

From Model to Movement:



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Learning from DOT's Youth
Leading Change Project



DOT's Youth Leading Change project, as well as this report, were undertaken with the support of the Mastercard Foundation.

This report was prepared by Heather Gilberts, consulting program evaluator.

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This report on DOT's Youth Leading Change (YLC) Project is a significant contribution to the continuous learning commitment that is an important part of the culture within Digital Opportunity Trust (DOT).

YLC is a four-year multi-million dollar project funded by the Mastercard Foundation, to increase the engagement of youth in the economies of Kenya and Rwanda.

The report has been commissioned from Heather Gilberts, a Canadian expert in the field of international development and a specialist in program evaluation. The report presents a 'contribution story' that is grounded in a realist evaluation framework. The author has followed the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance as it looks at DOT's YLC experience and impact from the perspectives of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

Importantly, the report comes at a critical juncture in DOT's progression as an international development force operating at the intersection of youth, technology and social innovation. While the report provides important evidence of the impact and

effectiveness of the DOT youth-led model – a model that has been refined over the past 15 years to international acclaim – it also provides insight into the ambitions and needs of young people in the rapidly changing world of work. It recognizes the desire of DOT youth to lead practical change in their communities through social innovation, human-centered design thinking and effective community projects. It understands the role of technology and digitally-enhanced interventions to support impact and scale. It understands DOT's commitment to increasingly putting youth at the center and DOT's ultimate measure of success when young women and men themselves take over the reins of change and self-development – the shift from model to movement.

The YLC project and the learnings in this report contribute greatly to the body of research and evidence that underpins DOT’s strategic direction.

In 2017, DOT embarked on a four-year journey based on a strategic framework of action and investment in innovation:

- Innovation in program design (focused on leadership and social innovation, mobile access);
- Digital solutions (digital channels to youth, platform thinking, peer driven);
- Replication (new business models to drive development); and
- Measurement (measuring innovation and impact, fresh indicators).

“From Model to Movement: Learning from DOT’s Youth Leading Change Project” provides evidence of the strength of DOT’s foundation as a point of departure, and encouragement to continue its pursuit of innovation in development.



Youth make up 17% of the world's population and 40% of the world's unemployed. The employment picture is particularly challenging for youth in sub-Saharan Africa, where the majority of young people work in low-productivity jobs, with low earnings and little security.

High levels of youth unemployment on the continent not only hampers economic growth, but also weakens social cohesion, and affects the desire and ability for young people to lead productive and rewarding lives. Against this picture is tremendous opportunity. The new generation in many African countries is more active, more tech savvy, more entrepreneurial and more connected than ever before. However, in order to realize their potential, young people need to develop the confidence, transferrable skills and business know-how to identify and create employment opportunities and to capitalize on the changing nature of work that is occurring as a result of rapidly increasing digital penetration and technological innovation.

Digital Opportunity Trust (DOT), a Canadian non-profit organization and leading international social enterprise, is pioneering a model that provides young people with the skills they need to successfully secure employment or create viable social enterprises. In 2013, DOT embarked on a 4-year initiative called *Youth Leading Change (YLC)* – an \$8.3 million project implemented in Rwanda and Kenya with funding from the Mastercard Foundation. The program is designed to address the high levels of unemployment and poor access to workforce education and training among young women and men in Rwanda and Kenya by fostering the attitudes, digital skills and networks they need to identify and chart pathways to sustainable employment or entrepreneurship in their communities.

This report details the result of an external learning review commissioned by DOT to document and synthesize lessons learned through the YLC program. Through a process that involved collating and analyzing outputs and outcomes, summarizing internal and external YLC reports, and conducting interviews with DOT staff, DOT youth in each country, and local partners, the review aims to bring to light key insights DOT gleaned about youth development and entrepreneurship

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

during the course of implementation. By drawing together lessons learned and assessing facilitators and barriers to impact against DOT's theory of change, the review captures DOT's evolving strategy along a trajectory of "model to movement".

Grouped according to the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and

sustainability of DOT's approach to youth development and empowerment, this learning synthesis highlights a number of lessons about how to shift from a programmatic model of development to a movement, where youth are in the driver's seat, and positioned as leaders and agents of change rather than as beneficiaries.

Key Insights from Youth Leading Change

- 01** Supporting youth innovation has the potential to transform societies;
- 02** Catalyzing youth leadership requires investing in supporting structures and enabling environments while handing over leadership to young people;
- 03** Experiential learning helps young men and women develop capacities for social change and community leadership by doing social change;
- 04** Resilience is first and foremost about creativity and innovation;
- 05** Transforming gender norms rather than gender mainstreaming is essential to the empowerment of women and girls;
- 06** Leveraging digital technology and opportunities in creative and innovative ways helps youth catalyze new opportunities, and supports systems-level change;
- 07** Strategic and sustainable networks are critical to a young person's success and can be facilitated through technology;
- 08** Transformative social change only happens for young people when they have the power to not only deliver a program, but also to influence, inform and innovate;
- 09** Focusing on youth has a multiplier effect—when young people are equipped with the skills and motivations to secure employment or start businesses, it improves the social and economic development of entire communities.

1.0

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Youth will define the future social and economic development of many countries in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). By leveraging their flexibility, resilience, willingness to take risks and technological savvy, young people can be equipped to disrupt the face of development in their communities and countries.

There is significant evidence that investing in youth has tremendous returns, not only in terms of economic progress, but also in terms of advancing social justice movements and policy reforms.¹ However, many opportunities remain largely untapped. Rather than viewing the large populations of youth in SSA as

a catalytic force that can transform their communities and countries, they are often seen in development and policy discourses as a problem—they are not thriving; “they are unemployed, idle, underpaid and unproductive.” Framing the “youth problem” in terms of disenfranchisement and a lack of viable economic opportunities misses the bigger picture—that young people, with their flexibility, creativity and capacity for risk, are national assets, uniquely well positioned to take advantage of the changing nature of work and the ever-increasing penetration of digital technologies to become social innovators.

¹ UNESCO (2012). *Empowering youth for peace and sustainable development*. Paris: UNESCO.

1.1 DOT'S APPROACH TO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

Situated in a youth development and empowerment framework, DOT respects youth as an untapped resource that can generate and drive growth and development in their countries. A youth movement is undeniably happening throughout the world, and young people are more tech-savvy, more active and more connected than ever before. Youth in SSA are no exception. Resting on the assumption that “the combination of youth and innovation has the potential to create solutions to development² challenges and to transform societies”,³ DOT aims to shift the discourse from an emphasis on youth as a problem to a focus on youth as a solution.

DOT recognizes that to do this, it must shift from a development model focused on youth as beneficiaries, which emphasizes service delivery, technical training and projects that are designed and implemented *for* them,

to one where youth are actively defining development challenges and solutions are developed *with* them and *by* them. This requires not only a new way of thinking about development, but a fundamental shift away from developing models, projects and programs. DOT has learned, through more than a decade of experience helping young people transform themselves, their livelihoods and their communities, that what is needed is a new global strategy, one that catalyzes youth leadership as an agent of transformative social change.⁴ DOT believes that by transforming the individual, the individual can transform their society. DOT is moving towards a strategy, that is less about designing programs for youth and more about catalyzing youth-led movements, and has identified a number of key shifts that need to happen to move from *model to movement*.

² <http://www.youthpower.org/blogs/positive-youth-development-changing-way-we-do-youth-development>

³ <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/blog/2016/1/7/Unlocking-the-potential-of-youth.html>

⁴ Restlessdevelopment.org



DOT is moving towards a strategy that is less about designing programs for youth and more about catalyzing youth-led movements, and has identified a number of key shifts that need to happen to move from model to movement.

Model

→ Movement

Youth are positioned as beneficiaries and contributors



Youth are positioned as partners, leaders and agents of change

Outcomes and indicators of success are clearly defined at the outset



Outcomes and indicators are co-created with youth, and are continuously adapted and updated as more information becomes available

Youth interns are embedded in community organizations to deliver DOT curricula



Youth identify needs in their community and develop sustainable solutions

Digital technologies are leveraged as tools for networking and program delivery



Digital technologies facilitate youth-led social innovation through user-centered design, blended learning approaches and lean experimentation

Gender equality is a cross-cutting programmatic theme



Young men and women lead efforts to disrupt gender norms, provide safe spaces for young women and champion women as social innovators

Strategic partnerships help extend the reach and improve the sustainability of programmatic elements



Networked ecosystems provide enabling environments to amplify and reinforce youth-led social innovation and support entrepreneurship

1.2 INVESTING IN YOUTH

Young people between the ages of 15 – 24 account for one third of the world's current global population, and more than 90% of this age group live in low-income countries.⁵ Africa is home to more people under the age of 20 than anywhere else in the world, and this figure is rapidly growing.

42%

The United Nations predicts that the population of young people in Africa will grow by 42% by the year 2030.

With such a large, energetic workforce, the sheer number of youth offers many countries in Africa a comparative advantage that could propel the continent forward as an engine of growth in the coming decade.⁶ Investing in youth is not simply a good idea - it is essential in order to ensure peace and security and to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Recognizing the need to tackle youth unemployment in order for least-developed countries to prosper, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development specifically calls for measures to improve youth economic empowerment and employment.

Capitalizing on the youth dividend that is present in many African countries does not simply mean increasing the number of

available jobs and maximizing the labour market; it means enabling youth to lead the way toward peace, growth and development. The net returns for investing in youth are well understood—increasing youth incomes stimulates economies by driving demand, including demand for formal financial services and credit, promotes peace, enhances physical health and wellbeing, and drives national and community development. Further, improving the lives and livelihoods of youth can ripple out from the individual to community and national levels. There is significant global evidence that investing in young girls is particularly important and has a multiplier effect in their households and communities.⁸

⁵ Perezniето, P. and Harding, J.H. (2013). *Youth and international development policy: the case for investing in young people*. London: ODI. www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8402.pdf

⁶ Canagarajah, S. (2014). *Realizing Africa's Youth Potential: Africa needs investors to create jobs for its youth, and develop skills*. <http://blogs.worldbank.org/developmenttalk/realizing-africas-youth-potential-africa-needs-investors-create-jobs-its-youth-and-develop-skills>

⁷ Knowles, J.C. and Behrman, J.R. (2005). *The economic returns to investing in youth in developing countries: A review of the literature*. The World Bank, Washington DC.

⁸ www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/45704694.pdf

While improvements in education, greater private sector investment and enlightened government policies to create more jobs are crucial for improving incomes for youth, entrepreneurship has become one of the most important drivers of job creation. The youth labour market is increasing the most in areas where there are few opportunities for viable employment, and where there are high levels of unemployment and working poverty. With more than 10 million young people entering the job market each year on the continent, there are simply not enough jobs, and job creation programs in both public and private sectors are not meeting the demand.

For these reasons, entrepreneurship is on the rise among youth throughout the world and SSA is no exception. Many young people—especially millennials—are increasingly drawn towards social entrepreneurship, which offers not only a path for them to improve their own lives, but also to improve the lives of others, their communities and their nations as a whole. Their entrepreneurial spirit is flamed by the explosion of digital technologies. Dissatisfied and impatient with the state of development in their communities, youth are leading the “digital disruption” occurring in many countries as they use new ICTs to develop innovative solutions to social problems.

1.3 ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM; IDENTIFYING THE OPPORTUNITY

Despite the potential for youth to radically change the face of development in Africa, the ability for many young people to thrive remains limited by out of date education systems, a lack of sustainable employment options, and few policies to support their economic development and inclusion.

Young university graduates face a lack of jobs in the formal sector when they graduate, and they often lack the critical skills that are necessary to identify and fill market opportunities. There are many factors that contribute to high rates of youth unemployment—lack of demand for trained youth, mismatches between labour needs and training programs, the perception of young people as irresponsible and unprofessional, and a professional sector that is unable to absorb large numbers of entrants into the labour market.

Further demand-related barriers include: inadequate government policies and programs that do not consider youth engagement; insufficient government action

to address gender equality; inadequate programs and incentives to encourage youth-led enterprise development; and limited access by entrepreneurs, particularly youth, to financial services. Additional barriers on the supply side include: ineffective education systems and lack of 21st century work force skills; lack of support for youth transitioning to the workforce; and limited use of technology to unleash the potential and ambition of youth.

As a result, many youth in SSA are unemployed and underemployed, lacking the tools and motivations necessary to become leaders and changemakers in their societies. There is a considerable amount of entrepreneurial potential, but this potential is

constrained among young people who often have difficulty accessing sources of capital, and lack the transferrable “soft skills”, self-

confidence and business know-how needed to find formal jobs and to start and grow businesses and micro-enterprises.

Context

RWANDA
CURRENTLY RANKS
163 ON THE HUMAN
DEVELOPMENT INDEX,
33 ON THE YOUTH
DEVELOPMENT INDEX,

and is classified as a low-income and low-development country. The Government of Rwanda’s Vision 2020 aims to shift Rwanda to a knowledge-based middle-income economy by the year 2020 (World Bank, 2016).

KENYA
RANKS

145 ON THE HUMAN
DEVELOPMENT INDEX,
AND 42
ON THE YOUTH
DEVELOPMENT INDEX

which places it on the verge of moving from low-human development to medium-human development status. While it is among the top five economies in Africa with a fast-projected growth rate, many jobs are being created in the informal sector. 9 million young people are expected to enter the economy in the next ten years (World Bank, 2016).

1.4 THE DOT MODEL

Addressing these gaps through financial and technical assistance, while also helping youth grow their networks and develop and sustain entrepreneurial ecosystems, is at the heart of DOT’s model.

Situated in an economic empowerment framework that combines soft skills (confidence-building, critical thinking, creativity), technical skills (computer literacy, digital skills), financial literacy and career coaching, DOT’s programs catalyze youth

along pathways to secure employment, entrepreneurship and civic leadership.

At the core of DOT’s approach are a number of principles: peer-to-peer and experiential learning; social innovation and

entrepreneurship; youth participation and leadership; holistic, self-directed education; local ownership; gender equality; digital inclusion. An ongoing commitment to these principles has been the cornerstone of DOT's approach to youth development. YLC's efforts to listen to young people's own ideas for change, and DOT's commitment to learning and development innovation is informing a new strategic vision—one that places youth as change agents and allows them to identify development challenges and solutions in their communities.

While the youth-led model was initially introduced in 2002, over the course of four years (2013 – 2017) DOT implemented and refined its model in Rwanda and Kenya through its Youth Leading Change program with funding from the Mastercard Foundation. The overall objective of the program is to help young people between 16 – 29 years of age find jobs or start businesses by developing skills that are in demand in their job markets, linking them with private sector actors, and supporting access to financial services and seed funds. DOT leverages a peer-to-peer learning approach by recruiting university graduates (ages 24 – 29) into modestly paid yearlong internships. After an initial 5-week training period, Interns become facilitators, and deliver training and empowerment programs in employment readiness (ReachUp!) and enterprise development (StartUp!) to hundreds of other young people in partnership with community-based organizations.

Each of the Interns trains 100-200 young people in their communities through partnerships with youth-focused community organizations. The peer-based train-the-trainer model is cost effective in that it has a multiplier effect—initial investment in hundreds of interns impacts the lives and livelihoods of tens of thousands

of Kenyan and Rwandan youth. Further, it builds the capacity of community partners as local staff learn from the creativity, innovation and technical skills of the Interns during their placements. It also strives to uphold principles of development innovation, which emphasize lean experimentation, ongoing adaptive management and iteration, convening rather than prescribing, and local ownership.

It is important to note that DOT is a learning organization that is continually innovating to respond to what it is observing and experiencing through its programming, from what it hears from the voices of its youth network and the global trends that it learns from its engagement with external experts and international networks. These insights, and those from YLC as presented in this report, underpin DOT's "model to movement" strategic plan, a transformative shift on which the organization has embarked. This will see major innovations in program design, technology and digital development, and fresh business and delivery models for replication and scale.

The peer-based train-the-trainer model is cost effective in that it has a multiplier effect—initial investment in hundreds of interns impacts the lives and livelihoods of tens of thousands of Kenyan and Rwandan youth.



THE DOT YOUTH LEADING CHANGE MODEL

RECRUITMENT

A rigorous selection process ensures that DOT recruits youth who have a passion for learning, leadership potential, and a commitment to community involvement and social change. Applications are carefully reviewed, telephone interviews conducted and face-to-face interviews held. Short-listed candidates participate in group activities to assess their interpersonal and communication skills and their ability to work in a team.

THE INTERN LEARNING EXPERIENCE

DOT Interns undertake an initial 5-week intensive training session that prepares them to deliver the DOT curriculum to youth in their communities. There are three main components to the Intern Learning Experience:

Empowerment	Builds self-confidence, strategic thinking, problem solving and helps youth identify their unique strengths, challenges and opportunities;
Employment and Digital Skills	Builds employment readiness skills such as planning, time management, reporting, facilitation, coaching, computer literacy and ICT technical skills;
Technical training for ReachUp! or StartUp!	Builds technical knowledge related to the employment readiness or entrepreneurial curriculum tracks, market sectors and financial literacy. Content is tailored to local market needs and growth sectors.

COMMUNITY INCUBATION

Participants deliver training in DOT's ReachUp! and StartUp! programs in their home communities in partnership with local youth-focused community organizations over a 12-month period. The community incubation is win-win: youth exercise their leadership skills and community partners get support and capacity-building from the Intern in exchange for providing a physical space, computers and an internet connection. Interns receive a monthly stipend for their work.

THE COMMUNITY PARTICIPANT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Community participants are often vulnerable, disenfranchised high-school graduates or early school leavers who have few opportunities and are unemployed or underemployed. Participants choose the Empowerment, ReachUp! or StartUp! program and can participate in additional employment readiness modules.

INTERN ALUMNI NETWORKING AND SUPPORT

At the end of their community incubation, DOT Interns are supported by staff to develop business plans or search for employment. Roundtable events with employers and small business and innovation competitions help alumni reach their post-DOT goals. The DOT Intern becomes a lifelong member of the alumni network, where they can link with other Interns in their own countries and around the world through social media tools.

DOT's new strategic vision encompasses the following key characteristics:

- Movement-building rooted in social innovation, shared purpose, ecosystems and risk-taking;
- A commitment to feedback and learning to inform iterative and flexible program designs;
- An emphasis on community solutions, entrepreneurship rooted in local demand, and the changing nature of work;
- A recognition of the potential for digital disruption leveraging new ICTs to decrease labour intensity and increase reach, scale and productivity, and to shift social norms and patterns of inclusion and exclusion;
- Greater support for youth-led design-thinking, self-determined pathways to change, shared conception and co-creation of solutions and community projects;
- Enhanced focus on self-paced and self-directed learning supported through blended learning formats, youth innovation hubs and youth-led research;
- A move away from service delivery toward supporting enabling environments by connecting diverse actors, forging new partnerships, and convening strategic networks.

From this point forward, this report summarizes what DOT has learned through the course of implementing YLC, with particular emphasis on how it is informing this new strategy.

The material in this report is the result of a learning review conducted by an external evaluator. The second section describes the methodology, grounded in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance (OECD-DAC), which has been followed to conduct the review. The third section summarizes the outputs achieved in Rwanda and Kenya during the implementation of YLC. Section Four explores the outcomes according to relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. The final section draws together key lessons learned through YLC and how such learning is shaping DOT's unique value proposition, pathway to scale and future strategic vision.

2.0

METHODOLOGY

In order to effectively synthesize DOT's lessons learned and impact as a result of YLC, a series of evaluative activities were conducted broadly under the rubric of 'learning review' with an emphasis on assessing what works, how and why, extracting lessons and good practices, and distilling wider learning beyond the organization.

Rooted in synthesizing learning according to relevance, effectiveness, impact, efficiency and sustainability, data for the systematic review was sourced

from evaluation reports and supporting information obtained through interviews with DOT staff, external consultants and in-country stakeholders in Rwanda and Kenya, including government partners, DOT Interns, DOT alumni and other program partners. By thinking about impact according to OECD-DAC, DOT is not only able to assess the impact of their own programs according a rigorous standard, but also to draw lessons about development effectiveness for other implementing organizations, and funders.

2.1 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This learning review is grounded in a realist evaluation framework and informed by contribution analysis, and aims to answer what works, for whom, how, in what contexts, and how by identifying the underlying generative mechanisms that explain how the outcomes were caused and the influence of context.⁹ The realist framework assesses a program's theory of change—how the intervention is expected to lead to its effects and in which conditions it should do so—against the contextual factors that will generate the outcomes, and helps to

identify what features of the context will affect whether or not those mechanisms operate. This approach considers and helps identify multiple and intersecting pathways to change, and incorporates contextual factors in the design, implementation and evaluation of key determinants of success. Contribution analysis takes a similar approach—assessing a program's theory of change—but with the aim of developing a 'contribution story' based on the evidence of observed results and core assumptions.

Relevance

The extent to which the aid activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor.

Efficiency

Whether a program uses the least costly resources possible in order to achieve the desired results.

Effectiveness

The extent to which a program achieves its objectives.

Impact

The positive and negative, intended and unintended, effects resulting from the program. This involves determining the main impacts and outcomes resulting from the activities on the social and economic development indicators.

Sustainability

Whether the benefits of a program are likely to continue after the funding period.

⁹ http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/approach/realist_evaluation



2.2 KEY QUESTIONS

The overarching question this learning review aims to answer is: What is DOT’s key ‘contribution story’ and how can it be drawn out of the results—both expected and unexpected, easily

discernible and emergent—and lessons learned in the implementation of YLC? This is answered by a number of sub-questions.

Focus area

Evaluation questions

Impacts and Benefits

To what extent is DOT’s model helping youth catalyze greater economic and entrepreneurial opportunities?

What is the connection between DOT’s model and longer-term resilience among youth?

Is DOT investment and youth investment having leverage or multiplier effects beyond the individual?

What has DOT learned about pathways to social impact and how they can be supported?

Youth Empowerment

To what extent are DOT youth becoming leaders in their communities?

Are DOT youth creating new livelihoods opportunities?

What does empowerment look like to youth?

Is DOT cultivating an attitude of lifelong learning in youth who move through the program?

To what extent is DOT’s model improving resiliency among youth in volatile economic and political contexts?

Movement Building

What has DOT learned through YLC about how young people can “cross the chasm” to become social innovators and entrepreneurs?

What evidence exists within the YLC program that DOT’s programs are building individual and systems level momentum?

To what extent can social media be utilized to foment and expand youth-led movements?

What are the best ways to leverage digital technologies to help transform youth from beneficiaries of projects to co-creators of change?

Focus area	Evaluation questions
Gender Equality	<p data-bbox="472 338 1421 380">What are the enablers and barriers for young women to become social innovators?</p> <p data-bbox="472 401 1421 443">What has DOT learned about the best way to engage young women?</p> <p data-bbox="472 464 1421 506">Is DOT's model shifting norms related to gender equality? If so, how? If not, why not?</p> <p data-bbox="472 527 1421 611">What differential results pathways do young women have compared with young men?</p>
Enabling Environments	<p data-bbox="472 632 1421 716">Is DOT transferring appropriate technology skills to youth and creating opportunities for them that didn't exist before?</p> <p data-bbox="472 737 1421 821">What has DOT learned through lean experiments, successes and challenges about the best way to engage youth through technology?</p> <p data-bbox="472 842 1421 884">Is DOT effectively building partnership ecosystems and what do they look like?</p> <p data-bbox="472 905 1421 989">What enablers and barriers exist to building strategic networks, and youth using them effectively?</p>
Processes for Sustainability and Scale	<p data-bbox="472 989 1421 1073">What institutional enablers and barriers exist across institutional/sectoral boundaries and how have they been addressed?</p> <p data-bbox="472 1094 1421 1136">How is sustainability embedded in DOT's model and activities?</p> <p data-bbox="472 1157 1421 1199">What has DOT learned about how to improve sustainability potential?</p> <p data-bbox="472 1220 1421 1293">What has DOT learned about cost-effective pathways to scale?</p>

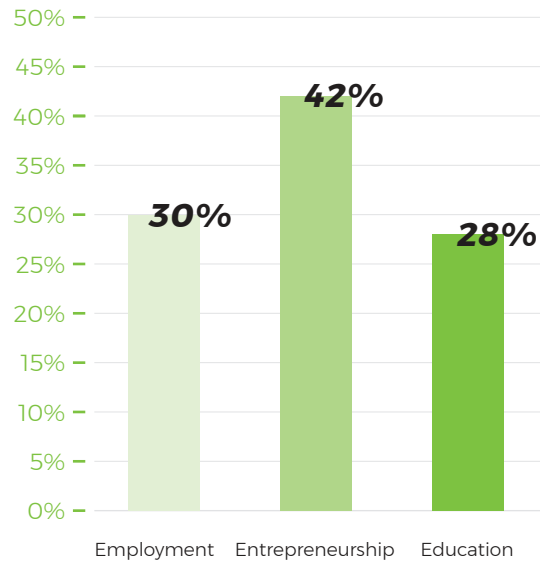
3.0

OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

- 233 youth in Kenya and Rwanda were trained to deliver DOT programs, with 219 completing their 18-month community-engaged Internship and graduating into the alumni network.
- 35,987 youth completed empowerment, employment readiness and/or entrepreneurship training.
- 87% of youth have secured jobs, started enterprises or chosen to further their education.
- 216 local institutions were engaged and strengthened through strategic partnerships.
- 80% of youth express satisfaction with the relevance and quality of youth-related programs and policies in which DOT is engaged as an active stakeholder.
- Youth trained demonstrate a 26% increase in entrepreneurial skills and attitudes.
- 92% of youth express satisfaction with services and opportunities in the job or business market as a result of the networks facilitated through their integration with DOT.
- 99% of youth graduating from the DOT Internship joined the alumni network.

Total Transition Rates

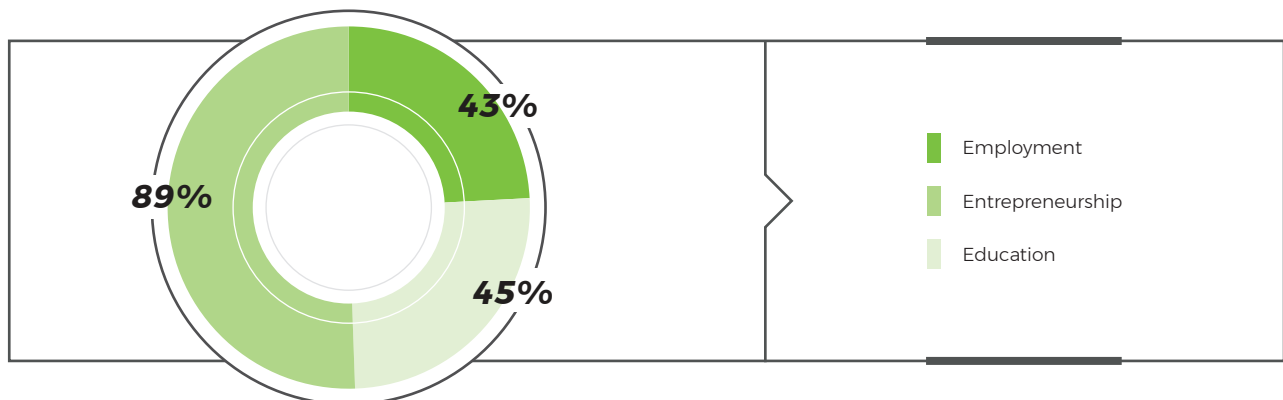
Transition rate refers to the number of young people who complete one of DOT's training tracks and who secure employment, start enterprises or further their education. Out of 31,174 youth who have completed training, 87% have transitioned successfully. There is a fairly equal representation across all three categories, but with a slight majority of youth (42%) choosing entrepreneurship over more traditional youth development pathways.



Transition Rates per Program Track

With similar proportions of youth successfully securing stable employment or furthering their education in the employment readiness and empowerment tracks, by far the most successful youth are those who participate in the entrepreneurial track. This may be because youth who participate in StartUp! tend to be older and more established, given that prior business experience is one of the recruitment criteria. It could also point to the broad way in which entrepreneurship is defined—some young people start microenterprises

that are similar to initiatives in the informal economy. Nonetheless, this suggests that entrepreneurship training provides skills, ideas and access to opportunities that weren't there before for many more youth than the more traditional training approaches. This confirms what youth advocates have been stressing—that there simply are not enough jobs, and entrepreneurship, whether in the form of SMEs or microenterprises, by necessity, is the way of the future for the large majority of African youth.



Social Outcomes

In addition to accessing greater livelihoods and educational opportunities as a result of participating in DOT’s programs, there is evidence that youth also experience myriad social benefits, including higher levels of digital inclusion, more equitable perceptions about gender norms, and greater community involvement and sense of civic responsibility.

Proxies for assessing changes in gender perceptions from baseline to endline indicate an average improvement of more than 30% in attitudes related to the role and potential of women among DOT youth. Furthermore, more than 50% of all DOT Kenya participants and more than 70% of DOT Rwanda participants indicate they have a greater level of community involvement after completing

the DOT program, and more than 50% in both countries feel they have an important role to play as a role model in their communities. In terms of digital inclusion, there was a dramatic increase in computer ownership and frequency of use among DOT graduates, with approximately 90% using a computer on a daily basis post-DOT compared with less than 70% at baseline.

“...more than 50% of all DOT Kenya participants and more than 70% of DOT Rwanda participants indicate they have a greater level of community involvement after completing the DOT program...”

4.0

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Through the implementation of YLC, DOT has learned a lot about how change occurs—i.e. the enablers and barriers to ensuring development programs for youth are relevant, efficient, effective, impactful and sustainable. Importantly, through implementation successes and challenges, DOT has learned what it takes to shift from a model to a movement— to move from a focus on replicating and scaling a service delivery model with rigid indicators of success to an ecosystems approach focused

on mobilizing ideas, resources and people behind a shared mission and purpose. The shift towards movement-building is rooted in principles of social innovation, which stress process rather than outcomes, and emphasize flexibility, risk-taking and participation of users in decision-making. Innovation also requires a learning mindset, in which failures are embraced, and learning is supported by lean experiments and strong feedback loops between implementers and participants.

Feedback and learning are essential to DOT's mission and values.

DOT's model is rooted in the principle of downward accountability,¹⁰ where regular feedback from participants facilitates ongoing programmatic adaptations. Youth

are engaged as key stakeholders at every stage, ensuring that youth voices are heard consistently, and that youth are able to contribute to programmatic decisions.

For instance:

- Satisfaction and skills assessment surveys are conducted at baseline, midterm and endline for all participants. This data is bolstered by the integration of regular qualitative feedback opportunities between youth and in-country program staff.
 - Interns are trained in monitoring and evaluation to assess the impact of their training programs.
 - Youth-led research projects and scoping studies help DOT ensure that program activities are demand-driven and relevant to the needs of youth in a particular context.
 - Externally commissioned evaluations help DOT understand what's working, what's not working, and why.
-

¹⁰Downward accountability refers to the extent to which development actors are accountable to constituents/beneficiaries as opposed to donors and policymakers. https://assets.helvetas.org/downloads/1__downward_accountability_red_final_engl_a3_landscape.pdf

4.1 RELEVANCE

DOT's approach ensures the relevance of its model by:

- Placing activities and objectives within a positive youth development and empowerment framework;
- Prioritizing gender equity;
- Leveraging principles of user-centered design;
- Ensuring program participants are involved in decision-making; developing effective partnerships with governments, NGOs and the private sector to support planning, coordination and implementation;
- Conducting rapid and lean experiments to learn what works and doesn't work and make ongoing adaptations.

92%

of youth participants express satisfaction with youth activities and services in their communities that are brokered by or affiliated with DOT.

Going beyond numbers and levels of satisfaction, DOT has learned about being relevant to the needs, passions and hopes of young people and has distilled a few key principles.

Ensure Activities are Demand-Driven

DOT upholds the principle of demand-driven implementation by positioning young women and men as partners with decision-making power from the outset.

Program elements were designed according to an initial needs assessment to identify the challenge and opportunities for youth, map

the networks of youth-focused services and opportunities, and assess level of financial inclusion. Through this assessment, ***DOT learned that training alone would not dramatically help youth*** in these areas, and facilitated partnerships with financial service providers, government youth services and potential employers.

The needs assessment also concentrated on the needs of youth-focused stakeholders and employers, and identified business-sector gaps and opportunities. Private sector actors were engaged in curricula development to ensure **training content was relevant to local demand**. This increases the likelihood that DOT Interns will obtain the right skills to move into employment or entrepreneurship opportunities, and helps ensure the training they provide to other young people is relevant. Partnerships with financial institutions ensure the skills and attributes DOT Interns bring to employment or enterprise opportunities are understood to secure financial products.

Young changemakers learn to identify problems in their communities and develop feasible solutions that they are able to lead with the skills they possess and assets they have access to. Young entrepreneurs also learn to develop social business ideas that are rooted in local demand and reflect the changing nature of work; as one DOT staff member highlights, **“We help young people come up with an idea based on what is needed in the community and what is possible”**.


Emphasize Experiential Learning and Transferrable Skills

DOT emphasizes experiential learning at the ultra-local level by placing trained DOT Interns in youth-focused organizations within their own communities. This meets both the demand for capacity-building by partner organizations and the demand for localized movement-building: **Interns engage and mobilize other youth who have similar histories, experiences, challenges, frustrations and passions.**

A focus on transferrable skills is essential.

Youth pathways towards economic security are fluid because of the volatile nature of the economy of many African countries. Existing economic empowerment programs tend to focus on traditional entrepreneurship, a particular vocation, or a prescribed employment path, yet evidence suggests that these models are no longer sufficient with rapidly shifting labour markets and the changing nature of work.¹¹ This corresponds to the findings of research commissioned by DOT and conducted by Dr. Edward Jackson, which found that the soft skills and behaviors developed by DOT youth were characteristic of resilient individuals. DOT youth embody transferrable skills, such the ability to identify resources, save for strategic investments, plan and manage time and commit to lifelong learning. An emphasis on transferrable skills helps DOT remain relevant even when access to opportunity is constantly shifting.

¹¹ Coward, C. et al. (2014). *Digital opportunities: Innovative ICT solutions for youth employment*. Geneva: ITU.



*I learned a lot about self-employment through DOT. I have always had a lot of ideas for small businesses, but I didn't have any idea where to start. **Through DOT's human-centered design program, I learned how to start planning, how to prototype an idea, and how develop my business model.** I am still testing my idea, but I now know what to do when I am ready to proceed.*

— DOT INTERN, RWANDA —

Respond to the Changing Nature of Work with Flexible Program Models

Despite developing methods to promote demand-driven programming from the outset, DOT learned that it must go further to be truly demand-driven. First, DOT noted that the model was too static, with set learning streams and pathways resulting in high levels of attrition at certain program points. Youth need a more flexible programmatic approach to learning. DOT addressed this during YLC by creating an abridged version of ReachUp! for youth who wanted to fast-track into the entrepreneurship training. An additional employment readiness module was also created for youth who completed ReachUp! but needed additional market-ready competencies. In future iterations of the model, one-size-fits-all learning tracks will be abandoned in favour of a modular approach that will give youth the chance to choose which elements of DOT programming are best suited for them, and self-select which competencies they want to develop.

Second, difficulties with adapting programs mid-stream as participants' needs and opportunities change over time points to the need to develop different measurement tools for ongoing assessment. While programs are demand-driven at the outset, they are fairly set once a young person chooses a particular track. DOT has identified the need to develop participatory M&E methods for ongoing assessment of learning outcomes, competencies, and continually shifting community needs and opportunities, and to position youth at the forefront of these efforts as action-researchers.

By putting the responsibility for ongoing evaluation and adaptation into the hands of youth, DOT intends to position young people to lead iterative program design and expansion efforts.

4.2 EFFICIENCY

Efficiency is at the heart of DOT’s approach to youth development. An emphasis on impact rooted in “ripple effects” means that investment in one young person impacts hundreds of others.

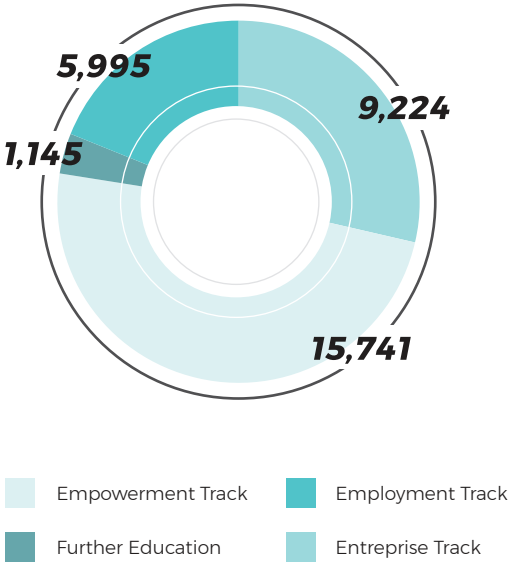
DOT also uses the principles of lean experimentation to continually test the most effective, efficient and impactful implementation strategies. As a result of lean experiments, DOT undertook a number of corrections and adaptations during YLC, such as adapting curricula to better target the individual needs of young people, and assessing which existing

digital networks and tools youth are most likely to engage with rather than building a new bespoke platform. DOT is also experimenting with tools and strategies to reach an even greater number of young people with the same resources, thereby stretching investment dollars to have the greatest possible impact.

Leverage the Multiplier Effect

Efficiency is a core principle in DOT’s model. The peer-based, train-the-trainer approach has an extraordinary cost-effective multiplier effect — one DOT Intern will reach up to 200 peers with employment readiness, empowerment and entrepreneurship training and coaching during their community deployment. This creates a multiplier effect where DOT’s significant investment in one Intern—through face-to-face intensive training, ongoing mentorship and a paid stipend—is actually an investment in up to 200 young men and women. Deep investment in 250 youth as Interns has led to 1,145 young people who are furthering their education through university or vocational colleges; 21,736 youth who have gained market-ready employment skills, and the critical thinking, communication and self-confidence competencies to actively seek out opportunities; and 9,224 young men and women who have

developed business know-how, including how to gain access to financial services, that they need to launch their own enterprises.



DOT's model further embodies the principle of development efficiency in that outcomes continue well after the implementation and funding period has ended. As Dr. Edward Jackson asserts, ***“Alumni see DOT’s contribution as catalytic—the confidence, skills and networks generated through their engagement with DOT makes exploiting other factors and opportunities more possible into the future”*** (Jackson, 2016).

The multiplier effect is also evidenced in the increased capacity and sustainability

of community-based organizations to provide youth with business development services and ICT training as a result of Intern placements. DOT Interns have added value to the work of their community partner hosts, including youth centers, community centers and technical institutes and have extended their community reach and the impact of their programs. DOT partners all agree that the internship accrues multiple benefits and improves the efficiency by extending tight budgets and attracting the participation of larger numbers of young people.

DOT has special skills related to entrepreneurship that our organization doesn’t have. They are skills that are needed for youth to find employment and create jobs. We are targeting the same youth and we have different strengths. So it’s a great partnership, and we save resources by each knowing our strengths and working together.

DOT PARTNER, KENYA

Finally, though currently untested in a formal way, there is anecdotal evidence that DOT's approach is contributing to the economic development of entire communities and regions as young people find stable employment and start businesses, thereby not only increasing their own household income but that of others. In this respect,

cost-efficiency is measured not only in terms of the individual who receives direct investment, but in the slow, longitudinal changes that happen to communities and economies as more young people access stable livelihoods and become social innovators seeking new solutions to old problems.

Expand the Use of Digital Technologies

Ongoing advances in ICTs are transforming old sectors and creating new ones. No sector has been untouched, from farming to manufacturing to service industries.

Given the disruptions caused by technological advancements and changing business models, digital technologies are poised to rapidly improve the efficiency of development interventions. Against this backdrop, digital literacy is becoming a prerequisite for both wage employment and creating one's own business. ICT literacy is an essential skill for youth living in lower-middle income countries—it not only qualifies them for employment in conventional job sectors, but also opens doors to participate in rapidly growing markets such as local language information bank, courses and services, online sales, and microwork.¹² People with more advanced ICT skills can also take advantage of an even wider range of opportunities facilitated by mobile phones and the “app economy”.

Given the expanding opportunities and the ever-increasing levels of digital penetration among youth in Africa, ICTs hold the potential to improve youth development in a number of ways: online learning will extend the scale of educational programs; young people increasingly have an outlet to express their

opinions and become involved in civic action; there is greater opportunity to participate more easily in an increasingly networked labour market; social enterprises have new tools to address longstanding social problems in news ways. The increasing adoption of ICTs in everyday life, and the growing marketplace for digital goods and services, are creating opportunities for youth livelihoods that transcend traditional paradigms.

Expanding access to and knowledge of ICTs is an obvious way to improve the reach, scale and efficiency of development interventions. Digitally-enhanced interventions require less direct labour and are easier to scale at a low cost over vast distances. This is especially true in the youth sector; as the start-up movement in Silicon Valley demonstrates, ***young men and women are often the earliest adopters of technology and the most daring pioneers.*** Many DOT youth have already recognized the potential of technology to grow their enterprises and catalyze social change in their communities.

¹² Coward, C. et al. (2014).

“...young men and women are often the earliest adopters of technology and the most daring pioneers.”



AJRA MOHAMED

is a DOT Intern from Kenya. During her internship, she created the first technology incubator for young women in Kenya's coastal region.



DOUGLAS MWANGI

is a DOT StartUp! participant in Kenya. He founded the first digital community hub in the Mathare Slum, which has since expanded to three locations.



RODRIGUE ISHIMWE

is a DOT Intern from Rwanda. He developed the first Kinyarwanda-language website to provide resources for entrepreneurs, building digital skills and supporting locally relevant content creation.

The full potential of digital inclusion among DOT participants was limited in some cases where Interns were placed at smaller community organizations that did not have Internet access or had limited computers for participants to use. Some youth indicate the lack of technology was a counterproductive force, making it difficult for them to recruit and retain participants who were motivated by the opportunity to learn computer skills.

DOT has recognized that more needs to be done to support youth to access the digital transformations happening in their societies, and to leverage the power of ICTs: support open courseware and online classrooms; create digital job matching services; leverage app development opportunities; and facilitate the expansion of tech hubs.

Established, new and emerging partnerships with the Government of Rwanda, the Mozilla Foundation and the World Economic Forum's Internet for All and Northern Corridor programs are informing DOT's strategy for youth-led digital disruption in the development space.

Recognition of these untapped possibilities is helping DOT focus its digital strategy and shift from an emphasis on skills delivery to an emphasis on youth-led civic engagement and digital disruption through ICTs, blended learning models, and the establishment of national and international youth networks.

DOT-Mozilla Partnership

moz://a

DOT and the Mozilla Foundation have come together to promote youth leadership and digital skills development for youth at a regional level in East Africa.

Leveraging both organizations' visions to help youth become changemakers in their communities, DOT and Mozilla will bring vulnerable youth together in online spaces, and convene youth-focused digital initiatives across the region to facilitate the development of an ecosystem of organizations dedicated to the digital empowerment of communities.

4.3 EFFECTIVENESS

Integrate Principles of Human-Centered Design

Also called user-centered or design thinking, human-centered design is an approach to problem solving that incorporates the wants and needs of end users of a product or service in every stage of the design process.¹³ These principles are at the core of DOT's model—**youth are engaged as action researchers**; young people are empowered to develop a model for recruiting and training their peers in ReachUp! and StartUp!; youth learn skills such as asset mapping, which helps them determine the tools and skills they have access to and the ones they don't. These principles also help young people to assess their competencies, decide what their challenges are and how to overcome them, and determine what they want to do and how to get there.

However, DOT has learned what is needed to go further. A reliance on a fairly rigid set of program pathways, curriculums and indicators of success did not fully support the reality that change journeys are not necessarily linear. Design-thinking at the outset was successful in helping youth understand the steps they would need to take on their journey, but it was not integrated throughout each phase.

Promote a Youth-to-Youth Model

There is a growing body of evidence on the effectiveness of interventions to build transferable skills using alternative learning pathways, such as community centers or civil society groups and peer-to-peer learning. DOT uses a peer-to-peer support in a number of different ways. Interns are placed in gender-balanced teams for their community

Youth move forward, backward and laterally as they navigate the changing nature of their economies, societies and lives.

Design thinking responds to this fluidity and is an essential tool to support flexible implementation and development innovation.

DOT is now incorporating design-thinking to help youth identify the competencies they want to develop and to create their own unique DOT programs, including defining their own objectives, pathways and indicators of success. Through self-paced learning that combines face-to-face and online modules, participants will also have the opportunity to start their own DOT programs, or develop and implement their own social innovations and community projects, including conducting community needs assessments, designing products or services, prototyping, securing financing, and delivering to a community.

incubation, allowing them to support one another in working through difficulties they face in delivering the programs, and creates strong cohorts that continue to help one another long after their internship with DOT has ended. DOT Interns also deliver training to other youth in their own communities.

¹³ <https://www.ideo.com/post/design-kit>

THE PEER-TO-PEER MODEL HAS A NUMBER OF BENEFITS:**01**

It mitigates the hierarchical power dynamics that emerge when youth learn from adults, or from other youth who come from another community or country.

02

Community participants learn from young people who are from the same community, and have experienced firsthand the same challenges, economic circumstances and educational opportunities. As a result, young people are able to trust and open up to their mentors more easily—a key component of confidence-building.

03

DOT Interns are easily able to recruit youth in their communities to participate in the training, as they have often the same networks and “speak the same language.” DOT’s community partner organizations, most of which are run by adults, report that Interns are extremely effective at helping attract youth to their centers and services.

DOT has learned ***that peer coaching and mentoring has myriad benefits for young people, but that collaborations with adults cannot be ignored.*** Learning how to speak to adults in professional circles and garnering respect received from adults has been a key element of the transformational nature of a DOT youth’s journey. It is also shifting negative adult perceptions of youth as irresponsible and unqualified.

Use Lean Experimentation and Adaptive Management

Incorporating frequent small experiments into program design helps organizations assess when they are and are not succeeding in achieving their desired impact and, often, helps identify what they could do better.

Lean experimentation puts the emphasis on a fluid rather than rigid strategy for implementation, and helps organizations “innovate more efficiently, build new services that meet the needs of their constituents, and develop disruptive solutions to seemingly intractable problems.”¹⁴ Adapted from the business world, lean experiments help corporations turn a profit by better understanding their users and buyers, and helps NGO’s and social businesses “do development differently”¹⁵ and, in turn, more effectively. Rapid testing of processes and approaches allows organizations to engage in ongoing adaptive management—a strategy for innovative development that is gaining prominence by USAID, the Centre for Global Development and others as a way to ensure interventions are more iterative, more responsive to those they are meant to serve, and more inclusive. Adaptive management seeks to better achieve outcomes and impacts through “the systematic, iterative, and planned use of emergent knowledge and learning throughout the program lifecycle.”¹⁶

DOT recognized during the implementation of YLC that ongoing iteration and adaptation were necessary when dealing with a

complex and multifaceted issue like youth development and livelihoods. DOT made a number of programmatic adaptations to respond to what young people were saying and what local staff in each country were witnessing on the ground.

The level of adaptive management DOT is able to engage in is only made possible by having strong local teams in each country and by soliciting ongoing feedback from program participants and partners.

DOT made a number of mid-course adaptations as a result of ongoing learning about what youth want and need.

¹⁴ Murray, P. and Ma, S. (2015). *The promise of lean experimentation*. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_promise_of_lean_experimentation

¹⁵ <https://buildingstatecapability.com/the-ddd-manifesto/>

¹⁶ <https://usaidlearninglab.org/lab-notes/what-adaptive-management>

Lesson

Adaptation

Catalyzing opportunities for youth requires a holistic approach.

DOT has learned that engaging large numbers of participants is not enough to transfer skill development into meaningful and productive opportunities for youth. DOT improved the curriculum, making it more demand-driven through formal private sector engagements, incorporating financial training, providing youth access to financial service providers, and making adjustments to ICT skill development to reflect local realities in both countries and improve applicability.

Young entrepreneurs often have some business or work experience prior to DOT and need different entry and exit points than less-experienced youth.

DOT created a shortened version of ReachUp! for youth with business experience who want to fast track into entrepreneurial training. The abridged ReachUp! is an onboarding process for business development, where participants are coached by a DOT Intern to assess their entrepreneurial skills and the feasibility of their business idea against market needs and available assets.

Youth pathways are diverse and non-linear. DOT interns experience a peak and plateau in their learning, and need support to transition along a new path when they are ready, as well as longer term follow-up support.

New tools to track participants across the different programs is allowing DOT to align program adjustments to the changing needs and preferences of youth. DOT also developed additional aftercare tools to support youth—including WhatsApp and Facebook groups, job-matching roundtables and business and innovation competitions for aspiring entrepreneurs—were developed to better support participants and Intern alumni in their transition to employment of self-employment. Aftercare support was also extended to those who leave the program early.

Youth are most likely to network through digital platforms they are already using rather than experiment with new ones.

Research commissioned by DOT and conducted by youth in Kenya and Rwanda indicates that youth have a strong preference for using the existing social media they are already familiar with than adopting new digital networking platforms. Rather than build a platform to connect interns, alumni and participants, DOT leveraged WhatsApp and Facebook, which are the most popular social media tools among youth. DOT’s program focused on helping youth figure out new and novel ways to use such tools.

Lesson

Young people need longer engagement as interns to reach optimal productivity and maximize their chances for success post-DOT.

Adaptation

DOT extended the Intern engagement from 12 to 18 months, with senior Interns taking on greater leadership and mentoring roles. This led to a reduction in new recruits, but a greater investment in DOT Interns throughout their learning journey and career planning. It also allowed for DOT youth to save additional finances during the internship, which helps them start their own enterprises more easily or enter the job market with a greater degree of stability post-DOT.

Create Strategic Partnerships and Connect with National Youth Development Goals

DOT's approach aligns closely with national youth policies in Rwanda and Kenya, and elements of it are even embedded in national youth strategies. DOT's strategic vision is aligned both with country-level youth sector strategic plans and with the youth targets in the Sustainable Development Goals.

At the national levels, both DOT Kenya and DOT Rwanda are recognized as leaders in the youth-led development sector and are significant contributors to public and private forums, committees and working groups. DOT implementing partners—community centers, technical and vocational training centers (TVETs), youth associations—are strengthened by the presence of the DOT Intern who facilitates outreach into the community and bring youth into the centers.

One of DOT's core values, which contributes greatly to its efficiency, is an emphasis on brokering strategic partnerships, and fostering ecosystems that help youth connect with the supporting structures and institutions that exist in their environments. Through ongoing work to connect with similar organizations and convene events to bring them together, DOT has forged

strategic partnerships with youth-focused community organizations, employers, financial service providers and government agencies. These partnerships have strengthened delivery of the training curricula by:

- Working hand-in-hand with trusted community partners who help to recruit youth and provide access to training space;
- Identifying and incorporating market-specific skills gaps in collaboration with private sector partners;
- Providing access to employment, loans and financial services for small enterprises;
- Embedding government-approved training in ministry initiatives, training institutes, and universities.



DOT adds immense value to our objectives. Most of the youth who have won innovation competitions have passed through the DOT program. We have even hired former DOT Interns in the ministry. They have special skills—computer skills, problem solving and critical thinking.

REPRESENTATIVE, MINISTRY OF YOUTH AND ICT, RWANDA

In Rwanda,

DOT has developed a thriving partner ecosystem, with mature strategic relationships with the Ministry of Youth and ICT (MYICT), the Ministry of Labour, the National Employment Program, the Business Development Fund, the Rwanda Development Board, and the National University of Rwanda and affiliated centers.

DOT's initiatives fall squarely within the Government of Rwanda's Digital Talent Policy and action plan for youth development, and DOT is a key implementing organization identified to help the government achieve its objectives. DOT is also taking a leadership role in the Government of Rwanda's digital literacy initiative, which aims to increase the digital literacy of millions of citizens, and to foster an entrepreneurial mindset among its youth.

DOT has co-implemented a number of activities with the Government of Rwanda. In collaboration with the National Youth Council, DOT Interns participate in implementing Youth Connekt Africa—an annual conference and innovation competition. 90 youth with promising businesses are invited to an entrepreneurial boot camp delivered by DOT prior to the conference. At the conference select businesses win awards and receive funding to expand their businesses, and many of the awardees are former DOT Interns. DOT is also working with the National Youth Council and the Business Development Fund to

coordinate a multi-stakeholder platform that will enhance youth access to finance. DOT also champions partnerships that focus on women in tech, and has a number of mature and emerging partnerships with organizations such as Ms. Geek, Girls in ICT and Girl Effect Rwanda. One of the most promising developments in this area is a recent formal partnership agreement between DOT Rwanda and MYICT to co-design and co-implement the SmartGirls initiative in Rwanda, which aims to empower women and girls with the ICT skills to become tech innovators in their communities.

DOT's win-win partnership with MYICT in Rwanda is a model for scale and sustainability.

- MYICT provides space for DOT Rwanda to deliver training throughout Rwanda.
- MYICT has implemented DOT training as part of its Youth Empowerment for Global Opportunities program.
- DOT is helping the Government of Rwanda implement its YouthConnekt program, which will be rolled out in countries throughout Africa.
- DOT participants have access to additional training, job placement services, apprenticeships and business mentorship under YEGO.

In Kenya,

new and emerging partnerships are expanding and extending the reach of DOT's programs. DOT Kenya effectively converted a longstanding partnership with the Kenya Red Cross in Machakos to a countrywide strategic partner. Formalized in a Memoranda of Understanding, DOT Interns will be placed at all of Kenya Red Cross's branches throughout the country. DOT also has partnerships at the national level with the National Library Service, the Kenya Commercial Bank, and a segment of the Government of Kenya's probation centers to offer employment readiness and vocational training to young offenders as they reintegrate into society. In addition to formalized strategic partnerships such as these, DOT has a number of "learning resource" partners—such as Samasource and OIC International— that provide further intensive incubator training for DOT graduates, and GIZ, Coca-Cola and Energizing Development—who provide additional enterprise start-up resources to young entrepreneurs in the StartUp! program.

However, DOT is not specifically measuring success with respect to network building and related indicators of change or contributions toward national and international youth development goals.¹⁷ DOT is primarily measuring impact at the level of the individual, which makes it difficult to assess system-level outcomes and the impact of strategic partnerships to foster ecosystems. In order to provide more robust evidence of the impact of DOT-facilitated networks on broader social and economic goals, DOT should assess differential outcomes in

regions where they have robust community partnerships and large cohorts of participants against communities where they are not implementing programs. DOT should also measure the longitudinal impacts of developing strategic networks and partnerships, both in terms of the benefits they provide for youth, and also the benefits they accrue for partner organizations. Finally, DOT should also invest in measuring the effect of networks on progress towards national and international youth development goals.

¹⁷ ET Jackson & Associates (2017). *DOT M&E Strategy Working Paper (Draft)*.

4.4 IMPACT

DOT assesses and demonstrates its impact according to a number of different indicators. Quantitative metrics, which are summarized in section two of this report include: number of young people who complete each of the different program tracks and number of participants and alumni who successfully transition to paid employment, self-employment or further education post-DOT. DOT also measures the acquisition of skills related to employment readiness and entrepreneurship and soft skills such as confidence, problem-solving and communication, and proxies for improved livelihoods and civic involvement such as number of community initiatives started, and increase in household incomes.

Promote Gender Equality Through Gender Equity

Meaningful and equitable engagement of both young men and young women in decision-making is key to the promotion of inclusive societies. ***By recruiting equal numbers of men and women as Interns, placing DOT Interns in gender-equal teams, and leveraging young women as positive role models in their communities, DOT's model strives to promote a form of youth leadership that contributes to radically reframing gender norms.***

DOT staff, partners and external consultants all stress the transformative work DOT is doing to shift gender dynamics in Rwanda and Kenya and to help young women become role models and leaders in their community. Importantly, they engage both men and women as gender champions—who facilitate online discussions about gender equality and

The successes and challenges DOT experienced in capturing robust evidence of impact during YLC has resulted in a number of key lessons related to how system-level change occurs, lessons that are often not easily discernible through logic models or project management frameworks, and are often lost in quantitative indicators. The lessons are grouped according to a number of key themes that emerged through the course of reviewing prior research and external evaluations commissioned by DOT, assessing DOT's internal M&E data and donor reports, and conducting interviews with DOT staff and partners.

organize community activities for international events such as Women's Day—which is an important vector of change in societies where women's engagement is typically marginalized. ***All youth leaders in DOT's program receive gender equality training, which is reinforced through program activities that allow young men and women to work alongside each other as equal colleagues.*** DOT has learned that when men recognize and promote the work of their female colleagues, it often helps women gain legitimacy as leaders and role models in spaces they don't have ready and easy access to. Through the implementation of YLC, DOT has drawn a number of key lessons about how to promote gender equality and greater inclusivity of women in formal employment and self-employment.

01

Gender-balanced recruitment is crucial to ensuring equal representation of men and women among DOT Interns.

DOT ensures gender equity in recruiting Interns by ranking candidates from within their own gender. Since young men have often had greater educational opportunities than young women, this helps offset gender bias in the first phase of online competency assessments. Also, many women have not had prior interview experience when they apply to become DOT Interns, and gender disaggregation helps ensure that promising young women are not missed because of their differential access to prior professional skills development.

*I love that I am helping girls in my community. The community has seen tangible changes and youth are very motivated. **Through their involvement with DOT, girls have increased confidence—they learn technology and social media and it helps them connect with other young people. Even more importantly, they are getting over their fear of leading.***

DOT INTERN, RWANDA

02

Female participants are attracted to the program when they see the leadership capabilities of female Interns.

Equipped with advanced facilitation, communication and problem-solving skills, **female Interns attract other young women to DOT's programs because participants want to become more like them.** The power of having young women who stand out in the community because of their leadership and professionalism cannot be underestimated in terms of the influence it has on the motivation of other women. Women in DOT develop high levels of confidence and have high expectations of themselves, which is also shared by their male counterparts, and by both female and male participants in their programs.

03

Impact pathways are often different for young women compared to young men, and evaluation parameters should reflect differential opportunities and outcomes.

Even young women with the motivation and skills of DOT Interns face challenges in the labour market compared to men. As with their peers in the general population, women in DOT programs often need to balance household management and childrearing with their studies and career ambitions. As a result, some young women complete the training in starts and stops as they juggle multiple roles or start families. Young women also don't transition into stable forms of employment or self-employment as easily as young men due to fewer opportunities and societal norms that prevent women from pursuing career opportunities or starting businesses. For these reasons, DOT's work highlights that markers of success need to reflect the differential access to opportunity that exists as a result of gender inequality, and reinforces that programs need to incorporate diverse strategies for bringing young women into the equation as innovators and co-creators of change.

04

Digital technology is an important enabler for women's empowerment.

Enhancing digital literacy can play an important role in building women's confidence and increasing their ability to play a leadership role in their communities. New technologies are creating new spaces for women to explore novel career opportunities, and providing platforms for them to express their opinions in safe ways. Digital technologies are not the answer to girls' empowerment, but they are powerful tools that they can use to disrupt gender norms in their societies.

DOT has learned that, in many cases, reality falls short of potential. The gendered digital divide is a significant barrier, and one that can only be bridged by better understanding the digital needs and desires of young women. DOT began this effort through youth-led research on digital access and use among young women and men in Rwanda and Kenya, the results of which were released in DOT's 2016 *Youth Voices: Digital Lives and Livelihoods* report.¹⁸ The research highlighted that in order to leverage ICTs as a powerful enablers in youth-led movements for gender empowerment, young women need to be involved as co-creators and agents of change in every step of the process—from researching levels of digital inclusion and identifying barriers and facilitators, to developing strategies for overcoming gendered digital divides, to determining what is possible for young women to achieve within their contextual circumstances.

What DOT learned about gender equality and women's empowerment through YLC is encapsulated in a newly developed gender strategy. The strategy is an attempt to move from a model that positions gender as a cross-cutting theme to a movement that aims to radically shift gender norms.

CORE PRINCIPLES OF DOT'S GENDER STRATEGY:

- Men and women are equal partners and should be given equal opportunities.
- Focus on gender equality rather than solely on gender equity, and promote capacity development for young women.
- Address sexual discrimination and harassment where it exists and when it presents itself.
- Move beyond gender sensitivity to instill gender equality as a core value among staff, Interns, participants and partners.
- Create space for young women and men to explore issues of gender inequality separately, but also encourage them to work together.

¹⁸ www.dotrust.org/media/2017/04/Youth-Voices-Digital-Lives-and-Livelihoods-2016.pdf

Understand and Measure Diverse Impact Pathways

Ongoing evaluation of youth over time by project staff, combined with externally commissioned research and evaluation activities, has led to substantial insights into impact—both in terms of the impact

of participation in DOT's programs on the individual participant or Intern and in terms of the social impact DOT youth have on their communities. A number of key lessons can be drawn from this data.

01

Interns follow diverse pathways.

Some go directly to a successful business or professional position where they employ others or transfer skills through programs they deliver. Some Interns pace themselves to save resources to purchase a home or land, to start families, or to start an enterprise when the time is right. Despite the diversity, Interns and Intern alumni credit DOT's program with helping them see a pathway at all, and catalyzing a journey on it. DOT Interns also highlight DOT's influence on their commitment to social change and community involvement.

*DOT believes we can do something great and that **we can change the lives of people in our community despite our backgrounds or age or the fact we don't always look like the best or smartest on paper.** Because of DOT, I know I want to put my efforts into social entrepreneurship. **I can help solve problems in my community and my community trusts me to serve them.***

— DOT INTERN, KENYA

02

DOT's contribution is often catalytic, but there are other contributing factors that shape success.

The DOT Internship is a significant contribution to young people's economic and social participation. The confidence, skills, resilience and networks they develop allow them to pursue, secure and create opportunities that would not have otherwise been available to them in many cases. However, a number of other non-DOT circumstances also shape their success, including participation in other training and empowerment programs, non-DOT networks, and "their ability to detect first-mover advantages in market niches."¹⁹

03

DOT Interns and participants produce positive social impacts that extend beyond them as individuals.

DOT Interns have added value to the work of their community partner hosts, including youth centers, community centers and technical institutes, by building the capacity of staff, attracting more youth to their programs, and extending impact of programs. DOT partners all agree that the Internship accrues multiple benefits to their facilities and programs, and that Interns are dedicated, hard-working and creative problem-solvers. Further, DOT youth who have started their own enterprises have generated secondary impacts when they employ other young people or provide a space for incubation and technology skills development.

As this section has highlighted, there is substantive evidence that DOT youth possess greater resilience, and greater potential to take advantage of opportunities that emerge through market shifts in their economies, than non-DOT youth. However, defining impact solely in terms of livelihoods does not adequately capture the fact that it takes some DOT graduates many years before their efforts translate into productive jobs or businesses and stable incomes.

Continued on following page

¹⁹ Jackson, E.T. (2016). *Results for resilience: Insights from DOT Intern alumni in Rwanda and Kenya*. Ottawa: ET Jackson & Associates.

03 (Continued)

Youth who are exposed to DOT's programs have varying success in securing stable and long-lasting employment after they complete the program, and the velocity and vectors of their success are varied and non-linear. As derived by case study research of Intern alumni commissioned by DOT, many graduates have low-productivity jobs and very small-scale formal or informal businesses.

DOT has derived a number of key lessons about what needs to be done to further support young people as they navigate successes and failures during DOT and beyond:

- Maintain longer engagement with DOT Interns and graduates to provide them with support as they develop businesses or career plans.
- Improve the outcomes of social businesses by incubating, replicating, scaling and brokering social impact investment funds for the most promising social enterprises started by Intern alumni.
- Provide links to social venture capital funds for entrepreneurs, networking opportunities, and ongoing peer-to-peer coaching and mentoring.
- Encourage further leadership and collaboration by expanding Intern deployment to include local government and civic departments.
- Enrich level of engagement and support (eg. annual job fairs, ongoing coaching and professional development, youth-to-youth exchanges) for youth alumni who complete the program, transition to employment or self-employment during the program or dropout entirely due to unforeseen circumstances.
- Provide value additions for Intern alumni to remain engaged with the network and to act as DOT ambassadors.

Despite a commitment to ongoing learning and adaptation, DOT recognizes that new strategies need to be developed to better capture evidence of impact. In particular, there are three major evidence gaps that DOT has identified:

- 01** Longitudinal data that demonstrates the impact of DOT's model on Interns and participants over time;
- 02** The effects of ecosystem-building on the ability of youth to identify, take advantage of, and catalyze economic opportunities;
- 03** Evidence of the secondary and system-level outcomes that DOT youth are generating or contributing to in their communities.

4.5 SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability potential of interventions is strongly correlated with the surrounding contextual circumstances—the state of the economy, market opportunities, the opening or closing of civic space, political stability, and so forth. Values, beliefs and behaviours that are embedded in local cultures influence the extent to which new ideas and approaches take hold, thereby also affecting sustainability.

To enhance sustainability, youth development and empowerment models require input and buy-in from policymakers and local partners, but they also require collective ownership among young people, parents, and communities, which is only achieved by building on past efforts and connecting with existing networks and movements. Developing sustainable models and systems

often requires years and even decades of engagement and relationship-building.

Through the successes and challenges, adaptations and iterations that occurred during the implementation of YLC, DOT has identified a number of key factors that contribute to greater sustainability potential in youth development programs.

Sustain Robust Networks

DOT staff and partners agree that the strength of a young person's network is a key determinant of their success in securing stable employment or sustaining enterprises post-DOT. Through their engagement with DOT's programs, youth are introduced to a number of strategic network opportunities, but even more importantly they learn how to identify, use and even create their own strategic networks. Online communities can provide ever-increasing opportunities for networking, and DOT has leveraged social media to engage alumni over time across different regions and countries. However, DOT's

experience emphasizes that social media is not enough in and of itself—it needs to be supported by strategic partnerships offline.

While social media-facilitated networks are important sources of support and cohort solidarity for DOT youth, they have not proven through YLC to be a significant factor in providing access to capital, developing additional skills, and creating partnerships between peers to start new business activities. While Interns and participants are active on DOT digital platforms and related social media channels during their formal

engagement, this engagement weakens during the post-DOT phase, where youth are more likely to leverage family or sector-specific networks in their communities to advance their livelihoods.

One of the most exciting developments for technology entrepreneurs is the expansion of tech hubs in African countries. Incubation spaces such as these provide young entrepreneurs with Internet connectivity, support structures, mentorship and collaboration across sectors. DOT plans to experiment with methods for connecting with existing networks such as these where it can act more as a convener and conduit to existing or emerging networks rather than attempting to build new or parallel ones.

DOT's experience emphasizes that social media is not enough in and of itself—it needs to be supported by strategic partnerships offline.

Focus on Capacity-Building for Local Organizations

Local capacity development is recognized as an essential component of sustainable development interventions.

During their community incubation, DOT Interns provide additional value to the work of youth organizations, youth centers and technical institutes, contributing greatly to the sustainability of these established and trusted sites of youth engagement. There is little doubt among community partners, government agencies, DOT Interns and DOT staff that Interns help these organizations think about their programs, missions and values in new ways, update and extend the skillsets of staff and, in many cases reinvigorate them as agencies of youth development, civic engagement and community leadership.

Further, what DOT has learned about youth journeys toward sustainable livelihoods, entrepreneurship, civic engagement and leadership is transferred to these organizations through the partnership. Long after DOT is gone, many of these community organizations will remain, equipped with new twenty-first century skillsets, a cadre of youth ambassadors, and new ways of thinking about longstanding social problems in their communities. For these reasons, the community partnerships and Intern placements are a critical element of sustainability in DOT's approach.

Provide Access to Finance, Mentorship and Dialogue with Industry Leaders for Entrepreneurs

Externally commissioned research and evaluation of the YLC program demonstrates that many small businesses started by DOT graduates are unlikely to be sustainable over the long term.²⁰ Many of the young entrepreneurs who complete DOT's programs are involved in a number of income-generating activities just to make ends meet, without much prospect of their microbusinesses or informal enterprises blossoming into a full-time livelihood opportunity. This aligns with the findings

of global studies, which document the difficulties youth face in sustaining small enterprises in low-resource settings.²¹ In 2012, a study commissioned by McKinsey identified access to finance as the greatest barrier to sustainable youth enterprises. Through dialogue with young entrepreneurs, private sector partners, impact investors and experts, DOT has identified a number of approaches to improve the likelihood of sustainability for emerging social enterprises.²²

DOT implemented a number of these approaches during the course of YLC and will conduct further lean experimentation to identify the most effective activities for integration into future strategic planning by:

- Brokering connections between young entrepreneurs and social venture seed funds;
- Creating formal mentorship opportunities for youth with established entrepreneurs and business leaders;
- Developing digital toolkits and online training plans to further support youth who complete DOT's program;
- Convening networking opportunities to link young entrepreneurs with investors and financial service providers;
- Supporting favourable policy development for youth entrepreneurship by working directly with government services that provide small business loans and guarantees;
- Convening innovation competitions in partnership with industry leaders;
- Brokering partnerships for regional cooperation and exchange to encourage more South-South and North-South collaborations.

²⁰ Jackson, E.T. (2016).

²¹ African Development Bank (2016). *Jobs for Youth in Africa Strategy for Creating 25 Million Jobs and Equipping 50 Million Youth*. <http://bit.ly/2qKtszS>

²² Chui, M. et al. (2012). *The social economy: Unlocking value and productivity through social technologies*. Washington, D.C. McKinsey Institute.

5.0

RECOMMENDATIONS

Moving forward, DOT's emphasis, described in its "model to movement" strategy, is on the young leader who can initiate change and generate positive social impact through employment, civic engagement, and community projects. This extended approach to youth leadership amplifies the traditional DOT Internship and programmatic streams and includes strengthening the voice of youth in the evolution, design, development and evaluation of DOT programs. This means increasing the availability of online learning opportunities, empowering young people to create and lead local youth networks, emphasizing social innovation and community projects, and facilitating online communities that promote engagement between participants,

both at national and regional levels. DOT aims to transition implementation to youth, and to act as a catalyst and strategic convener. This model of development is innovative and potentially disruptive, as it moves from the individual to the system.

To support this innovative ambition and add to the body of research that DOT has assembled, a number of key programmatic recommendations and strategic considerations can be drawn from the interviews and desk review conducted for this learning synthesis. Returning to the model to movement framework presented above, recommendations are grouped according to the core elements that underpin this evolution.

Position Youth as Partners, Leaders, and Agents of Change

In order to shift from positioning youth as project beneficiaries to project partners, DOT's evolving strategy emphasizes youth ownership: young people define the social problems in their community and develop and test solutions.

Embracing a model of youth development that hands the reigns of implementation over

to young people is a bold vision that requires a number of programmatic shifts. Young people need to develop leadership capabilities and apply them, learn how to recognize and take advantage of windows of opportunity, know how to identify and grow their networks, and they need support over time as they apply the skills they learned through DOT and navigate roadblocks and barriers to success.

In order to effectively put youth in the driver's seat, while also ensuring robust evidence of impact, DOT's strategy should incorporate a number of elements:

- Youth-led research and participatory consultations with youth and other stakeholders to identify development challenges, opportunities, facilitators and barriers in each of DOT's programmatic countries to ensure the strategy reflects local realities.
- Flexible, rather than formal, training programs where participants assess their own competencies and build a tailored program that responds to the skills they want to develop, their individual ambitions, and the time they are able to commit to the program.
- Co-create programs and indicators of success with DOT alumni and youth leaders in target regions. DOT should train program participants to collect data and assess individual and social outcomes over time.
- Opportunities for youth to get involved in formal decision-making processes and work with decision makers through local government partnerships and internships with civic departments.
- Support self-perpetuating coalitions and youth hubs by linking them with resources and networks.
- Capture and share examples of success and extract lessons about what makes positive deviance²³ successful, such as youth who successfully move from informal microenterprises to establishing small businesses.

²³ *Positive Deviance is based on the observation that in every community there are certain individuals or groups whose uncommon behaviors and strategies enable them to find better solutions to problems than their peers, while having access to the same resources and facing similar challenges. <http://www.positivedeviance.org/>*

Leverage the Potential of Digital Disruption

Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest mobile growth rates in the world.²⁴ Such rapid growth is making digital technologies more accessible, affordable and in greater demand than ever before. These advances are providing new avenues for innovation and entrepreneurship, and youth are best positioned to take advantage of the new possibilities and spaces emerging from increased access to ICTs. While digital development has always been central to DOT's model, a movement-based strategy gives digital technologies greater prominence as a core enabler rather than a tool for program delivery.

A number of strategic recommendations to better leverage emerging digital trends arose in the course of this learning synthesis:

- Use existing social media and popular networking platforms to connect young people from different regions and countries, and to raise their collective voices to decision-makers.
- Support the development of innovation hubs that can catalyze thriving entrepreneurial ecosystems and enable established businesses to partner with start-ups.
- Use mobile Open Data Kits to help youth track their social impact over time and map outcomes onto DOT's organization-wide Theory of Change.
- Extend and expand training programs with additional online modules and refresher courses.
- Leverage digital financial services and crowdfunding to help young entrepreneurs gain access to finance and develop innovative business models.

²⁴ www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/high-growth-markets/assets/disrupting-africa-riding-the-wave-of-the-digital-revolution.pdf

Support Enabling Environments for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship

One of the issues many social innovators face is how to connect their initiatives to wider social change efforts. Bringing change agents together and building partnerships across sectors helps amplify and reinforce their efforts, increasing their reach, impact and sustainability.

DOT's strong in-country and international partnerships, coupled with its unique knowledge of the diverse results pathways of youth, position it to play a key role in facilitating enabling environments and brokering strategic partnerships across

sectors. By focusing efforts at the systems level, DOT can further invest its efforts in developing robust ecosystems that support young changemakers as they move vertically and laterally through various employment opportunities and spheres of influence.

In order to play this role, DOT should incorporate the following strategies:

- Map partnership ecosystems and develop partnership strategies based on identifying who else is working in the youth sector and what they are doing, and defining DOT's value additions.
- Further develop partnership ecosystems – formalize partnerships with financial service providers, venture capital social impact funds, private sector companies who need skilled employees, and public service recruitment systems.
- Expand community incubation to include partnerships with civil society organizations, local government departments, and the private sector.
- Enrich alumni support by facilitating access to additional financing for promising enterprises, providing additional self-guided learning opportunities, establishing job matching services, and developing additional partnerships with the private sector.

Capture Lessons to Inform the Field

Robust systems for measuring impact are critical, not only for showing donors the social returns on their investment, but also for informing the field of youth development more broadly about what works, what doesn't work and why. The overreliance on self-reported, quantitative data misses a good deal of the larger picture, such as the extent

to which programmatic elements are helping youth become more engaged in public life, participate in political processes and institutions, and become agents of change and resilience. Further, it does not adequately assess the comparative importance of various program elements.

A number of strategic recommendations for improving DOT's ability to capture evidence and integrate lessons into ongoing program iteration emerged in the course of this research:

- Develop a robust theory of change that incorporates lean experimentation, tests assumptions, and accounts for risks and failures.
 - Make better use of innovative participatory methods that can elevate the agency of youth in the process and enable them to use data to influence decision-makers and access opportunities.
 - Develop methods to track the diverse and asynchronous livelihoods pathways youth take in unstable economies, and demonstrate how youth are learning and adapting over time as a result of their engagement with DOT.
 - Move from an overreliance on individual-level indicators and self-reported data to system-level indicators and social outcomes that are relevant to national and international youth development priorities.
 - Test the impact of each of the various program components—e.g. the impact the paid internship has on youth over time, the optimal balance of online vs. face-to-face learning, the optimal duration of the community incubation, and the best ways to sustain digital networks over time.
 - Incorporate qualitative data and relevant theoretical frames such as most significant change or outcome harvesting.
 - Collaborate with funders, researchers, multilateral organizations and governments to share and disseminate evaluation findings, improving use and uptake.
-

CONCLUSION

DOT has an impressive vision to transform how youth development is thought about and to engender youth-led innovation, not only in Rwanda and Kenya, but also in other countries where DOT has a presence.

The successes, challenges and lessons learned from youth and from partners in Rwanda and Kenya during the Youth Leading Change program inspired many elements of the “From Model to Movement” strategic vision that DOT is currently pursuing. This synthesis not only highlights the impacts of the YLC program

on the lives of thousands of Rwandan and Kenyan youth and their communities, it also demonstrates DOT’s commitment to learning and innovation. By working with donors and private sector partners that truly embrace innovative development approaches, by further integrating fluid and adaptive methodologies that can respond to rapidly changing economies, and by helping young men and women become leaders of change in their societies, DOT is well positioned to lead Canada’s efforts to support a global youth movement.
