

THE FUTURE IS YOUNG
LEARNING SERIES

**ECOSYSTEM MAPPING FOR
YOUTH EMPLOYMENT:**
Enabling Data-Driven Systems Change

November 2023



INTRODUCING GOYN'S "THE FUTURE IS YOUNG" LEARNING SERIES

The [Global Opportunity Youth Network \(GOYN\)](#) is a multi-stakeholder partnership committed to catalyzing place-based systems shifts in communities – cities and rural districts – around the world through the creation of sustainable economic opportunities for "Opportunity Youth," (OY) aged 15-29 who are out of school, unemployed or underemployed. Created in 2018, GOYN's current network is comprised of twelve communities in India, Africa and Latin America, which together represent over four million such young people. Over the next decade, GOYN aims to improve the lives of millions of young people, build community-based Collaboratives that coordinate work to improve the youth employment ecosystem, and catalyze systemic shifts to accelerate youth participation, opportunity, and equity, thereby ultimately contributing to more peaceful and vibrant communities.

GOYN's *'The Future is Young'* Learning Series seeks to lift up emerging practices and evidence related to how community Collaboratives can deliver tangible economic opportunities for youth. Previous Learning Briefs have focused on [GOYN's Collaborative Infrastructure model](#) and [GOYN's approach to youth engagement](#). This third installment introduces GOYN's ecosystem mapping methodology.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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THE ECOSYSTEM MAPPING PROCESS

The Global Opportunity Youth Network (GOYN) was founded in response to the fragmentation of youth employment initiatives, with the ultimate goal of increasing access to dignified, productive and sustainable employment and entrepreneurship pathways for “Opportunity Youth” - youth aged 15-29 who are out of school, unemployed or underemployed. GOYN uses a collaborative approach to develop long-term, sustainable strategies that tackle the underlying causes of youth unemployment rather than its symptoms, leading to systemic change.

Ecosystem mapping constitutes the foundation of GOYN’s strategy in a community. Through the ecosystem mapping process, GOYN builds a detailed picture of the youth employment ecosystem in the community: size of the Opportunity Youth population, relevant stakeholders to engage, existing assets and services, gaps to fill and opportunities to leverage. This information, most of which is usually not available from public sources at this hyper-local level, enables GOYN and its partners to understand the long-term changes required to increase economic opportunities for young people in the community.

GOYN’s ecosystem mapping methodology was developed in partnership with GOYN’s global partners Accenture and GDI, and builds on the experiences of all GOYN communities. Ecosystem mapping is a collaborative process that involves Opportunity Youth and other community stakeholders in data collection and analysis as much as possible. Findings are presented and discussed in community-wide workshops, and used to inform GOYN’s strategy for the community. This ensures that GOYN’s strategy is both grounded in data and evidence, and the product of a broad consensus between Opportunity Youth and other stakeholders. Importantly, ecosystem mapping is not a one-off exercise. Rather, GOYN and its partners continuously collect data and evidence on the ecosystem to support learning, guide interventions and track the progress being made.

GOYN’s ecosystem mapping process is made of three interconnected pillars:

1. Ecosystem analysis

Ecosystem analysis aims to build a comprehensive view of the stakeholders, programs, initiatives and services, policies and funding flows that shape the youth employment ecosystem in a community. To gather this information, Anchor Partners rely on extensive interviews and focus groups with relevant stakeholders, as well as an in-depth review of existing data and publications about youth employment in the community.

2. Market analysis

Too often, youth employment interventions are designed without taking into consideration the actual opportunities available in the labor market. Market analysis considers labor market trends, existing economic assets and resources, demand and supply dynamics in the labor market, with a deep dive on the most promising sectors of employment for Opportunity Youth. The goal is to identify the main economic opportunities for Opportunity Youth - which may be through formal employment, informal employment or self-employment.

3. Opportunity Youth segmentation and profiling

Opportunity Youth are typically not tracked by government statistics. Establishing how many Opportunity Youth are in the community and their main characteristics (in terms of gender, age, education levels, geographic location, etc.) is therefore a key part of the ecosystem mapping process. In addition to this segmentation exercise, GOYN also works with Opportunity Youth themselves to understand their aspirations and the day-to-day challenges they face, including the structural barriers that limit their access to economic opportunities.

By building a comprehensive picture of Opportunity Youth and the ecosystem they evolve in, ecosystem mapping constitutes a foundational piece for all of GOYN's work in a community. The data and evidence collected through the ecosystem mapping process, as well as the collaborative approach taken by GOYN, enable community stakeholders and Opportunity Youth to come together around a set of shared facts and to develop a common vision for increasing economic opportunities for youth in the community. Ecosystem mapping is, therefore, as much a consensus-building activity as it is a research exercise. Indeed, it is this common vision that enables GOYN to foster collaboration and create partnerships between local youth employment stakeholders that can deliver long-term, systemic change for Opportunity Youth.

For those inspired to replicate this process in their community, the **Ecosystem Mapping Checklist** at the end of this Brief provides a list of best practices drawn from GOYN's experience to maximize the value of the ecosystem mapping process.

INTRODUCTION: ECOSYSTEM MAPPING AS A FOUNDATIONAL TOOL FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE

With over 600 million young people either disconnected from work and education or informally employed¹, often in precarious conditions, youth unemployment is one of the defining global development issues of the 21st century. And yet, despite the size and urgency of the challenge, most youth unemployment initiatives around the world remain small, fragmented and disconnected from the broader ecosystem in which they operate², leading to duplicated efforts, inefficient use of resources and a limited long-term impact on youth unemployment rates. This is the critical issue the Global Opportunity Youth Network (GOYN) was founded to address, with the ultimate goal of increasing access to dignified, productive and sustainable employment and entrepreneurship pathways for “Opportunity Youth” – youth aged 15-29 who are out of school, unemployed or underemployed.



GOYN ecosystem mapping activities in Barwani, India (2022).

GOYN uses a collaborative approach to develop long-term, sustainable strategies that tackle the underlying causes of youth unemployment rather than its symptoms. Unlike a traditional youth employment initiative that would seek to enroll youth in a training program and place them into jobs, GOYN brings together Opportunity Youth and other community stakeholders to identify the changes needed in public policies, employer practices and local power dynamics to permanently expand economic opportunities for the growing numbers of Opportunity Youth.

¹ *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2022*, ILO, 2022

² *A Global Opportunity: Get Youth Working*, McAuliffe, Aspen Institute, September 2018

GOYN's work in a community always starts with a thorough analysis of the youth employment ecosystem, or ecosystem mapping. GOYN's ecosystem mapping methodology draws on the expertise of GOYN's global partners Accenture and GDI, and builds on the experiences of all GOYN communities. Accenture and GDI played a key role in developing an ecosystem mapping approach for the first round of GOYN communities. Since then, the process has been codified and adapted by new GOYN partners to fit their local context. GOYN's ecosystem mapping methodology is continuously enriched from these new experiences³.

Ecosystem mapping is an essential step to accurately assess the size of the Opportunity Youth population in the community, identify all the relevant stakeholders in the community, determine the gaps and opportunities in the current youth employment ecosystem, and understand the long-term changes required to increase economic opportunities for young people. This data gathering effort is critical, as this fundamental information is typically not available from public sources. This important analytical work is done in partnership with Opportunity Youth in the community and relies on extensive stakeholder consultations. Importantly, ecosystem mapping is an iterative process and not a one-off exercise: GOYN and its partners continuously collect data and evidence on the ecosystem to support learning, guide interventions and track the progress being made.

GOYN's ecosystem mapping is made of three interconnected pillars:

1. **Ecosystem analysis** - to develop a comprehensive picture of youth employment stakeholders and youth employment-related programs, initiatives, services and policies in the community.
2. **Market analysis** - to identify current and future employment opportunities for Opportunity Youth in the community, and understand the practical pathways that will enable them to access these opportunities, such as skilling programs.
3. **Opportunity Youth segmentation and profiling** - to get a detailed understanding of the size, composition, challenges and aspirations of the Opportunity Youth population in the community.

This Learning Brief details GOYN's ecosystem mapping process and details activities undertaken under each of these three pillars, illustrated with concrete examples from GOYN communities.

³ To share this wealth of knowledge, GOYN has developed the [GOYN Learning Lab](#), an online repository of tools, examples and best practices to guide Anchor Partners through the ecosystem mapping process and beyond. GOYN worked closely with CRS to develop the GOYN Learning Lab and its contents.

THE ECOSYSTEM MAPPING PROCESS

Ecosystem mapping is one of the very first activities GOYN undertakes when starting up in a new community. Preliminary work begins as part of GOYN's selection process for a new community to join the network, with the identification of key youth employment stakeholders and funders and an early analysis of the dynamics of the youth employment ecosystem. This research helps the GOYN Global Team to confirm that the community is a good fit for GOYN as the communities where GOYN can add most value are those that have a number of active, but uncoordinated youth employment stakeholders.

The formal ecosystem mapping process starts once GOYN has selected a local partner ("Anchor Partner") to lead GOYN activities in the community. The Anchor Partner, a trusted local organization, will typically work with a research or advisory entity to carry out ecosystem mapping activities, usually over a four to six months period. Throughout the process, the Anchor Partner will also be in close contact with the GOYN Global Team and other GOYN communities to discuss emerging findings and troubleshoot challenges⁴. Anchor Partners play a critical role in the ecosystem mapping process: they are responsible for centralizing the data and evidence collected, and sharing findings with ecosystem stakeholders for discussion and validation. This is essential to bring together stakeholders around a common understanding of youth employment issues in the community, and forms the basis of trust-building and collaboration between ecosystem actors.

Ecosystem mapping is a collaborative process that involves Opportunity Youth and other community stakeholders. As part of GOYN's early youth engagement activities, Opportunity Youth are invited to participate in the ecosystem mapping, for instance by helping to identify relevant stakeholders, highlighting issues, gaps and challenges in the current ecosystem, and expressing their views on what a functioning youth employment ecosystem should look like. Wherever possible, Opportunity Youth are also involved in data collection and analysis, as they are often best placed to reach other Opportunity Youth and bring unique insights to the table. In addition to Opportunity Youth, Anchor Partners will also consult frequently with local stakeholders (including employers, public officials and civil society organizations) to gather their perspectives and seek feedback on research outputs.

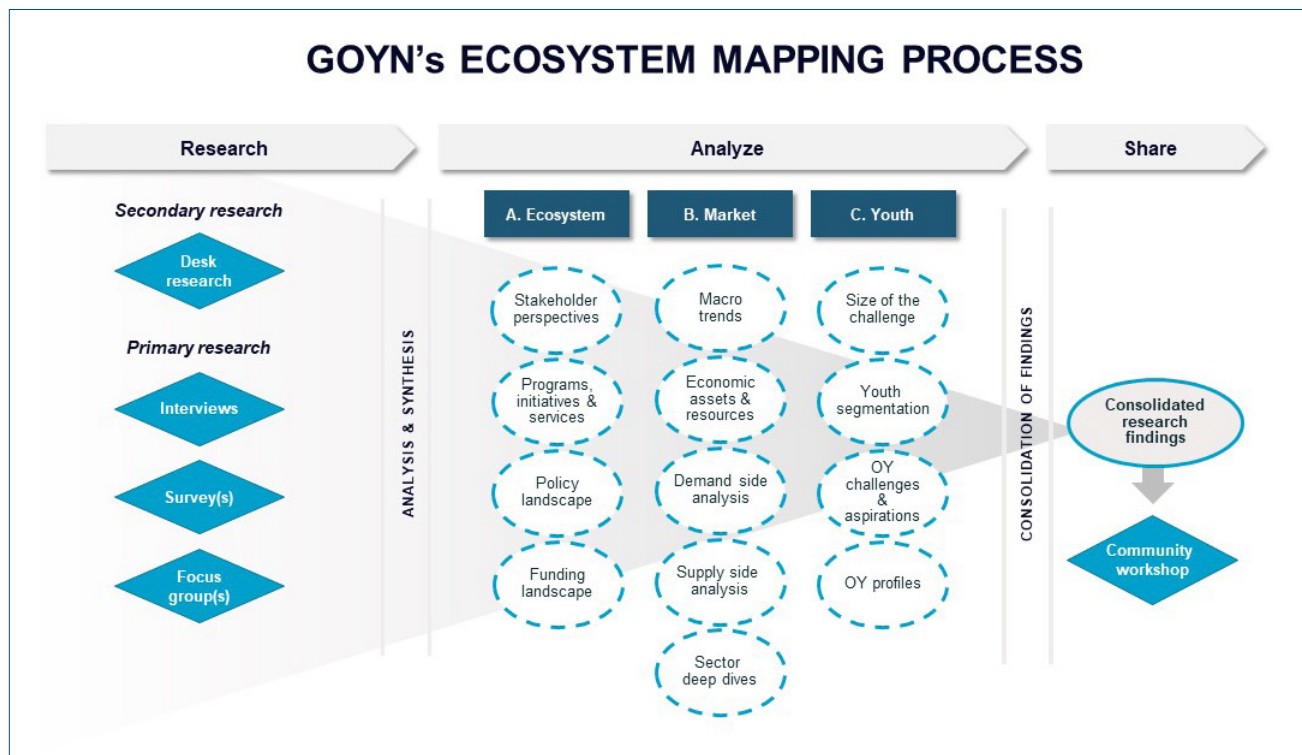
⁴ This close collaboration with the GOYN Global Team and an external research or advisory partner is also an important learning opportunity for the Anchor Partner, who will be responsible for updating the data and evidence collected over time.

For example, as part of a five-month ecosystem mapping process in Mexico City, the GOYN team, in collaboration with Accenture, interviewed dozens of stakeholders and Opportunity Youth. These interviews were complemented by a comprehensive secondary data collection exercise, and the findings were presented back to stakeholders, including Opportunity Youth, in a series of four workshops. During these workshops, the young people played a prominent role by sharing their personal experiences related to being unemployed, discussing the barriers they faced, identifying opportunities, and co-designing potential interventions.

This process of bringing the entire community together to review and refine the conclusions from the ecosystem mapping process, and to agree on the priority areas, serves as the foundation of GOYN’s strategy in the community. Ecosystem mapping ensures GOYN’s strategy for the community is both grounded in data and evidence, and the product of a broad consensus between Opportunity Youth and other stakeholders - rather than the result of a theoretical exercise imposed on the community.

Importantly, ecosystem mapping is not a one-off process. Over time, GOYN and the broader community will continue to update the data and evidence initially collected, building a dynamic picture of the youth employment ecosystem, reflecting the impact of GOYN interventions, informing strategies and policies, supporting learning and continuous improvement, and keeping stakeholders abreast of progress being made.

The diagram below offers an overview of GOYN's ecosystem mapping process.



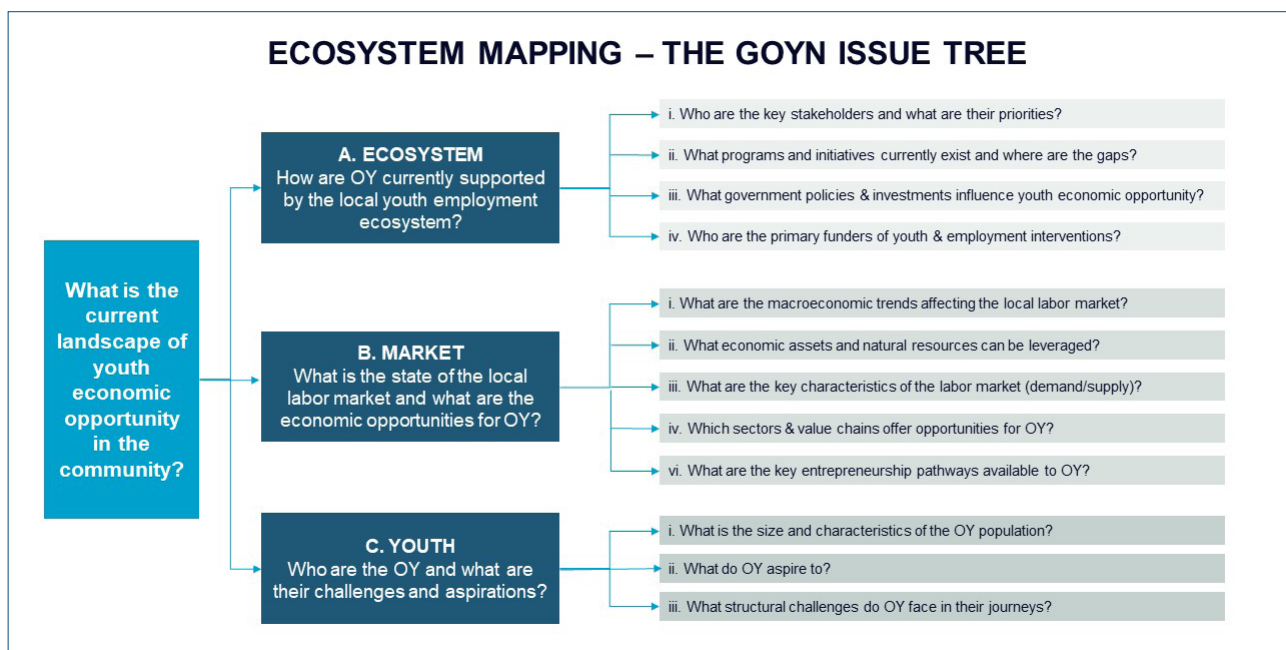
THE THREE PILLARS OF ECOSYSTEM MAPPING

The overall goal of GOYN’s ecosystem mapping process is to gather data and evidence to paint a detailed picture of the current landscape of youth economic opportunity in a community, which is then used to devise GOYN’s strategy for the community.

As outlined in the introduction, GOYN’s process for mapping the ecosystem is comprised of three interconnected pillars, each covering a specific area of enquiry:

1. **Ecosystem analysis** - how are Opportunity Youth currently supported by the local youth employment ecosystem?
2. **Market analysis** - what is the state of the local market and what are the economic opportunities for Opportunity Youth?
3. **Opportunity Youth segmentation and profiling** - who are the Opportunity Youth and what are their challenges and aspirations?

Each of these key questions can be broken down into sub-questions to guide the ecosystem mapping process, as illustrated in the issue tree below.



While the distinction between the three pillars is useful to organize the ecosystem mapping activities, it is important to understand that there are no firm boundaries between these areas of enquiries. Anchor Partners will usually work on all three pillars concurrently rather than one after another, and findings under one pillar may inform research activities under another.

Pillar #1: Ecosystem Analysis

Ecosystem analysis aims to build a comprehensive view of the stakeholders, programs, initiatives and services, policies and funding flows that characterize the youth employment ecosystem in a community. To gather this information, Anchor Partners rely on extensive interviews and focus groups with relevant stakeholders, as well as an in-depth review of existing data and publications about youth employment in the community⁵.

• Stakeholders

As part of the ecosystem mapping process, GOYN Anchor Partners identify key organizations that are active in the youth employment ecosystem in the community. As illustrated in the typology below, this includes not just skilling and training providers, but also other service providers, civil society organizations and youth-led groups, relevant public bodies (e.g., government agencies) and private sector entities (employers and industry associations).



⁵ To support this process, the GOYN Global Team has developed standard stakeholder interview guides that Anchor Partners can tailor to the needs of their community.

Through interviews and focus groups, GOYN seeks to gather the perspectives of these stakeholders in relation to the youth employment challenge, including their views on the underlying causes of youth unemployment, their understanding of what is working well and what needs improvements in the ecosystem, and their priorities for action. For example, GOYN will typically interview employers to understand their views of Opportunity Youth, the specific challenges that prevent them from hiring young people, and possible mechanisms that would help them overcome these challenges (e.g., hiring incentives). This perspective-gathering effort enables GOYN to develop a multi-faceted view of the youth employment ecosystem, and to identify areas of both convergence and divergence among different sets of actors. These areas may serve as early leads for future GOYN interventions to improve the functioning of the ecosystem. For example, in Mombasa, GOYN interviewed over one hundred stakeholders to understand their perspectives on youth unemployment in the community, identify existing assets and assess the strengths of the relationships between different stakeholder groups. Through this process, GOYN brought to light the impact that the limited coordination of ecosystem actors had on the system, such as misalignment between skilling curricula and private sector needs, insufficient government support to job-creating sectors, or the short-term horizon of funders.

Key assets identified in segments of the ecosystem

- County departments: youth, education, trade, health
- National government ministries
- JUMUIYA YA SAKATI na Pwani (JASAP)
- Free primary and subsidized secondary and TVET

- 2 local universities with heavy TVET focus, with additional constituent colleges
- Local polytechnics, 28 TVET centers
- National universities with Mombasa campus
- Colleges offering basic IT, creative, food service etc. manufacturing

- Top sectors include manufacturing, travel and tourism, transport and logistics, micro retail, waste management etc.
- Mombasa Youth Assembly – about 6,750 youth
- Mombasa County Youth League Network – about 7,250 youth

- Potential implementation partners
- Many NGOs are focusing on youth, CSR, civil society, and

Linking opportunity youth to assets can reduce unemployment

Education levels are still low, with very few going beyond high school levels.

The informal (unlicensed) business provide the largest source of employment

There are over 205,000 businesses in Mombasa who employ over 440,000 employees, 28% are employed by the unlicensed businesses

Employee education status:

- Unemployed: 93.5% primary school, 5% secondary school
- Employed: 49.2% primary school, 38.2% secondary school, 12% tertiary school

Over USD 900M investments in port expansion, special economic zones, blue economy, trade development and other infrastructure projects estimate creation of over 140,000 jobs over 10 years

Category	Value
County economy	• The WBID report says that the creative economy contributes up to 3.2% of the GDP of Kenya
Port expansion	• Maritime transport contributes \$1.75 billion, Fisheries \$0.3 billion, Tourism \$2 billion • Potential to create 50,000 new jobs in 10 years
Blue economy	• To grow by 38% to \$340M and employ 195 by 2025 (Kenya) (Mombasa?)
Skills	• Most popular sport is soccer • Other: rugby, cricket, hockey, water polo, scale diving
Labour force	• Unemployment 33.0%, Youth 44% • Employees: 107,200 (Informal: 45,000, Formal: 51,500)
Services	• 60% of Kenyan economy driven by service sectors • 50% non-coverage for 60% of jobs in Mombasa
Port	• Long-term in East Africa serving 6 countries • Port expansion to increase cargo handling

Gaps identified by key stakeholder groups

Private sector	Skill providers	Entrepreneurs	NGOs/Civil Society	Government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a misalignment between skill taught at college and labor market needs Drastic changes in Mombasa's economy is putting offshoring both formal and informal jobs in Mombasa eg. textile tourism and ICT construction Employers feel that they can't bank on the services provided by their immediate future of work Need to improve demand gap mapping for Mombasa Need to facilitate connections with government or academic bodies to encourage job creation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree that there is a skills gap Mombasa is unique as it is not seeing a similar situation as leveraging training in existing infrastructure (roads and skills) in TVET Increased involvement in short courses and life skills leading to better outcomes High level of skills a huge concern due to high expenditure of secondary school and TVET institutions National curriculum training solutions to incorporate life skills Focus on building sustainable skill training programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mombasa is a growing sector in Mombasa with a vibrant entrepreneurs through its sectors such as the county (road, food, ICT, etc.) NGOs emphasize a sustainability challenge and encourage a robust market environment strategy to create opportunities for growth Additional to restructuring access to existing capital centers, skills building, information sharing and financing policy and regulations to create a more vibrant change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recent initiatives all sectors in work that is interconnected and aligned on addressing the issue of youth unemployment Many youth entrepreneurship reflects a few of most of the same people within the same urban urban setting, rural areas often neglected Need to build a sustainability plan in current programs to push forward programs Proposed presentation of skill training program Need to re-evaluating mechanisms to work restructure it effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> County government is robust investment strategy with emphasis on youth, education, health and infrastructure components Government experience a public industry data to government investments There is a concentrated efforts to focus on the government's focus to a number of efforts Need to develop a robust data management platform to capture, monitor and analyze the labor market data in real-time, as Mombasa

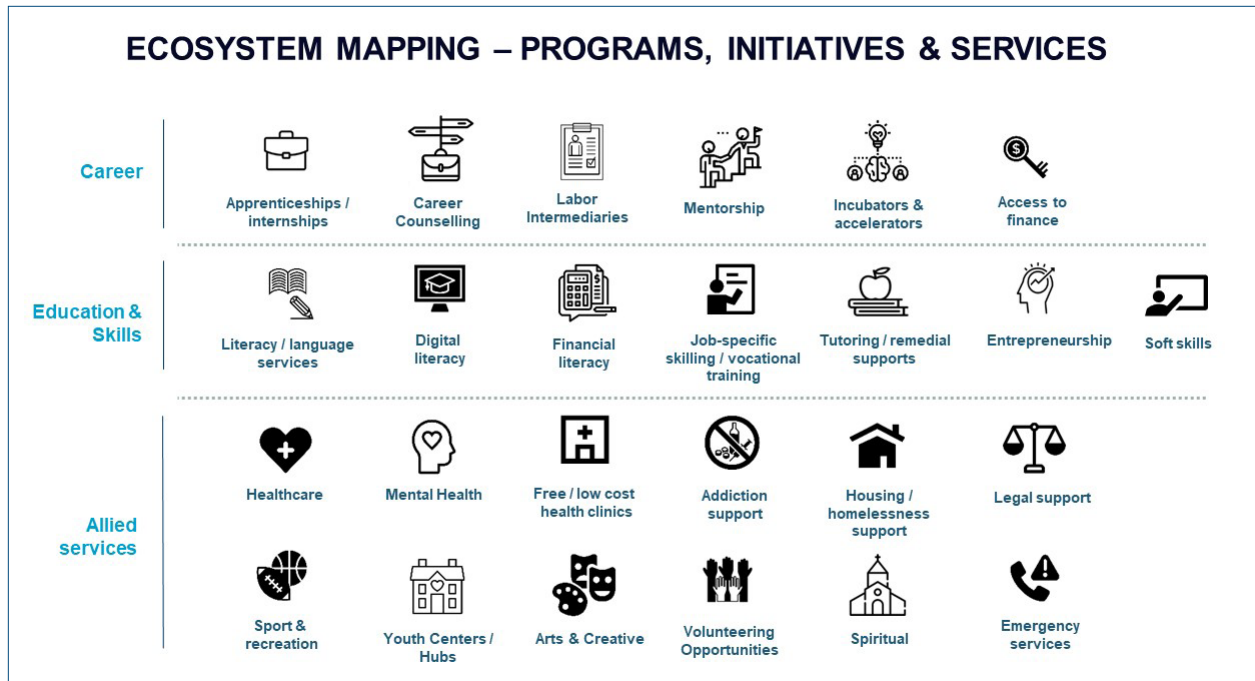
Snapshots from GOYN Mombasa ecosystem analysis, developed in partnership with GDI.

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GOYN Learning Brief #3 | Ecosystem Mapping for Youth Employment: Enabling Data-Driven Systems Change

- **Programs, initiatives and services**

Under this aspect of ecosystem mapping, GOYN establishes an inventory of employment-related interventions that exist in the community, and the broader support services available for Opportunity Youth, such as social services, mental health support, recreation and sports facilities, etc. Indeed, the needs of Opportunity Youth go well beyond skills training and job placement support – and it is critical for GOYN to also understand what other key services might be missing in the community.



For each program, initiative or service, GOYN considers the following key aspects:

- o **Reach:** How many young people does it support? What type of young people are most and least likely to benefit from this program/initiative/service?
- o **Quality:** What is the quality of the support provided?
- o **Place in the ecosystem:** Is there overlap with other existing programs, initiatives or services? Could it be connected to another program, initiative or service to better serve Opportunity Youth?

To answer some of these questions, GOYN will gather perspectives from the participants and users of these programs and services – Opportunity Youth themselves, who are best placed to identify what is working and what is not.

- **Policies**

Understanding the set of local public policies that relates to youth employment is another critical piece of the ecosystem analysis. This policy framework may be more or less complex, and will vary heavily in different

communities. It will typically include a mix of employment policies (e.g., minimum wage, working conditions, apprenticeship/traineeship schemes, etc.), education policies (e.g., entry requirements for accessing higher education or vocational training) and market policies (e.g. sector and enterprise development schemes).

Beyond the identification of these policies, GOYN seeks to assess their impact on Opportunity Youth, the success of their implementation, and their effectiveness at fostering economic opportunities for youth. This analysis helps a GOYN community identify which policy changes could be advocated for in support of Opportunity Youth.



In Pune, for instance, GOYN's policy analysis revealed that despite the existence of a number of government policies and initiatives aiming at boosting youth employment, these had a limited impact on actual job creation. GOYN identified better communications and integration with local youth employment programs as two potential solutions to improve the effectiveness of these government policies and initiatives.

• **Funding flows**

Finally, GOYN looks at the funding landscape for youth employment in the community, seeking to understand the amount of funding available for youth employment initiatives, as well as the sources and destinations of this funding. This enables GOYN to identify which funds might be mobilized for new Opportunity Youth initiatives, which new pools of funding could be explored, and how resources might be used in a more efficient way to support youth employment.

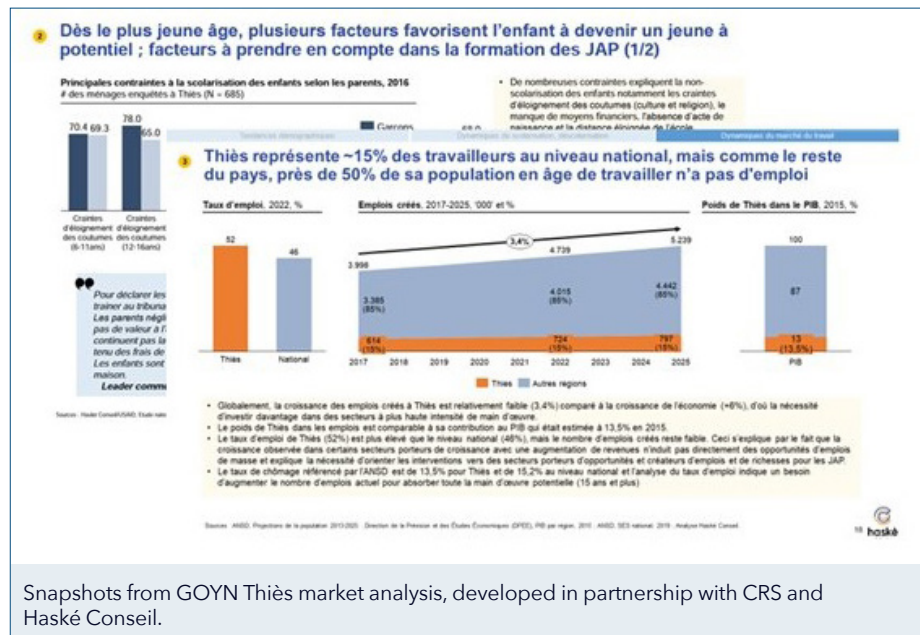


Pillar #2: Market Analysis

The second pillar of ecosystem mapping focuses on the labor market for Opportunity Youth. Too often, youth employment interventions are designed without taking into consideration the existing opportunities available in the labor market. As a result, young people may be trained for jobs that do not exist in their community or for which there are very few employment opportunities. As part of market analysis, GOYN considers labor market trends, existing economic assets and resources, demand and supply dynamics in the labor market, as well as the most promising sectors of employment for Opportunity Youth – present and future. The goal is to identify the main economic opportunities for Opportunity Youth – which may be through formal employment, informal employment or self-employment.

• Market trends

GOYN starts by creating a snapshot of the key macroeconomic trends that shape the national and local youth employment environment. This includes the overall growth rate of the economy, the poverty rate and wealth distribution, trade dynamics and levels of government debt. This sets the overall context for youth employment in the community. For instance, a rapidly growing economy that is creating jobs may lead the GOYN Collaborative to focus on ensuring Opportunity Youth have the training and support to secure these jobs, while a low-growth economy may push GOYN to consider alternative pathways to economic opportunities, such as self-employment and entrepreneurship.



Snapshots from GOYN Thiès market analysis, developed in partnership with CRS and Haské Conseil.

In GOYN Thiès, for example, the analysis of key macroeconomic indicators highlighted the disconnect between Senegal's strong economic growth and its low formal job creation rate, and identified specific public policies impeding the formalization of the labor market. These findings will inform GOYN's local advocacy work and government engagement activities.

• Assets and resources

Building an understanding of the key economic assets and natural resources in the community can help identify promising sectors for youth employment. These will vary significantly across communities and may include:

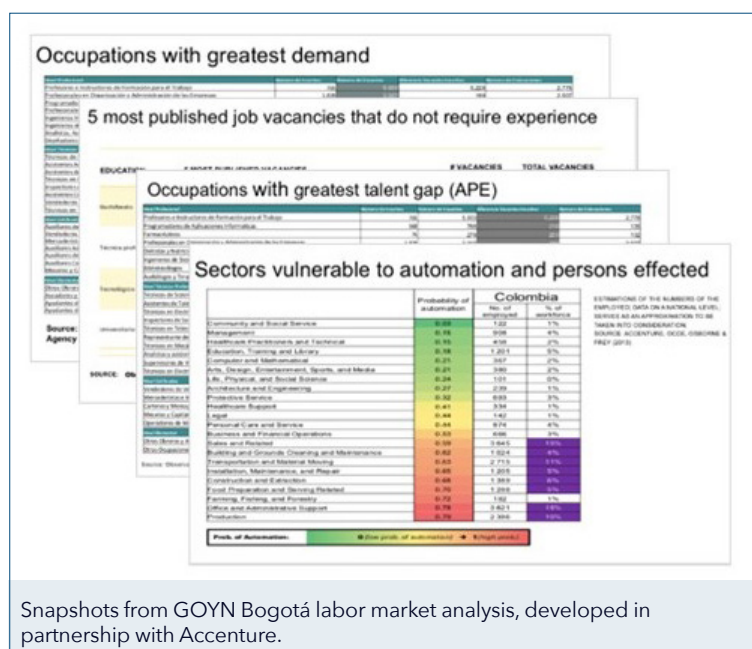
- o *Natural resources*: valuable raw materials (e.g., minerals, timber), natural tourist attractions (e.g., coastline), conducive climate for agriculture
- o *Economic assets*: logistics and transportation infrastructure, proximity to large markets, industry clusters

In Ramgarh, for example, GOYN identified the presence of natural forest resources and minerals as important drivers of economic activity – leading GOYN to explore self-employment opportunities in the value chain of these industries. The market analysis also highlighted infrastructure gaps in terms of power provision and cold storage. While these gaps negatively impacted economic activity in the community, they also presented opportunities to create long-term change if addressed by local stakeholders (e.g., by exploring mini-grids and distributed generation, or constructing new cold storage facilities).

• **Demand and supply**

Once the contextual elements have been analyzed, GOYN dives into a more detailed analysis of labor market dynamics for Opportunity Youth. GOYN looks both at the demand side – job openings for Opportunity Youth – and the supply side – the skills Opportunity Youth are bringing to the labor market. The goal here is to understand the underlying drivers of youth unemployment in the community, as different root causes will call for different interventions. For instance, an economy may be creating enough entry-level jobs to absorb all Opportunity Youth, but these jobs may require skills that Opportunity Youth do not have. This is a supply issue that may be solved by investing in skilling institutions. Conversely, an economy that does not create enough jobs accessible to Opportunity Youth – a demand issue – may call for interventions that can boost self-employment opportunities for Opportunity Youth.

In many contexts, the availability of labor market data can be a challenge when conducting market analysis. Where such data is not available from public sources, GOYN seeks to work with research partners, gather new or additional data from local partners, or use proxies to support labor market modelling efforts. Over time, as GOYN brings together increasing numbers of partners from the community, additional sources of data may emerge to further enrich labor market analysis.



Snapshots from GOYN Bogotá labor market analysis, developed in partnership with Accenture.

As part of its market analysis, for example, GOYN Bogotá used data from the Public Employment Service Observatory and the Public Employment Agency to identify the industries with the greatest number of vacancies for industry graduates, the positions that do not require prior experience, and the roles that employers most struggle to fill. This granular analysis led GOYN Bogotá to identify and prioritize opportunities in the digital sector.

- **Sector deep dives**

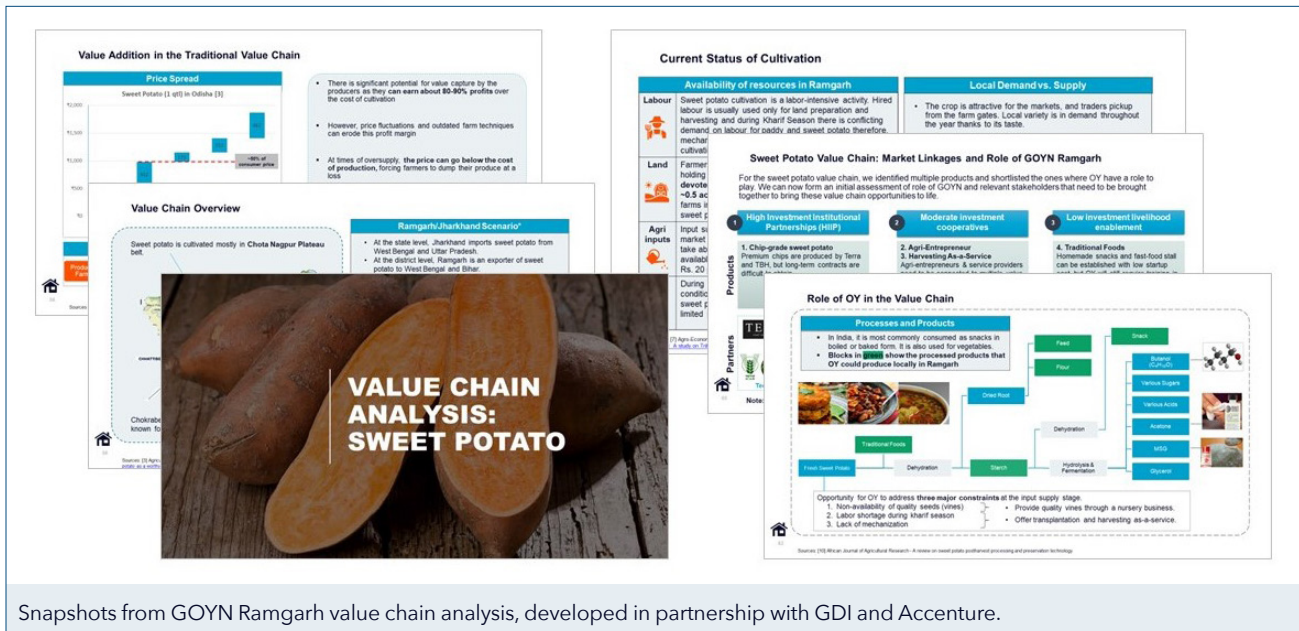
Through the activities described above, GOYN identifies priority sectors that offer the most promising opportunities for Opportunity Youth. These are sectors that:

- o Have a **promising growth outlook**, with a higher-than-average growth and job creation rate that is likely to be sustained over time
- o Have a **large employment footprint**, either through direct job creation or self-employment opportunities in the sector value chain
- o Offer **relevant and desirable opportunities for Opportunity Youth**, with jobs matching the skillsets of Opportunity Youth, decent working conditions and professional development pathways

Through workshops and/or focus groups, GOYN involves Opportunity Youth in the sector prioritization process to ensure selected sectors match their professional aspirations. Once priority sectors have been identified, GOYN will carry out an in-depth analysis of each sector, looking more at specific positions available to Opportunity Youth, skill requirements, opportunities in the value chain and potential partnerships with employers and industry associations.

For instance, in eThekweni, GOYN shortlisted six priority sectors based on preliminary research to further analyze: trade; hospitality and tourism; finance; manufacturing; transport and logistics; and agriculture. For each of these sectors, GOYN looked at industry trends, Opportunity Youth employment potential, top employers, required skills, existing training programs, and relevant positions for Opportunity Youth. This analysis supported the development of GOYN's strategy for the community.

In Ramgarh, where youth employment opportunities are scarce, GOYN evaluated 22 local agricultural value chains based on key assessment criteria, including feasibility and attractiveness, shortlisting eight for deeper research. Ultimately, two high-priority value chains were identified (lac and sweet potato), for which GOYN conducted a detailed value chain analysis to identify gaps in the value chain, viable interventions, potential roles for Opportunity Youth, investment models and relevant partners and stakeholders to work with.



Snapshots from GOYN Ramgarh value chain analysis, developed in partnership with GDI and Accenture.

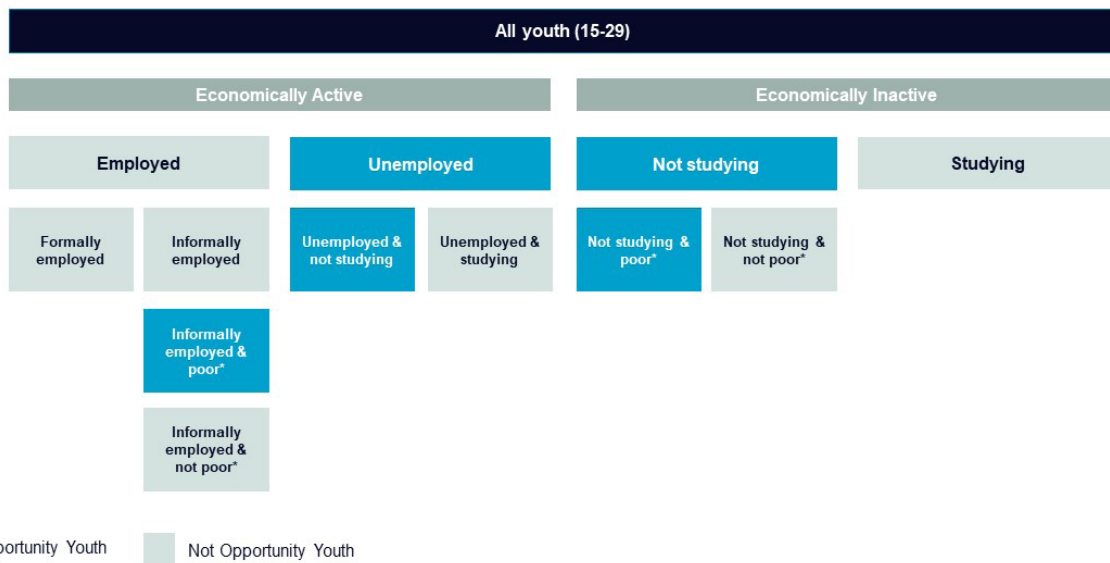
Pillar #3: Youth Segmentation & Profiling

The third pillar of ecosystem mapping focuses on Opportunity Youth themselves. Youth are often perceived as a homogeneous group in traditional youth employment interventions, leading to programs that fail to consider the diversity of their needs and the intersectionality of their identities, and often leave behind the most marginalized segments of the youth population. This is why GOYN undertakes a thorough youth segmentation and profiling exercise as part of its ecosystem mapping process, working with Opportunity Youth themselves to understand their aspirations, needs and the day-to-day challenges they face.

- **Size of the challenge**

GOYN starts by estimating the total Opportunity Youth population in the community. While public statistics on youth unemployment may be available, these are rarely disaggregated at the regional, district or municipal level at which GOYN operates, and they almost never include youth informally employed and who are often working in precarious conditions (which fall under the definition of Opportunity Youth). To mitigate these challenges, GOYN uses a mix of secondary data, proxies and survey data to arrive at an estimate of the overall Opportunity Youth population, disaggregated by category (inactive, unemployed, informally employed).

DEFINING THE OPPORTUNITY YOUTH POPULATION



*Poverty thresholds vary locally and different criteria can be used to define these groups (income level, access to social security, etc.).

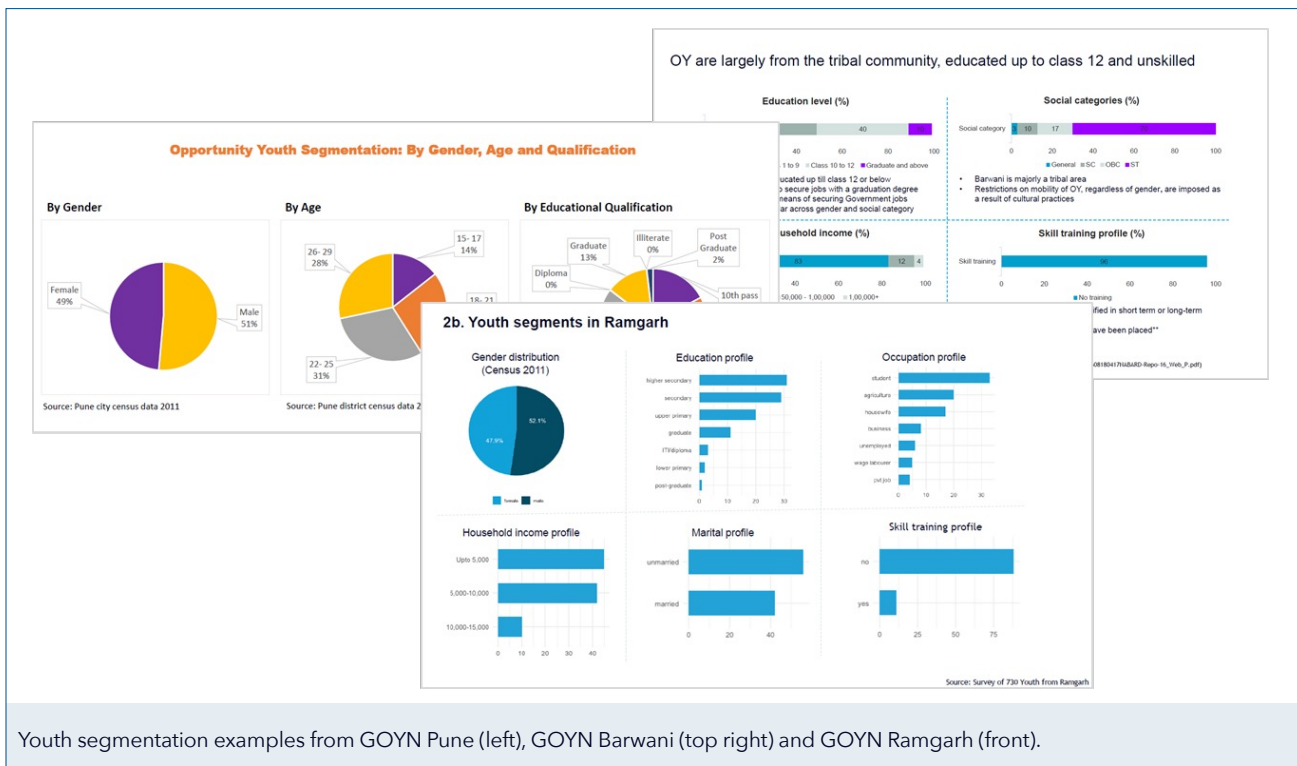
• Youth segmentation

GOYN then seeks to build a very detailed picture of the Opportunity Youth population in the community. GOYN will typically survey several hundreds Opportunity Youth to understand the makeup of the Opportunity Youth population in terms of gender, age, years of education and work experience, geographic location, disability status, and other dimensions⁶. This data collection exercise helps GOYN identify which groups are most likely to be disconnected from formal work and education and may require more tailored support.

In Barwani, for example, GOYN and its research partner surveyed close to 800 Opportunity Youth across the entire district. Among other findings, the data highlighted that few Opportunity Youth had completed a training program (4%), that young people in specific parts of the district were least likely to complete high school, and how Opportunity Youth aspirations differed across age groups and geographic locations.

Opportunity Youth play an especially important role in this part of the ecosystem mapping process. First, they help GOYN understand which dimensions should be considered in the segmentation process, based on their intimate knowledge of their community. Second, they support data collection efforts, reaching groups of Opportunity Youth that GOYN may not be able to. Finally, they bring unique insights to the interpretation of the data collected, pointing out to the underlying drivers behind some of the results (e.g., explaining why certain groups are overrepresented in the Opportunity Youth population).

⁶ These dimensions may vary in different communities to reflect specific local challenges (e.g., large number of internal migrants) or cultural norms (e.g., pluri-ethnic society).



• Aspirations and challenges

To complement this quantitative analysis, GOYN conducts focus groups and interviews with Opportunity Youth to understand their dreams and ambitions, as well as the barriers they face in accessing economic opportunities. This effort enables GOYN to develop a nuanced and layered understanding of Opportunity Youth in the community. Themes that GOYN explores with Opportunity Youth include, among others:



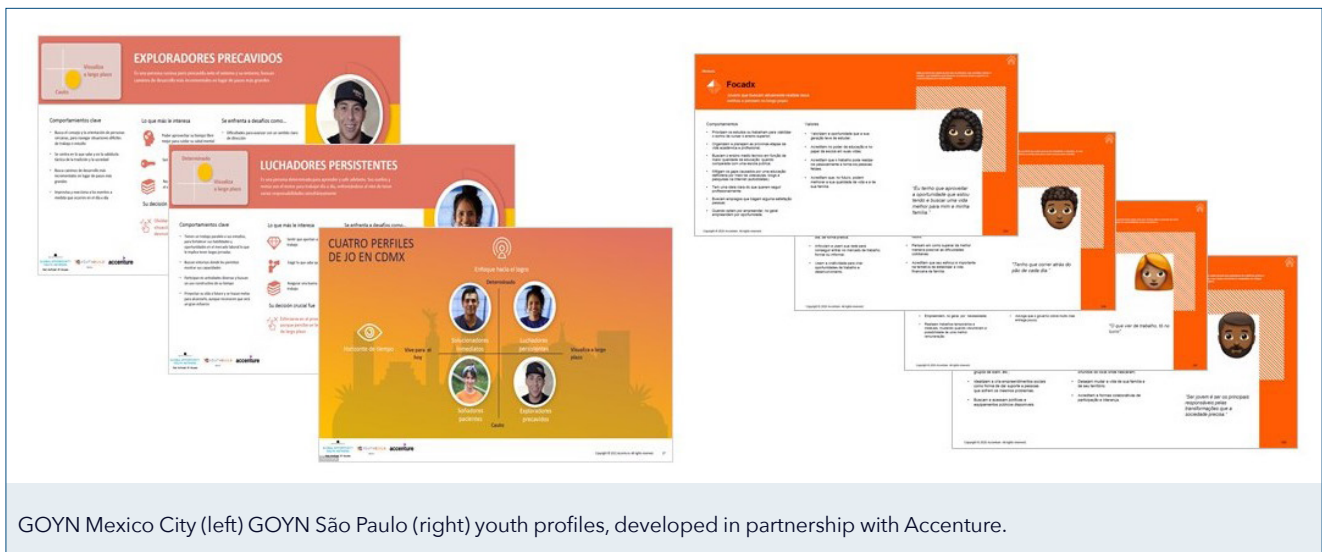
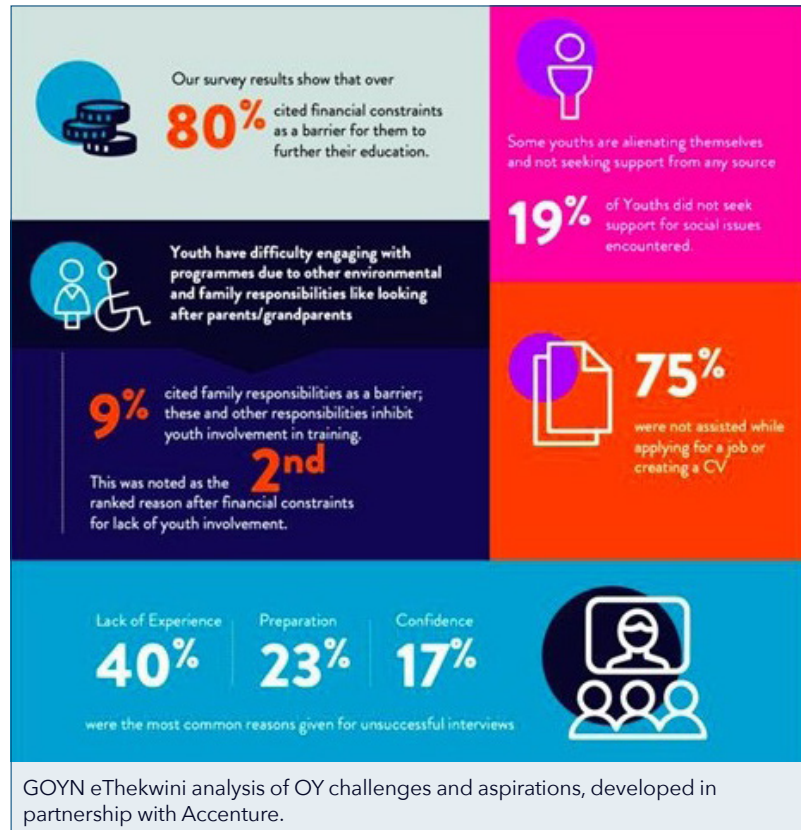
Opportunity Youth focus groups organized by GOYN Thiès, Senegal (2022).

- o **Personal and professional aspirations** of Opportunity Youth, and how these compare with reality
- o **Structural challenges** faced by Opportunity Youth in accessing employment (e.g., *lack of skills for available jobs, difficulties with conducting interviews, discrimination in recruitment process*)
- o **Typical disconnection points and triggers of disconnection** (e.g., *income-earning pressure, lack of interest, poor academic performance*) for Opportunity Youth on their journey from education to employment
- o **Existing programs and services** for Opportunity Youth (*awareness, effectiveness, gaps/unaddressed needs, etc.*) and suggestions for improving their delivery

• **Youth profiles**

As a final step of the youth segmentation and profiling, GOYN uses the data collected to build a set of 4-6 Opportunity Youth profiles for the community, which are discussed and validated with Opportunity Youth themselves. These profiles aim to represent the diversity of backgrounds and aspirations of Opportunity Youth, and portray them in a positive light (e.g., “resilient”, “determined”, “idealist”) instead of reinforcing existing stereotypes (e.g. “high-school dropout”, “recovering addict”, “teenage parent”, etc.).

Opportunity Youth profiles guide GOYN in the development of contextually appropriate solutions. When moving to strategy development and intervention design, GOYN refers back to these profiles to consider whether the needs of different groups of Opportunity Youth will be met and inform communications and outreach in the community.



CONCLUSION

By building a comprehensive picture of Opportunity Youth and the ecosystem in which they evolve, ecosystem mapping constitutes a foundational piece for all of GOYN's work in a community. The data and evidence collected through the ecosystem mapping process, and the collaborative approach taken by GOYN, enable community stakeholders and Opportunity Youth to come together around a set of shared information and develop a common vision for increasing economic opportunities for youth in the community. Ecosystem mapping is, therefore, as much a research exercise as it is a consensus-building activity. Indeed, it is this common vision that enables GOYN to foster collaboration and create partnerships between local youth employment stakeholders that can deliver long-term, systemic change for Opportunity Youth. Over time, GOYN and its partners will collect new data and evidence to build on the initial ecosystem mapping, inform and guide the GOYN strategy in the community, and ultimately demonstrate the progress made in support of youth economic opportunities. This continuous learning process promotes data-driven decision-making and provides the foundation and tools for a deep and long-lasting multi-stakeholder partnership that is fully focused on removing systemic barriers to youth employment.

For those inspired to replicate this process in their community, the Ecosystem Mapping Checklist on the next page provides a list of best practices drawn from GOYN's experience to maximize the value of the ecosystem mapping process.

THE GLOBAL OPPORTUNITY YOUTH NETWORK ECOSYSTEM MAPPING CHECKLIST

- Give Opportunity Youth an active role in the research process and put their perspectives front and center
- Emphasize collaboration and consultation over speed
- Make participation easy to increase stakeholder engagement
- Mix quantitative and qualitative methods to build a comprehensive and nuanced picture of the ecosystem
- Ground findings in facts and evidence to build the trust of community members
- Reflect the diversity of perspectives in the ecosystem
- Keep an “hyper local” focus to ensure findings are practical, additive and valuable
- Focus on actionable insights that will inform strategy development and intervention design

Excited by this work and want to know more about GOYN? Please get in touch with Jamie McAuliffe, Director at GOYN, at Jamie.McAuliffe@aspeninstitute.org.

Future installments of the GOYN ‘The Future is Young’ Learning Series will continue to explore themes related to youth economic opportunities, sharing lessons learned by GOYN communities to inform and inspire others seeking to make a difference in young people’s lives.