



# Evaluation Summary



International  
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## *Work4Youth : Improving decent work opportunities for youth through knowledge and action – Final evaluation*

### Quick Facts

<b>Countries:</b>	<i>Global (34 countries)</i>
<b>Final Evaluation:</b>	<i>31 August 2016</i>
<b>Evaluation Mode:</b>	<i>Independent</i>
<b>Administrative Office:</b>	<i>EMPLOYMENT</i>
<b>Technical Office:</b>	<i>YEP</i>
<b>Evaluation Manager:</b>	<i>Jean-Francois Klein</i>
<b>Evaluation Consultants:</b>	<i>Anthony Dewees, Marie-Laure Talbot, Tony Powers</i>
<b>Project Code:</b>	<i>GLO/11/01/MCF</i>
<b>Donor(s) &amp; Budget:</b>	<i>The MasterCard Foundation, US\$ 14,640,763</i>
<b>Keywords:</b>	<i>Youth employment, education, labour market statistics, policy development</i>

### Background & Context

#### Project background

Work 4 Youth (W4Y) is a \$14.6 million project supported through a public-private partnership between the ILO and The MasterCard Foundation (MCF). The project was originally conceived as a 60-month initiative from May 2011 to May 2016 and subsequently extended to December 2016. The immediate outcome of the project was modified after the realization of a Mid-Term Evaluation in January

2014 to read: National and international stakeholders use the evidence produced by the School-to-Work Transition Surveys in new or on-going policy dialogues on the transition.

### Main Findings & Conclusions

#### Relevance

W4Y was in principle relevant to addressing the challenge of youth employment at the global and country level. The SWTS methodology was recognized by a consensus of stakeholders as potentially more relevant for policy dialogue and policy development than information currently available from labour force surveys and responds to the need for youth-specific information regarding employment trends, wages, policies and practices highlighted in “The youth employment crisis: A call for action.”

Almost without exception, political leaders and government officials in countries visited during the evaluation cite the challenges of youth employment as one of, if not the most, pressing challenge. Using this rather low bar, the nature of information provided by the SWTS methodology is clearly relevant. However, ensuring that W4Y was relevant as a discernible input into policy, programme or dialogue proved to be very challenging. The team found few instances where stakeholders saw the SWTS as an important input into the major government policy and program initiatives to youth employment. In those cases where there was an

observable linkage, other actions like a follow on project supported by W4Y or the active involvement of a development partner in driving the policy process seemed to be the determining factor.

The knowledge products have been disseminated widely at the global level and have informed major publications on youth employment. This new knowledge about youth employment has provided global stakeholders a portrait of youth transition to work in specific countries and in regional and global comparisons. In addition, several W4Y supported studies have analysed factors that impact transition. Information generated through W4Y has been incorporated into the knowledge base that informs the ongoing work of the ILO and The MasterCard Foundation in employment policy, youth employment, programme development and advocacy.

### ***Effectiveness***

At the global/regional level proxy indicators for use of the SWTS in new or ongoing dialogue are available. The major youth employment publications (GET Youth Reports 2013, 2015) were downloaded from the ILO site more than 170 thousand times while country level and thematic reports were accessed more than 25 thousand times. These totals do not reflect the use of the W4Y products (and underlying data) by The MasterCard Foundation for advocacy, decision making, programme development and in its work with partners.

The project curates the cleaned SWTS micro data from all of the country surveys as they are completed. Access to these data sources is provided upon request and is accompanied by the instruments. Two research symposia were organized to encourage use of SWTS data in research. A scan of the major academic/professional bibliographic databases for additional publications (2012- 2016) yields a number of publications using the search term, “school to work transition survey”. Many of the search results are either W4Y publications or republications in other sources of thematic reports, technical notes or conference presentations for W4Y events. However, this is not the case for all the search results and use of the underlying data generated by the project could increase with more investment in dissemination and communication.

It is at the country level that the ambiguity in defining the project objective makes assessing effectiveness more difficult.

While it was difficult to characterize the effectiveness of the project across countries through project reporting and the results framework, the six country missions did provide insights into the ability of W4Y to integrate the new information into new or existing policy dialogue. In those visits a common theme was a surprising lack of familiarity with the SWTS survey and results among key government youth employment stakeholders (other than the NSOs) juxtaposed with diverse examples of W4Y information being used for various purposes by a variety of stakeholders. In the cases where the links to policy dialogue were most evident – Ukraine, Samoa, Malawi, Uganda – the determining factor appeared to be the active involvement of a development partner in the policy process and/or the funding of a follow on initiative.

### ***Efficiency and value for money***

The initial project design was ambitious, with 56 surveys in 28 countries to be implemented, analysed, and disseminated within the five-year period (later modified to 53 surveys in 34 countries). In eight countries an employer survey accompanied the first round of SWTS. While finding exact like-to-like comparisons is difficult, the consensus view of ILO officials knowledgeable about W4Y was that this planned implementation rate compared very favourably to other similar exercises implemented by the ILO. Both ILO staff within the W4Y project team and ILO officials and experts who had links with the project through their work in youth employment cited the “hands-on” involvement of the MCF and the close working relationship between the project team at the ILO and MCF as being key to meeting the ambitious project targets for SWTS delivery. As of 30 March 2016, most planned deliverables had been completed or exceeded, with pending products in a late stage of development.

### ***Impact and sustainability***

At the global level the project has refined and disseminated a methodology for capturing the challenges of youth in transitioning from school to work. A strong consensus among stakeholders saw the

methodology as a more powerful tool for policy analysis than the snapshot of youth employment status captured in typical labour force surveys. The project has added significantly to the global body of detailed information about youth employment by implementing the SWTS survey in 34 countries. This information has been widely disseminated in the form of reports and has been incorporated into global databases maintained by the ILO (YouthStats). SWTS information is a resource within the ILO for their ongoing global work in employment policy and in youth employment and for the MasterCard Foundation for their program and advocacy work for youth. The project has curated microdata on youth transition from all the participating countries and made this available to researchers, analysts and other youth employment stakeholders.

From a value for money perspective, only a portion of the potential value of the project has been realized as of yet. While ILO and MCF have utilized and disseminated SWTS information there has to date been limited use of the SWTS microdata, SWTS reports and the YouthPOL database among global stakeholders. The potential value (or impact) of the investment in assembling this global repository of detailed information will diminish over time unless there are additional efforts to: gather comparable information in more countries, gather comparable information in countries over time and expand the user base for the information. The diminishing value of the global outputs highlights the challenge of sustainability. Without the additional investment to support the kinds of actions described above, project impact at the global level will diminish as the information becomes less timely and further development and dissemination of the methodology ends. In contrast, strategic investment would have the potential to increase the value (impact) of the resources already produced through the W4Y project.

When assessing impact at the country level, it cannot be overemphasized that the evaluation team is drawing on the experiences of six (out of 34) countries. As is the case for global impact, much of the potential country level impact of W4Y in terms of supporting improved policy and programme responses is yet unrealized. It was not uncommon for key stakeholders to have limited knowledge of SWTS and it was only in those cases where it was possible to incorporate some

follow on support (Samoa, Malawi, Uganda) or where a development partner had an existing programme of support to a key youth employment stakeholder and was keen on utilizing the information (Ukraine), that SWTS had a more visible link to policy dialogue.

Despite significant investment in face to face engagement in building initial support for the SWTS survey in many of the countries, a limiting factor in country-level impact was the lack of involvement of country partners in the analysis. This was specifically mentioned in Togo and Malawi but the concern about the country report relevance and process for promoting buy-in at the country level was identified in the Mid-Term evaluation. Again, this constraint on impact at the country level is linked to the scarcity of resources for complementary country-level work and the assumption that the ILO could mobilize sufficient capacity at the country level.

Extracting more value (impact) from the W4Y investment at the country level would require more – and strategic – investment in countries where the potential to use SWTS information to inform policy and programme responses was greatest. These investments would focus on deepening and contextualizing the analysis of SWTS – possibly combined with other information gathering exercises – and using collaborative analysis as a means of building stronger partnerships among the key stakeholders. Criteria for identifying the countries where the potential for impact would be greater would include: how recent was the latest survey completed, the existence of a relevant policy process to support and analytical capacity (or opportunity to develop capacity) of key stakeholders. These complementary investments would improve the value for money of W4Y.

## Recommendations

- 1. Ensure that ILO structures have sufficient capacity and commitment for supporting global projects that have expected country-level results.**

Work4Youth was originally designed to synergize global and country-level youth employment dialogue in support of more effective policies and programmes.

The absence of resources for the proposed country level activities linked to the SWTS survey exercise was clearly a constraint on the ability of the project to achieve both country level and global level impact. Another constraint was the assumption that ILO structures (Regional and Country Offices) had sufficient capacity and commitment to supporting the necessary country-level efforts. In practice – at least in the six countries visited in the evaluation – country level results were dependent on other unanticipated support. To ensure that global projects that are dependent on country level actions to fully realize their objectives are successful, these actions must be supported through additional dedicated project resources or more formalized commitments of other ILO (or partner) resources.

## **2. Model an evidenced-led youth employment policy dialogue using transition data.**

While there was project investment in engaging with stakeholders during country level implementation, the analysis and reporting process was predominately a technical task with country level stakeholders exercising a passive role of engaging with the country report. This processes produced consistent and quality reports but may not have been ideal for ensuring that the country analysis addressed issues viewed as priorities by country stakeholders or for building ownership of the analysis. A more extensive engagement with youth employment stakeholders – in particular in collaborative analysis of the SWTS data (supplemented by other information) - may provide a means to motivate an evidenced-led youth employment dialogue. The results of the model exercise would be examples of evidence-led policy dialogue in the countries selected for the exercise and lessons learned for the ILO in how to promote this type of dialogue.

## **3. Commission research studies (2-4) utilizing SWTS data for publication in peer reviewed journals.**

W4Y has produced country/regional summary publications of SWTS data as well as thematic research products and shorter technical notes. The project has also curated the SWTS microdata for the 53 completed surveys. As of August 2016, the use of the SWTS data beyond immediate ILO partners was still fairly limited. In order to make the SWTS data more visible to

academic researchers (and beyond) the ILO should commission 2-4 research studies – with the proposed target publication being peer-reviewed journals.

## **4. Commission studies (1-2) utilizing the YouthPOL archive.**

The population of the YouthPOL archive exceeded original project targets with respect to the number of countries included and number of policy and other types of youth employment documents reviewed and categorized. To date, the utilization of this resource has been limited – and primarily confined to ILO and ILO partners. As a means of ensuring that the YouthPOL resource becomes more widely known, the ILO should commission one or two well-known research institutions to produce a research product utilizing this source.

## **5. Develop and test a methodology for incorporating the core SWTS items into household surveys, labour force surveys, in calculating SDG goals and informing multilateral programme development (UNDAF, WB, EU, EC, DiFID).**

A standalone SWTS isn't sustainable in the medium or long term. While the methodology provides policy relevant information, it should be incorporated into other periodic surveys regularly implemented by governments.