

Evaluation Report

**Final outcome evaluation of the Youth Employment
Promotion Project / Vocational Education and
Training (YEPP/VET)**

Mongolia

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Imprint

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Final outcome evaluation Youth Employment Promotion Project / Vocational Education and Training (YEPP/VET), Mongolia

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Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
Swiss Cooperation Office Mongolia
zayasaikhan.dugeree@eda.admin.ch

Authors:

Bat-Orshikh Erdenebat, Harald Meier (Lead evaluator), Michael Morlok, Ha-My Nguyen

Contact us at:

orange & teal
4054 Basel, Switzerland
harald@orange-and-teal.com



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Abbreviations

Aimag	Province (administrative sub-division)
BDSP	Business Development Service Provider
CHF	Swiss Francs
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
EQ	Evaluation Question
EU	European Union
GOLWS	General Office for Labour and Welfare Services
LMDS	Labour Market Demand Survey
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
MONEF	Mongolian Employers Federation
NEC	National Employment Commission
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NSO	National Statistics Office
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PES	Public Employment Office
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
SDC	Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development
Soum	District (administrative sub-division of an aimag)
ToC	Theory of Change
VET	Vocational Education and Training
YEPP	Youth Employment Promotion Programme
YES	Youth Employment Service
YESP	Youth Employment Support Programme



Summary

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) commissioned a final outcome evaluation of the Youth Employment Promotion Project / Vocational Education and Training (YEPP/VET) in Mongolia. The review was carried out between August and November 2021.

Background

The Youth Employment Promotion Project / Vocational Education and Training is a Swiss-funded program in Mongolia implemented by the GFA Consulting Group from Germany. It aims to “contribute to the equitable and sustainable social and economic development of the country through the promotion of youth employment”. The project has a budget of 5.15 million CHF. Initially planned in two phases from January 2016 to December 2020, the project was later extended following the Mongolian government’s request to support scaling the so-called YES Desks and in order to respond to delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The project will close in December 2021.

Methodology

The objectives of the evaluation are to assess the project based on the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria and SDC’s Assessment Grid. The evaluation shall support the knowledge management of the main evaluation stakeholders SDC and GFA by documenting learnings and providing recommendations related to the planned experience capitalisation. A key methodological feature of the evaluation was the implementation of an outcome harvesting to collaboratively gather and document outcomes to which the project contributed.

These sources were used for the evaluation:

- Interviews: 26 semi-structured interviews with a range of YEPP/VET stakeholders, including 12 youth
- Focus groups: 6 focus groups to which more than 38 participants attended, 16 of which were youth
- Online survey: 90 participants, out of 112 YEPP/VET stakeholders invited to the survey; overall response rate of 80%
- Data review: project M&E framework; quantitative analysis using public unemployment data
- Document review: review of project related documents (including ProDoc and progress reports) and other documents (including studies, internal evaluations, handbooks, guidelines)

Milestones of the evaluation were the briefing with SDC and the PIU (10 August 2021), the approval of the Evaluation Concept (3 September 2021), the validation workshop (10 October 2021), the submission of the draft report (10 November 2021), the submission of the final report (30 November 2021), and the debriefing with the project partners (7 December 2021). Apart from minor deviations the evaluation was implemented as planned.



Findings and conclusions

Relevance: The project's objective continues to be relevant: Reports and research results indicate that youth unemployment remains an important factor causing poverty. Likewise, interview and survey results show that the project stakeholders consider the project relevant or very relevant.

Coherence: Regarding internal coherence the evaluation finds that the project is consistent with SDC's current strategy for Mongolia, and Inclusive Economic Development more broadly. In terms of external coherence, the project has prompted other development partners to use similar activities or to build up on results of the project such as the "client-centred" approach for youth employment services. Some interviewees and survey participants were critical and believe coordination and cooperation could have been strengthened.

Effectiveness: The project is well on track to achieve its targets at output and outcome level. Interviewees and survey respondents reiterate the quality of the project's services and the commitment of the Project Implementation Unit (PIU). The outcome harvesting has shown that stakeholders associate many positive results directly with the project, in all three project components. In the course of the extension the Youth Employment Service (YES) Desks have been instituted in public employment offices in all aimags and districts in Ulaanbaatar, though not at *soum* level.

Efficiency: Interview and survey results confirm that the project delivers high quality services, training, and support. It also delivers in a timely manner and where there are deviations, they are well justified and documented. Stakeholders feel that the project has provided good value for money; this finding was also confirmed by a more detailed internal evaluation of the YES Desks. From our perspective as evaluators, we believe more should have been done to implement the recommendation of the phase 2 evaluation to strengthen analysis and provide evidence to identify what works and for whom.

Impact: The project does not set an impact target, yet its aim is that more young people are employed or self-employed. Quantitative data analysis that we carried out with official employment data provides some promising preliminary results of the project on the ratio between youth unemployment and total unemployment; yet the analysis was not fully conclusive. Feedback from interviews and the survey was predominantly positive, even if slightly less so than the opinions obtained for the short-term results (effectiveness).

Sustainability: Our findings indicate that the project stakeholders identify very well with the youth employment and start-up services. Many of them observe significant changes in work culture, attitudes, and mindsets. EU budget support, which ties the resources to the delivery of the YES Desk services, the inclusion of the latter in the bi-annual national employment promotion programmes, and ongoing development partner support by the World Bank Group are important elements for financial and institutional sustainability of the YES Desks, a key result of the project. The MLSP needs to ensure continued capacity building, specifically in those locations, in which the project activities were launched only in the extension phase. While some open questions remain regarding financial sustainability in particular, our findings and conclusions reflects how difficult sustainability is to reach with development interventions; we think the project has done very well in this regard.



Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, and in light of the impending closure of the project in December 2021, we formulate the following high-level recommendations:

- Recommendation 1: Consolidate service delivery in the YES Desks
- Recommendation 2: Strengthen monitoring, analysis, and learning
- Recommendation 3: Ensure adequate human and financial resources to uphold quality of service delivery



1. Introduction

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) commissioned a final outcome evaluation of the Youth Employment Promotion Project / Vocational Education and Training (YEPP/VET) in Mongolia. The evaluation was conducted between August and November 2021. This report contains the findings, conclusions, as well as recommendations of the review team.

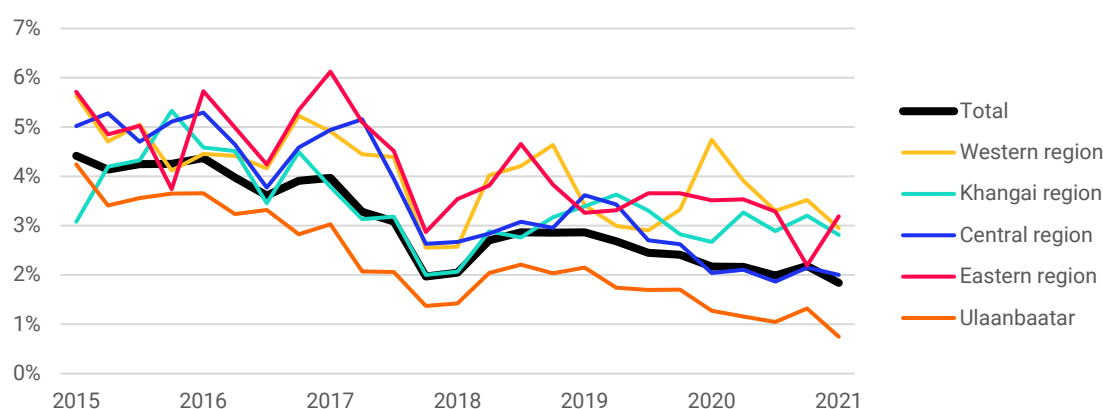
The report is structured as follows: Chapter 1 describes the background and explains the purpose and scope of the review and the methods that were used. Chapter 2 discusses the findings regarding the evaluation criteria relevance, coherence, effectiveness, impact, efficiency, and sustainability. Chapters 3 and 4 contain the conclusions and recommendations.

A key methodological feature of the evaluation was a so-called “outcome harvesting”, resulting in a catalogue of outcome statements describing various changes to which the project contributed. These outcomes are summarised in chapter 2. The full catalogue of outcome statements, along with other supplementary information and data, including the results of a quantitative youth unemployment data analysis, is included in the Annex.

1.1. Background

Poverty remains one of Mongolia’s biggest issues. Poverty incidence is often linked to agriculture-based income, low education, and unemployment. Despite overall decreasing trends of youth unemployment (see Figure 1), young people continue to face constraints to enter the labour market, especially those with lower educational attainment or little work experience.¹

Figure 1: Development of youth unemployment in Mongolia



Data source: Mongolian Statistical Information Services. Registered unemployed only.

¹ TVET Policy Review Mongolia, Unesco / MoLSP, 2019



The Youth Employment Promotion Project / Vocational Education and Training is a Swiss-funded program in Mongolia implemented by the GFA Consulting Group from Germany. It aims to “contribute to the equitable and sustainable social and economic development of the country through the promotion of youth employment”. The target group consists of young women and men aged 15-34 years who are unemployed, with a special focus on young women who in Mongolia have a much higher (registered) unemployment rate than young men.

The project originally focused on improving vocational education and training (VET) provision in six aimags in Mongolia’s western region. Following completion of this first phase and at the request of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) as the primary project partner, the project was redesigned towards supporting employability of VET graduates and young job seekers. Initially planned in two phases from January 2016 to December 2020, the project was later extended to December 2021 following the Mongolian government’s request to support scaling the so-called YES Desks and in order to respond to delays caused by the Covid-19 pandemic as well as to consolidate and enhance the sustainability of the project’s results. Table 1 summarises key features of the project.

Table 1: Project key features (phase 2 and 3)

Feature	Phase II	Phase III
Duration	January 2016 – December 2018	January 2019 – December 2021
Budget	2.25 million CHF	2.90 million CHF
Impact	More young people are employed or self-employed	
Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. National policies and programs are conducive to youth employment2. Effective employment support services are provided to young people3. Young people operate start-ups with growth potential	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. National laws and regulations are more conducive for youth employment2. Youth Employment Support Services are integrated in the local public employment services and YESD are scaled under the leadership of the MLSP3. National start up support program is strengthened through capacity building and the integration of lessons learned from the project
Target area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8 aimags and 2 districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initial duration: 16 aimags and 5 districts• Extension duration: 21 aimags and 10 districts

1.2. Purpose

The objectives of the evaluation are to assess the project based on the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria and SDC’s Assessment Grid. The evaluation shall support the knowledge management of the main evaluation stakeholders SDC and GFA by documenting learnings and providing recommendations related to the planned experience capitalisation.



The Terms of Reference state that the evaluation should go *“beyond a traditional M&E assessment and [capture] intended and unintended outcomes and processes of change leading to sustainability, impact and fulfilment of leaving-no one behind principles”*. To mirror this ambition, a key methodological feature of the evaluation was the implementation of an outcome harvesting (see explanation below) to collaboratively gather and document outcomes to which the project contributed.

The focus of the evaluation is on effectiveness, impact and sustainability, whereas the criteria relevance, coherence, and efficiency receive comparatively lesser attention. The evaluation questions are derived from the SDC Assessment Grid.

The evaluation covers the third phase of the program, hence the period 2016 to 2021. It includes references to selected findings and conclusions of the external review of the second phase.²

1.3. Methodology

The approach and methods for data collection and analysis were outlined in an Evaluation Concept, which was approved by SDC on 3 September 2021. The methods are briefly described in the following:

- Document review: YEPP/VET narrative reports (including Project Document and progress reports) and other documents (including studies, internal evaluations, handbooks, guidelines) were reviewed to infer answers to the evaluation questions but also to contextualise the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
- Data review: The YEPP/VET M&E framework was an important source to assess the level of target achievement. With a view to supplement the M&E, we implemented a quantitative analysis using public unemployment data.
- Focus groups: Primarily for the purpose of the outcome harvesting we organised and facilitated 6 focus group meetings in Bayangol, Darkhan-Uul, Khan-Uul, Umnugovi, Uvs, Zavkhan during which more than 38 participants, 16 of which youth, shared their experiences and learnings from the project. Annex 2 contains the list of the participants.
- Interviews: We carried out 26 qualitative, semi-structured interviews with YEPP/VET stakeholders, including 12 youth. Annex 2 contains the list of the participants.
- Online survey: A survey was carried out to which 112 YEPP/VET stakeholders were invited and to which 86 persons responded (response rate 77%). The survey lasted three weeks and two reminders were sent to engage respondents and achieve a higher response rate.
- Validation: Interviews with senior managers of SDC, the implementing agency GFA, and the Project Implementation Unit (PIU), a validation workshop as well as the review of the draft evaluation report provided opportunities for participation and feedback.
- Reporting: The draft evaluation report follows the structure agreed upon in the evaluation concept.

² Youth Employment Promotion Project Mongolia, External Review Final Report, M. Bloch and Norjinkham Mongolmaa, June 2018



Outcome harvesting

A special feature of this evaluation has been to apply outcome harvesting to describe the projects influence *“on changes in the behaviours, relationships, actions, activities, policies, or practices”*³ on the part of change actors directly involved in the project.

What is outcome harvesting?

- An approach to identify, formulate, verify, analyse, and interpret evidence of outcomes and then, working backwards, determining whether and how an intervention has plausibly contributed to these outcomes.

How is the term “outcome” understood in outcome harvesting?

- Outcome is a demonstrated, verifiable change in the behaviour of one or more societal actors, where behaviour change can relate, inter alia, to actions, activities, relationships, policies or practices.

How are “outcomes” documented?

- The outcomes are described in outcome statements that are structured as follows:
 - Title (one sentence)
 - Description (What changed? When and how? Who was involved in this change? Why is this change significant?)
 - Contribution (How did the project contribute to this change?)

1.4. Limitations

Outcome harvesting is particularly suitable in contexts in which relations between cause and effect are hardly understood. The YEPP/VET instead builds on a theory of change and a results framework that determines the activities and outputs that are needed to bring about the intended results of the project. Almost all of the persons we engaged were therefore on the one hand able to speak in detail about these intended results while it was on the other hand for most of them hard identify positive or negative “unintended” outcomes.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the evaluation had to be conducted primarily online, leaving only limited possibility for encounters and observations on site, which certainly would have yielded additional information and insights. Still, since two field visits could be carried out and since participants in the virtual focus groups engaged well, we were able to collect sufficient information for a sound evaluation.

The project team facilitated the contacts for many of the interviews, for which we are grateful. While several conversations were pre-determined because of the role the interviewees played for the project, the project team had to select among the youth and employers we talked to. A concern could be that such selection undermines the independence of the evaluation. To address such concerns, we base the assessment whether targets are achieved primarily on M&E and survey data; we then discuss how targets were achieved and challenges were met in the interviews. Related to independence, we would also like to mention that two members of the evaluation team

³ Outcome Harvesting, R. Wilson-Grau and H. Britt, May 2012 (Revised November 2013)



were involved in the design of the phase 2 Theory of Change, in 2015. We therefore respond to the related evaluation question (EQ 3) by referring to the prior assessment provided by other reviewers.

A limitation for the quantitative analysis is that the dataset from the Mongolian Statistical Information Services only contains information on the registered unemployed and not the remaining unemployed or job seekers more broadly. Furthermore, the data only covers the aimags but not the districts in Ulaanbaatar (UB), which introduced YES Desk at different times, so that Ulaanbaatar had to be excluded from the analysis.

2. Findings

This chapter contains the findings to the evaluation questions (EQ) as presented in the Evaluation Matrix (see Annex 1).

2.1. Relevance

Regarding relevance we assessed to what extent the project aligns with the needs and priorities of the target groups and government policies as well as the extent to which the project's theory of change is realistic and reasonable.

Does the project align with needs and priorities of the target group? (EQ 1)

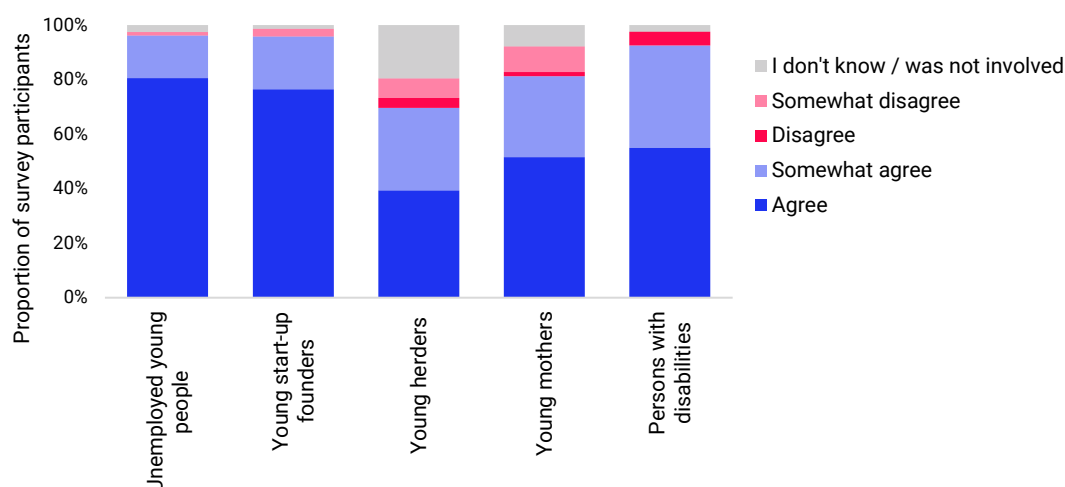
Our conversations with youth who attended the YES Desks, were mediated into an internship, or participated in a start-up event revealed that the project very much speaks to what these young people sought. Many of them felt being taken seriously and supported by the career counsellors or mentors at the public employment offices.

The results of the survey mirror these results. It shows in Figure 2 that most of the respondents consider that the project addresses the needs and priorities of the target groups. More than 90% of them confirmed the project's support for unemployed youth, young start-up founders, and young people with disabilities. There is more uncertainty regarding young herders and young mothers, as indicated by the higher level of "I don't know" responses, but the level of agreement is also high once these responses are accounted for (young herders 87%; young mothers 88%).

Asked about why they consider the project relevant, respondents commonly referred to the project's general youth services including "employment opportunities, methodological advice and training supports", "youth internships", and mentoring services for young start-ups. These new services are considered innovations that speak to youth and public employment office staff. This common notion is exemplified by this statement of a survey respondent: *"We believe that the project is very effective and has a more innovative and eye-catching approach than the previously implemented projects."* The lower rating for the project's support for young people with disabilities, young herders and young mothers is associated with some discontent that «there are only few specific activities for young people with disabilities and herders».



Figure 2: Relevance (survey result)



Question: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? The design of the project addresses important needs and priorities of: i) unemployed young women and men, ii) young women and men launching their own start-ups, iii) young herders, iv) persons with disabilities, v) young mothers.

Number of responses: 45, 43, 34, 40, 39

Does the project align with government policies? (EQ 2)

The project is well aligned with strategic goals of sustainable economic and social developments as expressed in the Mongolia Sustainable Development Vision 2030 or the Mongolia Development Vision 2050. In pursuing this vision, the State Employment Policy 2016-2025 emphasises the intent to *“support employment, train the younger generation with proper knowledge and skills to have a decent work and run a private business, and reduce the unemployment rate”*. Likewise, the Country’s Mid-term Development plan 2025 commits to *“create 150 thousand new jobs within the framework of the major development projects, through support for private sector, SMEs and employment promotion”*. The decisions to adopt regulatory and policy changes, to increase funding for youth specific active labour market measure, or to scale the so-called Youth Employment Support (YES) Desks in all regions in Mongolia signals the interest of the project’s main counterparts. With a view to respond to the economic downturn caused by the pandemic, the government engages with a large youth employment support program called (“Participate”).

Does the project design adequately reflect needs and priorities? (EQ 3)

The project’s Theory of Change (ToC) and results framework were developed in a participatory consultation process as part of the elaboration of the ProDoc for the second phase.⁴ The design of the third phase was to a large extent done by GFA in collaboration with SDC. While there have been slight modifications to reflect the gradual transfer of implementation responsibility to the MLSP, the core of the ToC remained unchanged.

⁴ Vocational Education and Training - Phase 2, Mongolia, Project Document, SDC, 25 August 2015



In the design of phase 2, the rationale for the project and its outcomes and outputs were explained in “12 causal links resp. 12 hypotheses whose validity has to be proven true (or at least likely) to warrant the investment”⁵ which were substantiated with references to research findings and international practices. As some members of the evaluation team were involved in this design process,⁶ we would like to refer here primarily to the assessment of the team evaluating the second phase. The evaluators concluded that the change theory and the logical framework were sound. During implementation the project commissioned internal evaluations to test the validity of the interventions, and also came to a positive conclusion.⁷

As we explain further below, we believe that more could have been done to assess the effects of the project’s activities, which is a concern related to both monitoring and working with the project’s ToC. This is also consistent with the evaluation of the second phase which recommended to “assist the MLSP in strengthening its capacity to better analyse youth employment challenges in a comprehensive way in view of devising effective strategies to address these challenges”.⁸

2.2. Coherence

This section covers internal coherence with other Swiss funded projects, and external coherence, i.e., complementarity and co-ordination of the project with those of other actors’ interventions in Mongolia.

Is the project coherent internally? (EQ 4)

The project is consistent with SDC’s Cooperation Strategy 2018-2021 for Mongolia, specifically the objective of increased employment as a result of “*high-quality, demand-driven education and better-performing employment services*”. With its focus on improved employment and matching services as well as start-up support, the project aligns with the transition to work agenda as defined in SDC’s Education Strategy, and the portfolio attending to entrepreneurship and start-up support in other SDC partner countries (horizontal perspective). Linking the project activities at the local employment offices with policy and advocacy work at the national level, for instance regarding the inclusion of the new youth employment services into the biannual program of active labour market measures, the project was also coherent across levels of government (vertical perspective). We have not observed synergies with other ongoing SDC funded projects in Mongolia which does not come as a surprise since SDC is gradually phasing out its activities.

⁵ SDC, 2015

⁶ Harald Meier and Michael Morlok were at the time commissioned by SDC to elaborate the ProDoc. Looking back at our work, the design still seems responsive to the needs and priorities of the target group. What we would do differently today is to focus more on behavioural change, and explicitly describe the project’s underlying assumption.

⁷ YES Desks Interim Evaluation Report, Constantin Lucian Pirjol, December 2018; Ecosystem development for local startup support in Uvs and Darkhan, H&D Partners, 2019

⁸ Bloch/Norjinkham, 2018



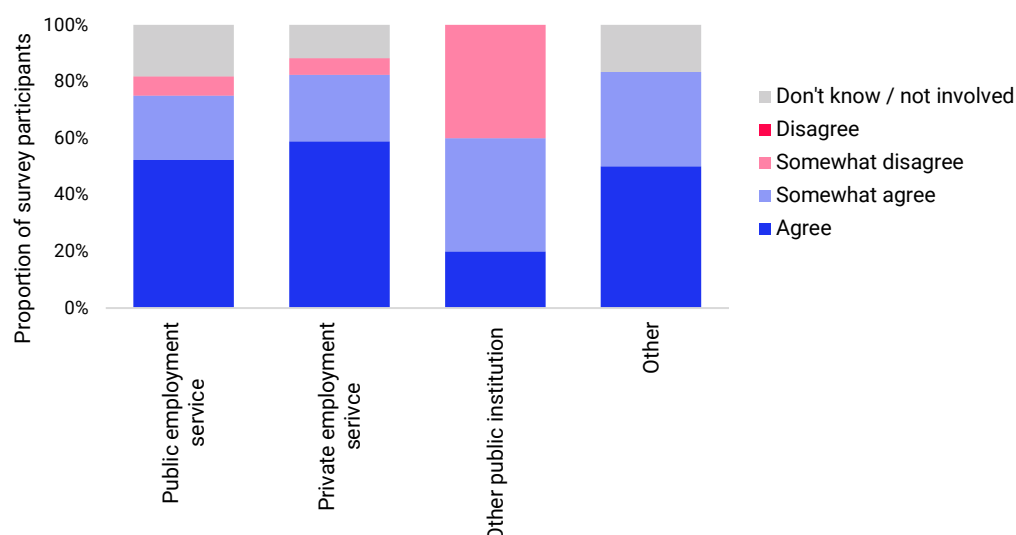
Is the project coherent externally? (EQ 5)

Several development partners in Mongolia have identified public employment services reform, youth unemployment, and entrepreneurship development as priority areas for reform, and fund interventions to address these areas. Apart from the International Labour Organisation, programs by the European Union and the World Bank Group were most often referred to in our interviews and the survey.

Regarding the European Union, interviewees noted positively that its decision to tie its budget support to the delivery of the YES Desks supports coherence (and sustainability) but they observed some overlap with the recently concluded SeCIM project, specifically in Zavkhan, where at some point both projects worked on reforming the services of the public employment offices. Political decisions, rigid workplans, as well as personality-related reasons seem to have undermined coordination and collaboration. With regard to the World Bank MESP project several synergies were created at the operational level, for instance by combining YEPP/VET support for the YES Desks with MESP infrastructure support for a select group of public employment offices. Another example is that the MESP project plans to further develop the Labour Market Information system at PES and the digitalisation of additional PES services, based on what YEPP/VET has started.

The survey results shown in Figure 3 mirror what we learned in the interviews: While public and private services providers assessed complementary and coordination between the YEPP/VET project and other projects funded by the EU and the World Bank very positively, the ratings from other governmental and public institutions were more critical (two of five respondents somewhat disagreed that enough was done to create synergies between these projects). The impression that we got from our interviews is that the MLSP could have played a more active role in coordinating the various donor interventions so as to improve complementarity and effective use of resources (for instance through MLSP-led coordination meetings).

Figure 3: Coherence (survey result)



Question: Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Enough has been done to coordinate with other donor-funded interventions to ensure that the projects fit with each other.

Number of responses: 17, 44, 5, 6



2.3. Effectiveness

To assess effectiveness (outputs and outcomes), we use the project's monitoring data, survey results, and most notably the outcome harvesting.

Are strategies and approaches adequate to achieve the intended results? (EQ 6)

All of the survey participants agreed (73% fully, 27% somewhat) that the PIU used adequate approaches and strategies to achieve the intended results. This included setting up working groups in which public and private actors and national and regional actors collaborated; insourcing expertise of specialised start-up support organisations; delivering extensive capacity building; and developing manuals, handbooks, or guidelines to document purpose, content, and process of the employment and start-up promotion services as well as the labour market demand survey (LMDS).

The project's adaptation to the situation induced by the Covid-19 pandemic was overall also viewed very positively. 75% fully and 20% somewhat agreed that the program has been effective and timely in providing an adapted response to the pandemic. The delivery of online capacity building events was most often mentioned as the prime adaptation.⁹ While the move to online was swift, technical issues of connectivity impacted on the effectiveness of trainings, as some of the interviewees noted (whilst expressing understanding that the PIU did what it could to mitigate problems). A few stakeholders noted that the move to online capacity building had the beneficial effect of including public employment office staff at the *soum* level who otherwise may not have had the opportunity to take part in training events.¹⁰ A more problematic consequence of the pandemic was that much of the service delivery by the public and private employment offices came to a halt because of stay-home policies.

With the gradual transfer of youth employment and start-up support services to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy the project assumed more of a facilitating role, as recommended by the external reviewers of the project's second phase.

Does the project achieve its intended objectives? (EQ 7)

Results framework: The project's result framework contains 7 outcome and 25 output indicators. Table 2 provides an overview of how many of the outcome targets were documented as achieved in the last progress report covering the period until June 2021. In total, the PIU reports all of the 7 outcome targets as achieved. Two of the five quantifiable targets are vastly overachieved, namely the government's funding for the Youth Employment Support Program in 2021, which

⁹ Two statements to exemplify: "There is no doubt that this is one of the projects that moved to digitalisation fast." and "It was effective to organise online training ... jointly with the project we organised an online training for mothers caring for their children at home and for people with disabilities, which saved time for citizens and provided them with knowledge and information from wherever they were."

¹⁰ We note in this context that the project design neither foresaw establishing YES Desks at or extending services to the *soum* level, nor was such expansion planned or requested by the Mongolian government.



includes the YES Desk service provision and the start-up support scheme, and the satisfaction rate of YES Desk clients.¹¹

Table 2: Results framework indicators (outcome level)

Outcome / indicator	Values			Comments / examples
	Baseline	Target	Achieved Status	
Outcome 1: National policies and programs are conducive for youth employment				
Revised and improved nation laws	No	Yes	Yes	Revised labour law, draft employment promotion law
Adopted youth employment and start-up promotion programs	No	Yes	Yes	Youth support programs 2021 and 2019, YESD guidelines
Outcome 2: Youth employment support services including YES Desks are integrated and scaled				
Number of YES Desk clients	0	12,000	>12,600	65% women
Number of job placements	0	3,000	>3,090	55% women
Satisfaction rate of YES Desk clients	67%	80%	96%	satisfaction survey 2020
Outcome 3: National start-up support program is strengthened				
Funds allocated to the YESSP	3.5	3.7	12.7	latest YESP budget in 2021, in million ₺
Number of start-up promotion clients	0	6,000	5,980	51% women Note: 4,890 start-up clients in 2019; drop in 2020 due to Covid-19 pandemic related restrictions

Source: Results framework, June 2021. The outcome formulations are shortened to better fit the table.

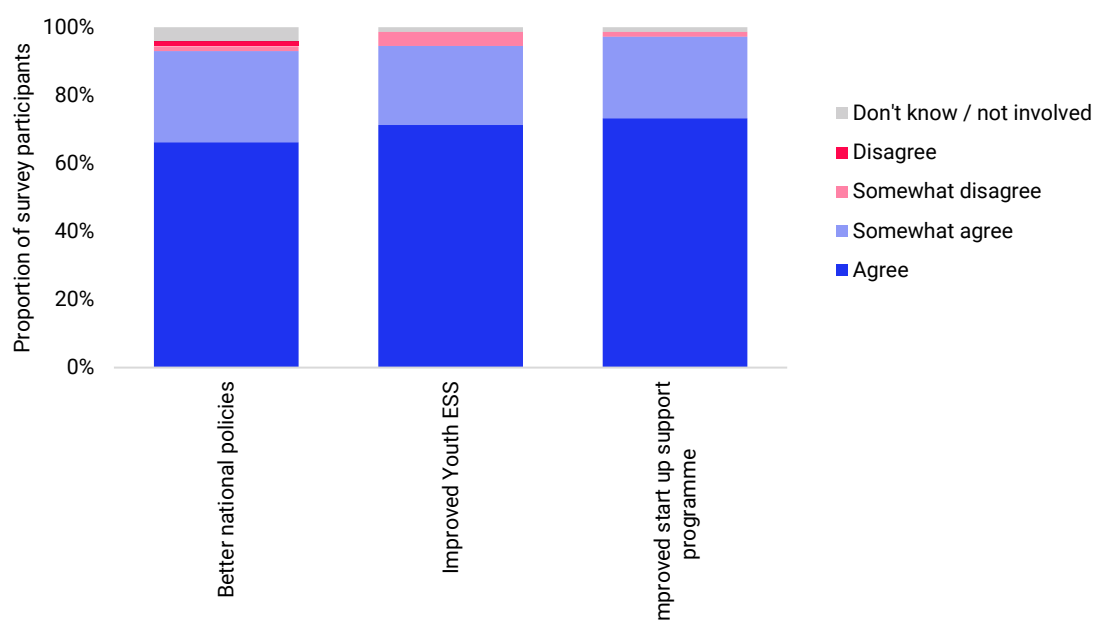
In the following we supplement the assessment based on the M&E data with findings from the online survey and interviews. The interviews in particular had a strong focus on the various results developed by the project, as this “outcome harvesting” was a main element of the evaluation approach. The results of the outcome harvesting are briefly summarised below (Figure 6) and are described in detail in full in Annex 3.

Survey: The majority of the respondents is of the opinion that the project will achieve its objectives in all three project components, as shown in Figure 4. We also asked the participants to reflect upon the most important effects associated with the project and whether there were any unintended negative effects: With very few exceptions the respondents commented positively and affirmed that there were no unfavourable consequences.

¹¹ Several of the target values were set pragmatically, as we’ve learned in the interviews with the implementing team. For the one-year extension phase, for instance, the PIU merely added a third of the target values of the original three-year project duration. It assumed linear progression of the project’s results and did, for instance, not take into consideration that the project had gained traction in some aimags whereas in others the project activities were only starting. Target figures were not adjusted, for instance for the complications the Covid-19 pandemic brought for project implementation.



Figure 4: Effectiveness (survey result)



Question: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? The objectives of the project will be achieved by the end of its duration: i) Youth employment is improved because of better national policies and programs. ii) Local employment services across Mongolia implement improved Youth Employment Support Services. iii) The national start-up support program is improved, iv) Mongolia's sustainable social and economic development improved as a result of more youth employment.

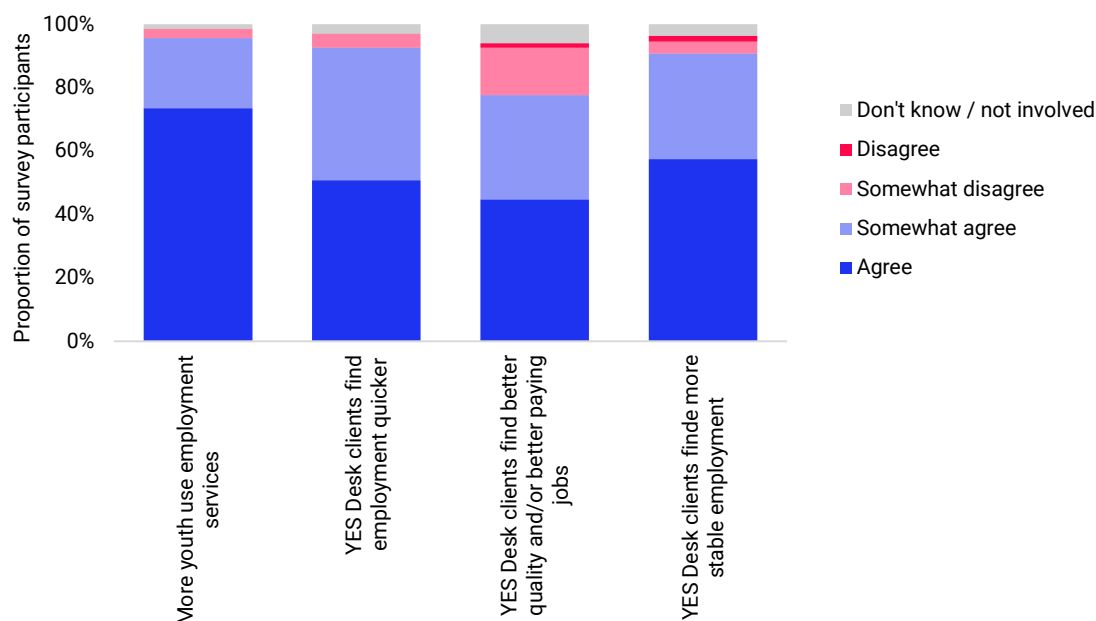
Number of responses: 71, 73, 71, 57

Regarding the extent to which the YES Desks and the start-up support services were beneficial, the responses in Figure 5 can be summarised as follows: There is high agreement that the new and improved services have not only led to more young people using public employment services instead of just registering to receive compensation (97% agreement, i.e. either "agree", or "somewhat agree"), but that the services also help finding new employment quicker (95%), finding better quality jobs (83%) and therefore more stable employment (94%). The start-up services (not shown in the figure below) received equally high ratings, with 93% of the participants believing that young clients of the YES Desks are more likely to succeed in their self-employment, and 91% indicating that the services also help with developing start-up companies further.¹²

¹² The only notable concern that was voiced related to the fact that the current practice of providing social welfare benefits to unemployed youth without requiring them to actively search for work remains unaddressed and therefore continues to complicate their participation in the YES Desks. An area beyond remit of the YEPP project, this remains an issue that might warrant more attention in the future.



Figure 5: YES Desk services effects (survey results)



Question: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Due to the changes initiated by the project i) more young people are using the services of the local public employment offices (beyond receiving their unemployment benefits); ii) young clients of the YES Desks leave unemployment quicker; iii) young clients of the YES Desks find better quality and / or better paying jobs, iv) young clients of the YES Desks are more likely to find stable employment and are therefore less likely to become unemployed again.

Number of responses: 68, 67, 67, 54

Interviews: The interviewees commonly provided very positive feedback regarding the project and the results that were achieved. They appreciated the commitment of the project team, the quality of its services and their innovative character. Several of them compared the YEPP/VET project with similar interventions and concluded in general terms that that it was much more successful than, for instance, the EU-funded SeCIM project.

Results that were commonly stated in the interviews include:

- The establishment of the YES Desks and the gradual scaling of the latter across Mongolia; likewise, the scaling of the start-up support program.
- Regarding the latter, several interviewees stated that the project gave the “impetus” for a growing start-up ecosystem. We cite here two statements that exemplify this view: *“The project is ... giving the biggest push and support in building and strengthening Mongolia's start-up ecosystem.”* and *“The project not only created a start-up business community, but also made local and government decision-makers aware of the importance of start-ups and how to support them.”*
- The integration of the new employment services – Profiling, Individual Employment Planning Pathway, Modular Training Unit and Open Office, Labour Market Demand Surveys – and the start-up support scheme into national legislation and youth specific employment promotion programs.



- The delivery of comprehensive capacity building with which the participants not only learned new knowledge, skills, and experiences but also changed their views on young people and the challenges they face. From the perspective of YES Desk staff, effectiveness of their employment counselling and job matching services improved their satisfaction too.
- Improved job search skills, understanding about business, and employment opportunities of youth who participated in the YES Desks. In addition, many youth report to feel motivated and activated. (The satisfaction rate of clients regarding the performance of YES Desks was above the internally set target of 80% in 2018 and 2019.)
- The internship program, offering youth without work experience an entry into the labour market, and its integration into government policies and programs.

At the same time, there have also been some more nuanced and critical voices. Several of them related to capacity constraints in the public employment offices which warrant to be addressed so as to uphold the quality of the service provision; that officers at the *soum* level were hardly involved in the training, which impedes providing the same quality services to hard-to-reach youth; or that issues of funding and participation exist to carry out Labour Market Demand Surveys. Yet others merely raised continued challenges, for instance that local governments internship programs vary considerably across locations – data from four locations suggests that placement after internship ranges from roughly 30-90% – or that employers at the local level have yet to come fully on board to tackle youth unemployment.

Richer and more detailed accounts of the changes that the project contributed are documented in detail in the catalogue of outcome statements in Annex 3. An overview of these outcome statements is shown in Figure 6 below. The catalogue is the result of the outcome harvesting to which the project team and a vast group of project stakeholders contributed. The catalogues represent what the contributors consider to be the most significant outcomes to which the project contributed during the past two project phases.



Figure 6: Outcomes 2016-2021, identified with project stakeholders

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
	National Employment Council (NEC) adopted the Youth Employment and Start-up Support Program (YESSP).		General Office for Labour and Welfare Services approves a new employment service methodology.	EU integrates YES Desks provision as an indicator of its budget support to Mongolia.	NEC adopts the Youth Employment Support Program, integrating and funding new employment and start-up services.
			Mongolian government adopts the National Program on Youth Development.		Parliament passes the revised Labour Law that contains regulations related to internship service.
Technical working group develops initial concepts and ideas towards improved employment services for young job seekers.	Labour and Welfare Services in three aimags start to pilot client-oriented Youth Employment Service (YES) Desks.	Scaling of YES Desks to cover ten locations (aimags and districts).	General Office for Labour and Welfare Services approves a revised employment service methodology.	Labour and Welfare Services in Bulgan, Uvs, and Zavkhan aimags improve access to employment service for youth with disabilities.	In 2021, all aimag and district public and private employment service providers use web-based employment service tools.
	Public employment offices facilitate LMD Surveys as part of the employment promotion services.		Ministry of Labour and Social Protection decides to establish YES Desks nationwide.	23 companies and DLWS in four aimags / districts pilot internships.	Staff at public employment offices capacitated towards becoming coaches and mentors.
Labour and Welfare Services in three aimags start to pilot the start-up support program.	Start-up support program is piloted and implemented to cover ten locations (aimags and districts).		MLSP starts to implement the start-up support program nationwide.		NEC passes a resolution to provide grants instead of loans to selected start-ups.
			MLSP issues guidelines to select start-up program service providers.		Youth turn their innovative ideas into start-up businesses.
			GOLWS applies criteria to select service providers providing "start-up support" to youth.		Private sector actors assume a more active role in supporting youth employment.

■ Policies, regulations, governance

■ Youth Employment Support Services

■ Start-up support

Outcomes in lighter colours are not described in a separate outcome statement



Does the project achieve objectives related to transversal themes? (EQ 8)

Inclusion and gender equality are central elements of the project and the Swiss Cooperation Strategy in Mongolia overall. In the following we assess to which extent the project has been attending to these transversal themes, using interviewee feedback, survey results and M&E data.

Gender equality: Two thirds of the YES Desk participants are women (see Table 2). One reason for this is that there are generally more registered unemployed young women than young men. Yet, even taking this difference into account, women are more likely to use the YES Desk services; on average, 0.72 services (Profiling, Individual Employment Pathway Planning, Modular Training Unit, Open Office) are used for each unemployed young woman, and 0.42 services per unemployed young man (comparing YEPP/VET data on services with unemployed data by the Mongolian Statistical Information services). When we examine specific services further, the pattern continues to persist: young women benefitted more from all employment services offered by the YES Desk. Similar results can be seen at the aimag level and in UB.

In the online survey, roughly 70% of the participants were of the opinion that women and men have benefited in equal parts from the project (81% of the survey participants representing private employment offices and business services providers; 64% of the survey participants representing public employment offices). About 25% were of the opinion that women benefited more.

While the results on the output level are comparatively easy to observe, we cannot determine whether more services translated into more (re-)employment. This data is not available. The preliminary analysis presented in section 2.5, using highly aggregated data from the Mongolian Statistical Information Services, suggests that young men might have benefited most from the introduction of the YES Desks.

Also, whether and to what extent gender is mainstreamed in the actual service delivery of the YES Desks, start-up mentors etc.¹³ is beyond the remit of the evaluation. However, neither in the interviews nor in the survey were issues flagged or negative experiences shared. From a project implementation perspective, we note that the project's M&E consistently reports disaggregated data showing the extent to which women are involved in or benefit from the project's activities.

Inclusion: With the project's objective to address youth unemployment in general, and a special focus on young women and herders, the project can be regarded as having a strong inclusion focus. Interviewees and survey respondents similarly share this view. One of the few critical comments in this context related to the fact that public employment office staff at *soum* level were hardly trained in the project, limiting the opportunities within the aimags to involve hard-to-reach youth. As stated elsewhere in the report, developments to digitalise service provisions can potentially mitigate this challenge; this happened with the development of an online portal

¹³ This would include, for instance, assessing the use of gender-sensitive language or the consideration of gender specific restraints or advantages. Two of the youth employment services that are on offer in the YES Desks (Profiling and IEPP) aim, however, to ensure that the individual barriers to employment and the specific traits and circumstances of a young jobseeker are systematically taken into consideration in order to define the respective and tailor-made actions in order to integrate her or him into the labour market. (see Handbook Model Labour Division for Youth, September 2017). By default, this also includes taking into consideration the specific barriers that women or persons with disabilities face.



(yesdesk.mn). The activities to enhance accessibility of persons with disabilities to employment support is another area in which the project became active (primarily by improving physical access to YES Desks in selected aimags), albeit with lower scope and scale. One of the interviewees critiqued in this context that while the infrastructure improvements are commendable, abundant challenges for persons with disabilities remain, including education and mobility, which vastly limited their opportunities in the labour market.

Spotlight: Feedback young people

This excursus summarises the views of youth who either were mediated into an internship or received start-up support offered by the YEPP/VET project. The twelve young people we interviewed were coming from different parts of Mongolia: Western region (Govi-Altai, Uvs, Khovd), Khangai region (Khuvsgul), Central region (Darkhan-Uul), and Ulaanbaatar (Khan-Uul District). Seven participants are operating a start-up, while five were participating in an internship. The interview participants were suggested by YES Desk staff and partly by the PIU.

The start-ups operate in various industries ranging from producing noodle, honey, organic herbal tea, making leather products, shoes, traditional wooden toys, to tree seedlings and building gardens. They are also at different stages of maturity and business scales ranging from self-employment to more than 10 permanent employees. All founders spoke highly of the quality of the start-up trainings and services, the YES Desk staff's dedication and engagement, the business knowledge and expertise of their assigned mentors, and the provision of new opportunities and potential customers by the project. For some, the YEPP/VET project opened their mind to the possibilities of becoming independent and self-employed; and for others, the business tools, techniques, and knowledge acquired helped them to be ready and more confident in building and expanding their business, as well as to be more innovative and resilient in dealing with uncertainties and crises. Nevertheless, they believe that there is room for enhancement. Some suggested that there should be better communication about the start-up events in terms of requirements and expectations, more professionalism by the judges, and providing activities other than start-up weekend, such as hackathon, accelerator program, demo day, etc., especially in small towns and villages. Other more mature start-ups raised the need for further support with more advanced training, mentoring and services to scale up and bring their businesses to the next level.

Prior the internship, the five young people came from different backgrounds: one worked part-time at a restaurant, another in construction, a vocational school student, a stay-home mother with an undergraduate degree, an undergraduate who wanted to change career. All of them commented positively on their learning and experiences with the internship programs. In their view, the internship provides an opportunity to learn about things that were not taught at schools, gaining practical skills, professional experiences, and connection with future employers. They believed that such learnings contributed greatly to their motivation and conviction to seek employment right after the internship and their success in finding the current jobs. While sharing their appreciation about the novelty of tri-partite contracts (YES Desk, intern, and employer) in Mongolia, some interns pointed out that there is a need for a detailed guidance of the internship scheme for future interns, employers, and mentors. There is also common view on the importance of having more than one staff per YES Desk to better support young people and perform all activities effectively.

Overall, the young people affirmed that the YEPP/VET project met or exceed their expectations and thought that it, as one participant put it, "inspires and sparks youth passion and motivations to take the right step into the future".

2.4. Efficiency

In this section we assess whether the project was efficient, hence whether it delivered results in an economic and timely way.



How efficient was the project (focus on cost-effectiveness, timeliness, monitoring)? (EQ 9/10/11)

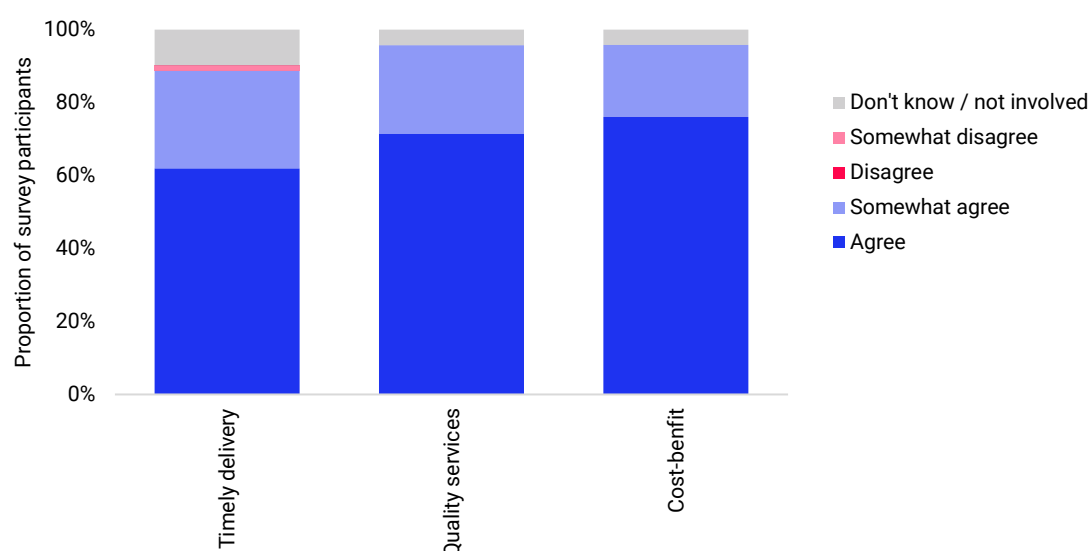
Figure 7 shows the results of the survey with regard to three criteria that can serve as proxies for efficiency.

Quality of services and products: As stated elsewhere in the report, the interviewees commonly stated that the project's services (training, advice, events) were of very high quality and showed much commitment by the PIU. The survey results mirror these findings with an approval rate of 100% (among those who gave a rating). Some argued that the digitalisation of the youth employment services will reduce administrative burden, whilst also making outreach to hard-to-reach youth much easier. This also extends to the platform www.startupbase.mn, a platform containing start-up information, case studies and hosting events.

Timeliness: The survey responses to the question whether the project delivered its services timely were similarly positive. While the pandemic undeniably affected the project, most interviewees believe that the project was quick to move its work online. A few of the interviewees had reservations about starting new YES Desks so close to the project's finalisation, arguing that these public employment offices will only receive a limited amount of capacity building.

Value for money: All survey participants who responded to this question found that the benefits they reaped from the project outweighed what they invested from their own resources (which was mostly time, e.g. participation in working groups, attendance of trainings). In the context of our conversations about the efficiency, three senior managers of employment offices compared the project with the recently concluded EU funded SeCIM project. They stated that despite the lower budget the project was much more successful, indicating higher effectiveness and efficiency.

Figure 7: Efficiency (survey result)



Question: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? i) The project delivered its services timely; delays were justified. ii) The project delivered its services and products in good quality. iii) The resources (time and / or funds) you invested while participating in the project were worthwhile.

Number of responses: 71, 70, 71



Regarding operational efficiency we learned from the interviews that the collaboration between SDC, PIU, and GFA were overall very good, and that interim issues around the start of the third phase meanwhile subsided. As mentioned further above, the regular progress reporting is rich in detail, showing where progress was made and where challenges were encountered. The monitoring comprises a comprehensive results framework. While using the M&E instrument for the evaluation we encountered some difficulties to understand and interpret some of the target, baseline, and achievement values which, despite explanations by the PIU, could not be resolved entirely. This somewhat undermines the usefulness of the results framework for learning and steering purposes. As mentioned elsewhere in the report, more could have been done to do more systematic analysis of effects of the various employment services. Over time a significant amount of data was accumulated which in our view was hardly analysed to understand trends, differences, results etc. within and among the public employment offices. These data could have been used to validate and update the results framework.

In this context we also recall the recommendations of the evaluation team of the second phase about knowledge generation and knowledge management, full implementation of which, in our view, could have generated more pertinent learnings.

A feature that has been mentioned quite frequently in the interviews related to the PIU, which was mainly staffed by Mongolian consultants (though consultants from abroad were frequently deployed too, specifically for component 2 of the project). Many of our interviews, specifically from government institutions, saw this as an important factor contributing to successful implementation of the project (“they speak our language and know our internal processes”, “no translation is needed, which makes it easier to understand new concepts”).

The project carried out an interim internal evaluation of the YES Desks.¹⁴ The evaluator concluded that relative to the potential effects of the YES Desks on youth unemployment *“the personnel and running costs of a YES Desk are clearly efficient”* and that *“there is no indication that the given set of outputs could have been produced at a lower cost”*. The argument that the YES Desks are efficient because staff from public employment offices deliver the new employment services in addition to their usual tasks needs to be contrasted with the findings of this evaluation that several of the YES Desks staff voiced concerns about their capacity constraints and about the risk that this can affect the quality of the service delivery. Since there are often only one or two trained YES Desk specialists in a given public employment office, absences or leaves exacerbate the constraints. Similarly, the lack of mentors was repeatedly mentioned as an issue that warrants to be addressed. A statement, exemplary for several ones, was: *“Innovative services are important, but they also depend on the ability of the specialists to provide those services, as well as maintaining their jobs.”* The (potential) effects also need to be further substantiated, to understand the “return on investment” of each of the services.

¹⁴ Pirjol, 2018



2.5. Impact

This section covers the extent to which the project has achieved or is likely to achieve impact. Both in the second and the third phase of the project the intended impact has been *“to contribute to the increased employment and self-employment of young men and women”*. The project’s results framework does not contain indicators for the development objective and was thus not part of the projects’ M&E.¹⁵ We use quantitative data analysis as well as interview feedback and survey results to assess impact.

Does the project contribute to increased employment and self-employment? (EQ 12)

Quantitative analysis: The Mongolian Statistical Information Services publishes the number of registered unemployed, disaggregated for age and aimag. We used this data to assess whether there is an observable effect of the introduction of the YES Desks on youth unemployment.¹⁶ In the following paragraphs we limit ourselves to the main findings of the quantitative analysis; a detailed description can be found Annex 4.

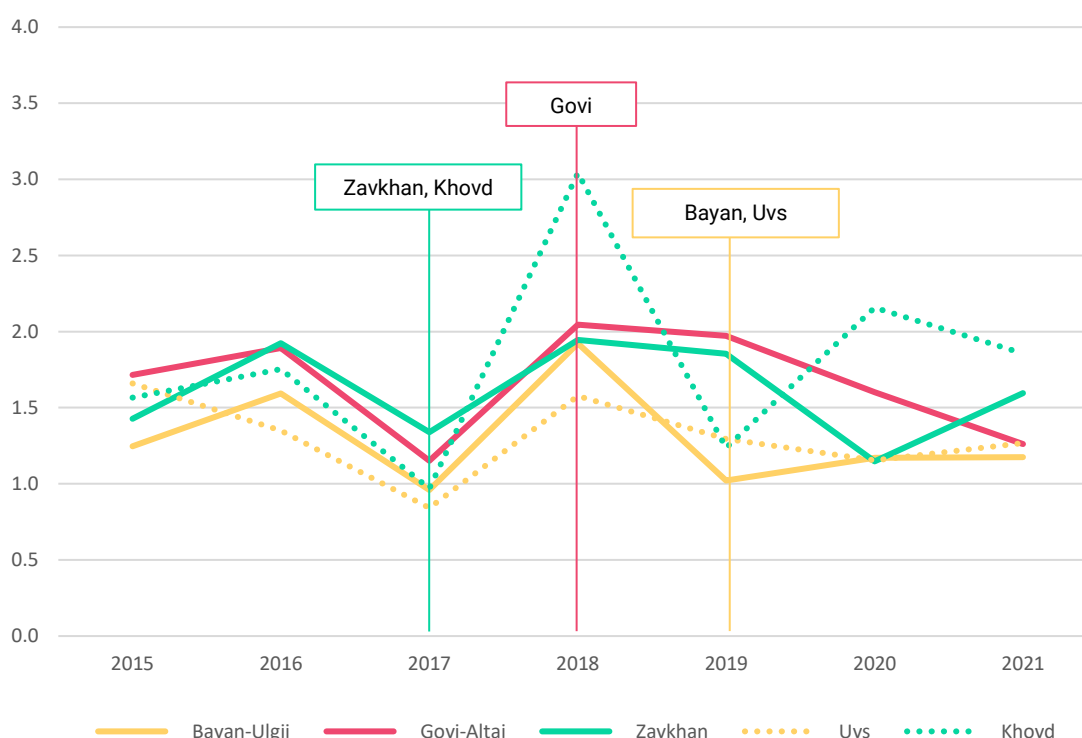
In a first step we looked at the development of youth unemployment as well as the ratio between youth and total unemployment by plotting the data along the time axis. This initial graphical assessment did not provide a clear result as shown in Figure 8: some aimags show an increase in registered youth unemployment immediately after the introduction of the YES Desk, others a decrease. This is not surprising given the many factors influencing youth unemployment and keeping in mind that the effect of the newly introduced youth employment and start-up services might not have been immediate.

¹⁵ See the explanation in the ProDoc of the second phase of the project: *“This objective is formulated mindful of the fact that is not possible to measure the project’s contribution to this development objective. Accordingly, the Logical Framework ... does not contain indicators for the development objective and it would not be part of the projects’ M&E.”* (SDC, 2015)

¹⁶ There are some important limitations to this dataset: We only have information on the registered unemployed and not the remaining unemployed or job seekers more broadly. The data only covers the aimags but not the districts in Ulaanbaatar (UB), which introduced YES Desk at different times. We therefore exclude UB from the analysis. The analysis itself is complicated because there are many other factors that influence the unemployment rate such as seasonal variation, business cycles and long-term changes in the business environment.



Figure 8: Development of ratio youth unemployment to total unemployment (yearly data), indicating the introduction of YES Desks (Western region)



Data source: 1212.mn

In a second step we applied regression analysis, a commonly used statistical method to identify the effect of one factor (the introduction of the YES Desks) while keeping other factors constant (for instance, general labour market trends, business cycles, seasonality, or other changes at the labour exchange offices). When assessing changes in youth unemployment, the regression results for the effect of the YES Desks are not statistically significant which means they are not robust. Where the model provides significant results – namely for young men – the results seem counterintuitive at first: registered youth unemployment rose after the introduction of the YES Desk. One explanation could be that the improvements in services led to more young people registering with the labour exchange offices (Note: YES Desk services could only be accessed by registering).

A second set of regressions focused on the ratio between youth unemployment and total unemployment. These estimates show that the ratio decreased after the introduction of the YES Desks. The effects were particularly large for young men, which is interesting in light of the finding that young women received more YES Desk services. The overall effect is a change in the ratio of about -0.1. To put this into perspective: In the first quarter of 2021, total unemployment was 1.3% while youth unemployment stood at 1.8%, which results in a ratio of 1.4. The regression results indicate that without the YES Desk, this ratio might have been 1.5, resulting in a youth unemployment rate of 2.0%, or 9,000 young registered unemployed instead of 8,000.



Overall, the statistical analysis provides some promising results on the ratio between youth unemployment and total unemployment, but also some puzzling ones – regarding the youth unemployment rate overall. The analysis also raises questions in regard to who benefits most, and why. A more detailed analysis would likely be able to provide more information and support learning in this regard (see chapter 4).

Interviews and survey results: The vast majority of project stakeholders we talked to were of the opinion that the project already had positive effects on youth employment. Many of them shared stories of youth who successfully found a job, or launched their business, or continued their education as a result of support they received at a YES Desk or one of the (start-up) events in the context of the project. Many also had examples of youth, public employment staff, and employers who “changed their mindset” and are convinced that the project will continue to have even more beneficial effects in the mid- and long-term. Furthermore, about two thirds of the survey participants strongly agree that youth employment improved because of YES Desk services. About 60% of the survey participants conclude that as a result of better national policies, programs, and services Mongolia’s sustainable social and economic development improved. The feedback that two survey respondents provided to explain their ratings suggests, that the reason for the comparatively lower agreement is that youth unemployment is just one of many factors and that more time is needed until more effects can be registered.

2.6. Sustainability

The sustainability chapter is based on the findings from the interviews, the survey, and the document review. We assess sustainability on the basis of three areas related to the capacity of stakeholders to uphold changes and results: technical capacity and motivation; financial capacity; and contextual factors.

Do stakeholders have the requisite technical capacity and motivation to sustain results? (EQ 13)

We observed much interest and motivation to continue with the project’s results. This is true for interviewees at all levels of government, where the feedback from those who directly work with young job seekers was specifically vivid.

In the following we summarise factors that are likely to contribute to sustain the results and others that pose risks, differentiated by the three project components.

- *Component 1 (policy):* Public and private sector stakeholders (MLSP, NEC, MONEF, private sector associations etc.) have actively engaged in the project and thereby increased their understanding and appreciation of the measures to address youth unemployment. Several policy-related decisions of the past years (such as revisions to the labour law, approval of guidelines, adoption of new active labour market measures, increase of funding etc.) bode well for sustainability. The repeat inclusion of the YES Desk and start-up services in the biannual national employment promotion programmes is evidence for this commitment. Youth unemployment will likely remain a government priority, including in the context of the post-pandemic recovery. Risks exist in particular due to frequent staff changes in the public sector, as they are often associated with a loss of technical know-how. Figure 10



below shows that almost all (98)% of the survey respondents agreed or somewhat agreed that the MLSP, the NEC, and the GOLWS are capable and willing to ensure continuation of the project's results.

- *Component 2 (employment services)*: It clearly emanates from the interviews that the newly introduced “client-centred” employment services are greatly valued – by young people and public employment staff alike. One head of an employment offices noted that her team “*changed the work culture and our attitudes towards all our clients – young job seekers, employers and other partners – entirely*” and concluded that “*none of us wants to go back when we only registered unemployment without helping them*”.

As mentioned in chapter 2.3 above the project has delivered a broad range of capacity building activities, equipping public employment office staff, start-up mentors, and company representatives with the needed technical knowhow to deliver specifically the YED Desk services in practice. This seems to be less the case for the Labour Market Demand (LMD) Surveys, considering that several of our interviewees argued that more training would be needed – to conduct the LMD, to interpret its results, and to define and implement actions in light of the results. Indeed, most senior managers of public employment offices we talked to could give concrete examples on how the findings of the LMD Surveys influenced their or other stakeholders’ policies or processes.¹⁷ Handbooks, guidelines, as well as digital resources and platforms facilitate knowledge management and transfer, for instance for newly recruited staff. Another element for sustainability is the complementary support that the World Bank Group is continuing to provide to public employment services.

In this context we also refer to the survey results in Figure 9 which indicate that the project has undertaken sufficient activities to explain and share tools and resources and to disseminate knowledge through peer learning. While a solid practice could be established in the locations in which the project piloted and initially implemented its activities, where we also observe much identification with new YES Desk services, there has only been limited scope for capacity building in those YES Desks that were established during 2021.¹⁸ In these aimags and districts sustainability will partly hinge on whether the MLSP and GOLWS will ensure continued capacity development, learning, and optimisation (e.g. through the deployment of the master trainers or peer-exchanges) through its own means. The survey respondents (see Figure 10) see the need for continued guidance and enhanced capacity of middle and high-level officials and social welfare officers, as well as continued improvement and implementation of tools and technologies, especially the development of an integrated labour market information system.

- *Component 3 (start-up support)*: A factor that we think contributes to sustainability – not least in light of continued capacity constraints of public employment office staff regarding the start-up support activities – is that dedicated start-up service providers are involved in delivering the start-up promotion program. Their continued engagement can enhance

¹⁷ Likewise, the evaluators of the second phase of the project noted: “*The use of the survey findings by YES Desk services, career and employment counsellors, by the LEC and the local TVET-Councils and others needs to be promoted.*” (Bloch/Norjinkham, 2018)

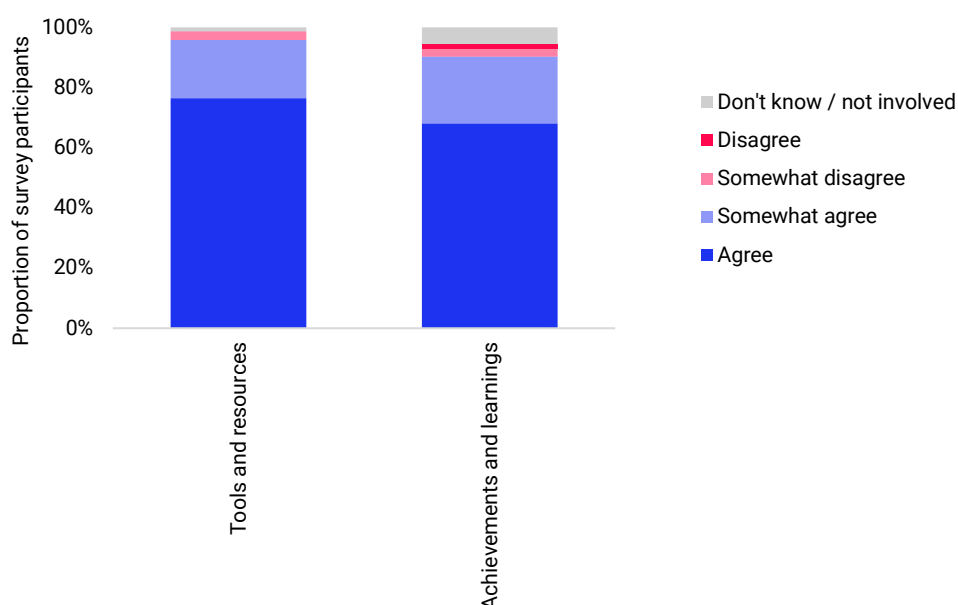
¹⁸ Arkhangai, Dornod, Gobisumber, Selenge, Sukhbaatar aimags; Bagankhangai, Baganuur, Songinokhairkhan, Sukhbaatar, Ulaanbaatar city districts.



quality and relevance of the support services and potentially grow the start-up ecosystem, creating demand for more services. Handbooks and guidelines on pitch events, training, accelerator services, etc. are documented and approved by the MLSP. Interest of young people to take part in the start-up programs should remain high, not least because of the innovative and modern methods that are applied but also the financial incentive that comes with the program (if they are upheld, see next section).

However, for long-term sustainability respondents (see Figure 10) suggested continued improvement of start-up mentoring services, more frequent support, and more trainers available to help youth who want to start their own businesses, and additional support for selected start-ups to help them reach the next development level. Several respondents also argue that regulatory changes are needed (for instance, regarding taxes or lending) to improve the enabling environment for start-ups.

Figure 9: Knowledge sharing (survey result)



Question: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? i) Enough has been done by the project to explain and share tools and resources (e.g. handbooks, guidance notes). ii) Enough has been done by the project to share achievements and learnings between different stakeholders ("peer learning").

Number of responses: 72, 72

Do stakeholders have the requisite financial resources to sustain results? (EQ 14)

Continued financing by the government, specifically at the national level, is a decisive factor for sustainability for this public sector-oriented intervention. In the following we again summarise contributing and hindering factors, differentiated by the three project components.

- *Component 1 (policy):* The government has a longstanding practice of adopting employment support programs and accumulating the Employment Promotion Fund, a biannual financing facility sourced from state and local budgets, employer contributions, and development partners. Lower contributions to the Employment Promotion Fund as a



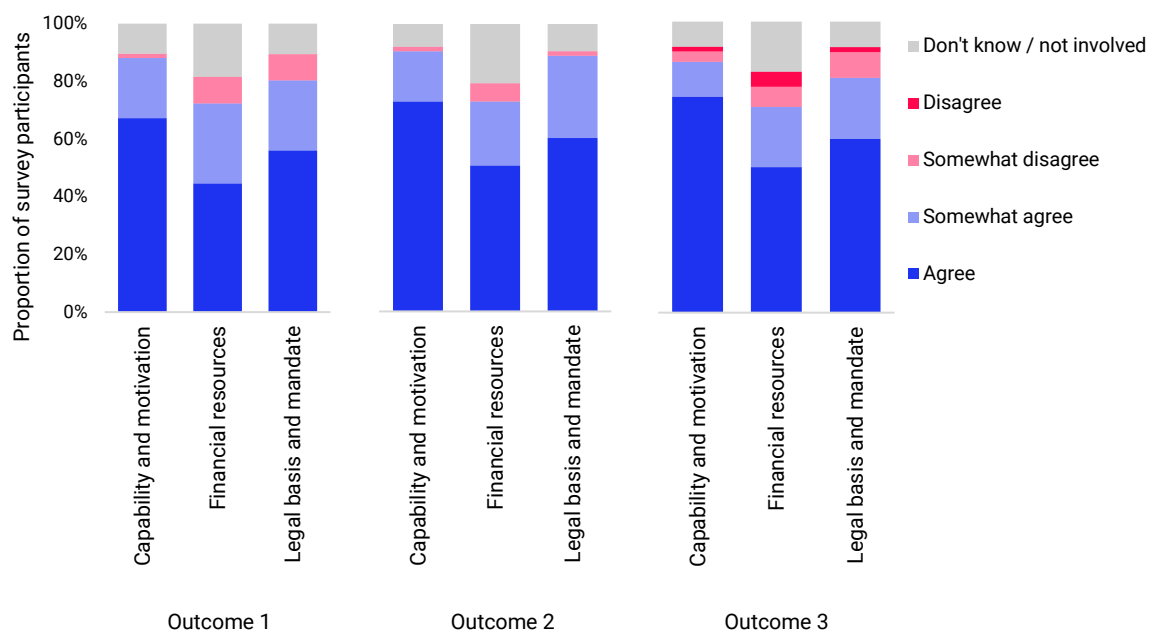
result of the pandemic and growing public debt could necessitate spending cuts in the short- to medium-term. The fact that the youth employment services are not explicitly codified in a law bares some risk in terms of legal sustainability. Indeed, it emanates from the survey respondents' open responses that sustainability ultimately hinges on maintaining or increasing funding for better expansion of public employment services and staff capacity building, incorporating the project activities into the Employment Promotion Law, and improving supervision and monitoring of the implementation of the youth employment laws, policies and programs.

- *Component 2 (employment services)*: The government committed to scale the YES Desks across Mongolia and has increased its funding for youth employment support in the past four years. The EU budget support, which includes the delivery of the YES Desks as one of the performance indicators, provides ample resources for continued financing going forward. Apart from the financial support, this also signals that the Mongolian government and the EU recognise YES Desks as an important instrument to address youth unemployment. Whether the Labour Market Demand Survey at local level will be continued also mainly hinges on whether they will be funded via the Employment Promotion Fund or whether resources can be sourced locally.¹⁹ Other risks in terms of sustainability relate to the staffing of public employment offices many of which, as far as we learned in the interviews, operate at their limits. Staff constraints can also undermine the quality of the service delivery, namely when less time is available for counselling, for case management, for relationship building, outreach to the private sector etc. Whether the government is inclined to recruit more staff, is an open questions.
- *Component 3 (start-up support)*: Similar to the assessment above, the start-up support scheme will hinge on continued financial support by the government, since it is unlikely that private actors will divert sufficient financing to the target groups of the start-up support scheme. The repeat inclusion of the YES Desk and start-up services in the biannual national employment promotion programmes signals a commitment that the government will continue providing the requisite resources, however.

¹⁹ See also GFA YEPP Operational Report January-June 2019, which reads: *"Required funds have proven to be a critical factor, as the majority of the aimags do not have sufficient financial resources to take responsibility and ownership for the LMDS. It shows that sufficient budget needs to be allocated from EPF to all aimags/districts every financial year for conducting local LMDS surveys."*



Figure 10: Sustainability (survey result)



Question: Thinking of the results achieved in outcome 1 / 2 / 3: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? i) Partners are capable and motivated to uphold the changes initiated or introduced by the project., ii) Partners have the financial resources to uphold these changes., iii) There is a legal basis and mandate for the partners to uphold these changes.

Number of responses: 67, 65, 66; 63, 63, 63; 58, 58, 57

Are contextual factors conducive to sustain results? (EQ 14)

Several context factors influence whether the policies, programs, and activities that were induced by the project will continue. We focus here on two factors that emerged from our interviews: First, despite an overall declining youth employment rate, the demand for measures that can effectively help youth to transition into the labour market will remain high on the agenda in the years to come, also in the context of the post-pandemic recovery. Second, following the scaling of the YES Desks and the start-up support program and considering how well public employment office staff, mentors, services providers, and youth identify with the newly introduced services, it will be hard to “scale down” to a previous stage again. In our interviews, senior government officials repeatedly stated that the scaling of the YES Desks underlines their commitment to continue youth employment and start-up services.



3. Conclusions

The evaluation was guided by 15 evaluation questions, which address various aspects of the DAC evaluation criteria. Taking these aspects into account, we provide a rating for each of the criteria:

Criteria / Rating	Explanation
Relevance: Highly satisfactory	The project's objective continues to be relevant: Reports and research results indicate that the youth employment remains an important factor causing poverty. Likewise, interview and survey results show that the project stakeholders consider the project relevant or very relevant.
Coherence: Satisfactory	Regarding internal coherence the evaluation finds that the project is consistent with SDC's strategy for Mongolia, and Inclusive Economic Development more broadly. In terms of external coherence, the project has prompted other development partners to use similar activities or to build up on results of the project such as the "client-centred" approach for youth employment services. Some interviewees and survey participants were critical and believe coordination and cooperation could have been strengthened.
Effectiveness: Highly Satisfactory	The project is well on track to achieve its targets at output and outcome level. Interviewees and survey respondents reiterate the quality of the project's services and the commitment of the Project Implementation Unit (PIU). The outcome harvesting has shown that stakeholders associate many positive results directly with the project, in all three project components. In the course of the extension the YES Desks have been instituted in public employment offices in all aimags and districts in Ulaanbaatar.
Efficiency: Satisfactory	Interview and survey results confirm that the project delivers high quality services, training, and support. It also delivers in a timely manner and where there are deviations, they are well justified and documented. Stakeholders feel that the project has provided good value for money; this finding was also confirmed by a more detailed internal evaluation of the YES Desks. From our perspective as evaluators, we believe more should have been done to implement the recommendation of the phase 2 evaluation to strengthen analysis and provide evidence to identify what works and for whom.
Impact: (Highly Satisfactory)	The project does not set an impact target, yet its aim is that more young people are employed or self-employed. Quantitative data analysis that we carried out with official employment data provides some promising preliminary results of the project on the ratio between youth unemployment and total unemployment; yet the analysis was not fully conclusive. Feedback from interviews and the survey was predominantly positive, even if slightly less so than the opinions obtained for the short-term results (effectiveness). <i>Note: The bracket indicates that this rating is based, at least partly, on inconclusive information.</i>
Sustainability: Highly Satisfactory	Our findings indicate that the project stakeholders identify very well with the youth employment and start-up services. Many of them observe significant changes in work culture, attitudes, and mindsets. EU budget support, which ties the resources to the delivery of the YES Desk services, the inclusion of the latter in the bi-annual national employment promotion programmes, and ongoing development partner support by the World Bank Group are important elements for financial and institutional sustainability of the YES Desks, a key result of the project. The MLSP needs to ensure continued capacity building, specifically in those locations, in which the project activities were launched only in the extension phase. While some open questions remain regarding financial sustainability in particular, our rating reflects how difficult sustainability is to reach with development interventions; we think the project has done very well in this regard.



A successful project is one which fulfils all DAC criteria; a project that is aligned with needs and priorities of its target group, generates meaningful results both in the short- and long term and spends its resources wisely. Based on our findings and the conclusions we draw above we believe that YEPP/VET is indeed such a successful project.

The evaluation of the second phase 2 contained seven high-level recommendations that contained a number of tasks, many of which we believe have largely been considered in the design and implementation of the third phase. Given that this third phase is the final phase of the project, the recommendation to the project team to transform its role from that of an implementer to that of a facilitator, seemed particularly important to us. The project team has managed this transition well. A case in point is the focus on capacity building, coordination among the project stakeholders (by means of working groups, master trainers, and peer exchanges).

One area where we feel a development project could have fared better is to produce evidence for the effectiveness of the developed solutions. This is a missed opportunity for both the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection as well as for SDC which could have used the evidence to propose similar solutions elsewhere. We believe that it's not too late to gather information and produce such data, however, and will be taking this up in the next section on recommendations.

4. Recommendations

The recommendations presented in this chapter have been formulated based on the findings and the conclusions of this evaluation.

In light of the impending closure of the project in December 2021 the recommendations are principally addressed to the MLSP / GOLWS, given their primary responsibility to deliver the youth employment and start-up support activities. At the same time, we believe that other development partners might be interested to learn about the recommendations and lend support for their operationalisation.²⁰ To what extent and how SDC could contribute to the operationalisation would have to be determined considering the gradual phasing out of its development support in Mongolia.

Recommendation 1: Consolidate service delivery in the YES Desks

Justification: The YES Desks in Dornogovi, Dundgovi, Khentii, Nalaikh, Orkhon, and Tuv aimags, as well as the desk in the Chingeltei district were introduced in 2020, in the midst of the pandemic. Capacity building was limited in these aimags and districts, and service delivery was generally difficult, due to restrictions but also the difficult labour market situation. Accordingly, concerns were raised in some of the interviews and the survey that sustainability of the changes in these aimags is more at risk than elsewhere, where processes have been long established. We

²⁰ For instance, the World Bank Group within the context of the ongoing MESP intervention.



recommend to closely observe developments, and support these YES Desks if necessary, for instance through the deployment of the master trainers or peer-exchanges.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen monitoring, analysis, and learning

Justification: The findings of the evaluation suggest that the newly introduced and strengthened services had many beneficial effects already. With a view to optimising the services further it would be instrumental to better understand “what works, where, for whom, and why”. Sourcing data and information to this end can take various forms, quantitative and qualitative, analytic, and anecdotal. Two ideas that we recommend the MLSP to consider are:

- Developing a sound system to collect and assess data to better analyse the effects of the youth employment and start-up support services. Using individual data from unemployed youth would, for instance, allow to distinguish between the likelihood to register, the duration of unemployment, and the probability that new employment found is sustainable, and the effect of the YES Desk on these. In addition, a disaggregated analysis would also allow controlling for differences in the profile of the registered jobs-seekers across aimags and shifts over time.
- Facilitating regular peer exchanges of youth employment practitioners – in private and public sector functions alike – to share their experiences, good practices, failures, and challenges which can relate to processes (to whom do we deliver services), outcomes (which services yield best results), or other forms of pertinent knowledge (what does not work).

Recommendation 3: Ensure adequate human and financial resources to uphold quality of service delivery

Justification: Our interviews suggest that several of the public employment offices face resource constraints. Public employment staff at YES Desks deliver their services in addition to their other tasks, increasing their workload. While many of the public employment staff see much value in what they do and do so with great commitment, many need to do extra hours that are not remunerated. These situations can have ramifications on long term staff motivation, the ability to recruit and retain suitable staff, and eventually the quality of service delivery. Two ideas that we recommend the MLSP to consider are:

- Carry out a costing of the new youth employment services to understand the “unit costs” that are required to support each of the young YES Desk clients optimally. Depending on the results and estimates of the future demand of the YES Desks, decisions regarding reorganisation or staffing might be warranted.
- As part of analysis and peer-learning, identify which services create most value (across all job seekers, but also specifically for those who need support most). Based on this, identify where (service, groups of job seekers) time investments are most relevant and cost-effective.



Thoughts on the forthcoming experience capitalisation

There is no set methodology and pre-defined topics for experience capitalisations. To serve its intended purpose, an experience capitalisation needs to be developed with the target audience and their information requirements – both in terms of content and format – in mind. We therefore believe it will be important to define the purpose and to explore the requirements in the preparation of the planned experience capitalisation.

From our perspective and given the positive rating of the YEPP/VET project, it would likely be interesting and relevant for organisational learning purposes to look into the factors which were driving the success of the project, as well the challenges and stumbling blocks that were encountered and how they were dealt with. This could build on the outcome descriptions provided in the Annex.

From our discussions in the evaluation team, we also find these questions relevant:

- How did the team composition – including the progression from an international to a Mongolian team lead – influence the project's results?
- How decisive were the inroads that the team had into the MLSP for the project? Can this also backfire when there are shifts in government and political factions change?
- Shifting from an implementing towards a facilitation role was defined as an important element to contribute to sustainability. What experiences did the PIU make in changing its role? What can be learned for other projects elsewhere?
- What value did M&E systems have to steer the project and what were the reasons that despite abundance of data, the latter was not systematically used to understand effects of the project? What can be done within implementers, project counterparts, and SDC to improve this?
- The YEPP/VET project is one of several projects within SDC's portfolio focusing on public employment services. What can be taken away from this experience? What could be replicated elsewhere?

Finally, we note that the "client-centred" approaches are a standard philosophy of public employment services in Switzerland. It could be interesting to involve representatives of these services in the capitalisation process or another form of peer exchange. Questions that could be addressed include: How were reform challenges addressed in Switzerland? Which mechanisms and processes were needed to consolidate and optimise reforms?



Annex 1: Evaluation matrix

The evaluation matrix contains the evaluation questions and the *main* sources of information and data.

Relevance	Doc / Data	Survey	Interviews
EQ 1: To what extent do the objectives of the intervention respond to the needs and priorities of the target group?		●	●
EQ 2: To what extent do the objectives of the intervention respond to the needs and priorities of the government?		●	●
EQ 3: To what extent do core design elements of the intervention (such as the theory of change, structure of the project components, choice of services and intervention partners) adequately reflect the needs and priorities of the target group.		●	●
Coherence			
EQ 4: Internal coherence: the extent to which the intervention is compatible with other interventions of Swiss development cooperation in the same country and thematic field (consistency, complementarity and synergies).			●
EQ 5: External coherence: the extent to which the intervention is compatible with interventions of other actors in the country and thematic field (complementarity and synergies).		●	●
Effectiveness			
EQ 6: The extent to which approaches/strategies during implementation are adequate to achieve the intended results.		●	●
EQ 7: The extent to which the intervention achieved or is expected to achieve its intended objectives (outputs and outcomes).	●	●	●
EQ 8: The extent to which the intervention achieved or is expected to achieve its intended results related to transversal themes.	●	●	●
Efficiency			
EQ 9: The extent to which the intervention delivers the results (outputs, outcomes) cost-effectively.		●	
EQ 10: The extent to which the intervention delivers the results (outputs, outcome) in a timely manner (within the intended timeframe or reasonably adjusted timeframe).	●		



EQ 11: The extent to which management, monitoring and steering mechanisms support efficient implementation.			●
Impact			
EQ 12: The extent to which the intervention generated or is expected to generate 'higher-level effects' as defined in the design document of the intervention.		●	●
Sustainability			
EQ 13: The extent to which partners are capable and motivated (technical capacity, ownership) to continue activities contributing to achieving the outcomes.		●	●
EQ 14: The extent to which partners have the financial resources to continue activities contributing to achieving the outcomes.		●	●
EQ 15: The extent to which contextual factors (e.g. legislation, politics, economic situation, social demands) is conducive to continuing activities leading to outcomes.		●	●



Annex 3: Outcome statements

The following catalogue of outcome statements is the result of the outcome harvesting to which the project team and a vast group of project stakeholders contributed. The catalogue represents what the contributors consider to be the most significant outcomes to which the project contributed during the past two project phases.

Outcome 1: policies, regulations, governance

1. In 2021, the National Employment Council adopts the Youth Employment Support Program (YESP), integrating and funding new employment and start-up services.

Description: The 2021 Youth Employment Support Program (YESP) aims to “promote youth employment services, pilot youth internship activities and support entrepreneurship skills and innovative ideas” (YESP, 2021). Similar to the previous programs, it sets forth the scope, the activities, and the indicators based on which the expected results of the YESP are assessed. Yet it differs insofar as it integrates new services related to “internships” to help youth acquiring job experiences. These new services and activities are fully funded by the Employment Promotion Fund. It also signals moving away from providing social welfare as a first response to support unemployed persons.

Already in 2017, the National Employment Council (NEC) adopted the Youth Employment and Start-up Support Programme (YESSP), which was documented as the first legal framework to implement youth specific employment and start-up interventions in Mongolia. Revised and adopted on a bi-annual basis, its next edition was adopted in 2019 in which the services were scaled nationwide. Previous employment support programs covered various social groups, but not youth specifically. With the new programs the NEC recognised the potential to reduce youth unemployment by promoting innovative start-ups and entrepreneurs.

Contribution: The project contributed to this outcome with policy advice and advocacy as well as the design and implementation of the five new employment and start-up services and internship program. The policy advice and advocacy work were provided through a technical working group whose members were representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP), the, General Office for Labour and Welfare Services (GOLWS), the Mongolian Employers’ Federation (MONEF), relevant NGOs and universities. Likewise, in meetings and workshops with representatives of local public employment offices and program specialist.

2. In 2021, the Mongolian Parliament passes the revised Labour Law that contains regulations related to internship service.

Description: As elsewhere, the lack of work experience and “on the job” skills is one of the factors causing youth unemployment. Offering temporary opportunities to gain job experience has thus been a recurrent practice in Mongolia – oftentimes targeted to graduate students of TVET schools and colleges. However, these internships were hardly structured or regulated.



The newly introduced legal provision in the Labour Law gives interns the status of contracted employees and thus the entitlement to a basic salary, additional salary, social benefits, and incentives. The legal basis is conducive to incorporate internships into the YESP. Already in 2019, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) made regulating “internship in firms” a strategic priority and submitted a corresponding law proposal to Parliament in 2020.

During a focus group discussion in Darkhan-Uul some employers have expressed ambiguities, for instance regarding (social) insurance of interns and others were of the opinion that they should be better compensated to off-set the time that their staff members invest to train interns. This critique suggests that the internship program may yet have to gain full traction among employers.

Contribution: Internships were piloted by the YEP project since 2019 in Darkhan-Uul, Khuvsgul as well as Bayangol and Khan-Uul districts. Based on the piloting experience, the project formulated two proposals on revision of the Employment Promotion Law. The 1st proposal was submitted to the MLSP in 2019. The 2nd “draft proposal” was tabled to a legal working group established within the MLSP in 2020-2021. Considering that new employment and start-up support services, including internships, were piloted and upscaled nationwide, the project proposed to include all of them into the Employment Promotion Law. The project also contributed to the revised Labour Law namely by contracting a consultant to provide legislative advice regarding the internships.

3. In 2021, the Mongolian National Statistics Office publishes youth employment data differentiated by age groups.

Description: The Youth Development Law (2017) defines youth as persons in the age group of 15-34 years. Youth specific employment statistics have not been collected for this age group. This hindered formulating targeted responses to employment challenges that young people face. As of 2020 the National Statistics Office (NSO) publishes employment related data for youth differentiated by the age groups 15-34. The data is available in the online database of the NSO. The provision of this differentiated data and statistics addresses a bottleneck for evidence-based policymaking. Publishing the data contributes to transparency too.

Contribution: The project supported the NSO to collect and publish this data, inter alia, by organising meetings with NSO specialists to discuss the possibilities of disaggregating youth employment data and by providing technical advice. Following the provision of the requisite data by the NSO in December 2020, the project issued a special bulletin of employment data for youth in the age groups 15-34.

4. Local public employment offices facilitate Labour Market Demand Surveys as part of the employment promotion services.

Description: Labour Market Demand Surveys (LMDS) allow for strategic and participatory planning and decision-making regarding employment promotion interventions. As a result of the LMDS the aimag authorities can anticipate future skills need and identify gaps where supply and demand do not match. This helps policymakers, local public employment offices, industry associations and training providers to take measures to bridge the skills gap between education and work at the aimag level. One interviewee also explained that Ulaanbaatar-based companies have used LMDS findings to decide whether to establish branch offices, for instance in Darkhan-Uul.

Actors from the public, private, and non-governmental sectors and from academia convened in different groups and were trained to apply the survey methodology. They then collaborated



in e.g. (i) the survey “management team” (3-5 persons), the “research team” (30-40 persons); the data collection and compiling team (4-6 person), and the “data processing team” (5-7 persons).

Contribution: The project provided technical advice and capacity building to implement the LMDS. The project established working groups and trained their members and developed a Handbook titled “Methodology for conducting Local Labour Market Demand and Supply Survey”. The project spent approximately USD 3500-7000 per LMDS. LMDS were conducted Bayan-Ulgii, Darkhan-Uul, Gobi-Altai, Umnugovi, and Uvs (2015-2016); as well as Dornogovi and Khuvsgul in 2019-2020. In 2021, LMDS are planned in Bulgan, Sukhbaatar, Tuv, and Zavkhan as well as the Baganaur district in Ulaanbaatar.

5. In 2019, the General Office for Labour and Welfare Services approves a new employment service methodology.

Description: The methodological guideline to implement Profiling, Individual Employment Pathway Planning (IEPP), Youth collaboration support (Modular training units, Open Office, Job Club activities) was adopted by the GOLWS' Director's Order No A/73, dated 22 April 2019. It describes the steps to be undertaken for each employment service and contains templates, forms, or samples. The approval of the methodological guideline sets quality standards among all employment services at aimag and district levels. Because the services had already been part of the 2017 YESSP, the approval ensured regulatory consistency.

Contribution: A technical working group comprised of international and national experts was instituted by the project. The group drafted the guidelines on behalf of the GOLWS and finetuned them in discussions with representatives of the GOLWS. In addition to the guidelines, the project provided a “handbook” on youth specific new employment services, designed to support employment service officers, career guidance and employment program specialists at the aimag and district Employment division level to work with young job seekers.

6. The European Union integrates YES Desks provision as an indicator of its EU budget support for skills development and employment to Mongolia.

Description: The European Union supports Mongolia with a sector budget support programme amounting to € 50.8 million over four years. The financing agreement was signed in May 2020. One of the purposes of the grant is to boost employment by providing help to “*improve skills for employability, promote decent work and formal employment*” and to address the social and economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The budget support agreement stipulates that the funds shall, inter alia, be used “*to continue to implement employment and start-up support services through operation of the YES Desks*”.

Coupling the budget support, which provides the requisite financial resources to implement employment and start-up support services, with the YES Desks contributes to sustain the employment and start-up support services for youth. It complements the project’s approach during the exit phase towards increasing ownership and commitment of the governmental stakeholders.

Contribution: Integration of the performance indicator is the result of donor coordination efforts of the Swiss Embassy in Mongolia and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation respectively. The project suggested meetings with the EU representatives.



7. In 2019, the Mongolian government adopts the National Program on Youth Development.

Description: Passed by the government on 1 May 2019, the National Program on Youth Development aims, among other, to enhance the quality of education at all levels, encourage lifelong learning and support employment and start-ups. From 2019 to 2022, 72 activities are planned.

Contribution: The project participated in the development of the program, suggesting that job creation and increasing the job opportunities for youth are essential elements to reduce poverty and create a conducive living environment for youth. The project attended several working group meetings at the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) and submitted the draft section on youth employment promotion and start-up (which later became section 5.2 in the program).

8. The GOLWS applies criteria based on which services providers are selected to provide “start-up support” to youth.

Description: One of the measures to reduce youth unemployment are start-up services, which are part of the 2021 Youth Employment Support Program (YESP) and funded with resources stemming from the Employment Promotion Fund. These services are delivered by Business Development Service Providers that are commissioned by the public employment offices. While the criteria-based allocation limits the scope for manoeuvre of authorities regarding the selection of the service providers, it curbs the risk of nepotism and enhances service quality. This can indirectly contribute to providing youth in Mongolia an equal chance to benefit from the support, irrespective of their social situation or resources, including networks.

Contribution: The project supported the GOLWs to develop criteria based on which NGO and Business Development Service Providers (BDSP) are selected to deliver the start-up support services.

Outcome 2: Youth Employment Support Services

9. In 2016, a technical working group develops initial concepts and ideas towards improved employment services for young job seekers.

Description: Employment services that public employment offices typically provided were often deficit-oriented and focused purely on job placements. The technical working group set out to change these services making them more responsive to the specific needs of unemployed youth, depending on their age, gender, level of education, and socio-economic background. The services should support the youth in their transition from school to the labour market and their professional and personal development. The new services should be delivered at dedicated employment divisions/units of local public employment offices, which later came to be known as Youth Employment Support Desks (YESD).

Contribution: The project set-up and facilitated an advisory task force to discuss and develop the methodology of the new services with the support of an international expert.



10. In 2017, Department/Division of Labour and Welfare Services in three aimags start to pilot client-oriented Youth Employment Service (YES) Desks.

Description: The YES Desks are a one-stop facility that offers unemployed youth specific employment services. YES Desk staff were beginning to work with personal and employment profiles of young job seekers, mirroring their specific needs, ambitions, resources, and competences. Young job seekers were then supported to identify their individual goals in the Individual Action Plan for Employment and finding means to achieve them. The relationship between YES Desk staff and youth is one of “facilitation”. Asked about her experience regarding the ‘client-orientation’ of the services, a young woman participating in a focus group in Bayangol explained that she felt being understood, supported, and emotionally lifted up when she was at the YES Desk.

Contribution: The project developed processes, tools, templates etc. to structure the services in selected public employment offices and procured various equipment. It provided training of labour division and YES Desk staff/career counsellors to apply the new approaches to employment services as well as post-training support. The project elaborated the Handbook “*New Employment Services for Young Job Seekers*”, designed to support employment service officers, career guidance and employment program specialists at the aimag and district Employment division level to work with young job seekers.

11. In 2019, the General Office for Labour and Welfare Services approves a revised employment service methodology.

Description: The methodological guideline to implement Profiling, Individual Employment Pathway Planning (IEPP), Youth Collaborative Support (Modular Training Units, Open Office, Youth Job Clubs), and Local Labour Market Demand Surveys was adopted by the General Office for Labour and Welfare Services’ Director’s Order No A/73, dated 22 April 2019. It describes the steps to be undertaken for each employment service and contains templates and forms. The approval of the methodological guideline sets quality standards among all employment services at aimag and district levels. Since the services were already adopted in the 2017 YESSP, the approval ensured regulatory consistency. The client-oriented methodology has since also informed the activities of the Mongolian Employment Support Project implemented by the World Bank Group in collaboration with the MLSP.

Contribution: A technical working group comprised of international and national experts, two of them from the project, drafted the guidelines on behalf of the GOLWS and finetuned them in discussions with representatives of the GOLWS. The project instituted the technical working group. In addition, the project updated the 2017 first edition of the handbook.

12. In 2019, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection decides to establish YES Desks nationwide.

Description: During 2017-2019 the number of YES Desks progressively evolved from three to fourteen locations. During the past two years these aimag and district public employment offices have implemented the employment and start-up support services independently from the project, yet under the supervision and guidance from General Office for Labour and Welfare Services. Following the decision of the MLSP YES Desks will be rolled-out to all 21 aimags, 9 districts of Ulaanbaatar. Operating YES Desks is one of the performance indicators under the ongoing EU sector budget support programme in Mongolia.



Contribution: During 2017-2020 the project designed, piloted, and provided advice and advocacy to scale YES Desks across Mongolia. The project capacitated more than 100 career counsellors, employment program specialists, and managers at public employment offices.

13. In 2020, Department/Division of Labour and Welfare Services in Bulgan, Uvs, and Zavkhan aimags improve access to employment service for youth with disabilities.

Description: The service changes relate to physical access with accessibility routes, curb ramps, threshold ramps, parking area, wall mounted handrails and restroom adjustments. Similar works are done in Dornod aimag and Songinokhairkhan district in 2021. The infrastructure adjustments render access to the YES Desks easier for young job seekers with disabilities.

Contribution: In 2020, the project procured works to improve the physical access for disabled at YES Desks in Bulgan, Uvs, and Zavkhan aimags. In collaboration with specialised organisations, the project organised training on disability and equality for career counsellors, job mediation specialists and program specialists, covering thirteen aimags and three districts.

14. In 2021, all aimag and district public and private employment service providers use web-based employment service tools.

Description: The web-tool covers Profiling and Individual Employment Pathway Planning, integrating the respective forms and tools (such as questions for the profiling). The web-tool facilitates service providers/career counsellors' work, reduces waiting time, creates a database service received by clients, and provides monitoring data. It offers the career counsellors and YES Desk staff with web-based templates needed for profiling and planning services (yesdesk.mn). The web tool also allows counsellors to extract reports on usage of youth employment new services. Additional features are foreseen for late 2021, including mobile phone access, to overcome limitations that persons face when using a mobile device to access the platform.

Contribution: The project initiated the development of web-based tools for offering Profiling and IEPP services in 2020 to facilitate the provision of new employment and job mediation services. The project procured and co-designed the web-based platform and organised online training and follow up classroom training for YES Desk staff and career counsellors to use the application.

15. In 2020, 23 companies and DLWS in Darkhan-Uul and Khuvsgul as well as Bayangol and Khan-Uul districts pilot internships.

Description: Internships, as one of the active labour market measures, were piloted by the YEP project in Darkhan-Uul, Khuvsgul as well as Bayangol and Khan-Uul districts. The internships last three months and are designed for unemployed youth without prior work experience. In 2020 internships were piloted in 2 aimags and 2 districts. About half of the companies that registered for the pilot signed an internship contract with the responsible public employment office. In total 60 interns participated in the internship program of which 33 were subsequently employed fully by the companies. By 2021, the internship program is implemented in 10 aimags.



In a focus group discussion interns were overall satisfied with the internship, yet they also saw room to optimise guidance for both employers and interns for each party to know about its roles and responsibilities.

Contribution: The project developed methodological guidelines and forms, in collaboration with an ad-hoc working group consisting of six members representing MLSP, GOLWS, Mongolian Employers Federation, and two public employment offices. Based on this piloting experience, the project formulated potential amendments to the Employment Promotion Law and submitted the latter to the MLSP in 2020.

16. Staff at public employment offices capacitated towards becoming coaches and mentors for unemployed youth.

Description: Staff at aimag and district public employment offices used to deliver employment services in a “one-fits-all” and commanding way. The new employment and start-up support services require public employment office staff to perform multifunctional roles, including as trainers (modular training), business advisors (helping in writing business plan), facilitators (referring to employers, partner education centres, and others) and mentors/coaches (supporting self-development). Learning new practices, methods, and techniques, the responsibilities and roles of the public employment office staff changed from “a desk sitting officer to an active coach and mentor who advises, trains and mentors young people” as one focus group participant explained. YES Desk staff perceive that their employment counselling and job matching services improved, which raised their own satisfaction too. At the organisational level this translates to more modern, transparent, and inclusive public services.

Contribution: The project contributed to this change via capacity building and support activities as well as engagement with the public employment office staff. It also emerges from the interviews that conducting the Profiling, in which staff engage with the client more holistically and consciously, also supports self-reflection and change.

17. Youth who take part in the YES Desk activities report satisfaction with the support services and improved personal and professional self-confidence.

Description: Young job seekers have gained requisite skills and knowhow to enter the labour market, ranging from searching for job opportunities, presenting their strengths and motivation in job interviews, or making their case for their business idea in pitch events. Others have reported to have become more familiar with labour laws, contractual issues and other regulatory matters that are beneficial. Apart from having better chances of getting an interesting job or launching their business several youth self-report to personal growth, more motivation, and stronger social networks through friends they made during the YES Desk modular trainings, internship program and social activities.

Contribution: The effects that youth associate with the YES Desks can be linked to the client-oriented approach which the project streamlined in the design and delivery of the new employment and start-up support services.



18. Private sector actors assume a more active role in supporting youth employment.

Description: Private sector engagement has increased in many ways: involvement in provincial and district employment councils, in internship programmes, in local youth start-up support working groups, and local labour market demand survey working groups. Private labour exchange offices and private companies act as mentors, and human resource managers participate in trainings of the YES Desks, for instance in the Modular Training Units on recruitment processes, job interviews, etc. Private sector actors also contribute to a start-up online platform, on which they upload their business information and offer different online-based trainings and consultations/mentorship. Mentoring services are offered by local private companies and entrepreneurs. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the collaboration reflects an improved image of local public employment offices among employers. As one interviewee stated: *"Before we used to look for employers, but today they are keeping in contact with us to ask for job seekers, job trainings and other social activities."* More than 200 companies participated in an internship training for employers. However, only a limited number of them has finally signed contracts with internships. This indicates that buy-in of employers may yet have to fully materialise.

Contribution: Apart from instituting technical working groups, facilitating events, networking, and coordination to foster private sector engagement, the project trained 180 mentors as well as 60 counsellors from more than 30 Private Labour Exchange Offices. The project also trained members of the National Employment and the Local Employment Councils on issues of public-private partnership.

Outcome 3: Start-up support

19. In 2016, the Department/Division of Labour and Welfare Services in three aimags start to pilot the start-up support program.

Description: The start-up support program was developed following a situation analysis of the start-up "ecosystem" in Mongolia. With the purpose of supporting the creation of start-ups in the local community, the public employment offices piloted start-up supporting activities at different stages of the business life cycle (raising awareness, organising pitch events, offering mentoring and business acceleration services, providing financial support). During 2017-2018 the pilot scaled to cover ten locations. During the pilot, close to 1500 youth participated in the program activities.

Contribution: The project contributed to this outcome by conducting the situation analysis; designing the program; developing manuals, guidelines and materials; and capacitating public employment office specialists.

20. In 2019, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection starts to implement the start-up support programme nationwide.

Description: Under the supervision and guidance of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP), General Office for Labour and Social Welfare (GOLWS), aimag and district public employment offices start to provide start-up support activities including pitch events, entrepreneurship training, accelerator training, mentoring services. These marks a shift of responsibility since the program has previously been implemented by the project. The services are implemented in cooperation with local Business Development Service Providers. The



program is funded by the Employment Promotion Fund and, as of 2019, covers all aimags and districts in Mongolia.

Contribution: The project contributed to this outcome by developing a *Handbook on organising Start-up support activities, Pitch events and Accelerator Program* and by training more than 150 start-up mentors from local Business Development Service Providers as well as providing advisory support the MLSP in the program delivery.

21. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection issues guidelines to select start-up program service providers.

Description: The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) announces tenders and selects NGO and BDSP to organise/deliver start-up support services at the aimag and district level in cooperation with the public employment offices. In order to be eligible, the tenderers need to fulfil criteria to ensure that they have the needed technical capabilities. This includes, for instance, that they need to have qualified personnel with specific experience such as design thinking and agile processes. While the MLSP had already previously commissioned services providers for activities such as training for unemployed persons, the selection has often been done short of selection criteria. Commissioning qualified BDSP to implement these services can improve quality and foster relations between public and private actors. More than 40 Business Development Service Providers and 300 mentors nationwide deliver and support start-up services.

As of 2021 the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection formalised contractual relations to implement start-up supporting activities with more than six NGO and BDSP. Despite the criteria, however, feedback from interviews and focus groups suggests that the quality of the services is quite mixed. Also, that the selection criteria are more flexibly applied where there are only few service providers.

Contribution: The project provided policy advice and advocacy to this end. This included developing criteria jointly with the GOLWS based on which NGO and BDSP were selected.

22. In 2021, the National Employment Council passes a resolution to provide grants to selected start-ups, changing its previous practice of granting soft loans.

Description: While the project provided non-repayable grants to winning start-ups during the initial stages of the start-up support programme, the government's practice has been to provide interest free soft loans that were repayable within a certain period of time. In 2021 the NEC changed its practice and switched to grants with a view to reduce financial strains on start-up business. Interviewees and focus group participants largely supported the change of practice, arguing that this will enable start-ups to invest more resources into growing their businesses (which would otherwise have been used to repay the loan). However, others were of the opinion that the new practice sets wrong incentives and will lead to start-ups being less committed and effortful to sustain their businesses (because they have less to lose). Some argued that paying grants could undermine people's perceptions about start-up support because they get "money for free".

Contribution: The project advocated for the policy change, for instance during annual working group meetings of the NEC in which learnings from the implementation of the Employment Promotion interventions as well as suggestions for improvement are discussed, and other consultative workshops at which various stakeholders attended.



23. Youth turn their innovative ideas into start-up businesses.

Description: Young people acquired skills and decided to run their own start-up businesses. The businesses are active in a range of services and industries, including agriculture, IT, dairy and food, and cosmetics. To what extent these start-ups have “growth potential” cannot be established. According to project data as of December 2019, 95% of the 26 start-ups that received financial support from the project were running their business without loss and gain some profit and more than half were formally registered as a business entity. Since 2016 more than 600 youth received start-up support as part of the government’s programmes and financed via the Employment Promotion Fund. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting restrictions, however, several of the businesses closed meanwhile.

Contribution: The project developed, piloted, and implemented the youth start-up support scheme from 2016-2018. Doing so, the project followed a modern and internationally practiced scheme for supporting young start-ups. The start-up services were scaled nationwide as part of the Youth Employment and Start-up Support Program.

24. Start-up ecosystems at local level emerge as a result of increased engagement of public, private, and non-governmental actors to respond to youth unemployment.

Description: Youth entrepreneurship and start-up related activities began to emerge in Mongolia over the past decade. They often focused on Ulaanbaatar and have over time resulted in a vibrant ecosystem there, contrary to other regions in Mongolia. Starting with 2016, local ecosystems emerged within the youth start-up pilot program that initially covered three locations and was later expanded to cover ten locations by 2017. Local public employment offices, business associations, Business Development Service Providers, investors, and business mentors engage locally, jointly forming a system to create and develop start-up companies. More than 80 business trainers are trained to deliver the startup training and acceleration programs. There are startup communities in aimags and districts, such as youth groups on social media, on which young startup members share and exchange their practice and experiences as well as learn from each other.

Contribution: The project contributed to this outcome with a range of activities (start-up pilot support, start-up support scheme, capacity development, policy advice, digital platforms).



Annex 4: Quantitative analysis

Changes in the youth unemployment rate

Summary

The Mongolian Statistical Information Services publishes the number of registered unemployed as well as the labour force, disaggregated for age and aimag. We use this data to discuss whether there is an observable effect of the introduction of the YES Desks on youth unemployment.²¹

An initial graphical assessment of the (registered) youth unemployment rate, and the ratio between youth and total unemployment, did not provide a clear picture. This is not surprising given the many factors influencing youth unemployment and keeping in mind that the effect might not have been immediate.

We then applied regression analysis. Regression analysis is a commonly used statistical method to identify the effect of one factor (the introduction of the YES Desks) while keeping other factors constant (for instance, general labour market trends, business cycles, seasonality, or other changes at the labour exchange offices).

When assessing changes in youth unemployment, the regression results for the “YES Desks effect” are not statistically significant which means they are not robust. Where the model provides significant results – namely for young men – the results are counterintuitive: youth unemployment rose after the introduction of the YES Desk. One explanation could be that the improvements led to more young people registering with the labour exchange offices (Note: YES Desk services could only be accessed by registering).

A second set of regressions focused on the ratio between youth unemployment and total unemployment. These estimates show that the ratio decreased after the introduction of the YES Desks. The effects were particularly large for young men, which is interesting in light of the finding from interviews that young women received more YES Desk services. The overall effect is a change in the ratio of about -0.1. To put this into perspective: In the first quarter of 2021, the total unemployment was 1.3% while youth unemployment stood at 1.8%, which results in a ratio of 1.4. The estimates indicate that without the YES Desk, this ratio could have been 1.5, resulting in a youth unemployment rate of 2.0%, or 9,000 young registered unemployed instead of 8,000.

More precise and robust estimations could be obtained using individual data from the unemployed. This would allow to distinguish between the likelihood to register, the duration of unemployment, and the probability that new employment found is sustainable, and the effect of

²¹ There are some important limitations to this dataset: We only have information on the registered unemployed and not the remaining unemployed or job seekers more broadly. The data only covers the aimags but not the districts in Ulaanbaatar (UB), which introduced YES Desk at different times. We therefore exclude UB from the analysis. The analysis itself is complicated because there are many other factors that influence the unemployment rate including seasonal variation, business cycles and long-term changes in the business environment.



the YES Desk on these. A disaggregated analysis would also allow controlling for potential shifts in the profile of the registered jobs-seekers.

Introduction

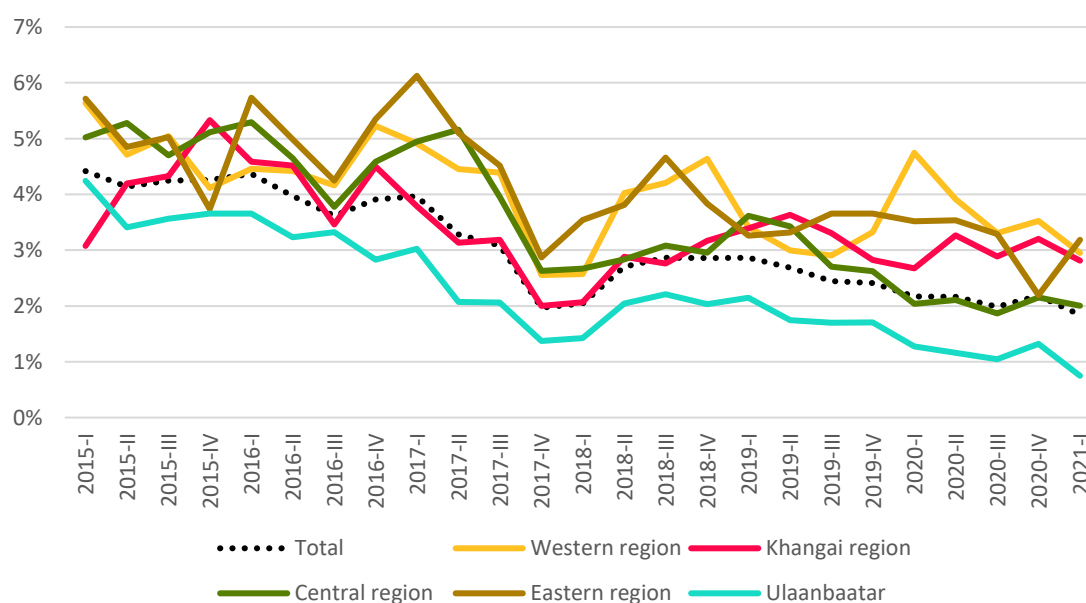
The Mongolian Statistical Information Services publishes the number of registered unemployed as well as the labour force, disaggregated for age and aimag. We use the information to discuss whether there is an observable effect of the introduction of the YES Desks on the youth unemployment rate.

There are some important limitations to this dataset: We only have information on the registered unemployed and not the remaining unemployed or job seekers more broadly. Improving the services of the labour exchanges might lead to more registrations, which in turn means that any assessment purely on the registered persons might underestimate the positive effect. Other limitations are that the data only covers the aimags but not the districts in Ulaanbaatar (UB), which introduced YES Desk at different times. We therefore exclude UB from the analysis. The analysis itself is complicated because there are many other factors that influence the unemployment rate including seasonal variation, business cycles and long-term changes in the business environment. After a graphical assessment we apply a regression analysis to identify the effect of the YES Desk while keeping other factors constant.

Graphical assessment

In figure 1 we depict the registered youth unemployment rates in different regions of Mongolia from 2015 until now. While the graph shows quarterly fluctuations, there has been a clear downward trend of youth unemployment in most of the regions, especially in UB. Overall, youth unemployment rate over the period has declined by more than half, from 4.4% (Q1 2015) to 1.8% (Q1 2021). The relative decline was almost the same for women (from 5.5% to 2.3%) and men (3.6% to 1.5%), yet on rather different levels (see Annex 1 for gender-differentiated graphs).

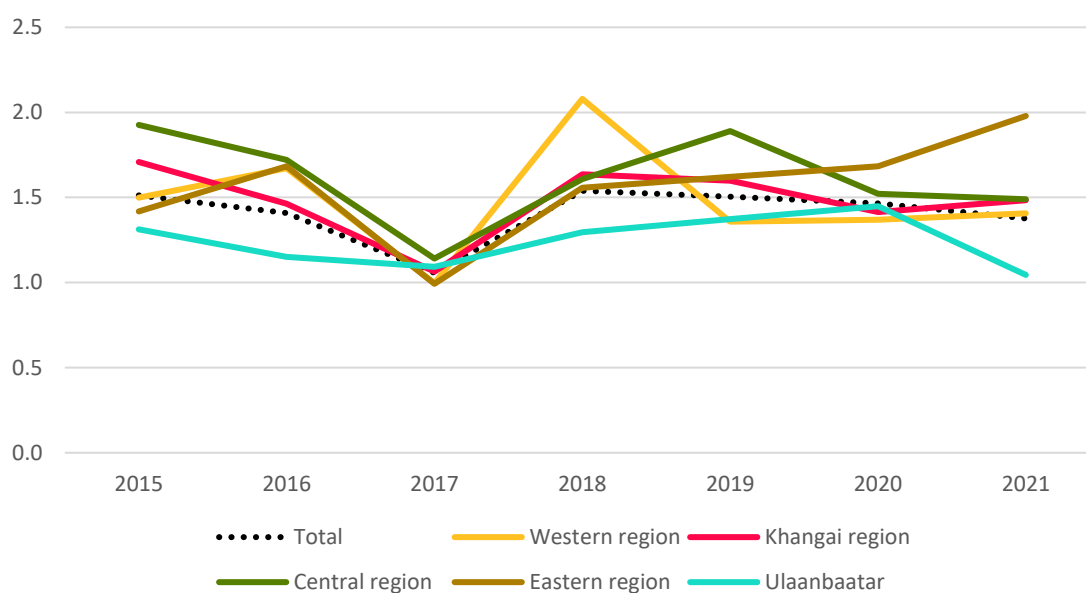
Figure 11: Development of youth unemployment in Mongolia (quarterly data)





To partially eliminate the effects of seasons, as well as of business cycles and other changes in the labour market, we next use the annual ratio of youth unemployment to total unemployment in figure 2. The resulting graph shows that the ratio for different regions declines from 2015 to 2017 to approximately 1.0, indicating that both youth and total unemployment were at similar levels. Since then, except for UB, youth unemployment in other regions has decreased less than total unemployment which led to an increase in the ratio of the two unemployment rates.

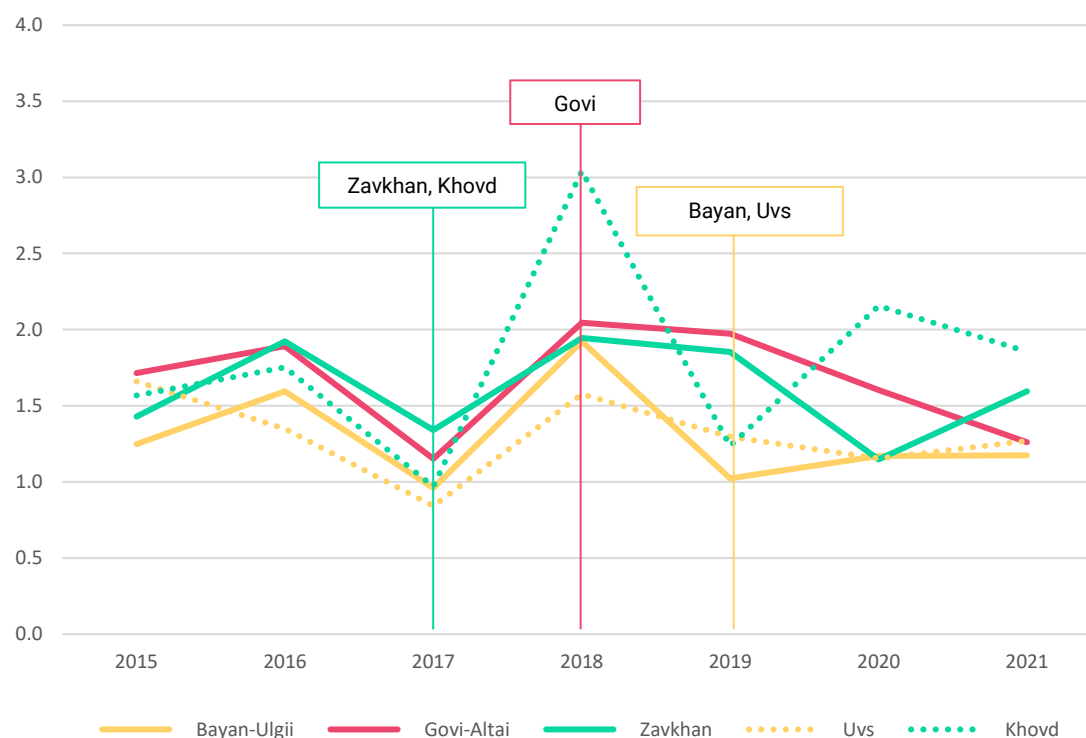
Figure 12: Development of ratio youth unemployment to total unemployment (yearly data)



We use yearly data of ratio of youth unemployment to total unemployment covering different aimags in Mongolia to observe whether there are any visible changes after the introduction of the YES Desks. Figure 3 depicts this development in the Western region. Interestingly, we can observe a higher ratio *after* the introduction of YES Desks in most of the aimags, except in Govi.



Figure 13: Development of ratio youth unemployment to total unemployment (yearly data), indicating the introduction of YES Desks (Western region)



Data source: 1212.mn

It should be noted that even though we plot yearly instead of quarterly data, and a ratio rather than the absolute unemployment rate for young people, it is still difficult to identify an effect graphically: The year-to-year fluctuations are high and there are general overlapping trends like the overall decrease in youth unemployment over the years (see figure 1). Also, the effect of the YES Desks might have been uneven over time, and uneven between the different aimags: sometimes the largest effect of such changes is right after the introduction but other times it is taking time for practices and culture to change. For this reason, we next explore the changes with a regression analysis. Regression analysis is a statistical tool to identify the average effect of one factor, keeping other factors constant. It also allows to separate short- and long-term effects.

Regression analysis

We use the same data for a regression analysis. Our model uses as dependent variable i) the youth unemployment rate, and then ii) the ratio between youth unemployment and total unemployment. A “dummy-variable” (0/1-variable) indicates whether the observation was before or after introduction of the YES Desks in the aimag. In an additional model, we separate the first year after the introduction of the YES Desk from the remaining period, to see whether there are different effects in the initial period following the establishment of the YES Desks and after 12 months. The models also include dummies either for years or for quarters to check for any (nation-wide) changes over time. We use two typical types of models for this type of analysis and compare their results (so called “fixed effects” model, controlling for all time-invariant



characteristics of the aimags, and a model which combines fixed effects with a lagged dependent variable). All statistical results are included in the Annex.

The models show following results:

1. Youth unemployment rate

- Using youth unemployment directly, all estimated effects are statistical insignificant, no matter what model is used. The statistical significance indicates whether the estimated effect is probably (on a 90%, 95% or 99% level) different from zero; if a coefficient is not statistically significant, the coefficient is not robust. In this case most coefficients are positive – positive meaning that the unemployment rate increased after the introduction of the YES Desks.
- The result should be interpreted with caution given that the coefficients are insignificant, yet it remains puzzling. Even more so given that the models using data only for young men renders coefficients which are not only positive but also statistically significant.
- It is important to remember that the unemployment rate is the result of a complex dynamic between the risk to become unemployment, the likelihood of being eligible for benefits / services, the likelihood to register once unemployed, the duration of unemployment, and the probability that new employment found is sustainable. If, for instance, the introduction of the YES Desks shortened unemployment duration but also increased likelihood of registration (Note: YES Desk services can only be accessed by registering) – which are both beneficial effects – it is possible that youth unemployment rate rose as a whole.
- A regression on the unemployment rate of older young men (35 years and older) shows that the introduction of the YES Desks also led to increased unemployment in this group. So either there were spill-over effects from one group to another (the new processes having an effect also on all other clients) and / or there are also other factors at play which are not captured by the model.

Table 3: Regression models with youth unemployment as dependent variable

Model	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Effect total	0.0014	0.0023			0.0014	0.0019		
Effect in year 1			0.0012	0.0020			0.0007	0.0012
Effect in year 2+			0.0019	0.0032			0.0029	0.0037
Dependent variable								
Youth unemp. quote	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ratio youth / total unemp.	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Controls								
Yearly time variables	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No



Quarterly variables	time	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Fixed effects		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lagged dependent variable		No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations									
Aimags		21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21
Quarters		7	25	7	25	6	24	6	24

2. Ratio youth unemployment to total unemployment

- Using the ratio between youth unemployment and total unemployment, the effect is relative similar in all models (using data from both women and men), between -0.08 and -0.12 of the ratio.
- It is important to point out that although the estimates are quite similar in all models, only one model renders a statistically significant coefficient (namely, the model which uses fixed effects and a lagged dependent variable, and quarterly dummies to control for development over time). So, these results also have to be interpreted with caution.
- The effects are large and statistically significant when looking at the long-term effects for young men. This could be an indication that the effects of the introduction of the YES Desks were more pronounced for men than for women. Yet the overall effect is quite similar; it is only the (statistically significant) long-term effects which differ, so this finding certainly would have to be further researched.
- To put the overall effect into perspective: In the first quarter of 2021, the total unemployment was 1.3% while youth unemployment stood at 1.8%, which results in a ratio of 1.4. The results indicate that without the YES Desk, this ratio would have been 1.5; at this ratio, youth unemployment would have been 2.0% instead of 1.8%. In absolute figures, the number of registered youth would have been 9,000 instead of 8,000.

Table 4: Regression models with the ratio between the youth unemployment quote and total unemployment quote as dependent variable

Model	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Effect total	-0.0818	-0.0871			-0.0927	-0.1113 *		
Effect in year 1			-0.0810	-0.0880			-0.0969	- 0.1207**
Effect in year 2+			-0.0839	-0.0846			-0.0820	-0.0857
Dependent variable								
Youth unemp. quote	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes



Ratio youth / total unemp.	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Controls								
Yearly time variables	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Quarterly time variables	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lagged dependent variable	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations								
Aimags	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21
Time periods per aimag	7	25	7	25	6	24	6	24

Note: * marks a statistical significance level of 90%.

More precise and robust estimations could be obtained using individual data from the unemployed instead of the aggregate quote. This would also allow controlling for potential shifts in the profile of the registered jobs-seekers. While beyond the remit of this evaluation, we believe there is much to be learned from such statistical analysis. For instance, it could be assessed which groups / profiles have benefited most, and which ones less so, from the introduction of the YES Desks. This information could be used to further increase the efficacy of the services. The analysis could also provide useful evidence for the discussion whether the services should be rolled out to other age groups.



Annex 1: Graphs split for women and men

Figure 4: Development of male youth unemployment in Mongolia (quarterly data)

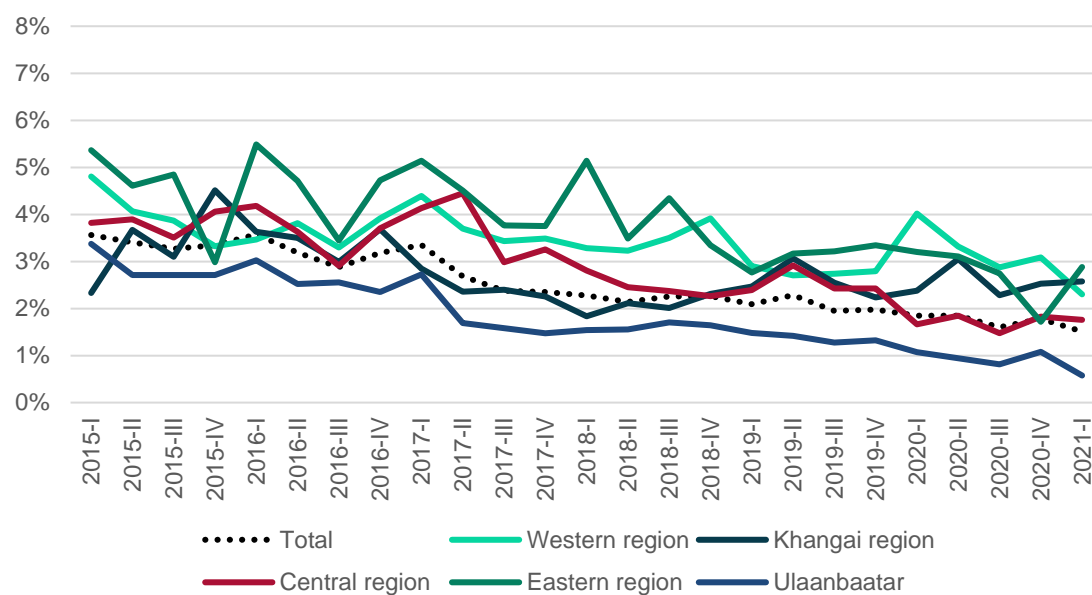


Figure 5: Development of female youth unemployment in Mongolia (quarterly data)

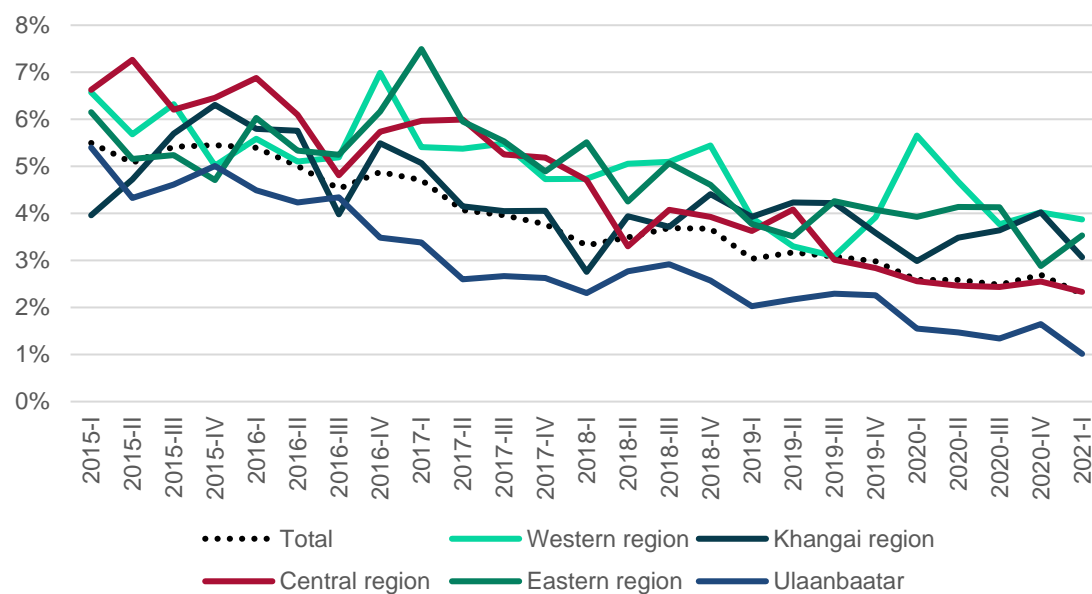




Figure 6: Development of ratio male youth unemployment to male total unemployment (yearly data)

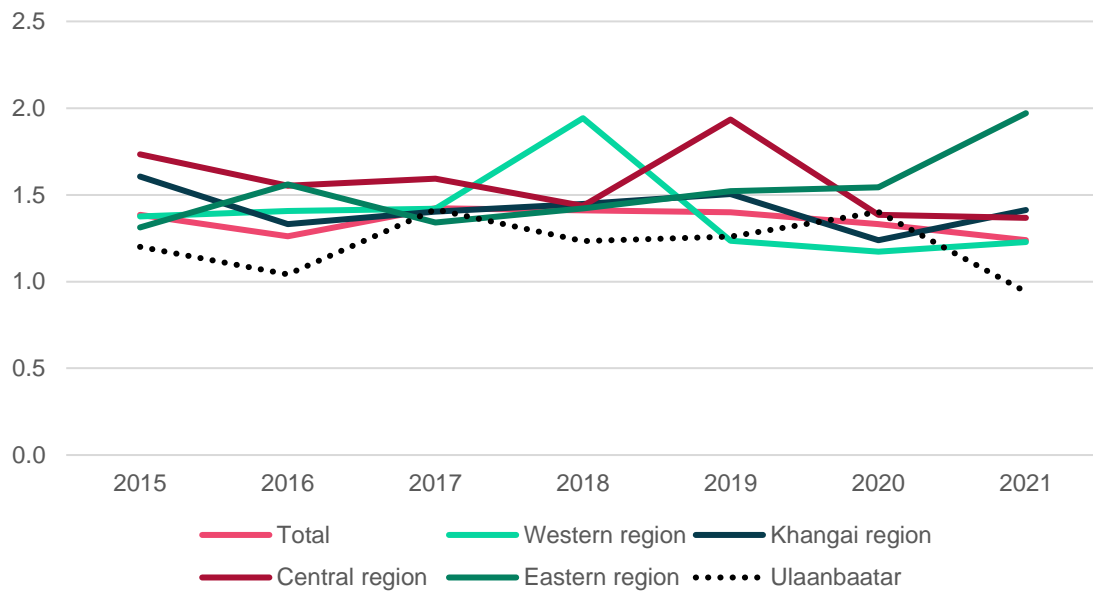
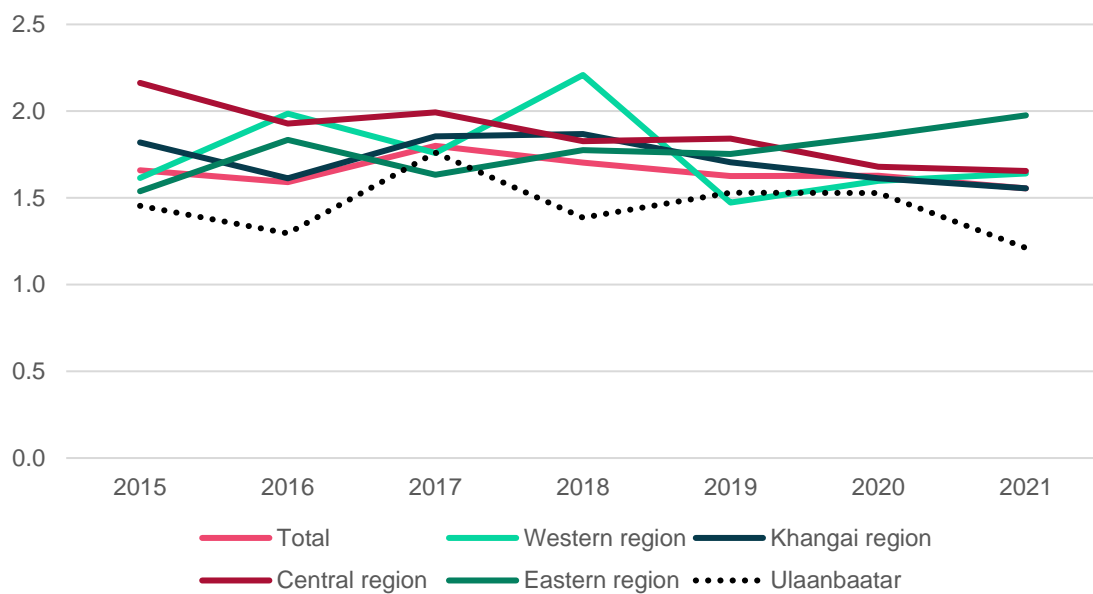


Figure 7: Development of ratio female youth unemployment to female total unemployment (yearly data)





Annex 2: Results regression models (women)

Table 5: Regression models with youth unemployment as dependent variable (women)

Model	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Effect total	0.0004	0.0011			0.0002	0.0012		
Effect in year 1			-0.0002	0.0004			-0.0003	0.005
Effect in year 2+			0.0018	0.0030			0.0017	0.0029
Dependent variable								
Youth unemp. quote	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ratio youth / total unemp.	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Controls								
Yearly time variables	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Quarterly time variables	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lagged dependent variable	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations								
Aimags	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21
Quarters	7	25	7	25	6	24	6	24

Table 6: Regression models with the ratio between the youth unemployment quote and total unemployment quote as dependent variable (women)

Model	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Effect total	-0.0657	-0.0796			-0.0683	-0.0876		
Effect in year 1			-0.1136	-0.1261			-0.1101	-0.1306
Effect in year 2+			0.0514	0.0420			0.0378	0.0298
Dependent variable								
Youth unemp. quote	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ratio youth / total unemp.	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Controls								
Yearly time variables	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No



Quarterly time variables	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lagged dependent variable	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations								
Aimags	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21
Time periods per aimag	7	25	7	25	6	24	6	24

Note: * marks a statistical significance level of 90%.

Table 7: Regression models with youth unemployment as dependent variable (men)

Model	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Effect total	0.0033*	0.0042**			0.0036*	0.0040**		
Effect in year 1			0.0032	0.0040*			0.0030	0.0034*
Effect in year 2+			0.0033	0.0046*			0.0050**	0.0055**
Dependent variable								
Youth unemp. quote	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ratio youth / total unemp.	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Controls								
Yearly time variables	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Quarterly time variables	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lagged dependent variable	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations								
Aimags	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21
Quarters	7	25	7	25	6	24	6	24

Table 8: Regression models with the ratio between the youth unemployment quote and total unemployment quote as dependent variable (men)

Model	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Effect total	-0.0676	-0.0635			-0.0698	-0.0775		



Effect in year 1			-0.0264	-0.0280			-0.0418	-0.0547
Effect in year 2+			-0.1683**	-0.1564*			-0.1409*	-0.1398
Dependent variable								
Youth unemp. quote	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ratio youth / total unemp.	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Controls								
Yearly time variables	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Quarterly time variables	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Lagged dependent variable	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations								
Aimags	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21
Time periods per aimag	7	25	7	25	6	24	6	24

Note: * 90% significance level, ** 95% significance level, *** 99% significance level

Table 9: Regression models with youth unemployment as dependent variable (men 35+ years old)

Model	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Effect total	0.0022*	0.0025**			0.0019*	0.0022**		
Effect in year 1			0.0015	0.0018			0.0012	0.0015
Effect in year 2+			0.0038***	0.0041***			0.0038***	0.0040***
Dependent variable								
Youth unemp. quote	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ratio youth / total unemp.	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Controls								
Yearly time variables	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Quarterly time variables	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes



Lagged dependent variable	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations								
Aimags	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21
Quarters	7	25	7	25	6	24	6	24



Annex 5: YES Desks

Nr	Nr (year)	Location	Date of opening
2017			
1	1	Khovd aimag	2017.10.09
2	2	Omnogobi aimag	2017.10.16
3	3	Zavkhan aimag	2017.11.08
2018			
4	1	Gobi-Altai aimag	2018.04.11
5	2	Bayangol district	2018.02.16
6	3	Khan-Uul district	2018.04.13
2019			
7	1	Uvs aimag	2019.05.13
8	2	Bayankhongor aimag	2019.05.21
9	3	Bayan-Ulgii aimag	2019.05.27
10	4	Darkhan-Uul aimag	2019.06.05
11	5	Khuvsgul aimag	2019.10.18
12	6	Uvurkhangai aimag	2019.11.29
13	7	Bulgan aimag	2019.11.29
14	8	Bayanzurkh district	2019.12.20
2020			
15	1	Khentii aimag	2020.05.06
16	2	Dornogobi aimag	2020.06.17
17	3	Dundgobi aimag	2020.08.18
18	4	Orkhon aimag	2020.09.17
19	5	Nalaikh aimag	2020.09.22
20	6	Tuv aimag	2020.09.30
21	7	Chingeltei district	2020.07.02
2021			
22	1	Arkhangai aimag	2021.09.27
23	2	Gobisumber aimag	2021.10.26
24	3	Sukhbaatar aimag	2021.11.09
25	4	Dornod aimag	2021.10.06
26	5	Selenge aimag	2021.10.14
27	6	Bagankhangai district	2021.11.17
28	7	Baganuur district	2021.09.17
29	8	Songinokhairkhan district	2021.11.19
30	9	Sukhbaatar district	TBI
31	10	Ulaanbaatar City	TBI

Source: YEPP/VET PIU



Annex 6: Assessment Grid

Note: this assessment grid is used for evaluations of SDC financed projects and programmes (hereinafter jointly referred to as an 'intervention'). It is based on the OECD Development Assistance Committee evaluation criteria.²² In mid-term evaluations, the assessment requires analysing the likelihood of achieving impact and sustainability. All applicable sub-criteria should be scored and a short explanation should be provided.

Please add the corresponding number (0-4) representing your rating of the sub-criteria in the column 'score':

0 = not assessed

1 = highly satisfactory

2 = satisfactory

3 = unsatisfactory

4 = highly unsatisfactory

²² For information on the 2019 revisions of the evaluation framework see: Better Criteria for Better Evaluations. Revised Evaluation Criteria. Definitions and Principles for Use, OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 2019.



Key aspects based on DAC Criteria	Score (put only integers: 0, 1, 2, 3 or 4)	Justification (please provide a short explanation for your score or why a criterion was not assessed)
Relevance Note: the assessment here captures the relevance of objectives and design <i>at the time of evaluation</i> . In the evaluation report, both relevance at the design stage as well as relevance at the time of evaluation should be discussed.		
1. The extent to which the objectives of the intervention respond to the needs and priorities of the target group.	1	<p>The project's objective continues to be relevant: Reports and research results indicate that youth unemployment remains an important factor causing poverty. Likewise, interview and survey results show that the project stakeholders consider the project relevant or very relevant.</p> <p>Our conversations with youth who attended the YES Desks, were mediated into an internship, or participated in a start-up event revealed that the project very much speaks to what these young people sought. Many of them felt being taken seriously and supported by the career counsellors or mentors at the public employment offices.</p>
2. The extent to which the objectives of the intervention respond to the needs and priorities of indirectly affected stakeholders (not included in target group, e.g. government, civil society, etc.) in the country of the intervention.	1	<p>The project is well aligned with strategic goals of sustainable economic and social developments as expressed in the Mongolia Sustainable Development Vision 2030 or the Mongolia Development Vision 2050. Most of the respondents in the online survey consider that the project addresses the needs and priorities of the target groups. More than 90% of them confirmed the project's support for unemployed youth, young start-up founders, and young people with disabilities. Asked about why they consider the project relevant, respondents commonly referred to the project's general youth services including "employment opportunities, methodological advice and training supports", "youth internships", and mentoring services for young start-ups. These new services are considered innovations that speak to youth and public employment office staff.</p>
3. The extent to which core design elements of the intervention (such as the theory of change, structure of the project components, choice of services and intervention partners) adequately reflect the needs and priorities of the target group.	1	<p>The project's Theory of Change (ToC) and results framework were developed in a participatory consultation process as part of the elaboration of the ProDoc for the second phase. The design of the third phase largely mirrors that of the second phase, except slight modifications to reflect the gradual transfer of implementation responsibility to the MLSP. Evaluators of the second phase and an internal evaluation of the YES Desks (also) concluded that the ToC is sound.</p>



Coherence		
4. Internal coherence: the extent to which the intervention is compatible with other interventions of Swiss development cooperation in the same country and thematic field (consistency, complementarity and synergies).	1	Regarding internal coherence the evaluation finds that the project is consistent with SDC's strategy for Mongolia, and its strategy for Inclusive Economic Development more broadly. Synergies with other ongoing SDC funded projects in Mongolia were not observed; however, this is because SDC is gradually phasing out its activities.
5. External coherence: the extent to which the intervention is compatible with interventions of other actors in the country and thematic field (complementarity and synergies).	2	In terms of external coherence, the project has prompted other development partners to use similar activities or to build up on results of the project such as the "client-centred" approach for youth employment services. Some interviewees and survey participants were critical and believe coordination and cooperation could have been strengthened. The impression that we got from our interviews is that the MLSP could have played a more active role in coordinating the various donor interventions so as to improve complementarity and effective use of resources (for instance through MLSP-led coordination meetings).
Effectiveness		
6. The extent to which approaches/strategies during implementation are adequate to achieve the intended results.	1	All of the survey participants agreed (73% fully, 27% somewhat) that the PIU used adequate approaches and strategies to achieve the intended results. The project's adaptation to the situation induced by the Covid-19 pandemic was overall also viewed very positively.
7. The extent to which the intervention achieved or is expected to achieve its intended objectives (outputs and outcomes).	1	The project's result framework contains 7 outcome and 25 output indicators: it is well on track to achieve its targets at output and outcome level. Interviewees and survey respondents reiterate the quality of the project's services and the commitment of the Project Implementation Unit (PIU). The outcome harvesting has shown that stakeholders associate many positive results directly with the project, in all three project components. In the course of the extension the YES Desks have been instituted in public employment offices in all aimags and districts in Ulaanbaatar.
8. The extent to which the intervention achieved or is expected to achieve its intended results related to transversal themes.	1	<i>Inclusion:</i> With the project's objective to address youth unemployment in general, and a special focus on young women and herders, the project can be regarded as having a strong inclusion focus. <i>Gender:</i> Two thirds of the YES Desk participants are women and women are more likely to use the YES Desk services. In the online survey, roughly 70% of the participants were of the opinion that women and men have benefited in equal parts



		<p>from the project; about 25% were of the opinion that women benefited more. We note that the project's M&E consistently reports disaggregated data showing the extent to which women are involved in or benefit from the project's activities. Neither in the interviews nor in the survey were issues flagged or negative experiences shared regarding unsatisfactory gender mainstreaming.</p>
Efficiency		
9. The extent to which the intervention delivers the results (outputs, outcomes) cost-effectively.	1	<p>The interviewees commonly stated that the project's services (training, advice, events) were of very high quality and showed much commitment by the PIU. Some argued that the digitalisation of the youth employment services will reduce administrative burden, whilst also making outreach to hard-to-reach youth much easier.</p> <p>All survey participants who responded to this question found that the benefits they reaped from the project outweighed what they invested from their own resources (which was mostly time, e.g. participation in working groups, attendance of trainings).</p>
10. The extent to which the intervention delivers the results (outputs, outcome) in a timely manner (within the intended timeframe or reasonably adjusted timeframe).	2	<p>The survey responses to the question whether the project delivered its services timely were similarly positive. A few of the interviewees had reservations about starting new YES Desks so close to the project's finalisation.</p>
11. The extent to which management, monitoring and steering mechanisms support efficient implementation.	3	<p>Many interviewees, specifically from government institutions, saw the fact that the PIU is mainly staffed by Mongolian consultants, as an important factor contributing to successful implementation of the project.</p> <p>While using the M&E instrument for the evaluation we encountered some difficulties to understand and interpret some of the target, baseline, and achievement values which, despite explanations by the PIU, could not be resolved entirely. This somewhat undermines the usefulness of the results framework for learning and steering purposes. As mentioned elsewhere in the report, more could have been done to do more systematic analysis of effects of the various employment services.</p>
Impact		



12. The extent to which the intervention generated or is expected to generate 'higher-level effects' as defined in the design document of the intervention. Note: when assessing this criterion, the primary focus is the intended 'higher-level effects'. In the event that <i>significant</i> unintended negative or positive effects can be discerned, they must be specified in the justification column, especially if they influence the score.	(1)	The project does not set an impact target, yet its aim is that more young people are employed or self-employed. Quantitative data analysis that we carried out with official employment data provides some promising preliminary results of the project on the ratio between youth unemployment and total unemployment; yet the analysis was not fully conclusive. Feedback from interviews and the survey was predominantly positive, even if slightly less so than the opinions obtained for the short-term results (effectiveness). <i>Note: The bracket indicates that this rating is based, at least partly, on inconclusive information.</i>
Sustainability		
13. The extent to which partners are capable and motivated (technical capacity, ownership) to continue activities contributing to achieving the outcomes.	2	Our findings indicate that the project stakeholders identify very well with the youth employment and start-up services. Many of them observe significant changes in work culture, attitudes, and mindsets. The MLSP needs to ensure continued capacity building, specifically in those locations, in which the project activities were launched only in the extension phase.
14. The extent to which partners have the financial resources to continue activities contributing to achieving the outcomes.	1	EU budget support, which ties the resources to the delivery of the YES Desk services, the inclusion of the latter in the bi-annual national employment promotion programmes, and ongoing development partner support by the World Bank Group are important elements for financial and institutional sustainability of the YES Desks, a key result of the project.
15. The extent to which contextual factors (e.g. legislation, politics, economic situation, social demands) is conducive to continuing activities leading to outcomes.	1	We focus here on two context factors that emerged: Despite an overall declining youth employment rate, the demand for measures that can effectively help youth to transition into the labour market will remain high on the agenda in the years to come, also in the context of the post-pandemic recovery. Following the scaling of the YES Desks and the start-up support program and considering how well public employment office staff, mentors, services providers, and youth identify with the newly introduced services, it will be hard to "scale down" to a previous stage again.

Additional information (if needed): [Click here to enter text.](#)

Title of the intervention: Final Outcome Evaluation Youth Employment Promotion Project in Mongolia (Phase 2 and 3)

Assessors: Bat-Orshikh Erdenebat, Harald Meier, Michael Morlok, Ha-My Nguyen

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