



Fair & Sustainable
Consulting

spark

Akazi Keza Mid-Term evaluation

07-10-2022

Wouter van Bruggen, Sylvestre
Bigirimana and Ben Haagsma

Contents

Abbreviations.....	1
Executive summary	2
1. Introduction	7
1.1 Description of the programme	7
2. Methodology.....	9
2.1 Approach	9
2.1.1 Sampling.....	10
2.1.2 Concepts used	10
2.2 Limitations	10
3. Findings	12
3.1 Relevance	12
3.2 Efficiency	15
3.3 Effectiveness	19
3.3.1 Outcome 1	19
3.3.2 Outcome 2	22
3.3.3 Outcome 3	26
3.4 Coherence.....	30
3.5 Sustainability	32
3.6 Impact	33
4. Reflection	35
5. Recommendations.....	39
5.1 Overarching Recommendations	39
5.2 Specific Recommendations	41
Annex 1: Evaluation Questions.....	0
Annex 2: Topic guide for interviews and FGDs	0
Annex 3: Documents list	2
Annex 4: List of respondents and planning.....	3

Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Stands for
ABIN	Agri-Business Incubation Networks
AFORGER	Association des formateurs Germe
AK	Akazi Keza
BD(S)	Business Development (Services)
CREOP-JEUNES	Création des Opportunités pour les Jeunes
CSO	Community Service Organization
EKN	The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (in Bujumbura)
F&S	Fair & Sustainable Consulting
IG	Infinity Group
IGA	Income generating activities
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFI	Microfinance institutions
MoVs	Means of Verification
MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
MSD	Market Systems Development
PAEEJ	Programme d'autonomisation économique et d'emploi des jeunes
PND	Plan National de Développement du Burundi
SC	Swiss Contact
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
WC	WarChild

Executive summary

This is the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) report for the Akazi Keza (AK) programme conducted by Fair & Sustainable Consulting. The objective of the MTE was:

- to formulate valid and accurate lessons learned, and
- to provide programmatic recommendations based on the evaluation of the programme thus far according to an assessment of its relevance, effectiveness, coherence, efficiency, sustainability of its results and impact¹.

Background

The AK programme (mid-2020 to mid-2024) is implemented by SPARK Burundi through local partners (currently 4) and a small number of independent local and international experts. The programme is funded by the EKN and has a total budget of 4,044,787 euros.

AK's specific objective is to *improve and enhance economic prospects and job opportunities for rural and peri-urban youth through job creation in cooperation with the local private sector*². To this end the programme works through 4 outcomes (of which the first 3 are within the scope of this MTE) that are expected to contribute towards this objective.

1. **Enhancement of skills** - bridging the skills gap through training in employability skills and facilitating access to internships and jobs
2. **Capacity building of promising start-ups** - A local demand analysis, followed by tailored (technical and entrepreneurship) training and individual proximity coaching as well as facilitation of access to finance
3. **Capacity building of capable existing SMEs** - A local demand analysis, followed by tailored training and individual proximity coaching.
4. Sustainable business-models for 3 agri-business incubators - not in scope of this MTE

Methodology

The evaluators conducted a desk study of programme documents after which, together with the AK programme team, the scope of the primary data collection was determined, and an (approximately) 8-day schedule was developed for in-person primary data collection. This plan consisted of 9 focus group discussions, 23 key-informant (or group) interviews with (local) partners, (regional) AK staff and other relevant stakeholders, as well as 9 site visits to participating SMEs (start-ups and scale-ups). The data thus gathered was analysed to provide answers to the evaluation questions, lessons learned and recommendations.

Relevance

Limited economic opportunities for young people are a major issue for Burundi, resulting in high youth unemployment. In its proposal, and further elaborated in the context analysis (developed in 2021), AK provides an analysis of this challenge. Through its different interventions targeting the demand and supply side of the various market(systems), AK supports youth to successfully find (self) employment. As such, the programme is relevant to its target group as well as the Burundian government and CSOs for which youth unemployment is a priority focus expressed through their national development plan (PND)³ and recent programming such as PAEEJ⁴. The programme also

¹ AK MTE ToR

² AK Theory of Change (ToC)

³ <https://www.presidence.gov.bi/strategies-nationales/plan-national-de-developpement-du-burundi-pnd-burundi-2018-2027>

⁴ <https://www.paeej-burundi.org/>

contributes to building the capacities of its local (CSO) partners and pilots a (largely) market-based approach. Which, if successful, adds to its relevance as it promises more sustainable results.

Efficiency

At the mid-way point (end of Q2, 2022) AKs expenditures amount to approximately 50% of the total available budget, which is largely in line with planned for expenses. The evaluators have no reason to expect that AK is unable to keep expenditures on-track for the remained of the programme. The activities financed under outcome 1-3 have resulted in the realization of approximately 1,760 out of a planned for total of 6075 jobs⁵. And, as job-creation is typically convex (especially for outcome 2 and 3), the expectation is that AK will come a long way towards realizing this ambitious target number of jobs. Knowing that AK is employing an innovative market-based approach in a complex context, this is a good result indicating that AK is using its resources efficiently. Therefore, there is no reason to suspect that similar results could have been achieved with fewer resources. This finding is strengthened by the identified adaptations in AKs programming to improve its efficiency (and effectiveness). Examples of which are adapting the approach to partner capacity building by adding supplementary training and coaching, discontinuing partnerships that have proven to be inefficient, changing partners' roles in the program based on their strengths and weaknesses, or demanding of them to dedicate better equipped and more dedicated staff to the partnership. As the unit-price for a job created under outcome 1 is significantly higher than for outcome 2 or 3, the programme should consider if a change in focus is desirable. Nonetheless, this will impact the result, as jobs under outcomes 1, 2 and 3 are not the same in terms of job quality (income, duration, etc.).

Effectiveness

Outcome 1: On outcome 1, AK works with CREOP and Infinity Group to address challenges on the demand and the supply side of the internship market with the objective to realize the target of 1200 of youths in jobs. The evaluators have found that it is unlikely that this target will be realized in full. While the supply side interventions (e.g., narrowing the skills gap) are very effective, increasing demand for interns is a challenge. This is not a surprise, as many of the factors that determine demand are outside of the programme's sphere of influence. If the forecasted numbers for 2022 are achieved, it is expected that AK will realize 52,5% of its 2022 target number of jobs⁶.

Outcome 2: AK works with CEMAC and AFORGER⁷ to address challenges faced by prospective entrepreneurs through a mix of (entrepreneurial and technical) skills training, coaching, and facilitating access to finance. A business competition is also part of this approach, and this selection instrument leads to some of these start-ups receiving co-financing to acquire (improved) means of production. In the view of the evaluators, AK utilizes a very effective mix of interventions and manages to kindle the entrepreneurial spirit of participating youth while providing them with the skills to start doing business. The proximity coaching by the local partner, furthermore, helps these youth to overcome emerging challenges. As a result of this effective approach, AK has managed to significantly overperform in terms of targets in 2021 and is expected to reach approximately 90% of their target number of jobs this year.

Outcome 3: On outcome 3, AK works with AFORGER and CEMAC to address challenges faced by SMEs in scaling-up. The programme makes use of a mix of skills training, coaching and facilitating access to finance. The main challenges observed are (timely) access to finance, the price of (improved) means of production and uncertainty due to the complex context in which these SMEs operate. A

⁵ Internships (output 1.3.2.), over which there is some debate if they should be counted, are not included in these numbers.

⁶ This number excludes internships realized.

⁷ AK has found that AFORGER is better equipped to only work with scale-ups outcome 3, thus this is now their focus.

need for additional technical training to increase and optimize production is also observed. As for the innovative approach using MoneyPhone, it has so far resulted in 50 individuals to be granted a loan, which they would otherwise likely not have managed to secure. It remains to be seen if this approach can be scaled-up and is sustainable. In the view of the evaluators, this mix of interventions is effective and output targets are expected to be met for 2022. The outcome target (number of youths in jobs), meanwhile, is expected to reach **79%** for 2022.

The results on outcome 2 and 3 in terms of jobs created are especially good, given the difficult context and AK's novel approach.

Coherence

AK, despite its novel approach, is largely coherent with ABIN, as well as other programmes on employment and entrepreneurship in Burundi by international organizations and the government programmes. This is reflected in the inclusion of graduates of these programmes in AK and also in the (for now limited) inclusion of AK participants in PAEEJ. The evaluators find that this coherence is the result of AK's (partner) staff rigorous monitoring of the context, looking for synergies as well as possible disruption. Concerning the latter, some examples were brought to the attention of evaluators and the actions taken by AK appear to have avoided (further) disruption to the programme and its participants. AK's overcoming the disruption due to the Blue Soap programme shows that AK properly understands and incorporates market-based approaches.

Sustainability

The evaluators expect that interventions such as training, coaching, internships, and possible ensuing work experience will have sustained positive effects on individual participants as the evaluation showed that participants put these to use inside and outside of the programme.

The sustainability of the supported start-ups and scale-ups is difficult to assess in this stage of the programme. Local partners expect that 3 to 4 years of support is needed for these SMEs (start-ups and scale-ups) to claim sustainability with more confidence. Naturally, the nature of these businesses, and the Burundian context, renders their position inherently precarious. Consequently, these reservations also apply to the permanent jobs that are thus created in these SMEs. Importantly, however, even if such jobs were to be discontinued (e.g., because of external shocks), the added work experience of these youth makes that they are better situated to engage in new (self) employment than before the intervention.

Finally, the capacity building provided to the local partners by AK is expected to contribute to the sustainability of the programme's results. Both partners and AK confirm the relevance of gains made in terms of professionalization of the respective partner organizations (e.g., financial reporting) as well as their use of improved instruments (e.g., proximity coaching).

Impact

As the evaluation focuses on direct participants in AK, the expected impact at the community level (see ToC) was not observed by the MTE. Furthermore, the evaluators found that AK's M&E framework does not monitor impact as it was not required by the donor and its ToC provides little explanation on how outcomes are assumed to lead to impact. Finally, if AK's ToC is on point and the programme is a success, impact is expected to be more pronounced towards the end of the project once outcomes have materialized. The MTE did find anecdotal evidence for the positive impact of AK on individual participants. Next to improved income, the evaluation found that participants are more confident, less dependent on others and eager to work with their peers to overcome challenges.

Reflections

The evaluators have found that, in relation to AK's management (which includes adapting the programme based on rigorous M&E of outputs, outcomes and impact) of the programme, some relevant improvements should be considered. This applies most to M&E framework that insufficiently captures the results in relation to systemic change and impact, effectively barring AK from making timely adaptations to their strategy if needed. This is also connected to a broader discussion on (aimed for) impact which would benefit AK and subsequent programming. And finally, exploring the opportunities for adding intermediate outcomes is likely to benefit AK, solidify result and reduce risk.

The performance of outcome 1 Vs. outcome 2 and 3 invites a discussion on cost-effectiveness and unit prices. Given the significant difference between outcomes, AK should explore the extent to which moving budget around is an attractive proposition.

Recommendations

The recommendations are based on the findings (chapter 3) and some of the overarching considerations described in the section on reflections (chapter 4).

A broader M&E role and function

M&E should extend to (all different levels of) outcomes and impact. The M&E of outcomes and impact should take place at regular intervals, quarterly or half-yearly in a sample of selected communities. This allows AK to verify if they are on the right track and assess which adaptations to its programming should possibly be made. The quality of this M&E also requires an active role of its stakeholders.

Unpacking impact

AK should formulate what impact they want to see at the individual level and make explicit how that relates to impact at the community level. This is valid in general, but even more so in the case of AK as the assumption that employment programmes lead to stability has little scientific backing. Once such an aim is formulated, this should be unpacked into outcomes, outputs accompanied by explicit assumptions on how one leads to the other. Finally, these should be accompanied by indicators that allow for measuring progress.

Periodic updates and revisions of the ToC

An M&E framework that incorporates the above recommendations, and a thorough review of results by the entire AK team and management allows for updating and revising the current ToC. This should go beyond the simple revision of target numbers and include the identification of additional outcomes, the reformulation of current outcomes and the review of assumptions. A more narrative format of the ToC, describing all steps and result levels in a clear language would be a good first step towards such a review. The updated ToC should be added to each annual report. Finally, this exercise allows for a much better understanding of the dynamics of the programme and allow for adaptive management provided that the donor is on-board that such is required and leads to better results.

Payment for business development services to safeguard sustainability

Sustainable service provision depends on the willingness and ability of clients to pay for it. As these costs are currently borne by AK in full, the evaluators encourage piloting partial payment by clients (AK participants) for the services that are being provided. Given that there is now a track-record of the average benefits to SMEs resulting from these services, there is a business case for new SMEs to do so. Advice is for the payment to cover part of the costs of the service as this is expected to be feasible. Meanwhile such an innovative approach, when successful, contributes to the programme's ability to elicit systemic change.

Outcome 1 as a pipeline for Outcome 2 or 3

AK should assess if outcome 1 dropouts are an interesting pool for outcome 2 interventions. As they have received significant training, “recycling” them in outcome 2 may be cost-effective. For outcome 3, a similar consideration should be made. As these growing SMEs require competent staff, the feasibility of matching them with ex-interns should be investigated.

Business case for interns to boost demand

Employers that make use of AK interns are overwhelmingly positive about their added value as they get a motivated and skilled worker for the costs of an intern. AK should utilize these experiences to build a business case for AK interns that is easy to communicate and will help boost demand for AK interns.

Facilitate exchange between MFIs

AK could play a more active role to facilitate the exchange of successful loan products that resonate with SMEs needs and capacities.

Boost innovative capacity for outcome 2 and 3 participants

Explore if participants selection can include testing for innovation. Alternatively, incorporate exercises that build innovation capacity.

1. Introduction

F&S Consulting was contracted to perform the Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) of the “Akazi Keza” (translated as nice job) programme of SPARK Burundi based on the Terms of Reference (ToR) released by SPARK. The objective of the MTE is twofold, to *formulate valid and accurate lessons learned and to provide programmatic recommendations based on the evaluation of the programme thus far according to an assessment of its relevance, effectiveness, coherence, efficiency, sustainability of its results and impact*⁸. To that end, the MTE’s ToR includes 23 evaluation questions (see Annex 1), and it is the explicit requirement of SPARK and the donor to provide an answer to all of those in this report.

The structure of the report is as follows: this chapter resumes with a brief overview of the programme, followed by the methodology and approach of the MTE, then the findings are presented according to the evaluation questions, followed by reflections and finally recommendations.

1.1 Description of the programme

Description of the programme

The Akazi Keza programme (2020-2024) is implemented by SPARK Burundi, through local partner organizations, currently: CREOP, Infinity Group (IG), CEMAC and Aforger. A small number of (local) experts⁹ also implements elements of AK (e.g., training in apiculture and coaching to partners). The programme is funded by the EKN and has a total budget of Euro 4,044,787.

The objective of the programme is to improve and enhance economic prospects and job opportunities for rural and peri-urban youth (through job creation in cooperation with the local private sector). To this end the programme has 4 pillars (of which the first 3 are within the scope of this MTE) that should contribute towards this objective.

1. **Enhancement of skills** - bridging the skills gap through training in employability skills and facilitating access to internships and jobs
2. **Capacity building of promising start-ups** - A local demand analysis, followed by tailored (technical and business) training and individual proximity coaching as well as facilitation of access to finance
3. **Capacity building of capable existing SMEs** - A local demand analysis, followed by tailored training and individual proximity coaching.
4. Sustainable business-models for 3 agri-business incubators - not in scope of this MTE

The corresponding Programme ToC is as follows:

⁸ MTE ToR

⁹ These are DouttiCoaching and an independent expert in apiculture and an expert in fish processing.

Impact	To contribute to increased stability of Burundi through poverty reduction of rural and peri-rural communities in Burundi.			
Specific Objective: Improved and enhanced economic prospects and job opportunities for rural and peri-urban youth through job creation in cooperation with the local private sector.				
Outcomes	1.Skills Transfer: 1200 Youth in jobs	2. Start-Up Support: 675 youth in jobs	3. Scale up support to SMEs 4200 youth in jobs	4. Sustainable incubators 3 Independent incubators
Outputs	1.Matching to jobs 4000 Youth trained 2000 Youth in internships	2. Support to start -ups 450 potentials trained 150 start-ups created, 100 A2F	3. Expand existing SMEs 600 SMEs Supported, 200 A2F	4.Sustainable incubators: entrepreneurs supported, 3 incubators handed over
Inputs	Funding from EKN; (Local) partner network, knowledge and capacity; SPARK expertise; Global M&E; learning, knowledge management and sharing; Continuous Beneficiary feedback.			

For the 3 to the MTE relevant pillars, the monitoring framework identifies 3 outcomes:

- Outcome 1: *Employment supply & demand opportunities for youth are better matched*
- Outcome 2: *Businesses are created and provide productive employment opportunities for peri-urban youth*
- Outcome 3: *High-growth potential SMEs scaled and create productive job opportunities for peri-urban youth.*

In all cases, the indicator for progress towards these outcomes is measured by the number of youths in jobs (temporary and permanent and both direct and indirect) and the aggregated result of achieving these outcomes should be approximately 6,000 jobs, of which at least 40% for women and 60% for youth.

2. Methodology

Following the contracting procedure and an inception period, a document review was conducted followed by a period of primary data collection in the field between August the 7th and August the 18th supplemented by (remote) interviews conducted up until the final week of August. Throughout this period, engagement with the SPARK team has led to additional documents being available to the evaluation team, including results reporting of partners. The preliminary findings of the evaluators were shared in two sessions on the 29th of August and the 1st of September for the SPARK team to reflect on. Throughout this period, the cooperation between SPARK and the evaluation team was rather smooth and the evaluators feel that they were able to evaluate the performance of the programme independently while SPARK was eager to share and learn from findings.

2.1 Approach

The methodology and approach applied during this assignment is in line with what was described and approved in the inception report. Below, some of the key elements are listed.

Expected and unexpected outcomes

Rather than a narrow focus on the extent to which targets have been achieved, the aim of the MTE was to interpret why certain (unexpected) changes have or have not materialised, such as changes to (the nature of) partnerships, sectoral focus, or the selection or mix of activities. Moreover, unexpected changes can be positive and negative. For the MTE, assessing how the programme has dealt with these is important as these jeopardised the success of the programme. Building on the above, the team also aimed to establish which practical measures the program took to reduce or minimise these unexpected negative effects.

The MTE, therefore, focused on behavioural and possibly systemic changes. The latter, only if these can already be identified given that this evaluation took place around the mid-way point of the programme. For that reason, the evaluators applied a light-touch **Most Significant Change** line of questioning in all interviews and focus group discussions, as it has proven to be an adequate method to bring to light all types of expected and unexpected changes linked to stakeholder's participation in the program. Thus, respondents were asked to articulate how their (working) life/business has changed over the period of the intervention, if and how they link that to the intervention and why this change is significant to them. They did not adhere to the more intricate details of the strict MSC approach e.g, selection of stories, longitudinal monitoring through follow-up, etc.

The **KIs** employed, as much as possible, open questions as the evaluators were interested in the respondents' perception of the changes that the Akazi Keza program has caused in the lives and livelihoods of the youth, and the strength and challenges of start-ups and SMEs targeted by the program.

FGDs were conducted with groups of participants in the different outcomes, such as interns (including those who had completed internships earlier), employers that currently or previously hosted interns, start-ups, and scale-ups active in various sectors. In practice, some of the planned for interviews with partner organizations turned into FGDs as there was strong engagement of multiple staff at once.

The **KIs** and FGDs were performed using topic-guides, based on the evaluation questions, in which the evaluators aimed, as much as possible, to touch upon the same topics for the same group of stakeholders. See Annex 2 for the topic guides used.

The MTE aims to demonstrate how the adjustments made by the staff in the AKAZI KEZA program so far can be considered as modest but essential changes in the ToC. These changes are likely to happen only at input, output, and assumption level, because of the very short implementation period of the program.

A document review was performed in preparation of the field work (some of it in preparation of the inception report) and a list of the documents consulted is provided in ANNEX 3.

2.1.1 Sampling

The MTE covers all areas of the AK programme (except for the incubators), combining its complex mix of interventions, partners and geographical locations. As the limited time in the field allowed for the most efficient planning only, the AK team played an instrumental role in designing a planning that was feasible. The starting point for this were the main project locations, after which the SPARK suggested an interesting mix of SMEs including those that did and did not perform well and operating in different sectors. For the FGDs, the evaluators were presented with lists of participants and randomly selected the appropriate number of respondents, including reserves, aiming for equal numbers of men and women. KIs, finally, were conducted with selected knowledge respondents such as all the local partners, the EKN, ENABEL and the most relevant SPARK staff, including from HQ and the regional hub. An overview of the KIs, FGDs and site visits conducted can be found in Annex 4.

2.1.2 Concepts used

Some of the key concepts explored in the engagements with partners, staff and other stakeholders are listed below.

Theory of Change (Review): AK presents a Theory of Change detailing their outputs outcomes and impact. With AK staff, the evaluators have discussed the application of this ToC and the value it represents. Recommendations on how to improve the use of ToC are included in this evaluation.

Systemic change: According to its ToC and project documents the aim of AK is to generate outcomes in the form of jobs created. In addition, AK aims to contribute to sustainable systemic change towards a more conducive environment for business that sustainably generates opportunities for youth (self) employment also post the intervention. While the staff is explicit in this aim, the ToC and M&E framework leave ample room for interpretation of how this change is expected to materialize. Thus, throughout the assignment, the evaluators have been keen to understand the vision of this change and whether there are indications of such change materializing.

Market Systems Development (MSD): The AK context analysis (2021) and the MTE ToR mention that AK is permeated by a demand-based approach and the MSD approach in particular. This has triggered the evaluators to look for clues in the practices applied by AK. As the evaluators are aware that the SPARK Burundi team has not received any formal training in MSD, we will aim to provide suggestions on how to bring the programme closer to MSD.

2.2 Limitations

Broad scope and limited timeframe: The main limitation was that the combination of an MTE with a broad scope (24 evaluation questions and no way to reduce that number) and a limited timeframe/window of opportunity given various constraints including upcoming holidays (availability of respondents) and availability of the evaluators. As such, the field work had to be squeezed into short period of time, one of the evaluators was only in the field for a week. This has led to the limited time available to discuss, structure and reflect upon findings, also between evaluators, while in the field.

As a result, the evaluators had some difficulties getting to the bottom of how the programme was organized, e.g., where did local partners operate, targeting whom (including their background in terms of previous interventions by SPARK or others) and contributing to which outcome. Specifically,

there was no opportunity to engage with other (former) partners except for CREOP, IG, AFORGER, CEMAC and Enabel.

As stated above the scope of the MTE was very broad and the interviews had to cover a great number of topics. In combination with the unexpectedly large groups of respondents (in most cases) present during FGDs and KIs (also during site-visits) this made for long interviews in which there was not always time to cover all topics.

The evaluators have sought to overcome these challenges through regular reflection with SPARK staff on what they had heard in the field, aiming to improve their understanding of the background to certain answers. In some instances, the evaluators decided to change the schedule to allow for a bit more room to engage in interviews and return-visits, allowing for deeper questioning.

Finally, unaware of what exactly was available, the evaluators have asked for access to partner documentation (e.g., narrative reporting) in a very late stage. Had they done this before, or had SPARK brought-up this documentation earlier, it would have allowed for a better prior understanding of the work of the partners. Having studied this documentation, the evaluators have, to the best of their ability interpreted respondent's answers considering this information.

Independence of the evaluation Vs. pragmatic approach: Considering the tight schedule, SPARK arranged all the visits to businesses (through their partners) and interviews with stakeholders (participants, partners and others). This was very convenient given that the timing was so tight and the scope so broad. The downside of this was that some of the meetings did not so much follow the format the evaluators were expecting, e.g., the two visits to the honey producing cooperatives but also some the meetings with local partners. In these instances, the presence of many members (up to 20) or staff (up to 10) meant that the evaluators had to improvise an FGD instead of ceasing the moment for an in-depth interview. As a result, the evaluators could not interview specific staff members individually, discussing their personal views and reflecting on their role. The evaluators have partially mitigated this limitation by taking more time than planned for at these instances, however, that meant that time constraints did emerge in ensuing visits. For the future, it would be better to discuss in more detail the expectations and arrangements about interviews and field visits to avoid these surprises.

3. Findings

This section provides an answer to the 23 evaluation questions included in the ToR. Upon request of the AK team, the answers are provided in a matrix that allows for easy identification of the main findings, conclusion, challenges, and recommendations. A side effect of the use of the matrix is that page count has gone up.

3.1 Relevance

1. *How relevant is the programme to the needs of its target group (i.e. youth and women)?*

The AK proposal and the 2021 context analysis provide AK's assessment of the target group's identified needs in relation to the challenge of high youth unemployment. Based on this analysis, AK targets supply and demand challenges that stand in the way of (self) employment, e.g., by narrowing the (entrepreneurial) skills gap, providing coaching and training and facilitating access to finance for participants.

Narrative

The evaluation team has found that participants in the AK programme overwhelmingly value the various types of support that they receive. For some, this support has meant that they have found (better) employment, others have been able to start or run a (more) successful (formalized) business. These changes have contributed to their (economic) independence, self-confidence, and ability to support others, including family members.

Those participants that have not yet found employment, value AK's support too as participation in AK has contributed to their confidence in succeeding economically, for example through self-employment. For those participants in outcome 2 and 3, the realization that they can pool resources to overcome challenges was deemed very relevant too.

Challenges

AK struggles reaching the same number of women and men through its interventions. Within the scope of this assignment, the evaluators identified that there are several (interrelated) challenges at the root of this issue. There are cultural limitations with regards to the sectors in which they can be (self)employed. And in some sectors that are a good fit, turn out to make for poor business cases, e.g., the health sector. Being identified as a promising sector for women, (see 2020 narrative report to EKN), it turned out that market distortion (distribution of free sanitary pads) stood in the way of developing a viable business.

This specific challenge is being addressed by AK through a reinforced multi-pronged approach to target women, including capacity building for CEMAC on gender and the involvement of Miss Burundi as a role-model in a special workshop in Gitega (June 2022). A subsequent workshop is foreseen in October.

Importantly, AK continues to assess the relevance of certain sectors that AK is equally relevant to women as to men. Sectors, such as textile, services (catering and hairdressing) will receive additional focus from AK.

Conclusion	All in all, the evaluation team is of the opinion that the AK programme, through its local partners and experts is relevantly contributing to the alleviation of the needs of participating young men and women.
Recommendations	<p>Overall, the AK programme should continue to do what it is doing including reinforcing their approach to women. Specific recommendations that increase the programme's effectiveness (and thus add to its relevance) are provided per question.</p> <p>AK should also update their ToC to better reflect the different outcomes of their interventions that go beyond job creation alone as these make the AK programme more relevant for its target group. This should subsequently be reflected in an updated M&E framework.</p>
2.	<p><i>How relevant is the programme in the involvement of Burundian civil society (organizations) and Burundi government priorities</i></p> <p>Burundi is no longer going through a crisis period requiring a humanitarian response. It has enjoyed several years of relative stability and the programming of development initiatives should reflect these evolutions. And, as AK uses a market-based approach incorporating elements of MSD, the programme (if successful) could be a good example of how to realize scalable and sustainable results.</p> <p>In relation to the government's priorities, the strategic document for the orientation of development policy of Burundi, namely the National Development Program-PND (2018-2027) ¹⁰, devotes an entire axis to the employability of young people¹¹.</p> <p>Narrative AK strengthens SMEs, including those that are active in the following value chain: cassava, oil palm, beekeeping, myciculture. These value chains are also government priority as mentioned in the National Development Plan.¹²</p> <p>In addition, the country has recently (June 2022) adopted a National Action Plan for Youth Employment in Burundi (PNEJ). The ambition of this plan is to create more than 500,000 jobs over a period of 5 year. PAEEJ, a presidential initiative, also represents a strong effort of the Burundian government to address youth unemployment¹³. Government representatives, furthermore, expressed their appreciation of the programme and called for its expansion into more areas in the country due to positive results observed thus far.</p> <p>As the AK programme implements their programme through local Burundian partner organizations (currently IG, CREOP, CEMAC and AFORGER), the</p>

¹⁰ <https://www.presidence.gov.bi/strategies-nationales/plan-national-de-developpement-du-burundi-pnd-burundi-2018-2027>

¹¹ This is axis 7, "decent employment and youth". Also, strategic objective 1 ("Put employment at the heart of macroeconomic and sectoral policies to influence the demand for employment") resonates with the aims of AK. To translate this into action, Burundi has put in place catalyst tools for investment and employability, namely the Investment Bank for Young People (BIJE) and the Investment and Development Bank of Women (BIDF).

¹² Axis 1, Development of Agriculture, Livestock and Strengthening Food Security), strategic axis 3 (Promote market family farming, program 2 (valorisation of agricultural, pastoral and fishery products)

¹³ <https://www.paeej-burundi.org/>

programme is exceedingly relevant to them. First and foremost, it allows these organizations to work towards their respective missions. In addition, AK invests in organizational development of its partners (e.g., internal structures, financial management and strategic planning) as well as capacity development of partner organisation staff, which is highly appreciated by those organization as they explained how the partnership has made them better at providing their respective services. Examples of how the capacity building has benefited these partners include: operating as true coaches that help clients to overcome challenges instead of telling them what to do, being more aware of what finance institutions need in terms of business plans and connect to relevant parties for future business opportunities.

If AK manages to contribute to the systemic change it aims for (albeit implicitly), the programme is expected to be even more relevant for Burundian CSOs. Making this vision explicit and subsequent monitoring will allow for management steering towards greater effect and relevance.

Challenges	While objectives, youth (self) employment, may align the different approach of the Burundian government (e.g., in PAEEJ) can have a disruptive effect on AK. For more elaboration, see the section on coherence.
Conclusion	Considering all these factors, the evaluators find that the Akazi Keza program is very relevant to the government's priorities as well as Burundian CSOs
Recommendations	AK should continue doing what it is doing currently as it is already relevant.

3.2 Efficiency

3. How efficient is the capacity to convert inputs into outputs and outcomes (Economic efficiency)?

The evaluators have focused on the realization of outcomes Vs. expenditures and not in-depth on how the budget is allocated to the different elements of AK (e.g., Activities Vs. management costs). This is due to the budget being approved by the donor and expenditures largely being in line with expectations. And, in addition, the evaluators are of the opinion that such characteristics, e.g., the ratio between management and operational costs are programme specific and therefore do not offer much in terms of assessing the programme's performance.

Expenditures Vs. budget

Expenditures at the mid-way point (end of Q2, 2022¹⁴) of the programme are close to 50% of the total reserved budget and are largely in line with the expectations¹⁵. Furthermore, the evaluators have no reason to expect that AK will be unable to keep this up in the remainder of the programme.

Narrative

Destination	Budget (2020- 2024)	Expenditure					% of budget spent
		2020	2021	Q1 2022	Q2 2022	Total	
outcome 1	676 750	361	256 304	0	89 530	346 195	51,2
outcome 2	500 000	0	158 391	24 136	42 904	225 431	45,1
outcome 3	835 000	19 333	300 469	34 688	89 400	443 890	53,2
outcome 4	170 200		87 241	31 651	28 044	146 936	86,3
Programme manageme nt Costs	1 513 075	143 424	489 319	109 667	80 368	822 778	54,4
Office and other Costs	197 025	10 193	39 095	13 484	7 189	69 961	35,5
Overhead at 7%	152 737	1 379	56 142	6 333	17 491	81 345	53,3
Total	4 044 787	174 690	1 386 961	219 960	354 926	2 136 537	52,8

¹⁴ As per the documentation that was available for the evaluators.

¹⁵ See for example AK 2022 plan.

Results

Outcome	Forecasted 2022	2021	Outputs
1	52,5% (210/400 jobs)	84%	Output targets for Outcome 1 are not forecasted to be met by the end of 2022 ¹⁶
2	91% (200/220 jobs)	132%	The forecast for output' targets for Outcome 2, are somewhat mixed. While 2.1. (Number of entrepreneurs trained in Business skills), is expected to reach more than 90%. Output 2.2., 2.3. and 2.4. will not reach 50% of the target
3	86% (1200/1400 jobs)	79%	Output targets for Outcome 3, are largely forecasted to be met by the end of 2022 while AK is expected to over-perform on some outputs.

Based on performance up until now, the evaluators do not expect the AK programme to achieve all outcome targets. Despite the scale-up currently taking place, outcome 1 will be especially challenging. For outcome 2 and 3, the evaluators consider it more likely that targets will be largely met. Especially given that job creation if SMEs are successful will likely be convex. However, it should be observed that in above forecast for 2022 the evaluators presumed that the (updated) targets for 2022 will be met in full, even though that might be somewhat optimistic.

Improving efficiency

The AK programme has arrived at the mid-point and, over the past two years, made several adaptations to the implementation of its program to operate more efficiently. The evaluators would like to illustrate these efforts with the following examples:

Quality of local partner service delivery

SPARK has learned through its 10-year experience in Burundi that the quality of local partner service delivery is not a given. Hence, AK has conducted partner assessments before contracting and added external coaching by Douthcoaching as well as training by SPARK staff to its interventions. The coaching has contributed to the coaching abilities of partners, while the latter led to better, more concise, business plans for entrepreneurs as well as better reporting by local partners.

AK has also discontinued some partnerships. With Kaz'O'zah Keza because they were too focused on outputs and quantity, not on quality of their service. And with WarChild due to a variety of issues. Continuation with these two partners would have lowered the quality of services, wasted resources and yielded lesser

¹⁶ The results for outcome 1 look different if internships are counted towards the outcome jobs as they are in the narrative reports to the EKN. This is not in line with AK's own monitoring protocol and job definition.

results. This (always difficult and sensitive) decision has thus improved the overall efficiency of the program.

Access to finance (A2F)

AK wants to remove “giving” mechanisms (e.g., start-ups receiving a grant), as they are aiming for sustainable A2F solutions. In addition, MFIs reported that receiving grants undermines entrepreneurs’ responsible behaviour regarding loans. Investment of AK in facilitating better access to loans through MoneyPhone (MP), fits such an approach that does not depend on “giving. Thus, the result is a more focused approach on securing loans.

AK recognized that A2F targets in partnership agreements can lead to local partners aiming for quantity rather than quality of loan provision. Therefore, partners have been made aware that AK aims for A2F solutions (loans) that resonate with participants’ needs.

Challenges	<p>On outcome 1: AK is encountering challenges in reaching the ambitious targets set for post-internship employment. The main challenge is the limited current absorption capacity of the local market and difficulties in boosting demand</p> <p>On outcome 2: No significant efficiency challenges identified.</p> <p>On outcome 3: No significant efficiency challenges identified.</p>
Conclusions	<p>While the evaluators do not expect all outcome and output targets to be met, there is no reason to conclude that this is due to inefficient use of resources. Instead, it is considered more likely that the targets may have been too ambitious given the scope of the programme and the complex context in which it operates (e.g., demand for internships, gender roles etc.). Furthermore, AK has shown to make relevant changes to improve efficiency.</p>
Recommendations	<p>From a narrow cost-effectiveness perspective, outcomes 2 and 3 outperform outcome 1. AK should internally and with the EKN reflect on whether that finding warrants a change in approach, e.g., spend (some of the budget) reserved for outcome 1 on outcome 2 and/or 3. Further elaboration can be found in the Reflections section (chapter 4). The effect of this on cost-efficiency however, is not easy to distinguish as jobs created under outcome 1 are qualitatively different from jobs under outcome 2 or 3.</p> <p>AK should monitor the creation of indirect jobs more precisely that are created under outcome 2 and 3 as the programme is less certain on the number for indirect jobs than direct jobs created.</p>

4. How efficient is the SPARK programme management structure, with focus on Burundi Country Team, Africa Hub Support and HQ Support (Operational efficiency)?

Narrative	<p>The SPARK management structure functions well. The team in Burundi is relatively young and ambitious and that appears to tie-in well with the desire of AK to really do things differently and to not revert to (I)NGO business as usual in Burundi. The latter is framed as somewhat ‘lazy’ programming including hand-outs and little attention to actual market demands. From the formal and informal engagement with the SPARK team, we are convinced that this approach pays off for AK and its participants. This is also reflected in the evaluator’s engagement with the regional hub and SPARK HQ who confirm that, overall, the SPARK Burundi team overcame previous (before AK) challenges and is now functioning well.</p>
	<p>The evaluators would like to note that the costs for the regional office weigh rather heavily on the AK budget: approximately 50% of the total staff cost 2020-2024. As the budget is approved by the donor, it is not so much an issue we need to dwell on in this evaluation.</p>
Recommendations	<p>Recommendations were formulated that benefit the overall project design and functioning. As these require a little more room for explanation, please refer to the reflection (chapter 4) and recommendations section (chapter 5) for an overview.</p>
Challenges	<p>The evaluators have observed only minor challenges in relation to the programme’s organizational efficiency which are being addressed, e.g., some vacancies at the regional office.</p>
Conclusion	<p>The evaluators find that AK’s management structure operates efficiently.</p>

3.3 Effectiveness

3.3.1 Outcome 1

5. How effective are employability trainings in enabling youth to acquire professional skills that are in demand?

Narrative	<p>Employability training addresses the supply side of the internship/labour market by narrowing the skills gap between the skills of prospective interns and the required skills for interns provided by employers. By the mid-point of 2022, AK has trained 51,9% of its overall target number of young people employability skills (output 1.1.) through its 2 local partners: CREOP and Infinity Group (IG).</p> <p><u>CREOP</u> provides training in the following soft skills: life skills, ethics and professional behaviour and managerial leadership. In addition, participants receive technical training that is tailored to their prospective field of work. Employers (FGD Gitega) confirm that the interns they hire through Ak are well-trained and are an added value to their companies. And, in some instances, they can independently cover for regular employees when needed. They appreciate the AK programme for delivering adequately skilled interns and are interested in continued participation in AK. Testament to their appreciation is that some employers were willing to pay the full salary of interns instead of only half as they are doing now if the AK programme came to an end. Participants that were trained in Gitega voiced a similar appreciation of the training, mentioning that they had acquired a more positive and professional attitude, understood better what was expected of them, how to professionally engage with customers and how to manage work-related stress.</p> <p><u>Infinity Group</u> trains young people in professional efficiency, basic IT, the pillars of commercial efficiency as well as communication in the professional environment. Participants in the focus group in Bujumbura unanimously confirmed the importance of these modules for their employability, as these are not taught in schools. Basic computing is considered a particularly useful skill that is currently needed in the workplace.</p> <p>Participants supported by both organizations expressed that they would welcome training in entrepreneurship, as not all trainees will find subsequent internships and jobs. Although not necessarily aligning with the aim of AK under outcome 1, this request is unsurprising, as the evaluation team is aware of the limited capacity of the Burundian labour market to absorb new workers.</p>
Recommendations	<p>AK should continue the intervention largely as is, as it effectively equips young people with the skills that are in demand.</p> <p>AK should assess if outcome one can function as a pipeline for outcome 2 and 3. As significant investments has already been made in those participants, an assessment of the barriers and opportunities related to entrepreneurship should take place. In the same vein, as growing SMEs under outcome 3 need capable staff, matching of ex-interns should be considered.</p>
Challenges	<p>No major challenges were identified.</p>

Conclusion	Overall, the evaluation team is of the opinion that the training and coaching provides participants with the required professional skill for employment.
------------	--

6. *How effective are employability trainings and the resulting professional skills in enabling youth to get into internships?*

	<p>The ‘internship market’ in Burundi is difficult, as interns are often seen by employers as more of a hassle than an added value¹⁷. Data from the project’s monitoring and evaluation system indicate that approximately 25% of the young people trained have so far been placed in internships (end of Q2, 2022). However, the updated targets for Q3 and Q4 of 2022 indicate that achievement is expected to accelerate significantly, and this is reflected in the expansion of the operations of IG and CREOP into new geographical areas.</p> <p>The evaluators find that youth in internships, Output 1.3.2. is an intermediate outcome, rather than an output. It requires effective supply side outputs as well as effective demand side outputs after which employers (together with local partners) create an internship position and hire an AK intern.</p>
Narrative	<p>From engagement with CREOP and IG, the evaluators have learned that they tirelessly seek out prospective employers and try to get them onboard. As AK demands that interns are being paid by the employers, at least 50% of the salary cost outside of Bujumbura and 100% in Bujumbura, this adds to the challenge.</p> <p>Other elements of AK partners’ activities, such as support throughout the internships to the intern and, if needed, also in resolving possible issues between employer and intern help to lower the barriers to hiring an intern. The following quote by an intern: “<i>if you come without an organization, you stand no chance!</i>” as well the FGD with employers in Gitega are a testament of that.</p> <p>The evaluation team is of the opinion that underachievement in terms of progress in this regard is mainly due to challenges in boosting demand and it remains to be seen if enough willing employers can be found to achieve the targets set.</p>
Challenges	<p>Successful placement of youth in internships requires interventions targeting demand (boosting demand from employers for AK interns) and supply side (narrowing the skills gap) interventions. The former of which are not well reflected in AK’s ToC and monitoring framework.</p>

¹⁷ The SPARK team and the two local partners confirmed that employers, overall, have little appetite for interns and see them, especially when they come from sponsored training, as a possible source of revenue. It takes significant effort to change employer’s minds to embrace the concept of paid internships as a good deal for both parties

Boosting demand for interns is a challenge for the local partners as the appetite for interns also depends on factors that are outside of the programme's sphere of influence.

The PAEEJ programme approach also incorporates internships. Due to it being a high-profile programme, and the high number of interns it aims to place, it will likely compete with AK for finding employers that are willing to host interns. Furthermore, if the PAEEJ programme does not mandate employers to pay (part of) the salary costs for interns, this may negatively affect the demand for AK interns. And finally, if PAEEJ does not monitor the quality of interns, appetite among employers for interns (including these from AK) may suffer.

Conclusion	The AK programme is not achieving its target number of youth in internships, due to challenges related to the demand for interns. The evaluators are convinced that the supply side interventions, employability trainings and resulting professional skills, are effective. AK and partners will have to prove if the context allows for the planned for scale-up (reflected in targets) in that regard.
Recommendations	<p>The evaluators recommend AK to design and pilot, with their local partners, additional activities to effectively increase demand for AK interns. Possibly, "internship fairs" could be such an instrument. There, employers that have previously made use of AK interns detail their positive experience to prospective internship providers and prospective interns can be matched with employers.</p> <p>The evaluators are aware of the good relationships between the AK programme staff and key PAEEJ staff. Thus, we recommend the AK programme to continue to try and influence PAEEJ staff to align their programming.</p>

7. *How effective are internships in enabling youth to get a permanent job?*

Narrative	<p>Employers report that interns, on average, perform (very) well during their internships. However, only 39% of interns have subsequently found employment (temporary or permanent). The main reason for employers not offering good interns a job after they have completed their internship is, according to the local partners and employers, an uncertain economic outlook for their businesses. As employers are unwilling to risk contracting additional staff unless they are 100% sure that there are no risks to the business in the short and intermediate future, the result is that in some cases good interns do not get hired.</p> <p>Some interns underperform, and naturally these are not hired afterwards. According to employers this is due to a lack of motivation reflected in absenteeism. Some employers blame a mismatch between educational background and the internship for that. Interestingly, employers also brought up instances of interns being unable or unwilling to fully commit to the internship due to other (small) jobs. The evaluation team was unable to pursue this issue further, though it would be interesting to evaluate if this can be resolved through better internships that pay better.</p>
Challenges	It is difficult to boost demand for employees due to factors that are outside of the programme's sphere of influence. The most important factor, as

	detailed to the evaluators be employers, is limited trust in economic outlook of employers that host interns and their ensuing unwillingness to hire additional staff.
Conclusion	The evaluation team is of the opinion that training, followed by an internship effectively narrows the skills gap. And, through the internships, employers get acquainted with their intern's skills, reducing the perceived risk of hiring. Nonetheless, the performance on outcome 1 is lagging. The evaluators attribute this to challenges in boosting demand.
Recommendations	The evaluators do not have concrete recommendations for increasing the percentage of interns continuing in jobs as employees. However, as there is a strong interest in entrepreneurship among (some) of the interns the evaluators engaged with, targeted training in entrepreneurship could result in more young people in jobs. AK will have to assess if adding such training is in line with their strategy.

8. To what extent did the innovative internship approach contribute toward creating a sustainable culture for internships (i.e., seeing young interns as an added value instead of a source of revenue?)

Narrative	The scope of the evaluation did not allow for engaging with employers that were not (yet) involved in AK. But, expecting a radically different attitude towards internships from them (and other that are not direct partners or participants) appears to be unrealistic given the programme's scale and phase. Nonetheless, CREOP and IG observe that employers are becoming more receptive to having interns and paying for them. Also, employers in health, catering, and commerce that hosted interns and were engaged in the FGD in Gitega, said that they were willing to host interns again as they represent an added value, bring energy to the business and are capable enough.
Challenges	The main challenge is that measuring systemic change is not incorporated in AK's monitoring framework. As a result, such systemic changes are largely invisible to them, see for an elaboration chapter 4 and 5.
Conclusion	The evaluators found anecdotal evidence that employers, through their interaction with AK partners and interns, now have a more positive attitude towards interns.
Recommendations	The programme should incorporate measuring systemic change in their M&E by involving staff and local partners, see chapter 4 and 5 for an elaboration. Success stories should be used to communicate AKs take on the interns and internships to enhance the likelihood of systemic change.

3.3.2 Outcome 2

9. How effective is the approach to use pipeline partners (ENABEL, SWISS-Contact, WarChild , etc.) as base to select youth?

Narrative	The pipelines are an expression of synergy between AK and partners, as the latter also benefit from AK carrying their participants to the next level. The evaluators have learned that motivation, a shared vision, access to capital (or means of production), market-demand and a solid technical background are important for start-ups and the pipeline guarantees AK access to potential candidate that score better than average on one or more of these criteria.
-----------	--

The evaluators found assessing the relevance and effectiveness of all the different pipeline in detail challenging. While the capacities and ambitions of the young people thus selected are influenced by the various pipelines' treatments, these programmes have also targeted different youth (geographical location, backgrounds, vulnerability, etc.).

The evaluators share the following observations on these pipelines: Youth that have graduated from a TVET supported by ENABEL have a solid technical background in their respective trade as they have received formal schooling through the TVET either in CEM (1 year) or in CFP (up to 4 years). They have also been exposed to internships (as part of their training) and to some entrepreneurial/start-up training. Finally, through the TVETs, they were provided with an in-kind loan at graduation. Nonetheless, only 50% of the Enabel graduates manage to put their skills to use through self-employment or employment¹⁸. Those TVET graduates that have received only basic training, do better than those that have had the full four years of training. It was argued that motivation may play a role in that, as those that have had more training may be more interested in continuing their studies.

By selecting from these graduates to enrol them in an entrepreneurship bootcamp followed by a business plan competition and a few months of business coaching, AK ensures that participants have a solid technical background. Thus, this pipeline contributes to the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme.

WarChild, has provided young people with psychosocial skills training and organised young people in VSLAs to improve their access to capital for investment in group-businesses. Their experience with pooling funds carries over into their business activities under AK, allowing for investing in improved means of production for business growth.

SWISS-contact, in our understanding, focused on relevant technical skills training. Young people trained by SC, formed businesses which have subsequently been included in outcome 3 in Cibitoke.

Challenges	No specific challenges were identified in relation to these pipelines' functioning.
Conclusion	In conclusion, these pipeline arrangements revolve around synergy and complementarity, by incorporating youth that have a solid technical background or have experience pooling resources, AK only needs to add those elements that are missing for them to be successful entrepreneurs. Thus, the use of pipelines is more effective (and efficient) than selecting youth without making use of pipelines.
Recommendations	The programme should largely continue their current approach while chapter 4 and 5 elaborate on the recommendation of using outcome 1 as a pipeline for outcome 2.

¹⁸ This figure (50%) varies per sector in which they have been trained, the estimate was provided by the TVET coach. The evaluators were unable to, in the scope of this evaluation, deep dive into the causes for such a limited rate of success.

10. How effective are business development trainings and proximity coaching and the resulting entrepreneurship skills in enabling start-ups to start sustainable businesses?

Selected participants in AK are provided with a mix of training and proximity coaching through local partners. According to entrepreneurs, trainings and coaching were instrumental in acquiring basic entrepreneurial skills and building the confidence needed to (collectively) start as entrepreneurs. They learned to think as entrepreneurs, together with the partners draw up realistic business plans and develop a shared vision.

The proximity coaching allows the entrepreneurs to devise solutions to the challenges they encounter along the way together with the coaches who are only a phone call away and visit regularly (3 times per month on average).

Sustainability

Narrative

Local partners indicate that, in their view, businesses require support for at least 3-4 years. The evaluators are also of the opinion that sustainability is difficult to assess at this moment as the start-ups have only been in operation for a limited period. The difficult context, furthermore, adds to SME's precarious situation. External shocks such as the lack of fuel during the evaluator's fieldwork can have disastrous effects as transport is difficult and machinery requires fuel too.¹⁹

Internal differences between members of an SME have in some cases proven to be difficult to overcome and to negatively affect business. Although coaching certainly contributes to the possibility of these SMEs to overcome such problems. In the same vein, formalization with the help of local partners has taken away the risk of legal troubles, which is a significant concern according to participants.

The partner reports indicate that most of the start-ups are doing well, they grow and generate a profit. The evaluators have seen successful businesses where initial loans were being paid off and more employees were being hired. From local partners too, we have heard that more and more start-ups find their way to access to finance and that hard work will lead to growth.

Challenges

There are numerous contextual challenges to entrepreneurship including for start-ups. However, AK through its local partners, aims to help participants navigate these.

Drop-out of members is an issue among some start-ups that struggle to take-off, CEMAC tries to overcome this issue by combining those start-ups that are in the same sector.

Access to finance is a challenge for all SMEs including start-ups. In this regard start-ups in Rumonge explained that long processing times are an issue. More on A2F in question 11.

¹⁹ Other examples of vulnerability were also observed including theft of equipment, sudden increase in rent for a production location or an unexpected rise of the price of inputs with little opportunity for these start-ups to increase the price of products.

Conclusion	Overall, the team concludes that the proximity coaching and BDS training greatly improve the odds of these start-ups becoming sustainable but that more time needs to pass to assess the sustainability of their business.
Recommendations	The AK programme should largely continue their current activities, as the mix of support activities appear to be effective. Nonetheless, the evaluators recommend analysing the performance of the different start-ups and identify if and why certain sectors have produced poor results. ²⁰ The analysis should inform AKs subsequent support to new start-ups.

11. How effective are business plan competitions (with matching grants/seed) in boosting promising businesses.

Narrative	<p>The business plan competitions were described by participants as a valuable experience contributing to their entrepreneurial skill and confidence in their business idea. The evaluation was unable to establish what part of these business plan competitions, including the matching grants, contributed most to boosting promising businesses. From CEMAC, however, the evaluators learned start-ups that won a matching grant were significantly more successful than those that did not benefit from a matching grant. The former saw a much more significant growth in terms of turn-over, revenue and created many more jobs during the reporting period. Nonetheless, the evaluators feel that such improved performance cannot be attributed to the grant alone, as a thorough selection process based on the start-up's potential for growth (all part of the business plan competition) determined which collective was provided with a grant.</p> <p>Without exception, however, the start-ups the evaluation team engaged with and that had received a matching grant, stated the importance of receiving such a grant as capital was of paramount importance to professionalize their means of production²¹ and their options for securing capital otherwise are limited.</p>
Challenges	No specific challenges were identified in relation to the business plan competitions. Naturally, the challenges for all start-ups, (access to finance, quality machines etc.), remain.
Conclusion	The business plan competitions are valuable for participants and are identified by all parties to contribute to boosting start-up's performance.
Recommendations	No specific recommendations other than close monitoring of the extent to which SMEs that have received a matching grant continue to outperform SMEs that have not and manage to secure subsequent funding. The latter is a good indication of sustainability of the results.

12. How effective are start-ups in creating (direct and indirect, permanent, and temporary) jobs?

Narrative	The monitoring data provided by AK shows that start-ups are creating direct and indirect permanent and temporary jobs. For 2021, there was a strong
-----------	---

²⁰ An example of which could be catering (in Rumonge), where multiple restaurants appear to have failed and the new SME (combination of multiple start-ups) did in the view of the evaluators not to be in such a good shape. It went beyond the scope of this evaluation to unpack all the issues that have played a role in the limited success of the start-ups. Such an analysis has, in an earlier stage, led to abandoning the efforts in health SMEs, specifically the production of sanipads as there was a lot of distortion e.g., handing out products for free.

²¹ These tools include those for welding, sewing etc.

over-performance (132% of target) and for 2022, AK is expected to reach more than 90% of its target number of jobs under outcome 2.

Most entrepreneurs that the evaluators visited or engaged in FGDs confirmed having created jobs for themselves (the members of the group) and for others. Those start-ups that were not doing so well, naturally, were unable to create much in terms of jobs.

Challenges	<p>As there are no MoVs available for indirect jobs created, the quantity and quality of these jobs is difficult to assess. AK staff expects the current estimates to be an underrepresentation of the actual number of indirect jobs created. Within the scope of this evaluation, this was difficult to assess for the evaluators. See the reflections section for an elaboration of this issue.</p> <p>Job creation is not the primary objective of start-ups. Thus, start-ups could be doing very well due to AK support while few jobs are created (targets are not met). AK should investigate whether goals of the businesses they support are truly in line with the goals of the programme and thus if they are using the right indicator(s).</p>
Conclusion	<p>The monitoring data speaks for itself, through support to start-ups, AK is effectively creating jobs.</p>
Recommendations	<p>Contextualize the number of jobs created with additional outcomes, such as the growth of their profit or turn-over (as is done for scale-ups in the narrative report). Given that such data is available (included in partner reporting) this should be relatively straightforward. The evaluators are of the opinion that this would reduce the risk for AK in case the number of jobs created does not meet the target in any of the remaining years. Furthermore, such data would provide a better insight into how participants benefit from the programme, i.e., what are the fruits of their entrepreneurship, see also chapter 4 and 5 on impact and job quality.</p>

3.3.3 Outcome 3

13. How effective are entrepreneurship trainings and proximity coaching and the resulting entrepreneurship skills in enabling SMEs to scale businesses?

The monitoring results indicate that SMEs enrolled in track 3 manage to grow/scale their business and participants identify both training and coaching as factors contributing to growth.

Narrative	<p>The SMEs appreciated coaching, and as coaches are easy to approach they are instrumental in devising solutions for emerging challenges. The role of the coaches in accessing finance was also appreciated, although there were some concerns over the time required by MFIs to grant and disburse loans. Improved financial management and understanding of their finances has also contributed to doing business better.</p> <p>The SMEs engaged have plenty of ambition left and aim to grow, or even branch out to other provinces. These ambitions are motivated by their own dependence on the income generated and the desire to support family members. There are accounts of SMEs performing very well on fairs and being appreciated for the quality of their products.</p>
-----------	---

Recommendations	As the mix of training and coaching is highly appreciated by AK participants and partners, the evaluators have no further recommendations other than continuing to provide both.
Challenges	No specific challenges identified related to training and coaching. However, successful scaling up depends on more than entrepreneurial skills and the training and coaching referred to in question 14. Access to finance is a crucial element for scaling-up and this continues to be a challenge, see also question 16.
Conclusion	Overall, the evaluators are of the opinion that the combination of coaching, training and entrepreneurship skills contributes to the opportunity to scale their businesses. Nonetheless, other elements such as access to finance, over which AK has limited control, should also align for them to sustainably grow

14. How effective is the approach to combine technical and business development coaching

	<p>From the team's engagement with CEMAC and AFORGER as well as the participants in AK, we have learned that entrepreneurs have a need for both. Participants explain how the coaching has contributed to their ability to financially plan (e.g. separating personal and business accounts) and manage their business.</p> <p>The proximity coaching that is provided ensures that there is regular contact between coaches and entrepreneurs and that coaches are aware of what is going on in the different businesses. This is more relevant as these SME's consist of groups of young people, who might have individually different needs or desires.</p> <p>In terms of technical training needs and the extent to which these are met through AK, the evaluation team observed that some SMEs did express the need for more training. Specifically, they are interested in training that would allow for improving the quality of their products (e.g., higher-end soaps), diversification or making use of 'waste' streams (e.g., fertilizer from organic waste). Other training needs were expressed in relation to maintenance and repair of machinery as outsourcing that is expensive. The difficulty with the above requests is that, in most cases, it is directly tied to capital needs for acquiring additional or improved machinery.</p>
	Some technical training needs remain, e.g., on new production processes or machinery. This ties in with the local partners identifying lack of innovation as an important challenge for participants.
Challenges	SMEs that consist of a larger number of members struggle to align their vision, impacting their success. While 2-5 members works best from that perspective, larger groups have access to more resources for investment.
	Some SMEs continue to struggle with professionalizing their management process, as members have other functions and responsibilities too.
Conclusion	Overall, the team is convinced that combining technical training and proximity coaching, as provided by AK to SMEs is a good approach.
Recommendations	No specific recommendations are formulated by the evaluators. In general, AK should investigate the opportunities for providing additional technical training.

15. How effective is the digital access to finance (with MoneyPhone and Burundi Lend and Lease) component of the program (for Bubanza /Honey Beekeepers)?

Access to finance through MoneyPhone has greatly improved the cooperative's opportunities. Through the individual loans, the cooperative has been able to acquire modern hives which are more productive and the expectations in terms of harvest are good. Scaling of their operation has led to additional jobs for cooperative members and more are expected when harvest has taken place. Meanwhile, additional funds were invested in an array of other income generating activities, both for the cooperative as well as for the individual members.

Narrative	<p>Money phone was, by both Burundi Lend Lease (BLL) MFI and the cooperative seen as an important tool to lower the threshold to access to finance. The use of the Money phone application takes away the need for the individual cooperative members to travel from Bubanza to Bujumbura (where the MFI is located) which can be a significant monetary barrier for those cooperative members.</p> <p>The current set-up in which AK covers most of the costs related to the introduction of MoneyPhone works for the MFI and they, in turn, can provide the service to this select group of clients. Meanwhile, this arrangement allows MoneyPhone to test their application in Burundi.</p>
Challenges	<p>Limited access to smartphones and poor connectivity makes that, a limited number of MP users are still using the application²². from the pilot still use the application.</p> <p>Burundi Lend Lease was able to use the Moneyphone license free of charge during the first year of implementation (2022) after which they are expected to pay a small sum for its use. This coincides with an obligation to scale-up the number of clients. From the team's engagement with BLL, we understand that there are doubts concerning the continuation with MP as they are unsure of its added value. Nonetheless, an evaluation has not yet been performed and BLL did not want to make any definitive statements beforehand. In the team's understanding, Moneyphone had a visit planned to Burundi at the end of August and this might ease decision making.</p>
Recommendations	Depending on the results of the upcoming evaluation of the pilot by BLL and MP, AK should determine their course of action.
Conclusion	The participants that have accessed finance through the MoneyPhone pilot have greatly benefitted from it. If sustainability issues can be resolved, it will be another promising tool in AK's toolbox for scaling-up.

16. How effective is the access to finance (ie, get a loan at MFI) component of the programme?

Narrative	Since the programme's start, 139 loans and matching grants were secured from (Q2, 2022). As such, AK appears to be on track of reaching its target.
-----------	---

²² BLL mentioned that only 3 out of 50 clients still use the application, but the evaluators have not been able to verify this.

Other scale-ups that secured access to finance through AK put these loans to good use to acquire additional means of production and diversification, allowing for growth of production, turn-over and profit.

An often heard complain is that MFIs need a lot of time before approving a loan and distributing the funds to applicants. The expectation is, however, that once these SMEs establish a track-record for repaying their loans on time, speed of the loan taking process as well as size of the loans will increase.

MFIs take a long time to assess loan applications which hamper SMEs in their development. However, when SMEs repay these in time, further loans are expected to be processed faster.

MFIs in Bubanza and Cibitoke province largely lack loan-products that suit AKs target group well, in Rumonge, Ishaka (MFI), offers a loan-product (Caution Solidaire) that is a better fit for the target group.

When SMEs secure access to finance, they face an additional challenge in limited availability of quality machinery. For example, The National Center for Agrifood Technologies (CNTA), which has been supported by several organizations to be a leader in the field of manufacturing food processing equipment, is not performing well. This place has been occupied by private individuals who provide equipment whose quality remains to be desired.

Given the contextual constraints, AK is providing effective support to SMEs facilitating improved access to finance.

AK should, once sufficient SMEs have proven to be capable of repaying their loans, investigate opportunities to leverage these results with MFIs to secure access to finance for more SMEs.

A second avenue to explore is if AK can play more of a role in facilitating exchange between different MFIs as there are some that have loan products that work better for AK clients.

17. How effective are scale-ups at creating (direct and indirect, permanent and temporary) jobs?

Scale-ups are creating direct and indirect permanent and temporary jobs. For 2022, the forecasted number of jobs created will reach approximately 80% of target²³. For the evaluators, this expectation is difficult to assess, though the interviewed SMEs were confident in having created jobs thus far and in expecting to create more jobs. These same SMEs however report challenges in access to finance and processing machinery, this stands in the way of their ambitions related to growth and consequently job creation.

AK has limited insight in the quantity and quality of the indirect jobs that are created as MoVs are not provided.

Given the ambitious targets and AKs performance against these, supported SMEs are effectively creating temporary and permanent jobs.

AK should improve their understanding of the impact of these jobs on individuals. Unpacking this impact starts with a good understanding of the qualitative characteristics of these jobs and what having such a job changes

²³ After a successful Q2 with 307 jobs created, Q3 and Q4 are expected to produce 400 and 500 jobs respectively.

in the lives of those that have them. For more elaboration, see chapter 4 and 5.

3.4 Coherence

18. How has the implementation-overlapping (and continuation) between Akazi Keza and ABIN affected efficiency in Akazi Keza's implementation (result wise)? (Internal coherence)

Based on the results of the evaluation and the lessons learned (source: AK proposal), the 30 SMEs out of the ABIN project were familiar with the VSLA approach, making small individual investments during a cycle that generally lasts 12 months. At the end of the cycle, the members share the income and can eventually make more substantial investments.

Narrative These SMEs continued to utilize pooled resources to scale their businesses and create jobs. This willingness was also attested to by the representatives of the SMEs who took part in the focus groups, *"We want to have companies in which we can work and that we can bequeath to our children"* indicated a participant of an SME at the Cibitoke focus group.

The interviews carried out as part of the evaluation (including with AFORGER), have not brought to light relevant differences, for example in performance, between the ABIN SMEs and the others. For participants in the FGDs in Cibitoke, the end of ABIN and the start of AK were not obvious, as even the local partners' coaches that support them remained the same at least in some instances.

Challenges	No specific challenges identified.
Conclusion	All SPARK programmes focus on creating employment and ABIN now serves as a pipeline for the AK programme (30 ABIN entrepreneurs have been included in AK). Therefore, the evaluators find that the two programmes are coherent.
Recommendations	No specific recommendations formulated

19. What are the synergies with the programs implemented by other organizations in the same ecosystem/intervention areas, i.e. (female) entrepreneurship, job creation and youth development? (External coherence)

As discussed under question 1 and 2, AK is not the only programme addressing youth unemployment in Burundi. Not only the government, but also other local and international organizations aim for improving the economic outlook of young people.

Narrative Enabel's current programme with 13 TVET institutions focuses broadly on closing the skills gap for TVET trainees. Among other things, they are involved *strengthening the management and governance of school institutions, matches the quality of the training offer with the needs of the economy, inserts graduates on the job market and improves the vocational training infrastructure.*²⁴ Especially the insertion of graduates in the job market is relevant to AK, as the TVET institutions aim to match graduates with internships and provide support for self-employment. Being a pipeline partner

²⁴ <https://www.enabel.be/content/enabel-burundi>

of AK, selected TVET graduates are provided with entrepreneurship training, proximity coaching and are expected to have better access to finance for starting businesses in groups. From engagement with Enabel staff and a manager of a TVET institution that is supported by Enabel, the evaluation team has learned that what AK does is invaluable for their students. For graduates of Enabel supported TVET, the rate of success after graduation (measured in graduates finding employment) is around 50% percent.²⁵ Those graduates that are supported through AK have been more successful. It is SPARK's understanding that Enabel is considering shifting/broadening their focus towards entrepreneurship. Such a development might be perceived as competition for AK, due to Enabel operating with larger budgets and scale. This could be perceived as a threat since Enabel operates on a different scale than AK. Alternatively, it opens-up avenues for further cooperation. SPARK, after all, has a highly specialized set of skills and ample experience in this type of programming and synergies can be imagined.

The PAEEJ programme does not adhere to the exact same approach as AK, e.g., they provide grants rather than facilitate loans to SMEs. Nonetheless, PAEEJ will support at least 2 selected entrepreneurs that are also supported in AK. The grants they are expected to receive will likely help these businesses grow. Overall, those involved in PAEEJ are appreciative of AK, and agree that what they aim to do is very much in the same vein as AK.

The Blue Soap initiative, on the other hand, was disastrous for SMEs producing soap from palm kernel oil. Subsidizing the production of soap by Savonor²⁶, made that other soap producing SMEs were no longer competitive. As a result, an average of 3 jobs per SME were lost²⁷. AK has made a successful effort with the EKN to stop the program and level the playing field for soap producing SMEs. This has led to the creation of 269 jobs with existing soap producing companies through AK, these companies have thus not only bounced back, but have grown back to a situation comparable with the situation before Blue Soap. The evaluator's visit to a soap producing SME, showed a successful and ambitious entrepreneur that had created numerous jobs and was expecting to create even more in the future. He strongly attributed his success to AK's support, detailing co-financing and innovation as a result of linking with other producers.

Challenges	As AKs invests heavily in convincing stakeholders and participants of their novel market-based approach (see question 1 and 2), they are susceptible to disruption resulting from more traditional programming, e.g., programmes that depend on hand-outs such as grants instead of loans for entrepreneurs or internships for which the costs are borne by the programme rather than the employer. In some cases, AK has successfully intervened to reduce or eliminate such disruption, for example in the case of Blue Soap.
Conclusion	AK is aware of its surroundings and manages to operate in synergy with various other programmes implemented by international organizations and the government, even if those programmes do not operate according to the exact same logic as AK. Furthermore, AK is very aware of possible

²⁵ Although, this is highly dependent on the trades in which they have received training.

²⁶ This company is the major player in soap production in Burundi. Their behaviour strongly influences the opportunities for and viability of soap producing SMEs.

²⁷ Narrative report.

	disruptions and has proven to be capable of actions that avoid or minimize damage to the programme.
Recommendations	AK should continue their current course, being highly aware of possible opportunities for creating synergy as well as possible disruptive programming by others.

3.5 Sustainability

20. To what extent did the programme increase the capacity of its local partner organisations? Did the local partner organisations take ownership of their activities, outputs and outcomes?

Narrative	<p>CREOP, CEMAC and AFORGER are being supported by AK to improve their capacity to provide services to AK participants and, overall, to improve their operation²⁸. Some of this support is provided directly by AK staff (e.g., reporting and finance) while Douthi Coaching provides coaching based on the organizations' needs. The partners all expressed their appreciation of these services and provided examples of what they have learned through coaching and from the AK staff, such as: leadership skills, prioritizing tasks, and how to write a better and more concise business plan. Currently, they are more receptive to their client's needs and together with the client look for solutions, more as real coaches (CEMAC and AFORGER).</p> <p>Likewise, the AK team confirms that they want to continue with the current local partners as they perform well, and they are still improving. The evaluation team, given the enthusiasm over coaching, does expect that these gains are sustainable.</p>
Challenges	The cost for the services the local partner provides to clients (SMEs) are covered by the AK programme. Thus, clients are not asked to pay for services. Service provision of these local partners, therefore, is dependent on third party funding and this is currently unlikely to be sustainable.
Conclusion	The evaluators find that AK support has allowed the local partners to efficiently and effectively provide the services expected of them. The local partners, furthermore, are invested in reaching the goals that are set.
Recommendations	The evaluators recommend piloting fee-based services with one or more of the local partners. Asking participants to pay a percentage of the costs of the services provided is in line with AKs vision of not simply "giving" to participants, but them investing in their businesses.

21. To what extent has the programme already contributed to systemic change in the regions/communities in which it is implemented and more specifically in the enabling environment for youth employment and SME growth?

Narrative	<p>AK does not regularly monitor systemic change. And for the evaluators, assessing systemic change brought about by AK during the snapshot that this MTE was, is impossible. What the evaluation can provide, is anecdotal evidence of systemic change, as offered to us during interviews and other engagements with stakeholders.</p>
-----------	--

²⁸ This includes IG, although AK does not actively engage in capacity building with them as the assessment of the AK team is that they already run a rather efficient and high-quality operation, especially given the Burundian context. The evaluation team concurs with this assessment based on the interview with the IG team and 'their' interns.

Employers with whom we engaged were content with the experience they had had up until now with AK interns. This has made them more receptive to hosting more interns in the future. This appears to be a rather different view of internships than generally held, interns as a source of revenue or a hassle. Furthermore, there is talk of at least one other programme adopting AK's internship approach in which employers pay interns.

Enabel is evaluating their current approach and appears to opt for a stronger focus on entrepreneurship. It appears as if, at least in part, this is inspired by what AK has managed to achieve.

During the evaluation, various stakeholders expressed their appreciation for what AK aims to do and that supporting young entrepreneurs that are willing to invest their own money in their companies is to be preferred over hand-outs. It remains to be seen how that will translate in others adopting elements of this approach.

Challenges	AK is only one programme in the ecosystem of interventions that aim to improve economic opportunities for youth, all of which also influence the enabling environment.
Conclusion	AK currently does not monitor systemic change and its contribution to it. Thus, elaborating on if and how AK contributes to systemic change is a challenge. The MTE has found anecdotal evidence that points in the direction of systemic change, for example in relation to how internships are perceived, that there is a realization among stakeholders that "giving" can have disruptive (market) effect and that entrepreneurship is increasingly seen as an opportunity.
Recommendations	Good examples of how other organizations (not dependents) have amended their approach to be more in line with AK's, could serve as illustrations of systemic change to which AK has contributed. AK should monitor such change to be able to report on it. A starting point should be to define what systemic change looks like, how AK expects contribute to it and subsequently design measurable indicators and include these in the M&E framework.

3.6 Impact

22. *To what extent the programme has already influenced (if at all) positively perceptions/attitudes in the communities it operated, relevant to violence and stability?*

The Akazi Keza ToC provides limited explanation for how it will produce the expected impact and few assumptions that can be tested. Furthermore, as agreed, the evaluation team has explicitly not interviewed or performed surveys among those that are not involved in the Akazi Keza programme, e.g., the community. Thus, this question is answered strictly based on our engagement with Akazi Keza stakeholders and participants.

Narrative

During interviews and FGDs, the evaluation team has observed that those young people that are (self-) employed as a result of AK, attach more meaning to that result than income alone. They mention to have reduced their dependency on parents and families, them being able to contribute to the needs of relatives and improved confidence in their chances of getting ahead. In addition, some participants felt more respected (by family, others) as a

result of the above-mentioned changes. Finally, young people expressed that, after their training, they were convinced that cooperation and cocreation with their peers is the (only) way to succeed. Not only was this motivated by the greater resources that can be mobilized as a group, risk-sharing was also an important reason as well as the opportunity to create synergies as their personalities and skills are compatible, helping to overcome challenges. The team is unsure to which extent these cooperatives incorporate young people of different political or ethnic backgrounds that are possible sources of tension in Burundi.

Challenges	Although the relation between (a lack of) jobs and (in-)stability is often assumed, there is limited evidence of individual programmes targeting a relatively small part of the population though job creation initiatives to stability. As such, a link is not considered to be scientifically proven and neither the mechanisms through which such impact should come about. Thus, a programme that claims such impact, should provide a detailed ToC establishing causal links between the activities, outputs, outcomes and eventual impact accompanied by explicit assumptions on the nature of these mechanisms that can be tested. If all that were in place, an evaluation could try to find evidence for these assumptions at the lower level, and were these to be found true, say something about the impact.
Conclusion	The MTE has not been able to assess the extent to which the AK programme has made an impact in the communities in which it operates. The evaluators have collected anecdotal evidence of outcomes that could positively impact these communities, e.g., participants are more independent, have more self-confidence and are perceived more positively by others. No indication of negative impact on the communities was observed by the evaluators.
Recommendations	<p>AK should explicate in an updated (narrative) ToC what the impact it aims for entails and attribute measurable indicators to determine progress towards this impact. Subsequently, they should incorporate periodic (e.g., bi-annually) monitoring of impact in their M&E framework. This can be done through periodic surveys in a sample of the communities in which they operate. Finally, AK's monitoring should also be receptive of potential negative expected and unexpected impact of the programme.</p> <p>In chapter 4 and 5, the evaluators elaborate on this recommendation, connecting it to other related issues.</p>

23. Is there any unintended (positive and/or negative) impact of the programme in the regions/communities it is implemented?

As AK identifies only one expected impact of their activities (see question 22), all other impacts are unexpected. Considering the constraints listed in the answer to question 22, some unexpected outcomes (not impacts) are:

Narrative	Participants, through AK support, have developed a strong entrepreneurial spirit. The evaluators have observed that this has led to diversification of SME activities, e.g., an SMEs that has a primary business in brick making and have started hulling rice on the side, an SME involved in sewing that has also opened a restaurant and a beekeeping cooperative that also exploits a bar. Having hedged their main source of revenue with several others, this contributes to resilience (positive). However, it is not a typical growth path for successful companies. A potential risk identified by the evaluators of such a strategy is the uncertainty over investment and growth strategy (what takes priority)
-----------	--

among members and potential financiers, and a possible risk regarding the commitment of members.

Individual loans accessed through AK that were used to procure collective means of production. The individual's profit was used to start doing business individually, next to their engagement in the cooperative. Examples include, rearing animals, opening a restaurant etc. As a result, these individuals have a diverse portfolio of income generating activities (IGA) of which the effect on their commitment to the cooperative is not so clear.

The FGD participants under outcome 1, not in Bujumbura, expressed a desire to start their own business, even though they were currently employed. Given this desire and the risks associated with entrepreneurship, what does that mean for sustainability of AK created jobs. And how should this desire for self-employment be interpreted in relation to the quality of the jobs created?

Recommendations	As in question 22, monitoring of impact is necessary for adequate reporting.
Challenges	Diversification by the supported businesses makes monitoring (indirect) jobs created more challenging.
Conclusion	The evaluators have not found unexpected impact(s) of the programme.

4. Reflection

This chapter serves to reflect on some of the overarching findings of the evaluators, as the findings chapter structure according to the specific evaluation questions does not allow for that. The reflections listed below allow for the evaluator to share some of their insights

What about MSD?

Despite the initial impression of the evaluators, due to the MTE ToR, AK does not utilize an MSD approach. There is, however, a strong interest to explore MSD, not only within AK but also within SPARK more broadly. Nonetheless, the evaluators do not recommend AK to try and make such a switch and incorporate MSD(-light) into the current programme as it requires a radically different approach and expertise. Subsequent programming, however, could be inspired by MSD as it promises more scalable and sustainable results. This chapter and the next provide a few more low-hanging fruits that are relevant to AK and help prepare for a possible switch to MSD in the future, in particular in the sections on Theories of Change, impact and systemic change.

Job quality and aimed for impact

AK's specific objective is to *improve and enhance economic prospects and job opportunities for rural and peri-urban youth through job creation in cooperation with the local private sector*. Success is measured by the number of jobs (outcome 1-3) AK has been able to generate through their novel market-based approach. Towards that aim, it counts permanent as well as temporary jobs created either directly with the supported SMEs, indirectly along these SME's value chains or, for participants through outcome 1, because of their internship trajectory. Some minimum requirements for these jobs, in terms of formality, duration and salary (e.g., for internships) are formulated. Nonetheless, this does not make all jobs equal; those that have found employment with banks in Bujumbura earn (very) good salaries, whereas guards employed by a honey cooperative earn a salary of BFu 30.000. Likewise, the impact of such a job on the individual and, through the individual's changes in

behaviour, possibly on the community are very different. In short, it makes that simply aggregating the results of this intervention does not do justice to the variation that is hidden underneath.

AK should aim to explicate the aimed for outcomes (or impact) of their intervention on individuals and on the community. This allows for arriving at a certain minimum standard for what a job should offer, e.g., for salaried workers. In the proposal as well as in partner reports, the concept of “decent jobs” is mentioned a few times. The concept of a decent job invokes the notion of decent work²⁹ which is very complex and likely not so relevant in the Burundian context. As an alternative, one could, starting with salaries, use the concept of living wage³⁰ or living income. The latter might be more appropriate as we have seen the diverse array of IGAs in which participants are engaged. There is a risk to this exercise and that is that if quality requirements for jobs are raised, it might be more difficult to realize the ambitious numbers that AK aims for.

The above section has deliberately not been included in the recommendations, as the evaluators are of the opinion that internal reflection is required to determine if and how AK wants to change its future course. AK can contextualize these reflections better than the evaluators and determine what is and what is not feasible in the Burundian context in the current or subsequent programme and in line with SPARK programming. Importantly, such considerations should also be shared with the donor, as they may prefer a specific course. Given that this discussion is also taking place within SPARK more broadly, the evaluators would suggest tying into this discussion and collect and share better data on the jobs that are created.

MoVs and indirect jobs

Related to the above is the use of MoVs in the AK programme. These MoVs provide tangible evidence of the quantity and quality (salary and duration) of the jobs created. Such MoVs, however, are not available for the indirect jobs that AK claims to result from their programming. Thus, the quality of these jobs is impossible to establish. Furthermore, direct and indirect jobs are eventually aggregated to measure the performance of AK (as in KPI #7 of the general monitoring protocol in narrative reporting to the EKN). By doing so, this indicator for performance becomes quantitative only, as qualitative data is available for only part of the data. Better monitoring of these indirect jobs (also described as indirect effects of employment programming) is time-consuming and requires significant effort.³¹ When AK is concerned with the above, it should explore if it is feasible, through their participants, to follow-up with a sample of these indirect jobs. This would allow for validating estimations for the quantity and quality of indirect jobs (hours of additional work due to the growth of the participant SME, salary derived, duration etc.).

Systemic change

As it was not a requirement by the donor, AK’s monitoring framework was not designed to capture systemic change. Nonetheless, the evaluators are of the opinion that exploring the concept is of interest to AK as it allows, among other things, for a better assessment of the scale and sustainability of the change that AK contributes too³² as well as acting upon this assessment through adapted

²⁹ <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/lang--en/index.htm>

³⁰ Earning a living wage means the basic cost of living for a family is attainable by the adult wage earners each month. A Living Wage is paid when a worker receives remuneration that is sufficient to afford a decent standard of living for the worker and her or his family in their location and time. Elements of a decent standard of living include food, water, housing, education, health care, transportation, clothing, and other essential needs including provision for unexpected events.

³¹ See for example Kluve (2011): *Measuring employment effects of technical cooperation interventions; some methodological guidelines*

³² The AAER framework, commonly used in systemic change makes the distinction between behavioural change among direct partners and participants and changes at the level of those beyond direct partners. Such

programming. Therefore, the section below provides a simplified overview of systemic change and options to engage with it in the framework of AK, it ties in with the sections on ToC in reflections (chapter 4) and recommendations (chapter 5).

Systemic change is at the core of MSD programming and systems are often defined roughly along (specific) value chains, the market, and their supporting rules and functions. This is not entirely in-line with the approach and design of AK. Nonetheless, as the programme has ambitions towards MSD³³ and aims for sustainable results towards better economic prospects for peri-urban and rural youth, understanding the concept is relevant.

System change literature can be exceedingly complex, and the evaluators do not recommend AK to start by embracing this complexity in full. Thus, AK should define what, to them, constitutes the relevant system. This system should be mapped according to the relevant actors and their actions (behaviour)³⁴. AK should also develop a vision of what an improved system should look like. The extent to which the actor's behaviour changes, constitutes a measure of systemic change. AK's contribution to systemic change should be determined by the change in behaviour of those beyond direct partners and participants (e.g., other development organizations, the government, TVET institutions, MFIs, etc.) or behavioural changes in partners and participants that the programme has not directly instigated through an activity.

A simplified example to help ease understanding of systemic change is the following: AK aims for better access to finance for young entrepreneurs and provides coaching and training to youth as well as matchmaking events between MFIs and SMEs. The loans granted to AK participants as a result, are not necessarily an indication of systemic change. However, when the partner MFI subsequently dedicates resources to organise such matching events themselves or to develop loan products that are a good fit for young entrepreneurs, this constitutes behavioural change that could be interpreted as systemic change. When other MFIs, having seen the success of the "partner" MFI, start doing the same, this can also be an indication of systemic change³⁵. Such changes might result in behavioural change of other actors in the system too. For example, (local) government may design and implement policy that helps MFIs to design loan products that are a better fit to young entrepreneurs. A good understanding of these effects helps AK determine how it interacts with the system and what if any changes to programming should be made to contribute more effectively to desired change.

Impact of AK

AK formulates its expected impact in the ToC as *To contribute to increased stability of Burundi through poverty reduction of rural and peri-rural communities in Burundi*. However, the extent to which AK manages to realize this impact is currently a black box. Given the uncertainty of the impact of employment programmes on stability and the lack of explication of how AK expects this impact to materialize³⁶, monitoring is essential. Currently, AK does not engage in such monitoring and except for the SME tracer study, that provides self-reported data on the contribution of SMEs to their

change is an indication of scale and sustainability of the change. See for an explanation of the AAER framework: Lomax, Jake. (2020). AAER Revisited: from systemic change narrative to systemic change analysis. 10.13140/RG.2.2.32996.81288.

³³ See AK's Context analysis. Also follows from conversations with staff.

³⁴ Lomax, Jake. (2022). Actions & Actors System Mapping: a practical guide to delineating systems. 10.13140/RG.2.2.17667.78888.

³⁵ The AAER framework, although relatively complex, could provide some guidance on how to determine what type of systemic change is observed in which phase of the programme.

³⁶ AK is aware of the general lack of evidence for such effects as reflected in conversations with staff, the Jobs Aid Peace study included in the Context analysis and broader discussions during SPARKS annual IGNITE conference.

communities, there is no information available on impact. The recommendations section provides a suggestion for AK on how to move forward.

Updating the ToC

The evaluators are unaware of a periodic revision of the ToC other than a revision of the numbers (targets) that it contains. As a result, AK misses out on the opportunity to use the ToC as a tool to reflect on its results, underlying assumptions and adapt programming accordingly.

Increasing cost-effectiveness, what can we learn from unit-prices?

Outcomes 2 and 3 outperform outcome 1 in terms of achieving job creation targets. There appears to be no quick fix to this issue as local partner(s) point at systemic challenges such as limited appetite among employers for interns. As such, approaching this issue from a cost-effectiveness angle can be interesting for AK going forward. Based on provided documentation on expenditure and results, a (very) “quick and dirty” calculation³⁷ of the unit price per job created was performed. As relative prices are more important than the exact unit-prices for this purpose, the evaluators are not so concerned with the limited accuracy of the numbers provided below. Thus, these simply represent the expenses per outcome divided by the number of jobs created. Programme management costs are excluded as a very thorough understanding of all budget lines is required for correct attribution.

Outcome	Jobs created	Expenditure	Cost/job
1	114	346.195	3.037
2	238	225.431	947
3	1.407	443.890	315

** Important to note that under outcome 1, internships are not included as jobs which is in line with AKs M&E framework. In the narrative reports to EKN, internships are counted towards the overall target number of jobs. If these were included outcome 1 would yield a unit price of 852 euros.*

From the above assessment follows that the unit-price for creating a single job is lowest for those created under outcome 3, followed by outcome 2. Meanwhile, the unit price for creating a job under outcome 1 is significantly higher. Thus, from a cost-effectiveness perspective, diverting funds from outcome 1 to outcome 2 or 3 is interesting. Naturally, such a decision should be informed by a better understanding of what a job under outcome 1 represents for the individual, but also for the community (where the ToC expects impact) and how that relates to a job under outcome 2 or 3. Suggestions for how to improve such understanding are provided in this chapter under quality of jobs.

Finally, the unit price of jobs created (and benchmarks for these) is a hot topic among the actors in the sector³⁸ and the EKN does not currently use such a unit-price as a criterion in assessing programmes. Nonetheless, As SPARK considers itself as a smaller organization delivering good value for money, the use of unit-prices represents an interesting opportunity to demonstrate that.³⁹

Demand-side interventions, intermediary outcomes and the monitoring framework

Overall, the evaluators observe that the progress on outputs over which the programme has a high degree of control (e.g., youth trained) is better than for those ‘outputs’ over which they have less control (e.g., youth in internships or loans/grants provided). In the evaluators’ opinion, these latter outputs should be qualified as **intermediate outcomes**, as it reflects the actions (or decisions) of

³⁷ With better knowledge of the programmes budget structure and the extent to which (management) costs can be attributed to the achieving the outcomes, AK can come up with a more precise unit-price.

³⁸ And the answers are not so easy to give, see for example: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/jobs/how-much-does-it-cost-create-job>

³⁹ The evaluators are aware of SPARKS earlier exploration of return on investment, including unit prices.

targeted other actors, e.g., employers who create internship positions that are open to AK participants. These intermediate outcomes are currently poorly reflected in AKs ToC or monitoring framework. The result of which is that analysing the performance of AK in this regard, i.e., the extent to which outcomes result from outputs and what could be done to improve performance, is difficult, as relevant data are not collected.

To some extent, this is also at play in outcome 2 and 3 in relation to access to finance, AK and local partners work both the demand and supply side of access to finance. The demand side is reflected in the detailed monitoring framework through outputs such as training and coaching, to SMEs and linking them to financial institutions. The supply side interventions that also contribute to the intermediate outcome of MFIs developing new loan products (or adapt existing ones) that are attractive for AK participants are not so visible.

Securing buy-in from the government

The evaluators have discussed with AK staff if and how AK engages with relevant government bodies to address barriers or challenges to AK. In the evaluators understanding, given the context, AK is content to be able to execute their programme with little interference from the government. The risk of the latter was also voiced by other stakeholders, added to that such interference can have devastating effects on programming⁴⁰. Nonetheless, as high youth unemployment and the challenges of doing business also have systemic causes, a more direct approach vis-a-vis government bodies may elicit better results. If, at some point, there is the desire to move towards a more MSD-inspired approach, getting government bodies' buy-in may be even more needed.

Contracting of partners

AK has carefully selected the local partners with whom they are currently working. In the understanding of the evaluators, the assessment process in 2021 and as well as the contracting for 2022 took a significant amount of time (naturally, the assessment more so than the contracting). Thus, the actual period for activities was somewhat reduced and partners experienced uncertainty and financial strain. This gap between two projects has also not been beneficial to SMEs who have found themselves unexpectedly confronted without coaching for a few months. The partners expressed a desire to accelerate this process to leave more time for implementation and reduce their uncertainty about contracts. If there is a way to accommodate this without compromising the quality of the process, the evaluators recommend AK to do so.

5. Recommendations

While the evaluators find that AK performs well and is of relevance for its participants, the below recommendations can be incorporated to fix some of the overarching issues in the programme's design or specific challenges related to one of the interventions.

5.1 Overarching Recommendations

A broader M&E role and function:

M&E should extend to (all different levels of) expected and unexpected outcomes and impacts. Though AK's M&E of inputs and outputs, including expenditures, is frequent, the M&E of outcomes and impact is not. The evaluators recommend organizing such data collection and analysis to take place at regular intervals (bi-annually or annually) in a sample of selected communities.

⁴⁰ The fact that SPARK is a relatively small organization may be a benefit here, as they draw less attention than others such as Enabel.

Such an improvement of the M&E framework is essential for AK to understand whether the program is on the right track to achieving impact. And, if not, assess which adaptations to its programming should be made. It is important that the EKN allows for such adaptation along the way, as without it, AK has little room for adaptive management. The quality of this (outcome and impact) M&E is improved if its stakeholders are also actively participating in data collection and analysis. Knowing that AK is concerned with the budget required for more extensive M&E, the evaluators suggest keeping it relatively simple, to pilot such data collection and evaluate what it brings them. Such a gradual approach may also be an easier sell to the donor.

Example 1: If AK decided to adhere to the current expected impact (stability) alone, which the evaluators advise against, indicators for improvement in stability should be formulated. A simple KOBO survey among a sample of households in the community would be a good way to monitor if progress towards this impact is realized.

Example 2: If the programme expands and explicates its expectations in terms of impact (as advised), other tools may be used in addition to the above survey. Periodic collection of Most Significant Change stories is a relatively low-cost method to better understand how the programme impacts participants (and possibly their communities) and make management decisions based on these results. The evaluators believe that local partners can easily be trained to employ these tools, while it would require some additional investment of the SAPRK staff in the analysis of these stories.

Unpacking impact

The evaluators recommend AK to start with a better formulation of the kind of impact they aim for in individual participants. This can be generic at first but should become more specific along the way. For example, if the programme aims for its participants to be economically empowered, this should be unpacked to reveal what that means in the context. Building on that, what does that mean for the minimum income they should generate through (self)employment⁴¹, for how long should one have such an income to be economically empowered? Are there, next to duration and income, any other criteria that are relevant? Subsequently, indicators should be formulated that measure the extent to which this impact is realized. Once AK has a better picture of what they aim for, they should make explicit how their interventions will result in outputs, (intermediate) outcomes and finally the expected impact. This ties in with regular updating of the ToC (below) and a broader role and function of M&E (above).

The evaluators are convinced that a lot of the knowledge needed for this exercise is **already available within the AK team**, some of it is probably explicit while other parts are contained in the minds of the different team members. Therefore, it is a matter of systematically doing this exercise with the team, and writing it down, to arrive at a better foundation for expected impact. This is not expected to be a costly exercise.

Regular updating of the ToC:

An improved measurement framework and good analysis (for example on impact as described above), including review by the AK team and management, should lead to periodic discussions on the current ToC. The outcome of such discussion should be an updated ToC that goes beyond the simple revision of numeric targets. It should also cover the identification of additional (unexpected) outcomes, the reformulation of current outcomes, and reviewing of assumptions.

⁴¹ See also reflections (chapter 4).

Only then can the ToC be used as a valuable flexible management tool and a general learning instrument. A narrative format of the ToC, describing all steps and result levels in a clear language, could be a useful instrument for the joint understanding by the entire team (including partners). The updated ToC should be added to each annual report.

Aiming for systemic change means securing (and measuring) buy-in.

As AK has not yet made explicit what, according to the programme is the relevant system and their vision for change, this should be the first step. As with the ToC (above), the evaluators believe that the required knowledge for defining a system and a vision is available implicitly in the minds of the AK staff.

In lieu of this vision, the evaluators provide a few examples of changed behaviour that indicate different degrees of systemic change: a more positive attitudes of MFIs towards young entrepreneurs (reflected in the loan-products, or services, they offer to this group), attitudes towards interns (reflected in employers making more frequent use of interns or paying them better), market-based programming by other organizations (e.g., entrepreneurship programmes substitute loans for grants), changes in TVET curriculum (more focus on employability of graduates and/or their entrepreneurship skills), elements of the AK approach emerge in other programmes (e.g., proximity coaching), policy changes that are in line with a more conducive environment for doing business (for young people), etc.

For these outcomes to emerge, it is important to closely engage with actors such as the government, international programmes, TVET institutions etc. and collaborate through adequate communication and sharing of reports and information at regular intervals. As shown in the section on coherence, the programme already manages to operate in synergy with other programmes from international partners and the government to the benefit of AK participants.

The evaluators recommend AK to start collecting data on these changes, first and foremost from their own staff as they have a good understanding of what is happening in the system. Given AK's concerns with regards to the budget required for measuring systemic change, the evaluators recommend a light-touch approach to measuring. Concretely, AK should systematically capture these changes as they are observed by staff. As AK staff meet regularly anyway, they should periodically (e.g., quarterly) discuss this specific issue to try and answer the question: do we see any indicators for systemic change? If so, what are these changes and how did they come about? The collected evidence should subsequently be used to inform program management (adaptation), ToC revision and possibly in reporting to the donor.

5.2 Specific Recommendations

Consider outcome 1 as a pipeline for outcome 2 (or 3).

Among participants in outcome 1 that have not found employment after their internships despite performing well, there is a strong interest in becoming entrepreneurs. These young people have been through a selection process, received technical and employability skills training and have at least some work-experiences due to their period as interns. The evaluators recommend AK to analyse the skills-gap and other barriers that stand in the way of them starting as entrepreneurs. Such an analysis might yield that including (some of) them in entrepreneurship training and possibly

other interventions (as provided to outcome 2 participants) is cost-effective⁴² given their capacity and set of skills and what was spent on them already. If the above is not considered feasible, the evaluators suggest exploring if ex-interns can play a role in the scale-ups of outcome 3. This too, could make sense from a cost-effectiveness point of view.

Payment for business development services to safeguard sustainability

Clients paying for a service that is provided is key to ensuring sustainability. The evaluators encourage AK to start piloting partial payment for the services that are being provided by partners to the SMEs. Given that there is now a track-record of the average benefits of these services to SMEs, there is a business case for new SMEs to pay for the service they receive. Advice is for the payment to cover the costs of the service only partially, as this will be feasible for SMEs while potentially contributing to systemic change where it comes to this type of programming. An example of the latter would be these service providers or their competitors introducing direct payment for services more broadly, i.e., also for clients that are not participants in AK.

Use success stories to formulate a business case for AK interns and boost demand

As the activities to boost demand of targeted employers are currently not reflected in the Measuring framework, there is a risk that the evaluators overlook AK partner activities already taking place. Nonetheless, the overwhelmingly positive appreciation of interns among exposed employers calls for using these results to boost demand among prospective employers. Simple suggestions, such as “internship fairs” or advertisement can prove to be valuable tools to increase awareness of and boost demand for AK interns. The evaluators would suggest to, making use of some of the employers that have previously hosted interns, formulate a business case for taking-on an AK intern.

Facilitate exchange between MFIs to ensure the exchange of innovative loan products that reflect what AK participants need and want

Access to finance is one of the main challenges for young entrepreneurs and there is a lack of suitable loan products. Nonetheless, AK identified the use of one or more suitable loan products provided by MFIs. AK should consider to actively facilitate exchange on these between MFIs, as they already engage with them e.g., for the matchmaking events. Here too, departing from a market-based approach, a business case for adopting such loan products should be formulated.

Increase the capacity to innovate among participants in outcome 2 and 3

Local partners identify the limited capacity for innovation among participants as an important barrier to growth. AK should investigate the extent to which this lack of innovation indeed exists and if so, whether it can be resolved through better selection of participants, as this was not explicitly mentioned as a selection criterion for outcome 2 or 3. Alternatively, exercises that test and improve the capacity to innovate can be included in the entrepreneurship skills training. If, unfortunately, it turns out that extensive additional technical training is the only avenue to improve innovation capacity, this is likely to come with significant additional costs.

⁴² Naturally, their location vis-à-vis the programme’s activities can easily be a deal-breaker, as are various other issues.

Annex 1: Evaluation Questions

Question nr.	Question
Relevance	
1	How relevant is the programme to the needs of its target group (i.e. youth and women)?
2	How relevant is the programme in the involvement of Burundian civil society (organizations) and Burundi government priorities?
Efficiency	
3	How efficient is the capacity to convert inputs into outputs and outcomes (Economic efficiency)?
4	How efficient is the SPARK programme management structure, with focus on Burundi Country Team, Africa Hub Support and HQ Support (Operational efficiency)?
Effectiveness	
Outcome 1	
5	How effective are employability trainings in enabling youth to acquire demanded professional skills?
6	How effective are employability trainings and the resulting professional skills in enabling youth to get into internships?
7	How effective are internships in enabling youth to get a permanent job?
8	To what extent did the innovative internship approach contribute toward a creating a sustainable culture for internships (i.e. seeing young interns as an added value instead of a source of revenue?)
Outcome 2	
9	How effective is the approach to use pipeline partners (ENABEL, SWISS-Contact, WarChild, etc.) as base to select youth?
10	How effective are business development trainings and proximity coachings and the resulting entrepreneurship skills in enabling start-ups to start sustainable businesses?
11	How effective are business plan competitions (with matching grants/seed capital) in boosting promising businesses?
12	How effective are start-ups in creating (direct and indirect, permanent and temporary) jobs?
Outcome 3	

13	How effective are entrepreneurship trainings and proximity coachings and the resulting entrepreneurship skills in enabling SMEs to scale businesses?
14	How effective is the approach to combine technical and business development coaching?
15	How effective is the digital access to finance (with MoneyPhone and Burundi Lend and Lease) component of the programme (for Bubanza/Honey Beekeepers)?
16	How effective is the access to finance (i.e. get a loan at MFI) component of the programme?
17	How effective are scale-ups at creating (direct and indirect, permanent and temporary) jobs?
Coherence	
18	How has the implementation-overlapping (and continuation) between Akazi Keza and ABIN affected efficiency in Akazi Keza's implementation (result wise)? (internal coherence)
19	What are the synergies with the programs implemented by other organizations in the same ecosystem/intervention areas, i.e. (female) entrepreneurship, job creation and youth development? (external coherence)
Sustainability	
20	To what extent did the programme increase the capacity of its local partner organisations? Did the local partner organisations take ownership of their activities, outputs and outcomes?
21	To what extent has the programme already contributed to systemic change in the regions/communities in which it is implemented and more specifically in the enabling environment for youth employment and SME growth?
Impact	
22	To what extent the programme has already influenced (if at all) positively perceptions/attitudes in the communities it operated, relevant to violence and stability?
23	Is there any unintended (positive and/or negative) impact of the programme in the regions/communities it is implemented?

Annex 2: Topic guide for interviews and FGDs

Interview with the project team

1. How was the programme designed to reflect the economic and social context like that of Burundi?
2. What is the relevance of the program in the involvement of Burundian civil society (organizations) and the priorities of the Burundian government?
3. Why has SPARK, in 2021 and 2022, chosen to do things differently? (What has changed and why)
4. Please reflect on the management structure of AK (team, regional office, headquarter)
5. Could you elaborate on your assessment of the results of AK?
6. How does monitoring and evaluation contribute to improving the quality of AK program implementation?
7. Does the budget allow for implementation of the programme as planned? Challenges?
8. What is the relationship like with program implementing partners and government? What are some of the challenges? How do you overcome these?
9. What are the synergies developed with the players involved in the same field of youth employability?
10. What are the difficulties encountered in the implementation of the program? How did you overcome them?
11. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Focus group guide with trainees

1. Since you have joined AK, what do you consider the most significant change for you and why?
2. What did the support of the AK program and its implementing partners consist of for the trainees?
3. How do you assess the training received before your internships?
4. How has this training helped you, or not in your internship?
5. How did the internships go?
6. How did your internships contribute to employment? (for young people who were able to get a job)?
7. What were some of the main challenges you have encountered and how did you manage them?
8. Do you have any other suggestions that you haven't mentioned so far?

Focus group guide with employers

1. In your opinion, is the AK program important? Why?
2. How did you appreciate the trainees of the AK program and its partners?
3. How did they perform during their internships.
4. Are you ready to welcome new interns to your respective companies? Why?
5. What are the difficulties encountered during the internship period?
6. Do you have any other points to add?
7. Since your participation in AK, what do you consider the most significant change for you and why?

Interview guide with implementing partner organizations (outcome 2 and 3)

1. How do you assess the partnership with the AK program?
2. Do you think the AK program is important in the context of Burundi? Why ? ? Have you been able to provide input in its design?
3. Can you describe and reflect on the current results observed in the field?
4. What are the challenges you encountered carrying out your activities?

5. What have you done and what should still be done to overcome these?
6. What are the main elements of successful scaling of businesses to make them stronger and create more jobs?
7. Do you have any other suggestions?
8. Since you have joined AK, what do you consider the most significant change for you and why? Training/coaching?

Interview Guide with Implementing Partner Organizations (Outcome 1)

1. How do you assess the partnership with the AK program?
2. Do you think the AK program is important in a context like Burundi? Why? Have you been able to provide input in its design?
3. What are the most important results in terms of supporting the employability of unemployed young graduates.
4. What are the difficulties you encounter supporting unemployed youth?
5. How are you overcoming these challenges and what is still needed?
6. Do you have any other suggestions?
7. Since you have joined AK, what do you consider the most significant change for you and why? Training/coaching?

Interview guide with stakeholders

1. What are the main issues related to youth unemployment in Burundi?
2. How do you contribute to overcomeing?
3. What should be done to improve the current trend?
4. Are you familiar with the AK program implemented by SPARK and its partners?
5. If you know it, what should be done for the program to do the best to contribute effectively to the employability of young unemployed graduates?
6. Do you have any other suggestions?

Annex 3: Documents list

Type	Description
Akazi Keza proposal	Proposal as approved and financed by the EKN
Akazi Keza Context analysis	2021, including annexes ⁴³
Akazi Keza Annual plan	2021, 2022
Narrative reports to EKN	2020, 2021
Expenditures	Up until Q2 of 2022
Results	Up until Q2 of 2022
Partner reports	For all four current partners: 2021 and 1 st half of 2022.

⁴³ SME tracer study (SPARK), Study on the state-of-play of youth employment in Burundi (REJA, ADISCO, Cordaid), Bruck, T., *Jobs aid peace*, Youth engagement and Economic opportunities for youth (War Child), Assessment of needed skills (SPARK), Overview of comparable initiatives (EKN).

Annex 4: List of respondents and planning

KIIs/group interviews:

Partners		SPARK staff		Stakeholders	
Aforger	2	Country manager	1	MoneyPhone	1
CEMAC	1	Financial officer	1	Agroecologist	
CREOP	1	Project manager	1	(University of Burundi)	1
Enabel	2	M&E officer	1	Savonor	1
Infinity Group	1	Area coordinator	2	Ministry of Commerce	1
Doutticoaching	1	Regional Programme director	1	PAEEJ	1
Apiculture expert	1	Monitoring, Evaluation and Quality Assurance manager	1	Burundi Lend and Lease	1
Total	10	Total	8	Total	5

FGDs		
Type	Nr.	Description
Interns (Gitega)	2	Male/Female
Interns (Bujumbura)	2	Male/Female
Employers (Gitega)	1	All sectors
Start-ups (Rumonge)	1	All Sectors
Scale-ups	4	Honey (Bubanza), Palm oil (Rumonge) and non-agricultural ⁴⁴ (Rumonge)
Total	9	

Site visits		
Type	Nr.	Description
Start-ups	3	Restaurant, tailoring
Scale-ups	6	Honey, Palm oil,
Total	9	

⁴⁴ The FGD with non-agricultural SME's included a sample of businesses active in various sectors.

Fair & Sustainable Consulting

Arthur van Schendelstraat 550

3511 MH Utrecht, The Netherlands

Phone: +31 30 234 8281

E-mail: netherlands@fairandsustainable.org

Internet: www.fairandsustainable.org