



# Akazi Kanoze Youth Employment and Livelihood Outcomes: A Qualitative Follow-up of Program Graduates

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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AK	Akazi Kanoze
EDC	Education Development Center, Inc.
FGD	focus group discussion
IGA	income-generating activity
IP	implementing partner
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WDA	Workforce Development Authority
WRC	Work Readiness Curriculum

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## INTRODUCTION

Youth make up almost 40% of Rwanda’s population. A 2013 household survey (EICV3) conducted by the Rwandan National Institute of Statistics, found that while only 0.8% of youth are unemployed, 64% are underemployed.

Established in 2009, the USAID-funded Akazi Kanoze Youth Livelihoods Project provided Rwanda youth ages 14-35 with market relevant life and work readiness training and support, on-the-job training opportunities, and links to the employment and self-employment market. Akazi Kanoze (meaning “work well done” in Kinyarwanda) builds capacity and creates linkages between youth, the Rwandan economy and the public and private sector so that youth can access increased opportunities for productive engagement in society. AK youth receive work readiness and entrepreneurship training in addition to internship opportunities for on-the-job learning, job placement services and/or business start-up coaching. At the end of the program, youth receive a certificate signed by the Rwandan Workforce Development Authority (WDA). Over the lifetime of the project, Akazi Kanoze reached 21,039 youth (9,996 Males and 11,043 Females) in 19 Districts across Rwanda through the partnership of 63 local civil society organizations (implementing partners).

## QUALITATIVE STUDY

To further describe how AK met its results to improve employment and livelihood outcomes for youth, **this qualitative follow-up study was designed to evaluate the employment and livelihoods status of several groups of AK students after their graduation.**

There are two main purposes for this youth employment and livelihood outcomes study:

- This study tracks the long-term livelihood and employment outcomes of youth who completed the program more than one year ago. As Result 1 of the project is to “increase livelihood opportunities for youth,” findings of this study will help AK better understand the challenges and pathways of two groups of graduates—employed and unemployed youth. Gathering data on youth who graduated more than a year and a half ago will help AK and EDC understand the long-term outcomes of the project.
- The study will also help the broader youth development community understand the long-term outcomes of workforce development projects like Akazi Kanoze. Youth are difficult to track long term and often data collection is limited to the life of the project, which may not be flexible enough to provide longitudinal data. The qualitative approach chosen by the research team allows AK to survey a diverse group of program graduates in order to contribute to literature on workforce development projects.

## Methodology

The evaluation team worked with field officers and implementing partners to identify groups of employed and unemployed youth from each graduating year. **The sampling techniques used in selection were purposive and non-random.**

Eighteen focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted during the youth employment and livelihood outcomes study: 10 groups with employed youth and 8 groups with unemployed youth. **A total of 46 female and 44 male AK graduates participated in the FGDs.**

## Research Questions

In order to demonstrate AK's long-term outcomes on youth employment and livelihoods, this study examines the following research questions:

1. What types of economic opportunities are AK graduates involved in after the completion of the program, including new and better livelihood outcomes and promotions?
2. What challenges have AK graduates faced in regards to finding employment or starting their own businesses?
3. From their perspectives, why are unemployed graduates without work?
4. Over time, have AK graduates continued to use the life skills and vocational training that they received during the project?
5. Are AK graduates more satisfied with their current economic opportunities than before?

## FINDINGS

The top findings for youth employment outcomes are below:

**Value of past work experience:** Almost all AK graduates who had a job at the time of the FGDs reported having previous work experience before entering the program. In contrast, only about half of unemployed youth had an income-generating activity (IGA) before AK.

**Diversity of past work experience:** Employed youth had more self-employment experience in a variety of fields than the youth who were unemployed at the time of the study.

**Reasons for lack of opportunities:** Youth who did not have an income-generating activity before AK cited these reasons: they were in school, on holiday after finishing secondary school, or did not know how to look for a job

**Greater accessibility of short-term jobs:** There was a variety in the types of employment ranging from three months to five years of employment, with the majority of the jobs being semi-permanent or temporary in length.

**Challenges:** Top challenges youth faced in gaining employment were lack of information on finding jobs, lack of skills, or low education levels. Youth struggled to start businesses due to lack of materials and lack of capital coupled with high startup expenses, such as taxes and rents, and a lack of clients.

# INTRODUCTION

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## PROJECT BACKGROUND

The Akazi Kanoze (AK) Youth Livelihoods Project was a seven-year, \$12.5 million project financed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC), between October 2009 and September 2016. The project provided youth ages 14–35<sup>1</sup> with market-relevant life and work readiness training and support, including hands-on training, links to employers, and self-employment opportunities. The AK project trained more than 21,000 Rwandan youth; 52% are female and 47% reside in rural areas. The project targeted two results:



An Akazi Kanoze participant takes notes for her group during a work readiness training.

- **Result 1: Increase Livelihood Opportunities for Youth**

AK empowers youth with the necessary tools and resources to enter into a positive development pathway that will lead to increased lifelong livelihood opportunities.

- **Result 2: Develop a Thriving Youth Livelihood Support System**

AK builds capacity and creates linkages between youth, the Rwandan economy, and public and private institutions so that youth can access increased opportunities for productive engagement in Rwandan society.

The project's theory of change states that the AK intervention will increase work readiness skills and the employability level of youth, thereby improving livelihood outcomes in the long term (see *Figure 1: Akazi Kanoze Theory of Change* on next page). This articulated theory of change is supported by research that demonstrates that work readiness skills increase employability and productivity.<sup>2</sup> There is a growing body of evidence that returns on skills training programs around the world can be positive and statistically significant.<sup>3</sup>

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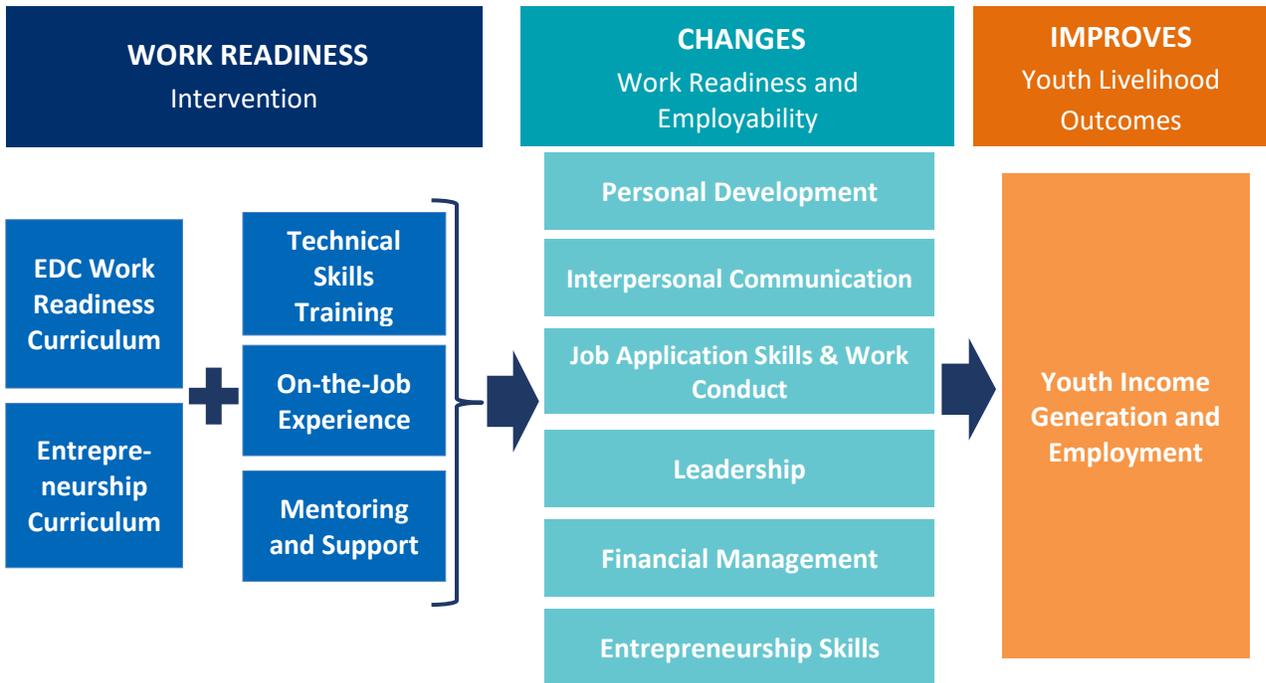
<sup>1</sup> Although USAID defines youth as between the ages of 14 and 25, Rwanda defines youth as between the ages of 14 and 35.

<sup>2</sup> The World Bank. (2010). *Stepping up skills for more jobs and higher productivity*. Washington, D.C.: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

<sup>3</sup> Riboud, M., Savchenko, Y., & Tan, H. (2007). *The knowledge economy and education and training in South Asia*. Washington, D.C.: Human Development Unit, South Asia Region, World Bank; Lassibille, G., & Tan, J. P. (2005). The returns to education in Rwanda. *Journal of African Economies* 14(1), 92–116; Kahyarara, G., & Teal, F. (2008). The returns to vocational training and academic education: Evidence from Tanzania. *World Development* 36(11), 2223–2242.

Furthermore, AK provides a skills certification system by awarding passing youth an AK graduation certificate signed by the Rwandan Workforce Development Authority (WDA), the arm of the Ministry of Education responsible for technical education. Skills certification has become an important quality assurance mechanism for employers,<sup>4</sup> which makes the AK certificate a valuable asset.

Figure 1: Akazi Kanoze Theory of Change



## Activities to Increase Youth Livelihood Opportunities

Akazi Kanoze aimed to enable youth participants to be more capable of earning a livelihood, through appropriate and relevant connections to work readiness training opportunities, market actors, and skills development and upgrading. In order to achieve these goals, AK provided youth with a variety of activities and trainings that were implemented by local implementing partners:

1. **Work Readiness Curriculum (WRC):** All AK participants underwent a modular, 100-hour work readiness core curriculum that included topics such as personal awareness, communication, professional conduct, financial literacy, personal health, and worker’s rights and responsibilities. All AK youth in this study completed this curriculum and the corresponding exam. Students who passed the exam received a nationally recognized certificate signed by the WDA.

<sup>4</sup> The World Bank. (2010). *Stepping up skills for more jobs and higher productivity*. Washington, D.C.: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

2. **Training and Support Resources:** AK youth were also offered a menu of specialized workforce development skills training and resource programs. These included savings groups, in-depth skills training in targeted sectors, literacy/numeracy instruction, entrepreneurship training, and youth mentoring. All AK youth in this follow-up study received the income-generating activities (IGA) training, which focuses on business startup and self-employment.
3. **Workforce Connections:** All participating youth were offered access to workforce linkage opportunities (internships and apprenticeships) including formal sector jobs, entrepreneurship, and other livelihood opportunities. After youth finished the in-class and technical training, the majority of the graduates in this evaluation went on to a three-month internship in their trade of choice. This internship provided them with on-the-job experience and in some cases led to full-time employment.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

To further describe how Akazi Kanoze met its results to improve livelihood outcomes for youth, **this qualitative follow-up study was designed to evaluate the livelihoods status of several groups of AK students after their graduation.**

There are two main purposes for this youth employment and livelihoods outcomes study:

1. This study tracks the long-term livelihood and employment outcomes of youth who completed the program more than one year ago. As Result 1 of the project is to “increase livelihood opportunities for youth,” findings of this study will help AK better understand the challenges and pathways of two groups of graduates—employed and unemployed youth. Gathering data on youth who graduated more than a year ago will help AK and EDC understand the long-term outcomes of the project.
2. This study will help the broader youth development community understand the long-term outcomes of workforce development projects like Akazi Kanoze. Youth are difficult to track long term and often data collection is limited to the life of the project, which may not provide sufficient longitudinal data. The qualitative approach chosen by the research team allows AK to survey a diverse group of program graduates in order to contribute to literature on workforce development projects.

The cumulative results of the employment and livelihoods outcomes study add to the body of knowledge on work readiness training, in particular about the employability of the youth trained and certified by AK. The three sections in this report include 1) methodology, 2) findings, and 3) conclusion. Findings are split into four sub-sections: youth employment outcomes, challenges, youth gains from the program, and future prospects.

# METHODOLOGY

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## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to demonstrate Akazi Kanoze’s long-term outcomes on youth employment and livelihoods, this study examines the following research questions:

1. What types of economic opportunities are AK graduates involved in after the completion of the program, including new and better livelihood outcomes and promotions?
2. What challenges have AK graduates faced in regards to finding employment or starting their own businesses?
3. From their perspectives, why are unemployed graduates without work?
4. Over time, have AK graduates continued to use the life skills and vocational training that they received during the project?
5. Are AK graduates more satisfied with their current economic opportunities than before?

## STUDY APPROACH

Within this study, employability is defined as “a set of achievements, skills, understandings and personal attributes that make a person more likely to gain and retain employment, be successful in their chosen occupation and be professionally and personally satisfied with their employment. To increase employability for a target group means to increase their capabilities for gaining and maintaining employment, thereby improving the probability of sustainable employment.” Youth are given the opportunity to improve their employability during the work readiness training and to apply these skills on the job during internships after the training.

Categories of livelihood opportunity, or employment, include: self-employed, working for an employer part-time or full-time, working for your family, or working for a cooperative. Increased livelihood opportunity does not necessarily mean higher income, but it encompasses the various ways in which youth can improve their economic situation, such as with higher job satisfaction, more customers, or improved perceptions of their working situation compared to before.

**This youth employment and livelihood outcomes study uses primary qualitative data collected in December 2014 that covers three rural and three urban districts in Southern Province and Kigali City.** Participants of the study were youth who had graduated from AK between 2010 and 2014. However, in the period of 2010–2011, no rural graduates took part in this study, as the program operated only in urban areas during that time. These study participants were split into two groups—employed and unemployed.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted over the course of one month. FGDs lasted about one hour and were conducted by two administrators. One administrator was responsible for asking the questions in English, French, and Kinyarwanda and translating to English while the second administrator was in charge of taking notes.

## SAMPLING

The evaluation team worked with field officers and implementing partners to identify groups of employed and unemployed youth from each graduating year. The sampling techniques used in selection were purposive and non-random.

Eighteen FGDs were conducted during the youth employment and livelihood outcomes study: 10 groups with employed youth and 8 groups with unemployed youth. A total of 46 female and 44 male AK graduates participated in the FGDs. Table 1 below outlines the characteristics of each focus group.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Study's Focus Groups

Graduation Year	Urban Employed Youth from Kigali Area	Rural Employed Youth from Rural Areas	Unemployed
2010	5-7		5-7 youth from Kigali area
2011	5-7		5-7 youth from Kigali area
2012	5-7	5-7	5-7 youth from rural areas
2013	5-7	5-7	5-7 youth from rural areas
2014	5-7	5-7	5-7 youth from rural areas
<b>Totals</b>	<b>25-35 urban youth</b>	<b>15-21 rural youth</b>	<b>25-35 youth</b>

## QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS METHODS

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis based on the topics identified in the research questions. The written form of the interviews was reviewed several times, and patterns and themes were identified by the research team. Common statements or ideas that appeared repeatedly were noted and incorporated into this employment and livelihood outcomes study report.

## FINDINGS

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The findings from the study that surveyed employed and unemployed Akazi Kanoze graduates are divided into five sections:

1. **Youth employment outcomes:** How did different factors affect outcomes? What types of economic opportunities are AK graduates engaged in?
2. **Challenges:** What challenges are youth facing in finding employment or starting a business?
3. **Youth gains from the program:** What have graduates gained from the program in regards to work readiness skills and job satisfaction?
4. **Future prospects:** How satisfied are AK graduates with their economic opportunities and future prospects?
5. **Challenges**

## YOUTH EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

One of the key topics that youth were asked about in this study was their previous and current employment status. Changes in youth employment outcomes, one of AK's key result areas, are of great interest for learning and retrospective analysis. Questions about employment outcomes were broken down into three areas: 1) types of employment before AK, 2) employment since graduating from AK, and 3) challenges in finding employment or in the workplace.

**The top findings for youth employment outcomes are:**

1. **Value of past work experience**
2. **Variety of past work experience**
3. **Reasons for lack of opportunities**
4. **Greater accessibility of short-term jobs**

**Overall, youth who were employed at the time of the FGDs had more past work experience and in a wider variety of fields than youth who were unemployed at the time of the FGDs.** Almost all of the youth who were employed at the time of the FGDs had an IGA before enrolling in AK. Those who did not have an IGA before AK cited the following reasons: they were at school, on holiday after finishing secondary school, or did not know how to look for a job. In comparison, only about half of unemployed youth interviewed had an IGA before AK.

These findings suggest that previous work experience is correlated with future success in the job market for AK graduates. Additional research, particularly quantitative, would be helpful to confirm this.

Employed and unemployed AK graduates reported working from two months to five years in one job. The jobs fell into the following categories in order of frequency:

1. **Non-agricultural commerce** – includes retail shops, tailoring, accounting, etc.
2. **Agriculture and agribusiness** – includes farming, animal husbandry, fishing, and agricultural commerce
3. **Services and hospitality** – includes restaurant and cleaning jobs
4. **Construction** – includes carpentry, welding, electricity, plumbing, etc.
5. **Education** – includes teaching, early childhood development, mentoring, etc.
6. **Other** – includes art and cooperatives

As illustrated in Figure 2, there was a difference in the types of prior employment that the two groups of youth reported—employed youth had more self-employment experience than currently unemployed youth.

**Figure 2: Difference in Employment History of Youth before Akazi Kanoze**



Table 2 shows the work experience of youth in the study according to their employment status.

**Table 2: Past Work Experience of AK Graduates**

Job Category	Employed and Self-Employed Youth	Unemployed Youth
Non-agricultural commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boutique</li> <li>• Cooperative of cleaners</li> <li>• Artisanal crafts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accountant</li> <li>• Storekeeper</li> </ul>
Agricultural and agribusiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agricultural services</li> </ul>	
Services and hospitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restaurant</li> <li>• Bar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waiter</li> <li>• Customer service role</li> </ul>
Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electricity installation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vice-masonry</li> <li>• Welder</li> </ul>

All employed youth interviewed earned an income for work they performed. A few unemployed youth received financial support from their families in order to attend trainings or look for jobs. Interestingly, several of the employed youth had received loans from savings groups to start their own businesses before joining AK, whereas none of the unemployed youth had received loans prior to doing the training. This highlights the importance of past experience as well as access to finance. AK supported youth to participate in savings groups and establish linkages with microfinance institutions, but the youth need follow-up and ongoing support to secure access to finance.

In general, the youth employed at the time of this study had a much more diversified work history than the unemployed youth we interviewed. They appear to have started AK with more experience to obtain startup funds, develop businesses, and save money for investment.

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The youth employed at the time of this study generally had a much more diversified work history than the unemployed youth interviewed.

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## CHALLENGES

### Challenges in Finding and Maintaining Jobs

Youth were asked about their pathways to employment opportunities since completing AK, and reasons for unemployment if they were unemployed at the time of the FGDs.

All AK youth graduates who were employed at the time of the FGDs had engaged in several different economic opportunities since graduating from Akazi Kanoze. Employed AK graduates reported working in jobs from 9 months to 5 years since graduation. Interestingly, the jobs they had were in the same sectors in which they were working before AK. Although the economic opportunities look similar before and after AK, the youth spoke about growth and diversification of their businesses and economic opportunities (see the case studies below for details on a few youth).

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Overall challenges:  
workplace ethics, personal,  
education/technical and  
financial capital.

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### Challenges in Employment, Launching and Sustaining Businesses

Unemployed AK graduates started a variety of IGAs, including businesses selling cooking oil, coffee, vegetables, and clothes; agribusinesses; and a hair salon. Many youth expressed a concern about not having enough capital to start or expand their businesses. Many of them cited that AK introduced them to the concept of savings and that their participation in savings groups helped them access funds to invest in their businesses.

Some youth demonstrated improved communication skills and were able to borrow funds from family members by explaining to them how they will use the funds to launch an IGA. Furthermore, youth improved their job search skills and were able to identify opportunities through networking and other job search strategies learned through the AK program.



AK participant Jean Baptiste, in front of his restaurant and tofu shop in the Nyanza District.

## Akazi Kanoze Youth Employment Case Studies and Key Takeaways

### **Youth reported business diversification and expansion.**

- Since graduating, one AK youth started a coffee plantation business with a plot of land. After one season when he sold only 70 kg of coffee, he started an egg business by purchasing chickens and selling the eggs at the market while saving money.

### **Comparing the economic opportunities before and after AK shows that youth moved from working for someone else to being self-employed.**

- Another AK graduate was director of a coffee washing station as a company employee, but after completing AK and learning various skills, he decided to buy a cassava processing machine and rent it out to others who use it to make cassava bread.

### **Those who did not have an income generating activity (IGA), but who had one in the past, identified several reasons for why they lost their jobs. The top reasons that illustrate how they became unemployed are loss of business, temporary jobs, return to school, or a shift of the business by the owner to another area.**

- For example, an AK youth started a chicken farming business after graduation, but the chickens were struck with disease and died, so she became unemployed.
- Another AK graduate started a business of selling cooking oil in the market, but the price for cooking oil went up beyond what she could afford. She could no longer sustain the business and became unemployed.
- And finally, one AK youth started a business to buy raw coffee and then sell it to a coffee production company. However, the youth had used his business money for an urgent family emergency and was not able to continue the business.

## Identifying Solutions to Employment Challenges since Graduation

All AK graduates confronted challenges, but employed youth were able to find more solutions compared to unemployed youth, which may indicate a higher level of resiliency and creativity in the employed group. On the other hand, the ability to overcome challenges may also be connected to the employed youth's higher level of prior work experience.

**All youth regardless of employment status said that the biggest obstacles they face are financial in nature: high taxes, high rent, and lack of access to capital.** The top roadblocks faced by both groups of youth are summarized in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Employed and Unemployed Youth Identified Challenges in Finding and Sustaining Employment; Corresponding AK Strategies**

Challenge	Employed AK Youth	Unemployed AK Youth	AK Strategies to Address Challenge
<b>Business Climate and Market Conditions</b>			
High taxes/ high rent	X	X	
Lack of market opportunities/ places to start a business	X		
Lack of clients	X	X	
Loss of business		X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Join savings groups</li> <li>• Identify mentors/expert to ask for guidance and advice</li> </ul>
Animal disease/ insect attack	X		
<b>Access to Finance</b>			
Lack of materials and capital to start a business	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Save money</li> <li>• Start microbusiness with plans to grow</li> </ul>
<b>Employability and Job Searching</b>			
Lack of skills/ low education levels	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify opportunities to develop specific demanded skills</li> </ul>
Lack of experience		X	
Lack of information on finding jobs	X	X	
<b>Work Environment</b>			
Receiving income payments late	X		
Not paid for extra hours	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage boss's expectations (don't always give in)</li> <li>• Build trust in your capability to do quality work</li> </ul>
Lack of personal confidence to sustain business	X		

To summarize, employed youth found more solutions to the above challenges. For example, they were able to effectively utilize problem-solving skills gained from the program. Unemployed youth found few solutions to their challenges; those who did, often utilized specific work readiness skills such as communication to obtain family support to overcome their challenges.

## YOUTH GAINS FROM THE PROGRAM

Almost all AK graduates regardless of employment status reported that the work readiness skills they gained were helpful and useful. It was not just employed youth who pointed out the importance of the WRC. Unemployed youth also saw the value of what they had gained during AK training. Both employed and unemployed AK youth stated that they were better positioned than non-AK youth to start a business.

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AK youth felt better positioned than non-AK youth to start a business.

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AK has taught youth participants about the importance of communication and customer service skills—understanding how to deal with customers and working with others to resolve conflict. Respondents also noted the important skills gained through participation in the project around finding a job and preparing for interviews.

Table 4 outlines skills improvements reported by employed and unemployed AK youth at least one year after completing the program. Unemployed and employed AK youth reported almost all of the same gains in skills, suggesting that youth recognize their own progress even when not in a work context.

Table 4: Employed and Unemployed Youth Gain Skills for Increased Livelihood Opportunities

Youth Gains	Employed AK Youth	Unemployed AK Youth
Increased confidence (on a personal and business level)	X	X
Personal development (understanding personal strengths/weaknesses)/goal setting	X	X
Open-minded	X	X
Increased motivation	X	
Communication skills	X	X
Customer service skills		X
Problem-solving skills	X	X
Financial management (money management, understanding importance of saving)	X	X
Job search skills (or information to start a business)	X	X
Understand employer/employee rights and responsibilities	X	

### Types of Work Readiness Skills Youth Found Most Useful

Almost all AK graduates who had an income-generating activity at the time of the FGDs reported that **all concepts and skills in the work readiness curriculum were helpful** in their daily activities and life. However, some reported that certain skills were not useful because they did not have the opportunity to practice using them after the training.

Employed and unemployed AK graduates reported different work readiness skills as useful. The most useful skills reported in order of frequency are these:

- 1) Self-reflection
- 2) Planning, marketing, and goal setting
- 3) Listening and speaking
- 4) Working cooperatively in a team, and team building
- 5) Identifying rights and responsibilities at work
- 6) Analyzing financial needs and expenses
- 7) Personal budget development
- 8) Customer care
- 9) Behaving appropriately at work
- 10) Managing time
- 11) Managing home and work life
- 12) Healthy habits



AK graduate Alphonisine of the Nyamagabe District, tailor and shop owner.

Overall, the self-reflection and communication skills in the WRC helped youth to demonstrate better customer service, as they are able to recognize their personal strengths and weaknesses and identify strategies to work with difficult customers. The concepts in the WRC around financial planning and budgeting have helped youth set priorities, reduce unnecessary spending, and start saving. AK youth indicated that they are able to exhibit effective time management by arriving to work on schedule, accomplishing multiple tasks in a timely manner, working efficiently without always needing supervision, and balancing work and home life and tasks.

**Increased Employability for Unemployed Youth:** Unemployed youth also indicated that their motivation and commitment to job-related tasks have increased as a result of the project. They also cited the importance of being introduced to the concept of saving and overall improved money management.

Unemployed youth highlighted some key business startup concepts, including understanding the importance of where to locate a business and the need to be patient in business operations and in waiting for the right opportunities. Unemployed youth also cited that their ability to manage things at home has improved after learning to develop leadership skills through AK.

**Improved Goal Setting and Personal Development:** Though some surveyed youth still struggled to articulate their goals, many were able to explain their goals and their plans to help them achieve the goals. For example, a few youth expressed their goal to start a business, and their plans to achieve these goals included saving money and participating in savings groups as well as selling assets in order to buy additional assets to support their business.

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The WRC has helped youth set priorities, demonstrate better customer service, and work efficiently.

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**Awareness of Employer and Employee Rights:** Employed youth in particular highlighted how the WRC helped them better understand their job's expectations and their particular roles. They also referenced how the training helped them to maintain jobs and work with different personalities, including challenging supervisors.

**Skills That Have Not Been Helpful or Have Not Been Used:** Youth were asked about work readiness skills that have not been helpful or useful since graduation. The following work readiness skills were reported as **not** used by employed and unemployed AK graduates because they did not have opportunity to put them into practice on the job:

1. Financial management
2. Leadership
3. Entrepreneurship
4. Working in groups
5. Safety and security

Despite not having had the opportunity to use these skills, unemployed AK graduates continued to express their need for financial support to enable them to pursue further education or to start a business.

Some youth stated that they could not apply some of the concepts learned in the WRC because they did not have the opportunity to join a savings group or start a business. Financial management skills are viewed as important and valuable by the youth, but these skills would be even more valuable to them if they have the opportunity to utilize those skills, whether it is in obtaining capital to start their own business, managing business finances, or participating in a savings group. Youth also expressed a need for ongoing support to find internships and jobs as well as the desire to obtain technical equipment (e.g., sewing machines, hair salon equipment).

On the other hand, some unemployed youth also voiced the need for follow-up and advanced training related to personal development or goal setting, entrepreneurship, and launching and sustaining businesses.

## Ways that Work Readiness Training Helped Youth Overcome Challenges in Employment and Entrepreneurship

Youth face many hardships in their daily personal and professional lives. In discussing challenges with AK youth, we can group the challenges they face into a few categories: workplace ethics, personal, education/technical, and financial capital. An example of a workplace ethics challenge is when a young employee is constantly asked by his or her supervisor to work extra hours. To address this challenge, the employee utilizes work readiness skills including interpersonal communication, and worker rights and conduct.

**Many youth expressed concern about lacking access to finance to start a business or expand a business.** Solutions cited by youth for capital challenges were related to savings and to exploring opportunities for obtaining capital—both key concepts of the WRC.

Youth engaged in agribusinesses, which face risks related to animal diseases and factors out of their control, demonstrated how they are using their newly gained problem-solving skills. Some

youth cited that savings groups helped them to build their capital in order to sustain and/or grow their business. One youth mentioned that he consulted an expert in the district to learn how to better manage these risks.

A female youth engaged in an electricity installation business faced challenges of earning customers' trust—she utilized her customer service skills and network of colleagues and friends to help prove to customers that she is indeed qualified. It is crucial for youth to build trust by providing high-quality and reliable service.

Some youth indicated that they did not have information on where to find jobs. The project's training helped youth identify job boards and other sources to search for jobs.

The concepts in the WRC—including communication, problem-solving skills, identifying support and resources within the community, and customer service skills—have all proven to help these youth overcome challenges.

## Unemployed Youth Face Challenges

Primary reasons cited for unemployment were related to temporary or short-term jobs coming to an end, loss of agribusiness due to disease or other factors that are hard to control, seasonal employment, and the need to use limited funds to support urgent family matters or to tend to rent and other personal financial needs.

Some unemployed youth indicated that they were engaged in short-term, informal activities to earn their livelihoods, including construction jobs, selling small portions of their family farm produce in the market, or engaging in jobs on demand such as a hair styling and cutting services or accountant services on short-term contracts.

Among the unemployed AK graduates in the study, only a quarter of them did not start an IGA or successfully apply for a job, primarily because they were engaged in educational activities. Since graduation, unemployed youth applied for various jobs, with information and communications technology, construction, social work, and services jobs being the most common. The unemployed youth at the time of the FGDs had applied for jobs in various sectors since graduation; about one in five were successfully hired previously. With this said, they were all currently unemployed or in the middle of temporary jobs. The lack of stable employment indicates the difficulties in finding steady or full-time employment for youth.



An Akazi Kanoze participant shows the product of her IGA.

## Improvement in Job Search Strategies

***Despite the challenges in securing consistent and long-term employment, unemployed AK graduates expressed that they are confident they would find employment again because***

**of the critical skills they have learned with the support of the AK project.** They stated that even before the AK training, they were confident that they would find a job, but the AK program has increased their confidence and has expanded and open their minds to explore new job search strategies.

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Even if currently unemployed, AK graduates are confident that they will find employment again because of the skills gained from the WRC.

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Before participating in AK, youth used to stay at home and wait for employers to come to them, only discussing job prospects with close friends and family. By participating in the AK program, youth expanded their horizons in terms of job prospects by exhibiting increased confidence and the desire to find and apply for job opportunities. The program helped youth understand the importance

of assessing their own skills and competencies, and matching those to job prospects as well as helping youth see the value of job prospects regardless of salary offerings. The project equipped youth with the skills to look for a job and taught them specific attitudes and skills to prepare them for a job interview.

With respect to entrepreneurship, the program showed youth, even unemployed AK youth, that businesses can be launched and expanded with small amounts of capital, and it encouraged the idea of saving as a way to start and grow their businesses.

## Changes in Daily Life

The Akazi Kanoze Youth Livelihoods Project teaches concepts that are crucial in the workplace and can be beneficial in youth's home and personal life as well.

All but one respondent (an unemployed AK graduate) in the study said the difference between AK and non-AK youth with similar economic conditions is clearly visible. They all referenced their ability to set goals, prioritize tasks, and manage money better. Employed AK youth referenced their ability to make the most use of their resources in their personal and business affairs—repairing, reducing, and recycling.

Focus group participants cited their ability to work with goals, explaining how goals motivate their actions, and they generally exhibit increased ambition and motivation as a result of the program. Employed AK youth also explained how they now better understand their strengths and weaknesses and are able to articulate their skills and competencies.

Unemployed AK youth also expressed that they see AK youth as being disciplined and honest members of the community. More research to gather information on the spillover effects into how the AK WRC has impacted youth's personal lives and behavior into communities would be valuable.

Table 5 shows that **both employed and unemployed youth cited several important personal life changes as a result of the AK program.**

Table 5: Personal Life Changes Demonstrated as a Result of the AK Program

Changes Demonstrated as Result of AK Program	Employed Youth	Unemployed Youth
Improved time management	X	
How to live well with others	X	
Increased confidence and optimism about a bright future	X	
Understanding own personal value	X	
Motivated to pursue education and other opportunities; increased ambition	X	X
How to communicate and share ideas		X
Improved English, which has facilitated personal development		X
Working toward goals		X
Financial management: how to prioritize spending and manage money better		X
Understanding the importance of savings groups		X

## FUTURE PROSPECTS: YOUTH SATISFACTION WITH ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Almost all employed **AK graduates who participated in the employment and livelihoods outcomes study stated they are more satisfied with their current economic opportunity than before** their participation in the work readiness training. Unemployed AK graduates remained confident that they would find work again because of the skills and knowledge gained through the AK program.

Employed youth referred to their current employment as consistent, compared with inconsistent employment before AK. Youth emphasized that their incomes have increased since participating in AK—some youth cited a shift from part-time to full-time work. Some AK youth were promoted after completing the training and returning to work. AK youth also indicated that they shifted from working for someone to starting their own small business. Other youth who were already self-employed cited examples of expanding their businesses and increasing their client base because of the newly attained skills from AK.

**All interviewed youth stated that they consider themselves successful.** Though not all youth were able to articulate their goals specifically, many were able to explain their plans to achieve their goals. Many youth expressed their goal of starting a business and their plans to join a savings group, obtain a loan, or sell existing assets to establish or grow a business.

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AK graduates are more satisfied with their current economic opportunity than before doing the AK training.

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## KEY TAKEAWAYS

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By using a qualitative approach, the Akazi Kanoze youth employment and livelihoods outcomes study was able to capture the long-term livelihood outcomes of a diverse group of AK graduates. Tracking youth employment outcomes longitudinally is a persistent challenge across youth development programs because youth are mobile and their employment changes often. Often youth are employed on a part-time or temporary basis and they move in and out of the workforce. This proved to be a challenge for this study as well, but the qualitative design allowed for a greater depth of information as opposed to breadth. The study's findings will serve to inform future AK and EDC work, as well as contribute to the broader literature on workforce development projects.

In addition to the study's main findings, youth's responses highlighted the value of AK programming and the significance of external market factors. The qualitative data collected from AK graduates show that the AK intervention has increased work readiness skills and the employability level of youth, thereby improving livelihood outcomes in the long term. Both employed and unemployed youth, at the time of interviews, reported that the work readiness skills they gained were helpful and useful, and that they were better positioned than non-AK youth to start a business.

The findings also demonstrate the importance of external market factors and that access to finance greatly influences youth employment outcomes:

- ***AK youth are able to recognize and articulate their own professional development and skill gains regardless of their current work context.***
- ***Future programming should continue to be contextualized to local market demands and youth's needs, as well as emphasize strategies to improve resiliency to external factors.***

### Importance of On-the-Job Experience for Youth

Employed or self-employed AK youth demonstrated the importance of on-the-job experience, as they had more previous work experience in general than unemployed AK youth. Their past work experience may have given them an advantage in the job market, compared with those with limited work experience. There was a difference in the types of prior employment that the two groups of youth reported—employed youth had more self-employment experience than currently unemployed youth.

The findings demonstrate the importance of work experience in the form of internships and on-the-job training:

- ***Real-life, on-the-job training is a critical component of work readiness programs.***
- ***Future programming should consider additional support for finding internships and jobs, as well as familiarity with technical equipment (e.g., sewing machines, hair salon equipment).***

- ***It is important to recognize the level of work experience youth have when they join workforce development programs – there may be opportunities to tailor programming to meet the needs of youth with different levels of experience.***

## Diversity of Past Work Experience

Employed youth had more self-employment experience in a variety of fields than the youth who were unemployed at the time of the study. In general, the youth employed at the time of this study had a much more diversified work history than the unemployed youth we interviewed. They appear to have started AK with more experience to obtain startup funds, develop businesses, and save money for investment. Given the value of diverse past work experience,

- ***Future programming should consider leveraging youth with diverse work experience to further tailor curriculum to the local context.***
- ***It may be necessary to incorporate additional programming or support for youth with less varied experiences, and perhaps incorporate a peer mentoring component.***

## Challenges AK Youth Faced and Overcame

Unemployed and employed youth reported challenges to gaining employment, citing lack of information on finding jobs, lack of skills, or low education levels. However, employed youth were better able to address these challenges through family support and problem-solving skills. Both unemployed and employed AK youth reported that the program helped expand their horizons in terms of job prospects, equipping them with the skills to look for a job and prepare for job interviews.

All youth regardless of employment status said that the biggest obstacles they face are financial in nature: high taxes, high rent, and lack of access to capital. Many youth expressed a concern about not having enough capital to start or expand their businesses. Despite these challenges, several youth cited that AK introduced them to the concept of savings and that their participation in savings groups helped them access funds to invest in their businesses. Thus, the following points can be made:

- ***The lack of knowledge of how to find work can be a big barrier for entry into the workforce. Future programming should continue to equip youth with the skills and linkages to identify critical information for their job searches.***
- ***Future work readiness programming should be contextualized to the local business environment.***
- ***Future programming should consider emphasizing the transferability of personal development and communication skills to identify creative solutions and opportunities when facing challenges.***

## Employed Youth Demonstrate Resiliency and Creativity in Problem Solving

Employed youth consistently identified solutions to their challenges of finding employment or starting a business. They often referenced their personal development, communication, and

financial management skills along with increased confidence and motivation that helped them overcome challenges to gain employment and successfully start businesses. Furthermore, youth improved their job search skills and were able to identify opportunities through networking and other strategies learned through the AK program.

- ***Future programming should consider including sessions on resiliency strategies and additional emphasis on real-life scenarios.***

# APPENDICES

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Appendix 1: Youth Employment and Livelihood Outcomes Study Plan

Appendix 2: Youth Employment and Livelihood Outcomes Study Interview Protocol

## APPENDIX I: YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOOD OUTCOMES STUDY PLAN

The principal purpose of the qualitative study is to evaluate the livelihoods status of several groups of Akazi Kanoze students after their graduation. The outcome evaluation surveyed a random sample of youth 7 months after graduation, but EDC seeks to better understand the status of AK youth over the longer term.

Akazi Kanoze proposes these follow-up research questions:

1. What types of economic opportunities are Akazi Kanoze students involved in after the completion of the program, including new and better livelihood outcomes and promotions?
2. What challenges have Akazi Kanoze graduates faced in regards to finding employment or starting their own businesses?
3. From their perspectives, why are unemployed graduates without work?
4. Overtime, have the Akazi Kanoze youth continued to use the life skills and vocational training that they received during the project?
5. Are Akazi Kanoze graduates more satisfied with their current economic opportunities than before?

### Methodology

To answer these questions, the evaluation team proposes conducting a follow-up survey of AK youth graduates using qualitative methods. These data will be collected during focus group discussions using a semi-structured interview protocol. Twelve focus groups will be conducted with youth graduates from the 5 years of the project—2010 to 2014. Each focus group will consist of 5-7 youth, with an emphasis on maintaining gender parity. The data collection will happen over the course of 3-4 weeks. Focus group discussions will be conducted in English with a Kinyarwanda translator. All sessions will be voice recorded and the facilitator will take written notes as well. The table here outlines the characteristics of each focus group.

Figure A1. Focus Group Discussion Participants

Graduation Year	# of Employed Urban Youth from Kigali Area	# of Rural Employed Youth	# of Unemployed Youth
2010	5-7		5-7 (from Kigali area)
2011	5-7		5-7 (from Kigali area)
2012	5-7	5-7	5-7
2013	5-7	5-7	5-7
2014	5-7	5-7	5-7
<b>Totals</b>	25-35 urban youth	15-21 rural youth	25-35 youth

## Sampling

The evaluation team will work with field officers and implementing partners to identify groups of working and unemployed youth from each graduating year. The sampling will be purposive and non-random. The evaluation team will over sample youth in order to guarantee that at least 5-7 youth are in each focus group.

## Analysis

The qualitative data will be the foundation for a youth employment and livelihoods outcomes study report. The qualitative data will be analyzed using thematic analysis based on the themes in the research questions. The written form of the interviews will be viewed several times and patterns and themes will be identified. Common statements or ideas that appear repeatedly will be noted. The report will synthesize common themes and cross-cutting characteristics of Akazi Kanoze youth graduates over the course of the project.

## Limitations

This is the second design of the youth employment and livelihood survey. Tracking this group of youth is a challenge and the rate of attrition from the original sample was a limitation for final data analysis and extrapolation. The value of the youth employment and livelihood study is the opportunity to speak with youth whose graduate dates range over five years. This depth of information is valuable as opposed to breadth of information, but the non-probability sampling means that no generalization can be made beyond those interviewed. Care will be taken to speak with a diverse set of Akazi Kanoze graduates, but the purposive sampling limits the researchers' ability to speak of project impact.

## APPENDIX 2: YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS OUTCOMES STUDY INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

**Purpose of this tool:** The purpose of this document is to explain procedures for conducting interviews with youth graduates and implementing partner representatives. These procedures must be adhered to every time the interviews are conducted.

**Method of interview:** This interview is designed to be administered face-to-face. Two M&E data collectors will participate in interviews: one to facilitate the conversation, and the other to take notes. It is preferable to conduct interview face-to-face and to use digital voice recorder to record the interview.

If using a digital recorder, it is important to ask the respondent for permission to record the interview prior to the beginning of the interview. It is important that the data collector explains that the voice recorder can be turned off at any point, if it restricts the respondent to openly express his/her views.

**Scheduling and Confirmation:** Prior to the administration, a face-to-face meeting with respondents must be scheduled. Scheduling process is specified and monitored by Akazi Kanoze field agents.

**Preparation for the survey administration:** In preparation for the interview the M&E data collector must do the following:

- **Scheduling the interview:** The M&E Officer will work with field agents to facilitate scheduling the visits for interviews with respondents. A day or two before the day of the visit, the respondent may be reminded through phone or an email about the upcoming visit.
- **Preparing for the interview:** The data collectors should study the interview questions to make sure to remember them well during the interview. They need to do mock exercise before and conduct role plays during the orientation session. In some instances, the respondent may not understand the question properly; the interviewer may rephrase the question for better understanding of the respondent. The interviewers' orientation will provide information about the intent of each question, to create a common understanding of same question among the interviewers. This will standardize the questions among all interviewers.
  - a. The interviewer should ensure that he/she has sufficient copies of the interview protocol before the interview takes place.
  - b. It should be ensured that the digital voice recorder's batteries are full.
  - c. It may also be ensured that the interviewer has all the required tools including a computer, notepad and pen to take notes during the interview.

### **Administration of the interview:**

- 1) **Reaching at the interview site:** The interviewer should call the respondent about an hour before scheduled time for a last meeting reminder and should attempt to arrive 15 minutes before the scheduled time.

- 2) **Explain the purpose of the interview:** After greeting the respondent, the interviewer M&E data collector should outline the purpose of the visit or interview, which is to gather information on how the Akazi Kanoze program has built capacity of local youth serving organizations and broaden their service agendas to include work readiness and livelihood supports; and how the program has impacted the lives of young people, what challenges they have faced and how they have overcome barriers to achieve their goals. Inform respondents that the findings will only be used for programmatic purposes.
- 3) **Privacy for interview:** A private room or place is recommended for the interview. Please avoid conducting interview in a place where other people are present, where it's too noisy or the interview is likely to be interrupted.

**Taking informed consent for voice recording:** Having answered whatever questions the respondent may have, the M&E data collector should proceed to the interview. Prior to switching on the digital recorder, the M&E data collector must ask permission of the respondent to record the interview. If the permission is not granted, then only notes should be taken.

**Interview techniques:** The interviewer should remember to use good interviewing techniques, such as:

- Active listening, with nodding and eye contact
- Regular summarizing the main points of the respondent
- Validating respondent's opinions by acknowledging them in neutral terms
- Using body language that is open and relaxed, such as smiling and not crossing arms/legs
- Using friendly demeanor.
- The M&E data collector should frequently go back to the interview protocol to make sure that all questions are answered.

**After the administration:** Following the completion of the interview, the interviewer should thank the respondent for their time, and leave.

**Transcription of the interview:** One of the two data collectors at the interview should type up the notes on his/her computer during interview or as soon as possible after the interview. The transcripts/notes should be submitted to Annie Alcid as soon as possible after the interview. Each interview should be properly labeled as below:

For employed and unemployed youth:

- a. Name of respondents
- b. Location (District)
- c. Age range
- d. Education Level
- e. Year of Graduation from the Akazi Kanoze program
- f. Date of interview

## Questions for Employed Youth

- 1) How did you hear about the Akazi Kanoze project?
- 2) What were you doing before enrolling in Akazi Kanoze as income generating activities?
- 3) What are you doing now to make money?
- 4) What skills have been most helpful in your work/business since finishing Akazi Kanoze?
  - o 4.1. How have these skills helped you in your work/business? Provide examples.
- 5) What Akazi Kanoze work readiness skills have not been helpful since you graduated? What skills have you not used?
- 6) What challenges have you encountered since finishing Akazi Kanoze? How have you overcome them?
- 7) Other than a job, what changes in your life have happened because of what you learned in the Akazi Kanoze program?
- 8) Compared to non-Akazi Kanoze youth with similar socio-economic conditions, what differences do you see in yourself?
- 9) Do you consider yourself successful? What are your future goals and plans to achieve them?

## Questions for Unemployed Youth

- 1) What were you doing before enrolling in Akazi Kanoze as income generating activities?
- 2) Please answer the following questions.
  - a. Have you ever any economic opportunity in your life?
  - b. How did you become unemployed?
- 3) What are you doing now to make money?
  - a. Are you confident you will be able to find work again?
- 4) How has Akazi Kanoze impacted your job search strategies? How did you search for work before Akazi Kanoze training?
- 5) Have you had any Income Generating Activity since you graduated from Akazi Kanoze?
- 6) Since graduating from Akazi Kanoze, have you successfully applied to any jobs or started an income generating activity? Yes/No
  - a. If yes (job), how many jobs have you applied to and what kind?
  - b. If yes (IGA), how many and what kind of IGA did you start?
  - c. If no (job), how many jobs have you applied to and why do you think you were not offered the position
  - d. If no (IGA), what kind of IGA did you start and why do you think it was not successful
- 7) What challenges have you encountered since finishing Akazi Kanoze? How have you overcome them?
- 8) What Akazi Kanoze work readiness skills have not been helpful since you graduated? What skills or support do you think would help you now?
- 9) Although you are not currently employed, are there any changes in your life which have happened because of what you learned in the Akazi Kanoze program?
- 10) Compared to non-Akazi Kanoze youth with similar socio-economic conditions, what differences do you see in yourself?
- 11) Do you consider yourself successful? What are your future goals and plans to achieve them?