



## AKAZI KANOZE 2 FINAL REPORT: PRIORITIES FOR SUSTAINABILITY

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Nearly 40 percent of Rwanda's population is between the ages of 14-35. Every year there are over 200,000 learners who enter upper secondary school and over 90,000 who enter technical and vocational education and training (TVET) schools. The small formal employment sector cannot absorb all of these graduates and youth unemployment is at 65 percent.

Through the Akazi Kanoze 2 (AK2) project, Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) worked with Rwanda's Ministry of Education to help young people gain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to participate in an expanding economy. At the center of AK2 is the implementation of EDC's [Work Ready Now!](#) curriculum and school-to-work transition services in schools throughout the country.

### **Progress Towards the Institutionalization of Soft Skills Made Under AK2**

EDC has been working to improve soft skills education in Rwanda since 2009 beginning with the Akazi Kanoze (AK1): Youth Livelihoods Project, which was implemented by EDC.

The AK1 Project provided youth, ages 14-35, with market-relevant life and work readiness training and support, hands-on training opportunities, and links to the employment and self-employment job market.

Much progress was made towards formalizing soft skills education in Rwanda under this project – including the development of the *Work Ready Now!* curriculum, a unique participatory approach to teaching work readiness skills that has been highly successful because it was developed directly in the local context with all scenarios, images, and descriptions being directly relatable to the Rwandan youth population. The results for youth who completed this training were impressive. Sixty-five percent of AK1 youth gained access to employment within 6 months of completing the training.

The Akazi Kanoze 2 (AK2) project, funded by the Mastercard Foundation, is a scale-up of AK1 with Rwanda's secondary education system. AK2 set out to institutionalize the Work Readiness and School to Work Transition in the Rwanda formal secondary school in order to equip graduates with necessary skills that enable them to gain a meaningful transition to work. AK2 worked in both General Secondary Schools (GSS) through the Rwandan Education Board (REB) and Technical and Vocational Training Schools (TVET) through the Workforce Development Agency (WDA). EDC worked with the Ministry of Education to adopt Work Ready Now! to fit within the national curriculum of both the GSS and TVET schools. In GSS, WRN! was adopted as a mandatory part of the entrepreneurship subject curriculum in upper secondary school (S4-S6). In TVET, it was adopted as 5 modules in the Level 3 curriculum for all technical specializations.

The AK2 project built the capacity of the Ministry of Education (both the Rwanda Education Board and the Workforce Development Authority) in materials development, student

assessment, and teacher training with the longer term goal of sustaining the delivery of these programs nationally. During AK2, EDC and its implementing partner organizations trained District and Sector education officers, school managers, and teachers to deliver School to Work Transition (STWT) programming and work readiness training, based on the *Work Ready Now!*

The STWT program was developed and refined during AK2 to fit the needs of the school systems. In the latest iteration of the program, Work Based Learning (WBL), students identify opportunities to visit or shadow various workplaces, and set up short work experiences such as internships. Students can then pursue an employment opportunity at one of those workplaces, or pursue a more entrepreneurial approach and establish their own business.

The Akazi Kanoze model and associated brand has been uniquely successful in Rwanda as evidenced in the full vertical scale-up of soft skills training which was accomplished under AK2 project, when the *Work Ready Now!* curriculum was fully institutionalized and embedded in the Rwandan national curriculum. Now, all students – regardless of whether they are learning at a general secondary or TVET school – will have access to meaningful work readiness training during their education where they will gain applicable skills to help them effectively access employment, self-employment, or further education opportunities upon graduation.

In addition to seeing the institutionalization of the *Work Ready Now!* Curriculum with all Rwandan secondary students and vocational technical students receiving work readiness during class time, AK2 saw a number of other successes. Since July 2014, AK2 partners have trained over 700 teachers and Ministry Officials and participating AK2 schools have successfully trained over 30,000 students in work readiness. To date, a total of 8,063 AK2 students have participated in a work-based learning opportunity to gain practical on-the-job experience to help them transition to work. Notably, a randomized control trial found that AK2 youth are **8% more likely to be employed than youth who did not participate**. For young women, the number jumps to **12% of women participants who are more likely to be employed** than women that did not participate in the program.

## AK2 Accomplishments

- Developed national curricula materials based on EDC's *Work Ready Now!* employability program.
- Oversaw the implementation of the Akazi Kanoze program in secondary and technical vocational schools across the country
- Supported the Ministry of Education in materials development, assessment, and teacher training
- Trained over 700 teachers and Ministry Officials
- Trained over 30,000 students in work readiness
- Created a [public data dashboard](#) to improve policy decision making
- Equipped secondary school and TVET students with market-relevant and transferable skills
- Implemented school-to-work transition through work-based learning in 150 schools in Kigali and Southern Province
- 8,063 AK2 students participated in a work-based learning opportunity to gain practical on-the-job experience to help them transition to work
- Published research on the impact and cost-effectiveness of AK2
- Published a Randomized Control Trial report demonstrating that AK2 youth have larger gains in work readiness competencies than a young person who did not participate in the program

## The Way Forward

Much was achieved under Akazi Kanoze 2; and, most importantly, the work will not stop after the official closing of the project on December 31, 2017. Both REB (Rwanda Education Board) and WDA (Workforce Development Authority) are committed to continuing to carry out quality work readiness training in all secondary schools in Rwanda. However, after various learning assessments with important stakeholders of the project (students, teachers, school administrators, and private sector members) in addition to retreats with REB and WDA staff, it is clear that more work remains to be done to ensure a clear transition towards full and sustainable institutionalization of soft skills and work readiness education in Rwanda.<sup>1</sup> In this memo, key recommendations are offered to strengthen and sustain work readiness education in Rwanda.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure that soft skills continue to be taught effectively in Rwanda, the following priorities and associated recommendations need to be considered:

**1. Continue to provide capacity building to REB and WDA as they seek to fully institutionalize what was established under AK2.** REB and WDA will continue to need capacity building to be able to sustain the quality of work started under the Akazi Kanoze 2 project. Now that the work-readiness curriculum has been embedded in the national curricula, both REB and WDA have taken a high level of ownership of the process and are committed to prioritizing effective soft skills education in Rwanda. However, this type of education is still new and it will be key for REB and WDA to provide systemic support in this area so that the results seen under AK2 will continue for future cohorts of Rwandan students.

During collaborative discussions with both REB and WDA at retreats hosted by the project, several specific recommendations were discussed on how to ensure consistent school monitoring and continuous teacher follow up which are critical areas to ensure quality soft skills education in Rwanda. First, they suggested developing a system by which lead trainers on the work-readiness curriculum are trained at the district level, so that they in turn can follow up on teachers within their locale. Many lead trainers were trained during AK2, but this would require developing some sort of system within REB and WDA where the lead trainers could be formally sent out to conduct refresher trainings and evaluations. Secondly, REB and WDA both indicated the need to encourage head teachers and Deans of Studies to take ownership of the work readiness modules and implementation. Some teachers noted that even the time-frame of when work-readiness lessons and activities were to be implemented was not well-defined. (As discussed below, this is especially true for work-based learning.) Thirdly, REB and WDA recognized a need to continue to track the impact of the work-readiness training on students so that could have data and insight to use when making future decisions on soft skills education.

Capacity building of REB and WDA will be key to the sustainability of the results achieved under AK2 and a clear strategy needs to be developed to ensure this is carried out.

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<sup>1</sup> For a description of how the internal and external learning reviews were conducted in addition to the REB and WDA retreat, please see the appendix.

## **2. Integrate work-based learning into REB and WDA curricula**

During the AK2 project, an innovative addition to the Work Ready Now! curriculum was developed: work-based learning. After completing the work readiness curriculum, students are encouraged to go out to their communities and gain real work exposure by participating in job observations, brief hands-on job training, or internships.

The concept of how to formalize work-based learning developed over the life of the project and wasn't fine-tuned until the final year. Thus, unlike the work-readiness content, work-based learning modules are currently extracurricular in REB and WDA schools. There is a need for REB to review work-based learning and decide if it should be integrated, and if so, where. This decision would then initiate a revision and adaptation process similar to what happened with the work-based learning content in the entrepreneurship syllabus. There is already a high level of interest from WDA to integrate work-based learning in the curriculum, and the process was already initiated to align the modules to the existing work readiness modules.

Both REB and WDA recognized that it will be essential to heighten collaboration with the private sector if work-based learning is to be rolled out effectively. This would involve building the capacity of REB and WDA so that they could effectively mobilize districts, schools, parents, and the private sector to provide support as students go and look for work exposure opportunities during their holidays.

The EDC office collected some data on the first group of student who completed work-based learning over their December – January 2017 holiday break to better understand how this process is happening at the school level. However, further time and resources will be needed to complete this vertical scaling process.

## **3. Improve best practices and reach of school-based in-service training**

Recently REB created a new Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) and during this process they worked with schools and teachers to develop a strategy for School-Based In-service Training (SBI) which is a peer-learning training model that encourages teachers and administrators to share skills and knowledge they learn in trainings with other teachers.

AK2 supported REB in CBC training and SBI monitoring by creating a cohort of Lead Trainers in 11 districts after training them in how to plan and facilitate CBC lessons and SBI trainings at their schools. While conducting these trainings, the following challenges in implementing regular SBI trainings were identified: i) lack of time – teachers have many competing priorities and few free periods to fit in training time, ii) incentivization - motivating teachers to do more than they already are without compensation is a barrier, and iii) lack of budget – it was difficult for teachers to collaborate with other schools due to transportation costs.

Based on these observations, in addition to suggestions from the REB retreat, the following are recommendations on what needs to be done to enhance SBI in Rwanda:

- Although the Continuous Professional Development guidelines already exist as a tool for SBI, a more practical guide with tools on how to implement and monitor in-service training in schools is needed.
- Strategies need to be developed to more fully integrate SBI into the schools. This could involve developing appropriate teacher incentives as well as integrating SBI into performance contracts of Head Teacher, SEOs, and DD's

- REB expressed the need to develop District Coordination Committees in charge of overseeing the quality of continuous professional development that will need training and mentoring as the new policy is rolled-out and standardized.

#### **4. Continue supporting teachers who are doing the direct implementation of the work-readiness training**

In addition to improving SBI, further strategies need to be developed to ensure that teachers are incentivized and motivated to carry out the work readiness training, particularly if the work-based learning modules are embedded into the curriculum as this will require extra student support for teachers. A better structure also needs to be developed to monitor that the work-readiness training is being carried out as it should be. During AK2, District Steering Committees were developed to monitor the implementation of work-readiness training in all AK2 schools. Making these committees truly sustainable remains a challenge, due to many competing priorities at the district level. Going forward it will be critical to explore the best ways to integrate WR content in the training of trainers for WDA and for pre-service training for teachers in the REB system. Thirdly, schools and teachers were adamant that they needed the work-readiness curriculum reference materials in order to be able to teach the material effectively. A hard copy of the reference materials was provided to each school in Rwanda under AK2, but this will need to be expanded as new schools are added to REB and WDA.

#### **5. Continue to ensure students have access to the resources they need in order to be able to effectively pursue work exposure opportunities**

During the AK2 external learning review, student representatives determined that there are some areas where they felt students could use more support as they explore work-readiness and work exposure opportunities. The first was to create some sort of nationwide platform which encourages youth to explore their career passions. They noted that many students wish they could get more career guidance and support from their parents. Others pursuing work-based learning opportunities noticed that many employers they approached weren't familiar with the idea of taking in a young person for work exposure and suggested national sensitization campaigns be developed to help the community better understand what students are trying to do after completing work readiness training. Secondly, students advised that a strategy be developed to help youth gain access to small loans and financing. Many youth were inspired to start small businesses after completing the work-readiness training, but felt that lack of access to finance was hindering them from growing their businesses. Youth-friendly services are currently being explored under the Huguka Dukore project, implemented by EDC, but there is a need to determine how those services might apply to students who are in school. Finally, youth suggested that alumni networks be developed so that work-readiness graduates can support each other and other younger students to spread the impact of very successful youth.

## **6. Continue to engage key stakeholders like the private sector and parents as school-to-work transition expands and work-readiness becomes part of all communities**

Parents, employers and communities at large were instrumental in helping students conduct work exposure and gain work experience during the school-to-work transition process. To ensure that school-to-work-transition remains demand driven, employers and parents need to continue to be engaged in the policy reform effort and roll-out of the CBC. Without the support and understanding of parents and employers, the horizontal scaling of school-to-work transition will be challenging. AK2 did a good job of engaging key stakeholders, but more time needs to go into this effort as the Ministry of Education's support for institutionalization of work-based learning as a means of contributing to student career guidance and planning is very high.

During the external learning review, some members of the private sector also suggested a few opportunities for continuing to engage the private sector. First, they recognized a need for internship management trainings as many private employees are not familiar with having interns and don't always know how to establish a mutually beneficial working relationship. Secondly, they suggest developing some sort of portal to bring together key stakeholders in the continued work-readiness and work-based learning training. This would be an online platform where students could connect with potential employers to search for work experiences in addition to engaging parents and teachers. Finally, they suggested that REB and WDA continue to consult the private sector as they carry out the work-readiness training so that it can continue to reflect the most current needs of the private sector as the market continues to change and develop.

## **CONCLUSION**

Much has been accomplished under AK2 and the impact that strong work-readiness training could have on the future youth of Rwanda is promising. However, it is critical that further follow-up and capacity building be undertaken in the trajectory towards sustainability in order for the quality of results under AK2 to be maintained under the MINEDUC take-over of work readiness training in the formal education sector. The education system needs to be further strengthened to support students to develop and internalize the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they are gaining through these innovative and effective programs.

## ANNEX

Below is a brief summary of the internal learning review, external learning review, and REB/WDA retreats that the above recommendations were gathered from:

### Internal Learning Review

The first step of the Akazi Kanoze 2 process evaluation was the internal learning review which brought together EDC staff and implementing partners (IPs) to review AK2 project interventions, reflect on what worked and what did not, and make recommendations for the future.

#### **Overview of Learning Review Process:**

Before attending the internal learning review workshop, IPs were asked to submit written responses to questions about project successes, challenges, and lessons learned. At the day-long workshop, participants reviewed these responses and agreed on the most important priorities for moving forward as outlined below.

#### **Key Attendees:**

- 8 EDC Rwanda Staff
- 16 technical staff from implementing partners including representatives from CRS, AVSI, HPA, Frontiers and AKA

The following are the key successes and challenges faced during AK2 in four key categories as identified by the internal learning review committee:

	Work Readiness	School to Work Transition (STWT)	Teacher Capacity Building	Institutional Capacity Building and Partnerships
<b>SUCCESSES</b>	1) WR curriculum embedded in REB and WDA curriculum	1) High student satisfaction with work experience	1) Trained teachers better equipped to teach CBC and learner-centered methods	1) Engagement of Mayors, Vice Mayors, and District Steering Committees added credibility to project
	2) Non-AK2 zone teachers trained on WR	2) Involvement of parents, schools, and District Steering Committees (DSCs)	2) Monitoring helped identify and address school-specific challenges	2) Involvement of Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and employers in STWT placements and AK2 implementation
<b>CHALLENGES</b>	1) A large number of teachers require training, but there is a limited project scope and budget to sufficiently train them	1) Insufficient employer engagement (some employers are still hesitant to offer work experience to students)	1) Lack of strategy to motivate teachers and School Liaison Officers (SLOs)	1) Sustainability of District Steering Committees (DSCs) is a challenge because employers and local government officials are already overburdened
	2) Insufficient teacher mentoring	2) Difficulty finding internships for students that live outside of AK2 zones	2) Difficult to adapt outreach to meet different school needs	2) Lack of clarity on how to hand the project over to MINEDUC

Based on the successes and challenges seen during the implementation of AK2, the internal learning review committee recommended the following priorities for ensuring the sustainability of work readiness training in Rwanda:

- 1) Improve training and mentoring model
- 2) Gain parent and employer buy-in
- 3) Improve information sharing and District Steering Committees
- 4) Improve strategies of motivating teachers and SLOs
- 5) Solidify transition plans of the project over to REB/WDA

## External Learning Review

The second step of the Akazi Kanoze 2 process evaluation was the external learning review, which brought together key school, government and private sector stakeholders to discuss successes and gaps in AK2 implementation as well as recommendations for the future of work readiness under MINEDUC.

### Overview of Learning Review Process:

A day-long workshop with reflective sessions including:

- creating sustainable personas for ideal student, teachers, government representatives, and employers
- identifying gaps in key contributing sectors
- brainstorming recommendations for the project transition

### Key Attendees:

- 5 students and 5 teachers from various secondary schools
- School administrators from 7 schools
- 3 WDA and 3 REB officials
- 2 Private sector stakeholders

In the first activity, attendees were asked to brainstorm what an ideal student, teacher, head teacher (or Dean of Studies), private sector, and REB/WDA official would look like in order to have the best and effective AK2 model moving forward. These sustainable personas speak a lot to what is going to be needed to make sure that each piece of the Akazi Kanoze 2 model functions sustainably with fidelity:

### Teacher/Trainer sustainable persona



#### An ideal student:

- is confident and self-sufficient
- works hard in school and his/her own business
- knows how to save
- has hope for the future

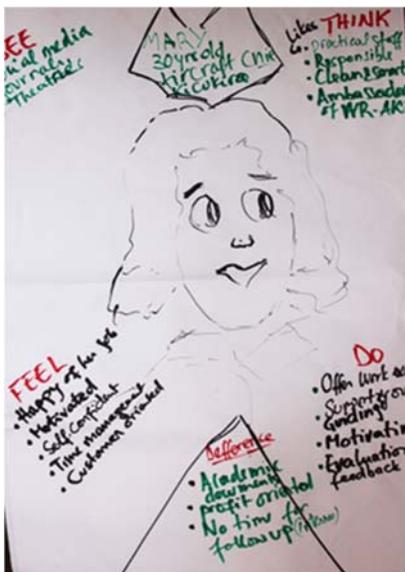
#### An ideal teacher or GoR lead trainer:

- is confident and proud to be an educator
- is creative, open-minded, resourceful
- a role model for his/her students
- uses engaging, learner centered approach
- “walks the talk” and has her own business

### Student sustainable persona



### Employer sustainable persona



#### An ideal employer:

- has good time management, a customer oriented focus and other soft skills
- teaches employees about rules and regulations and answers their questions
- ambassador of work readiness, offering work experiences, and guiding youth

#### An ideal head teacher:

- has a vision for sustaining AK2
- ensures good delivery of CBC
- is a bridge between students, employers, parents, and community in sustaining WBL and STWT opportunities

### Head teacher sustainable persona



However, each group recognized there were significant gaps between where they are now and where the sustainable personas are. Below is a brief summary of the key gaps they identified as well as recommendations on next steps required in order to bridge those gaps.

	GAPS	RECOMMENDATIONS
STUDENTS	1) Students need more support to stick to the goals they made	1) Youth should be encouraged to follow their passions and talents rather than feeling forced into a career path
	2) Students enjoyed budgeting and saving training but feel they need more reinforcement trainings	2) Parent engagement should be encouraged in helping their children discover their career path and they should be sensitized to WBL and STWT
	3) Students desire more attention and guidance from their parents particularly in career decisions	3) Institutions should be established that provide small loans to youth
TEACHERS	1) Work overload leads to an inability to focus on professional development	1) Develop comprehensive strategy of incentivizing teachers for participating in AK2 activities
	2) Teaching is largely not seen as a respected/valued career field which yields teachers that lack passion for their work	2) Expand and improve School Based In Service Training (SBI) and TOTs
	3) Teachers are lacking in materials (like work readiness manuals.)	3) Utilize technology to decrease workload
HEAD TEACHER OR	1) There is a lack of ownership of the AK2 model by some head teachers	1) Encourage head teachers to own the AK2 model. Continuing to track impact of AK2 on students and society will help with this.
	2) The time frame of AK2 activities is undefined in school calendars	2) Establish alumni networks at a school level
	3) Some students have lost motivation now that WR is mandatory (now focused on getting marks)	3) Continue developing Work Based Learning (WBL) and linking students to employers
PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYER	1) Many employers lack soft skills themselves and don't know how to appreciate/identify a good employee	1) Provide business management and internship management trainings
	2) There is a lack of access to job information – particularly for skilled workers living outside of main cities	2) Continue to consult employers and assess market needs as soft skills teaching is developed
	3) There is a lack of internship management skills	3) Create a portal which can bring together key AK2 stakeholders: what kind of trainings are offered, what kind of youth will come seek employment

For WDA/REB recommendations, see next sections.

## Highlights from REB Retreat



As a next step of the AK2 process evaluation, EDC Rwanda hosted a retreat with key Rwanda Education Board (REB) officials. The goal of the retreat was to share project accomplishments and discuss the way forward with the embedded work readiness content in the entrepreneurship curriculum, and sustainably scaling school-to-work transition through work-based learning and other components of the project that are not yet fully institutionalized.

<p><b>Overview of the Retreat Process:</b></p> <p>The 3 key questions the retreat sought to answer were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are some key recommendations for the full scale-up and integration of the work readiness curriculum?</li> <li>What are recommendations for scaling and strengthening school-based in service (SBI)?</li> <li>What steps need to be taken by REB to institutionalize the work-based learning component of the AK2 project?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key Attendees:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2 Deputy Director Generals</li> <li>- REB technical staff from teacher development, curriculum, assessment, and ICT</li> <li>- 3 EDC staff</li> <li>- 4 AKA staff</li> </ul>
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The following are recommendations from REB workshop participants on key priorities to further sustain and scale AK2:

	<b>KEY RECCOMENDATIONS FROM REB RETREAT</b>
<b>Integration of Work Readiness</b>	1) Increase REB capacity to sustain the quality of work started under AK2 and continue school follow-up
	2) Distribute 2 teacher reference manuals in each REB secondary school for the 2018 school year, including securing funds
	3) Expand the work readiness content training beyond entrepreneurship teachers and make it accessible to all teachers by putting it in the regular training plan
	4) Integrate the work readiness content in pre-service entrepreneurship teacher training at the College of Education
<b>School Based In-Service Training</b>	1) Develop a standardized SBI package (training materials, monitoring forms) for all Development Partners working in teacher training to use when training on SBI
	2) Integrate SBI into performance contracts of Head Teachers, SEOs, and DD's
	3) Establish District Coordination Committees in all 30 districts to reinforce SBI
<b>Work-based learning</b>	1) Approve, adapt, and integrate the work-based learning approach in general education as it is currently extracurricular in REB schools
	2) Build the capacity of REB to understand and support the implementation of work-based learning in schools, particularly involving heightened collaboration with the private sector

### Highlights from WDA Retreat

A final element of the AK2 process evaluation was the WDA retreat, which followed a similar process to the REB retreat.

<p><b>Overview of the Retreat Process:</b></p> <p>Like the REB retreat, the three main goals of the WDA retreat were to identify recommendations on the WDA Work Readiness (Core Module) priorities, suggestions for improving in-house training, and discuss if/how to integrate work based learning into the national curriculum.</p>	<p><b>Key Attendees:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Director General</li> <li>- 1 Deputy Director Generals</li> <li>- WDA technical staff from training of trainers unit, curriculum, and examinations</li> <li>- 2 EDC staff</li> <li>- 4 AKA staff</li> </ul>
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The following are recommendations from workshop participants:

	<b>KEY RECCOMENDATIONS FROM WDA RETREAT</b>
<b>Work Readiness (Core Module) priorities</b>	1) Publish & distribute TVET Core Module Trainer manuals
	2) Create vertical mobility at TVET Levels 4 – 7, and in particular offer advanced Core Modules for students who have completed Level 3
	3) Train lead trainers at district level to have lead trainers who are located closer to the schools
<b>In-house training priorities</b>	1) Harmonize and institutionalize SBI in TVET system by increasing awareness among district/sector education officials, school managers, PTAS etc. in addition to building the capacity of WDA lead trainers and developing a coaching/follow-up system
	2) Create and avail training materials for lead trainers to use in TOT and for trainers/head teachers to use in conducting SBI
<b>Work-based learning</b>	1) Review work-based learning modules and embed them in certified TVET Trainer modules/curriculum as well as existing student core modules
	2) Raise awareness and develop ownership of WBL among Workforce Development Authority (MINEDUC Central Level), Districts, schools, parents, and private sector