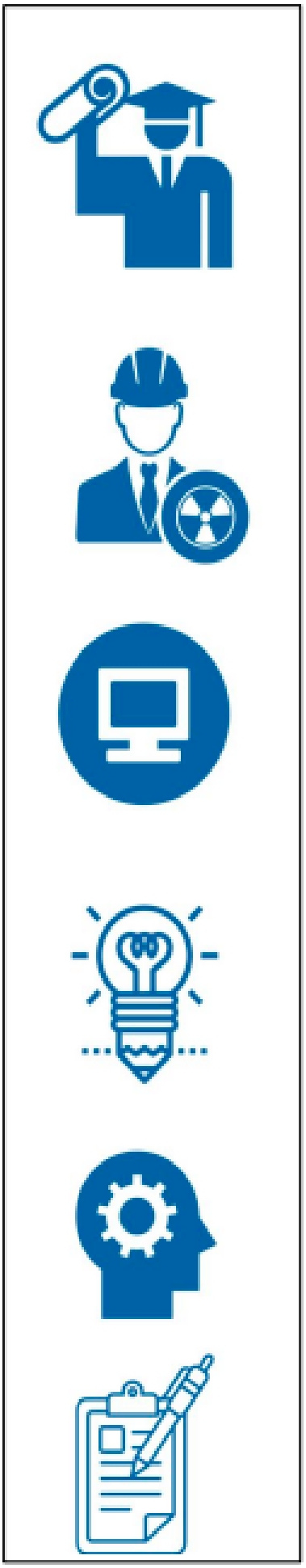
Using Digital Tools for Monitoring and Evaluation of Youth Employment Programs



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S4YE SOLUTIONS FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

WORLD BANK GROUP Jobs

The objective of this Solutions for Youth Employment (S4YE) Knowledge Brief is to promote a culture of innovation, learning and evidence-based decision making among youth employment practitioners.

In this Knowledge Brief, we highlight different ways in which youth employment projects in S4YE's community of practice, the Impact Portfolio, a network of 44 high-potential and innovative youth employment projects, are using digital tools for M&E strategies and data collection methods. Based on recent and ongoing discussions with our partners, we see common trends on the 1) importance of developing centralized data management systems, 2) promoting awareness and quick feedback, 3) enhancing data accuracy 4) increasing cost effectiveness of M&E tools, 5) broadening outreach with SMS and smart phones, and 6) using dashboards and data visualization. Overall, we see several ways our partners are using digital technology to be effective in monitoring and reporting impact.

Using Digital Tools for Monitoring and Evaluation of Youth Employment Programs

When youth employment organizations have well established Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) processes, they are able to make evidence-based decisions around project alterations, expanding scale, and communicating expectations with investors, stakeholders, and community members. Youth employment organizations can use M&E to track project metrics and ensure resources are being used effectively to achieve desired objectives. M&E is especially relevant and important for youth employment organizations to measure impact on not only direct beneficiaries but also on communities and labor markets.

Digital M&E tools can help simplify complicated processes by helping implementing organizations use the data from beneficiaries to influence project design in a cost effective way. Digital tools can broaden the scope of data collected, securely store beneficiary data, and create thorough monitoring reports. Based on our recent consultations and surveys with S4YE's community of practice, the Impact Portfolio (IP), a network of 44 high-potential and innovative youth employment projects, this knowledge brief will discuss how digital tools are helping IP organizations strengthen M&E in their youth employment programs. The table (Table 1) below lists specific digital tools S4YE IP partners shared, as effective methods for M&E.

Table 1 – Common Digital M&E Tools used by S4YE IP partners

Platforms used for developing centralized M&E Systems	• **Salesforce** – a monitoring platform that allows organizations to manage data and analytics • **Google Cloud Platform** – cloud computing services such as data storage, resource management and use of all Google tools (Gmail, Google Drive, Google Data Studio, Google Forms, Google Classroom, Google Sheets, Google Big Query) • **Stacker** – a software development and application creation tool that takes data from other platforms to build customizable apps	• Salesforce costs range from $25 USD to $300 USD per user per month for various levels of access and features • Google cloud offers free trial periods with various billing options for expansion packages and additional storage • Stacker costs range from $59 per month for one app to $269 per month for unlimited apps
Data Collection Tools	• **Kobo Toolbox** – data collection tool to create surveys and forms with online and offline capabilities, free for humanitarian organizations • **SurveyCTO** – data collection with phones, tablets, computers • **Qualtrics** – a survey creation and reporting software • **Form Assembly** – web form builder and data collection platform • **Typeform-** Spanish online software service company that specializes in online form building and online surveys. Its main software creates dynamic forms based on user needs.	• Kobo Toolbox is free for humanitarian organizations • SurveyCTO costs $198 USD per month for unlimited storage, forms, devices, and users • Qualtrics offers subscriptions from $1500 USD to $5000 USD • Form Assembly plans start at $89 per month up to $224 USD per month with customizable add-ons • Typeform starts at $ 25 USD per month to $83 USD per month
Outreach Tools	• **Zoom** – a web conference platform for audio and video meetings • **WhatsApp** – centralized instant message and voiceover IP service, free to download • **Textit** – interactive chatbot platform for outreach, • **Slack** – a messaging tool with flexible attachments, collaboration, and integration features	• Zoom offers free trials with limits on video lengths of 40 minutes and subscriptions ranging from $149 USD to $250 USD per month • WhatsApp is completely free to download and use • Textit has various subscriptions, the most inclusive being $25USD per month for unlimited messages, two hundred groups and campaigns, ten user logins and ten integrations • Slack offers a free option for two people, ten thousand messages, and ten integration tools, and offers Pro,

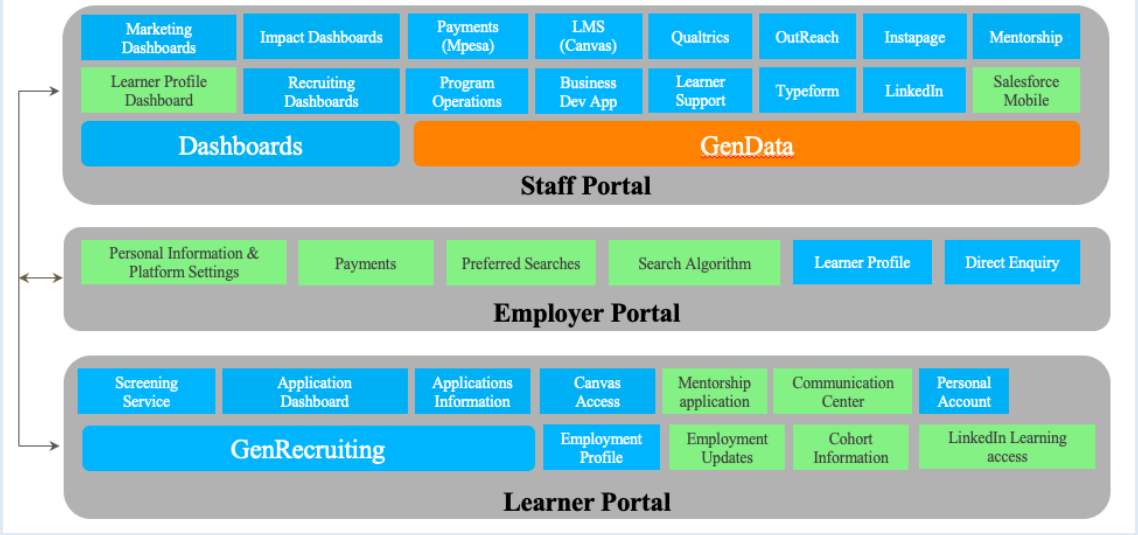
		Business and Enterprise level subscriptions with costs starting at $6.67 per month for Pro
Data Analysis & Visualization Tools	• **MySQL** – visualization and software development tool • **PowerBI** – interactive data visualization software • **Qlik** – an analytics, visualization, and dashboard creation application • **Airtable** – a database and spreadsheet combination tool that integrates with other platforms to create dashboards, data visualization, and integrations with other tools	• MySQL has a free version with costs ranging from standard options, $2,000 USD, to enterprise costs $5,000 USD • PowerBI subscriptions range from basic to enterprise ranging in cost from $10 USD per month per user to $4995 USD per month for the organization • Qlik plans vary with costs $30 USD per month per user for Qlik Business Sense up to enterprise level plans • Airtable offers 50% less Pro and Plus plans for non-profit organizations at $144 per user per year and $72 per user per year

Digital M&E tools can assist organizations in centralizing their monitoring platforms, receiving feedback from youth beneficiaries, improving data accuracy, decreasing data collection costs, broadening outreach and displaying impact through data visualizations. Six such ways in which S4YE's IP organizations are using these tools are highlighted below.

1. Developing Centralized Data Management Systems

When utilizing digital M&E tools, there are numerous platforms organizations can consider to develop centralized data management systems, monitor project results, and also increase scale. Operating through a centralized monitoring platform can increase accessibility and comparison across different program locations, demographics, survey results, and other indicators. Many organizations have noted the importance of a strong centralized monitoring platform, developed on platforms such as Salesforce, Google Cloud Platform, Stacker , and Google Data Studio. Laboratoria, a bootcamp program for women in Latin America interested in web development and UX careers, notes the ease of Google platform and the uniformity of using all Google tools across all internal teams. Monitoring and integrating data through Google Data Studio and Google Big Query, Laboratoria tracks beneficiary journeys from the sign up process, through the program, to post intervention alumni touchpoints. These monitoring platforms allow for integration of systems and tools easing data analysis processes and assessments. The figure below notes how Generation, a global nonprofit organization preparing unemployed or underemployed youth for entry-level, middle-skill roles, uses Salesforce for its internal centralized management system to maintain important data and information between staff, employer, and learner portals.

Figure 1: Generation Data Management System Example[1]



On the other hand, Educate!, a youth employment organization that partners with local schools and governments in Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda, relies on its monitoring platform that allows data collection to be implemented into one system through MySQL database and Google Data Studio tools. By filtering data collection through Google tools, that are easy to use, and are cost efficient, Educate! is able to replicate their model in other geographic locations. This monitoring model further strengthens Educate!'s objective as they are able to increase scale and establish more programs throughout the region.

Airtable is a customizable platform that combines databases and spreadsheets, facilitates data integration, and creates a single source for organizations to arrange external applications for internal teams. Airtable can partner with other digital tools, such as Stacker, that allow organizations to create and build applications using Airtable and Google Sheets data. Programa Valentina, a recruitment, training, and certification program for at-risk youth in Guatemala, and The Next Economy, an employability and entrepreneurship program in Mali, Somalia and Nigeria, both use Airtable to track participant data and applications for their programs. Programa Valentina and The Next Economy prefer to use Airtable as their main database platform because it is easy to use for both internal staff and participant end users, and because it offers extensive data storage for both applicants and beneficiaries.

Programa Valentina also uses Airtable for its matching algorithm which places candidates into entry level jobs based on potential rather than just experience. Airtable compares data from psychometric tests that beneficiaries complete to measure soft skills to test results from top performing employees at partner companies. Using this matching algorithm and Airtable for data analysis, Programa Valentina is able to place participants successfully, and deliver talent to partner companies. During the COVID-19 pandemic, monitoring systems such as these were crucial to retaining participant data, evaluating projects, and providing organizations flexibility while transitioning to online programming.

[1] Generation, 2022.

2. Receiving Regular and Quick Feedback from Youth Beneficiaries

Using digital tools gives organizations the ability to better understand insights about their project while receiving quick feedback from participants and community members. Mobile phone, SMS and online platforms increased access to youth participants. For example, Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, a social enterprise in South Africa helping youth find job opportunities, developed a zero-rated mobile pp[2] based M&E system. A zero-rated app allows users to access content without incurring data costs or using their phone plans. By minimizing expenses for participants organizations can incentivize youth to interact with the mobile app, provide key demographic data, and measure program efficiency. Harambee notes that it achieved this in collaboration with local telecommunication companies. Facilitating partnerships between youth employment organizations and major telecommunication companies can further ease the creation of zero-rated mobile apps. Establishing data free infrastructure can be an important step towards increasing community response and accelerating M&E data collection.

In addition, Slack, a messaging tool with flexible attachments, collaboration and integration features, allows for the creation of different channels organizations can use to foster connections with internal employees, beneficiaries and alumni of their programs. Slack internal and external channels streamline communication between cohorts and staff within youth employment organizations while completing the programs. Slack also gives organizations the opportunity to maintain connections and receive feedback after beneficiaries complete the programs through external alumni channels. For example, Laboratoria, uses Slack channels to foster community between active program participants and alumni, and tracks alumni placement and employment one, six, twelve, and eighteen months after completion of their bootcamp. In addition, the team sends out follow-up surveys via email and uses Typeform to gather more information.

Virtual meetings through Zoom, a web conference platform for audio and video meetings, allows organizations to collect data from focus groups and receive feedback on how the community responded to the program intervention. Zoom offers organizations the possibility to connect with beneficiaries and, with permission, record sessions to review responses afterwards. Box 1 below notes how Education for Employment, a placement linked skills training nonprofit operating in the Middle East, operated through Zoom to conduct beneficiary interviews.

[2] Harambee's website for information about which South African providers list Harambee as zero-rated,

Box 1: Strategies to Ease Data Collection during COVID-19

Education for Employment (EFE), is currently conducting evaluations for their Tunisia employment program and is combining M&E tools to collect as much data as possible while respecting COVID-19 guidelines[3]. Utilizing Zoom for virtual informant interviews allows EFE to maintain contact with their beneficiaries and collect important data surrounding project efficiency and impact. Within these virtual focus group interviews, EFE consultants reduced the number of youth per group in order to ensure adequate data collection within remote settings. While remote evaluations may cause some participants to be hesitant to share, a previous completed EFE evaluation in Gaza found that the change from in-person to virtual focus groups did not have a significant impact on data collection and all interviews were successful.

Solutions at scale also rely on the capacity of Ministries to play their part in the national data ecosystem. Together with the Ministry of Education in Ecuador, VVOB - education for development, a program focusing on improving education systems in Ecuador through teacher and school leaders´ professional development, developed a tracer study module and integrated it into the Ministry's existing data management system. Data is collected from students who are either in or have graduated from secondary education and in turn the Ministry, schools, and employers gain a better detailed understanding of areas where alignment between skills supply and demand needs to improve. The first round of data collection reached 62,349 youth from the Sierra and Amazone regions.

3. Enhancing Data Accuracy

Diversifying data collection methods increases the potential in receiving richer data from monitoring and evaluation. Digital tools such as SurveyCTO, Qualtrics, and Form Assembly[4], are data collection tools focusing on flexible and customizable survey and form creation options. By selecting a combination of M&E tools organizations can increase their outreach for data collection and receive greater insight from the specific features these tools offer such as GPS mapping, secure data storage, and various survey designs and templates. Heifer's Learn4Agribusiness project, a program focusing on assisting young farmers in Uganda, notes that SurveyCTO is an easy to use tool for low bandwidth areas and enables data collection from youth participants in rural areas using text SMS. Generation uses Qualtrics for its surveys. Generation specifically notes that with surveys, language and phrasing style are crucial to confirm that all surveys are asking the same question across different countries and cultures, and that translations do not alter the responses from participants. Qualtrics is valuable in assisting with creation of and distribution of surveys across web platforms, text messages, mobile applications, etc.

4. Increasing Cost Effectiveness of M&E

Technology can ease M&E and improve data collection accuracy while reducing costs. Collecting data electronically reduces data-entry costs and makes project information accessible faster. Additionally, cost

[3]EFE is replicating similar M&E tactics from their impact evaluation for their Gaza project in February of 2022 for their current Tunisia program evaluation to best receive feedback while respecting public health concerns.
[4] See Table 3 above for a table of M&E Tools with costs outlined.

efficient tools allow organizations the opportunity to redistribute funds and allocate resources toward other project aspects. To best serve a wide variety of organizations, technological tools offer range of costs and subscriptions, allowing organizations to select the plan that best fits their needs.

There are simple methods that organizations can utilize to decrease M&E costs while maintaining a high level of data quality and a rapid collection process. For example, ReBootKamp (RBK), a coding bootcamp for disadvantaged youth in the Middle East and North Africa region, uses Google Sheets to create a high frequency monitoring process. Participants in the bootcamps fill out a touchpoint emotional and stress level survey three times per day and from those responses the Google Sheets are updated immediately. Google Sheets is free to use with the creation of a Gmail email account and can store data securely the Google Drive.

VVOB - education for development, and Skills to Succeed, a program by Save the Children training adolescents with skills to find employment, both use Kobo Toolbox for all of their M&E data collection and outreach (Box 2). VVOB shared that the ability to collect data online and offline has expanded their data collection possibilities without incurring additional costs. Skills to Succeed notes that with the data collection tools Kobo Toolbox offers the team in Bangladesh is piloting a mobile app and website application to automatically calculate monitoring indicators and record monitoring activities in real time. This mobile app prototype is working to calculate project indicators and update in real time as data is provided by users, giving the Skills to Succeed team more accurate information to make decisions and changes to project design. Skills to Succeed's prototype mobile and web app demonstrates how digital M&E tools encourage product innovation for youth employment organizations to analyze impact more thoroughly on target communities and beneficiaries.

Box 2: Kobo Toolbox Cost-Effective M&E For Humanitarian Organizations

Kobo Toolbox is a cost-effective option that is free with unlimited use for humanitarian organizations. Kobo Toolbox is a particularly useful platform as it allows organizations to collect data both online and offline. This feature simplifies data collection and eliminates difficulties surrounding data access and Wi-Fi connections. In addition to unlimited free access and online/offline data collection capabilities, Kobo Toolbox offers survey and form templates that can be customized with different question types, easily shared, and exported.

Cost effective M&E tools can expand outreach to remote and hard to reach areas through products such as Raspberry Pi. Raspberry Pi runs on Linux, a free operating system from an SD card and it is powered by a USB phone charger. Raspberry Pi microcomputers cost begin at $35 USD and have various options that can be added on. Open Learning Exchange (OLE), an organization dedicated to assisting youth in remote locations access education, uses Raspberry Pi servers to support the Personalized Learning Achieved with Network Empowered Teams (PLANET) system that connects with community members and beneficiaries. Through Raspberry Pi servers, OLE's Planet system is able to monitor and track beneficiary data as well as send out surveys. COVID-19 highlighted the urgency with which governments and development organizations should focus on providing access to broadband to all areas, in utilizing digital M&E tools and

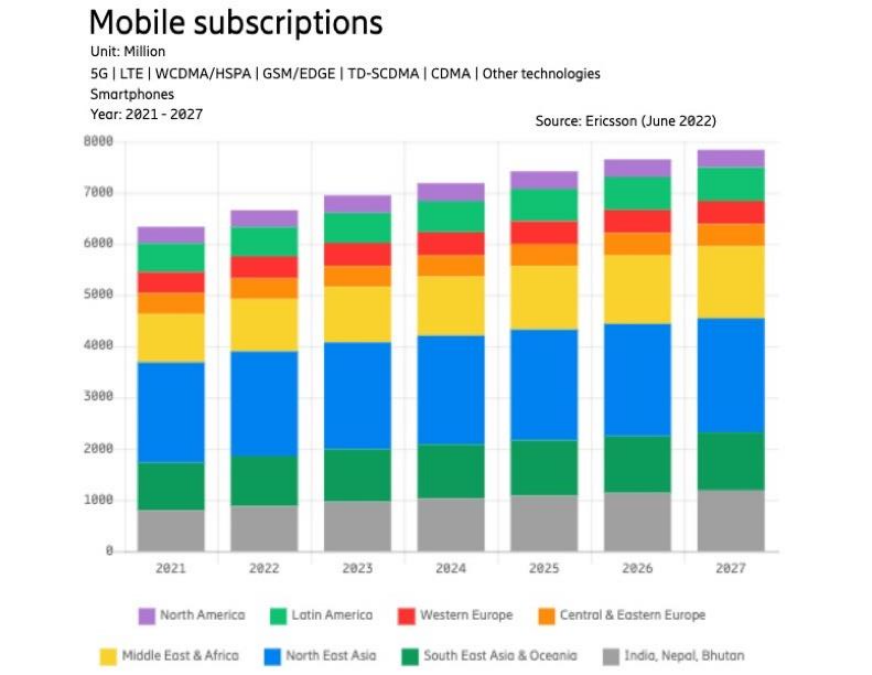
cost-effective products like Raspberry Pi, organizations can begin to expand access to employment in even the most remote locations[5].

5. Broadening Outreach with SMS and Smart Phone Surveys

Mobile data collection is an efficient alternative that reduces the costs of creating paper forms and data entry and facilitates an easier option for participants to respond. As more youth have their own personal phone, youth employment programs can expand their outreach through both smart phone and SMS text message surveys. M&E methods must ensure youth have as few obstacles as possible for data collection.

Programa Valentina used the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to update all of its programming to be accessible through a smart phone. As the figure below notes, smart phone subscriptions have been, and will continue, to increase globally in the upcoming years. Programa Valentina notes that in Guatemala specifically the telecommunications companies have a variety of bundles that citizens can select, and free Wi-Fi is available at different locations, so participants can find internet access to complete trainings. Combining a variety of tools, Zoom, Google Classroom, Airtable, and Canva, Programa Valentina is able to create a two-week training program, certify participants, and collect data on psychometric evaluations while matching participants to companies.

Figure 2: Prediction Global Mobile Smartphone Subscriptions[6]



[5] S4YE, 2021. Online Learning Models - How to include youth in low bandwidth areas.
[6] Ericsson Mobility Visualizer, 2022 report.

Access to cell phones has increased communication possibilities throughout the world, as 477 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa subscribed to mobile services[7]. To increase participant response rates, attendance to workshops, and online profiles, organizations can remove the costs attached to phone and SMS surveys[8]. Covering data access can act as an incentive for youth to fill out these surveys since there is no personal cost, except for the participant's time. Additionally, SMS reduces the barriers for young people with hearing and speech disabilities. Therefore, project teams could use SMS platforms to incorporate youth voice in their youth employment program to access all youth, including vulnerable youth in the local community[9]. The below box discusses a pilot Harambee is testing to see how soft skills influence their employment match program.

Box 3: SMS and Soft Skills Development Surveys

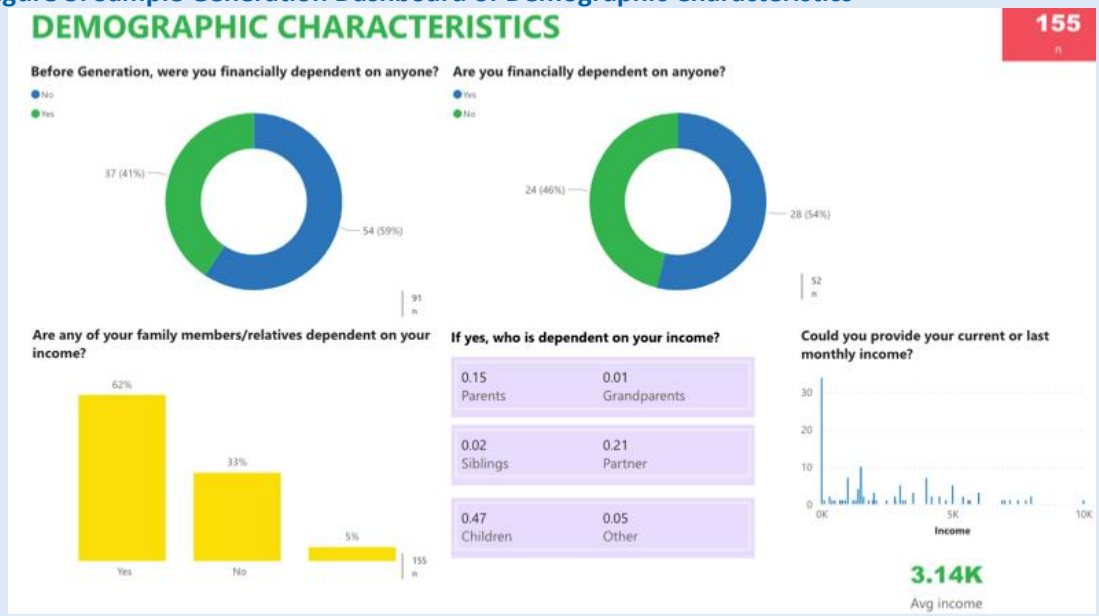
Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator has recently started a pilot using SMS text messages to examine whether adding soft skills to programs improves overall participant employment match outcomes with partners at J-PAL, Oxford, and Duke University[10]. Through this program, Harambee has found that SMS text message surveys yield high returns when costs for data are covered and the survey does not require a long time commitment from participants. The costs to cover SMS data was estimated around 8 South African Rand per participant, and the survey required less than 25 minutes to complete. This pilot found that there are 4 promising concepts that should be added to the algorithm: growth mindset, behavioral activation, grit, and entrepreneurial mindsets questions all predict labor market searches and employment outcomes well. From this study Harambee is considering restructuring their algorithm to better integrate soft skills into their matching process.

6. Dashboards and Data Visualization

Using analytics, data visualization, and dashboards organizations can clarify and analyze all the data collected for M&E. Expanding M&E across company goals drives an internal culture of being more data and evidence driven, and ultimately more impact oriented. The figure below from Generation demonstrates how data visualization can facilitate data driven conversations between internal teams when viewing key beneficiary demographic information in dashboards, charts, and tables. Creating dashboards and sharing real time data across entire organization networks can facilitate a clearer understanding about the role of M&E and can encourage all team members to be impact managers.

[7] The Mobile Economy Sub-Saharan Africa 2020 report from GSMA notes that in 2019 over 477 million people in the region accessed mobile services, and is expected to grow reaching 50% of the region as subscribers by 2025.
[8] In the 2019 article, "In search of the optimal mode for mobile phone surveys in developing countries: A comparison of IVR, SMS, and CATI in Nigeria. Survey Research Methods
", SMS text messages are noted as the most cost-effective tool for outreach.
[9] S4YE (2020), How Technology Can Help Incorporate Youth Voice in Employment Programs.
[10] The recent pilots, Improving Harambee Matching Service for Employers: Scale Validation, tests how incorporating soft skills into the algorithm that places participants with employers can improve match outcomes.

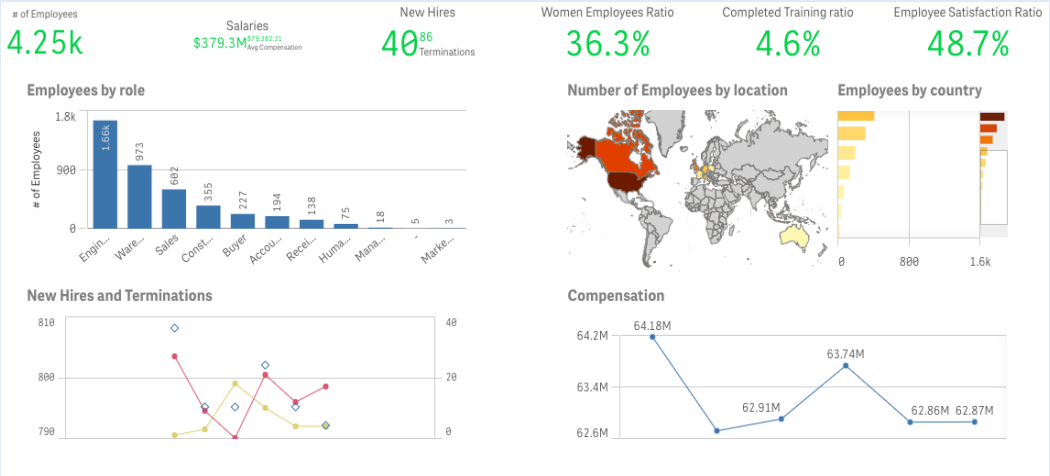
Figure 3: Sample Generation Dashboard of Demographic Characteristics[11]



Generation and Enablecode, an organization focused on enabling technology careers for youth with disabilities from Vietnam, both shared the importance of dashboards and data visualization within their M&E process to evaluate and develop project next steps from participant responses. Enablecode specifically emphasizes data collection and data storage as a crucial component to understanding short term processes and improving long term project approaches. By personalizing the data collection process to fully understand participants' backgrounds, organizations can not only accurately place beneficiaries into programs immediately but adapt and alter the program to maximize results. Enablecode uses Qlik to follow all of their participants throughout their program and measure longevity of employment afterwards. Qlik offers an easy-to-use platform that does not require query or code writing to create dashboards of data. Figure 4 shows a dashboard example from Qlik for the human resources people management option to demonstrate how organizations can share data through charts, graphs, and tables.

[11] Generation, 2022.

Figure 4: Qlik Example Dashboard[12]



Some Caveats to bear in mind

While tech-enabled M&E is a strong step forward in receiving data and measuring impact, it is important to note the shortcomings of these technology tools[13]. Tech-enabled M&E can remove personal rapport and isolate participants who do not have access to the technology that these tools use. Specifically, tech-enabled M&E can miss populations of disadvantaged beneficiaries and inaccurately report on the impact of a project. To overcome this, organizations must be extremely thorough in their evaluations, data collection methods, and baseline understandings of the communities that they serve. In sufficiently mapping target beneficiaries beforehand and using a variety of M&E tools to collect data from all participants, organizations can effectively overcome accessibility obstacles that tech-enabled tools generate.

Conclusion

As technology transforms the world of work, youth employment practitioners should continuously explore how to use tech-enabled solutions to make their programs more agile and evidence-driven. By using tech-enabled M&E, organizations can increase the rigor, efficiency, speed, and utility of data and evidence about their projects and programs. Also, organizations can make rapid course corrections in response to unforeseen local and global circumstances. Lastly, organizations must improve business intelligence dashboards and promote a culture of evidence-driven decisions. As implementing organizations gather, use, and share data, the broader youth employment community can also learn from experiences of other programs and collectively address the critical agenda of creating more and better jobs for youth.

[12] Qlik HR Dashboard, https://www.qlik.com/us/dashboard-examples/hr-dashboard.

[13] A Monitoring and Evaluation in a Tech-Enabled World study from the Rockefeller Foundation in 2014 discusses various challenges tech-enabled M&E can cause like selectivity bias, low institutional capacity, overreliance on digital tools, etc.

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S4YE is a multi-stakeholder coalition that aims to provide leadership and resources for catalytic action to increase the number of young people engaged in productive work. S4YE's partners include the World Bank Group, Accenture, The Rockefeller Foundation, Mastercard Foundation, Microsoft, Plan International, International Youth Foundation (IYF), Youth Business International (YBI), RAND Corporation, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Governments of Norway and Germany, and the UN Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth. The S4YE Secretariat is housed in the Jobs Group within the Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice at the World Bank Group.

This knowledge brief does not necessarily reflect the views of the World Bank or each S4YE partner. For additional resources for youth employment, please visit https://www.s4ye.org/s4ye-publications