organizations and the Akazi Kanoze network during the JADF meetings. For instance, local partners continued to support districts as far as youth engagement during open days and business competitions.

## SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH AKAZI KANOZE ACCESS

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After seven years of implementation, Akazi Kanoze has made a significant impact in youth development across Rwanda resulting in a strong reputable brand.

Understanding the value that AK products, services and approach brings to youth development in Rwanda, in

2014 a local entity was established, Akazi Kanoze Access (AKA). AKA was established by former staff members of EDC, who had extensive experience in youth development activities to help sustain and scale up AK models. The AKA founders established a Board of Directors, developed a basic business plan and created a management structure which will enable AKA to grow.

EDC financed support through local experts to conduct an analysis and guidance on entity registration requirements, tax compliance issues and business plan development. This first step established the best corporate structure for the group to expand its work from a variety of revenue streams including Rwandan and international Government donors, international and local NGOs, foundations, individual donors and the private sector. The OCA identified key areas which AKA would benefit from guidance and support. In addition to sharing technical expertise and materials developed by EDC to support youth livelihoods, EDC provided intensive guidance on business practices to ensure AKA is able to succeed. EDC recognized that with appropriate support, AKA would be more likely to succeed if they have strong institutional practices. Leveraging EDC's well establish institutional practices would advance AKA progress through the organizational lifecycle, minimizing their time and learning as start-up, quickly becoming an adolescent organization with the expectation AKA would become a mature successful organization.

Shortly after AKA was established EDC conducted an organizational capacity assessment (OCA). The OCA, adapted from USAID's New Partners Initiative Technical Assistance Project (NuPITA) tool, was to identify key activities, such as establishing necessary governance structures, policies and procedures

for finance, administration and human resources, along with sharing best practices in project management and organizational management.

## **Governance Structure**

The OCA identified that AKA would benefit from a restructuring the organizational chart to identify key senior managers, realign reporting lines and build the capacity of the department heads. In addition, the development of regular senior leadership meetings to ensure clear communication with the staff and the institution of a structured reporting mechanism was recommended. AK/EDC provided support through STTA to the Managing Director, Chair of the Board, and senior directors to address these issues. In addition, AK/EDC sponsored the director and two key personnel to attend the Inside NGO Project Management Workshop in Kenya.

## **Policies and procedures: Finance, Administration and Human Resources**

One of the greatest challenges of a new NGO is establishing feasible operating systems to support the technical services AK/EDC began its support to AKA by sharing sample policies, templates, tools, best practices and providing guidance to the AKA senior management and key staff. Through one-on-one consultations with EDC's Director of Corporate Compliance and Financial Managers, workshops, facilitating meetings and reviewing AKA's new propriety policies and procedures, AKA now has established financial policies which meet international requirements, including a chart of accounts, internal controls, and initial financial planning tools. AKA initially has one client and was highly dependent on one funding source.

With regards to administrative policies and procedures, EDC supported the finance and office managers to establish human resource onboarding checklist, orientation training (in both English and Kinyarwanda), finalized a policies and procedures manual which is provided to each staff person and an acknowledgement form. These manuals include all time keeping standards, travel and procurement policies, annual work plans and performance review processes. EDC provided templates and sample documents for AKA senior management to build on and create a systematic approach which meets the needs of their projects in Rwanda and to meet both local and international requirements and standards. EDC provided five expert resources to work with the senior management along with the finance officer and office manager. This support brought AKA quickly from an organization with informal management structure with unsophisticated operations to stable and efficient operations which recognizes risks and in a position to avoid the risk. These systems are designed to create clarity among staff as the organization grows. These policies and procedures also address critical human resource issues including determining staff salaries and benefits, fair and systematic performance reviews with established confidential tools, promotion criterial and recruitment activities.

## **Organizational Management**

EDC used eight of the nine sub-areas to evaluate AKA's organizational management capacity. Of these eight sub-areas twenty-three key activities were proposed to support AKA to increase their ability to successfully grow the organization. EDC dedicated short term technical assistance in the areas of strategic planning, resource mobilization, operations plan development, communication strategy, staff

knowledge management, stakeholder knowledge management, internal communications and decision making.

Through its growth from AK, AKA has been able to continue to utilize its network of strategic partnerships to foster its own new innovative and sustainable ways to engage in public-private sector partnerships to have a positive impact on youth employment outcomes in Rwanda. The majority of the priority activities feed into the key sub-areas: resource mobilization and communications.

With regard to **Resource Mobilization**, key outcomes were achieved including the business development team identified, proposal development training conducted, strategy meetings conducted and action plan developed. During the meetings, the team identified four key revenue streams, along with developing strategies and activities, and initial growth targets. The revenue streams included private sector contracts, grants, fundraising and membership fees. Although initial plans were discussed for each revenue stream, private sector contracts and grants were the two most likely forms for increasing revenue in the short term. AKA is continuing to foster public-private partnerships and leverage its staff's expertise, resulting in substantial early success at continuing to provide quality work readiness skills training to youth and internship management training to private sector companies. EDC identified and provided tools for the AKA to adapt to their needs including meeting templates, tracking templates and organizational efficiency model. EDC continued to support the business development team's efforts through the end of the project, however this sub-area faced many challenges.

In addition to business development activities EDC facilitated initial meetings to develop staffing plans maximize staff contributions to the organization, provide opportunities for person growth and to scale-up as projects are awarded. These discussions supported the management team to expand their knowledge to move from on a project based management approach to a more expansion organization based management approach. This new approach provides for greater long term stability and success.



Over the past eight months, AKA has secured projects through multiple funding sources. AKA continues to work towards financial stability through financial planning and business development activities.

AKA has established a complete operating staff, transition technical expertise and human resources from the AK project, manage a sub-grant of \$508,000 with AK funding, and mobilized new funding partners with EDC support for a total of \$865,658 in its first year of operations. AKA funding partners include, Deutch Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Educate, MasterCard Foundation, Save the Children, USAID and Eqwip Hubs Canada through EDC.

## Communications

With regard to **Communications**, AKA had developed a communication strategy which needed to be implemented to increase AKA's visibility in the country. EDC provided support through providing funds for a communication officer, updating tools and marketing materials, and training AKA staff on branding and marketing. Along with external communications, EDC focused on improving AKA's knowledge management and internal communications. AKA has a relatively small number of staff which meets for staff meetings on a regular basis. In preparing for ALP Report link on EDC website growth, AKA recognized they needed to move from an informal communication and knowledge management to more formal processes. AKA began addressing this issue with working with EDC to understand the significance of strong communication systems, develop initial strategies and identify key formal processes to be development. Formal knowledge management and communications activities have begun and will continue to evolve over the next few months.



Akazi Kanoze Access Newsletter from May/ June 2016.

## Project Management

The final OCA sub-area addressed was Project Management including, donor compliance, technical reporting, sub-grant management, quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation and cross-cutting issues such as community development, culture and gender equality. Over the past year, AKA has adapted EDC's sub-grant management framework and manuals, trained staff and senior management of grant management materials and developed strategies for compliance with complex donor regulations. EDC

not only shared tools and conducted trainings but continued their support through bimonthly meetings to ensure in-depth understanding of the tools, reporting mechanisms and protocols. AKA has embraced these tools and approaches and incorporated them into the daily activities.

AKA has adopted many of the successful and well-recognized approaches and policies which consistently satisfied AK's clients in order to provide continuity and support sustainability of AK's youth and workforce development efforts.

## **AKA's Successes**

AKA has provided training to youth in work readiness and entrepreneurship skills, created bridging opportunities between youth and the private sector, supported emerging entrepreneurs in establishing businesses, and provided capacity building services for partner organizations in more than 22 districts of Rwanda. AKA has managed grant funding from various donors including USAID, EDC/EQWIP Hubs Canada, MasterCard Foundation, Deutsche (GIZ), and Save the Children. With their support, AKA has trained more than 1,600 youth in employability skills and 147 teachers on the new competency based entrepreneurship curriculum in Rwanda and trained Master Trainers in WRN! in Senegal and Ghana.

## CONCLUSIONS

Akazi Kanoze has met or exceeded all of its Length of Project (LOP) targets (see table below). The program established an iterative process of reviewing accomplishments, challenges, and lessons throughout the lifecycle of the project. In order to document the process, EDC conducted several studies during the life of the project some of which were commissioned by USAID, to further show the project's unique strengths and challenges faced across the network of stakeholders (See Appendix 3). These in-depth studies into different perspectives and components of the project, provide a big picture view of the enabling and prohibitive factors of success. Going forward, USAID, EDC, AKA and other youth-serving organizations can learn from the seven years of Akazi Kanoze implementation. These factors of success and lessons learned can inform future youth workforce development programming in Rwanda and other similar contexts.

### Summary of Akazi Kanoze Achievements (LOP Targets, Year 2010 - 2016 Targets)

The table below summarizes progress against planned indicators for the final report.

#### Objective I. Establish a sustainable Akazi Kanoze Entity

##### Result I (IR 4.2.1 (USAID): Youth workforce readiness and employment coordination eco-system improved (ECOSYSTEM))

Indicator Number	Indicator	LOP Targets	Results (FY10 - FY16)		Achievement Total (FY10 - FY16)	LOP Targets	LOP Actual
			Urban	Rural			
In. 1.1	Number of CSOs using USG funds to improve internal organizational capacity (DG)—F Indicator <sup>15</sup>	30	n/a		63	30	63
In. 1.2	Number of workforce development trainers trained (Custom) <sup>16</sup>	70	n/a		Direct Beneficiaries 591 Indirect Beneficiaries 490 (334M, 156F)	70	Direct Beneficiaries 591 Indirect Beneficiaries 490 (334M, 156F)
In. 1.3	Number of workforce development initiatives created through USG assisted public-private partnerships (EG)—F Indicator <sup>17</sup>	86	n/a			86	202

<sup>15</sup> In. 12 was updated to In. 1.1 due to the updates of the PMP in March 2015.

<sup>16</sup> In. 15 was updated to In. 1.2 due to the updates of the PMP in March 2015.

<sup>17</sup> In. 14 was updated to In. 1.3 due to the updates of the PMP in March 2015.

Indicator Number	Indicator	LOP Targets	Results (FY10 - FY16)		Achievement Total (FY10 - FY16)	LOP Targets	LOP Actual
			Urban	Rural			
In. 1.4	Number of non-sub grantee organizations trained which implemented at least one workforce development program (Custom) <sup>18</sup>	15	n/a			15	15

## AK Extension Objective 2: Continue to build a sustainable youth opportunities network

### IR4.2.2: Number of Rwandan youth with life and workforce readiness skills increased

Indicator Number	Indicator	LOP Targets	Results (FY10 - FY16) Urban	Results (FY10 - FY16) Rural	Achievement Total (FY10 - FY16)	LOP Targets	LOP Actual
In. 2.1	Number of persons participating in USG-funded workforce development programs (F) (EG/EDUC) <sup>19</sup>	19,600	Direct Beneficiaries 11,045 (5377M,5668F) Indirect Beneficiaries <sup>20</sup> 1,981 (826M, 1155F)	Direct Beneficiaries 9,994 (4619M,5375F) Indirect Beneficiaries 7,504 (3629M, 3875F)	Direct Beneficiaries 21,039 (9996M, 11,043F) Indirect Beneficiaries 9,485 (4,455M, 5,030F)	19,600	Direct Beneficiaries 21,039 (9996M, 11,043F) Indirect Beneficiaries 9,485 (4,455M, 5,030F)
In. 2.2	Number of micro, small and medium enterprises receiving business development services from USG assisted sources (USAID - 4.5.2-37) <sup>21</sup>	100			222 (220 micro, 2 small)	100	222 (220 micro, 2 small)

<sup>18</sup> In. 1.4 is a new Indicator since the PMP updates in March 2015.

<sup>19</sup> In. 1 was updated to In. 2.1 due to the updates of the PMP in March 2015.

<sup>20</sup> Indirect beneficiaries are from The MasterCard Foundation funded Akazi Kanoze 2 project for in-school youth

<sup>21</sup> In. 2.2 is a new Indicator since the PMP updates in March 2015.

Indicator Number	Indicator	LOP Targets	Results (FY10 - FY16) Urban	Results (FY10 - FY16) Rural	Achievement Total (FY10 - FY16)	LOP Targets	LOP Actual
In. 2.3	Proportion of female participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources (assets, credit, income or employment) (GNDR-2) <sup>22</sup>	<b>50%</b>			<b>1:2</b> (52%)	<b>50%</b>	<b>1:2</b> (52%)
In. 2.4	Number of individuals participating in workforce development programs through non-sub grantee training providers (Custom) <sup>23</sup>	<b>1,500</b>	457 (202M, 255F)	1,872 (688M, 1184F)	2,329 (890M, 1439F)	<b>1,500</b>	2,329 (890M, 1439F)
In. 2.5	Number of targeted population reached with individual and/or small group level preventive interventions <sup>24</sup>	<b>12,800</b>	5,792 (2695M, 3097F)	9,967 (4600M; 5367F)	15,759 (7295M, 8464F)	<b>12,800</b>	15,759 (7295M, 8464F)
In. 2.6	Number of people reached by an individual, small group, or community level intervention or service that explicitly addresses norms about masculinity related to HIV/AIDS <sup>25</sup>	<b>12,800</b>	5,792 (2695M, 3097F)	9,967 (4600M; 5367F)	15,759 (7295M, 8464F)	<b>12,800</b>	15,759 (7295M, 8464F)

<sup>22</sup> In. 2.3 is a new Indicator since the PMP updates in March 2015.

The number of female participants (numerator) over the total participants, male and female (denominator)

<sup>23</sup> In. 2.4 is a new Indicator since the PMP updates in March 2015.

<sup>24</sup> In. 16 was updated to In. 2.5 due to the updates of the PMP in March 2015.

<sup>25</sup> In. 17 was updated to In. 2.6 due to the updates of the PMP in March 2015.

Indicator Number	Indicator	LOP Targets	Results (FY10 - FY16) Urban	Results (FY10 - FY16) Rural	Achievement Total (FY10 - FY16)	LOP Targets	LOP Actual
In. 2.7	Number of people reached by an individual, small group, or community level intervention or service that explicitly addresses gender based violence and coercion related to HIV/AIDS <sup>26</sup>	12,800	5,792 (2695M, 3097F)	9,967 (4600M; 5367F)	15,759 (7295M, 8464F)	12,800	15,759 (7295M, 8464F)
In. 2.8	Number of persons completing USG-funded workforce development programs (F) (EG/EDUC) <sup>27</sup>	15,554	Direct Beneficiaries 9,790 (4790M, 5000F) Indirect Beneficiaries 669 (233M, 436F)	Direct Beneficiaries 8,705 (4057M, 4648F) Indirect Beneficiaries 2,830 (1453M, 1377F)	Direct Beneficiaries 18,495 (8847M, 9648F) Indirect Beneficiaries 3,499 (1686M, 1813F)	15,554	Direct Beneficiaries 18,495 (8847M, 9648F) Indirect Beneficiaries 3,499 (1,686M, 1,813F) <sup>28</sup>
In. 2.9	Number of youth with improved work readiness skills after completing USG-funded workforce readiness program (EDUC) <sup>29</sup>	11,899	Direct Beneficiaries 9,147 (4457M, 4690F) Indirect Beneficiaries 665 (233M, 432F)	Direct Beneficiaries 7,843 (3633M, 4210F) Indirect Beneficiaries 2,792 (1430M, 1362F)	Direct Beneficiaries 16,990 (8090M, 8900F) Indirect Beneficiaries 3,457 (1663M, 1794F)	11,899	Direct Beneficiaries 16,990 <sup>30</sup> (8090M, 8900F) Indirect Beneficiaries 3,457 (1,663M, 1,794F)

<sup>26</sup> In. 18 was updated to In. 2.7 due to the updates of the PMP in March 2015.

<sup>27</sup> In. 2 was updated to In. 2.8 due to the updates of the PMP in March 2015.

<sup>28</sup> Indirect beneficiaries are from The MasterCard Foundation funded Akazi Kanoze 2 project for in-school youth

<sup>29</sup> In. 3 was updated to In. 2.9 due to the updates of the PMP in March 2015.

<sup>30</sup> The total for indicators 2.1, 2.8, 2.9, 2.10, and 2.11, have been recalculated using only external marks and youth 14 to 35 years old

Indicator Number	Indicator	LOP Targets	Results (FY10 - FY16) Urban	Results (FY10 - FY16) Rural	Achievement Total (FY10 - FY16)	LOP Targets	LOP Actual
In. 2.10	Number of youth, pursuing further education and/or training, after completing USG-funded workforce readiness program (EG) - F Indicator <sup>31</sup>	<b>6,148</b>	4,633 (2455M,2178F)	2,549 (1192M, 1357F)	7,182 (3647M, 3535F)	<b>6,148</b>	7,182 (3647M, 3535F)
In. 2.11	Person hours of training completed in workforce development supported by USG assistance (USAID indicator - 4.6.3-9) <sup>32</sup>	<b>840,000</b>	265,600 (111,600M; 154,000F)	674,000 (305,400M; 368,600F)	939,600 (417,000M, 522,600F)	<b>840,000</b>	<b>939,600</b> (417,000M, 522,600F) <i>(Results only from FY13)</i>
In. 2.12	Number of persons trained and certified in workforce development programs through Akazi Kanoze Access (Custom) <sup>33</sup>	<b>1,200</b>			<b>426</b> (122M, 304F)	<b>1,200</b>	<b>426</b> (122M, 304F)
In. 3.1	Number of people gaining employment or better employment as a result of participation in USG-funded workforce development programs (EG)—F Indicator	<b>7,797</b>	Direct Beneficiaries 4,916 (2551M, 2365F)  Indirect Beneficiaries 52 (24M, 28F)	Direct Beneficiaries 3,013 (1450M, 1563F)  Indirect Beneficiaries 356 (167M, 189F)	Direct Beneficiaries 7,929 (4001M, 3928F)  Indirect Beneficiaries 408 (191M, 217F)	<b>7,797</b>	Direct Beneficiaries 7,929 (4001M; 3928F)  Indirect Beneficiaries 408 (191M, 217F)
In. 3.2	Percentage of employers stating satisfaction with the Akazi Kanoze participants they have had as employees or interns. (Custom)	<b>80%</b>			91%	<b>80%</b>	<b>91%</b>

<sup>31</sup> In. 5 was updated to In. 2.10 due to the updates of the PMP in March 2015.

<sup>32</sup> In. 19 was updated to In. 2.11 due to the updates of the PMP in March 2015.

## Lessons Learned

### Monitoring and Evaluation

- **Building M&E Capacity of Local Partners**—An aim of the project was to build the capacity of local partners in monitoring and evaluation. Over the course of the project, EDC realized that while the capacity of partners had indeed improved, there was still little sustainability in the training approach. In order to improve the M&E training of implementing partners, the Akazi Kanoze M&E team developed a new phased training approach that gave partners the tools to apply the monitoring systems and best practices to their organizations. The training consists of two days of group training, followed by one day of one-on-one coaching at the organization’s place of work. The training is accompanied by the Akazi Kanoze Local Partners Monitoring Toolkit, which includes all parts of the AK monitoring system, and coaches them through the steps of adapting the best practices for their organization. In addition to IP staff being trained using this new, interactive training method, AK and AKA staff were also included so that staff beyond the M&E team understood the importance of gathering good data.
- **The database requires constant improvements**—The AK database served its purpose over the lifetime of the project, but by the end was outdated. The database administrator and external database consultant made as many updates and improvements as possible to the offline Microsoft Access database, but an online platform would be a more sustainable data management platform to handover to AKA. Moving forward, the AK database should be transferred to an online platform with an interactive dashboard that will allow stakeholders to more easily see results and access information about the project.
- **Build a cadre of M&E interns**—In order to keep up with the database and M&E demands of the project, EDC relied heavily on a strong group of M&E interns, mostly Akazi Kanoze graduates, to help clean and process data, assist with external assessments, and updates to the database. These M&E interns also assisted IPs, if need be. Two of the full-time AK M&E staff started as interns, which is a testament to the M&E interns program and its ability to identify and foster talent.
- **Conduct regular Data Quality Assessments (DQA)**—The large DQA done in FY16 showed several gaps in data collection, which had not been caught before due to a lag in DQAs. This was a lesson learned for EDC and has already impacted the regularity of DQAs being conducted under the Akazi Kanoze 2 project, which works with some of the same implementing partners. The importance of regular DQAs and setting a level of accountability with implementing partners from the beginning of the project is crucial. The new M&E training for local partners includes a long session on DQAs to set the expectation that they will occur on a regular basis and to encourage IPs to conduct their own DQAs before EDC.
- **Using technology to connect youth to employers**—EDC developed an SMS system to link potential job seekers (Akazi Kanoze graduates) with employers. Once a new job announcement was posted into the system, the system subscriber (job seekers) received an

alert immediately with a concise message about the job. The system subscriber then had the ability to apply to that particular job on the go. The system also helped Akazi Kanoze staff to make short surveys at a cheaper cost and get quick responses. It served to send bulk messages to a big number of people in case of an announcement or quick communication to the Akazi Kanoze trainees or trainers. The biggest challenge of the system was to train all the Akazi Kanoze graduates how to use the system. About 800 youth were trained on the system. Training them took about 45 minutes and there was an accompanying user guide in English and Kinyarwanda. On the employers' side, it wasn't hard to reach out to the employers but it was challenging to convince them to regularly log into the System to post jobs. Most of employers (especially hotels and construction companies) use word of mouth and/or their connection to pass on the information, and did not see a need to use the SMS system. It took a high level of partnership between the employers and EDC Akazi Kanoze to convince employer to use the system regularly. The biggest asset of the system was the speed in which it allowed participating employers to connect with graduates. In the future, a more sophisticated and dynamic system could be used to connect the project, youth, and employers, but it would require a more user-friendly so that youth and employers can use it with ease.

- **Youth trackers**—The project encountered a big challenge in tracking the youth after graduation. Due to the high mobility of youth and transient nature of employment in Rwanda, youth were difficult to follow-up with. One of the more successful strategies for tackling this challenge was using “youth trackers,” graduates of Akazi Kanoze that are tasked with keeping in touch with their peers and tracking them down for data collection, or follow-up support, as needed. We found that youth naturally stay in touch with each other and leveraged this social cohesion to help EDC support and monitor youth after graduation.
- **Collection of special studies**—EDC conducted a variety of special studies under Akazi Kanoze. The continuous data collection on various aspects of the program has provided valuable lessons learned. The executive summaries of these special studies are included in the Appendices. They range from a randomized controlled trial, the first that EDC has ever done for a youth workforce development project, to qualitative studies. The mixed methodology provides a rich array of research and lessons learned from Akazi Kanoze, which will inform future projects and the broader workforce development practitioner community.

## Implementation

### Engage with the local community and district level government officials from the onset.

Youth are at an age between childhood and adulthood, when they are exploring independence, but are oftentimes still living with family and dependent on the support of the community around them. This is important to take into consideration when working with youth. In the Akazi Kanoze recruitment process, involvement of parents was not systematic amongst implementing partners. While partners often relied on the support of local authorities to recruit and hold trainings, intentional mobilization of parents was not part of the recruitment strategy. The lack of systematic involvement of parents may have resulted in a less than thorough understanding of the project goals and activities as Akazi Kanoze

expanded to new locations. Other EDC projects have more purposefully involved parents, which is a strategy that may strengthen Akazi Kanoze in the future.

**Recommendation:**

- Going forward, stakeholders voted for implementing partners being required to mobilize and train local leaders and parents about Akazi Kanoze benefits, goals, and activities before implementation. During the learning review, 75% of stakeholders agreed that this was the best recommendation to address the above challenge.

**Youth coaching and monitoring is difficult, but necessary.**

Youth in Rwanda are extremely mobile and employment is often transient, making follow-up and coaching difficult. As the project scaled-up, the original system of one-on-one support became more difficult to sustain even though EDC had field officers monitoring the activity. All implementing partners were required to do follow-up within six months after graduation by completing a transition form, however most did not have the ability to provide consistent support over time. As a solution, EDC implemented the youth tracker strategy, where AK graduates were hired to follow up with other youth. Local IPs also received training in M&E to build capacity for tracking future graduates. M&E internships for AK graduates also provided opportunities for sustained youth monitoring. Akazi Kanoze's job match SMS system linked youth to job opportunities, but constantly changing telephone numbers and the cost for youth to reply to messages were challenges. Originally, follow-up within urban areas would not have posed such a challenge, but as the complexity of the project grew, so did the task of tracking youth.

Despite these issues, stakeholders agree upon the importance of follow-up. As mentioned in previous sections, youth seek moral and technical support after the program to be able to persevere when faced with hardships. While the training has shown to increase self-confidence, the 100-hour training alone is not enough to make youth successful. For future programming, establishing a sustainable follow-up and coaching system in the beginning of the project that can withstand scale-up will be of great benefit.

The recommendations looked at the two challenging sub-factors of youth follow-up: 1) keeping track of youth when implementing partners and/or EDC are located outside the community, and 2) increasing numbers of youth graduates during scale-up.

**Recommendations:**

- Build the capacity and systems of implementing partners and local leadership to create and follow-up youth in local areas: IPs did not necessarily have a staff person dedicated to youth follow-up. Stakeholders recommended emphasizing the importance of follow-up with all IPs by advocating for one staff, preferably a trainer, to be in charge of long-term mentoring. This may fall beyond the subgrant, but stakeholders believed that if IPs are convinced of the benefits for their organization to conduct follow-up, then they will invest in the human resources required.
- Create more SILC and alumni-groups for peer-mentoring and easier tracking: One way that youth overcame the challenge of limited follow-up from Akazi Kanoze was to form SILC or

peer groups of their own. With these groups already formed, EDC staff visits were more efficient by using one visit to talk with all the youth in that group.

### Monitor fidelity of implementation, especially during scale-up.

A key lesson learned that came out of the learning review series was that monitoring the quality of the trainings decreased as time went on. Youth from the early years of the project reflected on a high-quality training, facilities, and follow-up, whereas youth from the later years of the project did not entirely agree. Similar to the challenge of youth follow-up, monitoring fidelity of implementation is also tied to scale. As the project recruited larger numbers of implementing partners, control quality became more of a challenge. EDC field officers conducted routine field visits and teacher observations, but sometimes this was not enough to identify potential problems in trainings. The responsibility of monitoring trainings fell with the technical team, who was also grappling with an ever-expanding complex program. The issue of quality control was highlighted in the second AKA Organizational Capacity Assessment: “Data on adherence to standards is not systematically collected and there is no document that outlines service delivery standards for all staff to reference.” In order to maintain the Akazi Kanoze brand name, AKA will need to strengthen service delivery standards and train staff to apply and monitor the quality of implementing partners. This will become more difficult as Akazi Kanoze scales, but is vital for both in-school and out-of-school work readiness trainings.

#### **Recommendation:**

- Conduct more regular checks-ins with the trainers. Strong communication and collaboration supports consistent programming across sites and regions.

### Stronger partnership with the private sector is needed.

Although Akazi Kanoze has established strong brand recognition in the hospitality and retail services for providing youth talent, AKA aims to increase the brand’s reach with more employers in other sectors. As Akazi Kanoze worked with over 300 SMEs and large corporations, AKA will continue building the capacity for the entire network to reach this goal. Engaging the private sector in youth workforce development programming was an innovative idea with the start of Akazi Kanoze. Even the idea of internships for youth below the university level was novel. While great strides have been made in private sector engagement, there is still a long way to go to achieve full buy-in from private sector partners. When youth graduate, businesses are not always aware that their intern or employee was trained under Akazi Kanoze. This results in fewer employers being aware of Akazi Kanoze and from where the intern or employee’s employability skills originated. Additionally, some employers are still hesitant to take on interns, as they are not fully aware of the benefits of having Akazi Kanoze interns. Companies like Frontiers Great Lakes, in Rwanda, had great success with their internship program with paid internships increasing from 61 in 2009 to 869 in 2012. They were informed with realistic expectation prior to receiving the youth, which made the experience more beneficial. With more advocates and examples of success in the private industry, buy-in can increase.

In order to address the information gap for companies not yet participating with AK, an **internship management training tool** was developed for the growing network of private sector champions and increased number of youth placed into internships. As the AK project expanded its reach, it became clear to EDC that we needed to streamline our “coaching” and support to the private sector. The tool was designed to build capacity among IPs and private sector companies to deliver high-quality educational and on-the-job experiences for Rwandan youth so that the experience is beneficial for both employers and interns. The training helps employers identify ways for interns to contribute to the goals of the business. The training not only helped the private sector and the youth manage internships better, but it also continued to attract more employers to provide internship opportunities to youth.

**Recommendations:**

- Follow-up visits/meetings to explain the program (AK) after formal partnership.
- Continue to provide training support in-house for companies that provides internships/jobs for AK graduates.
- Support advocates of the Akazi Kanoze program to reach more potential employers to join the network.

**Consider the economic constraints of vulnerable youth.**

USAID is committed to continuing to improve livelihoods of vulnerable youth in Rwanda. As Akazi Kanoze expanded into rural areas, the remoteness of trainings, low literacy level, and economic vulnerability of youth resulted in a more challenging implementation environment than the original urban focus of the project. Quite often, youth were too poor to afford the transport to the training, meals during the day, or start-up capital for a business. The economic constraints of working with vulnerable youth affects attendance, completion, and the ease of starting a business after graduation. Some youth received a small per diem to cover transportation costs to the training, which often also helped them save start-up capital, but as the project scaled-up, the budget was not able to cover per diem for all youth. While not all youth need this per diem, the most vulnerable youth were the ones to miss class or drop out due to lack of economic resources and competing family and childcare demands.

**Recommendations:**

- Make trainings more accessible for youth (e.g. Select youth who live near training site or bring training closer to where youth live)
- Need to include in project budget to cover transport, meals and capital for businesses for vulnerable youth/groups. USAID wants to focus on vulnerable youth moving forward who have severe economic constraints that may prevent them from participating in the program and completing it. This needs to be considered and factored in if we are to be successful
- Partner with organizations who can provide economic support and have critical experience working with specific populations

## Factors of Success

In addition to lessons learned, a review of the project showed several key programming ingredients contributed to the success of Akazi Kanoze, which are identified below.

### **Positive Youth Development Approach: Creating Attitude Change, Increasing Self-Confidence, and Infusing an Entrepreneurial Spirit**

EDC employed a positive youth development approach recognizing youth's strengths, assets, and experiences, promoting positive outcomes for youth. We identified partners with specific expertise and potential for growth in youth and workforce development and worked with implementing partners to identify economic sectors and opportunities within their geographic area for their target youth. The AK project embodied an entrepreneurial spirit from the start, leveraging relationships and opportunities as they came up.

From youth, trainers, and employers, the theme of heightened self-confidence and entrepreneurial spirit is a common thread. Trainers talk about seeing a change in attitude in the learners during the training. "Rwandan youth used to think that if they went to school they would have a job after," explains one trainer. "This is not the reality. The training changes their mindset and shows them they can do any job including create their own." The training transforms youth. One young entrepreneur described the training as "what gave [him] the boldness to start [his] own business." Other youth reflected on feeling ashamed of their micro business before Akazi Kanoze, but becoming proud of their enterprises after learning and internalizing that starting small is okay. Due to the change in attitude and new determination, employers can see a noticeable difference between Akazi Kanoze and non-Akazi Kanoze young employees. Employers describe Akazi Kanoze youth as hard working and easy to supervise. This enabler of success has resulted in Akazi Kanoze youth being ambassadors for the program by demonstrating a strong entrepreneurial spirit and work-ethic.

### **Network Collaborative Approach: Partnership Building and Capacity**

**Building** Since project inception, EDC's approach has been to establish a network of stakeholders to support and continue the efforts of Akazi Kanoze. Not only has EDC established partnerships with high-level youth-serving organizations and institutions, but it has also connected youth with employers, and with each other. Youth now know where and how to find internship and job or business opportunities.

Additionally, the model of creating savings groups or other work-related youth groups has facilitated savings, knowledge sharing, and networking amongst young professionals and entrepreneurs. The various levels of partnerships that have been developed and maintained have resulted in a system of individuals and organizations focused on helping youth improve their livelihoods. The separate entities may have existed before, but what has enabled the success of Akazi Kanoze is the purposeful connection of these networks into a sustainable system.

During Akazi Kanoze, all youth outreach was done through existing local partners. This approach ensured that they local IPs received the most benefit through connecting with others in their community. Through capacity building trainings and partner collaboration, the Akazi Kanoze network continues to grow.

## Market Driven Curriculum and Methodology.

Stakeholders agree that the Akazi Kanoze Work Readiness Curriculum and learner-centered approach are not only highly relevant to Rwandan youth, but are also improving teaching methodology. The practical and participatory content allow trainers to build a strong relationship with their trainees, as youth apply the lessons in their own lives. Trainers and youth agree that the methodology encourages willingness to learn and youth work hard during training because they quickly see the practical advantages of the curriculum. This enabler of success ties to the careful preparation of the WRC with private sector, government, and youth input to ensure that it was both relevant and cutting edge. Since the start of the project, the WRC has been embedded in the TVET and General Secondary School systems, and institutionalized by numerous local implementing partners. The Akazi Kanoze Work Readiness Curriculum has not only been influential in the Rwanda context, but the curriculum is the basis for EDC's Work Ready Now! youth work readiness package that is being used and adapted around the world.

## APPENDIX LISTING

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1. Content Areas and Associated Skills and Attitudes
2. Table of Akazi Kanoze Materials
3. List of AK Studies During Life of Project

## Appendix I. Content Areas and Associated Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes

Content Area	Knowledge and Understanding	Skills	Values, Attitudes and Behaviors
<b>1. Personal Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Types of learning styles</li> <li>✓ Goal-setting steps and processes</li> <li>✓ Values and beliefs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Develop, implement and monitor plans</li> <li>✓ Take responsibility for learning</li> <li>✓ Reflect and evaluate</li> <li>✓ Think critically and reason effectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Self-identity and self-esteem</li> <li>✓ Respect, diversity and difference</li> <li>✓ Honesty and integrity</li> <li>✓ Flexibility and adaptability</li> <li>✓ Pride in work quality</li> <li>✓ Personal initiative and responsibility</li> <li>✓ Effective use of time</li> </ul>
<b>2. Interpersonal Communications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Nonverbal communication</li> <li>✓ Effective communication techniques</li> <li>✓ Customer service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Listen and speak effectively</li> <li>✓ Solve problems and make decisions</li> </ul>	
<b>3. Work Habits and Conduct</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Job-seeking and job-keeping processes and techniques</li> <li>✓ Workplace rules and expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Seek and apply for jobs</li> <li>✓ Communicate in writing</li> <li>✓ Develop, implement and monitor plans</li> <li>✓ Cooperate and work together</li> </ul>	
<b>4. Leadership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Qualities of an effective leader</li> <li>✓ Styles of leadership</li> <li>✓ Steps in problem-solving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Lead and guide others</li> <li>✓ Solve problems and make decisions</li> <li>✓ Resolve conflict and negotiate</li> <li>✓ Organize and motivate</li> </ul>	
<b>5. Safety and Health at Work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Healthy habits</li> <li>✓ Sanitation and hygiene</li> <li>✓ Workplace hazards</li> <li>✓ Emergency response procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Assess and monitor workplace conditions</li> <li>✓ Make decisions and solve problems</li> <li>✓ Think critically and reason effectively</li> </ul>	
<b>6. Worker &amp; Employer Rights &amp; Responsibilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Workplace rules and regulations</li> <li>✓ Rights and responsibilities of workers and employers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Think critically and reason effectively</li> <li>✓ Take responsibility for learning</li> </ul>	
<b>7. Financial Fitness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Money management basics</li> <li>✓ Types of financial institutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Develop, implement and monitor plans</li> <li>✓ Reason mathematically</li> </ul>	
<b>8. Introduction to Entrepreneurship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Basic business concepts</li> <li>✓ Qualities of effective entrepreneurs</li> <li>✓ Local labor market</li> <li>✓ Risk management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Develop, implement and monitor plans</li> <li>✓ Market and promote</li> <li>✓ Evaluate and assess</li> </ul>	

## Appendix 2. Table of Akazi Kanoze Materials

Name	Description
<b>Akazi Kanoze Work Readiness Curriculum</b>	<p>EDC's curriculum specialist team developed the project's Work Readiness Curriculum in 2009. The team, composed of international and local specialists, including partner organization EcoVentures International (EVI), incorporated best practices from local and international workforce development materials. Based on stakeholder needs, the curriculum specialists developed eight modules of transferable skills:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Introductory Module:</b> Introduce the curriculum while creating a collaborative and safe learning environment.</li> <li>2. <b>Personal Development:</b> Teaches how to set goals and track your progress towards accomplishment.</li> <li>3. <b>Interpersonal Communication:</b> Explores effective communication techniques and how to provide quality customer service.</li> <li>4. <b>Work Habits and Conduct:</b> Develops time management skills alongside more generally positive attitudes towards work.</li> <li>5. <b>Leadership:</b> Introduces qualities of an effective leader and helps to develop problem solving and conflict resolution skills.</li> <li>6. <b>Safety and Health at Work:</b> Helps youth to develop safe workplace habits to avoid injury.</li> <li>7. <b>Worker and Employer Rights and Responsibilities:</b> Teaches youth about their rights as workers as well as the Government of Rwanda's labor laws.</li> <li>8. <b>Financial Fitness:</b> Instills the importance of savings, managing money and budgeting as well as provides insight into how financial institutions work.</li> </ol>
<b>HIV/AIDS &amp; Reproductive Health Module</b>	<p>To train youth on HIV/AIDS Mainstreaming, Akazi Kanoze adapted the Prevention of HIV/AIDS and HIV/AIDS in Rwanda through Education project (PHARE) program curriculum approved by Rwanda National Commission to fight against HIV/AIDS. The curriculum was originally a 140 page books with 22 session designed by Voluntary Service Overseas for school clubs. AK staff and Peace Corps Volunteers adapted this curriculum into a 54-page curriculum taught in 12 hours to support WRC facilitators to train youth on relevant topics search as reproductive health, HIV (transmission, stigma, VCT), sexual violence and gender. This Health Module supplements Module 5 of the WRC.</p>
<b>Accelerated Learning Program</b>	<p>The ALP focuses on providing Primary 4 through Primary 6 dropouts with a program that combines non-formal basic education and technical training in a vocational area.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Accelerated Basic Education:</b> The 200 hours provides basic literacy and numeracy skills in Kinyarwanda and introduces English and work readiness skills.</li> <li>2. <b>Technical Vocational Training:</b> The 3-4 month training provides basic knowledge and skills necessary to get started working in a particular trade (e.g. carpentry, welding etc.).</li> <li>3. <b>Livelihood Accompaniment:</b> After 12 months of being in the program, youth are provided with coaching, mentoring, and work placement opportunities for 6 months after their completion. All youth were placed in at least one short-term work experience opportunity (equivalent to at least 20 days of full time work) that allowed them to put their emerging skills into practice.</li> </ol>

Name	Description
<p><b>Advanced Entrepreneurship Curriculum</b></p>	<p>The Advanced Entrepreneurship Manual is an adaptation of the International Labor Organization’s <i>Know About Business</i> curriculum and is designed to be used by youth who have at least a primary 6 literacy level and who have graduated from Akazi Kanoze’s Work Readiness course. It was developed in response to the Workforce Development Authority’s request to have a curriculum that could meet the needs of Rwandan youth. This curriculum aims to provide youth with the foundational skills and knowledge necessary to become a successful entrepreneur, from identifying and assessing a business idea to developing a business plan. The main topics of the curriculum include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Module 1: Getting Ready for Entrepreneurship</b> - Participants are introduced to some basic elements of entrepreneurship</li> <li>• <b>Module 2: Finding a Good Business Idea</b> - They explore businesses in their community and then identify their own business ideas based on their interests, skills and experiences.</li> <li>• <b>Module 3: Establishing a Business</b> - Participants are able to identify and analyze the key aspects of the market for their business identified business idea – products/services, promotion, place/distribution and price.</li> <li>• <b>Module 4: Operating a Business</b> – Participants learn about managing and operating a business.</li> <li>• <b>Module 5: Developing a Business Plan</b> – After learning about the reasons why it is necessary to have a business plan, participants will pull together the various parts of the business plan from the previous modules to create their own business plan.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Small Business and Cooperative Management Curriculum</b></p>	<p>The Small Business and Cooperative Module has been developed to provide youth who have successfully complete the Work Readiness Curriculum with the foundational skills and knowledge necessary to become a successful income generating activity (IGA) owner or cooperative member. The main topics of the module include:</p> <p><b>Session 1:</b> Getting Ready for Business  <b>Session 2:</b> Finding &amp; Establishing a Good Business Idea  <b>Session 3:</b> Record Keeping &amp; Financial Management  <b>Session 4:</b> Cooperative Management</p>
<p><b>Internship Management Handbook &amp; Training</b></p>	<p>The internship management training was developed to help employers better prepare to host and supervise interns. The training and handbook include the following sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Session 1:</b> Introduction to the Internship Management Guidelines</li> <li>• <b>Session 2:</b> What is an Internship?</li> <li>• <b>Session 3:</b> Benefits of Internships</li> <li>• <b>Session 4:</b> Employer &amp; Intern Best Practices</li> <li>• <b>Session 5:</b> How to Provide Supervision, Support &amp; Motivation to Interns</li> <li>• <b>Session 6:</b> Internship Management Templates &amp; Tools</li> </ul>

Name	Description
<p><b>IP Monitoring Toolkit</b></p>	<p>This toolkit is designed to guide implementing organizations through Akazi Kanoze (AK) project monitoring and evaluation (M&amp;E). The Akazi Kanoze Monitoring Toolkit starts at the beginning with a project description and basic M&amp;E concepts and definitions. It provides templates and examples of tools required to build a strong monitoring system. This toolkit was designed to help the Akazi Kanoze implementing partners plan for and gather good data, report accurately, and have a resource to reference when questions arise.</p> <p>This toolkit will provide answers to the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the difference between monitoring and evaluation?</li> <li>• What are the M&amp;E roles and responsibilities of my organization?</li> <li>• Why do we need a monitoring system?</li> <li>• How are the Akazi Kanoze indicators and definitions linked to the various data collection tools?</li> <li>• When do we collect monitoring data?</li> <li>• When should we report monitoring data to EDC?</li> <li>• What is a data quality assessment and how do I conduct one?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Early Childhood Development Caregiver Curriculum</b></p>	<p>EDC's caregiver training curriculum assists caregivers to purposefully work with children in these areas through 1) building on children's natural interest in play and 2) establishing a nurturing and supportive relationship between adult (caregiver) and child, a critical factor in any successful ECD classroom. The ECD caregivers also engage in a 3-month internship in ECD centers, with coaching and mentoring. The curriculum includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Module 1:</b> Introduction to the Junior Caregiver Program and Early Childhood Development</li> <li>• <b>Module 2:</b> Understanding How Children Think, Behave &amp; Learn</li> <li>• <b>Module 3:</b> Creating a Positive and Safe Environment for Children</li> <li>• <b>Module 4:</b> Health Promotion</li> <li>• <b>Module 5:</b> Creating Learning Materials/Toys from Local Resources</li> <li>• <b>Module 6:</b> Physical Development</li> <li>• <b>Module 7:</b> Social Emotional Development</li> <li>• <b>Module 8:</b> Cognitive Development</li> <li>• <b>Module 9:</b> Classroom and Center Management</li> <li>• <b>Module 10:</b> Assessment</li> </ul>
<p><b>Akazi Kanoze Radio Program</b></p>	<p>In 2011, EDC Akazi Kanoze in partnership with Search for Common Ground (SFCG) developed a radio program that addressed work readiness topics of Rwandan youth. Joint meetings of staff from both organizations were organized in order to design episodes under SFCG entrepreneurship KURA WIKORERA Program. In the initial phase 8 episodes were created and increased to 18 in the second phase each with 10 minutes each. Initial episodes were recorded and aired on Salus Radio and re-broadcasted on Contact FM station. Focus Group Discussions were conducted to evaluate the impact of the radio program after the first 8 episodes and the youth's feedback was used to improve the last 10 episodes. SFCG conducted a post-study on listenership and behavior change.</p>

## Appendix 3. List of Akazi Kanoze Studies During Life of Project

**Out of School Literacy Assessment:** Conducted between 2012 and 2013 for the Accelerated Learning Program, this evaluation provided the framework for assessing progress made towards the results of the literacy. The results from Akazi Kanoze's OLA evaluation activities focused on assessing the extent to which youth participants demonstrate improved reading and comprehension at the end of Levels 4-6 (formal grades 4-6 equivalence). The subordinate evaluation question aimed to explore any differences between men and women that may exist.

**Akazi Kanoze Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) and Case Studies:** The AK final evaluation report, consisting of results from a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) and youth case studies, was completed in FY15. This USAID published report received widespread attention in the youth workforce development community and AK team members presented the findings at various conferences in several countries. To supplement the RCT, several youth case studies were published in the final evaluation report. These case studies highlighted the challenges and successes of AK graduates in several industries and trades.

**Work Ready Now! (WRN!) Exam Predictive Validity Study:** AK was one of three countries to pilot EDC's WRN! exam in 2013. During FY15, the AK team followed-up with these youth as part of an EDC sponsored study on the predictive validity of the WRN! exam. Of the 157 youth who took the WRN! exam, 49 of their employers were asked to rate their performance on the job. A program note on this study was published by EDC.

**ALP Retrospective Study:** In order to better understand the outcomes of the AK ALP, a retrospective study was completed in FY15. Using existing quantitative data and collecting new qualitative data, the AK team studied the benefits, challenges, and potential for future ALP implementation in Rwanda.

**Health and Civic Engagement:** The studies completed in FY16, measured changes in behavioral health and civic engagement in treatment and comparison groups. In total 491 youth, 189 in comparison and 302 in treatment groups, participated in the surveys. The treatment group was made of graduates who had recently received WR training with the 5 IPs that had been implementing the Project from the start of FY16.

**Public Sector Engagement:** The study explores how AK's alignment with public and private interests and priorities resulted in buy-in from both, resulting in multiple PPPs. The study outlines the Akazi Kanoze approach to engaging businesses of all different sizes from all over Rwanda to host youth interns and to understand the importance of giving youth on-the-job work experience.

**RCT Follow-Up:** The AK team supported the AK Project Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) follow-up study. The study was conducted by Mr. Aussi Sayinzoga, a PhD candidate from the University of Wageningen in the Netherlands, in conjunction with GiveDirectly and their team of researchers. A total of 447 youth out of 600 from baseline were surveyed.

**Organizational Capacity Assessment:** A stipulation of the USAID-funded Akazi Kanoze (AK) project extension is the completion of an Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) in order to capture the baseline capacity of Akazi Kanoze Access. The findings from the OCA completed in FY15, showed there was a need for more training at all levels of the organization—training on policies and procedures, training on monitoring and evaluation, training on resource mobilization, training on the organization’s catch phrases. AKA created a capacity building plan from the results of the OCA.

**Building the Organizational Capacity of Local Partners:** The number of organizations with improve organizational capacity, as defined for USAID reporting purposes is, “the number of CSOs trained in the Akazi Kanoze minimum organizational capacity building package (e.g. financial training and M&E training) or whose staff participate in the training of trainers in either work readiness training or entrepreneurship training.” The purpose of this study was to go beyond the numbers to see how organizations have been applying the skills learned through Akazi Kanoze. The survey was sent to 48 partner organizations' managers and coordinators from 33 organizations who directly worked with the Akazi Kanoze project over the period of January, 2010 - January, 2015.

**Entrepreneurship Study:** The entrepreneurship study was predominantly a qualitative study. The data included interviews of AK youth who had received business development services, staff of the project’s implementing partners, financial institutions that provide services to youth, and business development advisers who work with AK youth as well as AK entrepreneurship staff. Combined with quantitative data from internal organizational surveys and a randomized controlled trial, this evaluation explored the effectiveness of AK’s support model to aid youth in opening businesses.

**Scale and Sustainability Study:** This 2014 study was authored by JBS International, and commissioned by USAID, to examine the following: 1) What scaling up of AK that has occurred to date? 2) What is the potential for the future scaling up and sustainability of AK? 3) What can be put in place to ensure future scaling up and sustainability of the program? 4) What are the lessons learned in AK that might assist in improving the scaling up and sustainability of other USAID-funded youth workforce development projects? The study examined 3 scaling up and sustainability scenarios: TVET system, Urban and Rural.