

Evaluation of NRC's Youth Education Pack (YEP) projects in Faryab, Herat, and Nangarhar

NRC

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ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS

BPRM	U.S. Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration
BSC	Beneficiary Selection Community
CAB	Community Advisory Board
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DoE	Department of Education
DoLSA	Department of Labour and Social Affairs
DMoYA	Deputy Ministry of Youth Affairs
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ILO	International Labour Organization
MoRR	Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
YEP	Youth Education Pack

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2002, NRC began developing a programme targeting youth in post-conflict zones. These Youth Education Packs (YEP) were intended to respond not just to employment needs but also to teach young people, who had grown up in often challenging and unstable situations, literacy and life skills.¹ After implementation in several countries around the world (Liberia; Burundi; Sierra Leone and more), beginning in 2010, NRC implemented this YEP project in Afghanistan, specifically in Herat, Faryab and Nangarhar provinces. Today, NRC at a global and strategic level is reviewing the efficiency of YEP as an instrument to enhance livelihood in post-conflict and conflict settings.

This evaluation falls at the intersection of migration studies, youth research and strategic review. It provides a fresh look at NRC's achievement in Afghanistan and its options ahead. This case study of the Afghanistan YEP activities can be used to highlight future practice in the migration sector globally. This evaluation also falls at a specific time of Afghanistan's history – the year 2014 marks the transition of power to Afghan forces, and a decrease in international humanitarian aid.

How can resources be more effectively utilised to address the needs of youth? Samuel Hall researchers are building on past and on-going research to bridge theory and practice. As stated in an upcoming research study on Urban Displaced Youth in Kabul city, migration is first and foremost a youth-based phenomenon in and out of Afghanistan. “Most of Afghanistan's migration is youth-based: yet, they are a left-out category in terms of the assistance received. There are increasing pressures for Afghan youth to return home – whether from refugee/migrant-hosting countries, asylum-providing countries, or from host country communities. Pressure to return, but to return to what? Every year, about 400,000 youth enter the labour market, mostly in urban centres, with limited skills. The current demand for labour, and shortage of employment opportunities form a strong pull factor, which means many are opting to leave if they can, while those who stay behind can potentially act as a destabilizing force – instead of contributing to a positive development process. There is a demographic push for the youth to leave as well as an insecurity push for the youth to **“fight or flight”**, a dichotomy in conflict settings.²”

The present evaluation is therefore very timely:

- a) In the Afghan context where the challenge of youth employment is increasingly seen as one of the major issues that the Afghan society will face over the next years;
- b) From an internal perspective, as the question of the relevant format and main objectives of the YEP is under discussion within the organisation.

¹ NRC (2010), Youth Education Pack Resource Kit, 2nd Edition, p. 15.

² Samuel Hall (2014), *Urban displaced youth in Kabul*, forthcoming publication.

A. CHALLENGES for DISPLACED YOUTH: EDUCATION, LIVELIHOODS

Nearly four decades of conflict have left Afghanistan with a population displaced both abroad and internally; as of April 2014, approximately one quarter of Afghanistan's population consists of returnees and 76% have been impacted by displacement.³ A mix of returns, migration and displacement will continue over the next years based on the following context analysis:

- a) While the numbers of voluntary returnees are decreasing, the number of involuntary returns and deportations have increased. The increase of deportations, which peaked with 250,000 deportees from Iran in 2012 has yet to abate.⁴
- b) Rising insecurity, recent droughts and floods have led to an increase in both conflict and natural disaster-induced IDPs. UNHCR estimates conflict-induced IDPs to be over 630,000 in the country, while IOM estimates natural disaster-induced in 2013 at 8,356, thereby increasing the overall displacement numbers to close to 640,000 IDPs in the country.⁵

Previous studies have highlighted vulnerabilities and protection concerns faced by populations on the move, including economic vulnerability and lack of skills.⁶ IDPs are particularly touched by these problems; the 2012 Samuel Hall/NRC study titled "Challenges of IDP Protection in Afghanistan" found that for 61.5% of IDPs, employment-related issues were their primary concern in displacement, with over 33% living below the national average poverty line, and 57 % of IDP households being dependent on daily labour for their income.⁷

Earlier labour market and employment studies underscore the role of personal connections in securing better employment opportunities: 80% of respondents in Afghanistan stated that the most common way of finding work is via a neighbour, family connection or friend.⁸ IDPs and returnees, often lack these connections and are placed at a disadvantage compared to the local population.

Further challenges come from the nature of the labour market in Afghanistan affecting IDPs and returnees. Two key features characterise the Afghan labour market:

1. The **vulnerable nature of most jobs**: approximately 81% are considered to work in a vulnerable setting characterized by informal arrangements and insecurity. In 2013, 25% of the labour force in Afghanistan was considered "not-gainfully employed"; of these 17% were underemployed and 8% unemployed.
2. The **underrepresentation of women** who make up 19% of the labour force.⁹

³ UNHCR (April 2014), Volrep and Border Monitoring Monthly Update.

⁴ UNHCR (Aug 2013), Volrep and Border Monitoring Monthly Update. <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5230447b4.html>

⁵ IOM (Mar 2014), Afghanistan Natural Disaster-induced IDPs in 2013 by place of origin and documented movements.

⁶ Majidi. N/NRC (2010), Research Study on the Coping Strategies of Returned Refugees in Urban Settings, pp.7-8.

⁷ Samuel Hall /NRC (2012), *Challenges of IDP protection*, p. 25.

⁸ Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, An Urban Area Primary Source Study of Supply and Demand in the Labor Market, Jan 2009, p.27.

⁹ Central Statistics Organization (2014), *National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2011-12*. Afghanistan Living Condition Survey, p. 27.

The challenge of access to employment is especially acute for youth. With the withdrawal of much foreign aid and troops in 2014 it is expected that the labour market will further contract, leaving few opportunities for the 400,000 entering it each year. The prospects facing youth are thus of unpaid or vulnerable labour opportunities.¹⁰ The youth unemployment rate is slightly higher, at 10% overall (with 16% underemployed). Samuel Hall's 2013 *Participatory Assessment of Afghan Youth* found that approximately 29% of youth were employed, many of these in the service sector, which will most likely be contracting in the next years.¹¹ At the same time, the number of youth seeking employment will most likely increase, given the "youth bulge" of Afghanistan's population. Samuel Hall / ILO's 2012 *The State of Employment in Afghanistan* underscored some of the particular issues employers detailed regarding youth's access to job: lack of opportunities (59.6%), family's hostility (55.5%), lack of experience (36.6%), low salary (35.6%), lack of qualifications (33.1%), lack of contacts to find a job (19.5%).¹²

The articulation between gaps in skills and employment is not straightforward but displaced youth are at a heightened risk of lacking proper skills, as they face particular educational challenges.¹³ Although IDP children attend school at the same rate as non-IDP children, Amnesty International has reported higher levels of absenteeism on their part. Additionally, many IDP children had their education disrupted upon displacement.¹⁴ In the 2012 SH/NRC *Challenges of IDP Protection Survey*, approximately 1/3 of IDPs reported that their children could not attend school as there was no school in their community.¹⁵

YOUTH, EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT – REPORT OBJECTIVES

The nexus between youth, education and employment is a key feature of returnee and IDP populations and represents an important – yet difficult – challenge for national and international stakeholders, one that NRC is working to address through its Youth Education Pack (YEP) programming in Afghanistan. Samuel Hall provides, in this report, best practices and lessons learned in assisting displaced youth. These conclusions are of relevance beyond Afghanistan, and beyond NRC, for all stakeholders whose mandate comprises support the next generation reach human and physical security.

¹⁰ Samuel Hall Consulting/ILO (2012), *Time to move to Sustainable Jobs: Study on the State of Employment*, June 2012. See also Samuel Hall (2011), *Commercial Law Needs Assessment*, commissioned by GIZ in May 2011; Samuel Hall (2011) *Economic Assessment and Labour Market Survey of Balkh, Baghlan, Kandahar, and Kunduz*, commissioned by Mercy Corps in November 2011; with, respectively, samples of 621 medium-sized companies (in Balkh, Kunduz, Takhar, and Badakhshan) and 1350 employers and employees from urban centers of Balkh, Kunduz, Baghlan, and Kandahar provinces.

¹¹ Samuel Hall Consulting (2013). "Afghanistan's Future in Transition: A Participatory Assessment of the Afghan Youth", research commissioned by DMoYA, UNDP, UNFPA, and UNICEF; Kabul, 2013, p. 34.

¹² Samuel Hall / ILO (2012), *Sustainable Jobs*, op. cit., p. 35.

¹³ Majidi, N (2011), 'Urban Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Afghanistan' in *MEI-FRS*, p.9.

¹⁴ Amnesty International (2012) *Fleeing War, Finding Misery: the Plight of the Internally Displaced in Afghanistan*

¹⁵ Samuel Hall / NRC (2012) *IDP protection*, op. cit., p. 37.

Box 1.1 - NRC YEP Programming

The Youth Education Pack (YEP) programming (piloted in Sierra Leone in 2002) has three primary objectives, to help youth, primarily returnees and IDPs,

- “Acquire basic vocational skills that will increase their chances of finding apprenticeships, paid work or allow them to pursue further professional training,
- Become functionally literate, mastering basic and relevant literacy and numeracy, and
- Obtain knowledge and awareness that will further their development and awareness as individuals and as members of their societies.”¹

In Afghanistan, YEP has been implemented in Nangarhar, Herat and Faryab as of 2010. The programme is just now, in 2014, starting in Kandahar.

While the specific modalities of implementation varied across the three provinces, the general structure was of a 10-month programme consisting of three primary components:

1. **Vocational training.** Courses are selected based on market surveys and discussions with the local community and potential beneficiaries. Training includes a classroom component, and, when appropriate, a workshop component.
2. **Literacy and numeracy training.** Following national curricula, the literacy and numeracy training aims to bring beneficiaries from illiteracy to the equivalent of Grade 3 skills in these domains. Graduates received a certificate attesting to this if they passed the final exam.
3. **Life skills training.** The life skills training includes up to ten topics: hygiene, nutrition, HIV, gender, conflict resolution, health, peace building, human rights, geography and business skills.

Selection criteria for beneficiaries were loosely interpreted, but include the following:

- **Age:** beneficiaries had to be youth (defined alternatively as 15-24 and 15-25 years of age; some leeway was accorded to “vulnerable” beneficiaries)
- **Vulnerability:** defined primarily economically, beneficiaries were to be under the poverty level. Additional signs of vulnerability such as handicaps, female/ child head of household and large families were also considered.
- **Literacy:** beneficiaries were to be illiterate, measured as having literacy less than or equal to grade 2.

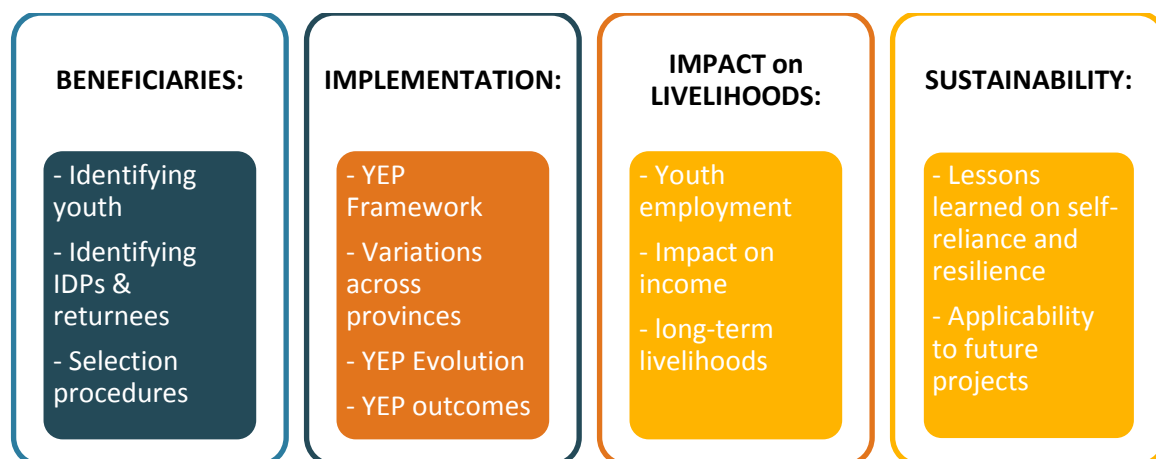
Migrant status: arguably, the most central criterion to NRC’s mission, target numbers on migrant populations varied from a minimum 50% of beneficiaries to unspecified. The target group for YEP programming includes refugees, refugee returnees, and IDPs, along with host community members meeting vulnerability criteria. In practice, research found that broad definitions were used in identifying IDPs in particular.

B. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Conceptual Framework. *How can displaced youth integrate local labour markets and to what extent does YEP make a difference in facilitating their access to job and income-generating activities?*

To answer this broad question, the evaluation focused on the four components outlined below.

Figure 0.1 - Thematic axes of research



The conceptual framework for this study is detailed in Annex B, which provides a review of key concepts used for this evaluation through an assessment of YEP's impact on employment, livelihoods, skills, self-reliance and resilience in the Afghan context.

Specific Objectives. These were, for the purposes of this evaluation, approached from three perspectives:

1. **Evaluation.** To provide an independent assessment of NRC's Youth Education Pack (YEP) evaluating how efficiently NRC addressed the needs of beneficiaries and local communities and implemented the project.
2. **Implementation.** To draw lessons learned and propose recommendations based on the evaluation for effective future planning and programming, and to provide NRC with tools to implement these recommendations effectively.
3. **Strategy formulation.** To analyse the gaps and best practices to tackle the challenge of access to employment and livelihood for displaced youth in a fragile context like Afghanistan.

Report outline. Chapter 1 introduces the research context, objectives and methodology. Chapter 2 evaluates beneficiary selection. Chapter 3 analyses programme implementation. Chapter 4 presents findings on YEP contribution to youth employment and livelihoods. Chapter 5 presents YEP impact on resilience and self reliance, and Chapter 6 offers conclusions and recommendations to improve future iterations of YEP programming and NRC actions in these domains more broadly.

C. METHODOLOGY

Research for this project included a quantitative and a qualitative component.

The quantitative component includes:

- 501 individual surveys, and
- 13 community leader surveys.

The qualitative component consists of:

- 4 focus group discussions,
- 10 case studies,
- 10 training centre observation checklists, and
- 28 key informant interviews.

These tools were designed to allow us to evaluate the impact of the YEP projects through a comparative analysis between beneficiaries and a “control” group of non-beneficiaries meeting YEP selection criteria in each location and to learn about beneficiary and non-beneficiary perceptions of the projects.

Geographic Scope

Research was conducted over two weeks in the three provinces where the YEP had been implemented in Afghanistan:

- **Week I. NANGARHAR**
- **Week II. HERAT, FARYAB**

Figure 0.2 - Evaluation geographic scope



QUANTITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

Individual Survey – 501 respondents

The individual survey was made up of 82 closed-ended questions. Upon arrival in communities team leaders met with the local community leader to explain the project and obtain permission to conduct research in the area. From there the enumerators spread out to find beneficiary (240) and non-beneficiary (261) respondents.

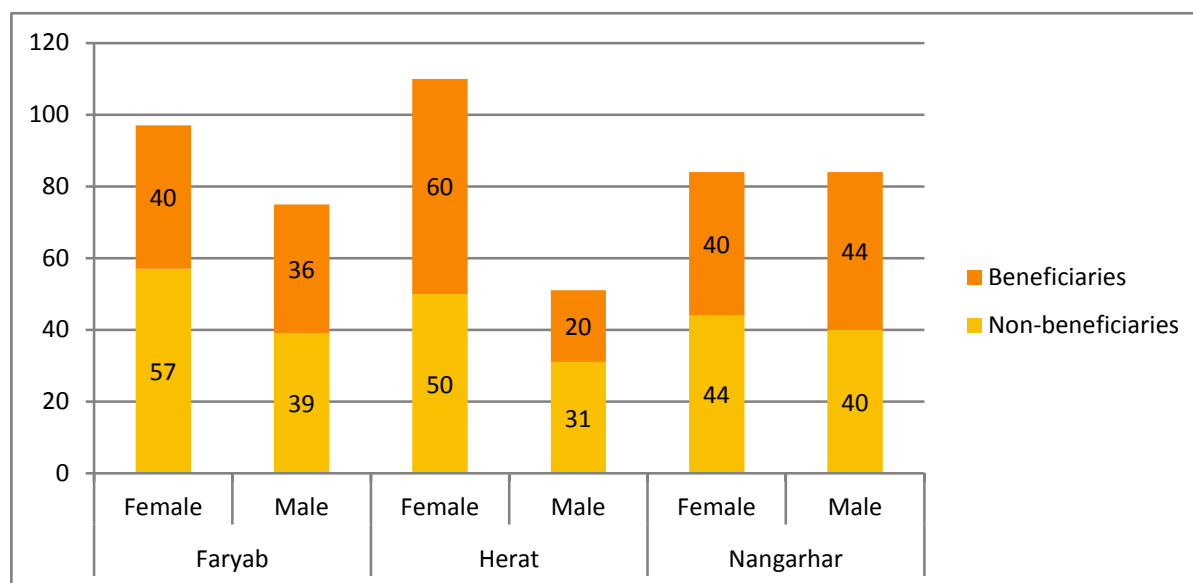
Within the visited villages, **selection of beneficiaries to interview** included two criteria:

- Gender (to mirror gender distribution of beneficiaries at the provincial level), and
- Training followed (to ensure respondents from a range of trainings).

Beyond that selection was random.

Selection of non-beneficiaries was accomplished by randomly selecting people in the communities visited who fulfilled NRC criteria (age, migration history, and previous education) for beneficiaries but had not participated in the programme. Thanks to this, the research team could collect truly comparable data.

Figure 0.3 - Individual questionnaire respondents by province, gender and beneficiary status



Community Leader Survey

The community leader questionnaires used semi-structured questions, including both multiple-choice and open-ended, to gather information about the socio-economic profile of communities visited and their perception of the YEP programming (in terms of both implementation and impact). All the community leaders interviewed were either the local *malik* (6) or members or leaders of the *shura* (7).

QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

Focus group discussions

4 focus group discussions (FGDs) with beneficiaries of the YEP programme provided in-depth information about the quality of the projects, selection processes, impact on beneficiary life and challenges faced both during and after their participation in the programme. In Nangarhar researchers conducted 1 male and 1 female focus group discussion, in Faryab 1 male focus group discussion, and in Herat 1 female focus group discussion was conducted.

Case studies

The case studies were designed to deepen understanding of the YEP projects and how to improve them. They went beyond the focus group discussions to find out more about beneficiary expectation and motivations. Researchers conducted 4 female case studies and 6 male case studies.

Key informant interviews

Samuel Hall researchers conducted 28 semi-structured in-depth interviews to get the views of national and international stakeholders on NRC YEP programming and livelihoods programming more broadly. Among the 28 people interviewed were NRC provincial and national staff, other major humanitarian actors (NRC, DRC, CRS...) and relevant government actors. A complete list of key informants interviewed is included in the Annex (Annex C).

D. CONSTRAINTS AND LIMITATIONS

The main challenges faced during data collection include the following:

Access to certain districts and villages was limited due to insecurity. This was especially problematic in Faryab, where nearly all locations outside of Maimana and its immediate vicinity were inaccessible due to either security concerns or flooding. One of the solutions to cope with the security context was to rely, as a last resort and only in a minimum number of cases, on phone-based interviews. In Faryab province researchers conducted telephone interviews with beneficiaries located in areas where they could not go due to security and accessibility problems. This allowed for a more representative geographic distribution of interviewed beneficiaries in the province.

Selection of locations for interviews had to take into account gender specificities. Female individual interviews were generally conducted in a centralised location in beneficiary communities rather than at each individual's home for cultural reasons. Selection may thus have been slightly biased by excluding those who could not leave their homes.

2. PROGRAM TARGETING

CHOOSING THE “RIGHT” BENEFICIARIES

KEY FINDINGS

NRC YEP beneficiary selection followed a robust structure, choosing people who could benefit from the training. However, displaced groups were under-represented in the selection process, along with men and beneficiaries from the target age bracket. These three components – targeting IDPs and refugee returnees, men and youth between 15 and 24 must be strengthened in future YEP programming if NRC is to achieve the goal of strengthening the potential of displaced youth as a force for change in their communities. In effect, vulnerability and availability emerged as the primary criteria for selection.

- VULNERABILITY FIRST:** NRC included beneficiary selection criteria in project proposals, which differed from province to province. The evaluation found that field staff were not always clear on how to determine them. As a result, **vulnerability** became the primary selection criteria, and beneficiaries did not always fit into the target categories.
 - **Upper age limits were more flexible than planned for women.** While across the board, male respondents fell in NRC’s target group, with a majority of younger beneficiaries (15-18), a significant proportion of female beneficiaries were older than the target age.
 - **Women made up a majority of beneficiaries:** in Herat province especially, it was easier to find women to participate in the programme as men were more likely to be needed to work, however small their current income.
 - **Beneficiaries reported higher levels of literacy and education prior to the start** of the project than called for in project guidelines
 - The selection was successful in choosing beneficiaries whose households presented vulnerabilities other than illiteracy and was perceived as fair by targeted communities.
- MIGRATION SECOND:** **there was a higher than expected integration of host community members and economic migrants into the beneficiary population** as current NRC selection does not succeed in identifying all beneficiaries correctly in terms of migration history. In particular, **the distinction between economic migrant and IDP was frequently overlooked**, leading to misleading presentations of beneficiary populations and a side-lining of actual IDPs.
- GENDER SENSITIVE PROGRAMMING:** **NRC succeeded in integrating female beneficiaries** as it has components in place enabling women to participate fully in YEP projects:
 - Childcare is provided at the YEP centres so that mothers can take part
 - A shift from centre- to community-based allowed an increase in women’s participation.
- CONCLUSIONS ON TARGETING:**
 - Guidelines elaborated for YEP programming in other countries do not suffice to target beneficiaries appropriately in Afghanistan, as poverty and vulnerability are endemic.
 - Methods need to be put in place to ensure that Information being reported to donors – such as migrant status, gender and age – is identified correctly in the selection process.

NRC’s mission is to “promote and protect the rights of all people who have been forced to flee their countries, or their homes within their countries because of conflict, regardless of their status.”¹⁶ **In practice, the clear targeting in NRC’s mandate and general selection criteria in YEP project proposals in Afghanistan was difficult to achieve; a portion of beneficiaries did not fall into the definitions of returnees and IDPs.** Given the complexity of identifying migratory profiles on the ground, and the fact that distinction between forced migration and voluntary is not always clear, organisations have to be very careful with their selection criteria and process. An organisation like NRC focused on the needs of the displaced needs to re-assess how it identifies and selects beneficiaries according to its mandate, a point to which we will return in the recommendations.

A. SELECTION CRITERIA AND PROCESS

SELECTION CRITERIA

NRC staff agreed on the major selection criteria, while recognizing that some accommodations were necessary due to local specificities. A closer look at some of the project proposals with the three donors – RNE, SIDA and SDC – reveals differences in target group and selection criteria. Most notable are the lack of gender targets in the SIDA project and differences in the target groups for the projects: **returnees make up only half of the target of the RNE proposal, while the SDC and SIDA proposals below accommodated community members so as to be able to help returnees and IDPs.**

Table 0.1 - Selection criteria in project proposals¹⁷

Donor	Project	Target group	Selection Criteria
RNE	AFFM	- Equal # men and women	- 15-24 years old
	1005	- 50% returnee 50% host community youth	- Illiterate, with 2 or fewer years of education - Not engaged in sufficient employment
SDC	AFN	- Equal numbers of men and women	<i>Compulsory</i>
	1201	- Globally the target group is refugees, refugee returnees, and IDPs, but NRC also targets host community members meeting EVI criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15-25 years old • Literacy less than or equal to grade 2 • Has not participated in a similar programme • Not registered in a governmental school • Resides in Nangarhar • Under poverty level (\$1 US) <i>Other vulnerability criteria</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female or child head of household • Handicapped • Low income and large families • Recently returned refugee or IDP

¹⁶ Norwegian Refugee Council, accessed 18.05.14, <http://www.nrc.no/?did=9298528>

¹⁷ Details taken from proposals for project AFFM 1005 (RNE), AFN 1201 (SDC) and AFFM 1106 (SIDA)

SIDA	AFFM 1106	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uneducated and vulnerable refugee-returnee and IDP youth between 15 – 25 years 	<p><i>Compulsory</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy less than or equal to grade 2 • Has not participated in a similar programme • Not registered in a governmental school • Recently returned refugee or IDP in Afghanistan • Resides in Nangarhar or Herat • Under poverty level (\$1 US) <p><i>Other vulnerability criteria</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Female or child head of household • Handicapped • Low income and large families
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NRC staff demonstrated strong understanding of the criteria detailed in the proposals. These were elaborated to fit the local context and adjustments were made to better capture the most **vulnerable**. The coordinator in Herat, for example, explained that while the target percentage of returnees and IDPs was not mentioned on the proposal, they settled upon a host community target of 20%. As members of the host communities were sometimes worse off than the returnees and IDPs, the communities themselves requested assistance.¹⁸ Exceptions were made for potential beneficiaries outside of the age target, when they showed high levels of vulnerability. **This flexibility, while allowing NRC to help beneficiaries facing many difficulties, widened the focus of the project from the initial YEP target of youth who have previously been displaced.**

SELECTION PROCESS

The proposals gave limited instructions around beneficiary selection, merely specifying that a Beneficiary Selection Committee should be put in place to select beneficiaries after an open registration process. Despite these limited instructions, according to NRC provincial staff a homogeneous procedure was followed across provinces:

- Firstly, target communities were selected; several criteria were taken into account in doing so. Potential areas of implementation had to **have a high concentration of IDPs and returnees**, generally based on UNHCR information as well as NRC/Samuel Hall's 2012 *Challenges of IDP Protection Report*, **be relatively secure**, and **show willingness to participate in the programme**. Based on conversations with the local *shura* and elders, as well as community members, villages had to accept the beneficiary selection criteria, and demonstrate a desire for involvement, for example with potential locations to hold training.
- Secondly, NRC staff conducted sensitization sessions in these communities. During these, NRC staff explained to community members the selection criteria for beneficiaries. After conducting a labour market survey, NRC staff would list potential trainings to be conducted.
- Thirdly, NRC received lists of potential beneficiaries from the local community advisory boards (made up of NRC staff, village elders, and representatives from government ministries – generally

¹⁸ Based on key informant interview with NRC staff in Herat

DoLSA, rather than the DoRR as specified in project proposals), and the beneficiary selection committees selected appropriate beneficiaries.

- Fourthly, beneficiaries were interviewed in person, and NRC staff visited their houses to make sure that they were indeed eligible for the programme. Documentation of IDP or returnee status was requested when appropriate. NRC staff reported eliminating recommended beneficiaries based on these home visits.¹⁹
- Finally, after beneficiaries were selected, a final interview was conducted to follow-up on any discrepancies in the forms. If at any point further discrepancies were found beneficiaries could be kicked out of the programmes.

Qualitative data showed varying levels of awareness of selection criteria among beneficiaries. Some believed they were selected just because of their migrant status, others (including some who were displaced) focused on the vulnerability criteria, some showed awareness of both components. **However, all agreed that the selection process had been fair, an important component for community acceptance and a smooth project implementation.**

NRC should continue community sensitization efforts in future iterations of the programme. The fact that some beneficiaries were not aware of the selection criteria suggests that current efforts were less successful in some areas than others. The clarity of selection criteria is key to community acceptance and to avoid household refraining from applying thinking that they would not qualify.

“As I mentioned I was selected because I was unemployed, returned from migration and had passion to learn a skill. People were selected based on criteria; on the first step, they had to be returnees or IDPs and to be needy.” – Zahidullah, 17 year old male beneficiary in Nangarhar province

“I think that the selection process for the YEP was fair because people were selected from the poor categories of the community; I joined YEP because I didn’t have a good financial situation in my life.” – Naseema, 25 years old, female beneficiary in Herat Province

“The people were selected for this programme based on the school drop outs, illiteracy, unemployment and poverty.” – Male beneficiaries in Faryab’s 6th district

Government involvement: government involvement in the selection process was reported to be less than called for in agreements by several representatives of the government. For example, the MoU between the Deputy Ministry of Youth Affairs (DMoYA) and NRC in Nangarhar called for NRC to select the beneficiaries “in close consultation with DMoYA” – however, relevant DMoYA staff interviewed in Nangarhar stated that practically they did not have much influence over selection of beneficiaries.²⁰ To avoid tensions with governmental staff feeling that they have not been allowed to fulfil their full role, future project iterations should be clearer about the degree of involvement of relevant departments in any MoUs and implement them.

¹⁹ Door to door visits confirmed in Faryab training centre evaluation.

²⁰ See Memorandum of Understanding between Deputy Ministry of Youth, the Ministry of Information and Culture and Norwegian Refugee Council, signed 29.07.2010 in Nangarhar province

B. BENEFICIARY PROFILE

The actual beneficiary population differed from that called for in project guidelines on several points. Faryab, in particular, showed the highest variations with the guidelines, from age to prior education and migrant status.

Table 2.2 - Graduated beneficiaries of YEP programming, to date²¹

	Faryab	Herat	Nangarhar	TOTAL
Men	270	32	531	835
Women	442	468	704	1611
TOTAL	712	500	1235	2446

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

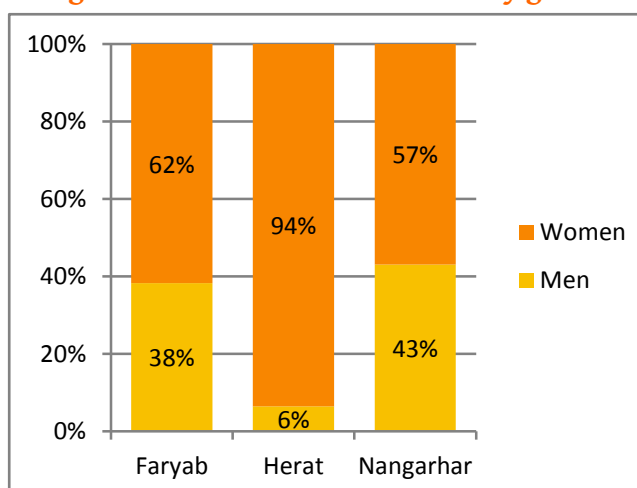
This review finds a concern in terms of gender breakdown: women are prioritised by NRC in the field, and men are a “missed out category”. Recommendation: re-interpreting ‘gender’ for more effective YEP programming.

Project proposals called for equal numbers of male and female beneficiaries, or did not specify targets. Specific steps were taken to enable the participation of women. The most notable of these was the switch from a centre-based structure to a village-based structure for NRC training in Herat. This enabled a large participation of women.

Yet, in practice, the main gender-related difficulty was in recruiting male beneficiaries: **only 32 of the 500 beneficiaries in Herat were male**. The Herat programme coordinator explained this as follows: “In many cases, the

only person working to support the family is male. Due to this, males are responsible for supporting the family. So, although they were interested in attending the programme, they could not – would have needed at least 300 Afs per day to be able to support the family.”²² This is more of a problem in Herat than in Nangarhar and Faryab because of the differing employment perspectives in each province: Herat offers more daily labour opportunities to unskilled males, and the proximity to Iran provides another potential area of employment. As men there are thus more likely to be able to find regular, if poorly paid, work, it becomes more difficult to convince them that the opportunity cost of a 9-10 month training programme during which they will not be able to earn money is worth it.²³

Figure 0.1 - NRC YEP beneficiaries by gender



²¹ Based on beneficiary databases provided by NRC staff

²² While UNHCR vocational trainings did not face a similar male-recruitment problem, this can be attributed to the fact that trainings were conducted outside of Injeel and Herat, where there were fewer economic opportunities.

²³ Based on key informant interview with senior expert on labour markets in Afghanistan, on the Herat labour market

While this female-focus was not called for specifically, **in the Afghan context access to livelihood and skills for women is particularly difficult, so an over-representation of women in the YEP beneficiaries does not render the project less relevant. However, this comes with two important caveats:**

- 1) **Male youth are important actors of the integration and reintegration process of their households but a missed out category in current YEP implementation. Male youth represent the future of their household and the backbone of their communities in conservative environments** such as Herat, Nangarhar and Faryab, as well as Kandahar where NRC is in the initial stages of developing its YEP programme. Missing the target of male beneficiaries prevents NRC from tapping into the potential of male youth, a potential often diminished due to the lack of formal education and job instability. To target return and reintegration objectives among returnee and IDP populations, NRC will need to adopt a gender-sensitive programming – whereby gender will require a strong male targeting component, besides its objectives to support vulnerable female groups.

- 2) **Future iterations of the project should take gender targets into account as the cost of the centre vs. community based training is not the same.**²⁴ Centre based training enables a centralization of logistics, and limits the number of staff necessary when compared to community-based trainings, where NRC has to run 3-4 times as many locations.

Age of beneficiaries

The YEP resource kit follows the UN definition of youth as being between 15-24 years of age. Project proposals alternatively give 15-24 and 15-25 as the target ages.²⁵ The survey shows stark differences in beneficiary age across gender and province. **Across the board, male respondents fell in the target group of NRC with a majority of younger beneficiaries (15-18). A significant proportion of female beneficiaries fell out of the target age group, especially in Faryab where 10% of respondents were 28 or over.**²⁶

Figure 0.2 - Female respondents, by age and province

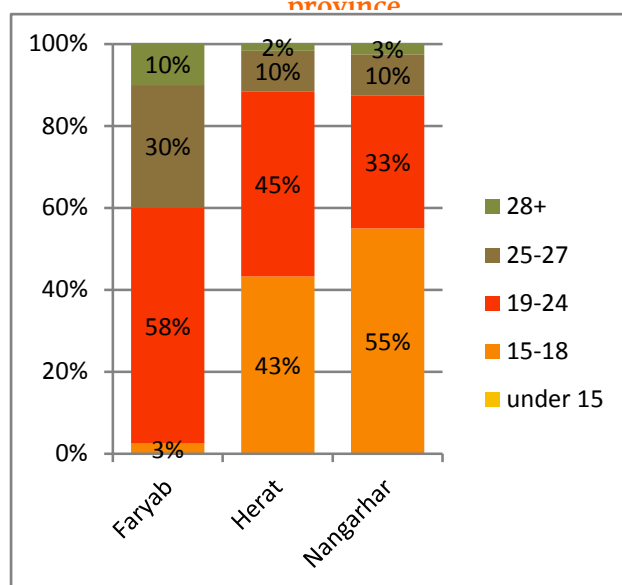
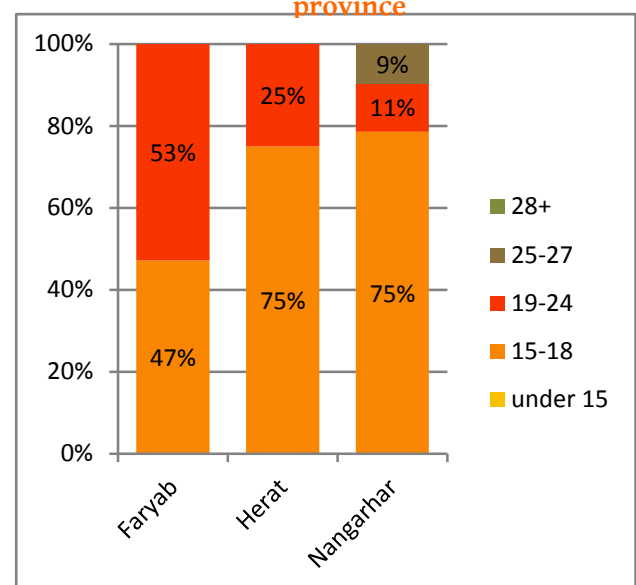


Figure 0.3 - Male respondents, by age and province



²⁵ NRC (2010), *YEP Resource Kit, 2nd Edition*, p. 12; NRC AFFM 1005 and AFN 1201 project proposals.

²⁶ Meaning they were definitely older than target even if they participated in the earliest iterations of YEP in Faryab.

That the spread is broader for women suggests that vulnerability trumps age guidelines more frequently for women. Additionally, it reflects that fact that older men (above 18) are less likely than women of the same age to be able to attend this type of training, presumably because they are more likely to be employed. NRC staff gave somewhat contradictory explanations as to whether or not this acceptance of older beneficiaries was intended or not; certainly it seems that it was not intended to be a frequent case.²⁷ Documentation difficulties do play a role in this: some beneficiaries lacked *tazkira* or any other official proof of age and not knowing one's age precisely is common in rural Afghanistan. These elements make it difficult to base selection on a strict age criterion.²⁸

Reported vulnerabilities: socio-economic vulnerability above educational vulnerability

NRC criteria for vulnerability included in proposals are detailed in Table 0.1. Compulsory vulnerability criteria for all three donors include illiteracy and unemployment. Other criteria of vulnerability detailed include female heads of household, child head of household, handicapped, low income, and large families. In practice, NRC's success in selecting for these particular vulnerabilities was mixed – particularly on the literacy/educational front, where a significant portion of beneficiaries reported education beyond grade 2 as called for – but the overall beneficiary pool was recognized as very vulnerable by the beneficiaries and community at large.

Overall, only 39% of respondents reported “basic” (little to no) literacy skills, with 47% reporting average skills and 13% reporting advanced skills before their participation in the YEP. Even taking into account some inflation of ability, this is far above the criteria listed by NRC. Reports of prior levels of education for men confirm that the selection process was problematic for literacy. **Faryab province, in particular, stands out as having a high percentage of beneficiaries with more prior education than called for:** 61% of male beneficiaries reported having completed at least grade 3, and 22% more than grade 6. It is important to note that it is difficult to confirm educational history for displaced peoples. A lesson learned from this evaluation is that this should therefore not be used as a “cut in stone” criteria.

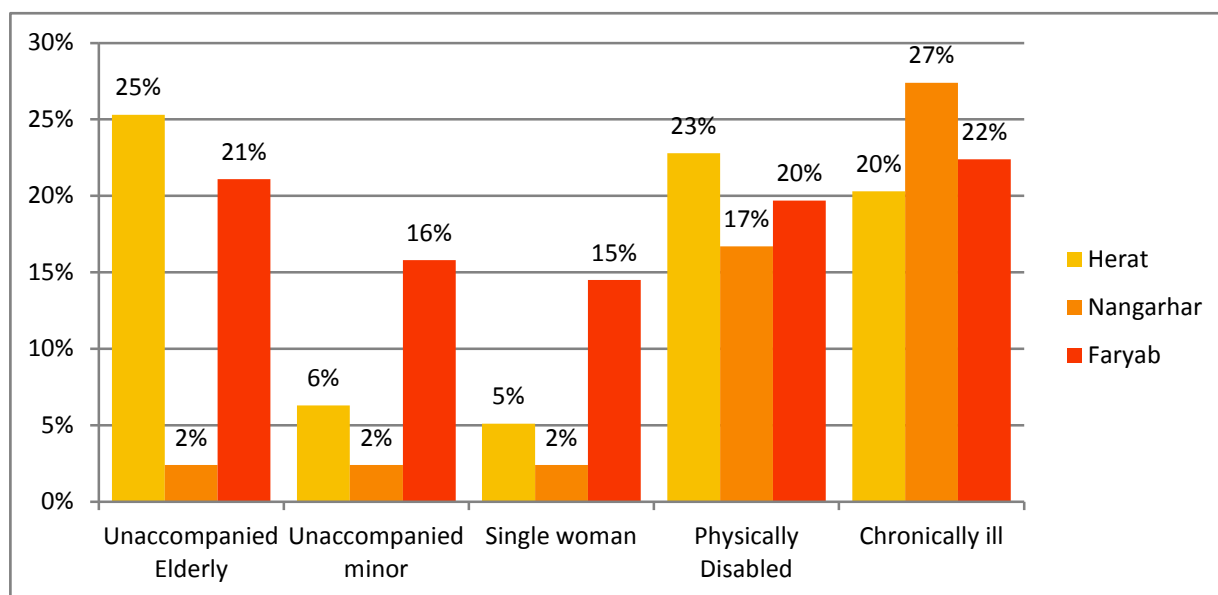
The added focus on vulnerability as a criterion for female beneficiaries discussed above is supported by the fact that only 31% reported that their household did not fall into any of UNHCR's categories of extremely vulnerable individuals (EVI), as did 50% of male beneficiaries' households.²⁹ Herat's high vulnerability rates are explained by the gender imbalance in the project there.

²⁷ Based on key informant interviews with NRC staff in Faryab and Herat, who says they did not make exceptions except for very few cases (Faryab) and Noorulhaq, who said that deserving women who were just a little older were allowed.

²⁸ Key informant interview with NRC staff in Nangarhar

²⁹ Respondents were asked which, if any, of the following descriptions applied to their household: unaccompanied elderly (over 60), unaccompanied minors (under 18), single women, physically and mentally disabled people, elderly- and child- head households, the chronically ill, gender-based violence survivors, poor families (with the guidelines of large families with 6 or more children and no livelihoods), single head of household, and drug addicts.

Figure 0.4 - % of Respondents reporting top vulnerabilities, by province



Migrant profile

As outlined in the previous section, project proposals called for a relatively broad target group for the YEP programming. **Nonetheless, this survey showed a higher integration than expected of host community members in the project.**

Figure 0.5 - Migrant history of beneficiary respondents, based on SH evaluation

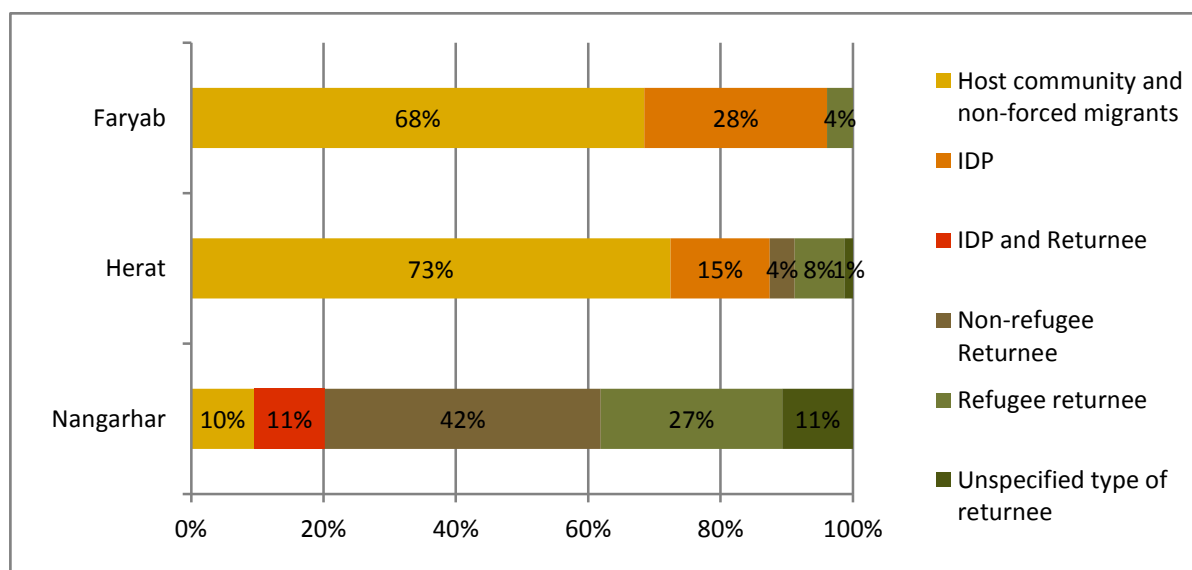
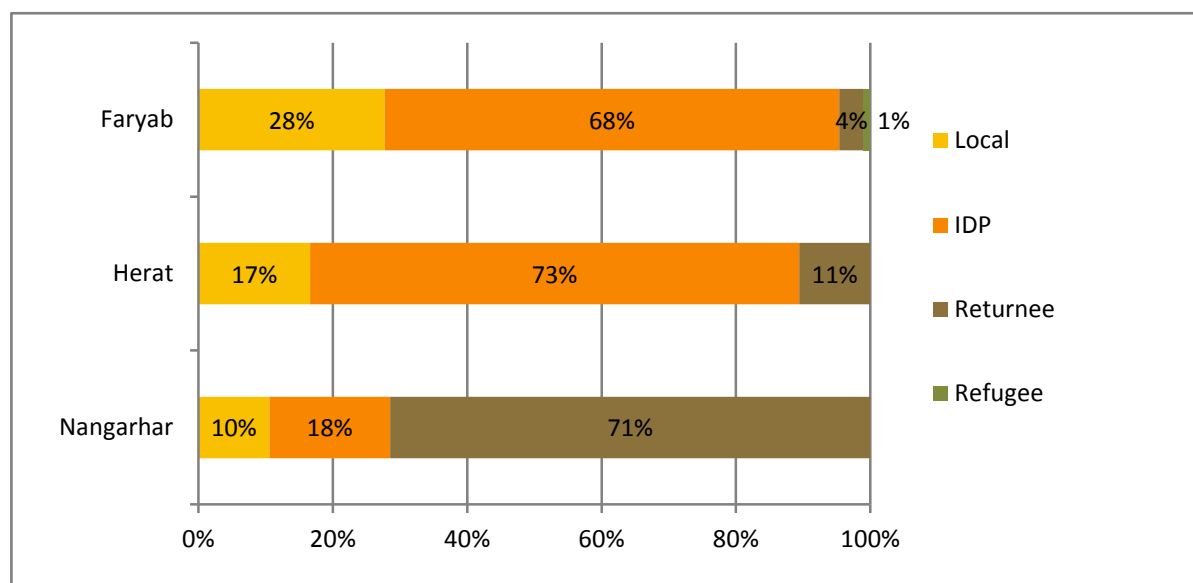


Figure 0.6 - Migrant history of YEP beneficiaries, based on NRC database



In Herat and Faryab, Samuel Hall research shows reversed figures from the baseline data for host community members and internally displaced persons. As can be seen in the graphs above, while NRC data counted 68% of IDPs and 28% of host community members in Faryab province, only 28% of respondents to the individual questionnaire in Faryab were IDPs, and 68% were host community members and non-forced migrants. Similarly, in Herat province NRC data notes 73% of IDPs among beneficiaries, versus 15% of the respondents to our survey. **This can be attributed to definitional differences and challenges in identifying IDPs on the ground.** In interviewing beneficiaries, Samuel Hall followed the UN definition detailed earlier. The question of **forced displacement** is central to classifying people as IDPs rather than voluntary migrants. Conversations with NRC staff revealed that they included as IDPs people who left their place of origin due to lack of opportunities when this lack of opportunities was prompted by natural disasters or conflict. This misinterpretation of IDPs explains the discrepancy between the baseline and the evaluation database. Admittedly, the distinction is frequently challenging to make on the ground, especially in cases where people may have been displaced for a mix of various reasons, including for example both natural disaster and economic reasons. NRC did report corroborating information from potential beneficiaries with information from other community members to confirm their migrant history. **Yet the line between “forced” and economic migrant is often very blurry. Although these people were not IDPs, they qualified in vulnerability terms.**

In Nangarhar province, targeting followed more strictly the NRC guidelines: both NRC data and the current research denoted 10% of host community / non-forced migrants among the beneficiaries. However, NRC data does not differentiate between refugee returnees and non-refugee returnees. Previous research has found higher vulnerability among the latter group; future iterations of YEP should make this distinction to better understand potential impact of project.

Overall then, beneficiary selection was conducted following NRC procedures, but allowed for a broadening of target group. The main weakness of the selection process is the inability to identify IDPs in a reliable manner. On the ground, vulnerability seems to have trumped other types of criteria (age or migratory profile in particular). Future projects should ensure that definitions of groups to target are clearer to ensure that any such broadening is intentional and reported.

C. TARGETING CHALLENGES AND FUTURE PROGRAMMING

In recruiting beneficiaries, NRC staff faced several challenges detailed above.

Two broader structural issues should be kept in mind in selecting beneficiary criteria for similar programmes in the future and in evaluating this one:

- **Given that migrant status of beneficiaries is one of the facts being reported to donors, it is crucial that this be identified correctly.**

Guidelines elaborated for YEP programming in other countries may not suffice to target beneficiaries appropriately in Afghanistan. Poverty and vulnerability are endemic; in high-return areas, for example, in Nangarhar, nearly everyone within the 15-24 age bracket would fulfil the other selection criteria. Literacy and lack of education, however may prove less useful criteria in the future as literacy rates among Afghan youth have increased dramatically in the past ten years, and respondents to our questionnaire often reported prior education levels higher than those stated in proposals. The findings of this evaluation suggest that a tighter selection framework should be established for the YEP. Focusing on vulnerability is relevant but both vulnerability and migration history need to be defined more clearly.

“Most of the people in this area are poor and eligible for the program but the fact is that they wouldn’t accept many participants.”

- Abdul Momin, community leader
in Faryab

- **YEP and other vocational training programmes carry an opportunity cost for beneficiaries.**

Even in cases where potential beneficiaries have access only to occasional labour, they will be reluctant to give this up for future benefits – such benefits will be useless if their family cannot eat in the meantime. This may prevent the most vulnerable people from taking part in the programme, especially vulnerable men, more likely to be working than women in the same situation. **NRC currently does not offer cash or other incentives for its vocational training. The research team supports this approach, which avoids distorting motivation for participating in the YEP programme (see below on the dangers of incentives in vocational programming) and has the unintended effect of prioritising women in the project.**

Box 2.1 –

INCENTIVES, OR, PROMOTING FLAWED BENEFICIARY SELECTION?

Given the opportunity cost of training and literacy programmes, various organisations have provided food or cash to programme beneficiaries, in well-meaning, if misguided, attempt to enable the most vulnerable to participate in these programmes, despite their short-term negative impact on income.

Samuel Hall's *Sustaining the Working Poor in Kabul Informal Settlements*, for example, found that "the "food-for-training" model in Kabul informal settlements failed to exclude individuals who lacked motivation to work. Most individuals were interested in the food content of the vocational training rather than learning the skills per se." ¹ A similar evaluation of WFP's food for training final report had also noted high incidences of people being motivated by food rather than the desire to be trained. While such programmes end up in line with humanitarian goals, the distorted incentives for participating in the programme will presumably a pool of beneficiaries less interested in the vocational aspect of the training – and thus less likely to have positive long term effects from said training.

Some programmes do provide incentives. Successful examples of such programmes, however, have a more nuanced approach to incentives, thus avoiding overly distorting incentives. HELP, in Herat, for example, provides food and financial assistance not just to beneficiaries but to their entire family. However, unlike many programmes, HELP takes a true long-term approach to aiding beneficiaries, from helping them plan their return from abroad all the way to ensuring they have enough to survive for some time after vocational training to find employment.

Given that NRC has been able to attract motivated beneficiaries without any incentives – in fact, in Herat province some extra 25 beneficiaries for whom there was no financing still followed the training, despite the fact that they did not receive a training kit and would not receive a certificate of completion – for now Samuel Hall recommends continuing to avoid

3. BEST PRACTICES and LESSONS LEARNED

Examining YEP Structure, Methods, Actors

KEY FINDINGS

Despite different implementation modalities, NRC achieved successful vocational, literary and life skills trainings across provinces, showing that the modalities chosen, while not innovative, were indeed appropriate to the local contexts and implemented in a satisfactory manner. Generally, NRC has a strong vocational training programme when compared with other organisations:

IMPLEMENTATION STRENGTHS:

- The selection process for skills was successful in identifying skills for which there were opportunities in the local labour market, and that were accepted by local communities.
- **The length of the training and workshop components (where applicable) are enough to ensure a strong skills transfer, certified by departmental ministries.**
- Toolkits were a clear positive in NRC's YEP programming: more extensive than in other projects, and reliably handed out, only 5% of beneficiaries reported not using them.
- Governmental collaboration was generally very positive from a monitoring and evaluation perspective.
- Existing M&E enabled the identification and firing of **several ineffectual teachers**.

IMPLEMENTATION WEAKNESSES

- The selection process for skills was not designed to identify new or innovative skills to offer in the areas concerned.
- 29% of beneficiaries in Herat reported learning a skill fully, vs. 47% in Faryab and 73% in Nangarhar, a fact which may be partially due to the shorter vocational training period there.³⁰
- NRC was forced to compromise between trainer preparedness and effectiveness and trainer acceptability to the community and ability to teach: favouring local teachers for pragmatic reasons, while most probably unavoidable, had a negative impact on teaching quality and limited the skills offered.
- Childcare, while popular, was insufficient to meet needs of beneficiaries, and thus may have prevented potential beneficiaries more in need of it from participating in programme.

³⁰ Gender discrepancies account for a portion of this difference but do not suffice to explain it all.

COMPONENT OVERVIEW

NRC's ten-month YEP programme had three primary components: vocational training, literacy and numeracy training, and life skills training.

- **Vocational training.** Vocational skills taught varied by province and gender, as did the method of teaching them. Courses were selected based on market surveys and discussions with the local community and potential beneficiaries.

Figure 3.1 - Vocational training structure, by province

	FARYAB	HERAT	NANGARHAR
Implementation Modalities	Vocational skills were taught in workshops near the YEP centres. NRC provided transportation to these after literacy and life skills training in the centres.	Male beneficiaries attended a centre in Darb-e-Malek. Female vocational trainings were conducted in villages, often at the home of the trainer.	Vocational skills were taught in the YEP centres; male students were able to go to workshops for the last month for further practical training.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational skills training from the start • Centres brought together beneficiaries from more than one village 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-village structure made it easier for females to attend trainings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centres had more autonomy for procurement, increasing community involvement • Centres brought together beneficiaries from more than one village
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centres were not built to create permanent buildings for community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More variance in training room quality • Less centralized approach makes logistics more challenging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centres were rented rather than built as planned in original project proposal

- **Literacy and numeracy training.** The curriculum is set by the Department of Education. Beneficiaries are brought from illiteracy to the equivalent of Grade 3 skills in these domains. If they pass the final exam, they receive a certificate from the Government.
- **Life skills training.** The life skills training includes the following topics: hygiene, nutrition, HIV, gender, conflict resolution, peace building, human rights, geography and business skills.

Vocational Training

Generally, NRC has a strong vocational training programme when compared with other organisations: the length of the training and workshop components (where applicable) ensure a stronger skills knowledge, certified by the relevant DoLSAMD. A robust selection procedure is in place to ensure skills are selected in accordance with the local labour market, availability of trainers and the desires of potential beneficiaries. This procedure, however, is lacking in innovation, particularly in the skills available to women.

Researchers spoke with beneficiaries of 15 different types of vocational training, representing the majority of the skills taught in each province.

Table 3.1 - Trainings followed by interviewed beneficiaries

Faryab	Herat	Nangarhar
Tailoring	Tailoring	Tailoring
Beautician	Beautician	Beautician
Bead sewing	Bead sewing	Bead sewing
Embroidery	Embroidery	Embroidery
Plumbing	Refrigerator repair	Plumbing
Vehicle and motorcycle repair		Vehicle and motorcycle repair
Transformer repair		Electric wiring
Carpentry		Carpentry
Handicrafts		Handicrafts
Carpet weaving		Making of leather products
Curtain sewing		

Skill selection

The selection procedure for skills was consistent across provinces. *Firstly*, a market survey was conducted to see which skills were marketable in the area and had high job opportunities. *Secondly*, NRC representatives spoke with potential beneficiaries to determine which skills they were interested in. *Finally*, skills requested by enough beneficiaries, for which NRC could find trainers and raw materials locally, were selected.

This procedure allows for input from all concerned and ensures that trainings will be accepted by communities, but has an important conceptual flaw: **training sessions offered will generally reflect existing opportunities**. When NRC staff introduced “new” skills, these were still of a traditional

nature: for example, in Faryab province, “mora dozi” (embroidery using beads) was introduced as a skill and soon became popular among potential beneficiaries.

Additionally, **community input sometimes limited the breadth of skills offered and prevented skills, which had been identified as marketable from being offered**, for example, food processing in Herat province.

Finally, **budget** is a constraining factor as well: the tools for certain trainings are far more expensive than others, and this was factored into skill selection.

Trainer selection

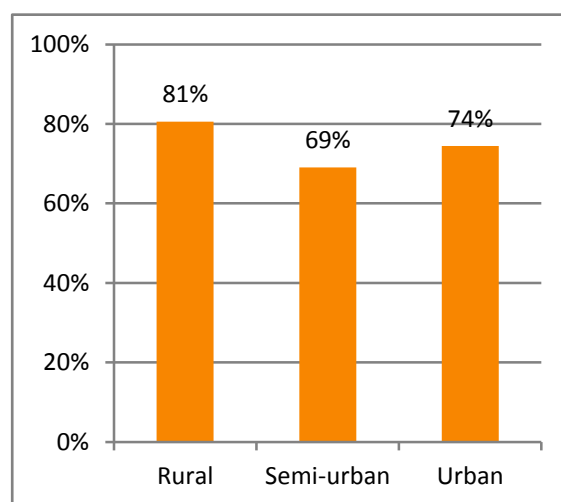
Practically speaking, the main criterion for vocational skills trainers was that of location: NRC recruited primarily trainers who were from the areas of implementation. This was done for the purposes of security and community acceptance, particularly when considering women’s training.

Research found several trade-offs stemming from this approach promoting community acceptance:

- **Effective teaching.** This approach led to a group of trainers of varying skill levels. The several days of “teacher training” offered by NRC to these was in some cases not enough to make up for lack of prior teaching experience. Representatives of DoLSA in Herat highlighted some of the problems this posed, saying “As you know, vocational training should be both practical and theoretical; however, most teachers from the villages did not know how to convey theoretical knowledge to the students, for example, did not know how to use boards to explain things, even though they could transmit practical knowledge”.³¹ For example, reports were given of illiterate tailoring teachers showing students how to measure cloth using their hands.
- **Ability to detect “bad” teachers.** When teachers come from the communities, beneficiaries may not want to complain about them. Samuel Hall researchers found cases where beneficiaries did not wish to complain about their teachers because they knew the complaints would come back to them.
- **Breadth of skills offered.** Choosing trainers from the **community limited the skills**, which could be offered by NRC.

Choosing local trainers did have some advantages beyond promoting community acceptance of training: trainers in rural areas were less likely to miss sessions of class than trainers in semi-urban and urban areas (cf. Figure 0.1).

Figure 0.1 - % of trainers who did not miss a session, by type of location



Governmental involvement in trainer selection varied by province. In Herat, DoLSA officials not only provided lists of potential trainers, but also helped with the selection of trainers; interviews

³¹ Key informant interview with DoLSA Herat.

were done with the presence of a focal point from DoLSA.³² In Faryab, DoLSA complained that they were not invited to take part in any of the processes relating to YEP.

Training duration

Faryab – From the start, beneficiaries spent time both at the centres and in workshops / the homes of trainers to learn skill, for a total of 9 months of training.

Herat – Vocational training began 2-3 months after the start of the programme, and lasted anywhere from 4-7 months depending on the type of skill learnt. The idea was that beneficiaries with literacy and numeracy skills would benefit more from vocational training.

Nangarhar – Beneficiaries attended skills training from the start in the centres.

“The training will improve, if its duration is extended.”

- Nasema, beneficiary, Herat province

The information beneficiaries provided about training length confirms that the training lasted as long as originally planned: the average vocational training length stated in Nangarhar was of 9.9 months, and in Faryab

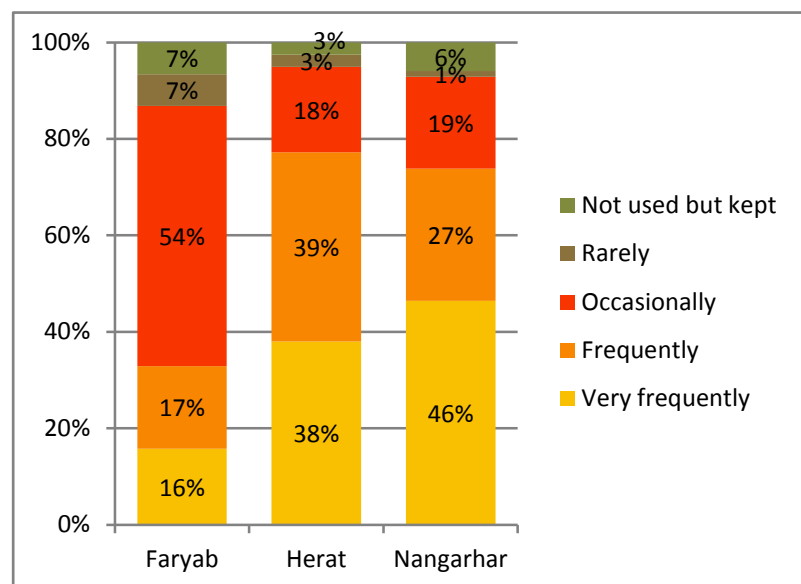
9.1 months, compared to 6.7 months in Herat. **These provincial differences had an impact on how extensively beneficiaries learnt a skill: only 29% of beneficiaries in Herat reported learning a skill fully, vs. 47% in Faryab and 73% in Nangarhar.**³³ While these trainings are good compared to other trainings given in Afghanistan, which sometimes last as few as 2-3 months, for some skills they remain too short to gain full knowledge of the skill³⁴ as only 50% of beneficiaries reported gaining full knowledge of a new skill. Beneficiaries in Herat province, which had the shortest training periods, were most likely to state that trainings should last longer (74%), and those in Faryab, where beneficiaries were learning in workshops from the start, least likely to say so (26.3%).

Toolkits

Beneficiaries were given tools to use during the training and then were to receive toolkits upon completion of the programme. While the tool distribution for trainings had some problems – field observations in both Nangarhar and Faryab reported instances

of tools coming up to three months late - **from an efficiency standpoint NRC was very successful**

Figure 3.32 - Frequency of beneficiary toolkit usage



³² Key informant interview with NRC staff in Herat.

³³ Gender discrepancies account for a portion of this difference but do not suffice to explain it all.

³⁴ Based on key informant interview with NRC staff in Kandahar (formerly Nangarhar)

with its' distribution of toolkits to beneficiaries: 90% of beneficiaries reported this as being the case, and nearly all of the remainder reported getting it at some point during the training. Only 1 beneficiary reported never getting a toolkit.

NRC's toolkits are also successful from an effectiveness perspective. Beneficiary satisfaction with toolkits was high. No one reported having sold it, and only 5% of beneficiaries said that they did not use it. Of these 5%, just a little over half said that they did not use the toolkit because the quality was poor. **This is crucial to the long-term sustainability of NRC's trainings: beneficiaries need tools to be able to use their new skills.** Too little investment on this front may provide short-term savings to NRC, but in the long term would have negative affects on programme impact. **The effectiveness of NRC's toolkits can be attributed to NRC's willingness to spend more money on these than many organisations.** Staff reported the cost of toolkits as between \$250 and \$500 (from tailoring kits to refrigerator repair). As a point of comparison, IOM's vocational trainings in Nangarhar and Herat counted between \$50 and \$100 per toolkit.³⁵ This highlights an advantage of direct implementation rather than relying on implementing partners, more likely to cut costs.

**Embroidery from Herat province;
Such a piece sells for 50 Afs.**



³⁵ Samuel Hall, Evaluation of IOM Return and Reintegration activities, op. cit., p. 48

Literacy Training

Relevant government departments (in particular, the department of Education) were involved from start to finish in the literacy training targeting specifically verbal and numerical literacy. **While government officials described their role as supervisory, in actuality they had a fair amount of influence: the curriculum was provided by the national government (as with all literacy trainings), and Department of Education staff were involved in teacher selection in some cases and monitored classes systematically.**

NRC implemented this training directly in Nangarhar and Herat provinces. In Faryab province, literacy training was initially provided through an implementing partner rather than directly, to fulfil donor requirements. While from a results perspective this went smoothly (the government leaving little room for leeway on curricula, etc.) NRC staff reported that they ended up duplicating some efforts from the IP; coordination between IP and NRC was lacking.³⁶

Trainer selection

The selection process for literacy trainers was stricter than for vocational skills trainers, as teachers had to pass a written examination provided by NRC. That being said, some of the same concerns apply as in finding effective vocational skills teachers, as for women in particular in more rural areas it was not always easy to find qualified teachers. Female beneficiaries were slightly less likely to report that their teachers had never missed a session than male beneficiaries (84% vs. 90%).

Challenges stemming from beneficiary selection

61% of female beneficiaries reported at least “average” knowledge of reading prior to start of programme, as did 59% of males. While this may have been inflated, reports of prior education completed show that in Faryab and Nangarhar this was a valid concern among men (cf. Figure 3.4).

This poses issue on two fronts:

- It becomes more difficult to teach effectively when students have differing starting levels, and curricula provided are not applicable to all students.
- Students are more likely to lose interest if they already know the material being presented.

Future iterations of the YEP programme in Afghanistan thus have decisions to make:

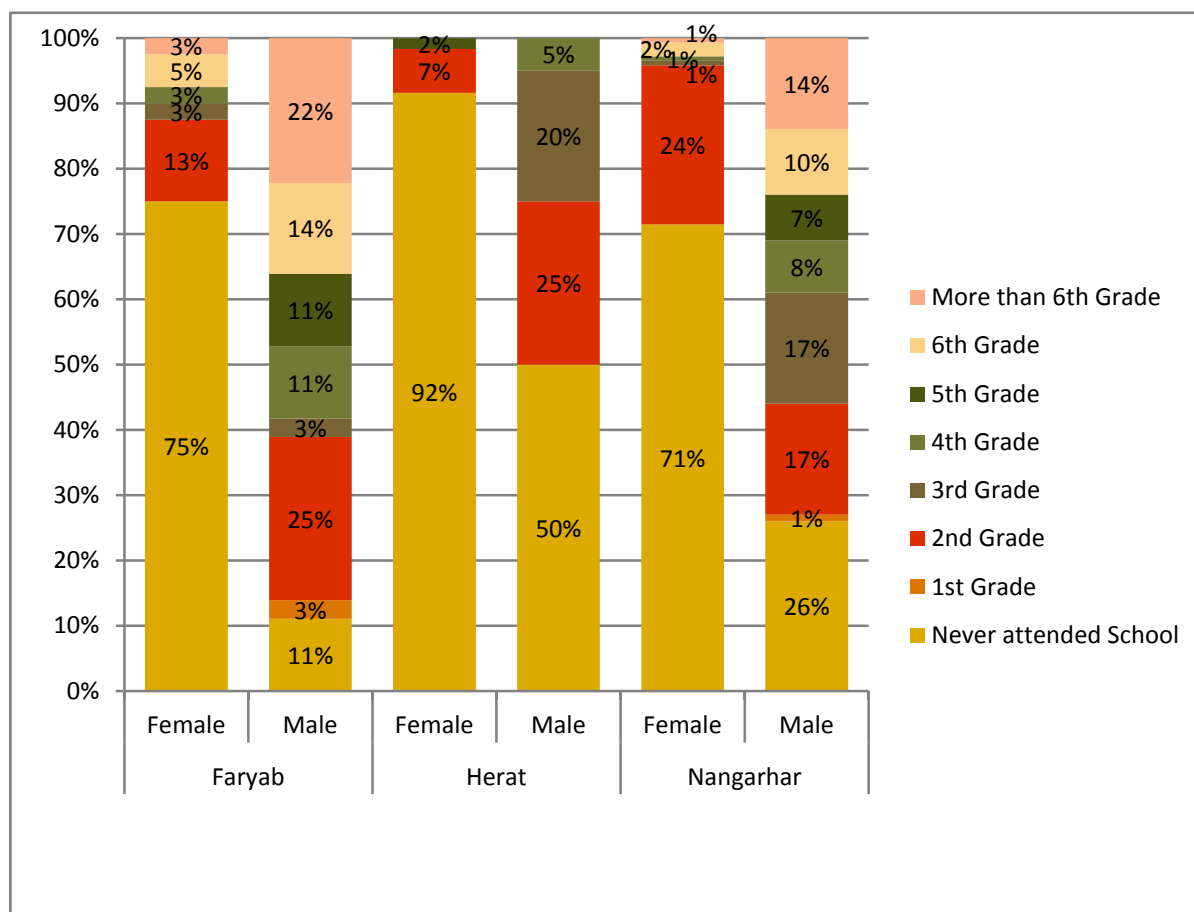
- 1) **Whether or no to be stricter in evaluating potential beneficiary educational past.** An “educational vulnerability mapping” will be required as part of the selection criteria – adding educational vulnerability, alongside age, gender and displacement profile to the key selection criteria of YEP. As displaced youth often highlight security and education as their two key priorities – across the world – in Afghanistan, YEP programmes should target the missed education opportunities of the displaced. However, to know how to target this ‘missed education opportunity’, NRC first needs to evaluate and rank the extent of their

³⁶ Based on key informant interview with NRC staff in Kabul.

literacy, or illiteracy as a first step, to organize beneficiaries according to their educational past.

- 2) **And whether or not to include otherwise worthy, but not completely illiterate students.** If the latter, steps will have to be taken to deal with the abovementioned problems, and NRC can learn from other organisations' work. For example, CEDO separates beneficiaries into two groups for literacy based on their skill level. This allows more advanced students to reach a higher literacy and numeracy skill level, which is advantageous from a business perspective.³⁷ This good practice could be taken upon by NRC across provinces.

Figure 3.4 - Highest level of schooling completed by beneficiaries prior to project start



³⁷ Based on key informant interview with CEDO staff in Kabul.

L

ife skills training

YEP intends to serve a holistic purpose of combining literacy with life skills training. In the overall YEP resource toolkit developed by NRC, approximately half of the time is supposed to be spent on literacy and life skills, the other half on basic vocational skills. However, the life skills portion was the smallest component of YEP programming in terms of time. In Herat, for example, only one hour per week was devoted to life skills, with one teacher going around to all training locations.³⁸

Originally, ten subjects were planned: AIDS, Conflict, Gender, Geography, Health, Human Rights, Hygiene, Nutrition, Peace, and Small business. In some villages, community members were opposed to some of these topics, for example, human rights and conflict resolution, particularly for their wives, and the training was condensed.³⁹ In these cases, key components from the other programmes were incorporated into taught modules. The lessons included relevant Koranic verses, making them more acceptable among communities.⁴⁰ Geography was the topic most frequently cited as “not applicable” (meaning that beneficiaries had not studied it), and, even then, only 15% said so, suggesting that the vast majority of beneficiaries were exposed to all topics listed above, a notable success given the sensitivity of some of these elements in rural Afghanistan.

The lessons were taught in an interactive fashion and emphasized connections between the theoretical subjects and beneficiaries’ lives. This included using techniques such as “video clips, reading-aloud and role playing.”⁴¹

As the data shows, the impact of life skills was disproportionate to the time spent on them. The qualitative research underlined that beneficiaries were both using and teaching information they had gotten on hygiene and nutrition, and the conflict resolution impacted the day-to-day life of beneficiaries – pointing out to the successes to be built on for future community-based efforts as a background to supporting integration and reintegration of displaced groups.

³⁸ Based on key informant interview with NRC staff in Kabul.

³⁹ Based on key informant interview with NRC staff in Herat.

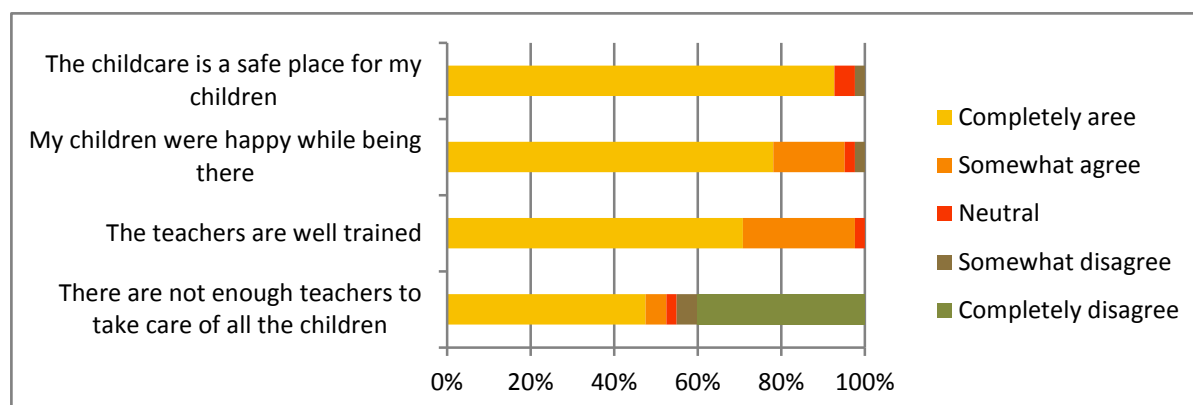
⁴⁰ Based on 2012 Annual Report for SIDA

⁴¹ Based on 2012 Annual Report for SIDA

NRC’s proposals called for childcare to be available in all three provinces to project beneficiaries, with a two-fold goal of enabling people who would otherwise not be able to participate to take part in the programming and to provide early childhood care development training to the children.⁴²

Of the 54 YEP beneficiaries interviewed who had children, 41 used YEP childcare facilities for their children. **Overall, beneficiaries were quite pleased with the service; the primary criticism was that there were not enough teachers to take care of all the children. Providing this service is a successful innovation on the part of NRC, enabling it to reach out to a vulnerable population that might otherwise be excluded.**

Figure 3.5 - Beneficiary evaluation of YEP childcare



In Faryab, this overcrowding was in part due to the fact that in some cases childcare workers could keep their own children with themselves – in some cases, they had up five children, which was equal to the number of children they were to take care of. Eventually, teachers were told not to bring any of their children, and beneficiaries could only bring their youngest child.⁴³ **This latter technique limits the usefulness of the childcare programme as only 6 of the 41 beneficiaries who used the programme had just one child. Presumably in at least some of the other cases where beneficiaries had more than one child, they had several children of age to need supervision.**

While beneficiaries stated teachers were well trained, this remains relative: there were no clear guidelines in hiring the childcare workers, and in Herat province at least it was not required that they have more than a middle school education, although they did receive one week of training prior to the start of the programme.⁴⁴ Proposals had called for the childcare to provide early childhood development education, but previous reports by NRC have noted that in initial phases at least, children were merely being looked after, not taught.⁴⁵

⁴² NRC proposal to SIDA, p. 9.

⁴³ Based on key informant interview with NRC staff in Faryab.

⁴⁴ Based on key informant interview with NRC staff in Herat.

⁴⁵ AFT 1005 proposal; YEP donor report to SIDA

4. IMPACT

YEP contribution to youth employment and livelihoods

KEY FINDINGS

YEP programming is at the nexus of two issues of concern in Afghanistan: youth and employment. A growing youth bulge (67% of the population of Afghanistan is 24 or under) and a worsening economic situation place YEP programming's target population in a particularly vulnerable position and make the project very relevant to the Afghan context. Yet, there is a paucity of programming focusing on this population in Afghanistan: understanding how successful YEP is at giving beneficiary skills for employment and the degree to which it changes beneficiaries' lives (versus non beneficiaries) provide a unique opportunity for organisations to understand how to address these problems. This chapter focuses specifically on vocational skills, and employment and livelihoods; the next will address the broader impact of YEP (including literacy and life skills) on beneficiary resilience and self-reliance.

While YEP's vocational training has a positive impact on beneficiary skills knowledge, there are clear opportunities for improvement in allowing beneficiaries to integrate labour markets. YEP programming does lead to increased employment and income, but these are limited in scope:

- *Approximately half of beneficiaries acquired full knowledge of a new skill, and nearly all the rest received partial knowledge of a new skill.*
- **53% of beneficiaries report having a full or part-time job.** However, a clear breakdown by gender appears in types of work and amount earned: women use their new skills part time or working from home and earn on average half as much as men using their new skills to earn money. Given that YEP selection currently attracts more women, then it can be inferred that the overall impact of vocational training is below its full potential. Branching out to full-time objectives through an increase in male beneficiaries should be the next objective of NRC's improved YEP programming in Afghanistan. The long-term potential of these jobs is less clear as already 10% of beneficiaries who were once employed with their new skills no longer are.
- *Training follow-up is a clear gap in programming, particularly when it comes to helping beneficiaries reach the labour market: current techniques such as apprenticeships, working groups and fairs to sell products have had a very limited impact. Beneficiaries have criticised this heavily and analysis clearly identifies this as an area where NRC could materially improve its long-term impact.*
- *Still, comparing with non-beneficiaries, data show a clear impact of YEP on youth's personal income and employment. If YEP does not offer a way out of poverty per se, it does give youth the opportunity to enter professional life and earn their own money, increasing their autonomy. As such, YEP represents a good basis to address the problem of youth's access to the labour market, and one that should be strengthened to a more precise targeting of displaced youth.*

Vocational skills training

The first objective of YEP programming around the world is to enable youth to “acquire basic vocational skills that will increase their chances of finding apprenticeships, paid work or allow them to pursue further professional training.”⁴⁶

The indicators chosen by NRC to measure the success of the YEP are detailed in Annex C. The evaluation team draw on and expanded this list so as to measure the impact of the pack. In evaluating the direct impacts of the vocational training, three major outcomes should be considered:

- 1) *Success in imparting knowledge of a new skill*
- 2) *Usefulness of the new skill imparted*
- 3) *Impact on individual and household economics*

Skills assessment

Table 4.1 – Acquiring Skills

Outcome	Indicator	Faryab	Herat	Nangarhar
Knowledge imparted	Acquired full knowledge of new skill	47%	29%	73%
	Acquired partial knowledge of new skill	47%	59%	24%

Beneficiaries in Nangarhar were most likely to have acquired full knowledge of a new skill and either full or partial knowledge. **Overall, nearly all beneficiaries reported gaining partial to full knowledge of a new skill.**

Women were less likely to report acquiring full knowledge of a new skill (42% as against 61% of male beneficiaries), explaining some of the differences between provinces: for example, this explains the lower percentage of respondents in Herat acquiring full knowledge of a new skill, as Herat beneficiaries were overwhelmingly female. This difference across gender may be explained a) by the lower initial level of skills that female beneficiaries could have had; b) by the higher difficulty of finding qualified trainers for female beneficiaries. For future programming, it could be relevant to take into account the different rhythm of skill acquisition between male and female beneficiaries to guarantee a full skill transfer for both groups.

Given that YEP selection currently attracts more women, in particular in Herat, then it can be inferred that the overall impact of vocational training is below its full potential: women working part-time or from home limit their ability to contribute to the household’s well-being and can contribute to perpetuating cycles of poverty. Given the positive impact of the skills training, branching out to full-time objectives through an increase in male beneficiaries should be the next objective of NRC’s improved YEP programming in Afghanistan.

⁴⁶ NRC (2010) YEP Resource kit, op. cit., p. 16.

Labour market integration after vocational training

Labour market integration should be evaluated on two fronts: **employment** and **income generation**.

Table 4.2 - Using skills

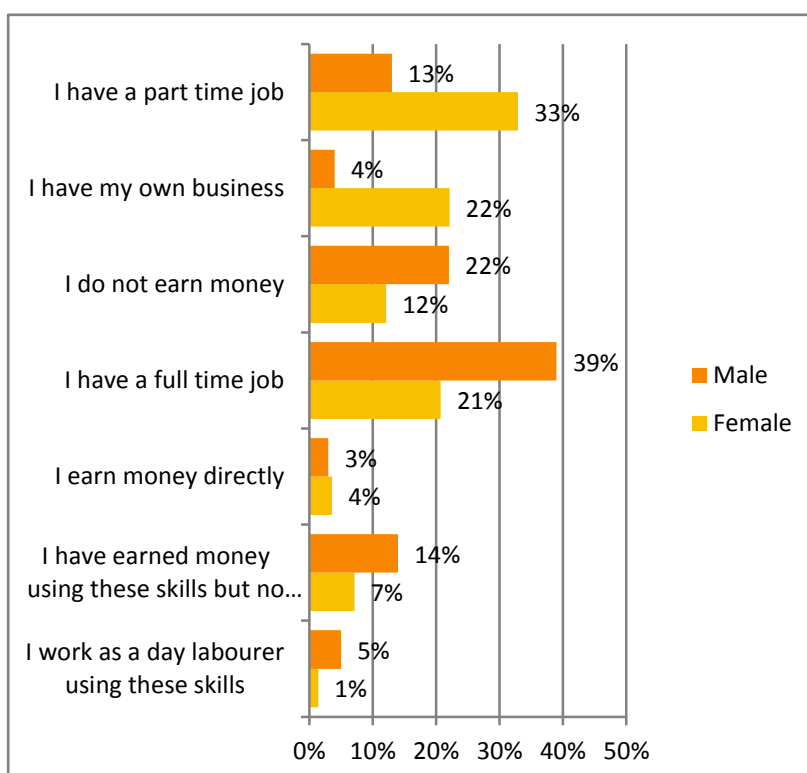
Outcome	Indicator	Faryab	Herat	Nangarhar
Usefulness of knowledge	Now have a full or part-time job using new skills	54%	52%	53%
Impact on income	Have had income increase as a result of training	58%	79%	74%
	Have had household savings increase as a result of training	33%	49%	68%

Employment

53% of beneficiaries now use their new skills as part of a full- or part- time job, a finding that confirms the significant impact of the YEP on access to employment. Interestingly, the impact is comparable across provinces, showing that the various modalities of implementation across provinces did not lead to different levels of access to employment.

Figure 4.1 - Employment of beneficiaries using new skills

One point is important to note: while both men and women describe comparable impacts from the YEP vocational training (improved job perspectives, skills, etc.), their starting points were most likely not the same. This translates into the improvement consisting of part-time jobs or self-employment for women (55%), and full-time jobs for men (39%), as shown in Figure 4.1. The duration of this employment remains a concern: 10% of beneficiaries report that they have earned money in the past but now no longer do. This varied by skill: anecdotally, bead sewing was one of the skills taught where this was more frequent (5 of 24 beneficiaries interviewed).



This tendency is reinforced by the types of skills taught to women, which are nearly all skills, which can be done at home (tailoring, embroidery, etc.), explaining the relatively high proportion of

women reporting that they have their own business. The distinction between owning a business, earning money directly and part-time or full-time work from the home is frequently difficult to make. This is an important aspect as self-employment, if better than nothing, does not represent a robust vector out of vulnerability. On the contrary, the NRVA classifies self-employment as one of its forms of vulnerable labour, perpetuating poverty.

The type of skills learned has an impact on the type of employment that beneficiaries may then access: electric wiring was the skill, which led to the highest level of full-time employment (56%). On the other hand, repairing of motorcycles and bicycles – admittedly with a small sample size - and bead sewing led to the lowest level of full-time employment (8 and 16% respectively). Even the full-time employment may be fragile: only 9% of YEP beneficiaries reported being employed in a salaried position.

Income

Few beneficiaries reported that they earned no money from their new skills; YEP is thus already more effective than many other vocational trainings. Women are even less likely than men to state that (12% vs. 22%).

Overall, only 30% of beneficiaries report that the training did not increase their household income. More than half of beneficiaries overall reported an increase in income as a result of vocational training, including approximately three quarters of beneficiaries in Herat and Nangarhar province. Beneficiaries in Herat and Nangarhar were most likely to also report household savings increase as a result of training.

Yet, the gendered impact of the YEP is also visible **in the amounts beneficiaries earned from their new skills**: 54% of female beneficiaries stated that they earn money between 0-1500 Afs per month; 31% earn between 1500 and 3000 Afs per month. For men, these figures decrease to 24% and 25%, respectively; 38% of men earn over 4500 Afs per month.

Indeed, the low amounts earned by beneficiaries, combined with the low percentage of women earning no money, would suggest that many women practice these skills on an occasional basis from the home, as illustrated by Table 4.2

Table 4.3 - Beneficiaries of vocational training in tailoring

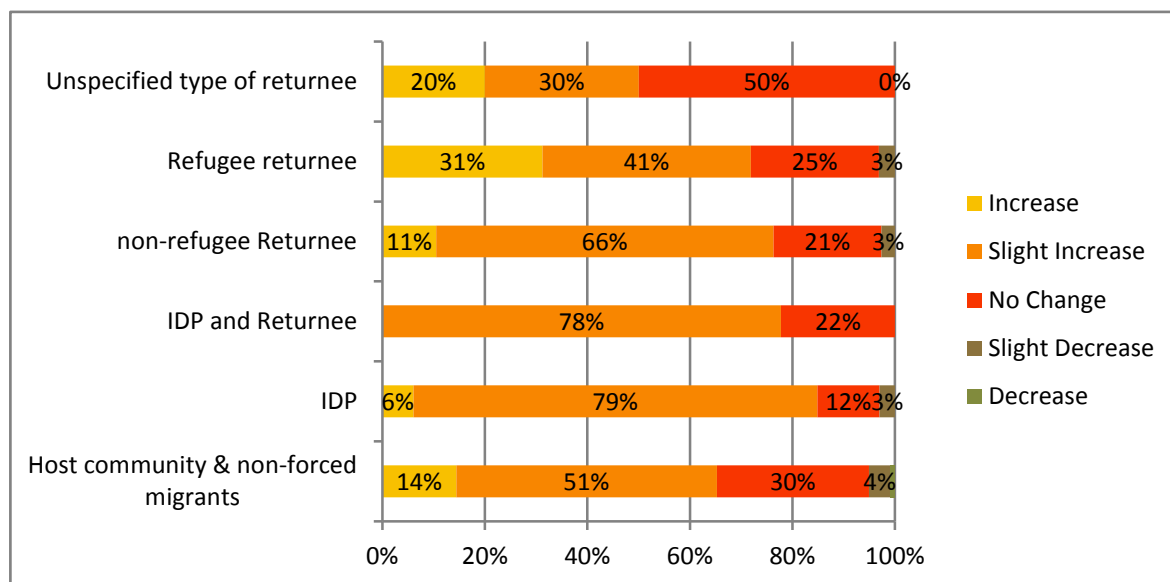
	Male	Female
Average hours worked per week in activity when it is considered job	45 hrs	17 hrs
Average hours worked per week in activity when it is considered income-generating activity	8.6 hrs	4.5 hrs
Average monthly income (Afs)	3214 Afs	1944 Afs
% employed full-time	38%	25%

While females are actually slightly more likely to be “employed” – that is to say, reporting that they are working as tailors either full or part time –, male beneficiaries on average work longer

hours, earn more money and are more likely to be employed full time. The impact of the YEP on livelihood is heavily gendered. Yet, given the structural and cultural constraints on women’s employment in the country, the impact of the YEP on women’s access to livelihood is already noticeable.

Migrant status was also a differentiator: IDPs were more likely to report some increase in income due to training than any other group (see Figure 4.2 below). IDPs were also the least likely group to report having not used their skills to earn money – only 6%, versus 16% overall. This suggests that IDPs may have been worse off to start in terms of ability to earn income – and once again highlights the importance of the correct identification of beneficiaries seeing the impact that the programme has on the most vulnerable. Given that the impact seems to be greater on IDPs, and that IDPs have recurrently been identified as the most vulnerable displaced group in Afghanistan, it will be a priority of NRC’s future YEP programming to target IDPs more heavily, especially in a context of increased internal displacement at a time of transition.

Figure 4.2 - Increase in income due to vocational training by migrant status



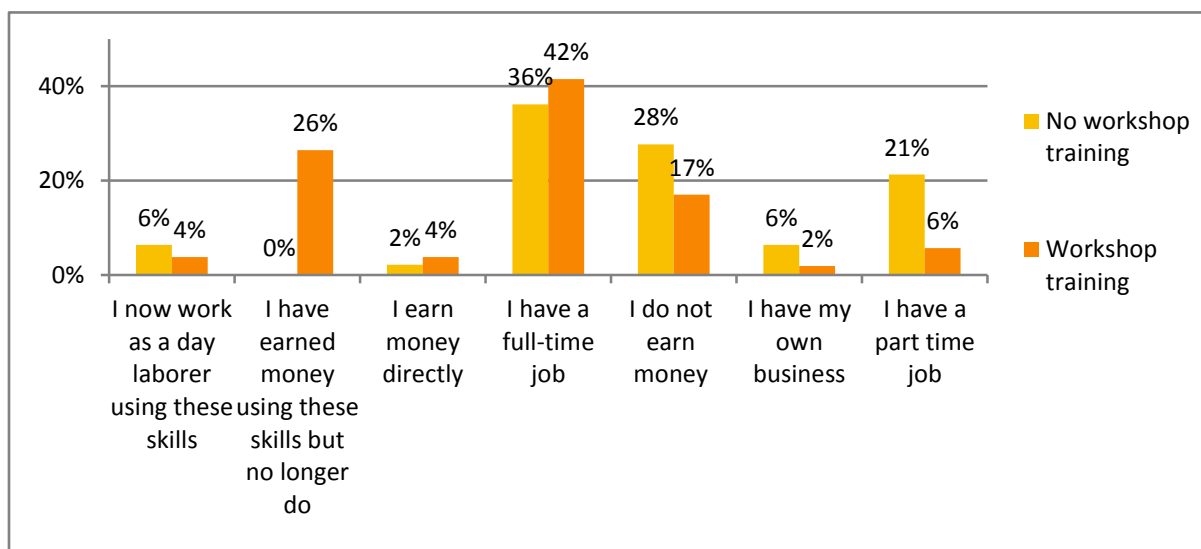
Limits of existing NRC efforts to link beneficiaries to labour markets

One of the primary challenges to beneficiaries in finding employment with their new skills is the lack of linkages to the labour market. NRC staff highlighted the workshop component of many trainings as a method to overcome this problem, helping beneficiaries to find jobs by giving them contacts in the local labour market. In actuality training in workshop had limited impact from an employment perspective (see **Figure 4.3** below).

This is not to say that the time spent in workshops does not have positive impacts. In Faryab, NRC staff underlined the fact that just being present in the market area made potential customers and/or employers aware of their skills.⁴⁷ Additionally, beneficiaries learn client management skills by being in the workshops and become more aware of how to run a business.

⁴⁷ Based on key informant interview with NRC staff in Faryab

Figure 4.3 – Male beneficiaries post-YEP use of skills: those who were in workshops vs. not



In Herat province, NRC staff organised several **market fairs** to sell products produced during training. Beneficiaries and village leaders as well as representatives from UN agencies and relevant government departments were invited to these fairs to see the types of products made. One beneficiary reported selling a set of bridal embroidery at one of these fairs for 17000 Afs.⁴⁸ Although these fairs did successfully provide an opportunity for beneficiaries to show off products made, they failed to provide long-term linkages to the market. No beneficiaries interviewed reported meeting regular distributors through these fairs. **From a long-term perspective, then, these market fairs are not useful; they fail to provide beneficiaries with a sustainable means of distributing products.**

Previous iterations of YEP abroad have included the creation of **working groups** post-training to encourage students to keep producing goods and facilitate their earning money through their skill. Research indicated that those formed into stricter cooperative models actually did not work as well as looser organisations: in these cases the structure had been imposed on beneficiaries, and was not necessarily adapted to its' members' needs.⁴⁹ No such issues were reported in Nangarhar and Faryab staff reported helping beneficiaries organise working groups. Beneficiaries of the same vocational training were helped by NRC to organise into groups to produce products to sell. **However, it appears that these were limited in impact for other reasons: no assistance was provided in linking working groups to the labour market in a sustainable way.**

In Faryab, NRC played a more active role in making these working groups successful: whenever possible, NRC would procure products for its other projects from these working groups. For example, in the case of emergency help will try to buy products from these working groups to donate to needy people.⁵⁰ Again, though, like the market fairs, this is not a sustainable solution to linking beneficiaries to the labour market: NRC would need to ensure that eventually other organisations, especially governmental ones, will purchase goods from these working groups for them to have a long term purpose.

⁴⁸ Based on key informant interview with NRC staff in Herat

⁴⁹ Ketel, Hermen, (2008) Youth Education Pack in Burundi, External Evaluation, p. 27.

⁵⁰ Based on key informant interview with NRC staff in Faryab

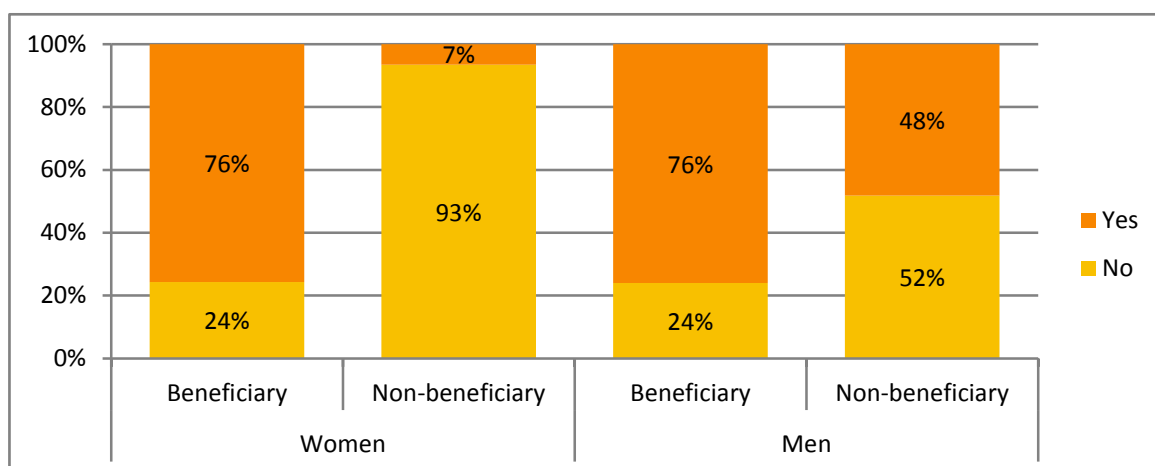
Youth employment: why it matters.

Why target youth with livelihood and employment-related assistance? Youth under 25 in Afghanistan show higher rates of unemployment than the population overall: 8.1% for men and 18.8% for women, versus 6.4% and 16.5%, respectively.⁵¹ Those who do have jobs are employed in fields with high levels of job insecurity and low quality of employment. With a well-documented over 700,000 youth graduating from secondary school each year, and the predicted shrinking of the services sector in Afghanistan after the international withdrawal in 2014, options for young people are limited. This problem is compounded for youth from returnee and IDP backgrounds.

Despite this, few programmes in Afghanistan are youth-based. YEP programming stands as a pilot for these; this evaluation demonstrates that it has a clear positive impact on youth employment and income. Figure 4.4 shows in particular that 76% of beneficiaries report earning money, versus 24% of non-beneficiaries. The difference is particularly striking for women, as 93% of female youth who did not participate in the programme do not report any personal income, confirming that the YEP is effective at building women’s ability to earn their own money.

This positive evaluation should be tempered with the fact that this improvement is from a very low start point meaning that access to income is not equivalent to exiting poverty. Still, the YEP provides an interesting platform for youth to develop means to access their own income and develop experience. Given the fact that the lack of experience is often cited as an obstacle for youth to access employment, the YEP does represent a first step in young people’s professional life.

Figure 0.4 - Do you earn money?



Finally, in considering ways in which programmes like YEP can improve youth employment and livelihoods, trainings should be considered not just from a money *earned* perspective but also from a

⁵¹ Central Statistics Office (2014), *NRVA Report 2013*, p. iii

money saved perspective. One beneficiary highlighted the additional positive impacts of tailoring training as follows: “My life has changed by the YEP: I am able to do tailoring now. I can make clothes for the people if they order, if not so, I can sew clothes for my household.” (Faryab male FGD). This underlines the support YEP provides to household resilience beyond income generation – and paves the way for recommendations to strengthen YEP programming by further solving emergency and chronic poverty through linkages to be made between income generation and resilience.

“The YEP programme has improved our behaviours with our households since we were involved with it. Unemployment itself is a tension and leads to disputes both in the households and in villages, but we are busy at our workshops now; we don’t bother anyone and we don’t have the time to do so. These are the changes that have happened in our lives. The other change is acquiring the skills of a profession, so we can find better jobs in the future.”

- Nangarhar, Male FGD respondent

Tokhali Khana training centre in Faryab



P rogramme evolution and linkages

The theory behind YEP programming relies on the synergy between the three components – literacy, vocational training and life skills. From a practical perspective, it is unclear the degree to which this was done. The difficulties in recruiting qualified teachers for certain vocational skills, particularly in rural areas, meant that NRC was limited in promoting literacy during skills training, as some teachers were reportedly illiterate.

Some authorities even claimed that fully separating the components would be better, and make logical arguments for this: “If [literacy and vocational training] are tied together, it will take too much time; daily vocational training is lessened when literacy and vocational training are taught together. Rather, beneficiaries should be taught literacy skills first, which will then improve vocational training”, said a representative from DoLSAmD.

Analysis of YEP programming would suggest that this is not the case. In Herat province where, this model was followed, and beneficiaries were much more likely to state that the programme would have been improved by longer training periods, and they were less likely to report full knowledge of a new skill.

NRC did link YEP programming to other NRC programmes, in particular ICLA (information, counselling and legal assistance programmes), to which beneficiaries were referred when they presented legal or documentation issues with which ICLA could help. Additionally, NRC strengthened the YEP programming with collaboration with both WFP and governmental entities.

Collaboration with the World Food Programme

The question of incentives was discussed in the previous section. Beyond the theoretical question of motivating individuals to participate, there is the practical issue posed by vocational training: participating in YEP programming may deny a household the income of someone either helping or crucial to its food security. While initial YEP programming had neither food nor cash incentives included, organisers were well aware of the challenges joining such a training posed. In all three provinces, NRC staff within the first months brought the World Food Programme in to supplement YEP programming. The help provided by the WFP varied from batch of beneficiaries and province involved – in some cases, beneficiaries received food basics for their families, such as flour, beans and oil, on a monthly basis. In Herat province, the second batch of beneficiaries received cash vouchers of 1750 Afs per month per beneficiary for food.⁵² This collaboration is clearly positive for beneficiaries. However, one point should be kept in mind: while for the first distributions of food from WFP, it would have been unexpected, in the case of latter batches, it may have contributed to distorting motives for participating in the YEP programme. NRC staff confirmed that while the first instance of distribution was unplanned, latter groups of beneficiaries would have expected it.⁵³

⁵² Based on key informant interview with NRC staff in Herat.

⁵³ Based on key informant interview with NRC staff in Kandahar.

Governmental affiliation

Previous sections have touched upon the certificates provide by the government to graduates of the YEP programming. Certificates were provided for the literacy and vocational skills components when beneficiaries passed final exams. Achieving this certification from the government is a success on the part of NRC, as other organisations have failed to do so.⁵⁴ That being said, **these certificates were provided at the provincial level.** Authorizing departments for NRC programming included the department of Education in Herat, Faryab and Nangarhar as well as DoLSAMD in Herat and the directorate of youth in both Nangarhar and Faryab.

From an implementation perspective, this certification process presented several challenges:

- ❖ NRC staff failed to apply for authorisation at the national level early enough to receive approval for these programmes.⁵⁵
- ❖ The departments issuing certification were not consistent across provinces; while in Herat, DoLSAMD was involved in addition to the DoE, in both Faryab and Nangarhar the Directorate of Youth was responsible for this. DoLSAMD in Nangarhar actually reported that they give no certification because they are not aware of these programmes, and the Directorate of youth in Nangahrar no longer signs certificates, suggesting deeper-seated issues between NRC and governmental entities in that province.
- ❖ In Herat province, some beneficiaries had yet to receive their certificates of completion from DoLSAMD/ NRC, and they did not just complain about it to researchers but stated that they had brought this up several times with NRC itself.

The practical impact of certificates, especially on employment, is unclear. However, to beneficiaries they are worth a lot. When asked to bring them to show to interviewers (to confirm graduation from YEP programme), the majority of beneficiaries showed certificates carefully protected in envelopes or even framed. It appears that similarly to graduation ceremonies, graduation certificates have a social role much greater than their actual practical role.

“Yes, we received the certificates of completion and it is valuable for acquiring a job.”

- Faryab, Male FGD

“We’ve received certificates of completion at the end of the programme, but don’t know whether it’ll be helpful in the future or not.”

- Nangarhar, Female FGD

⁵⁴ Based on key informant interview with CEDO staff in Kabul.

⁵⁵ Based on key informant interview with DoLSAMD staff in Herat.

M

onitoring and Evaluation

NRC's robust internal monitoring and evaluation structure for the YEP programming improved programme quality: a combination of student testing and lesson observation by NRC and the government served to identify problems in beneficiary selection and teaching on several occasions. The baseline information gathered by NRC in conjunction with this information allows for a better understanding of programme effects and beneficiary progress. However, progress remains to be made on two points:

- 1) The limited post-activity evaluation and follow-up
- 2) The nature of information gathered during the baseline programming

NRC monitoring

NRC staff in all three provinces reported regular visits to the field. The format for this seemed most structured in Herat, where one male and female officer went to the field every other day, and in the course of taking attendance sheet and transferring training materials would also speak with beneficiaries about teaching methods and principles with the trainer outside of the room⁵⁶ Staff were given checklists to fill out every 1-2 weeks evaluating the trainings. These checklists evaluate both the physical conditions of training as well as the teacher's style and effectiveness, and separate checklists were created for vocational and literacy evaluations.

Table 3.1 - Sample questions in Faryab monitoring checklists (yes/no response, with notes)

From the literacy training evaluation checklist

- The teacher smiles frequently and speaks in a friendly tone
- The teacher listens attentively to learners
- The teacher helps learners solve problems in a positive manner, without criticism
- Teachers relate lessons to practical topics and examples for the learners
- Teacher provides encouragement to the learners
- Learners spend more time in class doing things than they do waiting or listening to the teacher
- The room and area immediately outside is safe and clean
- The nearest latrine / toilet area is safe and clean
- The class begins and ends on time

These evaluations were on several instances used to fire ineffectual teachers proving that the monitoring was effective and had a direct impact on the quality of the training provided.

Student progress was noted via regular testing; scores on literacy and life skills testing were added to the beneficiary database. The beneficiary database included other information collected to

⁵⁶ Based on key informant interview with NRC staff in Herat; . This was confirmed in Faryab province by discussions with staff at one of the training centres, who reported visits from NRC staff twice a week.

evaluate whether or not they qualified for the programme: among others, legal status, desired trainings, household income, main source of income. **The existing baseline database should be modified as follows:**

- The “migration status” of beneficiaries is not elaborated upon; as discussed in previous sections, the terminology used here with regards to IDPs is broader than traditionally the case, and can be misleading in presenting results.
- The baseline database does not exist as such; the information is not kept as one document. Rather, it is kept at the provincial, and in some cases, project-level. In some instances, attempts have been made to put all provincial information on one sheet, but lines remain with only partially filled information. Colours have been used to note points about beneficiaries, but no key is provided. **The scattered and rough presentation of this information lessens its potential usefulness.**

Governmental monitoring

Additional monitoring was conducted by governmental departments in each province. **Governmental appreciations of the YEP programme varied by province.** In several cases this was attributed to character driven reasons limiting the collaboration between NRC and relevant departments. Problems were also caused by confusion about the departments’ role in the programme. Governmental collaboration and monitoring was most successful in Herat, where all departments spoken to underlined their role as monitors.

In Faryab, relations with the department of Education were quite positive but the local DoLSA complained about being completely out of the loop with regards to YEP, stating “We have never been invited to any of their sessions and graduation or for observation of the sites or selection of the beneficiaries.”⁵⁷ Relations with the department of Education were much more cordial; the head of the literacy department was so impressed with the project that he hired beneficiaries of the plumbing training to do work at his house.⁵⁸

In Herat, the departments of Education, Labour and Social Affairs, and Culture all had observers monitoring the YEP programme, and the general evaluation was quite positive. Although they did identify some problems, most prominently the “theoretical” problems of teachers, all highlighted NRC’s willingness to solve these problems as quickly as possible.

In **Nangarhar**, researchers spoke with staff at the directorate of Youth and the directorate of Education. Challenges stemmed from the more active role, which these wished to play in the programme, and lack of understanding around what was due from NRC. As often happens, departments complained that they were not given money to compensate for transportation for monitoring – when NRC is under no obligation to do so.⁵⁹ The Directorate of Youth similarly fulfilled its monitoring role while complaining about compensation – in this case, that they had not received goods used in vocational skills training upon completion of the project. The representative stated that in initial observations, they found training sites without any teachers or students, just the buildings, but these observations went uncorroborated by anyone else as being indicative of a problem.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Based on key informant interview with DoLSA staff in Faryab

⁵⁸ Based on key informant interview with DoE staff in Faryab

⁵⁹ Based on key informant interview with DoE staff in Faryab

⁶⁰ Based on key informant interview with DoE staff in Nangarhar

5. CHANGE

YEP impact on resilience and self-reliance

KEY FINDINGS

YEP beneficiaries were enthusiastic about the programme's impact: 53% rated the impact of the programming on their household as very positive, and another 45% rated it as positive. But how does YEP impact beneficiaries' lives, beyond the immediate employment and income impact?

Beyond the strict impact on income, this evaluation measured a positive impact of the YEP on beneficiary households' resilience. How to measure resilience has been the subject of much academic debate. This study follows the approach of the EU-FAO resilience tool, using indicators based on factors identified as contributing to household resilience: social safety nets, access to basic services, assets, income and food access, adaptive capacity, stability.⁶¹ It is necessary to understand how YEP has impacted resilience as returnees and IDPs, NRC's main target groups, along with the vulnerable local populations included, face increased difficulties with regards to resilience.⁶²

The study focuses in particular on income and food access, adaptive capacity and stability indicators as those are areas which YEP targets directly through its vocational, life skills and literacy trainings:

- *NRC literacy trainings have fairly consistently enabled beneficiaries, regardless of gender or province, to improve their literacy skills, hence consolidating their adaptive capacities.*
- *The life skills training has had a disproportionately (given the little class time allotted to it) large impact in helping NRC accomplish the third objective of its programming, helping beneficiaries develop as individuals and members of their societies. .*
- *Additionally, programming allowed for the socialization of women and improved beneficiaries' self-image and role in the community.*
- *Other indicators show slight positive effects of YEP programming on household resilience.*
 - *61% of beneficiaries report being self-reliant, i.e. able to meet basic household needs without borrowing money, vs. 37% of non-beneficiaries.*
 - *YEP participants are slightly less likely to note emergency assistance and shelter as a top household need than non-beneficiaries, and are more likely to mention job placement and business start up grant, showing that their households have reached a point of stability where they can think beyond immediate needs.*
 - *YEP beneficiaries are less likely to be in debt (67% vs. 74%) and their average debt is lower than non-beneficiaries. They are also less likely to be in debt for daily needs (47% vs. 57%)*

⁶¹ FAO/EU, Measuring Resilience: A Concept Note on the Resilience Tool, p. 2

⁶² Resilience in the context of internal displacement has been defined as "the ability of those – even the most vulnerable with the vulnerable [...] – to manage what are the reported changes and effects brought about by forced internal displacement – on economic wellbeing, social integration, and protection, and how they envision these effects in the longer term." Majidi and Hennion, p. 78

Beyond vocational skills: impact of literacy and life skills training

Literacy

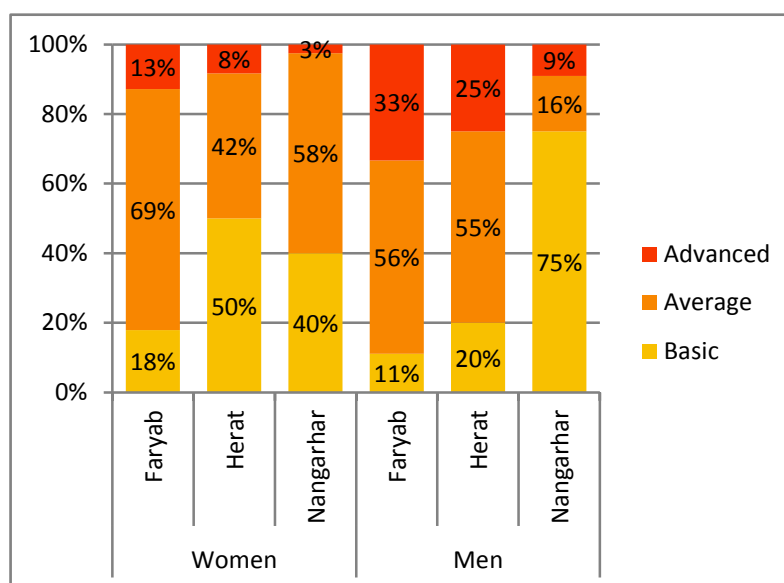
The impact of literacy training was measured on two fronts:

- *NRC's ability to enable trainees to reach a basic, grade 3 level of literacy and numeracy*
- *Beneficiaries' use of these new skills*

Two methods were used to evaluate beneficiaries' literacy skills: self-evaluation and a short test given by enumerators. Both of these suggested that women actually reached a higher level of literacy than the men taught – surprising as men tended to have a higher level of prior education.

Further investigation revealed that this was due to lower levels of literacy among men in Nangarhar province: 55% of men in Nangarhar were evaluated as having a poor knowledge of literacy, (vs. 15% in Herat and 31% in Faryab). However, this was not indicative of failure on the part of literacy training: rather, these beneficiaries began with a lower skill level. **NRC literacy training has fairly consistently enabled beneficiaries, regardless of gender or province, to improve their literacy skills.**

Figure 0.1 - Self-reported levels of literacy prior to NRC



Outside evaluations confirm this: representatives from the department of Education in the three provinces concerned, who had been monitoring the training, all praised the NRC training.

“During the training, we ask literacy and skill related questions from these students and see how much they have learned. Personally I didn't observe any major problems related to the projects and is a successful program as a whole.”

– Faryab Department of Education Staff

“Amazingly effective literacy wise and skill wise. Especially in terms of learning and teaching vocational skills which attracted most of the people and because of this, they also learned literacy.”

– Nangarhar Department of Education Staff

“In general the progress was good. Compared to other organisations we were very happy.”

– Herat Department of Education Staff

Not only have beneficiaries improved their literacy skills, but they report using them regularly. The most popular uses reported for literacy and numeracy skills are: to read signs (68%), to read books (56%), to make sure change is correct at the store (42%), to read the newspaper (33%), to help with household purchases (33%), and to write messages (27%). Beneficiaries in Herat and Nangarhar provinces are more likely to report using these skills for all reasons – possibly because of the presence of larger urban areas (Herat city and Jalalabad).

By increasing beneficiaries’ ability to manage household money and manage daily life without relying on others, the YEP programming is strengthening both beneficiaries’ self-reliance and household resilience. That being said, managing household money remains the domain of the household head regardless of beneficiary status (77% of beneficiary households and 72% of non-beneficiary households report the head of household as managing money, with just a slight increase, from 16 to 20%, of head of household spouses managing money after training).

Life skills

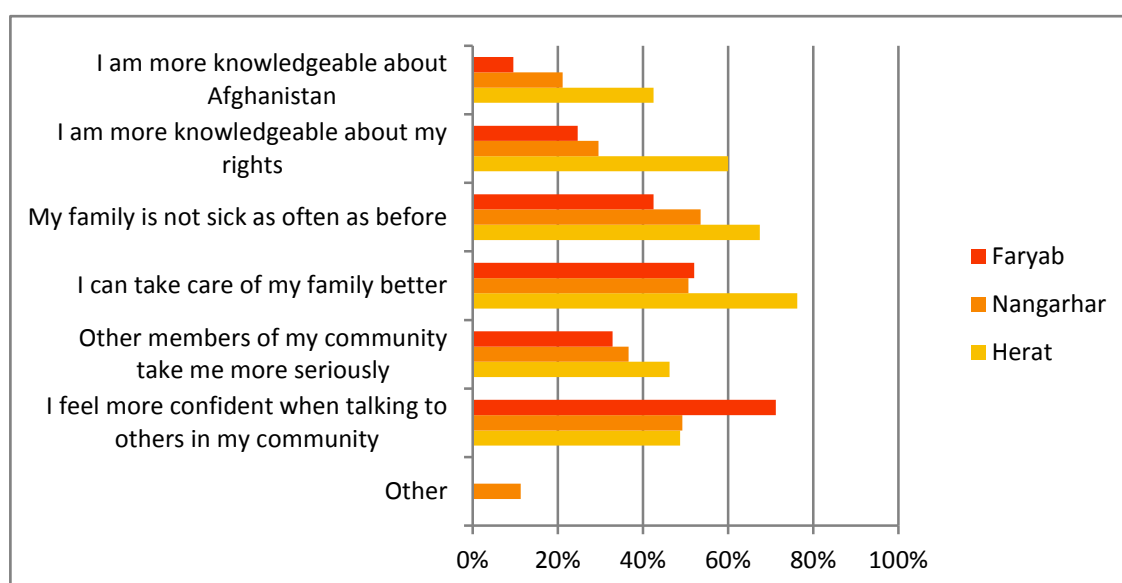
The impact of the life skills training can be quantifiably measured on two fronts:

- Understanding of the topics taught. Knowledge of basic hygiene and nutrition was specifically test in the quantitative survey.
- Self-reported improvement in quality of life due to life skills training

When compared to non-beneficiaries, YEP participants revealed better knowledge of basic nutrition and hygiene facts:

- Participants were slightly more aware of the importance of vegetables and balanced meals from a nutritional perspective (for example, when asked whether meat, meat and rice, meat and vegetables or meat, rice and vegetables form the healthiest meal, 6% of non-beneficiaries picked simply meat, vs. 1% of beneficiaries).
- Participants were slightly more aware of potential sources of illness – and none of them were not aware of any method through which disease can be caused (vs. 5% of non-beneficiaries).

Figure 5.2 - Ways in which life skills training has improved beneficiaries' lives



Nearly all beneficiaries reported improvement in their quality of life due to the life skills training; only one beneficiary said that it had not done so. Beneficiaries in Herat were most likely to note improvement on the metrics considered. **These life skills trainings translate to more than increased knowledge. Figure 5.2 highlights some of the “soft” ways in which the life skills training positively impacted the lives of beneficiaries.** These soft improvements were confirmed by the beneficiaries themselves, community leaders and NRC staff:

- Beneficiaries, by gaining in skills and employment, gain in respect and social capital within the community.
- Community knowledge around hygiene and nutrition improves as beneficiaries are encouraged to share the information they have learned – again positioning them in a more respected social position.

Women highlighted the fact that they could better take care of their children, and the clear advantages that knowing their one rights gave them.

“I am very happy from the YEP because not only I learned a profession, but have learned a good social behaviour by which I can hereafter help my family too.”

– Nangarhar, female FGD

“I can better take care of [my child] now.”

– Herat, female FGD

“I think the training of the life skills was more beneficial to me than acquiring a profession [...] these issues can help me in reaching my rights in my whole life.”

– Herat, female FGD

Men focused on their improved knowledge of hygiene as well as peace and conflict resolution in describing the impacts of the life skills training.

“The life skills have helped us in terms of household/ social life and hygiene. In terms of social life, we were taught to respect the rights of our parents, other elders and kids in the community. For hygiene, we were taught to prevent diseases by washing hands before eating and after using the toilets, not to use polluted water, to keep the toilets at least 20m from living rooms and to avoid insects.”

– Nangarhar, male FGD

“I was not aware of peace before the YEP; I did not know how to behave with the people around me.”

– Faryab, male FGD

“We were informed about human rights, for instance to act against oppressors and help the oppressed get their rights.”

– Nangarhar, male FGD

In conversations with researchers, community leaders also emphasized that the life skills training has helped beneficiaries find peaceful resolutions to conflicts with their families and others.

The life skills training has thus had a disproportionately (given the little class time allotted to it) large impact in helping NRC accomplish the third objective of its programming, helping beneficiaries develop as individuals and members of their societies.

M

Measuring success: YEP's impact on resilience and self-reliance

"I wish I could take the course a second time", stated one beneficiary in Ab Borda (Herat province), very enthusiastic about the project. There is no question that YEP beneficiaries were enthusiastic about the programme's impact: 53% of beneficiaries rated the impact of the programming on their household as very positive, and another 45% rated it as positive; no beneficiaries reported a negative overall impact of the programme on their household.

"It was a fantastic programme; I learned a lot from it."

"I did not face any problem for attending this programme."

- Female FGD, Hirat province

"The YEP is the best [...] its duration has to be extended because it has many helpful programmes, and we always want to be involved in such programmes."

- Male FGD, Nangarhar province

"We have the professions, the jobs and money as a result of our participation in the YEP."

- Male FGD, Faryab province

Community leaders were also satisfied about YEP's impact on the communities: 62% rated it as "positive", and the remainder as "very positive". Both qualitative and quantitative data confirm a very high level of satisfaction amongst beneficiaries and communities, a very positive output of NRC's project.

This satisfaction can be better understood by considering YEP's impact on resilience and self-reliance.

Resilience is an important outcome indicator of NRC YEP packaging in Afghanistan, as the primary specific outcome of the project was "to improve the resilience of refugee – returnees and IDP youth, especially women, in the target areas through literacy, life skills and sustainable livelihoods opportunities."⁶³ In the context of internal displacement, past research has considered resilience as the ability to manage the changes it brings about "on economic wellbeing, social integration, protection, and how they envision these effects in the long term."⁶⁴ Measuring the resilience of beneficiaries pre- and post-participation in YEP is part of the evaluation. Self-reliance is part of resilience, as it consists of "the social and economic ability of an individual, a household or a community to meet essential needs (including food, water, shelter, personal safety, health and

⁶³ See TOR for evaluation, p. 3

⁶⁴ Majidi, N., and Hennion, C. "Resilience in Displacement: Building the Potential of Afghan Displaced Women, Journal of Internal Displacement Volume 4 Number 1, p. 78

education) in a sustainable manner and with dignity – strengthening livelihoods of persons of concern and reducing their vulnerability and long-term reliance on humanitarian assistance.”⁶⁵

Despite the focus on “resilience” in humanitarian and development programming around the world, major stakeholders do not agree on one method to measure it. The current research uses metrics based on the FAO-EU resilience tool, considering indicators based on factors identified as contributing to the resilience of households: social safety nets, access to basic services, assets, income and food access, adaptive capacity, stability.⁶⁶

As Table 0.1 below shows, **YEP beneficiary households are, on a variety of metrics, more resilient than non-beneficiary households**, but the difference is slight, especially on metrics related to income. This highlights once again the need for a stronger link to the labour market as part of the YEP programming, to allow beneficiaries to gain the full benefits of their trainings.

- 61% of beneficiaries report being self-reliant, i.e. able to meet basic household needs without borrowing money, vs. 37% of non-beneficiaries.
- YEP participants are slightly less likely to note things like emergency assistance and shelter as a top household need than non-beneficiaries, and are more likely to mention job placement and business start up grant, showing that their households have reached a point of stability where they can think beyond immediate needs.
- Beneficiaries are slightly less likely to report coping mechanisms in the case of the loss of primary income such as putting children to work (8% vs. 12%), selling household assets (29% vs. 36%), and more likely to rely on such techniques as sending a household member abroad to work (12% vs. 7%).
- YEP beneficiaries are less likely to be in debt (67% vs. 74%) and their average debt is lower than non-beneficiaries. They are also less likely to be in debt for daily needs (47% vs. 57%)

Table 0.1 – Measuring resilience and self-reliance among beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of YEP programming

Indicator	Non-beneficiaries	Beneficiaries
% of households with debt	74%	67%
Average debt size	86,266 Afs	77,884Afs
% of households able to meet basic needs	37%	61%
Top three needs (% citing)		
<i>Emergency assistance</i>	41%	36%
<i>Shelter/housing</i>	44%	38%
<i>Financial support</i>	70%	61%
Level of literacy of head of household	Long-term effect of YEP: when beneficiaries become head of household	
Access to education of children	NRC staff, community leaders and beneficiaries reported that training increased the likelihood of children in their household going to school.	

⁶⁵ UNHCR, (2005) *Handbook for Self-Reliance, Glossary*, <http://www.unhcr.org/44bf3fc52.html>, p.7

⁶⁶ FAO/EU, *Measuring Resilience: A Concept Note on the Resilience Tool*, p. 2

Sections 4 and 5 have showed that the YEP programming is successful in impacting not only access to job and employment but also the overall level of resilience of beneficiary households. This is linked to the particular modalities of YEP programming, including the successful combination of its three components – vocational, literacy and life skills – which develop beneficiaries’ adaptive capacities and social capital at the same time as they address the question of income-generation. This broad package is successful in bringing change to beneficiaries’ lives, an outcome difficult to achieve in the current socio-economic conditions characterizing the country. Still, linkages to the labour market could be strengthened to guarantee that the impact of the YEP on income means a real step out of vulnerability, for men and for women. These will be further elaborated on in the recommendations section.

Evaluating YEP on the OECD – DAC criteria

RELEVANCE

How relevant are YEP target populations?

- Focus in the field has been on vulnerability more than migration status. As a result some flexibility around guidelines was allowed, particularly for women; they were more likely to be outside the target age group. Men were overall side-lined and should be mainstreamed through tailored programming for male youth.
- Research found assessment of migration status was insufficient. In particular, those identified as IDP included cases of economic migration. Host community was overrepresented compared to original project guidelines. IDPs should be prioritized in future selection rounds especially given the positive impact of YEP on IDPs.
- Overall 5 criteria should direct NRC's programming: displacement/migration status, age, gender balance, economic and educational levels of vulnerability. These should be at the core of a strong strategic document outlining future YEP strategy.

How relevant are the skills taught in YEP?

- Target populations are lacking in vocational and literacy skills prior to training; given the difficult labour market context it is relevant that they learn these.
- Skills taught are those desired by beneficiaries

How relevant is this assistance for IDPs and Returnees?

Highly relevant, as access to livelihood is one of the primary needs of IDPs in particular and of the host community in general.

EFFICIENCY

How efficiently have project resources been used?

Selection processes

- The beneficiary selection process was successful in identifying beneficiaries whom community members, NRC staff and government representatives all agreed were deserving of help; however, this beneficiary selection was less successful in identifying beneficiaries according to guidelines.
- The selection process for skills was successful in identifying skills for which there were opportunities in the local labour market, and accepted by local communities.
- The selection process for skills does not go far enough: labour market surveys were not designed to identify new skills and opportunities in concerned areas.

Programme structure

- The length of the training and workshop components (where applicable) are enough ensure a strong skills knowledge, certified by departmental ministries.
- Childcare, while popular, was insufficient to meet needs of beneficiaries, and thus may have prevented potential beneficiaries more in need of it from participating in programme.
- Toolkit selection and distribution
- Toolkits were a clear positive: more extensive than in other projects, and reliably handed out, only 5% of beneficiaries reported not using them.

M&E structure and implementation

- Governmental collaboration was generally very positive from a monitoring and evaluation perspective.
- Existing NRC M&E enabled the identification and firing of several ineffectual teachers.
- From a project evaluation perspective, the current M&E structure is overly fragmented and lacking in coherence.
-

EFFECTIVENESS

Did NRC achieve overall project objectives?

- Beneficiaries successfully acquired basic vocational and literacy skills

Were there challenges in doing so?

- NRC was forced to compromise between trainer preparedness and effectiveness and trainer acceptability to the community and ability to teach: favouring local teachers for pragmatic reasons, while most probably unavoidable, had a negative impact on teaching quality and limited the skills offered.
- Non-centre based structure in Herat limited the community impact intended by these

IMPACT

What were the effects of the YEP intervention?

YEP beneficiaries rated the programme quite highly: 53% of beneficiaries rated the impact of the programming on their household as very positive, and another 45% rated it as positive. Additionally, programming allowed for the socialization of women and improved beneficiaries' self-image and role in the community.

More specifically:

- **Vocational trainings** enabled approximately half of beneficiaries to acquire full knowledge of a new skill, and nearly all of the rest to receive partial knowledge of a new skill. Compared to other similar project, higher rates of beneficiaries report earning money with their new skills. The modalities of the impact are very much gender dependent: women tend to use their new skills working from home or in part-time employment, and, as a result, earn on average half as much as men using their new skills.
- **NRC literacy trainings** have fairly consistently enabled beneficiaries, regardless of gender or province, to improve their literacy skills.
- **The life skills training** has a disproportionately (given the limited class time allotted to it) large impact on beneficiaries. They report using the practical components (hygiene, nutrition) to take care of their families, and community leaders noted the use of conflict resolution and awareness of rights in interpersonal relationships.

In terms of secondary effects, programming enabled socialization of women and improved beneficiaries' self-image and role in the community.

SUSTAINABILITY

How sustainable are YEP results?

- **YEP programming has an initially positive impact on household resiliency.** 61% of beneficiaries report being able to meet household needs without borrowing money, vs. 37% of non-beneficiaries.
- **Long-term impact of programming** is hindered by the lack of follow-up to training, especially the limited linkages to the labour market enabled by NRC and beneficiary need for financial support to practice skills.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Few programmes in Afghanistan are youth-based. YEP programming stands as a pilot for these; this evaluation demonstrates that it has a clear positive impact on youth employment and income. 76% of beneficiaries report earning money, versus 24% of non-beneficiaries. This evaluation found that the YEP programming had significant social and financial impact, particularly on women, a positive outcome given the difficulties that livelihood programmes usually face in the country. Beneficiaries and stakeholders did not hold back on praise for both the training and NRC and quantitative analysis confirmed a real impact on access to income-generating activities.

YEP was successful in building the resilience of beneficiary households, thanks to a good balance between the three components of the programme. While the general structure of the programming is well-adapted to the Afghan situation, future iterations should refine selection criteria and processes across provinces for both beneficiaries and skills, improve trainer capacities, and strengthen monitoring and evaluation tools. Additional research is required to better understand the existing labour market situation and develop ways to broaden post-training opportunities.

Finally, in considering ways in which programmes like YEP can improve youth employment and livelihoods, trainings should be considered not just from a money *earned* perspective but also from a money *saved* perspective. One beneficiary highlighted the additional positive impacts of tailoring training as follows: “My life has changed by the YEP programme: I am able to do tailoring now. I can make clothes for the people if they order, if not so, I can sew clothes for my household.” (Faryab male FGD). This underlines the support YEP provides to household resilience beyond income generation – and paves the way for recommendations to strengthen YEP programming by further solving emergency and chronic poverty through linkages between income generation and resilience.

In a context of general hardship, YEP has shown both its acute relevance – tackling what is perhaps one of the most challenging issues that the Afghan society will have to address, that of youth unemployment – and the efficacy of its modalities as the YEP does bring a measurable impact on the income, level of employment and resilience of the displaced youth in Afghanistan. This is particularly interesting given the context of on-going national youth policy and strategies development by the Government of Afghanistan and its international partners.

Yet, areas of improvement exist – as outlined in our recommendations. To summarize these:

- 1) Selection:** An organisation like NRC, focused on the needs of the displaced, should re-assess how it identifies and selects beneficiaries through YEP according to 5 criteria:
 - a. Migration profile
 - b. Age
 - c. Gender balance
 - d. Socio-economic vulnerability
 - e. Educational vulnerability

- 2) **Create stronger partnerships** with local government, local NGOs and WFP
- 3) **Strengthen its monitoring and evaluation system** beyond the current M&E set-up
- 4) **Provide a clear strategic orientation through a YEP program document clearly outlining objectives overall and per region**, to better measure outcomes through a mid-line and end-line process, using the current evaluation as a baseline to track progress.

Selection & Defining target populations

The evaluation found clear differences between provinces in both the **theoretical** and **actual** target populations included in the YEP programming. Of most concern is the fact that some beneficiaries were incorrectly identified as IDPs in NRC databases when in fact they were economic migrants. **That being said, the population selected for the programme consistently fulfilled vulnerability criteria and were recognized by other community members as deserving help.** Indeed, the majority of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries agreed that the selection process was fair (97% and 72%, respectively). NRC is thus faced with two issues:

- How to make sure staff identify potential beneficiaries correctly in the field?
- What the criteria in selecting beneficiaries should be: should the focus be on refugees and IDPs, in keeping with the NRC mandate, or broadened to include vulnerable non-displaced peoples specifically given a) NRC's success in helping them and b) the highly vulnerable economic situation of many Afghans?

Implementation challenges

While overall implementation went smoothly, two significant challenges were identified:

- Trainer preparedness
- Selection of vocational skills

NRC was forced to compromise between quality and availability in selecting vocational skills trainers. As cultural constraints in most locales, particularly rural, impose the choice of trainers from the local community, the selection pool is limited in terms of experience and training. This can have a significant impact on project quality and success. This is reflected in the fact that only half beneficiaries reported gaining a full knowledge of their skills.

Additionally, it can limit opportunities on another front: the breadth of vocational skills offered, as those trainings offered will necessarily reflect skills already present in the local community. Given the current state of the Afghan labour market – increasingly fragmented and threatened by the departure of the international community and uncertain security conditions – opportunities are limited even for those with skills. Relying on demand as reported by community members and local enterprises does not take into account new skills which could be introduced to the local market.

Positive impact on beneficiaries' lives

Overall, nearly all beneficiaries reported gaining partial (43%) to full (50%) knowledge of a new vocational skill. Most (70%) reported positive impact on their household income, and half also reported an increase in household savings. Whilst the first outcome is usually achieved to a various degree by vocational training implemented in the country, the second is more rarely achieved and

suggests that NRC's implementation modalities are successful. Beneficiaries reached a basic level of literacy and numeracy now used to read street signs (68%), books (56%), make sure change is correct (42%) and more. Literacy is considered to be a crucial aspect impacting food security and resilience and the YEP proves successful in transferring these skills to beneficiaries. Only 16% of beneficiaries state that they have never used these new skills to earn money. Beneficiaries demonstrated good knowledge of basic hygiene and nutrition; these types of training were frequently evoked by both beneficiaries and community leaders as having been integrated into their day-to-day lives, as were training sessions around human rights and conflict resolution. Comparisons to non-beneficiaries show that YEP beneficiaries are better positioned for the future in terms of resilience and self-reliance, as the YEP is able to consolidate their social capital and adaptive capacities.

Taking a long-term approach

NRC's interaction with beneficiaries should not end with end of training if progress is to be sustainable. From the start, a long-term approach should be taken to the YEP and any other similar programming. Currently, this is limited by lack of NRC interaction with beneficiaries after the training ends. Beneficiaries do not always know how to approach finding a job, and women in particular are limited in how they can put their new skills to use.

NRC has a responsibility to improve linkages to the job market, whether through job creation, helping beneficiaries find existing opportunities, or helping beneficiaries find intermediaries to bring their products to market. Without this, while the secondary impacts discussed above will still be present, from a **livelihoods** perspective, the project will not have sustainable effects.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the evaluation above, recommendations are provided to strengthen future iterations of YEP programming in Afghanistan, along the five OECD-DAC evaluation criteria - relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

Figure 6.1 - Recommendations for improvement of NRC's YEP Programming

Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adopt clear beneficiary selection criteria and procedures to reach populations included in NRC's mandate and improve the integration of IDPs in the project.• Take more innovative approach to vocational skills selection
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a centralized, standardized M&E structure across provinces, including a general database
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve selection and capacity of vocational trainers• Develop clear YEP programme strategy document
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reinforce mechanisms to bring together beneficiaries and employment opportunities• Link beneficiaries to organisations which can provide loans for business development
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set up partnerships strategy with other NGOs / IOs• Improve coordination with government• Create structures to help women market products

A 10-POINT RECOMMENDATIONS PLAN:

- 1. Adopt clear beneficiary selection criteria: 5 core selection criteria**
- 2. Expand the skills offered**
- 3. Create a centralized M&E structure**
- 4. Strengthen training of trainers (ToT)**
- 5. Strengthen mechanisms to link beneficiaries with employment opportunities**
- 6. Create structures to help women market products**
- 7. Link beneficiaries with organization that can provide loans under favourable conditions**
- 8. Set-up a partnership strategy with non-governmental organisations**
- 9. Improve coordination with government**
- 10. Develop a clear YEP programme strategy document summarizing the key guidelines, objectives, resources and provincial specificities of the programme for better communication internally and externally**

1. ADOPT CLEAR BENEFICIARY SELECTION CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES TO REACH TARGET POPULATIONS

Selection: An organisation like NRC, focused on the needs of the displaced, should use 5 guiding criteria to select beneficiaries, as listed below:

- a. **Migration profile**
- b. **Age**
- c. **Gender balance**
- d. **Socio-economic vulnerability**
- e. **Educational vulnerability**

Some of these criteria are here further detailed to highlight the stakes involved.

Criteria 1. Focus on targeting Migration and Displacement profile. The main weakness of the selection process is the inability to identify IDPs in a reliable manner. **Migrant status was also a differentiator: IDPs were more likely to report some increase in income due to training than any other group.** IDPs were the least likely group to report having not used their skills to earn money – only 6%, versus 16% overall. This suggests that IDPs may have been worse off to start in terms of ability to earn income – and highlights the importance of the correct identification of beneficiaries seeing the impact that the programme has on the most vulnerable. Given that the impact seems to be greater on IDPs, and that IDPs have recurrently been identified as the most vulnerable displaced group in Afghanistan, it will be a priority of NRC's future YEP programming to target IDPs more heavily, especially in a context of increased internal displacement at a time of transition.

Currently, although NRC staff demonstrated good knowledge of beneficiary selection criteria as detailed in project proposals, in actuality vulnerability was the key deciding factor. This dichotomy was due to a lack of clear indicators to select beneficiaries on the ground. The primary criterion, based on NRC's mission, should be to target returnees and IDPs; host community members should be included only insofar as necessary to keep good relations with communities where programming is ongoing.

Therefore, clear procedures should be put in place to accurately identify returnees and IDPs. Generally, potential beneficiaries do not have documents proving their status (except for VRF forms). As a result, NRC staff involved in beneficiary selection should be given thorough training on the definitions and identification of IDPs and returnees, and provided with specific questions to ask beneficiaries which will allow them to identify these. This will avoid relying on community leaders who may bend the truth to increase aid to their community.

These questions should not be solely based on self-identification, as many will not understand terms such as IDP and returnee. Instead, they should consist of an easy-to-answer sequence of questions that will allow NRC staff to evaluate whether or not potential beneficiaries fit the target group, and record exactly their actual migrant status.

Table 6.1 - Sample questions to identify targeted beneficiaries

To determine...	Question to ask
<i>If interviewee is a returnee</i>	Have you ever lived abroad?
<i>If interviewee is a refugee returnee</i>	Did you have a refugee card when you lived abroad (e.g. amayesh card in Iran, POR card in Pakistan)? Why did you originally move abroad?
<i>If interviewee has been displaced</i>	Is this your community of origin?
<i>If interviewee is an IDP</i>	Why did you leave your place of origin? (if due to conflict, natural disasters, man-made disasters or a combination of the above, IDP. Else, including for economic reasons, NOT IDP) – Rank answers by order of importance
To determine...	Cross-checking Individual Statements
<i>If interviewee is a returnee</i>	VRF Form
<i>If interviewee is a refugee returnee</i>	VRF Form, Amayesh card, POR card
<i>If interviewee has been displaced/IDP</i>	Documentation from the Place of Origin: tradition land deed, traditional marriage certificate, contact number of community leaders in the place of origin

In order to increase relevance, the evaluation team also recommends for NRC to distinguish between refugee returnees and undocumented returnees in their selection process, as the latter group present higher levels of vulnerability and could be targeted specifically.

Criteria 2. Providing a Gender balance. Male youth are important actors of the integration and reintegration process of their households but a missed out category in current YEP implementation.

Given that women outnumber men in YEP selection currently, it can be inferred that the overall impact of vocational training is below its full potential: women working part-time or from home limit their ability to contribute to the household’s well-being and can contribute to perpetuating cycles of poverty.

The lack of male beneficiary coverage – a problem particularly acute in Herat – is not because women were favoured over men in the selection process, but rather due to the difficulty to recruit men for economic reasons in Herat. To address this gap, future NRC YEP programming should include:

- 1) A survey of the ‘tipping point’ whereby men would accept to enrol in a vocational skill programme rather than be dedicated primarily to an income earning activity
- 2) A systematic on-the-job component as a key incentive to attract male displaced youth, to be complemented with classroom training, literacy and skills training
- 3) A parallel “training for daily workers” that would be tailored to a part-time vocational training during the non-working days (2 days per week for income earning youth) to help them transition out of their current casual and insecure jobs to learning a new skill for future employment prospects.

Criteria 5. Targeting educational vulnerability. Future iterations of the YEP programme in Afghanistan thus should:

- 1) **Map potential beneficiary's educational past.** An “educational vulnerability mapping” will be required as part of the selection criteria – adding educational vulnerability, alongside age, gender and displacement profile, and socio-economic vulnerability to the key selection criteria of YEP. As displaced youth often highlight security and education as their two key priorities – across the world – in Afghanistan, YEP programmes should target the missed education opportunities of the displaced. However, to know how to target this ‘missed education opportunity’, NRC first needs to evaluate and rank the extent of their literacy, or illiteracy as a first step, to organize beneficiaries according to their educational past.
- 2) **Decide whether or not to include otherwise worthy, but not completely illiterate students.** If the latter, steps will have to be taken to deal with the abovementioned problems, and NRC can learn from other organisations’ work. For example, CEDO separates beneficiaries into two groups for literacy based on their skill level. This allows more advanced students to reach a higher literacy and numeracy skill level, which is advantageous from a business perspective.⁶⁷ This good practice could be taken upon by NRC across provinces.

2. EXPAND THE SKILLS OFFERED TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE LOCAL LABOUR MARKET

Broader scope of skills offered. The current structure to evaluate local labour market has successfully identified needs in existing skills in targeted communities. NRC needs to conduct broader labour market assessments, which identify new sectors of activity to introduce to targeted communities. This will:

- Allow NRC to continue to help out vulnerable communities without over saturating the labour market with beneficiaries of the same skills training,
- Help counteract the limitations in opportunities caused by the current fragmentation of the Afghan labour market due to security concerns,
- Increase beneficiaries’ opportunities post-training.

These skills need not be limited to the mechanical and manufacturing. In more rural communities, NRC should consider agricultural trainings.

To avoid going against community and beneficiary desires, NRC could devote a small portion of each project to these new, niche skills, and reserve the rest for traditional opportunities.

Push for technological innovation in skills offered. With regards to existing skills, NRC should introduce technological advances where possible; other organisations have had success with this in the past. For example, HELP brought in trainers from abroad to introduce new techniques in car repair)⁶⁸ The YEP programming offers a valuable opportunity for NRC to generate technological advances in Afghanistan.

⁶⁷ Based on key informant interview with CEDO staff in Kabul.

⁶⁸ Based on key informant interview with senior expert on labour markets in Afghanistan

3. CREATE A CENTRALIZED M&E STRUCTURE AND DATABASE ACROSS PROVINCES

Monitoring and evaluation of YEP programming has been primarily conducted at the provincial level and this evaluation found the system in place robust and reactive. Yet, more could be done to collect comparable and reliable data across YEP projects, allowing for internal assessments and comparisons of the various implementation modalities. We recommend the development of standardized tools to do this and a centralized database to keep all this information together. The centralized database will allow for easier evaluation of the YEP programming over the course of the project. Additionally, it will provide valuable insights on the impact and effectiveness of current programming and potential areas for improvement.

This database should expand on the current baseline component, and include the migration information discussed in the beneficiary selection process as well as socio-economic information about the beneficiaries and not just their households.

In addition to the programme **outputs**, which are currently tracked via regular testing, these tools should measure programme **outcomes**. Tracking not just knowledge but beneficiaries' use of the new skills will enable NRC to evaluate which training modalities have the greatest impact on beneficiaries, and strengthen YEP programming by promoting best practices. Innovative monitoring techniques can be implemented to strengthen this component of the project: for example, training sessions can be regularly filmed for NRC regional offices to check attendance, quality of the teaching and pedagogical methods.

Post-training monitoring can be improved through the establishment of mobile-based quarterly assessment. Through a partnership with one of the 4 mobile networks operators (preferable Roshan or Etisalat), NRC can implement regular sms-based surveys with beneficiaries, which would allow the organisation to get data on the impact of the YEP and the state of the labour market in real time. Beneficiaries should be incentivised and earn free mobile credit if they answer the survey.

Table 6.2 - Suggested topics to add to baseline and continual evaluation

Database	Information to gather
<i>Baseline</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migrant status • Reason for any displacement/ migration • Time spent at current location • Beneficiary income
<i>Longitudinal Evaluation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of nutrition training in daily life • Use of hygiene training in daily life • Frequency of reading (signs; newspapers; books) • Use of numeracy skills for household expenditure • How was resolved most recent conflict • Role in the community
<i>Post Training monitoring</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarterly mobile-based assessment of access to job and field of employment • Quarterly mobile-based assessment of beneficiaries' income and household income

4. PROVIDE ADDITIONAL TRAINING TO TRAINERS PRIOR TO START OF PROGRAMME

The constraints around trainer selection are such that in some cases NRC is forced to compromise quality for availability. To minimize the negative effects of this NRC should expand the short teacher training provided to vocational skills trainers. This training should include:

- **Instructions on pedagogical methods.** Trainers are selected because of their skills knowledge and location, not because they have learnt how to teach. They should be introduced to basic pedagogical methods to make training sessions more effective.
- **Overview of the key points of the curriculum for their skill.** This will ensure consistency in material presented to beneficiaries
- **Introduction to new techniques.** This provides an opportunity to spread technological advances via local trainers, and improve the livelihoods of the trainers themselves.

Note that this training should be given not just to classroom trainers but also to the owners of workshops when a workshop component is included – it is equally important that they be able to teach effectively and not just use trainees for labour. Integrating workshop owners in the pedagogical training would also increase the impact of the project at the community level.

5. REINFORCE MECHANISMS TO LINK BENEFICIARIES AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

A key weakness in YEP programming is in helping beneficiaries use the skills they have successfully learnt to earn money. Women, given the cultural context, find it especially difficult to do so. Existing attempts to link beneficiaries and labour markets have not been systematized. This process should begin even prior to the start of the vocational training programme, from the proposal writing phase: at each step of the process, the main objective of improving livelihoods should be considered.

- **Initial labour market analysis should include a mapping exercise of potential workshops, factories and employers, along with contact details and their willingness to take apprentices, as those workshops where beneficiaries are apprenticed will most likely not have the capacity to absorb all beneficiaries.**
- **In selecting workshops where beneficiaries are placed, their willingness to hire beneficiaries after the training should be taken into account.** Previous research has highlighted the role personal relationships play in helping people find jobs in Afghanistan.⁶⁹ IDPs and returnees, by virtue of their displacement, are more likely to be cut off from these networks, making it more difficult to find employment. Time spent learning in a workshop will prove their skills to the owners looking for employees and help compensate for the lack of personal relationships.
- **Each province should include job placement in the TOR of field staff.** This person (or persons) should do the following:
 - **Prior to the training** - Local labour market assessment and the selection of skills should be used to develop a database of potential employers
 - **During training** – Staff should keep database updated and monitor needs evolution
 - **After completion of the training** - Reach out to potential employers and give them information about YEP beneficiaries, as well as help beneficiaries in finding jobs.

⁶⁹ Samuel Hall Consulting / DRC (2013), Designing Livelihood Programmes for Displaced Populations in Urban Settings in Afghanistan: Labour Market Assessment in Kabul, Jalalabad, Herat, and Kandahar

6. CREATE STRUCTURES TO HELP WOMEN MARKET PRODUCTS

For cultural reasons, female beneficiaries are limited in the employment opportunities available to them as a result of their training. While they are primarily taught skills which can be done at home (tailoring, embroidery, bead-work, etc.), no provision is made to help them exercise this skill in the long-run beyond providing them with toolkits.

NRC should not only help link female beneficiaries to opportunities in the local market as described above, but also help them establish working groups or cooperatives allowing them to sell products. Steps have already been taken in this direction, as the formation of working groups has been encouraged in both Nangarhar and Faryab provinces. **NRC can systematically help interested beneficiaries form these groups, and teach them how to use their groups to market their products.** This should include help to find middle-men who can play the commercial role linking women to the market and explaining what a fair commission structure would be for such help. The terms of the any agreements with middle-men should be closely reviewed by NRC and monitored throughout time to avoid any misuse of the system. Cooperatives in general imply a longer-term commitment on the part of NRC: to ensure their success NRC will have to include follow-up for them in proposals.

7. LINK BENEFICIARIES TO ORGANISATIONS WITH LOANS FOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT UNDER FAVOURABLE CONDITIONS

Based on Samuel Hall's evaluation on vocational trainings for Solidarités, "Financial and non-financial support to trainees who would like to establish a business of their own is crucial."⁷⁰ This report cited evaluations by the Agence Française de Développement that stated that the greatest element to ensure success is "the provision of financial and material support at the end of training, without which it is difficult, if not impossible, to ensure that people obtain work, and, above all, keep it."⁷¹

NRC does this to a certain extent through the provision of good quality tool kits, which represent one of the main expenditure for potential small entrepreneurs. The organisation may not have the budget to provide more financial and non-financial support directly. While traditional methods of financing (both formal and informal) mean that beneficiaries are not without means of borrowing money, they may not be able to do so under conditions favourable to business creation. Therefore, we suggest that, as recommended to Solidarités, NRC partner with micro-finance institutions or banks **to enable beneficiaries to access credit at favourable terms.** These partnerships could be further extended to encourage savings and loans to beneficiary working groups in cases where they would not be eligible for credit on their own. Such a relationship would also prove beneficial to the micro-finance institutions, which otherwise may not be able to reach these potential customers.

Two caveats to keep in mind:

- Potential partners should be carefully vetted to make sure that they offer fair conditions to beneficiaries. Pushing beneficiaries into a cycle of debt contradicts the essence of YEP.
- Before NRC suggests beneficiaries to partner institutions, they should receive extended business management training. The most promising students should be offered the financial support and additional business training to avoid pushing beneficiaries into problems.

⁷⁰ Samuel Hall Consulting / Solidarités International (2012), *Sustaining the Working Poor*, op. cit., p. 56.

⁷¹ Walther (2007) as cited in SH Solidarités report, p. 56

8. PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY: COORDINATE WITH OTHER NGOS / INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

NRC needs to develop a **partnership strategy** at two levels: local NGOs and national/international NGOs and international organisations.

At the local level: the YEP resource kit highlights that, globally, NRC is supposed to rely on local actors for much of the implementation of the programming, from training to running the YEP centres.⁷² However, barring a partnership for some of the literacy training in Faryab, the YEP remains almost exclusively implemented directly by NRC. Partnerships with local NGOs would allow NRC to improve YEP implementation on several fronts:

- Leveraging partners with local knowledge will help select teachers with the right technical skills and who are accepted by the community.
- Given the increasingly insecure context of activities in Afghanistan, partnering with local NGOs is important to allow for implementation of activities where NRC cannot go.
- The long-term goal of these partnerships will be to build the capacity of local actors such that, eventually, NRC will not be necessary for successful implementation of similar projects.

At the national / international level: Many organisations – UNHCR, IOM, CRS, UNHabitat, DRC, Solidarités, to name a few – have implemented livelihoods programmes in Afghanistan. However, provincial staff of both these organisations and NRC were not always familiar with the others' activities in the same area. NRC would do well to:

1. Fully map out interventions by other stakeholders in each area of implementation
2. Set up coordination mechanisms with concerned organisations

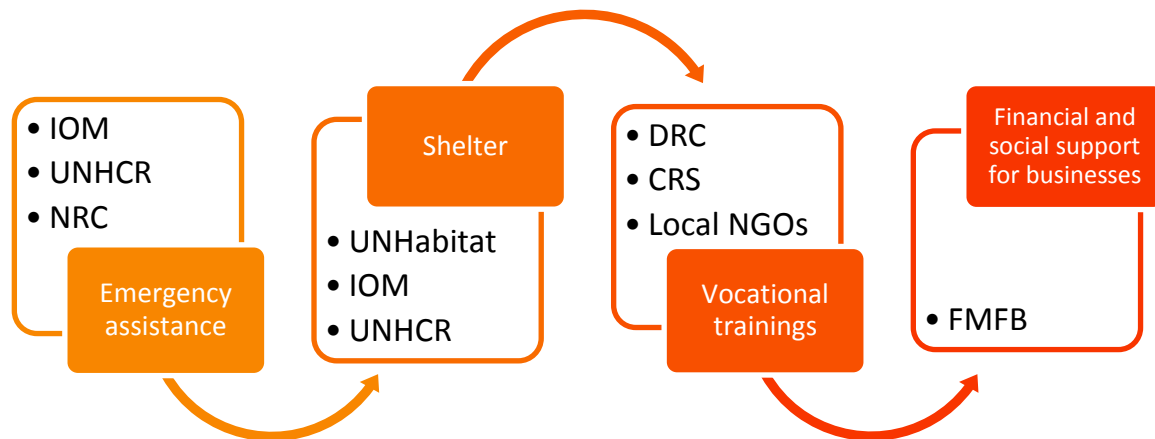
Sharing best practices and lessons learned will allow for adaptation of the YEP programme to support local conditions. This is especially important when implementing the YEP programme where it has not been done before – as it is currently the case in Kandahar.

Increased coordination can help beneficiaries: NRC should refer beneficiaries to other organisations for help when appropriate, as it already does *within* NRC. Furthermore, NRC could potentially implement vocational trainings in coordination with other organisations when faced with funding limitations, avoiding problems caused when only a small number of eligible people can be helped in an area.

NRC should pay particular attention to potential collaborations with organisations offering complementary assistance. **While NRC itself does not offer the start-to-finish assistance offered by organisations such as HELP, a chain of partnerships could be set up to do so, the synergistic effect magnifying the sustainability of each individual intervention.**

⁷² NRC, Youth Education Pack Resource Kit, op. cit., p. 17

Figure 6.2 - Potential humanitarian and development partnership chain



9. Improve cooperation with government

The primary point of cooperation with the government is that of certification. The research has highlighted the importance of certification, both to beneficiaries as well as to make the programming more accepted by the local government and to increase the visibility of the YEP with local private actors. NRC needs to work with government at both the provincial and national level to develop a systematic system of certification across provinces.

The requirements of this certification should be standardized across skills and trainings. This will ensure that the certificates are more readily recognized by potential employers.

NRC should also pay attention to its relationships with relevant governmental departments. They can support day to day monitoring and facilitate implementation. On the other hand, a poor relationship with governmental department can be detrimental to programming.

10. Develop a clear YEP programme strategy document in Afghanistan

This research has underlined the challenges posed by a lack of clear definitions and targets adapted to the Afghan context, and the differences in programming this has led to between Faryab, Herat and Nangarhar. Before implementing any further YEP programming, NRC Afghanistan should develop a document that:

- Summarizes programme objectives
- Clearly states guidelines for beneficiary, location, skill and trainer selections
- Makes explicit planned provincial specificities of the programme.
- Includes M&E procedure, along with primary indicators and methods for measurement
- Develops its partnership strategy

This document will allow future YEP iterations to be coherent in targeting and implementation, and reduce the risk of misallocating resources due to lack of understanding of what YEP should include. It is not intended to decrease the flexibility of the YEP programme at the provincial level – one of its strengths - but would offer a common ground for all stakeholders to refer to when needed. Other actors in these sectors will be able to use this strategic document as a model to implement similarly successful programming.

PROVINCE-SPECIFIC CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Province	Challenge	Recommendation
<i>Faryab</i>	<p>Limitations in terms of which supplies can be used for trainings by the size and scope of Maimana market, especially if wish to ensure sustainability of programme</p> <p>No work on agricultural issues, despite relevance to areas</p> <p>Particularly broad range of beneficiaries and increased focus on host communities</p> <p>Increasing instability makes it harder to access areas outside of Maimana</p>	<p>Labour market evaluations should incorporate this and explore new opportunities based on local supplies</p> <p>NRC should consider linking beneficiaries of different trainings to help with sourcing: e.g. beneficiaries of trainings in agriculture could then sell products to beneficiaries of training in food preparation, and so on.</p> <p>Begin trainings with agricultural skills as would open access to new areas and provide more opportunities to women in particular.</p> <p>Use revamped M&E structure to track different groups if continue to allow for this broad range (particularly if continue to include high proportion of host community members) to understand where impact is greater and which fit into NRC's mission</p> <p>Consider alternative approaches to trainings, with just some of the components; would host communities, for example, accept instruction via video?</p> <p>Reinforce community involvement from the start of the project to increase local ownership</p>
<i>Herat</i>	<p>Comparatively difficult to recruit men to programme due to financial opportunity cost</p> <p>Beneficiaries not as likely to report full knowledge of vocational skill</p> <p>Variance in training setting quality due to community-based model</p> <p>Variance in training location procurement: some rented, some loaned</p>	<p>Explore opportunities for men to earn money during training from skills they are learning as soon as possible; will avoid problems of incentives but enable them to support families and join training.</p> <p>Lengthen vocational training; begin instruction in it simultaneously to instruction in literacy and life skills</p> <p>Make providing location for training village's responsibility as they do not wish women to commute to centre; if no room (up to standards), no training</p>
<i>Nangarhar</i>	<p>High returnee population</p> <p>Government departments reported that relevant materials were not given to them at the end of the training as planned</p> <p>Training centres not stand empty / unused</p>	<p>Particular attention should be paid to select beneficiaries liable to stay in Nangarhar rather than return to Pakistan</p> <p>Make sure English/ dari/ Pashto translations of MoUs are consistent</p> <p>Improve communication from start to be very clear on what government will receive.</p> <p>Include a long-term component to training in centres where they would</p>

	<p>weakening positive impact on community</p> <p>Dichotomy between NRC as a humanitarian actor (not development) and expectations of building infrastructure (centres)</p> <p>Two instances of reported threats from Taliban; believed at least one may have actually come from local Malik</p>	<p>otherwise stand unused. For example, potential facility for working groups to meet.</p> <p>NRC should not directly build infrastructure. Communities should provide centres themselves. NRC may aid in funding construction, but the onus should be on the community to plan a centre with a long-term purpose.</p> <p>Continue with sensitization efforts and inclusion of local leaders in CABs to make communities feel responsible for YEP centres, staff and beneficiaries.</p>
<i>Kandahar</i>	<p>Local government does not want allow community based schools, making it difficult to recruit women</p> <p>Cultural constraints prevent women from going into existing centre</p> <p>Very limited in terms of female-appropriate skills</p> <p>Unreliable access to electricity⁷³</p>	<p>Open lines of communication with counterparts in Herat to address governmental concerns</p> <p>Push for a “test” community-based school in Kandahar city where the government can easily monitor to calm government fears</p> <p>Increase community sensitization; consider allowing older women to participate in a first iteration with more limited components that they could then teach to other family members (focus on life skills) as a way to gain a foothold in the communities and improve likelihood of participation in future iterations of programming.</p> <p>Have consultation between staff and community on new skills which can be introduced to community to identify female-appropriate ones.</p> <p>Offer course on generator building / maintenance to men</p>

⁷³ Based on Samuel Hall / Mercy Corps (2011), Economic Assessment and Labour Market Survey of Mazar-i-Sharif, Pul-I Khumri, Kandahar City, and Kunduz City

LESSONS LEARNED FOR YOUTH EDUCATION PROGRAMMING GLOBALLY

While the recommendations detailed above are based on the specific challenges of the Afghan context, they underline lessons that can be generalised to YEP programming in other relevant countries. Below, the research team has elaborated broader principles to keep in mind more generally:

1. **Beneficiary selection** requires clear criteria across core elements. For YEP programming, these are: migration profile, age, gender, and socio-economic and educational vulnerability.
2. **Skill selection** should take into account both existing types of skills as well as new opportunities for the area targeted, such as to expand employment opportunities.
3. **A centralized and structured M&E process** should be planned prior to the start of the project, with relevant indicators and reporting mechanisms.
4. **Other relevant actors** – whether governmental, international or local – can be crucial to allowing for a full impact of YEP programming, particularly when NRC cannot ensure a long-term follow-through. Opportunities for collaboration should thus be elaborated prior to project implementation to understand which role each partner shall play.
5. **Clear communication** of programme goals and strategy to other actors and targeted communities will avoid complications stemming from misunderstandings and promote successful selection of beneficiaries and skills.

Suggested areas for further research

This evaluation provides an assessment of NRC's YEP programming and underlines areas which require further investigation. Below are suggested research studies to support NRC's work in Afghanistan.

- **Understanding the labour market open to women**

The challenges women face in accessing the labour market in Afghanistan have been discussed at length in this and other studies. Focus is often placed on the positive secondary effects of vocational trainings – increased sociability, cost-savings, transmission of health and human rights information – and low rates of financial impact are considered satisfying results given the difficult conditions. This study will focus on a) evaluating the skills taught to women for their financial impact and actual employment opportunities and b) exploring the viability of new strategies to link women to the labour market. How can NRC integrate these skills and strategies into YEP programming?

- **Partnership study**

Given the current context of increased instability, decreasing funds and decreasing access in Afghanistan, successful coordination between stakeholders is particularly necessary. NRC would benefit from a detailed partnership study examining opportunities for collaboration with other primary stakeholders in Afghanistan. In the interests of encouraging long-term sustainability of programmes and implementation across needy areas, the study will focus on coordination with local partners and government entities.

- **Assisting IDPs: Durable solutions in the Afghan context beyond going home**

Samuel Hall / NRC's 2012 *Challenges of IDP Protection: Research study on the protection of internally displaced persons in Afghanistan* identified key challenges facing internally displaced persons and evaluated current protection efforts. This study will build on this and reflect the *current* situation of IDPs in Afghanistan, and, taking into account the National IDP policy and evolving IDP trends, propose up-to-date solutions to the primary problems facing IDPS.

Annex A - Bibliography

LABOUR MARKETS, EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN AFGHANISTAN

Key doc	Source
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✓	Scanteam Analysts (2009), <i>"Small-small Steps to Rebuild Communities with YEP: NRC Youth Education Pack Project in Liberia"</i> , for NRC
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PAST SAMUEL HALL REPORTS

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	Samuel Hall (2013), <i>Multi-sector Assessment in High Returnee and IDP Locations in Eastern Afghanistan</i> , ChildFund Afghanistan
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	Samuel Hall (Forthcoming), <i>Study on Alternatives to Camp Based Assistance for Eritrean Refugees in Ethiopia</i> , NRC
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	Samuel Hall (Forthcoming), <i>External Evaluation of IOM's Return and Reintegration Activities for Returnees and IDPs in Afghanistan</i> (IOM)
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Annex B – Key concepts and definitions

KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

Employment	The ILO uses the following criteria to determine whether or not a person is employed, unemployed or economically inactive: whether or not the person (a) works or has a job, (b) is willing to work and (c) is available for work. Unemployed people include those who did not work but were available and willing to work. Underemployed people include those who do work but are also willing and available to work more. ⁷⁴ The distinction between self-employment (that is to say, owning one's own business), casual labour (dependent on finding work on a day-to-day basis) and salaried (contractual, with regular income) work must be taken into account in evaluating the job opportunities of YEP graduates.
Livelihoods	The goal of YEP is not just to lead to employment in the strict sense of the word but also to support livelihoods more broadly. Livelihood can be defined as “the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living. A sustainable livelihood allows to cope with and to recover from stress and shocks, to maintain and enhance its capabilities and assets to provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation.” ⁷⁵
Skills	Literacy. The Afghan Ministry of Education Literacy Department distinguishes between two different understandings of literacy in its 2012-2015 Afghanistan National Literacy Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Literacy in the “narrow sense of knowing how to read, write and calculate”, and• Literacy including the “ability to think critically and understand the context of one’s life”⁷⁶ Life Skills. The <i>Women’s Refugee Commission</i> defines life skills as “the range of skills that young people and adults need to navigate daily life and to be successful in their roles as family members, community members and workers. These skills include personal development and self-knowledge, leadership, health and general well-being, financial literacy, negotiation skills and interpersonal communication skills.” ⁷⁷ Vocational skills. The European Council on Refugees and Exiles, in its <i>Good Practice Guide on the Integration of Refugees in the European Union – Vocational Training</i> , describes vocational training as “the acquisition of new skills in order to obtain employment.” ⁷⁸
Self-reliance	According to UNHCR’s <i>Handbook for Self-reliance</i> , “the social and economic ability of an individual, a household or a community to meet essential needs (including food, water, shelter, personal safety, health and education) in a sustainable manner and with dignity – developing and strengthening livelihoods of persons of concern and reducing their vulnerability and long-term reliance on humanitarian assistance.” ⁷⁹ In the Afghan context and when focusing on youth, self-reliance can be assessed at two levels: a) at the household level, given that the family unit remains the most relevant economic unit in the country, self-reliance is therefore the ability of a household to meet its needs outside external assistance; b) at the individual level, assessing the level of self-reliance of youth can be understood as a way to measure their personal contribution to the household’s livelihood and their position within the household.

⁷⁴ Underemployment Statistics, ILO, <http://www.ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/statistics-overview-and-topics/underemployment/lang--en/index.htm>

⁷⁵ Chambers R. and Conway G. (1991), *Sustainable rural livelihoods – practical concepts for the 21st century*, IDS Discussion Paper 296, Brighton, 1991.

⁷⁶ Afghanistan Ministry of Education Literacy Department, *2012-2015 National Literacy Plan*, <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/ED/pdf/Afghanistan.pdf>, p. 25

⁷⁷ 2011 Women’s Refugee Commission Tapping the Potential of Displaced Youth

⁷⁸ ECRE, *Good Practice Guide on The Integration of Refugees in the European Union – Vocational Training*, p. 8

⁷⁹ UNHCR, (2005) *Handbook for Self-Reliance, Glossary*, <http://www.unhcr.org/44bf3fc52.html>, p.7

Resilience

Resilience is a major outcome indicator of NRC YEP packaging in Afghanistan, as the primary specific outcome of the project was “to improve the resilience of refugee – returnees and IDP youth, especially women, in the target areas through literacy, life skills and sustainable livelihoods opportunities.”⁸⁰ Measuring the resilience of beneficiaries pre- and post-participation in YEP is part of the evaluation. The UK Department for International Development (DfID) defines disaster resilience as “the ability of countries, communities and households to manage change, by maintaining or transforming living standards in the face of shocks or stresses – such as earthquakes, drought or violent conflict – without compromising their long-term prospects”.⁸¹ In the context of internal displacement, past research has considered resilience as the ability to manage the changes it brings about “on economic wellbeing, social integration, protection, and how they envision these effects in the long term.”⁸²

⁸⁰ See TOR for evaluation, p. 3

⁸¹ DfID, (2011), *Defining Disaster Resilience: a DfID Approach Paper*, London, p. 6

⁸² Majidi, N., and Hennion, C. “*Resilience in Displacement: Building the Potential of Afghan Displaced Women*,” *Journal of Internal Displacement* Volume 4 Number 1, p. 78

Annex C – Key informant interviews

Organisation	Position	Location
DoLSA	Head, Vocational Training Department	Faryab
DoLSA	Director, Women's vocational training department	Faryab
DMoYA	Legal Coordinator	Faryab
MoE	Head of Literacy Department	Faryab
NRC	Acting Area Manager	Faryab
NRC	Education Coordinator	Faryab
NRC	Senior Education Officer	Faryab
Save the Children	Provincial deputy manager	Faryab
CRS	Head of Office	Herat
CRS	Education Programme Manager	Herat
DoLSA	General Director, Skills Development	Herat
DMoYA	Focal Point	Herat
MoE	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	Herat
NRC	Former Education Coordinator	Herat
UNHCR	Head of Sub-Office	Herat
CEDO	Director	Kabul
DRC	Former Livelihoods Programme Manager	Kabul
Samuel Hall	Director	Kabul
The Asia Foundation	The Asia Foundation	Kabul
NRC	Area Manager	Kandahar
DoE	Manager of Monitoring	Nangarhar
DoE	Monitor	Nangarhar
DMoYA	Communication Manager	Nangarhar
DMoYA	Services Manager	Nangarhar
NRC	YEP facilitator, Education department	Nangarhar
NRC	Former team leader	Nangarhar
NRC	YEP facilitator, Education department	Nangarhar
NRC	NRC Area Manager	Nangarhar

Annex D – NRC Indicators

Donor	Project	Primary indicators from project proposals and logframes
RNE	AFFM 1005 ⁸³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of beneficiaries regularly at skills, literacy and life skills training • # of beneficiaries passing basic skills and literacy and numeracy final exams • # beneficiaries receiving training in business skills • # beneficiaries provided with relevant livelihoods start up support • 90% of graduates having increased income from baseline 6 months after completion • 100% of graduates have employment or undertake regular income generating activity or participate in advanced apprenticeship six months after course completion • 100% of graduated learners demonstrate use of functional literacy skills 6 months after completing the course • # who participate in life skills lessons on topics such as health, nutrition, human rights, parenting, GBV, etc. • # who organize and participate in one community event during the course of the training • 100% of YEP graduated learners demonstrate retained knowledge or application of life skills learned during the course • 80% of YEP graduated learners show increased self-confidence from pre-course baselines • 100% of youth learners are verified and referred through a transparent and representative selection process • 100% of youth learners in need are provided with hot lunches/food support • 100% of youth learners are able to access safe child care for their young children while they attend training • 100% of YEP centers have developed protection systems to ensure a safe environment, including codes of conducts, protection awareness raising and reporting systems. • 100% of YEP childcare workers are trained on early childhood development. • Early childhood development activities are implemented into child care for children aged 3-5 years. • 100% of school aged children of YEP youth learners are in school.
SDC	AFN 1201	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of youth employed (wage and self-employment) • # of YEP graduates from 2011/12 engaged in YEP Working Groups (YWG) as a way of self-employment • # of learners who demonstrate knowledge of life skills • 50% of youth have increased income • # of new centres set up and operational • # of already established centres continue to be operational • # of new CAB and BSC set up and trained • # of Youth enrolled in YEP • 90% of youth graduated • # of start-up kits distributed to graduated learners

⁸³ Indicators taken directly from RNE 2010-2012 logframe

SIDA AFFM
1106

- # of children benefit from Early Childhood Education
- # of YEP working groups established
- # of new centres set up and operational
- # of new CAB and BSC set up and operational
- # of CABs receiving trainings
- # of youth trained in marketable skills
- # of youth who are functionally literate
- # of post-training learners that receive toolkits
- # of YEP learner children in NRC provided childcare
- # of CABs taking on day-to-day management of YEP centres
- # of market fairs in Herat

Samuel Hall. Contacts

Samuel Hall is a research and consulting company based in Asia (Kabul, Afghanistan) and East Africa (Nairobi, Kenya). We specialise in socio-economic surveys, private and public sector studies, and impact assessments for non-governmental and international organisations. Our teams of field practitioners, academic experts and local interviewers have years of experience leading research in Central Asia and East Africa. This has enabled us to acquire a firm grasp of the political and socio-cultural context in the country; design data collection methods and statistical analyses for monitoring, evaluating, and planning sustainable programmes; and to apply cross-disciplinary knowledge in providing integrated solutions for efficient and effective interventions. To find out more, visit samuelhall.org.

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