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Boosting Decent Jobs and Enhancing Skills for the Youth in Rwanda's Digital Economy – Internal Midterm evaluation

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Acronyms

AFR	Access to Finance Rwanda
AI	Artificial Intelligence
BDA	Business Development Advisor
BDF	Business Development Fund
BDS	Business Development Services
BNR	National Bank of Rwanda
BPN	Business Professionals Network
CESTRAR	Rwanda Workers' Trade Union Confederation
CBC	Competency-Based Curriculum
CIT	Corporate Income Tax
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
DAP	Digital Ambassadors Programme
DBI	Digital Business Identifier
DCO	Digital Cooperation Organization
DED	Digital Employment Diagnostics
DIY	Do It Yourself
DOT	Digital Opportunity Trust
DPI	Digital Public Infrastructure
DYB	Digitize Your Business
EAC	East African Community
EDP	Entrepreneurship Development Policy
ESO	Entrepreneurship Support Organization
EU	European Commission
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FSP	Financial Service Provider
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Society for International Cooperation)

HDI	Human Development Index
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IEED	Inclusive Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPRC	Integrated Polytechnic Regional College
IoT	Internet of Things
IP	Intellectual Property
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
LFA	Logical Framework Analysis
LFS	Labour Force Survey
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MIFOTRA	Ministry of Public Service and Labour
MINEDUC	Ministry of Education
MINICOM	Ministry of Trade and Industry
MINICT	Ministry of ICT and Innovation
MOYA	Ministry of Youth
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise
MTE	Mid Term Evaluation
MTN	Mobile Telephone Networks (MTN Mobile Money)
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NEP	National Employment Policy
NFES	National Financial Education Strategy
NFIS	National Financial Inclusion Strategy
NIRDA	National Industrial Research and Development Agency
NISR	National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda
NST1/NST2	National Strategy for Transformation 1 and 2
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development-Development Assistance Committee
PSF	Private Sector Federation

RBA	Rwanda Broadcasting Agency
RDB	Rwanda Development Board
RFL	Rwanda Finance Limited
RIS	Rwanda Innovation Strategy
RICEM	Rwanda Institute of Cooperatives, Entrepreneurship and Microfinance
RISA	Rwanda Information Society Authority
RTB	Rwanda TVET Board
RURA	Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority
RP	Rwanda Polytechnic
RSSB	Rwanda Social Security Board
SACCO	Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization
SIYB	Start and Improve Your Business
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SRMP	Smart Rwanda Master Plan
SSC	Sector Skills Council
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
TAG	Technical Advisory Group
ToC	Theory of Change
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
ULK	Kigali Independent University
UR	University of Rwanda
YEGO	Youth Empowerment and Global Opportunities (centres)

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Executive Summary

Project design

The *Boosting Decent Jobs and Enhancing Skills for the Youth in Rwanda's Digital Economy* project responds to Rwanda's urgent youth employment challenges within a rapidly evolving digital economy. Rwanda faces a fast-growing youth population, high underemployment, widespread informality, and persistent skills mismatches. At the same time, the country has made digital transformation a national priority. The project is implemented under the ILO–ITU–AU Joint Programme and aligns with the Global Initiative for Decent Jobs for Youth, Rwanda's Vision 2050, the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1/NST2), and the National Employment Policy.

The project adopts a systems-based approach. It recognises that decent youth employment in the digital economy cannot be delivered through isolated interventions. Instead, it requires coordinated action across four interconnected areas: digital job creation and enterprise development; digital skills supply; school-to-work and skills-to-enterprise transitions; and multi-stakeholder partnerships and governance. The programme therefore focuses on policy support, institutional strengthening, skills systems reform, work-based learning, entrepreneurship support, and evidence generation.

The Theory of Change (ToC) is built on the assumption that improving youth employment outcomes in the digital economy requires structural and institutional change. By strengthening policies, enterprises, training systems, and labour-market intermediation simultaneously, the project seeks to trigger systemic shifts that can be sustained beyond the project lifespan. The design prioritises institutionalisation within national systems rather than standalone delivery.

Evaluation design

The Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) was conducted after two years of implementation, covering the period from January 2024 to December 2025. The evaluation serves two main purposes: accountability to the donor and national partners and learning to strengthen implementation during the remaining project period. The evaluation follows ILO evaluation policy and applies the OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, with attention to cross-cutting issues and management arrangements.

The evaluation used a theory-based, systems-oriented, mixed-methods approach. Data collection included document review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and analysis of monitoring and diagnostic data. More than forty stakeholders were consulted, including government institutions, employers' and workers' organisations, training providers, youth, entrepreneurs, and development partners. Gender equality and inclusion were integrated throughout the evaluation.

Given its mid-term nature, the evaluation did not seek to attribute final impact. Instead, it assessed progress toward outcomes, tested the validity of the ToC, identified early signs of systemic shifts, and highlighted enabling and constraining factors affecting performance.

Evaluation findings

Relevance

The evaluation finds that the project remains highly relevant. The design is well grounded in Rwanda's labour-market context and policy priorities. It responds directly to high youth underemployment, informality, digital skills gaps, and weak school-to-work transitions. The focus on digital transformation is timely and aligned with national strategies.

The project has also shown strong responsiveness to evolving priorities. It has adapted to new policy developments, including the review of the National Employment Policy (NEP) and the growing emphasis on digital skills, internships, and apprenticeships. Increasing attention to

gender, persons with disabilities, and vulnerable youth reflects responsiveness to beneficiary needs, although inclusion gaps remain.

Coherence

The project demonstrates strong internal and external coherence. Internally, activities across policy support, skills development, entrepreneurship, and employment services are conceptually aligned. Externally, the project complements national programmes and aligns with other UN and development partner initiatives.

The project actively avoids duplication by embedding tools and reforms within existing institutions. It works through ministries, training bodies, Hanga hubs, employment service centres, and employer organisations. However, the evaluation notes that Rwanda's youth employment and digital skills landscape is crowded. Coordination demands are high, especially at district level, and some overlap risks persist outside the project's direct control.

Efficiency

Resource allocation has generally been strategic. Spending has prioritised core implementation and partnerships. Some components, particularly skills development and intermediation, progressed more slowly than planned due to procurement delays and the technical complexity of systems reform.

The project relied heavily on ILO international technical support. With the lean project team in Kigali, it was necessary to get this backstopping and technical support from the ILO regional and HQ teams to maintain delivery timelines and for high quality delivery of certain outputs (assessments, NEP reviews etc). This ensured quality and technical alignment. With about 50% of overall project budget already spent (~50%) and 25% committed against 2026 new initiatives by mid-term, the project has some flexibility, with 25% remaining budget, to introduce initiatives in 2027. Efficient use of remaining resources will require strong prioritisation.

Effectiveness

The project has made solid mid-term progress toward its intended outcomes. Major achievements include high-quality labour-market diagnostics, institutionalisation of entrepreneurship and digital skills tools, redesign of the National Internship Programme, piloting of quality apprenticeships, and strengthened career guidance systems. Partnerships with government, employers, and workers are strong at national level.

However, outcome-level results such as job creation, job placement, enterprise growth, and improvements in job quality /decent work are not yet measurable at scale. This reflects the project's systems-change orientation, where impacts are expected to emerge over a longer period and potentially more visible towards the end of the project. Private-sector engagement in internships and apprenticeships remains uneven, particularly beyond the ICT sector.

Impact

Early signs of impact are visible at the level of policies, institutional behaviour, and norms. The project has helped shift thinking away from fragmented interventions toward integrated demand-supply-intermediation approaches. Systems for internships, apprenticeships, digital skills, and entrepreneurship are stronger than at project start.

Direct labour-market impacts, such as reduced NEET rates or widespread decent job creation, are not yet observed. Some entrepreneurs and trainees report improved confidence, skills, and business practices, indicating promising last-mile effects. These remain fragile and require consolidation and follow-up at the project level as well as by other actors in the digital eco system.

Sustainability

Sustainability prospects are strongest where interventions are embedded in national systems. Institutionalised curricula, standards, policies, and partnership mechanisms are likely to endure beyond the project. However, sustainability risks remain, particularly in scaling pilots, sustaining district-level delivery, systemic challenges faced by youth enterprises in securing financing, and expanding MSME absorption of digital skills.

The project contributes as one actor within a broader system. Long-term sustainability depends on continued government commitment, private-sector engagement, financing mechanisms, and coordinated development partner support.

Management arrangement

Roles and responsibilities among ILO offices, national partners, and stakeholders are generally clear and functional. National-level governance structures, including tripartite platforms, are effective. However, reliance on international backstopping increased costs and limits familiarising national subject matter experts to ILO methodologies and approaches to decent work and social inclusion. District-level coordination and ownership remain weaker and require strengthening.

Conclusions and recommendations

The evaluation concludes that the project is strategically sound, relevant, and well aligned with Rwanda's digital transformation and youth employment agenda. It has built strong foundations for systems change but has not yet translated these into large-scale employment outcomes at the mid-term point of the project. The main challenge is conversion—turning institutional reforms, pilots, and partnerships into sustained, inclusive jobs for young women and men within the project's overall timeframe.

The evaluation recommends prioritising system consolidation during the remaining project period, strengthening decentralised delivery, deepening inclusion of women, NEET youth, rural youth and persons with disabilities, expanding MSME engagement, and improving outcome monitoring. A second phase is recommended to achieve scale and long-term transformation.

Lessons learnt, cross-cutting issues and emerging good practices

Key lessons include the value of starting with strong diagnostics, institutionalising tools rather than running parallel programmes, and using multi-stakeholder governance platforms. Digital skills programmes are most effective when linked to work-based learning and enterprise support. Private-sector engagement does not happen automatically and must be actively structured.

Gender equality, inclusion of vulnerable youth, and social dialogue are clearly recognised but need deeper and more systematic embedding across delivery and monitoring systems. Emerging good practices—such as innovation challenges, decentralised delivery through hubs, and structured internships—offer transferable lessons for similar initiatives in other contexts.

Overall, the project demonstrates that digital economy initiatives for youth entrepreneurship and employment require evidence-driven design, systems thinking, strong partnerships, inclusion by design, and sustained follow-through to achieve lasting impact.

1. Introduction

1.1 About the project

Africa's young population is growing at an unprecedented rate, with estimates indicating that it will double by 2050. Rwanda is no exception where – according to the ILO estimates (ProDoc, 2023), the youth population (15 to 24 years of age) has increased from 2.2 million in 2013 to an estimated 2.9 million in 2023. A transition to a digital economy presents an opportunity for jobs-rich growth. In this context, the ILO/ITU/AU are implementing a Joint Programme on youth employment in the digital economy, under the umbrella of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth. The continental programme aims to implement interventions that empower African youth, and to ensure that young men and women benefit equally from emerging opportunities in Africa's growing digital economy and that they can contribute with their energy and creativity. As part of this initiative, the ILO is implementing a project focused on youth employment in Rwanda's digital economy. The project in Rwanda uses an integrated, systems-based approach. It recognises that creating decent jobs for young women and men in Rwanda's digital economy requires coherent actions across four areas – a) Labour demand (creating jobs), b) Supply (developing skills), c) Intermediation (transitioning skills to decent work), d) Partnerships (leveraging the enabling environment). The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Luxembourg, provides financial and strategic support, while national partners in Rwanda contribute local expertise and policy alignment. The project activities include policy support, training programmes, job matching services, and fostering partnerships with private sector actors.

1.2 The Project theory of change

The project is built on the premise that Rwanda's transition to a digital economy presents a significant opportunity to generate decent work for young women and men, provided that the country simultaneously strengthens its policy environment, enterprise ecosystem, digital skills system, and labour intermediation mechanisms. The Theory of Change (ToC) articulates how coordinated interventions across these domains can unlock systemic, sustainable improvements in youth employment outcomes. At its core, the ToC assumes that **youth employment in the digital economy is a systems challenge**, not a single-intervention problem. This multi-layered systems map of Rwanda Digital Skills, Enterprise, Employment & Innovation Ecosystem is presented in the figure 1. It requires aligned action across government ministries, private sector actors, training institutions, and youth themselves. The project therefore adopts a multi-pronged strategy that addresses **labour demand, labour supply, and labour market intermediation**, while strengthening the partnerships and governance structures that hold the system together.

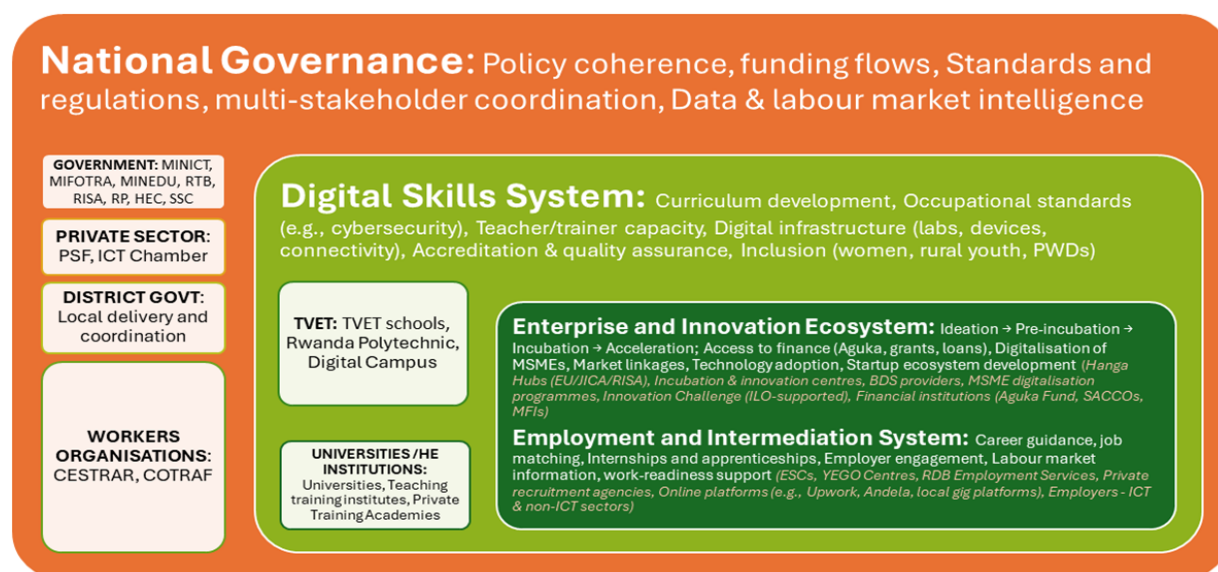
1. Problem Statement and Rationale

Rwanda faces a dual challenge: a rapidly growing youth population and a labour market dominated by informal, low-productivity work. At the same time, the country has made digital transformation a national priority, yet persistent gaps in digital skills, enterprise competitiveness, and job-matching systems prevent young people from benefiting fully from emerging opportunities. The project responds to these constraints by targeting the structural bottlenecks identified in the PRODOC, viz. a) limited digital skills among youth, b) weak enterprise capacity to create digital jobs, c) fragmented policy and institutional coordination, and d) underdeveloped employment services.

2. Pathways of Change /Outcomes

The ToC is structured around **four mutually reinforcing pathways**, each corresponding to a project outcome. Together, they form a coherent strategy for enabling youth to access decent work in the digital economy.

Figure 1. Systems Map: Rwanda's Digital Skills, Enterprise, Employment & Innovation Ecosystem



Source: MTE 2026 adaptation to the systems narrative captured in the ProDoc 2023 and Project Progress Reports (Y1 and 2)

Pathway 1: Strengthening the Policy and Enterprise Ecosystem (Outcome 1)

If the project generates robust evidence on digital labour market needs, supports policy dialogue, and strengthens enterprise capabilities—particularly MSMEs and tech start-ups—then Rwanda will have a more enabling environment for digital job creation. This pathway assumes that - a) policy actors are willing to adopt evidence-based reforms, b) enterprises are motivated to digitalise and expand, and c) innovation hubs can catalyse entrepreneurship in secondary cities.

Pathway 2: Enhancing Digital Skills for Youth (Outcome 2)

If digital skills curricula are updated, instructors are trained, and youth—especially young women—gain access to relevant training, then the supply of digitally skilled labour will increase and better match market demand. This pathway assumes that – a) training institutions have the capacity to integrate new curricula, b) youth can access training despite cost and connectivity barriers, and c) employers recognise and value the skills provided.

Pathway 3: Improving ‘Skills-to-Internships-to Work’ or ‘Skills-to-Ideas-to-Incubation-to-Startup’ Transition (Outcome 3)

If Hanga hubs and Employment Service Centres (ESCs) are strengthened, digital job-matching tools are improved, and work-based learning opportunities are expanded, then young people will transition more effectively into digital-economy jobs or start on their entrepreneurial journey. This pathway assumes that – a) employers engage with ESCs, b) digital platforms remain accessible and functional, and c) internships and apprenticeships lead to real employment opportunities, b) Hanga hubs remain conducive for incubating ideas.

Pathway 4: Strengthening Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships (Outcome 4)

If coordination mechanisms are institutionalised and youth-led organisations are meaningfully engaged, then the digital economy ecosystem will become more coherent, inclusive, and capable of sustaining long-term change. This pathway assumes that – a) ministries maintain commitment to joint action, b) private sector actors remain active partners, and c) youth voices influence programme design and implementation.

3. Intermediate Outcomes (Systemic Shifts)

Across these pathways, the project aims to trigger **systemic changes** that extend beyond

direct beneficiaries:

- **Policies and regulations** become more coherent and responsive to digital labour market needs.
- **MSMEs and start-ups** adopt digital tools and expand employment.
- **TVET and higher education institutions** deliver market-relevant digital skills at scale.
- **ESCs and digital platforms** provide more effective job-matching and career guidance.
- **Hanga hubs** catalyse entrepreneurship and start-ups in digital economy
- **Stakeholders coordinate more effectively**, share data, and co-design interventions.

These and other systemic shifts (see the evaluation findings in section 3) are essential for sustaining impact beyond the project's lifespan.

4. Final Outcomes and Impact

When these systemic shifts occur, the project expects to achieve its four outcomes, which collectively contribute to the overarching impact: *“Young women and men in Rwanda access and sustain decent work opportunities in a dynamic, inclusive, and growing digital economy.”* This impact aligns with Rwanda's Vision 2050, the National Strategy for Transformation (NST1), and ILO's Decent Work Agenda.

5. Assumptions and Risks

The ToC rests on several critical assumptions – a) Continued government commitment to digital transformation, b) Private sector willingness to engage in skills development and job creation, c) Youth ability to access training and employment services, d) Stability of digital infrastructure and connectivity, e) Gender norms do not significantly restrict women's participation. Key risks include – a) persistent digital divide, b) limited absorption capacity for digital jobs, c) delays in policy implementation, and d) insufficient institutional capacity in training and employment services.

6. Feedback Loops and Systems Dynamics

The ToC recognises that changes in the digital economy are **non-linear** and shaped by feedback loops:

- More skilled youth → stronger digital firms → more jobs → higher demand for skills
- Better ESC services → improved job matching → higher employer engagement → stronger ESC credibility
- Stronger innovation hubs → more start-ups → more innovation → more investment

1.3 Mid-Term Evaluation of the Project

Following the completion of the first two years of project implementation (January 2024 to December 2025), the ILO commissioned an internal Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) led by an international consultant. The purpose of the MTE was to provide a structured review of project progress, identify key achievements and major challenges, assess sustainability and impact potential, and deliver actionable recommendations to guide the remaining implementation period. The MTE has assessed early achievements on systemic shifts and movement towards the outcomes. The MTE has also examined systemic constraints. The evaluation examined the critical role of underlying assumptions and risks in enabling result transitions—from outputs to outcomes and ultimately to impact.

2. Evaluation Design

2.1 Purpose and objectives of the evaluation

The ILO has commissioned this internal MTE to fulfil two core purposes:

1. **Accountability to the ILO constituents, and the donors** (Luxembourg)
2. **Learning and strategic improvement** to strengthen programme performance, coherence, and impact during the remaining implementation period.

As the project is designed using an integrated and ‘systems-based’ approach, it was essential for the MTE to review and understand a ‘systems’ theory of change. This refers to understanding how various project components and interventions interact within the broader context to produce intended outcomes. Therefore, the evaluation framework is guided by this ‘systems’ theory of change (see section 1.2 and section 3.3). The MTE was guided by a set of focused evaluation questions (19) designed to assess the project’s strategic relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, gender responsiveness, sustainability, and contribution to systemic change in Rwanda’s digital economy. Together, these questions provide a structured lens for understanding whether the project is on track to achieve its intended outcomes and where course corrections may be required.

At the highest level, the MTE have assessed whether the project remains **relevant** to Rwanda’s evolving digital transformation agenda and to the needs, aspirations, and constraints of young women and men. This includes assessing alignment with national strategies such as Vision 2050, the National Strategy for Transformation (NSTI and II), and sectoral digitalisation priorities. The evaluation has also examined **coherence**, exploring how well the project complements and coordinates with other government initiatives, development partner programmes, and private-sector efforts. Given the project’s multi-stakeholder design, this dimension is critical for understanding the quality of collaboration across ministries, TVET institutions, private sector actors, youth organisations, and development partners.

A central focus is **effectiveness**—the extent to which the project is progressing toward its four outcomes: enabling digital-economy job creation, improving youth digital skills, strengthening school-to-work transitions, and enhancing multi-stakeholder partnerships. The evaluation has assessed what has worked, what has not, and why, paying particular attention to systemic enablers and bottlenecks. The evaluation also considered **efficiency**, assessing whether resources, delivery mechanisms, and partnerships are being used optimally to achieve results. This includes examining the timeliness of implementation, the appropriateness of delivery models, and the value generated relative to investment.

Given the project’s ambition to influence systems rather than deliver isolated outputs, the evaluation has explored **impact pathways**—testing the validity of the ToC and plausibility of the project’s contribution to observed changes, and the extent to which key assumptions still hold. This includes identifying early signs of systemic change in policy, enterprise development, skills ecosystems, and labour intermediation.

A cross-cutting set of questions examined **gender equality and inclusion**, assessing whether young women, NEET youth, and disadvantaged groups are benefiting equitably and whether the project is effectively addressing gendered barriers to participation in the digital economy.

Finally, the evaluation has assessed **sustainability**, exploring whether institutional capacities, policies, partnerships, and systems strengthened by the project are likely to endure beyond the project’s lifespan. This includes examining ownership, institutionalisation, and the readiness of national actors to continue or scale interventions.

Together, these evaluation questions provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the project’s performance, identifying strategic adjustments, and strengthening its contribution to Rwanda’s digital transformation and youth employment agenda.

The evaluation has followed the requirements as per the [ILO evaluation policy](#), which is based on the [United Nations Evaluation Norms and Standards](#) and the [UNEG ethical guidelines](#). Further, it is acknowledged that the following requirements as per ILO reporting guidance have been adhered to, while a) formulating and presenting recommendations, b) identifying and presenting lessons learned and filling in the appropriate templates; and c) identifying and presenting emerging good practices and filling in the relevant templates.

The scope of the evaluation was:

- **Timeframe:** Project inception to mid-point (**January 2024 to December 2025; including inception phase from August to December 2023**)
- **Geography:** Kigali + districts /secondary cities where hubs, TVETs, and ESCs operate

2.2 Intended users of the evaluation

The MTE is intended to serve a diverse set of users who play distinct but interconnected roles in shaping Rwanda's digital economy and youth employment landscape. At the centre are **national government institutions**, particularly MIFOTRA, MINICT, MINEDUC, and RISA, which rely on the evaluation to assess progress, identify systemic bottlenecks, and refine policies and implementation strategies.

The evaluation is primarily important for the ILO project team in Rwanda (part of the ILO Dar es Salaam Country Office) and the ILO Regional Office for Africa, and other Country Offices implementing similar initiatives. The evaluation assesses the effectiveness of the project, validates the project's Theory of Change, and provides recommendations for necessary adjustments to implementation approaches during the remaining period.

The funding partner, Luxembourg, is another key user. The evaluation offers assurance on the relevance, efficiency, and impact of its investment, while providing insights that inform future programming and strategic engagement in digital transformation and youth employment.

At the operational level, the evaluation is designed to benefit **TVET institutions, universities, innovation hubs, BDS providers, and Employment Service Centres (ESCs)**. These actors use the findings to improve service delivery, strengthen institutional capacity, and enhance linkages with employers and youth. The evaluation highlights what is working, where gaps remain, and how partnerships can be deepened to support systemic change.

The **private sector**, including MSMEs, start-ups, and the ICT Chamber, also stands to gain insights into skills gaps, enterprise needs, and labour market dynamics help employers engage more effectively in training, recruitment, and innovation ecosystems.

Finally, the evaluation is intended to serve **young women and men**, including NEET youth and those in rural or disadvantaged contexts. While they may not read the evaluation directly, its findings shape the quality, accessibility, and relevance of the services they receive—training, job-matching, entrepreneurship support, and pathways into decent digital-economy work. Youth-led organisations can use the evaluation to advocate for more inclusive, responsive, and gender-sensitive interventions.

Taken together, these users form a multi-layered ecosystem. The evaluation is designed not only to assess performance but to strengthen shared ownership, inform adaptive management, and reinforce the partnerships required to build a dynamic, inclusive digital economy that delivers meaningful opportunities for Rwanda's young people.

2.3 Evaluation Framework

The evaluation design is based on applying **systems lens** to the originally envisaged project theory of change in the ProDoc, 2023. This systems narrative in the ToC is articulated in section 1.2 (also see section 3.3 for the systems change theory of change conceptualised by the MTE) and has been used as a basis to assess the progress and results achieved by the

programme and to answer the 19 evaluation questions. The evaluation framework (figure 2) is aligned with the intent of the project ToC and is primarily based on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development-Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) evaluation criteria¹.

Figure 2. Project Evaluation Framework

Evaluation Dimension*	Broader Evaluation Questions	Evaluation Measures /Indicators
RELEVANCE: Context Alignment, & Context Responsive	Are interventions aligned with Rwanda's digital transformation priorities and youth needs?	Instances of conformance /non-conformances and responsiveness of project design with the needs and priorities of ILO constituencies and youth
COHERENCE: Coherent and Complementary	How well do government, private sector, TVETs, and youth organisations coordinate?	Examples of complementarity with other initiatives; Instances of leverage with other non-ILO initiatives
VALIDITY of the DESIGN: Logical and feasible	Is the project design and Theory of change logical and account for the complexity of the labour market systems of Rwanda?	Examining logic, validity, consistency and practical feasibility of the ToC, strategies deployed to achieve ToC; M&E framework capture evidence
EFFICIENCY: Strategic resource allocation, cost-benefit /value for money	Are resources, delivery mechanisms, and partnerships used optimally?	Appropriateness of financial allocations; Instances of adaptability to financial constraints; Indicative cost benefit /value for money analysis
EFFECTIVENESS: Performance (target Vs. actual), stakeholder participation, effective execution of strategies	To what extent are outcomes being achieved? What factors enable or hinder progress?	Citation, instances of this project moving towards achieving four outcomes (and associated outputs); Strategy and factorial analysis
IMPACT: Incremental or transformative changes - early signs	Are there early/potential signs of transformative or changes (e.g., institutional behaviour, social norms, labour practices) in which the project has an explicit contribution?	Are there signs of more substantive and visible improvements in institutional behaviour, social norms and labour practices in the digital economy
SUSTAINABILITY: Sustainability mechanisms and momentum gained	Are institutional capacities strengthening? Are systems and policies likely to endure?	Specific examples of mechanisms that can act as 'sustaining' force for continuation of project benefits; Momentum being gained on sustainability
MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS, CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES & LESSONS LEARNT: Project management, coordination and partnerships incl. effective role divisions, risk management, cross-cutting issues (ILS, social dialogue, gender equality, disability inclusion, and other non-discrimination concerns, lessons learnt and best practices		

*OECD-DAC criteria

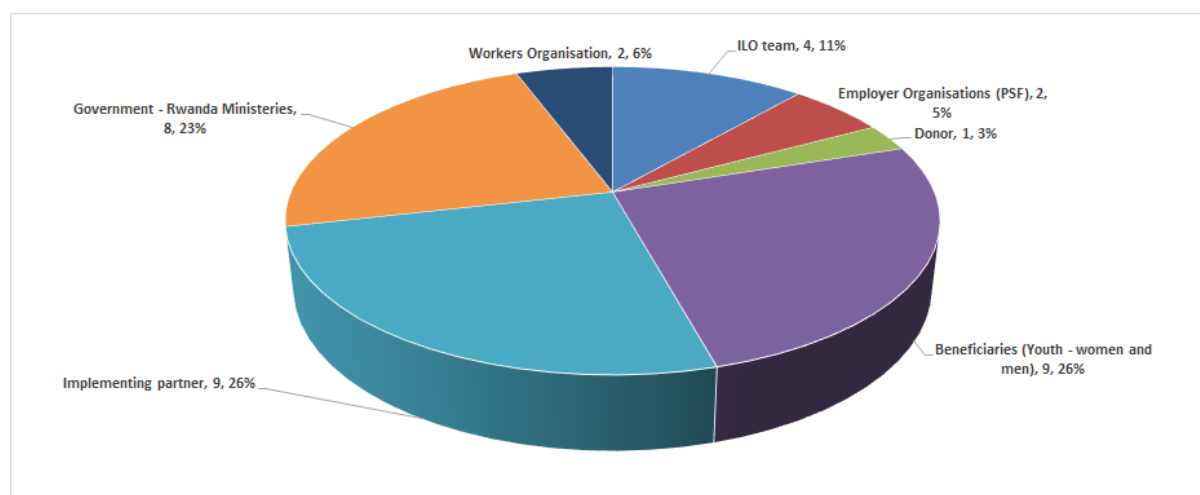
2.4 Evaluation methodology and approach

The MTE has used a **theory-based, systems-oriented, mixed-methods approach**, combining:

Mixed-Methods Design: The evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach—combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. While the evaluative enquiry was primarily qualitative, using key informant interviews and focus group discussions (3-5 key informants in one meeting), quantitative data was collated and analysed from diverse sources such as programme monitoring databases, outcome assessments, and research studies. The evaluation has covered more than 40 key informants and stakeholders during 35 interviews, some of which were focus group discussions (see Annex 2 – stakeholders interviewed). A list of sources of evaluative evidence is provided in the references section. A distribution – by type of stakeholder - is represented in the figure below.

¹ [OECD-DAC principles for evaluation of development assistance | Better Evaluation](#)

Figure 3. Number, Proportion of Stakeholders Participation in the MTE, by type of Stakeholder (N=35)



Gender-Responsive Evaluation: Gender and other ‘cross-cutting issues’—which encompass themes like social inclusion, sustainability, and equity—has received equal attention throughout the evaluation process. The evaluation has assessed gendered access to digital skills, barriers to participation and gendered outcomes in employment and digital entrepreneurship. The evaluation was carried out in compliance with the relevant parts of the ILO Evaluation Framework and Strategy; the ILO Policy Guidelines for Results-Based Evaluations 2020 and ILO Guidance note 3.1.

Contribution Analysis (CA): To test whether the project plausibly contributed to observed changes in policy frameworks, enterprise ecosystem, digital skills system and employment services.

Outcome Harvesting (OH): To capture emergent outcomes, especially in policy influence, institutional behaviour changes and multi-stakeholder partnerships, evaluation utilised an outcome harvesting approach. The evaluation made full use of data from project records, partners’ documents, contextual materials, and relevant literature.

Systems Thinking: The evaluation integrated ‘systems thinking’ through including systems lens in navigating project theory of change (see section 1.2 and section 3.3). The evaluation analysed how the project is contributing to ‘systemic shifts’ through its various actions aligned with the four outcomes. The evaluation has also analysed systemic constraints.

The evaluation was conducted through a **consultative and participatory process**, engaging with key stakeholders during the field mission in Rwanda as well as remotely. **Periodic debriefing and multiple project team discussions** were conducted, validating and enriching the assessments carried out.

2.5 Scope and limitations of the evaluation

The proposed evaluation methodology is utilisation-focused and responds to both accountability and learning concerns of the ILO and its constituency partners. However, it cannot clearly assign causality or identify all intervening factors that may have influenced or hindered the observed outcomes. The evaluation is not designed to capture attributed impact or explore alternative pathways to impact. Notably, the lack of rigorous impact-level evidence at the mid-point of the project means that conclusions regarding the project’s impact should be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, by applying a systems lens, the evaluation has identified both facilitating and constraining factors that have affected the project’s achievements.

This is a comprehensive mid-term evaluation, addressing 19 questions across 7 main OECD/DAC parameters (figure 1). While the evaluation maintains focus and emphasis on all questions and parameters, some criteria were assessed less robustly than others due to

limited or inadequate data available from project monitoring. For example, the evaluation was not designed to collect rigorous outcome or impact-level evidence and primarily relied on outcome and impact data provided by the project or shared by stakeholders interviewed. It was not possible to validate available evidence on all evaluation questions and criteria due to the limited timeframe and methodological approach.

Conducting a cost-efficiency analysis was limited. A detailed value-for-money (VfM) analysis would ideally require more granular information about both costs and benefits, which falls outside the scope of this evaluation.

The assessment of the effectiveness of project management arrangements relied on the openness and honesty of feedback from key stakeholders interviewed. Some aspects remain unknown to the evaluator, so findings should be considered as reflecting the ground-truths to the extent that information and perspectives were shared with the evaluator. Overall, the evaluation gathered a wide range of perceptions to assess different aspects of the project. However, the evaluation lacks sufficient quantitative methods to statistically validate the project's achievements, gaps, and challenges.

In summary, key methodological limitations include the inability to assign causality, limited availability of impact-level evidence, constraints in validating all evaluation questions, and insufficient quantitative data for statistical validation. These factors should be considered when interpreting the findings and recommendations. This transparent approach reinforces the commitment to objective reporting and builds trust with recipient and users of the evaluation.

3. Evaluation Findings

3.1 Relevance

Context alignment (EQ1)²

Headline finding 1: The project design demonstrates strong contextual grounding in Rwanda's youth employment and digital transformation landscape and is a highly relevant intervention in the Rwanda labour market characterised by high underemployment, widespread informality, digital skills gaps, and weak school-to-work transitions.

The project's design demonstrates a strong and well-grounded understanding of Rwanda's youth employment context, drawing on national strategies (Vision 2050, National Strategy for Transformation NST1/NST2, National Employment Policy -NEP 2019, Information and Communication Technology - ICT Sector Strategic Plan), labour market diagnostics, and global ILO frameworks. The PRODOC accurately identifies the country's core structural challenges—high youth underemployment, informality, gender disparities, digital literacy gaps, weak labour-market intermediation, and fragmented youth employment programmes. It also correctly positions digital transformation as a national priority and adopts a holistic three-pillar approach (enterprise development, digital skills, and employment services) that aligns with Rwanda's policy direction and demographic pressures.

Evidence from the inception and progress reports confirms that the project's conceptualisation was highly relevant and responsive to Rwanda's needs. Overall, the project design reflects strong contextual knowledge and alignment with the country needs and policies.

Context Responsiveness (EQ2)

Headline finding 2: The project design and implementation are strongly aligned with beneficiary needs and evolving policy priorities, with growing attention to inclusion and system-level sustainability

The project is tightly anchored in Rwanda's and ILO's strategic frameworks and remains responsive as these evolve. It explicitly aligns with Vision 2050, NST1/NST2, the National Employment Policy, ICT Sector strategies, National Digital Talent Policy, UNDAF/UNSDCF, the ILO Decent Work Country Programme and SDG 8, positioning digital jobs, youth employment and skills as core levers of inclusive growth. "Across the portfolio, interventions have been delivered through existing national institutions and in close coordination with government, employers and workers," ensuring that tools, curricula and delivery models are embedded rather than stand-alone. The project "operates as a system actor, providing demand driven technical support to address structural gaps across policy, skills development, enterprise growth and school-to-work transition," which has allowed it to adjust to new priorities such as NST2, the Digital Acceleration agenda and the analytical review of the National Employment Policy.

Responsiveness to final beneficiaries is evident in the way design and implementation have

² Nineteen (19) Evaluation Questions, as per the TOR, for this MTE are captured in Evaluation Question Matrix - Annex 1

progressively integrated gender, youth and vulnerability considerations, while addressing concrete barriers identified in the literature and diagnostics. Rwanda's youth face high underemployment, informality and large Not in Employment, Education and Training (NEET) rates, with young women and rural youth particularly disadvantaged. According to the Labour Force Survey 2022³, 35.6% of the country's young population (16-30 years) is categorized as NEET. The gender disparity is concerning, with young women experiencing a 41% NEET rate, compared to 29.9% for young men. The project responded through entrepreneurship support, digital skills pathways, internships and apprenticeships that deliberately target young women and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), and by translating tools into Kinyarwanda and decentralising delivery to districts. Entrepreneurship support was embedded within partner systems through contextualisation and translation of nine Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) and Digitalize Your Business (DYB) modules extending structured content to an estimated potential of 12,500 learners nationally. Overall, the training cohorts are potentially reaching 47 per cent women and 4 per cent persons with disabilities. The project has adjusted to delays and contextual shifts by having a longer inception period, switching from external firms to in-house expertise, adding ecosystem assessments, and aligning with new strategies (NST2, NEP review, Digital Employment Diagnostic). Continued attention will be needed to keep pace with rapidly evolving digital and labour-market dynamics.

The project has engaged with global and regional agendas—such as the AU–ILO digital jobs initiatives and the UN Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection—ensuring coherence between country-level interventions, ILO normative frameworks and Luxembourg's priorities on decent work, social protection and digital inclusion.

3.2 Coherence

Coherent and Complementary (EQ3)

Headline finding 3: The project has generated strong, intentional synergies with UN, national and private-sector initiatives and generally avoids harmful duplication, but it operates in a structurally crowded youth employment and digital skills ecosystem where coordination demands are high and some overlap and coordination risks persist, especially at district level

Anchored in ILO and UN frameworks Evidence: The project is explicitly linked to the ILO Decent Work Country Programme and P&B outcomes: Outcome 3: Full and productive employment for just transitions; Outcome 4: Sustainable enterprises for inclusive growth and decent work. The project is aligned with SDG 8 and the global “Boosting decent jobs and enhancing skills for youth in Africa’s digital economy” portfolio, positioning it as a system actor rather than a standalone intervention. The Year 2 (2025) report notes that the project “operates as a system actor, providing demand driven technical support to address structural gaps across policy, skills development, enterprise growth and school-to-work transition” and that interventions are delivered “through existing national institutions and in close coordination with government, employers and workers.”

Synergies with UN agencies (UNICEF, UNDP, ITU): SIYB/DYB entrepreneurship and digitalisation modules are being integrated into UNICEF’s Ingazi platform, so ILO content rides on an existing digital infrastructure rather than creating a parallel one: “the e-versions of SIYB and DYB are in the process of being integrated into the Ingazi platform to ensure broader outreach.” (KII) Aligning with the UNDP / Tony Elumelu (Aguka Fund), the project provides

³ <https://rwanda.dotrtrust.org/digital-skills-for-employability-to-equip-10000-young-people-in-rwanda-with-digital-and-entrepreneurial-skills-to-secure-dignified-and-fulfilling-livelihoods-in-the-digital-economy/>

financial education Training of Trainers (ToT) for 37 YEGO Centre coordinators as an entry point to Aguka Fund referrals, complementing UNDP's financing role instead of duplicating it. The Digital Employment Diagnostic (DED) identifies the affordability and usage gap in internet access and explicitly informs a planned joint dialogue with ITU and MINICT on expanding affordable connectivity for job creation. Overall, while the project is seeking to complement other development partners' efforts rather than duplicate them.

Deep integration with national policies and programmes: The evidence harvest shows strong alignment with Vision 2050, NST1/NST2, the National Employment Policy (2019), ICT Sector Strategic Plans and the National Digital Talent Policy, all of which prioritise digitalisation, job creation and youth employment. "Recognising that productive employment and decent work cannot be achieved through fragmented and isolated interventions, the [NEP] represents a paradigm shift where employment is integrated into all policy frameworks" (NEP review). The project then operationalises this alignment by:

- Supporting the review of the National Employment Policy, producing ten priority policy areas that embed digital transformation and lifelong learning.
- Embedding SIYB/DYB and e-SIYB in Rwanda Polytechnic's e-learning system, YEGO Centres, PSF, Hanga Hubs and Employment Service Centres, so entrepreneurship support is institutionalised rather than project-bound.
- Working with RTB and NCSA on cybersecurity occupational standards and curricula, and with MIFOTRA on the National Internship Programme redesign and quality apprenticeship pilots—directly reinforcing national systems for skills and transitions.

Synergies with private sector and ecosystem actors: The project systematically partners with PSF, the ICT Chamber, BDF⁴, Hanga Hubs, Imanzi Business Institute, Kina Rwanda and ICT firms (e.g. BK Techhouse, Tek Experts, Irembo, Amalitech) for internships, apprenticeships and digital skills delivery. The Innovate4DigiJobs Innovation Challenge funds nine institutions to deliver demand-driven digital skills programmes linked to job outcomes, reaching an expected 1,600 youth by 2026. This approach leverages existing capacity and market linkages instead of building parallel training centres.

Key gaps and risks – where overlaps or coordination challenges remain

Structurally crowded youth employment and digital skills landscape: The article *What Works for the Youth*⁵ notes that Rwanda's Youth Employment Policies (YEPs) and programmes suffer from "poor coordination among the vast youth employment programmes causing monitoring challenges both at national and district level, and duplication of services," and that addressing these challenges "requires a joint, well-coordinated stakeholder engagement, and strong collaboration between the public and private sector, as well as civil society organizations." The project is clearly designed to mitigate this—through Technical Advisory Group meetings, Project Partners Meetings and system-level reforms—but it cannot fully remove the structural risk of duplication in such a dense ecosystem. Furthermore, the project connections and collaboration with other digital transformation initiatives - such as GIZ's and Mastercard Foundation's - are less evident.

Potential overlaps at district level: In entrepreneurship and youth support, multiple actors (BDF, RICEM, Hanga Hubs, Youth Friendly Centres, YEGO Centres, NGOs) provide entrepreneurship and youth employment services. While the project adds value by harmonising content (SIYB/DYB, financial education) and embedding it across these channels, key informants observe that similar target groups (young entrepreneurs in secondary cities) are often reached by several initiatives, furthermore district levels synergies could potentially address multiple support needs of young entrepreneurs and job seekers. The project's tracer studies are planned for 2027, so systematic evidence on whether overlaps translate into inefficiency or useful layering is not yet available.

⁴ Before the merger with the BRD in December 2025

⁵ <https://sciencepublishinggroup.com/article/10.11648/j.ijfbr.20241002.11>

High coordination burden and communication bottlenecks: As stated above, multiple studies highlight systemic coordination challenges. A *Scoping Report*⁶ notes multiple ministries and agencies with overlapping mandates. KLLs shared that deficiencies in policy coherence and institutional coordination. The inception report records that initially preference of partners was to centralise all communication, which “led to significant delays in communication and dissemination of information,” prompting the project to explore another mechanism to support more regular convening after the inception phase (from year 1 onwards). This illustrates that while synergies are strong, they come with a high coordination cost and dependence on key partners’ convening capacity. The project is helping but cannot fully overcome structural fragmentation.

Overlap risk in digital skills provision: The Digital Skills Demand and Supply Assessment and the DED show that Rwanda already hosts multiple digital skills initiatives (e.g. Coding Academy, 1 million Coders, private bootcamps, platform-based training). The project reduces duplication by focusing on system gaps (occupational standards, teacher competency frameworks, cybersecurity curricula, work-based learning), but the broader training market remains fragmented and partially overlapping.

In net terms, the project adds connective tissue and technical depth to an already busy field. Synergies clearly outweigh overlaps, but sustained investment in coordination and joint planning remains essential to keep duplication and coordination risks in check.

3.3 Validity of the Design

Logical and feasible (EQ4)

Headline finding 4: The project’s design and Theory of Change are broadly logical, evidence-based and systems-oriented, but the ToC remains only partially explicit and does not fully surface the complexity, feedback loops and political-economy constraints of Rwanda’s segmented, largely informal labour market.

Strong evidence base and clear problem framing: The ProDoc and collected evaluative evidence show that the project design is grounded in robust diagnostics on youth underemployment, informality, NEET rates and gender gaps. Rwanda’s youth are predominantly in informal, low-productivity work, with high underemployment and large NEET shares, especially among young women. “*The biggest labour market challenge young people in Rwanda face are the absence of a sufficient number of decent and productive jobs, marked by stark gender differences*” (ProDoc, problem analysis). Literature such as *Youth employment in Rwanda – scoping report*⁷ and *What Works for the Youth*⁸ reinforces this diagnosis, highlighting underemployment, informality, skills mismatches and weak coordination of youth employment policies as core systemic issues.

Partial but meaningful attention to system complexity: The project recognises multiple layers of the labour market system (see systems map in figure 1): national policy, sector skills councils, TVET and higher education, BDS providers, financial institutions, private firms, and local youth centres. It explicitly addresses coordination bottlenecks (e.g. NEP review, SSC strengthening, Digital Inclusion Council engagement, Project Partners Meetings) and structural constraints such as internet affordability, digital usage gaps and weak soft skills for

⁶ [REPORT COVER](#)

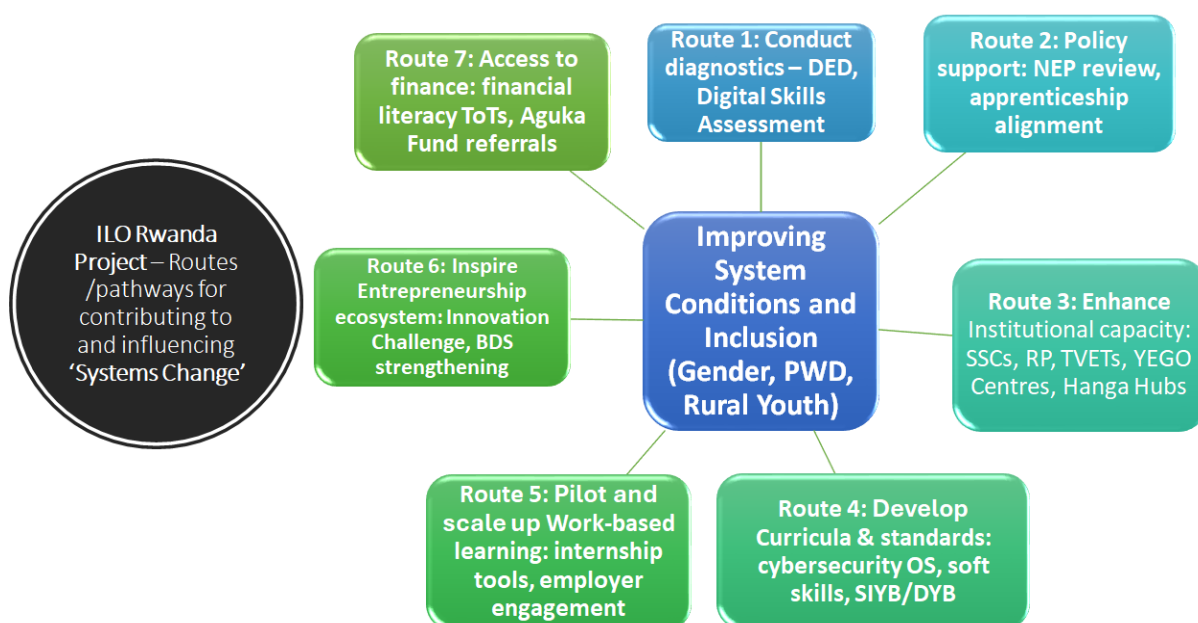
⁷ <https://www.laterite.com/cases/youth-employment-in-rwanda-a-scoping-paper/>

⁸ <https://sciencepublishinggroup.com/article/10.11648/j.ijfbr.20241002.11>

ICT-enabled roles. The Innovation Challenge⁹ and ecosystem assessment show awareness that outcomes depend on the behaviour of many actors, not just direct beneficiaries.

A multi-pillar, systems-change logic rather than isolated training: The design links three main components—(i) job creation and entrepreneurship, (ii) digital skills, and (iii) employment services and intermediation—mirroring labour demand, supply and matching. This is a coherent response to the labour market failures identified in the literature and national policies. The project progress reports show this logic being operationalised through four outcomes. The Year 2 (the project progress report 2025) reporting explicitly describes the project as a “system actor” that works across policy, skills, enterprise and school-to-work transition, and emphasises institutionalisation within MIFOTRA, MINICT, RTB, Rwanda Polytechnic, PSF, BDF and YEGO Centres rather than standalone delivery. This is consistent with a systems-change ToC even if not always labelled as such. The project uses seven main pathways /routes towards influencing ‘systems change’ in Rwanda as depicted in the figure 3:

Figure 4. ILO Rwanda Project – Routes /pathways for contributing to and influencing ‘Systems Change’



The Theory of Change is not fully explicit or visualised: Across the ProDoc, inception and progress reports, the ToC is mostly implicitly described through outcomes, outputs and narrative rather than a clearly articulated causal map with assumptions, risks and feedback loops. There is limited explicit articulation of causal pathways from specific interventions (e.g. cybersecurity curriculum, SIYB/DYB, financial education, internship reform) to system-level changes in job quality, informality or NEET reduction, beyond generic statements about “decent jobs” and “improved employability.” This makes it harder to see, at a glance, how different strands interact (e.g. how digital skills reforms and entrepreneurship support jointly influence rural or informal youth outcomes).

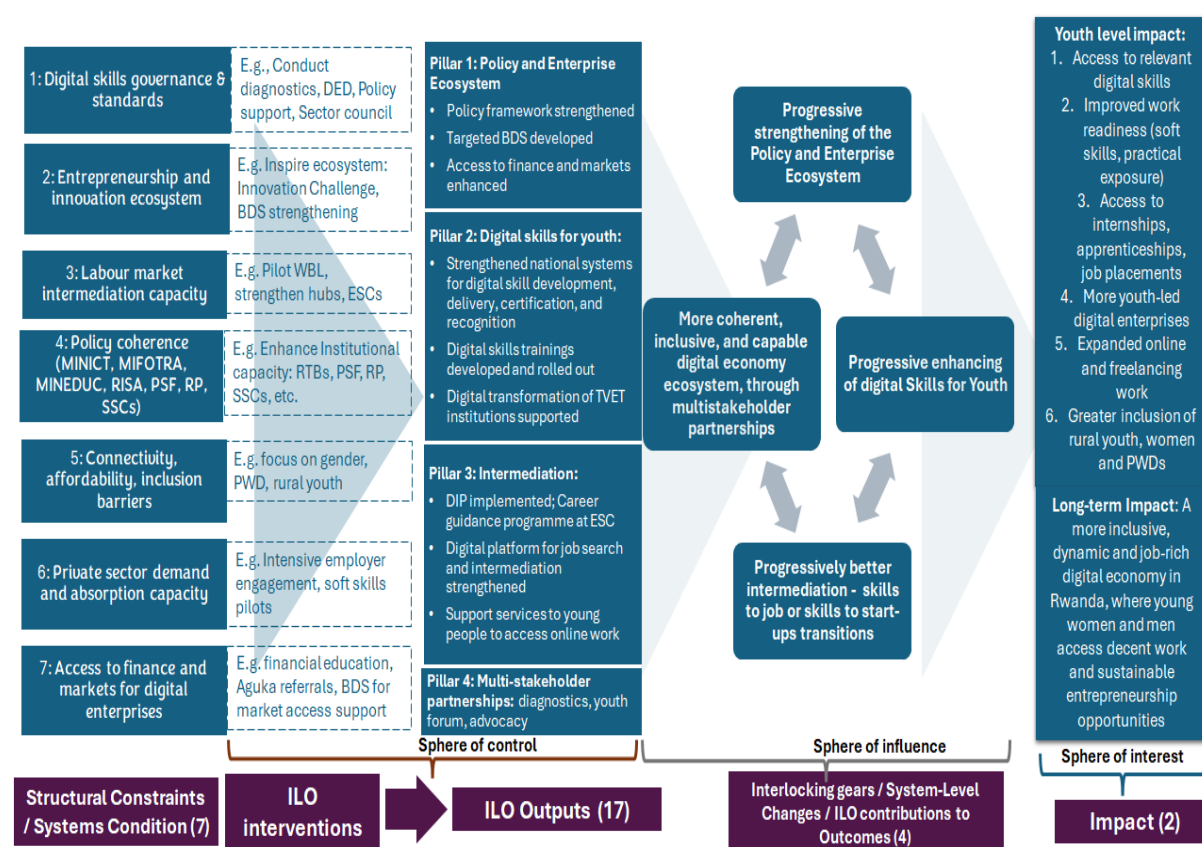
Complexity of Rwanda’s labour market is only partially captured: Literature and project progress reports emphasise deep structural issues: dominance of informal and subsistence work, rural–urban divides, gender norms, care burdens, disability exclusion, and the sheer

⁹ The ILO and ICT Chamber Innovation Challenge, part of the project, identified 9 training and community-based organisations and provided them with technical and financial assistance in implementing digital skills training programmes for young people

scale of NEET youth. *What Works for the Youth* and the scoping report highlight underemployment, informality and weak integration of vulnerable youth into YEPs. While the project addresses some of these (gender targets, PWD inclusion, rural districts, financial access, soft skills), the ToC does not fully spell out - How interventions will reach and sustain impact among the most marginalised (e.g. rural NEET youth, young women with care responsibilities, youth with disabilities) beyond participation quotas? How informal sector dynamics and low productivity in agriculture and micro-trade will be shifted at scale, given that many beneficiaries operate in these segments? How political-economy factors (e.g. incentives of ministries, private firms' reluctance to host interns, coordination costs) might constrain or reshape pathways?

Feedback loops, non-linear change and risk pathways are under-developed: The risk register and progress reports acknowledge coordination risks, private-sector reluctance, consultancy market weaknesses and crowded ecosystems, but these are not fully integrated into a dynamic ToC that anticipates how such factors might alter trajectories or require course correction. For example, the assumption that private firms will progressively adopt internships and apprenticeships is challenged by early evidence of reluctance; the ToC does not explicitly model what happens if uptake remains low or if digital skills demand shifts slower than the supply of skills. Similarly, the project recognises that internet affordability and usage gaps are binding constraints, but the ToC does not clearly show how policy dialogue on connectivity will interact with skills and enterprise interventions to unlock demand i.e., digital job creation.

Figure 5. 'Systems-Change' Theory of Change for the ILO Digital Jobs for Youth Project in Rwanda (2026 MTE)



Limited explicit modelling of scale and sustainability pathways: Implementation practice is strongly oriented to institutionalisation (integration into NEP, TVET, Rwanda Polytechnic, YEGO, BDF, Hanga Hubs), which is a major strength. However, the ToC does not clearly articulate how scale is expected to unfold—for example, how many institutions need to adopt which tools, over what timeframe, to influence national employment indicators. Tracer studies and some outcome-level evaluations are scheduled late (2026–2027), which limits early testing of ToC assumptions about employment outcomes, especially in a fast-evolving digital

labour market.

Overall assessment: The design and implementation are logically structured, evidence-based and aligned with national and ILO frameworks. The multi-pillar approach and institutionalisation strategy reflect a coherent systems-change logic. The project acknowledges and engages with key elements of Rwanda's labour market complexity but does so through practice more than through an explicit, fully articulated ToC. Informality, vulnerability, coordination failures and private-sector incentives are recognised, yet not fully modelled as dynamic, interacting forces. In short, the ToC is substantially sound but under-specified: it provides a solid backbone for action, but could better capture the non-linear, politically mediated and segmented nature of Rwanda's labour market system. The MTE (2026) framing of the 'system-change ToC' (see figure 5) partly address these issues.

M&E that enhance learning, effective reporting (EQ5 and EQ16)

A formal M&E framework was developed early and is used consistently: The *Inception Report* includes a full Monitoring and Evaluation Framework with revised indicators, targets

Headline finding 5: The project has a solid M&E foundation that supports learning, adaptation and accountability, but the framework remains activity and output-heavy, with delayed outcome-level measurement and limited early mechanisms for capturing behavioural or system-level change

and a data-collection sheet for gender, age and disability disaggregation. The report notes that the M&E framework was designed to "provide timely access to progress data which will support decision-making at operational level" and ensure "continued focus on outcome-level change." This demonstrates early investment in structured monitoring and accountability.

Strong emphasis on evidence generation to inform learning: The project has produced or commissioned multiple diagnostics that feed directly into design and adaptation, for example, Digital Employment Diagnostic (DED) was completed and validated with government and social partners. A Digital Skills Demand and Supply Assessment was done systematically which included large-scale enterprise and stakeholder survey. An Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Assessment mapped systemic constraints. An internship and apprenticeship rapid assessments informed redesign of the National Internship Programme. The Year 2 report states that the project "combined labour market analysis with practical tools and hands-on technical support," positioning evidence as a driver of adaptation. This is a major strength that the project uses M&E not only for reporting but for continuous learning and course correction.

Regular partner engagement reinforces learning loops: The project convenes regular Technical Advisory Group meetings (MIFOTRA, MINICT, MINEDUC, PSF, trade unions), and annual Project Partners Meetings to validate findings and align priorities. The project shares continuous feedback with RTB, Rwanda Polytechnic, YEGO Centres, BDF, Hanga Hubs. The Year 2 report notes that findings from the DED were validated with all partners and used to adjust implementation priorities. This shows that M&E outputs are actively used for collective learning, not just internal reporting.

Clear tracking of delivery and institutionalisation: The progress reports provide detailed tracking of number of trainers certified, number of youth trained, number of institutions adopting SIYB/DYB, number of digital campuses assessed, number of internship host companies mapped, and number of districts engaged. The Year 2 report documents that SIYB/DYB integration into Rwanda Polytechnic's e-learning system is expected to reach 12,500 learners, showing some institutionalisation tracking. This supports accountability and

visibility of scale.

The results framework is heavily activity and output-focused: While activities and outputs are well-tracked, outcome-level indicators are less developed and often scheduled for later years. Tracer studies for employment outcomes are planned only for 2027. Many outcome indicators (e.g., job placement, enterprise growth, digital job creation) lack early measurement mechanisms. The M&E framework focuses on counting participants rather than measuring behavioural change, quality of employment, or system performance. This limits early insight into whether interventions are producing meaningful labour-market change.

Limited measurement of system-level change: The project aims to strengthen systems (TVET, SSCs, BDS ecosystem, internship frameworks), but the M&E framework does not fully capture institutional behaviour change, policy implementation quality, coordination improvements, private-sector engagement dynamics and sustainability of institutionalisation. The project document highlights that Rwanda's youth employment ecosystem suffers from "poor coordination and duplication of services," yet the M&E framework does not include indicators to track improvements in coordination or system coherence.

Limited early measurement of inclusion outcomes: Although the project tracks gender and disability participation, the M&E framework does not yet measure gendered barriers to digital access, inclusion outcomes for rural youth, accessibility of digital skills for PWDs and differential employment outcomes by subgroup. The literature review (*What Works for the Youth*) emphasises that youth employment programmes often fail to reach vulnerable groups due to structural barriers. The project's M&E framework does not yet systematically measure whether these barriers are being reduced.

Some delays in M&E implementation due to procurement challenges: Both the Digital Skills Assessment and the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Assessment were delayed because "none of the firms provided sufficient value for money" (Year 2 report). This slowed the availability of evidence needed for early learning.

Theory of Change not fully integrated into M&E: The ToC is implicit and not fully articulated with assumptions, risks, feedback loops, system-level indicators. This makes it harder to align M&E with the causal pathways the project seeks to influence. M&E should ideally be aligned with the 'systems change ToC' (MTE 2026) as depicted in the figure 4.

Overall: The project's M&E framework supports learning and accountability, but its ability to measure change, especially at outcome and system levels, is moderate and will require strengthening to fully capture the project's transformative ambitions.

3.4 Effectiveness

Effective project performance and partnerships (EQ6 and EQ7)

Outcome 1 – Jobs created in the digital economy through policies and enterprise growth

Strong evidence base for policy and programme actions established: The DED was completed and published in 2025, identifying digital job hubs (Kigali, Musanze) and priority sectors (public administration, market services). The DED provided national evidence base on digital labour markets. Analytical review of the 2019 NEP was completed and endorsed by MIFOTRA, defining ten priority policy areas for the next generation employment framework. Entrepreneurship support was institutionalised and scaled as nine SIYB/DYB modules

Headline finding 6: The project has made substantial mid-point progress toward its intended outcomes, particularly in evidence generation, institutionalisation, capacity development, and systems strengthening. However, outcome-level effects (job creation, job placement, start-up acceleration, enterprise growth, decent work) remain largely prospective, with several foundational activities still in progress and some delays in assessments and private-sector uptake. Further, multi-stakeholder partnerships are strong at national level than at local delivery (district) level. Partnership structures need to be more inclusive and more involving of private sector (especially in non-ICT sectors).

contextualised and translated into Kinyarwanda. These were integrated into Rwanda Polytechnic's e-learning system, potentially reaching an estimated 12,500 learners. The project progress report has documented that 425 youth entrepreneurs were trained across five districts (47% women, 4% PWD). The project has strengthened financial inclusion pathways with 37 YEGO Centre coordinators trained in financial education to support Aguka Fund referrals.

Outcome-level job creation not yet observable or measurable: Tracer studies are planned for 2027, meaning job creation and enterprise growth outcomes are not yet evidenced. Entrepreneurship ecosystem constraints (market linkages, tailored finance) remain as is evidenced by several entrepreneurs met by the MTE. The project experienced delays in ecosystem assessment and policy work. This was due to procurement challenges as “*none of the firms provided sufficient value for money*” (Year 2 report).

Outcome 2 – Improved digital skills of young men and women

Several foundational activities are in progress; outcome or impact are yet to be realised: Draft zero of Digital skills demand–supply assessment was presented to the national stakeholders. This assessment included a survey of 332 enterprises and consultations with 296 stakeholders. This would need to be validated with the constituency partners, including with MSMEs to improve ‘demand’ for skills. Occupational standards and curricula development is ongoing with cybersecurity occupational analysis validated and curriculum development scheduled for 2026. Two TVET institutions (Ecole Technique Saint Kizito Musha and Gacuriro TSS) identified for piloting cybersecurity digital campuses. Nine institutions have been selected to operationalise Innovation Challenge fund, expected to reach 1,600 youth by 2026. This is a potentially transformative intervention, to be determined by the intensity or quality of intervention. It is to be seen to what extent the outcome /impact potential of this intervention is realisable by 2026/27.

Delays in digital skills assessment: Procurement delays slowed the start of the assessment.

Early evidence of improved digital skills and decent work outcomes are not yet observable or measured: Training delivery is underway, but outcome-level indicators (skills proficiency, job placement, decent working conditions) are not yet observable or measured.

Outcome 3 – Improved youth transition to decent work

Progress achieved on several fronts of intermediation: Redesigned NIP with Soft skills curriculum (40-hour package) has been validated. Internship tools (agreements, supervisor checklists) has been developed. 200 interns are targeted for the first cohort. Quality apprenticeship pilot launched with 50 apprentices and 25 ICT companies. Strengthened career guidance - “Building My Future at Work” contextualised and delivered to 30 advisers across employment centres, universities and TVET institutions through a seven-week blended programme.

Private-sector reluctance remains a barrier: Early assessments (project document, KII, and literature) show employers reluctant to host interns. Also, soft skills gaps persist affecting intern performance.

Employment outcomes not yet observable or measurable: Post-internship tracking planned for 2027.

Outcome 4 - Strengthened multi-stakeholder partnerships to promote decent jobs for youth in the digital economy

Strong alignment with national institutional architecture: The project is intentionally embedded within Rwanda’s existing employment and digital transformation governance structures. The *Inception Report* confirms early bilateral consultations with all these actors and the establishment of a Technical Advisory Group chaired by MIFOTRA. The *Year 2 Progress Report* states that “*partnership governance continued to function as a core implementation mechanism,*” with annual Project Partners Meetings involving government, social partners, private sector, and the Luxembourg Embassy. Clearly, the project has successfully positioned itself as a system actor, not a standalone implementer.

Partnerships strengthened through joint evidence generation and policy processes: The project has used diagnostics as partnership-building tools. The DED was validated with MIFOTRA, MINICT, MOYA, RTB, MINICOM, RISA, PSF, and trade unions. The NEP review was conducted jointly with MIFOTRA and endorsed at national level. The Digital Skills Demand and Supply Assessment involved 296 stakeholders across 73 institutions. Evidence generation has become a shared platform for coordination, strengthening trust and alignment across ministries and social partners.

Strong partnerships with training institutions and ecosystem actors: The project has built a network of institutional partners delivering entrepreneurship and digital skills. 44 trainers certified across BDF, Hanga Hubs, Employment Service Centres, RICEM, PSF, ICT Chamber, and Imanzi Business Institute. Nine institutions selected through the Innovation Challenge to deliver digital skills to 1,600 youth. Rwanda Polytechnic integrated e-SIYB into its e-learning system, potentially reaching 12,500 learners.

Strengthened partnerships for youth transitions (internships, apprenticeships, career guidance): The project has convened public and private actors around work-based learning. Internship mapping involved MIFOTRA, RTB, GIZ, Rwanda Coding Academy, Central Bank IT Unit, and 10+ ICT companies (e.g., BK Techhouse, Tek Experts, Irengo). The Quality Apprenticeship Pilot engages 25 ICT companies. Career guidance training involved advisers from employment centres, universities, and TVET institutions. The project has created new bridges between training institutions and employers.

District-level coordination remains weak: While national partnerships are strong, district-level integration is uneven. Youth employment programmes (Youth Friendly Centres, YEGO Centres, ESCs, Hanga Hubs, BDF advisors) often operate in parallel. The project’s

entrepreneurship rollout (IBI, BDF, Hanga Hubs) risks overlap without stronger district convening mechanisms.

Limited inclusion of vulnerable youth in partnership structures: Partnerships are broad, but not always inclusive of marginalised groups. Literature shows young women face higher NEET rates (41% vs 29.9%) and work fewer hours. Youth with disabilities have significantly higher NEET rates. The MTE KII observes that digital skills initiatives often fail to reach rural and vulnerable youth (NEET and rural youth), including women and PWDs. The project initiative, such as Innovate4DigiJobs, address this issue to some extent but not fully. So, while partnerships are strong, but are not yet fully inclusive of organisations representing women, rural youth, and PWDs.

Private-sector engagement remains inconsistent: Partnerships with employers are promising but not yet robust. The project engagement with supply-led institutions (government, training institutions) seems to be heavier than with the demand side organisations (private sector –MSMEs- who will absorb skills). Engagement is stronger with ICT firms than in non-ICT sectors where digital jobs are emerging.

Headline finding 7: Project activities have been broadly well targeted and have reached the intended groups—youth entrepreneurs, digitally aspiring youth, TVET learners, trainers, and ecosystem actors. However, the reach among the most vulnerable groups (young women, rural NEET youth, and youth with disabilities) remains uneven, and some structural barriers limit equitable access.

In sum: The project is on track and has built a strong foundation for achieving its intended outcomes, but most measurable employment, enterprise and decent work effects will materialise in later years, once institutionalised systems begin to deliver at scale. The project has significantly strengthened multi-stakeholder partnerships, but deeper, more inclusive, more private sector engagement (especially in non-ICT sectors) and more decentralised coordination is needed.

Targeting and outreach (EQ8)

Targeting aligns well with Rwanda's labour-market realities: The project's focus on youth aged 18–30, digital skills, entrepreneurship, and employment services is strongly aligned with the evidence base. Rwanda has a very young population (78% under 35). Youth face high underemployment—two-thirds work <35 hours/week (*Scoping Report*). NEET rates are high, especially for young women (41% vs 29.9% for men – DOT statistics). Informality dominates youth employment (75%+ in informal sector – *What Works for the Youth*). The project's target groups are highly relevant to the country's demographic and labour-market profile.

Strong reach among youth entrepreneurs and MSMEs: Entrepreneurship support has reached a wide and diverse group of young entrepreneurs. Participants primarily from retail, services, hospitality, and micro-trade—consistent with Rwanda's MSME structure (92.6% micro-enterprises – *ProDoc*).

Effective targeting of digital skills providers and learners: The project has strengthened institutions that reach large numbers of youth. Nine Innovation Challenge partners delivering digital skills potentially to 1,600 youth by 2026, a large proportion of which are expected to be NEET, rural youth and women. Rwanda Polytechnic integration of e-SIYB potentially reaching 12,500 learners. Cybersecurity curriculum and digital campuses target TVET learners, a key youth segment. Targeting of institutions ensures potentially scalable and sustainable reach.

Targeting of employment-service actors has been strategic: The project has strengthened

actors who directly support youth transitions. 30 career guidance advisers trained across employment centres, universities, and TVET institutions. 200 interns targeted in the redesigned NIP. 50 apprentices and 25 ICT companies engaged in the apprenticeship pilot. Targeting focuses on actors who can directly influence youth employability.

Targeting of trainers and ecosystem actors supports decentralised delivery: The project has built capacity among institutions that serve youth at district level. 44 trainers certified across BDF, Hanga Hubs, ESCs, RICEM, PSF, ICT Chamber, and IBI. YEGO Centre coordinators trained in financial education (37 coordinators across all districts). This strengthens local delivery capacity, improving long-term reach.

Vulnerable youth (women, rural NEET youth, youth with disabilities) could remain under-reached: Despite efforts, the project may not fully overcome structural barriers. Women's participation is improving though it needs to be seen the proportion of women that the 9 grantees under the innovation challenge are able to reach. Digital skills programmes risk favouring urban youth due to connectivity and device constraints. Targeting quotes are effective but would need to be closely monitored by the project for the ongoing initiatives such as innovation challenge fund.

District-level targeting is uneven: Some districts have strong engagement (Musanze, Huye, Rubavu), while others lag. Innovation Challenge partners operate in selected districts only. Entrepreneurship training concentrated in five districts. Youth Friendly Centres and YEGO Centres vary in capacity and reach (*What Works for the Youth*). Geographic targeting is strategic but uneven, with risk of leaving some districts behind.

Limited targeting of out-of-school NEET youth: Most beneficiaries are connected to institutions (TVET, hubs, centres). Project activities rely heavily on institutional channels, which NEET youth often do not access. This could be the reason why the NEET youth—especially rural and female NEET—remain under-reached. This is a structural issue. There is no data base for youth NEET. However, via the Innovation Challenge some of the downstream partner NGOs are targeting youth NEET (e.g. Ejo Youth targeting young mothers and She Can Code).

Digital access barriers limit participation among the poorest youth: The DED highlights

Headline finding 8: Progress has been strongly enabled by high government ownership, strong institutional partnerships, and a robust evidence base. However, delivery has been constrained by procurement delays, coordination bottlenecks, private-sector reluctance, and structural labour-market challenges such as informality, digital access barriers, and lack of access to tailored financial products. Post-training follow-up, when conducted in the future, could enable the project to understand and address barriers to achieve outcomes.

a major structural barrier. Internet penetration is 34%, usage is only 9%, despite 90% coverage. Data costs are 10–20% of GNI per capita (DED; World Bank Africa Digital Report). Limited device ownership among rural youth. Digital skills targeting is appropriate, but access constraints limit reach among the most disadvantaged (Rwanda digital skills – demand and supply study and evaluation field mission observations).

In sum, targeting is strong and well aligned, but equity gaps remain, requiring more deliberate outreach to vulnerable youth and broader employer engagement.

Enabling and limiting factors (EQ9)

Enabling factors: Strong project design, strategic alignment and evidence driven implementation: The project's holistic design—linking labour demand, supply, intermediation and partnerships —has enabled coherent implementation. Government partners (MIFOTRA, MINICT) have actively shaped and validated project outputs. Diagnostics and other evidence studies have guided adaptive management and strengthened credibility.

Limiting factors: Procurement and consultancy market constraints, coordination bottlenecks, private sector reluctance and other structural challenges: Several assessments were delayed because firms did not meet quality or value-for-money standards. Delayed evidence meant delayed downstream activities. Structural labour-market challenges (underemployment, informality, NEET, digital access and affordability barriers) are persistent despite project efforts. These and private sector reluctance (to host interns) limit the speed at which training translates into jobs. Further, access to finance is a major structural constraint as there are no tailored financial products for the MSMEs supported by the project. Access to Finance Rwanda and other development partners (such as UNDP) provides collateral security or risk guarantee /risk sharing mechanisms however uptake of these is currently limited for the project beneficiaries. The project could have started with stronger financial inclusion and mentorship/coaching for entrepreneurs who graduated from the existing mechanisms (Hanga hubs and other development partner initiatives). However, lack of the basic level of trained trainers, quality training material led the project to first invest in trainers' capacities. This diverted resources from 'access to finance' and mentorship related initiatives in the beginning of the project.

Enabling factor, not evident yet: Post training (soft skills, SIYB, DYB) follow ups and impact evaluations: Post training follow up would provide an understanding on how the trainees have progressed and more specifically what barriers and obstacles they have experienced in their progression. For example, IBI trained 175 entrepreneurs (~50% women,

Headline finding 9: On balance, resources have been allocated and spent strategically. Spending has clearly prioritised core delivery and partnerships. At mid-point pace of implementation, project spend is almost at half level, meaning that the pace of implementation is aligned with the timeframe. Higher spending in certain categories (notably ILO international staff, travel non project staff) points to operational needs of the project with a lean project team in Kigali and limited national expertise in some areas. In the remaining timeframe (two years) , the project has some leeway or flexibility to invest in follow-on activities aimed at accelerating impact.

4% PWDs) - 100 in Rubavu, 75 in Huye on SIYB package. This has boosted their skills and have potential to improve their business operations. IBI has planned to visit these companies 6-months later to understand the level of uptake. This follow up engagement would also capture challenges being faced by the trainees. IBI then intends to document and develop specific interventions as may be required to support the entrepreneurs towards their progressive journey.

In sum, the project has navigated a complex environment effectively, but structural and operational constraints have moderated the pace of progress. A periodic monitoring of limiting factors would be necessary for an adaptive response from the project.

3.5 Efficiency

Efficient and strategic resource allocations (EQ10)

The ILO has undertaken strategic budget allocations to support the delivery and management of the project: Project interventions and activities—meaning the direct actions aimed at achieving project objectives—account for 50% of the total budget, while national staffing, operational costs, and the project management costs comprise the remaining 50% (see table 1). By December 2025, the project had spent 49.8% of its budgeted resources overall. At mid-point pace of implementation, project spend is almost at half level, meaning that the pace of implementation is aligned with the timeframe. The project has received 86.8% from the donor so far from the total project budget, which is USD 4,423,495, with rest 13.2% (€500, 000 $\approx$ USD 584,794.62¹⁰) is yet to be received. Spending rates differ across outcomes: Outcome 1 (job creation) has seen maximum spend with 25.5% of total expenditure incurred for this outcome. Outcome 2 has seen 11.9% of total spend, Outcome 3 has seen 7.2% and outcome 4 has witnessed 5.3%. Project management and oversight have accounted for 50% of total spend so far, including 11.5% have been charged to the ILO overheads¹¹. Disparities in expenditures highlight the project emphasis on different outcomes and the complexity of managing diverse project components for operational efficiency.

Table 1. Project Spend - By Outcomes (as of December 2025)

Outcome	Total Actuals (US\$)	Proportion (%) against total spend
01: Jobs are created in the digital economy through policies and investment growth in sustainable enterprises	562,608.23	25.5%
02: Improved digital skills of young men and women	262,710.74	11.9%
03: Young people's transition to decent work in the digital economy is facilitated	158,654.36	7.2%
04: Strengthened multi-stakeholder partnerships to promote decent jobs for youth in the digital economy	117,186.76	5.3%
10- Project management and oversight	849,828.31	38.5%
99 – Programme Support Costs	253,628.69	11.5%
TOTAL Project	2,204,617.09	

The project experienced challenges in managing cost efficiencies and value-for-money:

The project exhibits robust spending performance across most expense categories, in line with the proportion of the project period completed. However, expenditure remains notably low in the 'subcontracts' and 'national consultants' categories, primarily due to procurement delays. For example, the engagement of national consultants for critical activities—such as entrepreneurship and employment studies—was postponed because procurement processes were not finalised on schedule. This directly slowed the implementation of these studies and delayed related project outputs, demonstrating how procurement bottlenecks hinder both spending and progress in these areas. In terms of cost efficiency, the ILO team consistently prioritised value for money in taking decisions on external consultants versus using internal ILO expertise. A substantial portion of the project budget—36.8%—is spent on engaging ILO international staff. This includes expense category 010 (related to ILO regional and HQ office personnels providing technical assistance to the project) and expense category 050 (ILO international staff travel). This allocation can be justified by the lean project team based in Kigali, engaging higher level of technical backstopping from both the ILO regional offices and Headquarters in Geneva (international travel costs – 5.5% of budget) meant a high level of spending. Even though high cost, this strategic choice was necessary for efficient project

¹⁰ At exchange rate of EUR/USD 1.159

¹¹ The ILO overheads are set at 13% of direct costs (sum of Outcome 1 to 99). This is a generic overhead charge, for the provision of ILO management, financial, procurement, legal services and is a standard for all the ILO projects.

management, timely delivery of certain outputs and for quality assurance of the technical delivery of the project.

Table 2. Project spend - By Expense Category (as of December 2025)

Expense category	Total Actuals (US\$)	% Spent against overall expenditure
010 & 020- ILO Project Staff (in-country and technical back-stoppers)	704,580.25	31.9%
015 - International consultants	73,667.00	3.3%
024 - National officers	91,814.15	4.2%
025 - National consultants	91,379.50	4.1%
040 - Travel - Project staff	20,978.03	1.0%
050 - Travel - Non project staff (ILO backstopping + HQ team)	209,328.34	9.5%
060 - Subcontracts	526,105.02	23.9%
070 - General operating expenses	56,768.07	2.6%
071 - Communication	1,782.66	0.1%
080 - Furniture, equipment	67,167.37	3.0%
100 - Seminars	72,971.39	3.3%
110 - Other training activities	13,446.59	0.6%
120 - Grants	21,000.00	1.0%
140 - Program support cost	253,628.69	11.5%
TOTAL Project	2,204,617.09	

The project has some manoeuvrability in the remaining timeframe, with 25% unallocated budget available: At mid-term (two years into the project), 75% of the project budget has already been allocated – 50% expenditure incurred and about 25% commitment against 2026 planned outputs of the overall \$4.4 million. In this context, "allocated" means funds have either been spent or earmarked for specific purposes - encumbrances. Encumbrances refer to funds that have been committed but not yet spent, further limiting available resources. As a result, there is some leeway or flexibility for the project to invest in follow-on activities aimed at accelerating impact, designing new initiatives in response to emerging needs, or expanding existing programmes that have demonstrated strong potential. For instance, the project can potentially support additional round of Innovate4DigiJobs, potentially most transformative initiatives under the project, or pilot new outreach programmes targeting NEET, rural youth, women and PWDs.

Headline finding 10: There are credible early signs of incremental and transformative change—especially in how institutions think about digital jobs, youth employment policy, and delivery systems—but these shifts are still partial and fragile, with social norms, decent work, employment, entrepreneurship and inclusion outcomes only beginning to move.

3.6 Impact

Early or potential signs of incremental and transformative changes (EQ11)

The project is contributing to systemic conversation - institutional and policy shifts - from fragmented youth employment to integrated, 'demand-supply-mediation-

enabling environment' thinking: The project's four-pillar design - a holistic approach focussing on digital economy workforce demand, supply, mediation and enabling environment - is now reflected in concrete processes: DED, NEP review, the Digital Skills Assessment, and the redesign of the NIP. This is a clear shift toward the integrated, pro-employment, pro-entrepreneurship and pro-decent work framework. The analytical review of the 2019 NEP (supported by the project) has produced ten priority policy areas that explicitly integrate digitalisation, lifelong learning, and system-level coordination. These shifts are largely at the level of policy framing, agenda-setting and some pilots; full implementation of the revised NEP and related strategies is still ahead, and the extent to which they will change budget allocations, incentives, and enforcement remains uncertain.

The project is catalysing systemic shift in terms of norms around structured work-based learning: The redesign of the NIP and the Quality Apprenticeship Pilot introduce structured soft-skills curricula, standardised agreements, and clearer expectations for host companies. In a context where the literature notes “difficulty to integrate youth in education and skilling leading to decent employment” and weak workplace learning practices, these are early but important changes in how institutions conceive of internships and apprenticeships. Employer reluctance to host interns and apprentices—linked to perceived soft-skills gaps and supervision burdens—shows that firm-level behaviour is only beginning to shift. Without stronger incentives and demonstration effects, these pilots are unlikely to become the norm.

Digitalisation and Decent work¹² connections are conceptually clear but are yet to become evident in the real-world situation: The ILO project interventions support boosting of digital economy based on the conceptual foundation that it would lead to decent work. These connections are yet to become evident in the real-world situation though some early signs are being observed. For example, SIYB trainings emphasise decent working conditions. Entrepreneurs, receiving these trainings, expressed that they understand the benefits of having skilled employees. Entrepreneurs also understand that decent pay and decent working conditions are a prerequisite to attract talent to their businesses. The project trainings of existing entrepreneur are expected to lead to improvement and expansion of businesses, which would require more skills and is likely to create decent jobs. Several training institutes (IBI for instance) provide evidence that some of the businesses, post training, do expand and therefore 'decent job creation' potential of these trainings are real. There is a logical connection of digitalisation with decent work, however it takes several steps, beyond the training, before decent work outcomes can be realised.

The project is beginning to generate credible last-mile effects: Last mile impacts are particularly emerging in entrepreneurship readiness, institutionalised digital skills pathways, and improved work-based learning structures. MTE discussions notes that youth who participated in SIYB/DYB and financial education training report increased confidence in business planning, better understanding of costing, pricing, and record-keeping, improved ability to approach BDF and SACCOs, and clearer pathways to formalisation. Youth, in different post-training assessments, report better soft skills, improved digital literacy, and greater awareness of job-search platforms. However, deeper labour-market outcomes (job placement, income gains, reduced underemployment, inclusion of vulnerable youth) are not yet visible at scale. Innovate4DigiJobs is potentially an impactful initiative of the project. All nine selected innovations have the possibility of being a game changer in their specific domains. College Baptise Gacuba II in partnership with ARICENT Technology Ltd is piloting an Internet of Things¹³ (IoT) based course that would empower youth with digital skills that can be applied in farming, potentially leading to precision agriculture. This would not only ignite youth interest in agriculture but also make agriculture more modern and more remunerative,

¹² MIFOTRA official, during evaluation discussions, described decent jobs as having written contract, social security contributions, regular pay, not under-age (<16), and employer value skills with remuneration according to the skill level

¹³ The Internet of Things (IoT) refers to a network of physical "things" or objects embedded with sensors, software, and technologies that connect and exchange data with other devices and systems over the internet

while following more resilient and more climate-smart approaches. They have been awarded US\$ 20,000 to run three cohorts of 25 students each (75 total). This three-months (4 hours a day classes for 5 days a week) certificate course is followed by an industrial attachment component. This will provide students with skills and inspirations in entrepreneurship, software development, data science (machine learning) and IOT technologies, for use in agriculture. Among each cohort, five best trainees would be selected for entrepreneurship and incubation support. This is a perfect example of last mile 'potential' impact. Impact potential is yet to be proven though as it is to be seen when the project concludes in the next two years. The foundations for future impact are strong, but several systemic and operational shifts are required to unlock full last-mile transformation as is observed in the following entrepreneur case studies.

Entrepreneur case studies demonstrate early signs of project impact:

Case 1: Mechanical Engineer in Musanze

This case features a mechanical engineer who established a machinery manufacturing business in Musanze, driven by a vision to innovate and expand the sector.

- **Background:** The entrepreneur launched his enterprise to meet local machinery demands, leveraging his technical expertise and ambition.
- **Business Overview:** Currently supplying machinery to a ready market, he aims to diversify into renewable energy and electric vehicle manufacturing, reflecting broader industry ambitions.
- **Challenges:** Scaling up operations is hindered by difficulties in accessing finance, which limits expansion into new sectors despite proven demand.
- **Support Received:** Guidance and workspace from Hanga Hub, alongside IYB and DYB training from Kinar Rwanda, have strengthened his business management skills and strategic planning.
- **Measurable Outcomes:** The business maintains a steady customer base, with demand consistently outstripping supply. The entrepreneur has developed detailed plans for diversification, and has received positive feedback from industry stakeholders, although financial constraints remain a barrier to significant growth.

Box 1 – High impact potential of a Innovate4DigiJob funded initiative

The RP College initiative, as part of Innovate4DigiJobs, recruit students from across Rwanda who have dropped out, require professional upskilling, or are currently unemployed. The programme is highly inclusive, with 40% of participants being women and 8% persons with disabilities, ensuring that traditionally underrepresented groups are actively involved. Participants undergo a six-month training tailored to specific job titles, such as UX designer, embedded systems specialist, or IT developer, equipping them with relevant skills and connecting them directly with industry opportunities. The initiative further supports students by providing professional internships, enabling practical experience and facilitating smooth transitions into the workforce. RP College has established over 80 Memoranda of Understanding with industry partners, guaranteeing each student an industrial placement and significantly increasing their chances of employment. Notably, in the previous cohort, 15 start-ups were launched, with 10 becoming profitable within two years, demonstrating the effectiveness of the training and placement model. The current initiative aims to replicate this success, expecting at least 20 new start-ups to emerge from the programme. The actual cost per learner for the comprehensive training and placement package is 600,000 RWF (400 USD), which is substantially lower than the tuition fees charged by private entities such as Africa Digital Academy (1,500 USD for similar courses). Thanks to full funding from the ILO project, eligible participants incur zero cost, making the initiative accessible to low-income communities and ensuring equal opportunity for all. This inclusive approach not only removes affordability barriers but also enhances the potential impact of the programme across Rwanda.

Case 2: Tailor's Dream College

Tailor's Dream College is a community-based, purpose-driven social enterprise founded and led by Gisele, herself a single mother, with a mission to empower vulnerable women through professional skills development.

- **Background:** The initiative targets 25 single mothers aged 18–25 in Musanze and Kigali who face barriers to employment and entrepreneurship due to limited education and lack of support networks.
- **Business Model:** The enterprise offers certified six-month training in tailoring, followed by job placement support. Profits are reinvested to sustain and scale the model, promoting social impact alongside business growth.
- **Support Received:** The project's Innovate4DigiJobs initiative provides ongoing assistance, including a partnership with a German company to support 50 youth in acquiring professional tailoring skills. The digitalisation of operations ensures efficient programme delivery.
- **Impact and Measurable Outcomes:** All 25 women are enrolled in training, with projected job placement rates above 80%. The enterprise has secured agreements for skill development and introduced a pay-back scheme for graduates. Gisele's fashion house has expanded, and the business plan for a new training centre is underway. The company has improved recruitment and retention of skilled tailors, addressing a key industry challenge.

Case 3: Agri-business in Gakenke

Abaysenga Gisele's agri-business showcases successful growth and digital transformation in poultry farming, responding to market demands both locally and in DRC.

- **Business Growth:** Starting with 1,000 chickens in 2020, the business has expanded to 5,000, with plans to reach 8,000 in the near future.
- **Digitalisation:** Support from Hanga Hub and IYB/DYB training enabled the entrepreneur to adopt digital marketing strategies. The addition of an IT specialist has led to increased online orders and greater market reach.
- **Support Received:** The business benefited from workspace and mentorship at Hanga Hub and received a \$7,000 grant from 'Bridge for Billions' in 2025 for infrastructure and modern materials.
- **Measurable Outcomes:** Online order volumes have grown significantly, turnover has increased year-on-year, and the business is now self-sustaining, with no immediate need for external loans. Market expansion into DRC has been secured, and job opportunities within the business have increased.

Case 4: Sun Studio Photography

Bangankiza Felicien's Sun Studio demonstrates how targeted training and financial support drive business expansion and professional development in the creative sector.

- **Business Expansion:** Since its founding in 2013, Sun Studio has expanded operations from Musanze to Kigali and Rubavu, securing a loan in 2025 at 18% interest to facilitate growth.
- **Training:** The entrepreneur received IYB and DYB training, which enhanced digital marketing and presence, helping attract a broader client base.
- **Support Received:** The loan was facilitated with collateral support, and the project provided business management and marketing training.
- **Measurable Outcomes:** The business has entered new geographic markets, increased revenue streams, and established a plan to sponsor staff for further education in media and photography. Upgrades to digital equipment are underway, with expected improvements in service quality and competitiveness.

Case 5: Bashions Ltd Interior Design

Bashions Ltd, led by Iranzi David, represents innovation in interior design, leveraging digital solutions to create unique products and seeking further investment for growth.

- **Business Innovation:** The company manufactures wooden lamps operated via a digital app, employing four workers and seeking to scale operations.
- **Support Received:** Hanga Hub provided mentorship from ideation through incubation, along with workspace for the team to develop and refine their product.
- **Investment Needs:** The business aims to secure approximately 15 million RWF in grants or investment, as conventional loans are prohibitively expensive.
- **Measurable Outcomes:** The product has reached market prototype stage, with initial sales recorded. Mentorship has led to improvements in business strategy and product design, and the team is actively engaging potential investors to support expansion.

These case studies collectively illustrate the positive impact of project interventions on local entrepreneurs, demonstrating measurable progress in business growth, innovation, digital transformation, and social inclusion. Continued support, access to finance, and system-level collaboration and consolidation remain key to sustaining and scaling these successes.

‘System Consolidation’¹⁴ is needed for building a cohesive support ecosystem for entrepreneurship: As evidenced by the entrepreneurs’ cases (see above), despite the breadth of interventions, many trainees and entrepreneurs encounter persistent systemic barriers that hinder their progress. In the case of Baptist college, if only a few succeeds out of 75 being trained, then it is less of an impact as others face systemic barriers to success. Increasing probability and intensity of success for many would require a consistent follow up to understand these barriers and to support the trainees to go forward. It may be that some of these trainees would need proper connections with farmer cooperatives. It may be that farmer cooperatives themselves need support. Collaboration and follow-through would determine the degree of the success of the project. System consolidation is essential for converting early project successes into broader, incremental, and transformative change. By integrating interventions and fostering collaboration, the project partners can help trainees and entrepreneurs overcome systemic barriers, maximise impact, and ensure sustainability. Concrete strategies such as mentorship, partnership-building, and resource-sharing is likely to be needed across all project initiatives to realise the full potential of entrepreneurship support programmes.

Unintended outcomes (EQ12)

Headline finding 11: There are plausible unintended positive effects—especially around standards, and spillovers into non-digital segments and system enabling functions that project partners are playing—and some emerging negative risks, notably urban bias, risk of exclusion of more vulnerable youth. Most of these effects or risks are still early and need closer monitoring.

Spillovers beyond the “digital” niche: Although framed around the digital economy, SIYB/DYB, financial education and soft-skills content are being used by youth in classic

¹⁴ System consolidation refers to the deliberate integration of multiple interventions, support mechanisms, and stakeholder engagements to create a unified and effective ecosystem for trainees and entrepreneurs. Rather than isolated efforts, system consolidation ensures that training, mentorship, access to finance, and market linkages are harmonised, thereby increasing the likelihood of sustained success for participants. This approach is particularly relevant for project and policymakers seeking transformative impact and scalable change in entrepreneurship support programmes.

micro-trade, services and agriculture, where most young people actually work. The project's tools are helping some of them improve basic business practices even when their enterprises are only partially digitalised.

Strengthening data and evidence culture: The DED, skills assessment and ecosystem studies respond directly to long-standing evidence gaps—"rigorous impact evaluation of training programs" and "youths' aspirations in the labour market" are explicitly flagged as missing—and have encouraged ministries and partners to demand and use better labour-market data, which can benefit other programmes too.

ILO project partner, as a system enabler: Kina Rwanda, an experienced organisation that has supported entrepreneurs in Rwanda for over seven years, receives support from the ILO and manages ongoing projects funded by Heifer International and Access to Finance Rwanda. Each project is distinct: the ILO initiative focuses on entrepreneurship training for youth, equipping them with business management skills; Heifer International's project centres on agricultural business development, providing resources and technical expertise to young agripreneurs; and Access to Finance Rwanda specialises in financial literacy and facilitating access to credit, enabling beneficiaries to secure funding for their ventures. Kina Rwanda integrates these projects to enhance complementarity, ensuring that youth who participate in SIYB training through the ILO project can subsequently benefit from financial literacy and credit support via Access to Finance Rwanda, and agricultural business development through Heifer International. By coordinating these efforts, Kina Rwanda enables seamless progression for beneficiaries, allowing them to move from skill acquisition to practical business development and financial empowerment. This integrative approach, although not required by its specific ILO mandate, positions Kina Rwanda as a 'systems' enabler. Tangible outcomes include the creation of a sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem, improved access to markets and finance, and enhanced long-term economic empowerment for young people.

Risk of widening gaps between "reachable" that are reached and "hard-to-reach" that are unreached youth: Because many activities are channelled through institutions (TVETs, hubs, YEGO Centres), there is a risk that youth already somewhat connected to services benefit most, while the most marginalised—rural young women, youth with disabilities, out-of-school NEET—remain outside. Literature notes that female youth have "a high share of NEET youth" and that policies for persons with disabilities have "limited gender" and youth specificity; without deliberate corrective measures, the project could unintentionally deepen these gaps.

In sum, unintended effects are more positive than negative: the project is helping to normalise systems thinking, raise standards, and strengthen data use. But there are clear equity risks—urban bias, and limited reach to harder-to-access youth—that need to be explicitly recognised in the remaining timeframe and potential next phase of the project, with stronger rural outreach, and targeted inclusion strategies to turn early promise into genuinely broad-based, resilient impact.

3.7 Sustainability

Sustainability mechanisms (EQ13)

Sustainability mechanisms focus on embedding and ensuring ownership of the initiatives, tools, and methods promoted by the project to strengthen the digital economy and contribute to decent work. Achieving sustainability requires that multiple actors and instruments actively promote digital economy initiatives. This collaborative approach ensures broader ownership and institutionalisation. After first mentioning "multi-actor, multi-instruments", it's important to clarify: This refers to the involvement of various stakeholders—such as government, the private sector, and civil society—and a range of tools including laws, policies, and programmes, all working together to support digital economy initiatives. In the words of Peter Utting ^[1], these multi-actor, multi-instruments essentially mean that a more enabling environment is created through laws, policy, programmes, planning, tools, and institutional

reform within the country. This also means that implementing policies is just as crucial as designing them. These coordinated efforts are more likely to drive continuity of ILO initiatives and sustain the benefits derived from them. The ILO project acts as a ‘cog in the wheel’—that is, a contributing part of a larger system—where several other forces also determine the sustainability of digital initiatives. For example, the ILO project facilitated the adoption of digital skills training programmes in partnership with RTB, RP college, ensuring long-term capacity building beyond the project's duration. The analysis below presents specific contributions made by the ILO project towards catalysing sustainability mechanisms, along with a

Headline finding 12: The project has made good progress in institutionalising tools, curricula, and partnership mechanisms within national systems—particularly in entrepreneurship, digital skills, and work-based learning. However, sustainability gaps are evident in scale up of pilots, district-level delivery structures and financing pathways.

description of broader forces currently at play.

^[1] Peter Utting (2017); Public policies for Social and Solidarity Economy- Assessing progress in seven countries https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_emp/@emp_ent/@coop/documents/publication/wcms_582778.pdf

The project has moved the needle on institutionalisation of entrepreneurship and financial education Nine SIYB/DYB modules were contextualised and translated into Kinyarwanda. These modules are now integrated into Rwanda Polytechnic's e-learning system, reaching an estimated 12,500 learners. Additionally, the modules have been rolled out through BDF, Hanga Hubs, ESCs, and YEGO Centres. Training has also been delivered to 37 YEGO Centre coordinators in financial education, linked to the Aguka Fund and BDF schemes. This marks a shift from one-off financial literacy projects to routine, institutionalised financial readiness support for youth. In the coming months, it is to be observed whether support to the Aguka Fund result in improved screening and referral processes. Subsequently, it needs to be observed whether this leads to higher rates of financing approval for youth enterprises and measurable growth in new businesses launched.

The project has started to address structural constraints and strengthen national systems for boosting digital economy: The project is supporting pilots on digital apprenticeships and cyber security apprenticeships. Cybersecurity occupational standards have been validated with RTB and NCSA. TVET institutions has been selected for digital campus pilots. The pilots are mechanisms for the Government to embed these within their funding priorities (institutionalisation). Growing commitment for digital economy from within the govt is evident in terms of building Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) such as rolling out deployment of fibre optics, digital hubs, ambassador in each cell (group of villages), e-government (Irembo) etc. Government budgets /funds are not sufficient as ambitions are very high, necessitating support from development partners, such as the ILO, for scale up of the initiatives. Government wish to provide the backbone (DPI, digital literacy etc) while the private sector is expected to provide the intelligence layer. The initiatives of the development partners, such as the ILO's, strengthens this 'systems' approach, as it addresses many structural barriers (adoption of digitalisation by MSMEs, digital skills supply, intermediation, coherence) to the Government and private sector initiatives. Overall, digital economy reforms are anchored in national institutions, involving private sector partners. This increases the potential for sustainability.

The project has supported systemic shifts in internships, apprenticeships, and career guidance: NIP has been redesigned with MIFOTRA, which includes structured soft-skills curriculum and standardised agreements with host companies. Quality Apprenticeship Pilot is

aligned with ILO Recommendation 208¹⁵, involving 25 ICT companies. Career guidance training institutionalised across employment centres, universities, and TVET institutions. When these initiatives gain momentum, then the work-based learning can achieve a systemic shift - from fragmented practice to structured national systems.

Despite progress in strengthening national systems for the digital economy, district-level delivery remains uneven and faces critical continuity risks: While the project has built capacity among ESCs, Hanga Hubs, BDS trainers, PSF, IBI and other intermediaries, district-level implementation still faces weak follow-up systems, limited employer engagement, underused digital job platforms and weak links between training providers and employers. ESCs need stronger tools, data systems, outreach and periodic impact assessments. The project has also embedded SIYB training within Hanga Hubs, creating an important pathway for sustained entrepreneurship support. However, sustainability of the ILO engagement with Hanga Hubs is at risk as EU and JICA support for hub managers and operating costs is ending in 2026, while RISA plans to expand Hanga Hubs to all 20 districts and is developing a future business model.

Financing pathways for youth enterprises remain under-developed: Sustainability of entrepreneurship outcomes depends on stronger, institutionalised financing pathways. The MTE discussions with entrepreneurs point to persistent constraints in access to finance. While steps are taken to institutionalise financial education, actual access to finance to MSMEs is not yet a reality or systematically embedded.

Headline finding 13: Planned results are moderately to highly likely to be durable and scalable where they are already embedded in national policies, systems and routines; durability is less certain for digital job absorption by MSMEs, digitalisation leading to decent work, inclusive finance and for inclusive reach beyond Kigali/Musanze/Rubavu and better-connected youth.

Sustainability momentum (EQ14)

Where durability and scale look strongest: SIYB/DYB has been contextualised, translated into Kinyarwanda, and integrated into Rwanda Polytechnic's e-learning system, with a potential reach to 12,500 learners. These modules can also be delivered through BDF, Hanga Hubs, Employment Service Centres, YEGO Centres and PSF. IBI have scale up plans for SIYB, DYB this year. Some of the finance for scale up comes from other development partners and in some cases IBI is charging a fee (50,000) while subsidising the rest of participants. IBI gradually intends to increase the fee amount based on demand. This moves entrepreneurship support from project-bound training to standard institutional offer. Similarly, digital skills and TVET reforms are anchored in national systems, e.g., cybersecurity, NIP and quality apprenticeships. The PSF's training to 100 businesses opens avenues for both digitalisation and decent work. A few of these businesses are currently using digital tools for operating and promoting their business. Post-training, this is likely to be the case when businesses start adopting digital application as relevant for their business. Many of the participating businesses are informal businesses. Post-training, there is likelihood of these businesses acquiring registration. Becoming 'formal' is likely to boost decent work credentials of the businesses and may improve prospects for workers working in these businesses. Also, as businesses improve their skills, become digitally enabled, it is likely to boost their business momentum and can potentially lead for some of them to expand

¹⁵ <https://www.ilo.org/publications/guide-policymakers-quality-apprenticeships-recommendation-2023-no-208>

their operations within the country, and in the DRC, where there is lot of scope of expansion of Rwandan businesses. This expansion, in turn, would not only boost the local economic growth, but also create jobs and improve working conditions. This example demonstrates how the project can unleash momentum to achieve sustainability and scale.

A significant and enduring positive contribution of the project relates to the recent approval and publication of the Sector Skills Councils' law¹⁶. For context, Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are bodies that bring together employers, training providers, and other stakeholders to identify skills needs and shape workforce development within key sectors. The changes introduced by the new law are important because they are expected to empower SSCs to operate more independently and effectively, ultimately improving workforce development outcomes for businesses, workers, and the wider economy. The project played a key role in shaping these legislative reforms by providing recommendations during the law development process¹⁷. Several important technical suggestions made by the project were incorporated, demonstrating tangible influence on the revised draft Ministerial Instructions. Most notably, the framework moved away from the earlier “registration” model to an “accreditation” approach. Additionally, the provision stating that SSC recognition confers legal personality was removed. This aligns with ILO advice that councils should already exist as legal entities before being recognised. The revised text also reflects recommendations to reduce overly prescriptive regulatory controls. Previously, SSCs were required to adopt a government-provided model statute and seek ministerial approval for amendments. This requirement has now been removed. Instead, councils are only required to adopt their own statutes for accreditation. Furthermore, some problematic functions previously assigned to SSCs in the original draft were either removed or softened. For example, provisions stating that councils would develop workforce skills, regulate employment services, or coordinate activities of other councils have been amended. The language concerning quality assurance has also been moderated to avoid excessive regulatory burden. The passage demonstrates clear evidence of the project's influence on these policy changes, strengthening the credibility and persuasiveness of its contributions.

Where durability and scale are at risk: The project progress so far indicate a ‘demand side’ gap. MSMEs require digital skills, but currently as per employment diagnostics only 6 per cent of workers are in high-digital-intensity jobs. Majority (85%) of workers are in low intensity digital jobs. This reveals that Rwanda’s digital economy is still narrow in scope and concentrated in specific demographic and geographical segments. Digital skills agenda of the project (and of many other development partners) is focussed on ‘supply side’ intervention, unleashing higher quantum of skills in the job market. It is not clear whether in the current growth momentum of the digital economy, MSMEs will be able to absorb these skills. The MSMEs themselves are under supported, with evaluation discussions pointing out that support system to the enterprises is deteriorating. The initiatives, such as PSF’s training to 100 MSMEs, would need to be scaled up to plug this gap. Digital skilling creates a supply of improved skills in the market, but MSMEs should also be supported equally to absorb those skills. The ambition of the Government of Rwanda in terms of supplying skills to regional and global market can also be better realised with increased support to national MSMEs.

Durability and scale are at risk in the transition of digitalisation leading to decent work. This is still a work in progress. Decent work refers to opportunities for productive employment that provide fair income, security in the workplace, and social protection. MSMEs play a crucial role in driving economic growth. Digital skills encompass the knowledge and abilities required

¹⁶

https://www.minijust.gov.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/Minijust/Official_gazettes_2/2026_Igazeti_ya_Leta/_WERURWE-March-Mars/OG_n_09_bis_of_02.03.2026_PO_Gukuraho_inoti_PMO_Umuyobozi_Mukuru_MIFOTRA_Inama_zishinzwe_kubaka_ubushobozi_mu_byiciro_by_imirimo.pdf

¹⁷ 2025 Project Annual Report

to use digital tools, platforms, and technologies effectively in the workplace. As organisations become more formal and digitally enabled, the likelihood of achieving decent work increases. This progress relies on several factors, such as trainees and new market entrants acquiring relevant digital skills and securing employment with businesses willing to offer competitive wages for their talents. Interventions on both the demand side (such as supporting MSME digitisation and expansion) and the supply side (such as equipping youth with digital skills) have the potential to enhance decent work opportunities within the digital economy. These changes have not yet been observed at scale in Rwanda, they may become more prominent as government, ILO, and other major initiatives generate momentum, expanding MSMEs and advancing digital skills training for youth.

Durability and scale are at risk for financing and expanding enterprise gains. While financial education is now embedded via YEGO coordinators and SIYB/DYB modules, access to finance remains structurally constrained; evaluation evidence highlights ongoing funding gaps and the need for tailored, youth-friendly financial solutions. For instance, MTE found that most of youth-led enterprises are struggling to access customised financial products.

Durability and scale are also at risk in terms of achieving inclusive reach. Young women and youth with disabilities have higher NEET rates, largely due to prevailing social norms that discourage their participation in sectors such as ICT, entrepreneurship, and technical trades. For example, traditional expectations often steer young women away from STEM fields, while youth with disabilities frequently encounter stigma that limits their access to mainstream training and employment opportunities. Existing policies tend to lack targeted provisions for these groups, with few measures addressing the unique barriers they face or offering tailored support to facilitate their inclusion. Digital access and affordability remain unequal for young people across Rwanda, further exacerbating disparities. If inclusion mechanisms—such as targeted outreach programmes, financial subsidies for marginalised groups, and accessible

Headline finding 14: Roles and responsibilities are broadly clear and functional, especially at national level and within the ILO structures. However, heavy reliance (justified with the lean project team at Kigali) on ILO offices for technical backstopping have at times increased costs.

digital platforms—are not institutionalised, project scale-up may reinforce existing inequalities rather than close them.

3.8 Management arrangement

Effective project management, decision-making and reporting (EQ15 and EQ16)

Strong clarity of roles among the project collaborators /ILO constituency partners: The project is collaborating with various ministries of the Government of Rwanda, each with a distinct mandate and role. For example, MIFOTRA's mandate is to create an enabling environment for the creation of decent and productive jobs; MINICT provides policy direction and coordinates digital transformation and digital skills; MINEDUC integrates digital skills into secondary, TVET, and higher education; MOYA focuses on youth empowerment and policy coordination; PSF engages employers and supports enterprise development; and CESTRAR represents workers and facilitates social dialogue. These clearly defined mandates have not only enabled smooth collaboration but have also contributed directly to project outcomes. For instance, the Digital Skills Assessment identified key gaps in workforce readiness, which prompted MINICT and MINEDUC to develop targeted training programmes addressing these needs. Similarly, collaboration on policy reviews led to improvements in the NEP, and institutional reforms, such as the introduction of structured internships and apprenticeships,

have provided tangible pathways for youth employment. These examples demonstrate that the projects' collaborators /ILO constituency partners have played clear and concrete roles in furthering the shared mandate of boosting digital economy for youth employment.

Functional coordination within the ILO structure: Roles are clear across levels. The Rwanda-based project team, within the ILO Country Office in Dar es Salaam, manages day-to-day delivery, partner coordination, procurement, finance, HR, reporting, and project oversight under the Country Director as responsible official. The Regional Office for Africa serves as the main technical backstopping unit, with support from the Decent Work Team in Pretoria. ILO HQ, particularly the Employment Policy and Enterprise Development departments provide specialised expertise. CO-Dar es Salaam also liaises regularly with HQ on quality assurance, including approval of training modules and alignment with ILO standards. Overall, this structure provides both technical depth and quality assurance through regular coordination across levels.

The project management approach improved operational efficiency but also increased costs for ILO backstopping support: Early in implementation, the project found that Rwanda had a limited pool of high-quality consultancy firms, while hiring international firms would have involved high overhead costs. It therefore adopted a lean country-level model supported by ILO specialists in Abidjan, Pretoria and Geneva, working alongside national consultants. This reduced reliance on external consultants and helped deliver activities and outputs. However, it also generated substantial costs for non-project staffing and travel, especially from Geneva and regional offices. The project planned 11 work-months of regional backstopping over four years, but the support required proved broad and technically demanding, covering assessments, policy work, work-based learning, the innovation challenge, skills development, the global guide, reporting and resource mobilisation. Although the backstopping team was

Headline finding 15: Gender equality, NEET, rural youth and PWD inclusion are mainstreamed in the project design and implementation—there are clear intentions, some concrete achievements, and a few promising practices—but they are not yet systematically embedded across all outcomes, delivery channels, and monitoring systems.

highly supportive, competing demands across multiple countries sometimes slowed responses. To maintain delivery within the same staffing structure, timeline and overhead envelope, the project had to rely on specialised ILO expertise in areas where suitable national capacity was not available, notably for the three assessments, the NEP process and the global guide.

3.9 Cross cutting issues

Gender equality, inclusion of NEET, rural youth and PWDs (EQ17 and 18)

Gender, PWD, NEET and rural youth have been mainstreamed through strategic alignment with national and ILO frameworks: The project's focus on decent jobs, digital skills, and entrepreneurship for youth is consistent with policy frameworks (National Gender and PWD policies, 2021) and with ILO's Decent Work and non-discrimination agenda. The project has achieved gender-responsive targeting in entrepreneurship support. Entrepreneurship training reached 425 youth entrepreneurs, of whom 47% were women and 4% were persons with disabilities (project reporting). This is notable in a context where young women are more likely to be unemployed (4.9% vs 3.2% for young men) and work fewer hours (28 vs 37 per week), with much higher urban female unemployment (12.6% vs 5.6% for males). By embedding SIYB/DYB and financial education in YEGO Centres, BDF and hubs,

the project has created gender-aware entry points in services that previously tended to be more male-dominated. Similarly, institutionalisation of entrepreneurship and career guidance tools in YEGO Centres and ESCs creates potential long-term access points for NEET, rural and low-income youth. The project diagnostics (DED, skills assessment) and communications consistently highlight gender, NEET, rural youth and PWD disparities, which is an important step in norm-shifting and agenda-setting.

Inclusion is not yet structurally embedded and monitored in all components: While there are gender and PWD references in design and some activities, systematic mainstreaming (e.g., gender/PWD, NEET and rural youth criteria in all calls, partner MoUs, and tools) is not consistently visible across Outcomes 1–3. The project’s diagnostics highlight that over 75% of youth are NEET and that rural youth face digital access and affordability barriers. However, without systematic measures - such as targeted support, subsidised data/devices, accessible content, flexible schedules, or childcare support - women, NEET, rural youth and PWDs continue to face higher effective barriers to benefiting from project initiatives. While some participation data are sex-disaggregated, outcome-level evidence (e.g., jobs, income, business survival, quality of work) by sex, NEET, rural youth and disability is not yet available as tracer studies are planned later. This limits the project’s ability to learn and adapt specifically on gender, NEET, rural youth and PWD impact.

Persistent structural barriers remain: Cultural norms, care burdens, and safety concerns still limit women’s participation, as noted in *What Works for the Youth* (“cultural bias limiting young women from participating in some labour market activities”). Digital access barriers disproportionately affect women. Few interventions explicitly address accessibility (assistive

Headline finding 16: Tripartite partners have clearly contributed to developing and strengthening systems and structures for social dialogue in Rwanda’s youth digital employment and entrepreneurship space—especially at national level—yet these gains are still uneven and fragile, with weaker reach into districts, more vulnerable groups, and labour standards for platform economy workers.

tech, adapted curricula, sign language, etc.) for PWDs. Digital skills programmes risk excluding NEET, rural youth without targeted measures, devices or affordable data.

In sum: Gender, NEET, rural youth and PWD considerations are present but not yet fully embedded—the project has laid important foundations, but deeper, more systematic mainstreaming is needed in design, delivery, partnerships, and monitoring to ensure that women, NEET, rural youth and PWD benefit proportionately from emerging digital and employment opportunities.

Normative and tripartite mandate (EQ19)

The project has institutionalised tripartite governance for gainful participation of youth in the digital economy: The project has embedded social dialogue in its core governance through the TAG and Project Partners Meetings, where government (MIFOTRA, MINICT, MINEDUC, MOYA), employers (PSF, ICT Chamber) and workers (CESTRAR) jointly review diagnostics, validate priorities, and steer implementation. Government, PSF and CESTRAR jointly engaged in the NEP review, integrating digitalisation, systems thinking, and decent work principles. This has created a standing tripartite platform on gainful youth participation in the digital economy.

Tripartite contributions and dialogue structures remain limited at district/delivery level: Social dialogue is strong in Kigali, weaker where implementation and last-mile issues emerge and where youth interact with services (YEGO Centres, hubs, BDF advisors). Social dialogue

structures, therefore, may not fully reflect the voices and needs of young women, NEET, rural youth and PWDs. Further, social dialogue has focused more on access and systems (skills, internships, entrepreneurship) than on job quality, rights, and fair transition (e.g., working conditions in platform work, social protection, green jobs). The potential of tripartite partners to shape labour standards in emerging digital jobs and platform economy workers is not yet fully realised.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

This Mid-Term Evaluation concludes that the '*Boosting Decent Jobs and Enhancing Skills for the Youth in Rwanda's Digital Economy*' project is strategically sound, highly relevant, and well aligned with Rwanda's national development priorities, ILO standards, and global commitments on decent work and youth employment. The project has successfully positioned itself as a system actor within Rwanda's digital economy and youth employment landscape, moving beyond discrete activities to influence interconnected policy, skills, enterprise, and labour-market intermediation systems.

The evaluation finds that the project design remains strongly grounded in Rwanda's labour-market realities, particularly persistent youth underemployment, informality, skills mismatches, and gender disparities. Its integrated approach across labour demand, labour supply, skills-to-work transitions, and multi-stakeholder partnerships is coherent and consistent with Vision 2050, NST1/NST2, the National Employment Policy, and the country's digital transformation agenda. At the same time, implementation experience reveals that some institutional capacity constraints, coordination complexities, and affordability barriers were underestimated at design stage, requiring adaptive management and longer timeframes for systemic change.

Regarding coherence, the project demonstrates strong complementarity with national institutions, UN agencies, development partners, employers' and workers' organisations. It has generally avoided duplication in a crowded youth employment ecosystem by embedding interventions within existing systems and aligning closely with government processes. Where coordination challenges persist—particularly at district level—these reflect broader structural fragmentation rather than weaknesses in project intent or positioning.

The evaluation assessed the project's implicit Theory of Change as broadly logical, evidence-based, and systems-oriented. While the Theory of Change was not fully explicit at inception, implementation has increasingly reflected systems-change thinking through institutionalisation, policy influence, and multi-stakeholder governance. The refined systems-change Theory of Change developed through the MTE provides a stronger conceptual framework for the remainder of the project and any potential future phase.

In terms of effectiveness, the project has made substantial mid-term progress in establishing foundations for impact. Notable achievements include the generation and use of robust labour-market evidence, institutionalisation of entrepreneurship and digital skills tools, redesign of the National Internship Programme, piloting of quality apprenticeships, and strengthening of partnerships across government, employers, workers, and service providers. However, most employment, enterprise growth, and decent work outcomes remain prospective. This is consistent with the project's systemic ambition, where measurable labour-market effects are expected to materialise after institutionalised systems begin to operate at scale and private-sector absorption increases.

The assessment of efficiency shows that resources have generally been allocated strategically, although execution has been uneven across outcomes due largely to procurement delays and the time-intensive nature of systems-level work. Reliance on international technical expertise ensured quality but increased costs. With most resources already allocated by mid-term, the project now operates with limited flexibility, increasing the importance of prioritisation and acceleration in the remaining period.

Early signs of impact are evident primarily at the level of policy framing, institutional behaviour, and norms around digital jobs, work-based learning, and entrepreneurship support. While promising last-mile effects are emerging among some trainees and entrepreneurs, transformative labour-market outcomes—such as reduced NEET rates, widespread decent job creation, and sustained income gains—have not yet been observed at scale.

Sustainability prospects are strongest where tools, curricula, and processes are embedded in national systems, notably in TVET, entrepreneurship support, employment services, and policy frameworks. Risks remain around scaling pilots, sustaining district-level delivery structures, expanding digital job absorption by MSMEs, and institutionalising inclusive financing pathways. Without deliberate system consolidation and follow-up, early gains may not translate into durable outcomes.

Finally, the evaluation finds that while gender equality, inclusion of NEET youth, rural youth, and persons with disabilities are clearly recognised and partially mainstreamed, they are not yet consistently embedded across all delivery channels or outcome monitoring systems. Tripartite dialogue has been strengthened at national level but remains weaker at district level and in shaping labour standards for emerging forms of digital and platform work.

Overall, the project is on the right strategic trajectory. Its principal challenge at mid-term is not relevance, design, or legitimacy, but conversion—translating strong foundations, credible pilots, and system-level reforms into sustained, inclusive employment outcomes for young women and men. The remaining implementation period therefore represents a critical opportunity to consolidate systems, deepen decentralised delivery, strengthen demand-side absorption, and rigorously track outcomes so that the project's systems-change ambition results in lasting impact.

4.2 Recommendations

The recommendations follow the MTE evidence. Recommendations are proposed for the ILO and its constituency partners. The recommendations are organised in two sub-sections: 4.2.1 Strategic priorities for the remaining two years and 4.2.2 Strategic priorities for a potential second phase of the project. The recommendations also indicate priority (high /medium/low), resource requirements (high/medium/low) and timeframe (short/medium/long) needed for implementation.

4.2.1 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE REMAINING TWO YEARS

(Focus: system consolidation, acceleration, last-mile delivery and outcome monitoring)

Recommendation 1: Institute a 'System Consolidation' Phase (6-12 months) Before Project Completion

For: ILO, CO-Dar es Salaam | **Priority:** High | **Resources:** Medium | **Timeframe:** Short-term (last year of the project + some extended timeframe if available)

To maximise the success and impact of major project initiatives, a dedicated system consolidation phase of 6 to 12 months is proposed. A system consolidation phase is needed to understand how various project interventions can contribute to addressing some of the systemic constraints and accelerate ongoing systemic shifts. A systems consolidation phase would be crucial in ensuring that the project contribute to the systems change outcomes as per the systems change theory of change (MTE 2026). This phase should focus on targeted support, additional resource allocation (where needed), and robust follow-up to ensure sustained outcomes for youth entrepreneurship and digital job creation.

Actionable Steps for System Consolidation:

- *Identify High-Potential Initiatives, within the existing project portfolio:* Systematically review all project components to pinpoint those showing strong promise—such as Innovate4DigiJobs—and prioritise them for further support.
- *Allocate Acceleration Grants:* Establish mini-grant schemes for youth enterprises and start-ups that demonstrate measurable progress and potential for scale, including those emerging from flagship initiatives.

- *Establish Financial Institution Partnerships:* Collaborate with financial institutions to develop and deliver tailored financial products for supported start-ups, ensuring access to capital and growth opportunities.
- *Connect with Marketing BDS Providers:* Form partnerships with marketing business development service providers to facilitate market linkages, helping start-ups accelerate their commercial rollout and reach new customers.
- *Provide Policy Advocacy Support:* Offer targeted advocacy and policy guidance to enable MSMEs and youth enterprises to achieve formalisation, navigate regulatory environments and access relevant opportunities.
- *Deliver Ongoing Post-Implementation Support:* Implement structured follow-up mechanisms for all supported initiatives, including mentoring, technical assistance, and resource mobilisation.

Instituting a 'system consolidation' phase would require regular progress reviews and rapid monitoring and impact assessments for all supported initiatives, with feedback collected directly from the MSMEs, start-ups and youth enterprises. It would require adaptive support model—resources and interventions will be adjusted based on monitoring data and stakeholder feedback to address emerging needs and challenges. It would require establishment of clear communication channels for reporting outcomes, sharing best practices, and resolving issues in real time. It would also be beneficial to measure progress against defined metrics and success criteria to ensure transparency and accountability. This structured approach to system consolidation will enhance the likelihood of sustained impact, empower MSMEs, youth entrepreneurs, and stimulate local economic growth through digital job creation.

Recommendation 2: Deepen Decentralised Delivery and District-Level Institutionalisation

For: ILO, MIFOTRA, District Authorities, Development cooperation partners and district level actors | **Priority:** High | **Resources:** Low to Medium | **Timeframe:** Short to Medium term (2 to 3 years, possibly extending to the potential next phase of the project)

To reinforce decentralised delivery and to ensure effective synergy among youth employment and entrepreneurship programmes, the project should strengthen a robust convening mechanism at district level linked to the digital inclusion council /SSC. This strengthened mechanism will bring together representatives from the ILO, MIFOTRA, district authorities, development partners (including other UN agencies), ESCs, Hanga Hubs, Youth Friendly Centres, YEGO Centres, and BDF advisors, alongside other key district-level actors. Each stakeholder will have clearly defined responsibilities within the mechanism, for example:

- *ILO:* Provide technical guidance on labour standards, ensuring that all programmes adhere to international best practices and promote decent work. Facilitate a multi-stakeholder response to address 'systemic constraints' being observed at district level.
- *MIFOTRA:* Oversee policy alignment, ensuring that youth employment and entrepreneurship initiatives are consistent with national frameworks and regulations.
- *District Authorities:* Facilitate local implementation, coordinating logistics, community engagement, and administrative support for programme rollout.
- *Development Partners:* Supply resources and expertise, offering financial support, capacity-building, and technical knowledge to complement local efforts.
- *ESC, Hanga hubs, YEGO Centres and other district level actors:* Manage data systems and employer engagement, including assigning staff to oversee data collection, analysis, and employer liaison activities to strengthen linkages with training providers.

Actionable Steps for Decentralised Delivery and Coordination:

- *Identify and Action in a Few Pilot Districts:* The project can run a pilot of strengthening

convening mechanism in a few select districts. The convening mechanism will coordinate efforts by assigning clear responsibilities to programme leads and district authorities. The convening mechanism can potentially facilitate the procurement and distribution of modern tools for ESCs through partnerships with local technology providers and development partners.

- *Unite Development Partners to Plan and Deliver Synergistically at District Level:* The district pilot can bring together and unite development cooperation partners to design and implement synergistic initiatives at district level, especially addressing systemic constraints being observed in some of the initiatives, for example, this mechanism can develop strategies for the operational sustainability of both ESCs and Hanga hubs.
- *Improve Data Systems, Employer Engagement and Impact Assessments:* To accelerate decentralised delivery and district-level impact, it would be essential to strengthen data systems, employer engagement and impact assessment of the initiatives at district level. The convening mechanism can assign data management and employer liaison roles to relevant staff within ESCs and Hanga hubs and strengthen linkages between training providers and employers through regular coordination meetings and collaborative projects. Additionally, the mechanism can support ESCs and Hanga hubs in conducting periodic impact evaluations of their initiatives, ensuring ongoing improvement and learning.

By implementing this structured, outcome-oriented approach, the convening mechanism will enhance the likelihood of sustained impact, empower youth entrepreneurs, and stimulate local economic growth through digital job creation. District level synergy and aligning of activities across initiatives is crucial as it can then leverages complementary resources and expertise, resulting in more comprehensive entrepreneurship and employment support for youth at district level.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen Inclusion of Women, Rural NEET Youth, and PWDs

For: ILO, MOYA, MINEDUC | **Priority:** High | **Resources:** Low | **Timeframe:** Short term (1-2 years)

To ensure meaningful and sustained inclusion, the project must adopt a clear, structured approach to implementing inclusion measures that actively engage women, NEET youth, rural youth, and PWDs.

Actionable Steps for Improved Social Inclusion:

- *Establish a Working Group:* The project can establish a working group to review existing inclusion numbers for women, NEET, rural youth and PWDs across all initiatives. Based on the evidence and gaps discovered, update all subcontracts and MoUs for strengthen inclusion criteria, with the objective of completing this review by Q3 of the current year.
- *Integrate Targeted Support for Improved Social Inclusion:* The working group can develop specific targeted measures such as financial Subsidies, data and device support, and transport allowances for women, NEET youth, rural youth, and PWDs across all ongoing and future initiatives, commencing roll-out in Q4.
- *Enhance Digital Platforms Accessibility:* The working group can also identify barriers experienced by the rural youth, women, NEET and women in accessing digital platform. This then can lead to improving platform design standards, accessible versions and outreach activities by the end of the year.

By following this action-oriented, evidence-based guidance, project partners will ensure that inclusion measures are both practical and impactful, fostering equitable participation and sustained benefits for all target groups.

Recommendation 4: Expand MSME /Employer Engagement

For: ILO, PSF, ICT Chamber, MIFOTRA | **Priority:** High | **Resources:** Low | **Timeframe:** Short-term (1-2 years)

The project's current partnerships with MSMEs and employers show promise, but there remains substantial scope for strengthening these relationships. While the project's 'supply side' interventions are likely to generate a larger pool of skilled individuals entering the job market, it is crucial to expand collaboration with a broader range of MSMEs—especially in non-ICT sectors where digital jobs are increasingly emerging. By doing so, the project can ensure that these new skills are effectively absorbed, ultimately driving employment opportunities and economic growth. The ambition of the Government of Rwanda to supply skills to the regional and global market can also be better realised with increased support to national MSMEs, particularly those with high digitalisation potential. Identifying such MSMEs in sectors like logistics and agriculture will enable targeted collaboration and maximise the impact of training and placement efforts.

Actionable Steps for Improved MSME /Employer Engagement:

- *Review and Scale up Existing (and Promising) Initiatives:* Some of the existing project initiatives have shown promise, for example PSF's training to 100 MSMEs is expected to increase formalisation, digitisation, business improvement and job placements. Such initiatives can be reviewed and scaled up with MSMEs in different targeted sectors. This would provide a direct boost to employment outcomes and strengthening business capacity in emerging digital fields.
- *Develop Sector-Specific Employer Compacts:* In line with the NIP redesign, the project can facilitate targeted collaboration and skills development. For instance, a retail compact could involve partnerships with local supermarkets to offer digital inventory management training, while in agriculture, apprenticeships might focus on digital farm management tools. Piloting apprenticeships in non-ICT sectors will provide practical experience to youth trainees, significantly improving their employability and readiness for the evolving job market.
- *Run Recognition Schemes:* The project can introduce light-touch incentives, such as recognition schemes and supervision support, to encourage MSME participation. For example, logistics companies adopting digital scheduling tools could be recognised for innovation, motivating further engagement and adoption of digital practices across the sector.

Recommendation 5: Improve Monitoring of Employment Outcomes

For: ILO, MIFOTRA, NISR | **Priority:** Medium | **Resources:** Medium | **Timeframe:** Short-term (1-2 years)

The project's M&E framework supports learning and accountability, but its capacity to track changes at both outcome and system levels is moderate. To fully realise the project's transformative ambitions, it will be necessary to strengthen this framework, ensuring comprehensive measurement of progress and impact.

Actionable Steps for Improved Monitoring of Employment Outcomes:

- *Review and Refine Systems Change ToC and Accompanying M&E Framework:* Develop a refreshed M&E framework based on an updated conceptualisation of the systems-change ToC (see MTE 2026 version in figure 4). This should include the creation of specific and measurable indicators for tracking progress at both outcome and impact levels. Assign responsibility to the project's national coordinator, who will ensure the framework is regularly reviewed and adapted as needed. By clarifying and strengthening the ToC, stakeholders will gain clearer insight into how the project's activities drive systemic transformation, enhancing the ability to demonstrate results and guide future strategy.
- *Launch Tracer Studies and other measurements in 2026:* Initiate early tracer studies and other measurements to follow up on outcomes and impacts related to internships, apprenticeships, and entrepreneurship. The project team, in collaboration with relevant partners, can conduct these studies to assess the employment status and career progression of participants. The results will provide valuable evidence on the effectiveness

of interventions, informing adjustments and improvements to programme interventions. By tracking participant journeys, the project will be able to demonstrate its contribution to employment and entrepreneurship, motivating continued investment and engagement.

- *Improve Digital Platforms for Tracking Outcomes at ESCs and Hanga hubs:* Assign a dedicated team to digitise placement tracking via ESCs and monitor entrepreneurship journeys through Hanga hubs. This includes ensuring regular updates and maintenance of digital platforms, as well as training staff in data management. Enhanced digital tracking will streamline reporting, facilitate real-time analysis, and support evidence-based decision making. Ultimately, these improvements will strengthen the visibility of employment and entrepreneurship outcomes, helping the project to adapt interventions and maximise impact.
- *Ensure Collection of Disaggregated Data:* Collect outcome data disaggregated by NEET, rural youth, sex, and disability status. The project team in Kigali can gather and analyse this data. This will help the project identify service delivery gaps and tailor interventions to reach marginalised groups more effectively. By emphasising inclusivity in monitoring, the project will be better positioned to promote equitable outcomes and support sustained benefits for all target groups.

4.2.2 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR A POTENTIAL SECOND PHASE

(Focus: scale, systems transformation, sustainability)

Recommendation 6: Plan for the Second Phase

For: ILO, MIFOTRA, MINICT, MINEDUC, PSF, CESTRAR, Development Partners | **Priority:** Medium | **Resources:** High | **Timeframe:** Long-term (3 to 5 years)

A second phase of the project is essential to achieve greater scale, systems transformation and sustainability. Planning for this phase, including resource mobilisation, should commence in earnest during the fourth year of the project (2027), when early evidence of outcomes and impact will be available from the implementation of the five recommendations (see above) outlined for the current phase. To inform the design of the second phase, the project should convene consultative round tables at national and district levels, engaging all constituency partners. These discussions will help clarify priorities, sequencing, and measurable targets for the next stage.

Priority Actions and Sequencing for Strategic Interventions

To ensure effective design and implementation, the following interventions are recommended. Early actions should focus on establishing foundational systems, which will support subsequent reforms and allow for efficient monitoring and scaling. Measurable indicative targets are included to facilitate progress tracking and demonstrate impact.

- *Establish the National Digital Skills Framework and System (Flagship Phase II Reform):* Develop a National Digital Skills Framework with clear pathways. Scale digital campuses to all TVETs by end of year two of the second phase. Institutionalise continuous labour-market intelligence, setting up annual skills demand surveys and reporting mechanisms.
- *Expand Work-Based Learning into a National Apprenticeship Ecosystem:* Develop sector-specific apprenticeship standards for at least five priority industries within two years. Aim to increase SME participation in apprenticeships by 30% by the end of the second year. Provide incentives for SMEs to host apprentices and track their engagement through the M&E system.
- *Establish a Youth Digital Enterprise Fund:* Blend grants, loans, and mentorship, prioritising women, rural youth, and persons with disabilities. Link financing to SIYB/DYB certification and target at least 500 youth-led enterprises during the second phase of four to five years.
- *Create a National Inclusion Framework for Digital Employment:* Develop gender-responsive and disability-inclusive digital skills standards. Introduce universal design

principles in all training and platforms. In partnership with RISA and other government entities, support establishment of at least 30 community-based digital access points (at least one in each district) by year two to increase rural and marginalised youth participation.

- *Strengthen Decentralised Governance and Coordination at district level:* Scale up and strengthen decentralised delivery structures and co-ordinational mechanisms at district level, across all districts in the country. Use project diagnostics as shared evidence for planning. Introduce joint reporting standards across partners, with annual reviews to adjust strategies and targets.
- *Build the National Youth Employment Monitoring & Evaluation System:* Establish a national youth employment M&E platform within the first year. Integrate digital job-tracking into employment centres and conduct regular tracer studies. Collect disaggregated data on gender, rural youth, and disability to monitor inclusivity and share success stories.
- *Integrate Fair Transition and Green Digital Jobs:* Develop green digital skills modules. Support youth enterprises in e-waste, circular economy, and green tech. Promote digitalisation as a pathway to low-carbon employment, targeting at least 100 green youth enterprises by year three.
- *Consolidate Digital Job-Search and Labour-Market Information Systems:* Integrate job-matching tools with district employment centres. Expand digital literacy modules for job seekers. Link platforms to private job boards and sector associations, aiming for a 25% increase in platform usage by job seekers within two years.
- *Strengthen Social Dialogue at District and Sector Levels:* Establish district-level tripartite forums. Include gender and disability as standing agenda items. Expand dialogue to platform work, job quality, and fair transition issues, with biannual stakeholder meetings to review progress.

Inclusivity remains central to these interventions. The project will continue to collect disaggregated data on participation and outcomes, and share success stories of women, rural youth, and persons with disabilities benefiting from these initiatives. This approach will strengthen equitable access and ensure that all groups are represented in the digital economy transformation.

5. Emerging Good Practice and Lessons Learned

Exemplary achievements, emerging good practices and lesson learned

The project at the Mid-Term has the following twelve exemplary achievements, emerging good practices and lessons to offer — each one grounded in what worked in Rwanda and directly applicable to other African contexts, especially any country designing and implementing digital economy project focussed on digital skills, digital jobs, or youth entrepreneurship and employment. These emerging good practices and lessons are also applicable to countries where digital ecosystems are fragmented and centralised.

1. Start With Diagnostics Before Designing Interventions (good practice)

Using labour market diagnostics, digital skills assessments, and ecosystem mapping to shape interventions has clearly proven to be a good approach for evidence-based planning. This creates shared evidence base and aligns government and development partners. This prevents duplication and ensures interventions respond to real market needs.

2. Institutionalise Tools Instead of Running Parallel Programmes (good practice as well as a lesson)

Embedding curricula, standards, and tools into national systems (TVET, ministries, youth centres) is a better approach than running parallel training programmes. There are several examples where this institutionalisation was achieved - SIYB/DYB integrated into Rwanda Polytechnic e-learning, soft skills curriculum embedded in NIP, Cybersecurity standards validated through RTB. This ensures sustainability, reduces long-term costs and strengthens national ownership.

3. Use Multi-Stakeholder Governance Platforms - SSCs, Technical Advisory Groups (good practice)

Strengthening or establishing platforms where government, employers, and workers co-design reforms, such as SSCs and TAGs, have proven to be a good approach as it improves relevance of skills, strengthens labour market governance and ensures tripartite ownership.

4. Build Private Sector Engagement Mechanisms — Don't Assume It Will Happen (lesson)

Creating structured pathways for employer involvement is of paramount importance in job creation and for achieving digitalisation and decent work ambitions. The project co-designed apprenticeships conducted employer mapping for internships and validated of occupational standards through private sector engagement. This ensures that training matches labour market demand and increases job placement rates. Private sectors buy-in are essential in any digital economy project.

5. Decentralise Delivery to Reach Rural and Vulnerable Youth (lesson)

Using district-level hubs (YEGO Centres, TVET schools, Hanga hubs, ESCs, digital campuses, district level authorities) to deliver training is critical for reaching women, PWDs, NEET, and rural youth. This expands access beyond the main cities. This approach can potentially succeed in reaching women, PWDs, and low-income youth and it builds local capacity. Effective decentralisation is important in contexts – such as Rwanda – where there are strong regional disparities. The MTE results also indicate that reaching rural and vulnerable youth would require targeted measures that provide incentives and address access barriers. The project can still do better on this aspect, in the remaining timeframe.

6. Decentralised Delivery Systems Require Stronger Ecosystem Partners, Local Capacity and Coordination (lesson)

Collaborating with district level Hanga hubs, the project experiences indicate several lessons

for decentralised delivery:

- ✚ Decentralisation works but requires strong local capacity: Hanga Hubs show that innovation can thrive outside Kigali when infrastructure and support systems are available. The JICA's ToT findings also indicate that local staff need continuous capacity building to run high-quality programmes. The ILO project provides decentralised SIYB/DYB, digital skills, and internship delivery aligns perfectly with this model — but must be paired with ongoing staff development.
- ✚ Secondary cities need stronger ecosystem partners: The EU reporting¹⁸ notes challenges in attracting ecosystem actors (investors, mentors, tech companies) to secondary cities. The ILO project's partnerships with BDS providers, ICT Chamber, and private sector networks can help fill this gap — especially if linked to Hanga Hubs.
- ✚ Infrastructure alone is not enough: The EU and JICA both highlight that equipment must be matched with structured programmes (ideation, incubation, mentorship). The ILO project's Innovation4DigiJobs challenge follow the same principle — combining infrastructure with curriculum, standards, and work-based learning.
- ✚ Structured pathways increase startup survival: JICA's ideation → pre-incubation → incubation pipeline shows that multi-stage support increases startup quality. The ILO project's entrepreneurship ecosystem assessment and MSME digitalisation pilots can plug into this pipeline, offering post-training support that Hanga Hubs currently lack.
- ✚ Youth engagement is high when programmes are practical: Hanga hubs that include hands-on prototyping, design thinking, and pitching attract strong youth participation. The ILO's soft skills curriculum, internship tools, and digital freelancing training can be integrated into Hanga hub programming to strengthen employability outcomes.
- ✚ Strong donor coordination is essential: Hanga Hubs involve the EU, JICA, GIZ, MINICT, RISA, and district governments. This shows the importance of aligned donor investments in digital transformation. The ILO project's supported SSC – digital inclusion council - can serve as the coordination backbone for these actors.

7. Combine Digital Skills with Work-Based Learning (good practice)

Pairing digital skills training with internships, apprenticeships, and mentorship work better for imparting practical skills and for ensuring employability. This approach strengthens employer relationships and supports smoother skills-to-work transitions. Digital skills alone do not guarantee employment or entrepreneurship outcomes.

8. Digital Enterprises Need Tailored Financial Products (lesson)

Tailoring financial products to digital economy needs are strongly realised. Traditional microfinance products do not fit digital business models (e.g., freelancers, platform workers, digital service providers). This is why the planned 2026 output of the ILO project - co-design of youth-focused products is critical. Furthermore, coordination between finance and skills systems is still weak. Aguka is not yet fully integrated with TVET institutions, Hanga hubs, Digital Campus pilots, BDS providers etc. This limits the pipeline of high-quality and most-in-need applicants.

9. Apply Adaptive Management to Overcome Procurement and Capacity Constraints (good practice)

Pivoting to in-house expertise or hybrid models has proven as a good alternative, when procurement fails or consultancy markets are thin. This approach improves operational efficiency, maintains quality and keeps timelines on track.

10. Use Innovation Challenges to Identify High-Capacity Innovative Local Partners (good practice)

¹⁸ https://www.cnbcfrance.com/media/6359222651112/hanga-hubs-48mn-eu-investment-to-bridge-rwandas-digital-skills-gap-?utm_source=copilot.com

Running competitive calls to select institutions capable of delivering digital skills guarantees better employment and entrepreneurship outcomes for NEET, rural youth, women and PWDs. This approach identifies strong local actors, encourages innovation and builds a decentralised delivery ecosystem.

Box 3 – EcoMapper: An exemplary Innovate4DigiJob funded initiative

The EcoMapper stands out as a leading grantee of Innovate4DigiJobs, exemplifying an unwavering commitment to advancing digital skills and supporting young people's transition into employment and entrepreneurship. Since 2022, EcoMapper has trained over 250 young individuals in Geospatial technology, with a focus on those from low-income backgrounds who would otherwise struggle to afford such training. Their comprehensive three-month programme covers GIS software, data collection tools, advanced geo-processing, data analysis, SQL, Python, Power BI, integrated geospatial applications, and the use of analytics in urban planning and disaster resilience. The blended learning structure consists of three days of in-person classes and two days online, delivering a total of 30 hours per week—including 12 hours online—to ensure robust, accessible education.

EcoMapper's funding model prioritises inclusivity. Although the course's cost-recovery rate is approximately 380,000 RWF, participants pay only 80,000 RWF in registration fees, with the remainder subsidised through grants and in-kind contributions from dedicated trainers. This approach significantly lowers barriers for disadvantaged youth. Graduates receive internship placement support, and in 2025, 68% of trainees secured paid internships, many leading to full-time employment with monthly salaries ranging from 500 to 1,000 USD. One notable success story is of a person, who, after completing the programme, obtained a position with a government agency and now mentor current trainees, exemplifying the transformative impact of the initiative.

A defining feature of EcoMapper is its strong culture of giving back. Many alumni, inspired by the support they received, return as volunteer trainers or mentors—over 30% of former graduates contributed their time in the past year. This peer-led approach not only sustains programme delivery but also fosters a vibrant, supportive community where success is shared and multiplied. Through this ethos, EcoMapper ensures ongoing impact, resilience, and a scalable model for digital skills development and youth empowerment.

11. Integrate Gender and Disability Inclusion into Programme Design - Not as Add-Ons (good practice)

Setting inclusion targets and design delivery models that reduce barriers is an effective approach for gender-balanced recruitment, inclusion of NEET, rural youth and PWDs in entrepreneurship and employment training. This improves equity, expands reach and strengthens social impact. The project experiences indicate that this approach has also supported district-level delivery to reach young mothers.

12. Use Social Dialogue to Strengthen Legitimacy and ILS Alignment (good practice)

Engaging with tripartite partners in all major reforms — standards, curricula, policies, apprenticeships - ensures that the reforms are fair and rights-based. It builds trust among the social partners and aligns digital transformation with ILS.

Box 4 – Insights from ILO’s 2024 Multi-Country Survey and COTRAF’s Social Dialogue Initiative for the platform economy workers

Recent findings from the ILO’s 2024 multi-country survey [1] highlight an evolving landscape of unionisation within Rwanda’s platform economy. Platform workers—those engaged in digital, gig, and freelance work—are demonstrating stronger pro-union attitudes compared to the general population. This shift signals a growing recognition of collective representation to address the unique challenges faced by platform workers, such as job insecurity, dispersed workplaces, and limited access to traditional labour protections.

The union density statistic for platform workers worldwide, currently measured at 13.4%, carries significant implications for the future of labour organisation in Rwanda. This rate is not only measurable but also noteworthy when compared to union density levels in traditional sectors, such as agriculture, manufacturing, and services, where unionisation rates often fluctuate and may be lower due to structural barriers or fragmented workforces. The fact that platform workers are organising at rates comparable to, or even exceeding, those seen in established sectors underscores the robustness of collective action in the digital economy. This demonstrates that the foundation for further unionisation is strong, particularly as online communities and offline networks serve as effective catalysts for mobilisation and engagement.

Within this context, COTRAF’s work stands out as an emerging best practice in advancing social dialogue and unionisation for gig workers. The project has actively supported COTRAF’s efforts to train platform economy workers on their rights and negotiation strategies, fostering a collective identity among individuals who are often geographically dispersed and isolated from traditional labour structures. Leveraging digital tools for organising, COTRAF positions unions as vital intermediaries between workers, platforms, and government authorities. Rwanda’s proactive approach, exemplified by COTRAF’s initiative, places the country among the early adopters of protecting and promoting the rights of gig workers in Africa.

[1] https://www.ilo.org/publications/are-platform-workers-willing-unionize-exploring-survey-evidence-14-european-1?utm_source='copilot.com

Overall, the ILO Rwanda project demonstrates that successful digital economy programmes require evidence-driven design, strong institutionalisation, structured private sector engagement, decentralised delivery, access to finance, tailored financial products, social inclusion by design, tripartite governance, social dialogue for gig workers, adaptive management and System-level thinking. These emerging good practices and lessons are transferable and can potentially strengthen ILO’s digital economy portfolio across different countries of the African continent.

Appendices

Annex 1: Evaluation Questions Matrix, aligned with the Terms of Reference of the MTE

Evaluation aspect (8)	Sub-aspect (16)	Evaluation Questions (19)	Measure (s) or indicator (s)
RELEVANCE	Context alignment	EQ1: Does the design of the project reflect adequate knowledge on the issue and background knowledge on the specificities (challenges and opportunities) of the country's context?	- Instances of conformance/ non-conformance of the project design with challenges /barriers being faced in youth employment in the digital economy - Extent to which the project aligns and addresses the ILO's global commitments, and national strategies - Citations and instances demonstrating changes in the context since 2023 (project inception), and how these contextual changes have elicited programmatic response and how effective that response have been
	Context responsive	EQ2: To what extent do the project design and implementation respond to final and institutional beneficiaries(i.e. young women, men, and marginalized or vulnerable groups) and partners at global, regional and country-level needs, policies, and priorities (including ILO and the donor), and continue to do so if circumstances changed (national development plans, UNSDCFs, DWCPs, ILO P&B and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda?	- Citations and instances demonstrating consistency (or inconsistency) of project alignment with national policy framework viz. Rwanda policy agenda, including the National Employment Policy, The Private Sector Development and Youth Employment Strategy, NTSII, Digital Transformation Strategy -Citations and instances demonstrating project alignment with the international labour standards and country level DWCP, donor and other priorities - Citation and instances of project response /adaptability to changing realities
COHERENCE	Coherent and complementary	EQ3: Are there synergies or overlaps with other ILO projects, UN agency programmes, national interventions, or private sector efforts addressing the employment promotion priorities?	- Specific project activities that stand out, in terms of complementarity with the other ongoing interventions in the country - Specific project activities that are seeking to address constraints and opportunities for boosting digital economy in Rwanda for youth employment - Instances of leverage with other non-ILO initiatives at the country, regional and global levels

Evaluation aspect (8)	Sub-aspect (16)	Evaluation Questions (19)	Measure (s) or indicator (s)
VALIDITY OF THE DESIGN	Logical and feasible	EQ4: To what extent are the project design and implementation and Theory of change logical? How well does the project's Theory of Change account for the complexity of the labour market systems of Rwanda? EQ5: Does the project have an M&E framework that enhance learning among stakeholders at all levels. To what extent does the results framework enable measurement of change, learning, and accountability?	- Examining logic, validity, consistency and practical feasibility of the ToC, strategies deployed to achieve ToC and extent to which modus-operandi have proven to be coherent in Rwanda - Testing the validity of the assumptions as conceptualised - Whether M&E framework and mechanisms devised capture evidence at all levels of the result-hierarchy - Whether the M&E tools also focus on understanding result-transitions - if happening how? and if not happening, why?
EFFECTIVENESS	Effective project performance (target vs. achievements)	EQ6: To what extent has the project made mid-point progress toward achieving its intended outcomes at the country and regional levels?	- Citation, instances of this project moving towards achieving four outcomes (and associated outputs) - Disaggregated achievements (plan Vs. actuals) of outputs and outcomes - Reasons for variance if any
	Effective stakeholders' participation and contribution	EQ7: Are partnerships (with governments, social partners, UN agencies, and civil society) contributing to or hindering efficient delivery? EQ8: Have activities been well targeted? Were the different target groups reached as intended?	- What profile of youth (including women, PWD and other vulnerable groups in communities and sectors) are being supported by the project - Instances and citations of stakeholders involvements in different stages of project design and execution - Instances /specific contributions and effectiveness of the stakeholders and constituency partners who contributed to implementation of the project - Any missed opportunities in here in targeting and also in terms of engaging and supporting constituency partners and stakeholders
	Effective execution of project strategies	EQ9: What enabling or limiting internal and external factors (e.g., capacity, partnerships, contextual risks) have influenced progress?	- What factors affected (positively /negatively) project execution and how project management responded to ensure effective delivery of strategies and outputs - Any action taken on addressing the impeding factors and whether the project 'sphere of influence' extend to addressing these factors

Evaluation aspect (8)	Sub-aspect (16)	Evaluation Questions (19)	Measure (s) or indicator (s)
EFFICIENCY	Efficient and strategic resource allocations	EQ10: Have resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) been allocated and spent strategically and efficiently to achieve expected results? Are project management, operational, and coordination arrangements (national and regional) effective in supporting implementation?	- Extent of appropriateness of financial allocations of project budgets across strategic areas - activities, outputs and outcomes - Instances of adaptability and creativity to financial constraints while still achieving outputs in both project components - Instances of leverage and how it helped the project in synergistic implementation, while improving efficiencies
	Cost-benefit /value for money		- Indicative cost benefit /value for money analysis using disaggregated budgets to understand cost efficiencies as well as impact per dollar spent
IMPACT	Incremental or transformative changes - early signs	EQ11: Are there early/potential signs of transformative or changes (e.g., institutional behaviour, social norms, labour practices) in which the project has an explicit contribution?	- Instances and citations on specific policy, legislative and legal, structural reforms in Rwanda - Are there signs of more substantive and visible improvements in institutional behaviour, social norms and labour practices by employers in the digital economy, which ultimately will lead to more young women and men access decent jobs in Rwanda's digital economy
	Unintended outcomes (positive or negative)	EQ12: Are there unintended positive or negative effects on job creation, enterprise and labour market actors' resilience, or stakeholder practices?	Instances and examples of outcomes witnessed which were unintended, both positive and negative
SUSTAINABILITY	Mechanisms	EQ13: How effectively has it institutionalized interventions and partnerships to ensure sustainability?	Specific examples of mechanisms that can act as 'sustaining' force for continuation of project benefits
	Momentum	EQ14: To what extent are the planned results of the project likely to be durable and can be maintained or even scaled up and replicated by other partners after the Project has been completed?	Instances /examples of ongoing or planned efforts to ensure continuance and scale up of project interventions and results by different constituency partners
MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENT, CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND LESSONS LEARNT	Management, coordination and partnerships incl. effective role divisions	EQ15: How clear and functional are roles and responsibilities between implementing partners, ILO offices (project level, COs, DWTs, ROAF and HQ), and national	- Extent of fit for the purpose - project management structure, including backstopping by different ILO experts and offices - Extent of fit for the purpose - sharing of roles and responsibilities between ILO project team in Rwanda and implementing

Evaluation aspect (8)	Sub-aspect (16)	Evaluation Questions (19)	Measure (s) or indicator (s)
		stakeholders? EQ16: How timely and effective are decision-making and reporting processes at different implementation levels for action, accountability and learning?	partners and national stakeholders - Instances of mis-match /missed opportunities /challenges in terms of collaborating with implementing partners and national stakeholders - Instances of satisfaction /dissatisfaction with division of labour and work allocations between project staff, partners and govt entities; any missed opportunities
	Risk management	How has the project managed risks and carried out adaptations in response to the changing context?	Instances and citations in terms of how risks were managed and how it helped the project in preventing risks or in lowering the impact of risks that materialised
	Cross-cutting issues, lessons learnt and best practices	EQ17: To what extent has gender equality and PWD strategic and operational needs mainstreamed in the implementation and outcomes of the project? EQ18: What is the emerging contribution of the project toward more equitable gender relations, addressing people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in targeted communities and sectors as well as social dialogue, respect for ILS and a fair transition to environment? EQ19: Have the tri-partite partners contributed towards developing or strengthening systems and structures to promote social dialogue in their countries?	- Instances /specific examples of cross cutting issues being addressed, incl. - extent to which project interventions have integrated gender aspects, ILS, social dialogue, disability and non-discrimination - Best practices observed in different aspects of project design and implementation, including in tripartite roles and contributions - Examples of facilitating or constraining factors to making project effective and impactful - Challenges and missed opportunities in dissemination and communication about the project

Annex 2: List of stakeholders interviewed

Boosting Decent Jobs and Enhancing Skills for the Youth in Rwanda's Digital Economy – Internal Mid-term Evaluation <u>Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions with the ILO team, constituency partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries</u>							
N	Stakeholder type	Name	Organisation	Position	Other KIs, in the meeting	Date of meeting	Dates – Add on meeting
1	ILO team	Fatima Sirelkhatim Elsanousi	ILO Rwanda	Project Manager	Germain Mirimo (Project finance and contract); EL Moulat, Abderrahim (ILO Regional Office)	04 February 2026	12 February; 26 February; 3 March; 18 March
2	ILO team	Jens Dyring Christensen	ILO Regional Office (Eastern and Southern Africa)	Subject matter expert and backstopping		11 February 2026	
3	ILO team	Jonas Bausch	ILO Regional Office (Eastern and Southern Africa)	Technical delivery support		11 February 2026	01-Apr-26
4	ILO team	Albert Willian Okal	ILO Regional Office (Eastern and Southern Africa)	Technical backstopping skill development		12 February 2026	
5	Communities (Youth - women and men)	Egide MUGWAN EZA	MECHENER GS Pvt Ltd	Entrepreneur, owner and innovator		24 February 2026	
6	Communities (Youth - women and men)	Gisele Umutoni	Tailor's dream college, community-based company	Entrepreneur, owner and innovator		24 February 2026	
7	Communities (Youth - women and men)	ABAYISEN GA GISELE	AGI IYUBAKE LTD IN GAKENKE DISTRICT	Entrepreneur, owner and innovator		24 February 2026	
8	Communities (Youth - women and men)	Bangankiza felicien	Sun Studio	Entrepreneur, owner and innovator		24 February 2026	
9	Other stakeholders /implementing partner	Aimable RWIGAMBA	Musanze Employment Service Centre	Manager		24 February 2026	
10	Other stakeholders /implementing partner	Nsoro Janvier	Hanga Hub Musanze	Manager		24 February 2026	
11	Communities (Youth - women and men)	Iranzi David	Bashions Ltd, Interior designing company	Entrepreneur, owner and innovator		25 February 2026	

Boosting Decent Jobs and Enhancing Skills for the Youth in Rwanda's Digital Economy – Internal Mid-term Evaluation Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions with the ILO team, constituency partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries							
N	Stakeholder type	Name	Organisation	Position	Other KIs, in the meeting	Date of meeting	Dates – Add on meeting
12	Communities (Youth - women and men)	Muhorakeye Diane	kitchen appliances wooden	Entrepreneur, owner and innovator		25 February 2026	
13	Communities (Youth - women and men)	Ishimwe Joseph	Stand-up comedian, film maker, entertainer	Entrepreneur, owner and innovator		25 February 2026	
14	Communities (Youth - women and men)	Nkeramihigo Aime	Printing business, computer engineer	Entrepreneur, owner and innovator		25 February 2026	
15	Communities (Youth - women and men)	Mayogi Uwineza Cindy	Agripreneur	Entrepreneur, owner and innovator		25 February 2026	
16	Other stakeholders /implementing partner	KUBWUM UKIZA Seth Instructor at CR. ARICENT Technology Ltd	College Baptiste Gacuba II	Trainer /instructors	TUYIZERE JEAN CLAUDE Trainer in Software Development; MUKANYI NDO Clemence School Manager College Baptiste Gacuba II; KAMPOGO Virgine deputy Director of Studies College Baptiste II	25 February 2026	Focus group discussion
17	Employers Organisations (PSF)	RUDASIN GWA Eric	Private Sector Foundation (PSF)	Rubavu PSF District Manager		25 February 2026	
18	Rwanda Ministries		Rwanda TVET Board			26 February 2026	
19	Rwanda Ministries	Gilean	National Cybersecurity Authority	National cybersecurity officer		26 February 2026	
20	Other stakeholders /implementing partner	Parfait Yongbago	Rwanda Polytechnic	Division manager in charge of institutional development, applied research and consultancy		27 February 2026	

Boosting Decent Jobs and Enhancing Skills for the Youth in Rwanda's Digital Economy – Internal Mid-term Evaluation Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions with the ILO team, constituency partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries							
N	Stakeholder type	Name	Organisation	Position	Other KIs, in the meeting	Date of meeting	Dates – Add on meeting
21	Rwanda Ministries	Musonera Abdou	Ministry of Public Service and Labour	AG head of targeted labour market interventions department		27 February 2026	
22	Rwanda Ministries	Ntirampeba Sylvere	Ministry of Public Service and Labour, Chief Skills office	Labour market statistics and forecasting analyst	Joselyn Mukaneza, team lead for national professional internship	27 February 2026	
23	Other stakeholders /implementing partner	idebate	Nathan	Trainer /instructors	Shema	27 February 2026	
24	Donor (Luxembourg)	Bob Junker	Luxembourg Aid and Development			27 February 2026	
25	Workers' organisations (CESTRAR)		Rwanda Workers Trade Union Confederation	General Secy	1 other official of the organisation	02 March 2026	
26	Employers Organisations (PSF)	Deus Kayitaakirawa	Imanzi Business Institute, subsidiary of PSF	Executive Director		02 March 2026	
27	Rwanda Ministries	Marie Grace	Ministry of ICT and Innovation	Digital inclusion council		02 March 2026	
28	Other stakeholders /implementing partner	Aulolie	ICT Chamber	Coordinator - Innovate4DigiJobs		02 March 2026	
29	Other stakeholders /implementing partner	Rebecca	EcoMapper	Entrepreneur, owner and innovator		02 March 2026	
30	Rwanda Ministries	Amos MFITUNDI NDA	Ministry of Public Service and Labour, Chief Skills office	HoD of Strategic capacity Development		03 March 2026	
31	Workers' organisations (CESTRAR)	MWUMVA NEZA Joseph	COTRAF-RWANDA national confederation of trade unions			03 March 2026	
32	Other stakeholders /implementing partner	Malik	KinaRwanda	Trainer /instructors		03 March 2026	
33	Other stakeholders /implementing partner	Gideon Bitegetsimana	RP College	Trainer /instructors	Two other colleagues from the RP college	03 March 2026	

Boosting Decent Jobs and Enhancing Skills for the Youth in Rwanda's Digital Economy – Internal Mid-term Evaluation Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions with the ILO team, constituency partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries							
N	Stakeholder type	Name	Organisation	Position	Other KIs, in the meeting	Date of meeting	Dates – Add on meeting
					joined the conversation - Medison and James		
34	Rwanda Ministries	Virgile Ngabo	BRD	Manager, Advisory Services and Green Finance		16 March 2026	
35	Rwanda Ministries	Daina Gahima	Rwanda Information Society Authority	Business and Market Intelligence Analyst		17 March 2026	

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Annex 4: Terms of Reference for the MTE

Internal Mid-term Evaluation

“Boosting Decent Jobs and Enhancing Skills for the Youth in Rwanda’s Digital Economy” (RWA/23/01/LUX)

1. Basic Information

Title of project being evaluated and Project DC Code	Boosting Decent Jobs and Enhancing Skills for the Youth in Rwanda’s Digital Economy
Type of evaluation	Internal mid-term evaluation
Timing of evaluation	Mid-Term Evaluation
Duration of the project	June 2023 – 31 July 2027
Development Partner	Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Luxembourg
Administrative Unit in the ILO	CO-Dar Es Salaam
Countries covered	Rwanda
Technical Unit(s) in the ILO responsible for backstopping the project	RO-Africa, EMPLAB, SKILLS, ENTERPRISES
P&B outcome (s) under evaluation	Outcome 3: Full and productive employment for just transitions Outcome 4: Sustainable enterprises for inclusive growth and decent work
SDG(s) under evaluation	SDG 08: Decent work and economic growth
Budget of the project	EURO 4,000,000
Dates for Evaluation	January 2026 – March 2026
Evaluation Manager	Project Manager

2. Background Information

The project Boosting Decent Jobs and Enhancing Skills for Youth in Rwanda's Digital Economy, is a four-year project, funded by the Government of Luxembourg. It is part of the ILO/ITU/AU Joint Programme on youth employment in the digital economy, under the umbrella of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth. The continental programme aims to implement interventions that empower African youth, and to ensure that young men and women benefit equally from emerging opportunities in Africa's growing digital economy and that they can contribute with their energy and creativity.

In Rwanda, the project aims to support Rwanda's structural transformation from an economy dominated by low productive rural employment towards a digital economy. Its main goal is to enable more young women and men in Rwanda to access decent jobs in Rwanda's digital economy, focusing on the youth between the age brackets of 16 and 35 years that are economically active in the capital Kigali and the following districts: Musanze, Rubavu, Huye, Nyagatare, Kayanza Rusizi and Ruhango. The main components of the project are: (i) Promoting job creation and entrepreneurship opportunities in the digital economy, (ii) Improve digital skills of young women and men, and (iii) Facilitate young people's transition to decent work in the digital economy.

Under these components, the project supports the design and implementation of digital intervention models geared towards job creation, towards strengthening existing programs aimed at promoting digital skills, and towards stimulating the demand for digital services among micro enterprises, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and business start-ups in. The project also seeks to strengthen the capacity and relevance of employment service centres to bridge the information gap between job seekers and employers in the field of the digital economy. Finally, the project strengthens platforms for sharing labour market information and for enhancing the dynamic partnership between skills development training providers, young innovators and the private sector players to boost job creation in the digital economy.

These Terms of Reference (TOR) outlines the framework for conducting the internal mid-term evaluation of the project. In line with the ILO's Policy Guidelines for Results-Based Evaluation, all development cooperation projects with a duration exceeding 30 months and/or a budget above USD 5 million must undergo both a mid-term and a final evaluation. These evaluations serve accountability and learning purposes, ensuring that the ILO and its constituents can assess performance, results, and sustainability, while capturing key lessons and good practices to inform future programming.

Project strategy

The project contributes to the achievement of digital transformation priority under the National Strategy for Transformation II and the National Employment and Skills Strategy, while aligning with the ILO's Decent Work Country Programme and the global agenda on youth employment. It positions Rwanda as a regional leader in leveraging digital transformation for job creation, ensuring that young women and men are not only beneficiaries but also active drivers of inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

The project adopts an integrated and systems-based approach, recognising that creating decent jobs for young women and men in Rwanda's digital economy requires coherent action across labour demand, supply, intermediation and partnerships. It seeks to advance this transformation through interventions that ensure jobs are created in the digital economy through policies and investment growth in sustainable enterprises (Outcome 1), improve the digital skills of young men and women (Outcome 2), facilitate young people's transition to decent work in the digital

economy (Outcome 3), and strengthen multi stakeholder partnerships to promote decent jobs for youth in the digital economy (Outcome 4).

By addressing these four interconnected areas, the project aims to generate evidence-based models that respond to national priorities, strengthen institutional capacities, and expand opportunities for young people, with particular attention to young women in secondary cities and Kigali. The approach places youth at the centre of design and implementation, while fostering alignment with government strategies, private sector initiatives and development partner investments to ensure that interventions are sustainable, scalable and replicable.

The project is structured around four interdependent and mutually supportive outcomes, each contributing to the development objective of enabling more young women and men in Rwanda to access decent jobs in the digital economy:

Outcome 1: Jobs are created in the digital economy through policies and investment growth in sustainable enterprises (demand side) focuses on stimulating enterprise activity and job creation by supporting the review of Rwanda's National Employment Policy, strengthening business development services, startup hubs and entrepreneurial ecosystems, and facilitating access to finance. This outcome emphasises building the capacity of youth and women entrepreneurs, supporting startups and small enterprises, and fostering strategic partnerships with financial institutions and business support organisations.

Outcome 2: Improved digital skills of young men and women (supply side) aim to strengthen national systems and policy frameworks for digital skills development, harmonisation, delivery, certification, recognition and portability. It supports the development of new curricula, promotes work-based learning opportunities such as apprenticeships and internships, and builds the pedagogical and digital teaching capacity of TVET and higher learning institutions. Particular emphasis is placed on ensuring gender inclusiveness and increasing private sector involvement in curriculum design and delivery.

Outcome 3: Young people's transition to decent work in the digital economy is facilitated (intermediation) seeks to improve school to work pathways through the introduction of the Digital Internship Programme, stronger career guidance services in employment service centres, ICT hubs and TVET institutions, and enhanced job matching platforms. It also supports young people in accessing online work, freelancing and employment in the BPO sector, while contributing to the promotion of social protection and fair working conditions in the platform economy.

Outcome 4: Strengthened multi stakeholder partnerships to promote decent jobs for youth in the digital economy (enabling environment) works to build effective platforms for dialogue, coordination and knowledge sharing among government, private sector, workers' and employers' organisations, academia, civil society and youth led organisations. Through initiatives such as the Digital Jobs for Youth forum, this outcome supports high level policy advocacy, showcases results, and facilitates collaboration. It also contributes to embedding the project's holistic approach in national systems and linking Rwanda's experience to regional and global initiatives on youth employment and digital transformation.

Stakeholders and partnerships

The project institutional framework is under the tutelage of the Ministry of Labour and Public Service of Rwanda (MIFOTRA), while fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships promoting a 'whole-of-government' approach. Design of intervention models and their subsequent implementation is based on market and digital economy ecosystem assessments as well as on secondary research and emphasise public-private partnerships, collaboration with development stakeholders and the meaningful engagement of young people to ensure they have a voice in labour market interventions that affect them.

The project leverages the ILO's tripartite structure to strengthen collaboration among governments, workers, and employers, while working closely with a broad range of stakeholders that can be categorized into the following key **target impact groups**:

National and government institutions

- Ministry of Public Service and Labour, the Ministry of ICT and Innovation, Ministry of Youth and Arts,
- the Rwanda TVET Board, Rwanda Polytechnic, Rwanda Development Bank (former Business Development Fund), Rwanda Information Society Authority
- the National Bank of Rwanda, the National Cyber Security Authority and Employment Service Centres
- HangaHubs

Workers' and Employers' Organizations

- Private Sector Federation (including, Imanzi Business Institute) and the ICT Chamber,
- Trade Unions (Congrès du Travail et de la Fraternité des Travailleurs au Rwanda (COTRAF), CESTRAR and COSYLI

Other key stakeholders:

- Civil society and youth led organizations that mobilize young people, particularly women and disadvantaged groups,
- Academia, innovation hubs, training providers, and financial institutions that play a critical role in digital skilling, enterprise support, and access to finance, and
- Development partners and UN agencies, including Luxembourg, LuxDev, UNICEF and GIZ.

Direct beneficiaries

- Young enterprise owners (18-35 years old) who received entrepreneurship training.
- Business Development Service Providers who received capacity development to strengthen their mandate
- Youth (18-35 years old) receiving digital skills development programmes.
- Institutions receiving capacity development to roll out digital skills training.

3. Purpose, objectives, evaluation criteria, and scope of the evaluation

The purpose of the mid-term evaluation is twofold:

- **Accountability:** to assess the performance of the project to date against its stated development objective and outcomes, including progress achieved, resource use, and relevance to stakeholder priorities. The evaluation will also examine how the project has drawn on the findings of initial diagnostics and stakeholder consultations, and the extent to which it has built on existing national programmes and policies to foster continuity and sustainability.
- **Organizational and project learning:** to generate insights and practical lessons that inform adjustments during the remaining implementation period, strengthen alignment with Rwanda's Vision 2050, NST-II and the National Digital Talent Policy, and contribute to cross learning and innovation within the ILO and among national partners.

The mid-term evaluation's objectives are closely derived from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) evaluation criteria as detailed below. The evaluation will also include the UN Evaluation Standards and Norms and the Glossary of key terms in evaluation and Results-Based Management.

- ▶ **Assess the relevance and strategic fit** – the extent to which the objectives are in keeping with Sub-Regional, national and local priorities and needs, Constituents' priorities and needs, ILO policy results (P&B) and the donor's priorities for the Project countries, incl. the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the UNSDCF, the AU-ILO Youth Employment Strategy for Africa, the African Union Agenda 2063, Rwanda's national development frameworks. The evaluation will also assess whether the project strategy and interventions remain relevant to the needs country's employment promotion, particularly in light of emerging challenges such as the climate crisis, demographic shifts, and evolving donor and national priorities.
- ▶ **Assess the project's coherence**, that is the compatibility of the intervention with other interventions (e.g. ILO, UN, government, NGOs, etc.) in a country, sector or institution;
- ▶ **Evaluate the validity of design** – The extent to which the project design, logic, strategy and elements are/ remain valid vis-à-vis problems and needs;
- ▶ **Evaluate Effectiveness** - To assess progress toward achieving the project's four outcomes and their outputs, identifying enabling and hindering factors, as well as any unintended or unexpected results, positive or negative
- ▶ **Analyse Efficiency** - To review the efficient use of resources, including the timeliness and cost-effectiveness of delivery mechanisms, partnerships, and project operations in each country and to assess value for money, incl. the use of financial, human and institutional resources, and the effectiveness of management and coordination arrangements.
- ▶ **Assess Impact** - To identify early/potential signs of systemic, behavioural, or institutional changes emerging and evaluate the likelihood of sustainability of project outcomes and the mechanisms in place to promote national ownership, institutional capacity and long-term impact.
- ▶ **Analyse Sustainability** – To assess whether the project is laying the foundation for sustainable change, including through institutional capacity-building, integration into national systems, and financing strategies; overall if the project has designed and implement a strong exit strategy from the start of it. To evaluate the ownership and commitment of tripartite constituents and private sector actors and to assess how a potential phase 2 of the project could leverage the current project to ensure sustainability of the ongoing interventions.

In applying the above evaluation criteria, the evaluation is to result in strategic and actionable recommendations to ILO constituents, the donor and project partners to reinforce project implementation in light of Rwanda's evolving development needs in the area of decent jobs for young people in the digital economy in Rwanda , and to support the sustainability and scalability of results over time.

The evaluation will integrate gender equality and non-discrimination as cross-cutting concerns across all criteria, in line with ILO's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and treatment in the world of work. The assessment will include the extent to which gender and non-discrimination have been considered in both the design and implementation of the project, as well as their outcomes, in addition to social dialogue, tripartism and sustainable transition.

Users of the evaluation

Primary users of the evaluation findings include:

- ILO tripartite constituents in Rwanda;
- The project's development partner (The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of Luxembourg);
- ILO implementing partners
- ILO Country Office for Tanzania, Rwanda, Kenya, Burundi and Uganda, the ILO Regional Office for Africa, Decent Work Teams (DWTs), and ILO Headquarters (technical departments, EVAL, PARDEV, and PROGRAM).

Secondary users include:

- Other national and regional stakeholders and development partners;
- Researchers, academics, and think tanks working on youth employment, decent work, skills development and labour market transition;
- Other ILO projects;
- The general public.

Scope of evaluation

The scope of the evaluation covers the first half of the project implementation **from August 2023 to December 2025** and results focusing not only on what has been achieved but how and why. The evaluation will primarily focus on the main implementation phase of the project which started with the onboarding of the project team in January 2024

The evaluation should be carried out in adherence to the relevant parts of the ILO Evaluation Framework and Strategy; ILO Policy Guidelines for Evaluation: Principles, Rationale, Planning and Managing for Evaluations and UNEG Principles. For all practical purposes, these ToRs and ILO Evaluation policies and guidelines define the overall scope of this evaluation. Recommendations, emerging from the evaluation, should be strongly linked to the findings and conclusions of the evaluation and should provide clear guidance to stakeholders on how they can address them.

The geographic coverage of the evaluation will Rwanda.

The evaluation will cover all components of the project and investigate the coherence and linkages among these vis-à-vis the Project's development objective.

The evaluation will integrate the ILO cross cutting themes throughout the evaluation (outputs, outcomes, and impact). These themes include gender equality and non-discrimination as a crosscutting concern throughout its deliverables and process. It should be addressed in line with EVAL guidance note n° 4 and Guidance Note n° 7 to ensure stakeholder participation. Furthermore, it covers also social dialogue, international labour standards, and fair environmental transition.

4. Evaluation questions (including Cross-cutting issues/ issues of special interest to the ILO)

The evaluation questions are framed around the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria, with an emphasis on learning and accountability for the project. These questions are tailored to assess not only what the project has achieved so far, but also how and why progress has occurred or been constrained. In line with ILO policy and evaluation standards, the questions will also explore the integration of cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, non-discrimination, social dialogue,

international labour standards, and environmental sustainability throughout the project's lifecycle.

The evaluation should address relevance to beneficiary needs, validity of the design, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, potential for sustainability and impact as defined in the [ILO Policy Guidelines for results-based evaluation, Nov-2020](#). The evaluator may adapt the evaluation criteria and questions, but any fundamental changes should be agreed between the evaluation manager and the evaluator and reflected in the inception report.

Relevance:

- To what extent do the project design and implementation respond to final and institutional beneficiaries (i.e. young women, men, and marginalized or vulnerable groups) and partners at global, regional and country-level needs, policies, and priorities (including ILO and the donor), and continue to do so if circumstances changed (national development plans, UNSDCF's, DWCPs, ILO P&B and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda)?
- Does the design of the project reflect adequate knowledge on the issue and background knowledge on the specificities (challenges and opportunities) of the country's context?

Coherence

- Are there synergies or overlaps with other ILO projects, UN agency programmes, national interventions, or private sector efforts addressing the employment promotion priorities?

Validity of design:

- To what extent are the project design and implementation and Theory of change logical? How well does the project's Theory of Change account for the complexity of the labour market systems of Rwanda?
- Does the project have an M&E framework that enhance learning among stakeholders at all levels. To what extent does the results framework enable measurement of change, learning, and accountability?

Effectiveness:

- To what extent has the project made mid-point progress toward achieving its intended outcomes at the country and regional levels?
- Are there unintended positive or negative effects on job creation, enterprise and labour market actors' resilience, or stakeholder practices?
- To what extent has gender equality and people with disabilities strategic and operational needs mainstreaming in the implementation and outcomes of the project (i.e. strategic and operational needs?)
- Have activities been well targeted? Were the different target groups reached as intended?
- What enabling or limiting internal and external factors (e.g., capacity, partnerships, contextual risks) have influenced progress?

Efficiency:

- Have resources (funds, human resources, time, expertise, etc.) been allocated and spent strategically and efficiently to achieve expected results? Are project management, operational, and coordination arrangements (national and regional) effective in supporting implementation?
- How clear and functional are roles and responsibilities between implementing partners, ILO offices (project level, COs, DWTs, ROAF and HQ), and national stakeholders?
- How timely and effective are decision-making and reporting processes at different implementation levels for action, accountability and learning?
- Are partnerships (with governments, social partners, UN agencies, and civil society) contributing to or hindering efficient delivery?

Impact and sustainability:

- How effectively has it institutionalized interventions and partnerships to ensure sustainability?
- Are there early/potential signs of transformative or changes (e.g., institutional behaviour, social norms, labour practices) in which the project has an explicit contribution?
- To what extent are the planned results of the project likely to be durable and can be maintained or even scaled up and replicated by other partners after the Project has been completed?

Cross-cutting Themes

- What is the emerging contribution of the project toward more equitable gender relations, addressing people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in targeted communities and sectors as well as social dialogue, respect for ILS and a fair transition to environment?
- Have the tri-partite partners contributed towards developing or strengthening systems and structures to promote social dialogue in their countries?

5. Methodology

The mid-term independent evaluation of the Boosting Decent Jobs and Enhancing Skills for the Youth of Rwanda's Digital Economy Project should apply a mixed-method approach. The evaluation should capture preliminary results at outcome and output levels as well as any unexpected results.

Furthermore, it should take into account the perspectives of diverse stakeholders—from women and men at the community level to actors at district and national levels.

The methodology is expected to ensure a robust, credible, and participatory assessment of the project's achievements, challenges, and prospects for sustainability, including variations across countries and supply chains. The evaluation will be conducted in accordance with ILO evaluation policies, UNEG norms and standards, and applicable ethical safeguards.

Based on these parameters the consultant will present its technical proposal (maximum 5 pages). The evaluation will be carried out through the following phases:

- ▶ **Inception phase:** During this phase, the evaluator will undertake a comprehensive desk review of all relevant project documentation. This includes progress reports, monitoring data, research, knowledge products, and publications at global, regional, and country levels.

Initial consultations will be held with key stakeholders, including the ILO project team, the M&E and Knowledge Sharing Officer.

Special attention will be given to reviewing the project's overall Theory of Change (ToC) and logical frameworks to assess their current relevance and functionality.

The Inception Phase will culminate in the development of an **Inception Report**, which must be approved by the Evaluation Manager and endorsed by the project's management team before the evaluation moves forward. This report will outline the refined evaluation framework and methodology, data collection tools, proposed country sampling strategy, and detailed workplan for the field phase.

- ▶ **Data collection and fieldwork:** will involve both virtual consultation and in-person field visits. The fieldwork will include a minimum of 1 week in which the consultant will be meeting stakeholders in Kigali as well as selected districts (to be confirmed during the inception phase). The week in Kigali will also include a consultation workshop with key stakeholders. During fieldwork, the evaluation team will engage directly with stakeholders across all levels—from national government institutions and ILO tripartite constituents to implementing partners, supply chain actors, community-based organizations, and direct beneficiaries (i.e. use of local languages as needed).

A mix of qualitative and quantitative methods will be applied, including Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Where applicable, structured

surveys may be deployed to gather quantitative feedback from project partners or beneficiaries.

In parallel, existing project monitoring data and relevant statistical indicators will be analysed to assess performance. Triangulation of data from various sources and methods will be used throughout this phase to strengthen the robustness and credibility of the evaluation findings.

- ▶ **Presentation of preliminary findings and gathering comments:** Stakeholder validation workshops will be organized—either virtually or in-person depending on feasibility—to present key emerging findings, conclusions and recommendations in English. This interactive session will serve to test the validity of initial findings, clarify any inconsistencies, and incorporate stakeholder insights before finalizing the report. This stage is critical for ensuring that the evaluation remains grounded in the lived experiences and perspectives of those most closely involved in or impacted by the project. It is expected that the country-based workshop will include stakeholders from country and sub-national levels to be representative of different stakeholders and presentation should be adapted to the different types of stakeholders (i.e. the presentation and collection of feedback) to enhance the voices of communities and vulnerable groups beyond local authorities.
- ▶ **Report writing** phase will involve the drafting of the mid-term evaluation report, integrating all evidence collected across countries, stakeholder groups, and methods. The draft report will present the evaluation's findings, conclusions, and actionable recommendations in a clear, evidence-based, and balanced manner. It will be circulated to stakeholders for review and feedback. Comments and inputs will be synthesized by the evaluation manager and addressed in the final version of the report, which will be prepared in line with ILO's formatting, style, and quality standards for evaluation products. The final report will be submitted to the Evaluation Manager for formal approval, that is ultimately by EVAL, and dissemination.
- ▶ **Presentation of the final report:** This event will provide an opportunity to share key findings and recommendations, encourage dialogue among partners, and identify pathways for action during the remaining project period and beyond. The presentation will include a summary of key lessons learned, promising practices, and strategic options for sustainability, replication, and scale-up. A summary brief and visual presentation materials will be prepared to facilitate stakeholder engagement with the evaluation's conclusions.

Sources of information:

The evaluators will be granted access to all relevant project materials, including but not limited to:

- Project documents and logical frameworks
- Evaluability assessment
- Monitoring data and project progress reports
- Theories of Change
- Research reports, training materials, knowledge products, and communication tools
- Documentation from implementing partners, regional and country offices
- National and regional policy documents and legal frameworks relevant to the project

- Financial information.

Stakeholders to be consulted

The evaluation will be participatory and engage a wide range of stakeholders, including:

- ILO staff: Project Manager and project team in Rwanda Regional Office for Africa management and relevant specialists, Decent Work Teams (DWTs) relevant specialists including ACT/EMP and ACTRAV officers and related technical departments at HQ.
- ILO Country Office Directors.
- Tripartite constituents: Ministries of Labour and other relevant national ministries, employers' organizations, and workers' organizations at national and local levels.
- Selected implementing partners and consultants.
- The donor.
- Project beneficiaries including entrepreneurs, hubs, TVET schools, youth, parents, teachers, social partners at community level.
- Other organizations collaborating with the project.

Special attention will be paid to engaging women, youth, people with disabilities, and marginalized groups in data collection to assess their specific experiences and the inclusiveness of interventions.

6. Evaluation implementation arrangements

The Project Manager will coordinate the evaluation as the Evaluation Manager. Oversight will be provided by the Regional Office for Africa and the ILO Evaluation Office (ILO/EVAL), ensuring compliance with ILO evaluation standards and independence of the process.

The evaluation will be carried out by the consultant who is responsible for conducting field visits, data collection, and analysis. The consultant/evaluator will coordinate the overall evaluation process, synthesize inputs from national consultants, and ensure delivery of high-quality outputs. In practice:

- The evaluator will guide methodology design, develop data collection tools, and consolidate findings into a unified analytical framework.
- The Evaluation Manager will ensure that deliverables meet ILO quality standards and timelines, while facilitating access to documentation and stakeholders.

7. Main deliverables

The following deliverables will be expected from the evaluation team, aligned with ILO quality standards and procedures:

Deliverable 1: Inception report:

This report, in English, will be submitted after the initial desk review and preliminary stakeholder consultations. It should include a refined evaluation framework, proposed evaluation questions, detailed methodology (including sampling strategy, data collection tools, and ethical safeguards), country visit plan, timeline, and any anticipated challenges or limitations. The report should include draft versions of all data collection instruments (interview guides, FGD protocols, survey questionnaires, etc.). These tools will reflect the agreed evaluation questions, align with the evaluation matrix, and be adapted to various stakeholder groups at global, regional, national, and community levels. The Inception Report must integrate comments by the Project management and be approved by the Evaluation Manager before proceeding to field data collection.

Deliverable 2: Stakeholder validation workshop materials:

Ahead of the presentation of preliminary findings, the lead evaluator will develop brief PowerPoint presentations or slide deck summarizing key findings, emerging conclusions, and initial recommendations at the country level (in English). This will be used to guide the validation sessions with stakeholders, either virtually or in-person. Feedback gathered during the validation workshops must be documented and used to refine the final report.

Deliverable 3: Draft evaluation report

The draft report will present a comprehensive account of the evaluation's methodology, findings, conclusions, and recommendations. It will address each evaluation criterion and include evidence-based assessments of the project's performance. The draft will be circulated for comments to ILO stakeholders, including project teams, technical departments, constituents, and the donor. The format will follow the ILO's standard evaluation report structure. It will be available simultaneously in English and French.

Deliverable 4: Final evaluation report, summary and annexes

The final report will integrate stakeholder feedback and respond to comments received on the draft report. It will clearly distinguish between findings, conclusions, lessons learned, and recommendations, and will be aligned with ILO's formatting and quality requirements.

- The Evaluation Report should include action-oriented, practical and specific recommendations assigning or designating audiences/implementers/users. The Evaluation Report should be prepared as per the ILO Checklist 4.2: Preparing the Evaluation Report which is annexed in this ToR.
- The evaluation questions should be presented in an integrated manner under each evaluation criteria and not be answered individually.
- The evaluation report should follow this outline:
 - Cover page with key project and evaluation data ([using ILO EVAL template](#))
 - Executive Summary
 - Acronyms
 - Description of the project
 - Purpose, scope and clients of the evaluation
 - Methodology and limitations
 - Clearly identified findings for each criterion
 - Conclusions
 - Recommendations
 - Lessons learned and good practices (briefly in the main report and using ILO EVAL template [4.1](#) and [4.2](#) , annexed to the report)
 - Annexes:
 - a) ToR
 - b) Evaluation questions matrix
 - c) Data Table on Project Progress in achieving its targets by indicators with comments by the evaluation team
 - d) Evaluation schedule
 - e) Documents reviewed
 - f) List of people interviewed (no emails or phone number)
 - g) Data collection tools
 - h) Lessons learned and good practices (using ILO-EVAL template [4.1](#) and [4.2](#))
 - Any other relevant documents
- The report should be finalised as per the ILO Checklist 4.2: Preparing the Evaluation Report, link is provided in this TOR. The quality of the report and evaluation summary will be assessed against the ILO Checklists 4.2, 4.4 and 4.9 provided in link in the annexure.

- All drafts and the final report including other supporting documents, analytical reports and raw data should be provided in electronic version compatible with MS WORD for windows.
- The evaluation report should not be more than 30-40 pages excluding the executive summary and annexes.

Deliverable 5: Presentation of final findings:

The consultant will deliver a final presentation of the key findings and recommendations in a virtual or hybrid dissemination workshop, in English. Presentation materials (slides and/or handouts) will be prepared in consultation with the Evaluation Manager to ensure clarity and utility for a wide range of stakeholders.

All deliverables will be produced in English and submitted in editable format (Word, PowerPoint, Excel, etc.).

8. Management arrangements

Roles and responsibilities throughout the evaluation process are as follows:

Evaluation Management

An ILO official will serve as the Evaluation Manager (EM) and will manage the evaluation under the oversight of the Regional Evaluation Officer based at the ILO Regional Office for Africa and under supervision of the Evaluation Office (EVAL).

The responsibilities of the Evaluation Manager include managing the contract with the evaluation consultant firm, advising on methodological issues, and facilitating access to primary and secondary data. The EM will also be responsible for the following tasks:

- Prepare the TORs and ensure consultation with all key stakeholders before the TORs are finalized.
- Facilitate and recruit independent evaluation company.
- Ensure proper stakeholders' involvement.
- Review and approve the inception report in coordination with EVAL.
- Review, approve and circulate the draft evaluation report and consolidate comments from key stakeholders.
- Review and submit the final report to ILO Evaluation Office for approval.

ILO Evaluation Office, ILO HQ:

The ILO Evaluation Office, at ILO HQ, will approve the final report. The evaluation report will be considered final only when it is approved by ILO Evaluation Office.

Project and Country Office teams:

The Project Manager (PM) and the M&E Specialist at the Africa Regional Office will have overall responsibility for supporting the consultant throughout the evaluation process.

- Provide country specific interventions' background materials,
- Prepare a list of recommended interviewees,
- Obtain relevant approvals and consent from key stakeholders to undertake evaluations and interviews,
- Help in scheduling meetings for field visits and coordinating in-country logistical arrangements,
- Be interviewed and provided input as requested by the evaluator during the evaluation process,
- Review and provide comments on the draft evaluation reports,

- Provide logistical and administrative support to the evaluator, including travel arrangements (if applicable) and all materials needed to provide all deliverables.



Annex 5: Lesson Learnt

Boosting Decent Jobs and Enhancing Skills for the Youth in Rwanda's Digital Economy

Project DC/SYMBOL: RWA/23/01/LUX

Name of Evaluator: Ravinder Kumar

Date: 13 May 2026

The following lesson learned has been identified during the course of the evaluation.

LESSON LEARNED ELEMENT	Decentralised Delivery Systems Require Stronger Ecosystem Partners, Local Capacity and Coordination
Brief description of lessons learned. (link to specific action or task)	A key lesson emerging from the Mid-Term Evaluation is that decentralised delivery of digital skills, entrepreneurship support, and work-based learning requires strong local ecosystem partners, adequate district-level capacity, and robust coordination mechanisms. While the project has successfully institutionalised tools at national level, the MTE finds that district-level implementation remains uneven, limiting reach to rural youth, women, and persons with disabilities. As the report notes, <i>“Coordination demands are high, especially at district level, and some overlap risks persist outside the project’s direct control.”</i> This demonstrates that decentralisation is not simply a matter of geographic rollout—it requires local ownership, capable institutions, and structured coordination.
Context and any related preconditions	The project operates in a national context where: • Rwanda’s youth employment and digital skills ecosystem is crowded, with many actors (government, UN agencies, NGOs, hubs, TVETs). • National-level governance is strong, but district-level systems are less mature, with variable capacity and limited resources. • The project’s systems-based design relies on local institutions (ESCs, YEGO Centres, Hanga hubs, district authorities) to deliver last-mile services. The MTE highlights that the project <i>“works through ministries, training bodies, Hanga hubs, employment service centres, and employer organisations,”</i> but that decentralised structures require more support to function effectively. Preconditions for success include: • Strong district-level leadership and coordination • Local institutions with adequate staffing and digital infrastructure • Clear roles and responsibilities among partners • Mechanisms for joint planning and monitoring at district level Without these, decentralised delivery risks fragmentation and inconsistent quality.
Targeted users /Beneficiaries	This lesson is most relevant for: Primary users • District-level government authorities (labour, youth,

	education, ICT focal points) - Local delivery institutions (ESCs, YEGO Centres, Hanga hubs, TVETs) - Local private sector actors (MSMEs, cooperatives, chambers) Secondary users - National ministries designing decentralised programmes - Development partners supporting local delivery systems - ILO project teams implementing multi-level interventions Beneficiaries indirectly affected - Rural youth, young women, NEET youth, and persons with disabilities, who rely on district-level access points for training, job matching, and entrepreneurship support.
Challenges /negative lessons -Causal factors	The MTE identifies several constraints that hinder decentralised delivery: 1. Weak district-level coordination <i>“Coordination demands are high, especially at district level.”</i> - Multiple actors operate in parallel, creating duplication risks. Cause: No unified district-level coordination platform for digital skills and youth employment. 2. Limited local institutional capacity - ESCs, YEGO Centres, and hubs vary in staffing, digital infrastructure, and ability to deliver integrated services. Cause: National systems are stronger than local systems; decentralisation has outpaced capacity building. 3. Uneven private sector engagement outside Kigali and ICT <i>“Private-sector engagement remains uneven, particularly beyond the ICT sector.”</i> - Rural MSMEs are less aware of or connected to project opportunities. Cause: Lack of local employer networks and brokerage mechanisms. 4. Inclusion gaps at district level - Women, rural youth, and PWDs face barriers accessing decentralised services. Cause: Limited outreach, accessibility adaptations, and targeted support at local level.
Success / Positive Issues -Causal factors	Despite challenges, the project demonstrates promising decentralised practices: 1. Strong national-level institutionalisation - Tools like SIYB/DYB, financial education, and digital skills curricula are embedded in national systems. Cause: Effective national partnerships and policy alignment. 2. Effective use of existing local structures - Hanga hubs, ESCs, and YEGO Centres serve as decentralised access points. Cause: Project design emphasises working through existing institutions rather than creating parallel structures. 3. Strengthened career guidance and work-based learning systems <i>“Career guidance systems strengthened” and “National Internship Programme redesigned.”</i> Cause: National reforms create frameworks that districts can adopt. 4. Early signs of local behavioural change

	Youth and entrepreneurs report improved confidence and skills. Cause: Combined digital skills + work-based learning + entrepreneurship support delivered through local hubs.
ILO Administrative Issues (staff, resources, design, implementation)	he MTE identifies several administrative factors influencing decentralised delivery: 1. Lean project team in Kigali <i>“With the lean project team in Kigali, it was necessary to get backstopping and technical support from ILO regional and HQ teams.”</i> Implication: Limited staff capacity constrains district-level engagement and follow-up. 2. Strong national governance but weak district governance - TAG functions well nationally, but no equivalent district-level mechanism exists. Implication: Coordination gaps at local level reduce effectiveness of decentralised delivery. 3. Systems-based design requires more local investment - The project’s design is sound, but decentralisation requires more resources for local capacity building, not just national reforms. The core lesson is that decentralised delivery is only as strong as the local ecosystem that supports it. Rwanda’s project shows that national-level institutionalisation is necessary but not sufficient; district-level capacity, coordination, and partner engagement must be intentionally built and resourced. Without this, decentralised digital skills, entrepreneurship, and work-based learning interventions risk uneven implementation and limited reach to the most vulnerable youth



Annex 6: Good Practice

Boosting Decent Jobs and Enhancing Skills for the Youth in Rwanda's Digital Economy

Project DC/SYMBOL: RWA/23/01/LUX

Name of Evaluator: Ravinder Kumar

Date: 13 May 2026

The following emerging good practice has been identified during the course of the evaluation.

GOOD PRACTICE ELEMENT	Combine Digital Skills with Work-Based Learning
Brief summary of the good practice (link to project goal or specific deliverable, background, purpose, etc.)	The Rwanda digital economy project has developed an integrated model that combines digital skills training with structured work-based learning (internships, quality apprenticeships, and entrepreneurship pathways). Rather than offering stand-alone courses, the project links updated digital curricula and instructor training with real workplace exposure through the redesigned National Internship Programme, piloted quality apprenticeships, and Hanga hub-based incubation. As the MTE notes, the project shows that <i>“Digital skills programmes are most effective when linked to work-based learning and enterprise support.”</i> This approach is emerging as a good practice because it treats youth digital employability as a systemic transition—from skills, to experience, to jobs or startups—rather than as isolated training events.
Relevant conditions and Context: limitations or advice in terms of applicability and replicability	Enabling conditions: • Strong policy alignment: Rwanda's Vision 2050, NST1/NST2, NEP review, and national focus on digital transformation create a receptive environment for integrating digital skills with internships and apprenticeships. The MTE highlights that the project is <i>“well grounded in Rwanda's labour market context and policy priorities”</i> and closely aligned with national digitalisation strategies. • Existing institutional infrastructure: TVET institutions, universities, Hanga hubs, Employment Service Centres (ESCs), and national internship schemes provide platforms where digital skills and work-based learning can be combined and institutionalised. • Tripartite and multi-stakeholder engagement: Ministries (MINICT, MINEDUC, MIFOTRA, MOYA), employers' and workers' organisations, and hubs are already engaged through project governance and technical platforms. Contextual limitations / advice: • Crowded ecosystem: The MTE notes that Rwanda's youth employment and digital skills landscape is “crowded” with multiple actors, making coordination demanding, especially at district level. This means the model works best where coordination mechanisms are strong and duplication can be managed. • Uneven private sector engagement: Engagement is stronger in ICT and Kigali-based firms than in other sectors and districts;

	replicability requires active incentives and brokerage to bring in non-ICT MSMEs. • Inclusion risks: Women, NEET youth, rural youth and persons with disabilities still face barriers to accessing both digital training and work-based opportunities; replication must build inclusion by design (targeting, support services, monitoring).
Establish a clear cause-effect relationship	The good practice rests on a clear causal chain: 1. Upgraded, market-relevant digital skills ○ Updated curricula and tools, trained instructors, and institutionalised digital skills modules in TVET and higher education increase the relevance and quality of youth skills. 2. Structured work-based learning opportunities ○ The redesign of the National Internship Programme, piloting of quality apprenticeships, and strengthened career guidance and ESC services create real workplace exposure and pathways into firms. The MTE notes “redesign of the National Internship Programme, piloting of quality apprenticeships, and strengthened career guidance systems” as major achievements. 3. Improved transitions to jobs or entrepreneurship ○ When youth apply digital skills in real settings—firms, hubs, or startups—they build experience, networks, and job-readiness, increasing their chances of job placement or viable self-employment. 4. Systemic shifts in institutions and norms ○ Institutions internalise combined models (digital skills + internships/apprenticeships), and employers start to expect and value such pathways, shifting norms from ad-hoc internships to structured, quality work-based learning. In short: Digital skills → applied in real workplaces → stronger transitions → emerging systemic change.
Indicate measurable impact and targeted beneficiaries	Targeted beneficiaries: • Primary: Young women and men (15–35) in Rwanda, especially TVET and university students, recent graduates, aspiring digital entrepreneurs, and youth engaged through Hanga hubs and ESCs. • Secondary: TVET and higher education institutions, Hanga hubs, ESCs, MSMEs and startups that host interns/apprentices or benefit from youth digital skills. Measurable / observed mid-term effects (as per MTE): • Institutional results: ○ Digital skills and entrepreneurship tools have been institutionalised in partner institutions (TVET, higher education, hubs). ○ The National Internship Programme has been redesigned and quality apprenticeships piloted, with strengthened career guidance systems. • Behavioural and last-mile effects: ○ Some entrepreneurs and trainees report improved

	confidence, skills, and business practices, indicating that combining digital skills with applied learning is changing how youth operate in the labour market. Limitations at mid-term: • The MTE is explicit that large-scale outcome indicators—job creation, job placement, enterprise growth, NEET reduction—are not yet measurable at scale, given the systems-change orientation and early stage of implementation. • Private sector engagement in internships and apprenticeships remains uneven, particularly outside ICT. So, the measurable impact at this stage is strongest at the institutional and behavioural levels, with labour-market outcomes expected to materialise later.
Potential for replication and by whom	High replication potential where: • There is a national digitalisation agenda, and youth employment is a priority. • TVET and higher education systems are open to curriculum reform and work-based learning. • There are intermediary structures (hubs, ESCs, youth centres) that can host or broker work-based learning. Actors who can replicate or adapt the model: • National governments / line ministries ○ Ministries of Labour, Youth, Education, ICT can integrate digital skills + work-based learning into national internship and apprenticeship frameworks, TVET reforms, and youth employment strategies. • TVET and higher education institutions ○ Can embed digital modules and mandatory internships/apprenticeships into programmes, using the Rwanda experience as a template for curriculum–industry linkage. • ILO and other UN agencies / development partners ○ Can replicate the model in other countries under digital economy and youth employment programmes, using Rwanda as a demonstration case for systems-based design. • Private sector federations and hubs ○ Can adopt structured internship and apprenticeship schemes linked to digital skills training, especially in MSME and startup ecosystems. Replication will be strongest where partners are willing to institutionalise tools, not just run pilots—mirroring the Rwanda project’s emphasis on embedding within national systems.
Upward links to higher ILO Goals (DWCPs, Country Programme Outcomes or ILO’s Strategic Programme Framework)	This good practice directly contributes to several higher-level ILO and SDG frameworks, as reflected in the title page and executive summary: • P&B Outcome 3 – Full and productive employment for just transitions ○ By improving youth transitions into decent work in the digital economy through combined digital skills and work-based learning, the practice supports Outcome 3 on productive employment in a transforming economy.

	• P&B Outcome 4 – Sustainable enterprises for inclusive growth and decent work ○ Strengthening MSMEs and startups’ capacity to absorb digitally skilled youth, and linking skills to enterprise support, contributes to sustainable enterprises and inclusive growth. • SDG 8 – Decent work and economic growth ○ The project is explicitly framed under SDG 8; combining digital skills with work-based learning supports Target 8.3 (productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship) and 8.6 (youth not in employment, education or training). • Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) / Country Programme Outcomes ○ The model advances DWCP priorities on youth employment, skills development, and enterprise promotion in Rwanda’s digital transformation context, and aligns with the ILO’s Decent Work Agenda referenced in the ToC section.
Other documents or relevant comments	Key related documents and evidence base: • Project ProDoc (2023) – identifies structural bottlenecks (limited digital skills, weak enterprise capacity, fragmented coordination, underdeveloped employment services) that the combined digital skills + work-based learning model addresses. • Digital Employment Diagnostics (DED) – provides labour-market evidence on digital skills gaps and demand, underpinning curriculum and work-based learning design. • NEP Review and related policy documents – show how internships, apprenticeships, and digital skills have become national priorities, into which the project’s good practice is feeding. • Project progress reports (Years 1–2) – document the roll-out of digital skills tools, institutional partnerships, and early internship/apprenticeship pilots that the MTE synthesises. Final comment: The Rwanda experience shows that “combining digital skills with work-based learning” is not just a pedagogical tweak but a systems intervention: it changes how institutions train, how employers engage, and how youth transition into the digital labour market. The MTE’s core lesson—that digital skills programmes are most effective when linked to work-based learning and enterprise support—captures the essence of this good practice and its value for replication in other digital economy and youth employment initiatives.