


# Strengthening a global network

*An evaluation of capacity development  
services provided by Youth Business  
International's network team*

Based on an independent  
evaluation conducted  
by Soledad Muniz



## About Youth Business International

**Youth Business International (YBI) is a global network of independent non-profit initiatives helping young people to start and grow their own business and create employment.**

YBI members assist under-served young entrepreneurs with a combination of training, access to capital, mentoring and other business development services. They adapt this common approach to their local context, working in partnership with governments, businesses and multilateral and civil society organisations.

Through YBI, members exchange resources and act collectively to increase the efficiency and scale of support to young people seeking to start their own business. A network team coordinates and leads this activity, with additional responsibilities for driving network growth, quality and performance.

YBI was founded in 2000 by HRH The Prince of Wales. Our members have helped over 100,000 young people to create their own business and generate employment.

An estimated 70% of these businesses are still trading after three years, with many going on to create significant levels of employment and further benefits for their communities.

## About the network team

**The London-based YBI network team offers a variety of services to YBI members from targeted resource raising and partnership programme management to knowledge sharing platforms and events. The YBI network team also currently provides four main capacity development services to members, which were the focus of this evaluation:**

1. Mentoring – support for members wishing to initiate, grow or improve a volunteer mentoring programme for young entrepreneurs
2. Training – support for members in selecting, developing or refining their training programme methodology and delivery for young entrepreneurs
3. Technology – assisting members in adapting a bespoke Salesforce application (referred to as Operations Management System, or OMS) as a back-office system.
4. Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL) – working with members to improve their M&E design and systems, varying from Theory of Change workshops and delivering M&E training to full MEL system design with ongoing support.

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# Executive summary

**The NGO sector is becoming more decentralised, and more and more international non-profits are adopting network structures. These structures enable more decision-making and autonomy for national programmes, whilst still providing the benefits that global collaboration brings.**

Youth Business International has been a network since its inception in 2000, with a strong belief that contextually-specific solutions need to take root at the local level. We don't believe in a head office, but we do believe that member initiatives in a whole range of countries can work collaboratively, sharing expertise and developing solutions together. For us, the network structure is the best way to enable more young people around the world to start their own business.

The YBI network provides benefits to members in two ways: firstly, through member to member collaboration, and secondly via support delivered by the network team.

This report focuses on the latter, in particular the effectiveness of four capacity development programmes which aim to help members with their mentoring programme, access to technology, entrepreneurship training work, and monitoring, evaluation & learning.

But, what benefits can a London-based network team meaningfully deliver to diverse members around the world? How replicable are solutions found in one part of the world to another part of the world?

To help answer these questions, YBI commissioned an independent evaluation to examine the core capacity development services delivered by the network team to members across a range of countries over a three-year period – 2012-2014. The purpose of this evaluation was to:

1. Enhance understanding of the value of the services to members
2. Contribute to internal learning to help improve the capacity development practices.

The Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology was selected for this evaluation. MSC is a qualitative evaluation approach, based on stories of change. It allows exploration of complex issues in an way that is accessible to a diverse range of actors. 29 interviewees from 21 different members across four continents were sampled in this evaluation.



**What we have now is a very slick operation that is light years ahead of everybody else that is doing this kind of thing.**

*YBI member, Europe*



## Main results

The findings clearly demonstrate that organisations derive significant benefit from the capacity development services offered by Youth Business International's network team.

Increased programmatic effectiveness and organisational effectiveness were the most mentioned categories by the 29 interviewees (48% in total), followed by learning & collaboration and time saving and efficiency.

The report shows how the capacity development services provided by the network team have been transformational for some members.

In some cases, the benefits for members have transcended the project at which they were aimed, leading to organisation-wide improvement and strengthening. The stories show that as a result of the capacity development work, members have been able to improve staff retention, work better with partners and donors, and ultimately, provide more effective support for young people.

We believe that the research also demonstrates more widely that in a decentralised NGO network, there is an important role for a central team which can act as a changemaker for other parts of the network. This central team exists not only to support members, but as the case studies in this report show, to challenge and encourage members to transform themselves.

This report is based around six (anonymous) stories which we believe represent systemic and sustainable change in the member organisation, but a full list of stories is available on request.

## Thank you to our supporters

We would like to thank our supporters, particularly Accenture, for their partnership in helping us carry out this important work. For the last nine years, YBI has been developing its capacity development work, seeking to utilise good practices from our network to help members grow.

We started this work in the field of mentoring in 2006 – with the backing of Accenture. Over the last few years we have expanded our work to include entrepreneurship training, technology and monitoring, evaluation and learning – with plans to launch more programmes in coming years.

Understanding how to create these initiatives, and how best the network team can help members to support more young entrepreneurs with better quality services has not been easy, but we are grateful to Accenture for believing in our approach and giving us the space to experiment.

As this report shows, we think that we have created an approach which is now paying tremendous dividends.

In addition to Accenture, we have received funding from Barclays, BG Group, DfID Uganda, JP Morgan Chase Foundation, the Multi-lateral Investment Fund of the Inter-American Development Bank and USAID to help us carry out this work.

# Evaluation background

## Project Background

**This evaluation focused on capacity development projects in the four areas outlined above delivered between 2012-2014.**

The majority of these projects were funded through a grant from Accenture, as part of its Skills to Succeed initiative. Over the three years, YBI members applied for grants and network team support in four capacity development areas - mentoring, technology, entrepreneurship training, and monitoring, evaluation & learning – based on their specific need and context. This resulted in the delivery of a large number of capacity development projects by the YBI network team.

## Objectives of the Evaluation

**The overall purpose of the evaluation was to enable internal learning and reflection:**

1. Enhance understanding of the value of YBI's current capacity development services to members
  - What are the different views of stakeholders around the YBI network regarding the value of YBI's core capacity development services for their organisations?
  - What changes have participating member organisations experienced as a result of receiving YBI capacity development services?
2. Contribute to internal learning to help improve the capacity development practices
  - Based on the perspectives of member organisations in receipt of YBI capacity development services, how can these services be enhanced and improved?

## Why did YBI choose Most Significant Change?

**The evaluation used the Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology, which engaged stakeholders in a participatory process, involving a wide range of staff from YBI member organisations and network team capacity development specialists, along with wider YBI network team staff members. By providing the opportunity and space for open reflection, the MSC process was intended to be beneficial for all involved.**

As Davies and Dart write (2005)<sup>1</sup> there are many reasons why a wide range of organisations have found MSC useful, including:

1. The MSC methodology is easily understood across a variety of different contexts by varied stakeholders as it requires no specialist technical skills. Everyone can relate to and participate in storytelling.
2. MSC has the ability to identify unexpected changes, without the need for pre-designed indicators. This is especially suitable for the learning purposes of this evaluation, as well as the complex and often unpredictable nature of capacity building.
3. MSC is useful in bringing different values to light and this is particularly useful for YBI, which is a complex and varied network.

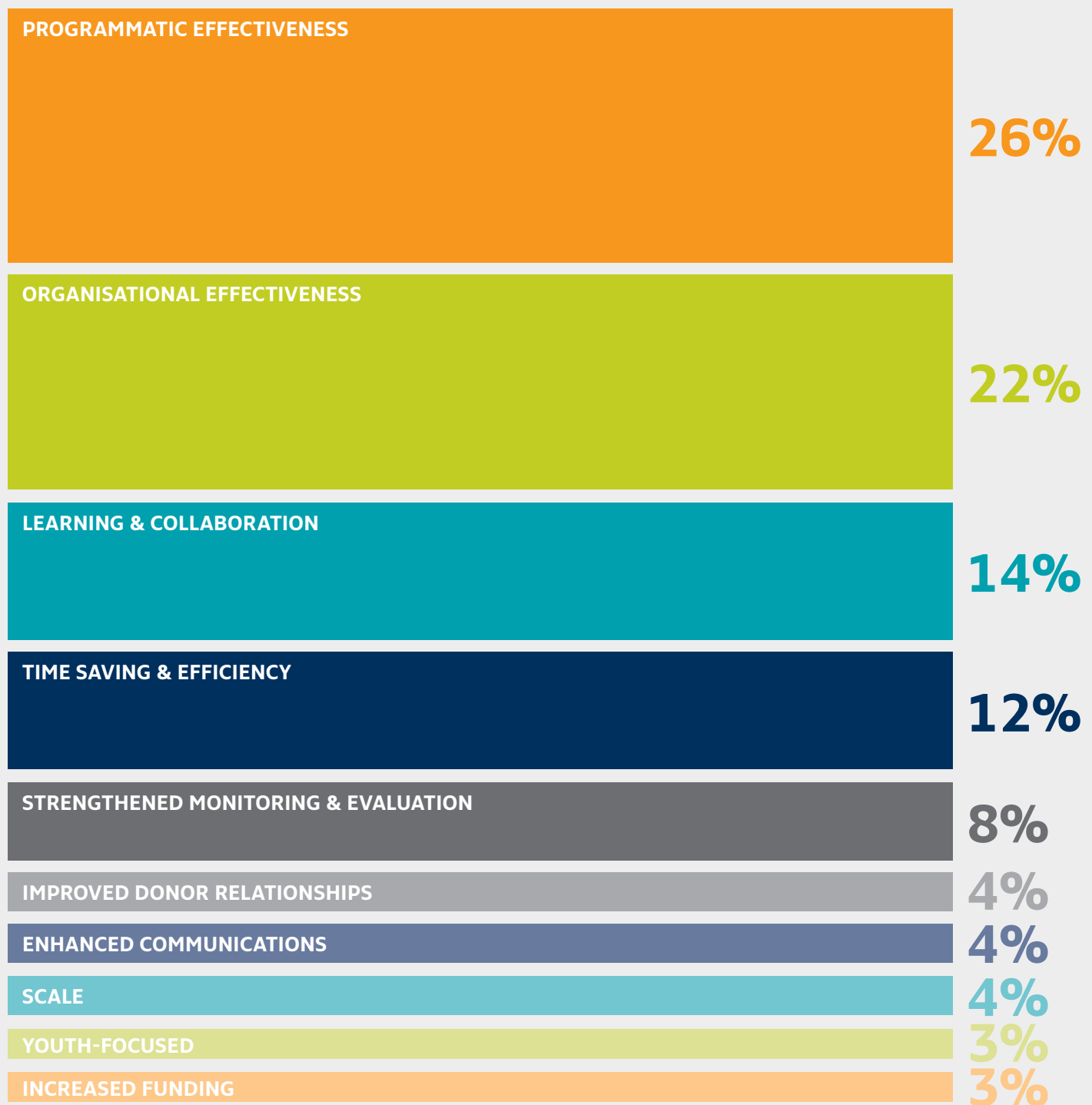
<sup>1</sup> The 'Most Significant Change' (MSC) Technique: A guide to its use by Rick Davies and Jess Dart, April, 2005. [www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf](http://www.mande.co.uk/docs/MSCGuide.pdf)

# Analysis & learning

*The storytellers shared the changes that happened in their organisations as a result of interaction with the network team. The support received under the four YBI capacity development programmes was repeatedly mentioned.*

## Most Significant Changes and categories of change

The YBI capacity development team analysed together the 29 MSC stories and identified the key changes emerging from the stories. The Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning manager and the consultant then aggregated the changes into categories of change.



**Programmatic effectiveness and organisational effectiveness represent the majority of changes mentioned by the members, followed by learning & collaboration and time saving & efficiency.**

- 10 out of 29 stories reported organisational effectiveness, time saving & efficiency or strengthened M&E as the MSC, and link it to the reception of Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning & Technology capacity development; and all the stories (5 out of 29) that mention time saving & efficiency as their MSC attributed it to Technology.
- 13 out of 29 stories reported programmatic effectiveness or learning & collaboration as the MSC, and link it to the reception of Mentoring & Training programmes; and 8 out of those 13 attributed MSC to Mentoring.

## Most Significant Change per region:





## Most Significant Change, ranked per each type of capacity development support provided by the network team:

**MENTORING: 12 STORIES**



**TECHNOLOGY: 10 STORIES**



**ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING: 8 STORIES**



**MONITORING, EVALUATION & LEARNING: 6 STORIES**



## Other changes, ranked per type of capacity development support:

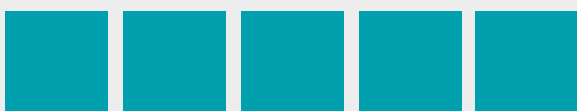
**MONITORING, EVALUATION & LEARNING: 10 OTHER STORIES OF CHANGE**



**MENTORING: 6 OTHER STORIES OF CHANGE**



**ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINING: 5 OTHER STORIES OF CHANGE**



**TECHNOLOGY: 3 OTHER STORIES OF CHANGE**



Storytellers also mentioned five other stories of change linked to accessing funding as a direct result of being a YBI member.

## Enablers of change

The capacity development team also analysed the stories for enablers of change – anything that was identified as contributing to change, but did not drive the change. This shows that as well as the four capacity development support programmes that are analysed in this report, there are other factors such as sharing with other YBI members that can help to enable change to occur.

### CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT

35%

### WIDER YBI SERVICES

15%

### SHARING WITH NETWORK MEMBERS

13%

### INTERNAL FACTORS – MEMBERS

12%

### SYSTEMS

11%

### FUNDING / DONOR SUPPORT

5%

### LANGUAGE & CONTEXT

4%

### RESOURCES

4%

## Areas for improvement

**Lastly, the capacity development team identified areas of improvement mentioned by the members in the interviews. The evaluation consultant aggregated them in categories.**

An increase in the exchange between members was the most mentioned area that should be improved in the near future, followed by YBI network team human resources (eg. better coordination and more staff), a need by members to keep improving the technology platform, the language barrier (particularly in Spanish-speaking countries) and a need for a more holistic approach to capacity building.

### EXCHANGE BETWEEN MEMBERS

21%

### NETWORK TEAM HUMAN RESOURCES

20%

### SYSTEMS

15%

### LANGUAGE BARRIER

11%

### HOLISTIC APPROACH TO CAPACITY BUILDING

11%

### MATERIALS AND CASE STUDIES

8%

### TRAINING

7%

### CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT – FUND RAISING

5%

### CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT – COMMUNICATIONS

1%

## Analysis

### The findings of this evaluation are relevant for one of YBI's priority learning questions:

*Does being part of a network enable local service providers to scale and improve services and improve outcomes for under-served young entrepreneurs? If so, how?*

From the evaluation, it is clear that YBI's services have made a meaningful contribution to the abilities of YBI members to scale and improve services for under-served young entrepreneurs. In some cases, this support has been truly transformative.

### Increased programme and organisational effectiveness

Increased programmatic effectiveness and organisational effectiveness were the most mentioned categories by the 29 interviewees (48% in total), followed by learning & collaboration and time saving & efficiency.

### Increased ability to scale

As a result of improving programme and organisational effectiveness, there were clear indications of increased ability to scale. In total, 'scale' was highlighted as a result of YBI support five times, with members identifying:

- Ability to expand;
- Ability to reach more marginalised youth;
- Better processes and systems to manage growth;
- Effective management of thousands of clients, and
- Ability to double number of applications in 4 months

Linked to this, changes resulting in 'time saving and efficiency' were identified 14 times, with members noting, for example, 'time saved aggregating data', 'quicker response times' and 'ability to process huge amounts of data' as a result of network team support. A further three stories highlighted that YBI support led directly to 'increased funding'. A strong example of this is YBI's work one member in Africa:



**This year we will be moving to the south coast and expand part of our operations. That will be a great opportunity for us because there are a lot of people under the south coast that are being marginalised and there are a lot of youth that lack opportunities, so being there as an organisation to help this youth it's a change that we'll bring to the society. We could do that because YBI helped us and that's why we are able to expand.**

*YBI member, Africa*



This is a clear example of transformational change for a YBI member.

### Improved services and outcomes for youth

YBI services have led to tangible improvements in services for under-served young entrepreneurs. Changes relating to improved organisational effectiveness were mentioned 25 times by members while improved programmatic effectiveness was cited 29 times. As a direct result of YBI capacity development, members highlighted changes such as "revolutionary" monitoring and reporting systems which are "light years ahead" of the sector; ability to track and therefore improve longer-term outcomes for youth; more focus on post start-up support; creation of a loans capability and minimised risk for youth – among many others.

### Lessons learned

1. It is clear that the network team does have an impact on its members, primarily through increasing the scale of their activities and the quality of their services for young entrepreneurs.

However, evaluating improved outcomes for young people as a direct result of capacity development is more challenging, and requires further study.

2. The evidence shows that the involvement of the network team can lead to increased funding for members, as a result of YBI's global partnerships, and also as a result of improvements in organisational effectiveness within members.
3. A collaborative approach between members and network team is vital. Each member has different needs and the network team needs to adjust the services it provides in every country. The stories show that where genuine collaboration takes place between member and the network team, the result is far more effective.
4. Provision of a combination of capacity development services has a stronger impact than a standalone project. Two of the six stories selected by the network team as the most significant involved a close combination of Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning and Technology, for example.
5. The network team needs to have a more holistic and comprehensive approach to capacity development, and also look at activities beyond the current four areas of focus.

YBI is reviewing all recommendations for improvements and will incorporate this into future planning.

### Consultant recommendations

- The network team should look at capacity building in a more holistic way including the wider support that YBI provides members with, beyond the four capacity development programmes, as mentioned by members: communications, resource mobilisation, learning & collaboration, etc.
- The categories of change can be triangulated in future evaluations (e.g. using a survey) and be used as future indicators for capacity building.
- The criteria identified by network team staff to select significant change can be aggregated by the Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning team for future MSC selection panels on capacity building.
- The information that came out of the analysis of enablers of change can help the capacity development team identify internal and external conditions needed for members to create change and can be fed into future planning.
- YBI network team should review and respond actively to improvements suggested by members.
- MSC was recognised by members and YBI staff as a useful learning exercise that can be reproduced in the future.
- Some key questions that should be further evaluated emerged in the conversation that YBI staff had in the selection panel: Does this trickle down to entrepreneurs? How to measure sustainability vs. dependence? At what point can we say that capacity has been developed?

# Case studies

*A selection committee event was held at the YBI network team office in London. This session was attended by the whole team and facilitated by the evaluation consultant. The team discussed and reviewed the stories of change provided by YBI members and selected the most significant of these stories to represent the work of the YBI network. Here are the six stories selected through the evaluation.*

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Using technology  
to drive rapid growth 18

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**Location: Africa**

Developing a stronger  
organisational structure 30

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Cristián Leger, founder of Dermaloe – a Chilean company which creates health and beauty products from the Aloe Vera plant. Cristián received start-up support from Acción Emprendedora, a member of Youth Business International.

# Location: Africa

## Getting everything in place for growth

**The network team selected this case study because it represented a broad transformation in the member. It demonstrated structural and cultural change which we could see were leading towards a stronger organisation and wider geographic coverage. It was also clear that the combined technology & monitoring, evaluation & learning support was helping to underpin the change.**

**What Changed:**

**Category of change:**

**Support received:**

**Caused:**

We did get donor support and we are able to expand our project.

### SCALE

- Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning
- Technology

We actually developed the Theory of Change (ToC) and we went to London in October and we've met all the team. We stayed for a week and we learnt a lot, in every aspect: training, mentoring, OMS<sup>2</sup>, Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning, everything. With the expansion to south coast, we were able to develop a ToC, which it's almost concluded now with support from Rowena<sup>3</sup>. The OMS and Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning – surveys. We are using them and have seen the significance that they have because currently we are using them and we are planning to expand on everything. It's a significant change on process.

At first, we didn't have the questions in our registration form, so they were not matching, so we had to find a way so they can match, so that's why we developed the survey so they can match into the OMS, so that is easier for someone who can fill the form and also it goes directly to the OMS. So at first we didn't have that.





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*YBI member, Africa*



### **Why the Most Significant Change?**

This year we will be moving to the south coast and expanding part of our operations. That will be a great opportunity for us because there are a lot of people under the south coast that are being marginalised and there are a lot of youth that lack opportunities, so being there as an organisation to help this youth it's a change that we'll bring to the society. We could do that because YBI helped us and that's why we are able to expand.

### **Additional Information A moment or memory:**

I can remember when we were in London, we talked with Rowena about the impact we will have when we are going to the south coast so that will be a great opportunity for us as an organisation and for the beneficiaries. We developed the ToC and the project summary, all that it was required; all of that Rowena took care of. Everything was in place in that week.

### **Anything to improve?**

They are really trying hard so all I can say is that they should continue to support us because it really helps. Their support is what benefits us. It's very important to continue it.

# Location: Europe

## Using technology to drive rapid growth

**The network team selected this case study because it was clear that the support provided had been instrumental in enabling the member, itself a recent start-up, to grow quickly. The case study shows that embedding systems when an organisation or programme starts is much easier than doing it several years later.**

### What Changed:

### Category of change:

### Support received:

### Before:

### Caused:

### After:

### Why the Most Significant Change?

Efficiency

#### TIME SAVING & EFFICIENCY

- Technology

We started ourselves recently so we are a young organisation, and became YBI member a few months later. Fundamentally, we had very little systems and processes in place at the beginning when we started to talk about taking the OMS<sup>4</sup> on.

It's great because it developed as we've developed and we've been able to customise it with the help of Jonny<sup>5</sup>, that has been fantastic, to get it to the stage where now it runs the whole business for us. Our attitude is a factor: if it sounds like a good idea, let's explore it and try to make the most of it. We quite entrepreneurial ourselves, so it was really I guess to the open mindedness of everybody in the organisation, in terms of this could make our lives easier, we see the potential of it and we want to deliver on that, so we are prepared to make it happen. Also the fact that we were developing ourselves as we went along developing this.

When you embed something from the beginning is a lot easier than to do it 5 or 6 years down the line.

What we have now is a very slick operation that is light years on ahead of everybody else that is doing this kind of thing.

We've essentially taken the OMS and developed that with YBI to the point when now it runs our entire business. It's been hugely positive, we are getting 1600 applications a month, which is a staggering number to have to work through, and actually there is 11 of us in the office, so we really use the technology to help us be efficient with our time, efficient with our resource, keep track of where we are.



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*YBI member, Europe*



### Additional Information A moment or memory:

We've started working on it May last year and after about a month when we've got the system, there was a point when we turned off the spreadsheet that we were using before and starting using this instead, and you kind of think: how on earth did we survive with that database.

That was one big turning point.

The second one is where we've got not so long ago. We have delivery partners around the country so when we've started to bring all those people on to the OMS as well, that's when we had an overview of the country within a second if you wanted it, so those two points were for us really important.

### Challenges:

We've embraced it too much in a way, so we are quite demanding in terms of we want this, we want that done, can we have it done yesterday? Because we are developing at such a rate, as I said, we get 1600 applications a month, and it was only 800 four months ago. So even that challenge of scaling to that degree it's been fairly significant.

And so to compensate for that we use the OMS to make us more efficient and deploy resources more efficiently, so I think we've been quite demanding, so I suppose we've been waiting for some bits of development to happen and obviously there is only so many hours in the day for the team on what we want and everybody else wants. So probably we tried to move too quickly.

### Anything didn't work?

I think it depends of who the person is at our end, in terms of your partners' end, in working with YBI. I come from that kind of background and I'm the one who led the implementation of this, and I understand adaptation of Salesforce and what it can and can't do. I have a very good relationship with Jonny, and if there is something that doesn't quite work, we talk it over and 10 minutes later we've got a solution, so there is not really a problem. So no, we didn't have anything that I would call challenge.

There are things we had to work around but I think that's the case with any kind of IT project. We tried to talk on our partners' wishes as much as possible, we've worked around everything, and it's never been an issue.

# Location: Latin America & Caribbean

## Restructuring entrepreneurship training to make it more relevant

**The network team selected this case study because it showed how the member had been able to revitalise itself and really think about the right area of focus, thanks to training and ongoing support. The case study also shows the challenges of changing when the member is a small organisation – change takes time. It also shows the value of building regional networks within the wider YBI network, to make the most of shared language and cultural understanding.**

**What Changed:**

Focus in youth

**Category of change:**

**ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

**Support received:**

- Training

**Before:**

In the last two years the people who came to the NGO were women and 45 years old in average. Without realising, we were closing ourselves.

**Caused:**

When YBI came they opened our horizon and looked into the country's situation. The entrepreneurs were starting too late, and it was easier for them to start younger. We've checked the experience of France and try to take best practices from other countries. The trainings they did in country for us were crucial. Before that the staff didn't know much about YBI, beyond what I could verbally tell them.

During the training everyone had a realisation of how much we had closed ourselves. Everyone started reading and learning more after the training. Also the support of the Accenture consultant was essential to help us make it happen. We were too disorganised before and he helped me re-structure the training once I came back from Buenos Aires, from the regional training, with new material. The way he worked, consulting everyone in the organisation, made a huge difference to help people feel valued and to see what we were doing well but also what could be improved.

Working with him I learnt in six months much more than in my last four years of work experience.

**After:**

We started a pilot to test the new methods.

**Why the Most Significant Change?**

We used to do things before you are used to that, so when you systematise so much after 14 years a methodology, you stop asking yourself if it is still the best. When we started to develop new products was great. We used to lose a lot of entrepreneurs before. Today entrepreneurship is a key issue in our country and the work, so this will allow us to differentiate ourselves.



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*Maria Paz, Latin America & Caribbean*

### Additional Information Challenges:

We are still in the process. I'm a one person team because of lack of funding. Programming and operation work takes most of your time, so lack of time is the biggest challenge. Each component we include – OMS<sup>6</sup>, training, mentoring – is a long process of learning, sharing and implementation. I'm now focused on the IADB<sup>7</sup> project plus organising all the support coming from YBI offerings. Mentoring and OMS are completely new for us. I have some interns that help me but lack of time is the main challenge. It's important if the different sectors (like OMS or mentoring) organised themselves knowing when one is coming, as I can't organise training for mentoring and a week after one for OMS. That would be important to support us better.

### Anything didn't work?

Language barrier. I was in London, and I don't speak really well English, so in the first training I lost half of the content. In the workshop organised in Argentina only for Latin America and Spain, it was incredible because we not only share the language but also the cultural understanding. I think the new person leading training doesn't speak Spanish, and I think it's important to raise this issue. We feel that members who speak English have privileges. I can't run course in English as my staff won't be able to participate. When Nina<sup>8</sup> was there, it was easier. Also it's OK with Jonny in OMS.

I'm happy that now they are training a regional expert as a trainer of trainers. Until that person becomes an expert, it's important that she/he is accompanied by YBI staff or consultants who are extremely knowledgeable in the areas. Thanks for taking the time to discuss this as it's helpful for us to look back at what happened in the last years.

6 Operations Management System, YBI's technology system

7 The Youth Entrepreneurship Programme for Latin America & the Caribbean, [www.youthbusiness.org/yep](http://www.youthbusiness.org/yep)

8 Previous member of the network team, who left in 2014.

# Location: Europe

## Creating a mentoring programme from the very beginning

**The network team selected this case study because it demonstrates the role of the network team in helping a member to build a mentoring programme from the start. It also demonstrates the importance of collaborating with other partners, particularly when looking to recruit mentors, and how the network team can help to instil this openness. This shift in mindset can trickle down to other parts of the member's operations.**

### What Changed:

### Category of change:

### Support received:

### Caused:

### After:

### Why the Most Significant Change?

New philosophy of work

#### ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

- Mentoring

YBI opened our horizon to not only work with our resources and to incorporate the role of mentors who themselves had entrepreneurial experiences. Also the fact of not only depending on public funding shifted the bureaucratic pressures. We can now design programmes with much more freedom having private funding.

The fact of feeling that we are able to start from scratch, learning from YBI and creating and adapting something for our context. The team work and also the support from Accenture made a difference.

There has been a shift in openness to work and collaborate with other organisations.

To be able to create the mentoring programme we had to change, particularly in terms of reaching out to volunteers. We had never worked before with volunteers.



There has been a shift in openness to work and collaborate with other organisations. To be able to create the mentoring programme we had to change, particularly in terms of reaching out to volunteers.

*YBI member, Europe*



### Additional Information A moment or memory:

In the first workshop related to mentoring already the style of team work lead by John<sup>9</sup> and Hoang-Anh<sup>10</sup> created a synergy with other organisations in our national network. There was a shift from that day to collaboration.

### Anything didn't work?

It's hard to finish unifying the vision of the national network. Each organisation has its culture and way of looking at things. One is more social and creative and the other is more formal, which makes timing on doing things approached differently, for example into waiting or not for official branding to start activities. We are trying to include someone to deal with communication and define the brand.

### Anything to improve?

We would like similar case studies from other organisation on how to manage the brand when involves several organisations in the national network. Also case studies to work with mentors, around best practices and different experiences to discuss best practice. We have advanced fast so I would have needed that information before.

Language barrier is the other thing. It affects me in daily conversations and emails. I feel it generates distance.

# Location: Africa

## Embedding data systems to improve operations and be accountable to donors

The network team selected this case study because it demonstrated how a member has been able to combine a technology system, and rigorous MEL (Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning) system to become much better about understanding its operations, and what individuals are benefitting from the support provided. This has had a transformational impact on the member's effectiveness and dealings with partners and donors.

**What Changed:**

**Category of change:**

**Support received:**

**Before:**

**Caused:**

Accessing and storing data fast and easily

### STRENGTHENED MONITORING & EVALUATION

- Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning
- Technology

Before YBI came to us, we used to do a lot of work but if you asked each one of us to show you what you've actually done, we had lots of nice stories from people but we really didn't know where these people are beyond the training that we offered them. So what YBI did was to come and say: you are doing lots of work but what system do you use to manage the information that you use, both financial and programme? We didn't have anything to show. Even simple excel sheets were very difficult for some of us. Partners would actually ask us, can you tell us how many people you've been able to reach, and we would struggle to mention. We knew we had reached many but we wouldn't have evidence to show.

When they came in they've installed the system OMS<sup>11</sup>. We never had a Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning unit before. YBI helped us installed that as well. But without the system these people would also struggle to do their work. They are so complementary, as with the system the information that comes in, they can use that to ask any question they would like to ask and find out.

Internally if we didn't have that system, even with these people being on board, they would struggle to keep tabs in what we are actually doing. Because it's very extensive work, it's very intense, and it can overwhelm anybody. But if it's just in one platform, someone can navigate different scenarios and ask any question they'd like to ask and helping with the adjustment of the programme if there is something to be done. I'd struggle to decide which one of the two, but Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning staff would struggle without this platform in place.





The immense support that YBI provided us enabled change. We had no clue and of course when you are introducing such a thing, you find people who are used to their old way of doing things. They are a bit comfortable. YBI was insisting that we can only take information that you are putting into your quarter report as being truthful if it appears in the system.

So, previously we would just write reports and you can send it on email. But they say, we don't see this information in the system. We were used to do things in the old fashioned way. It was a system that was making us uncomfortable, which was giving us more work, and naturally people get a little bit resistant to it. This means I have to work a little bit harder than I have been doing, why should I do it?

But the insistence and the technical support that YBI provided us made life a little bit easier and it's a process, you learn it. Once you learn it, it makes your life easy. They kept on educating us along those lines. Of course they brought people who would seat with us here, they didn't just call on the phone. They've sent in technical people and they continued supporting when different scenarios emerged. They didn't shy away saying that we finished our part and that's your business. They continued providing it.

As I speak now, there is a team that is coming in April, providing on things that keep emerging and we discover while we are working. The system that works here may not work in exactly the same way in another organisation doing totally different work. So they customise it and continue to give us the technical support. That is one of the major points.

The second one is openness to learning. Initially we were a bit resistant, the staff here were saying these things are giving us trouble, but of course internally we would discuss and say: this is for our own benefit as well. If we are able to master this, then we shall be the industry leaders. We would have set a new benchmark. We can't continue doing the same thing every single day of every single year and hope that we going to make any changes in the way we work. So if we think this is making us uncomfortable, yes, but it's for our own benefit as well.



That system has made our lives so easy in managing thousands and thousands of people that we are dealing with. Just in this programme alone, we are reaching 10,500 people. We can pinpoint to each and every person. We can give you information about each and every person by just a click of a button. If I need someone in a region I click and I have all the information about that person. It's cloud computing, so anywhere I am, I can pinpoint this information without me having to call anyone. If I want to check a report, analyse it, see the progress that we are making, so it helped us to keep on track and also keep our eyes on what we are doing finding the information in real time.

*YBI member, Africa*



**After:**

**Why the Most Significant Change?**

So the willingness was slow but slowly people pick interest on it and now everybody is happy with it. They are able to say yes, I think it makes our life easier. If you are in the field, you can check in your laptop, see where you are, the dashboards are very clear, you know where you stand, so it brings in the accountability mechanism as well for each one of us.

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So this has helped us a lot in harmonising our operations and getting everything in one single platform, which we can use to analyse different scenarios. If I want to find information about women, I'll get it. If I want from this age group, I'll get it. If I want from this region, I'll get it. This has helped us a lot. It's revolutionary.

We are the only ones that have that kind of information in the country. Even the national bodies don't have that kind of information. Our institution now has over 8000 records of people that we can be able to refer using that system. It has made our lives really easy.

It was around 2010, we've got finance from the government of our country to do similar work that we are doing in this current project with YBI. They've asked us a question: before you actually get government financing, the institutions are called to the parliament, which appropriates money, and you must defend it. So they've asked us can you give us data on the people that you've been able to reach?



### Additional Information A moment or memory:

The only data we had were numbers written in a report. Nobody was able to trace the attendance sheets, where they were, it was such a nightmare. So it became very difficult for us to convince them that actually this information is there and we have a foolproof system where we keep it. So we had to do a lot of explanations, questions after questions came, and of course it brings a down side in people, thinking maybe what you are saying is not exactly true, because you can't actually prove it. They asked us, could you show us the people that we've been able to reach?

If you are going to continue having government money can you show us the people that you were able to reach. We couldn't show that. The only thing that we given them was a report that somebody wrote after coming back from the field, and you know you can't go back through piles and piles of paper and how it was store, it was just a nightmare. Now that was the before.

After (in October 2014)... this project is financed by DFID, so they said can you give us all the beneficiaries in this region? They made a request: all the beneficiaries that you've touched with this project under this region. We've just gone into the system and all the beneficiaries we printed them out. We didn't know why they wanted it, for us it was just giving it to them. The person from DFID said: I'm going to randomly pick any person and then I'll go and ask them questions. Here he had a record of almost 800 people, and he randomly picked 5. He said I'm going to see this one, then he jumped his finger and said I'm going to see this one, then jumped his finger, I'm going to see this one, and then I'm going to see this one. He made phone calls, I want to come and visit you, where are you. He went there, ask for their name, and everything he asked, the record rhymed with what the other person was responding.



### Challenges:

### Anything didn't work?

So he said: Now I believe that what you are telling me is true. Initially the information we would give them looked too good to be true. He said, let me go and investigate myself and find out. And he proved what he had seen in our reports. So for me that was very important.

If we wouldn't have the system, I can assure you we would struggle to show him the beneficiaries. We would have done the work, yes, but we would have struggled to show him the information concerning them.

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One of them was infrastructure. It is a web-based system, it's not something that you switch on your computer and you start using it. You must have Internet access. The problem is when Internet is down completely you can't use the system. So those are some of the problems that we had. But we also invested money as an institution to improve this. As I speak, at the end of this month, we'll have expanded our bandwidth; we are bringing a new server, with bigger capacity, to handle this volume of work, new IT software to help us to work very well.

So the institution has also addressed some of the challenges dogging us along the way. Being Internet based, if you Internet is slow, it can hamper your ability to do work in a very specific sphere of time. That's why we've started to spend in machinery, very expensive one, to make sure that it works best for us and we have the right equipment.

Not really. The good we've always done is that there is back and forth communication and whatever we do is agreeable to both parties. We always had a wonderful relationship, it's not like they come and say do this, impose it and you either take it or leave it. No, it's not like that. There is a lot of discussion, talking, exchange of information, texts, and they come up with the advice and we respond. I think in this context it might not be possible, so they say ok, you advise us the way we are able to work. They are helping us to run our things. Not for them to run our things for us.

That support has been really collegial in nature, we receive the information and we agree with the things we are going for.

### Anything to improve?

With their reach and exposure, certainly different things work in different countries. So it might be a little bit difficult to say you take this from this country and go and implement it, which is extremely difficult, because the contexts are very different. But it is very interesting if the members exchange a little more information, because if you find out how do you do this, how do you get so many numbers of people to actually get entrepreneurship training, you can be able to exchange that kind of information with the affiliate.

But also they may be giving services that we are not aware of and we ask them how they actually do it, to get the results that they get. So cross-learning is extremely important.

The second one would be sharing the resources that they have. They have access to various resources across the entire global network. Maybe papers that were presented by people about this, new things that come up, so if you are able to share a little bit more information along that line, which has happened elsewhere, because they have the access in the different countries, then share it with others that probably don't have access to it. Then we are able to learn online what is happening with other countries.

# Location: Africa

## Developing a stronger organisational structure

The network team selected this case study because it showed how by being part of the YBI network, the organisation had been able to improve in many areas of its operations. By providing advice in one specific area – mentoring – the network team was able to influence other areas, such as communications. By facilitating sharing of knowledge from YBI's Brazilian member, the network team has been able to show how entrepreneurship training works in a similar context.

**What Changed:**

**Category of change:**

**Support received:**

**Before:**

**Caused:**

**After:**

**Why the Most Significant Change?**

Improvement in operations

### ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

- Mentoring
- Technology

When I joined in January 2012, the organisational structure was not very clearly defined, and it has taken time to develop.

We've received evaluations from YBI, we have received training and consultation that has helped us re-structure with time.

By now with the support from YBI we have really improved, first of all in having roles which are clearly defined, we have had the communications department that did not exist before, and there has been a very clear definition of what our roles are as an organisation and department.

I am in training and mentoring, and what I've found in place when I joined in January 2012 I that I had to do mentoring, training, purchasing stationary, you do so many things that could be done by another person. And as this continued at some point we've received the mentoring manager from London and she was very useful advising the project office.

We tried to bring volunteers and also developing the communications department. It was very poorly structured then, to the point a person didn't wish to stay long in the organisation. But now there is such a big difference, the working environment is wonderful.



### Additional Information A moment or memory:

The communications department never used to exist at all. And also the finance department we used to have part-time staff, which works in another organisation, a private company, that it would be hard to get time. We needed to get cheques and approval, and it would get delayed but now there is a difference. Now we have finance staff that works with us currently 5 days a week.

Previously, I'm not an expert in social media or communications, so you would find it was a demand on me to develop a mentor's page on Facebook, yet I'm not an expert there. Writing a newsletter to send out of volunteer members, that would be required of me, yet I'm not an expert. But now in communications there is an expert and they do it very well.

### Challenges:

One challenge is when staff doesn't understand how it should be. Until you get a third person coming in, that all of them will listen. It was a challenge because all the staff we had then, their level of experience was not very developed like now.

She (Hoang-Anh) advised on mentoring level, but that advice would be applied in all the other areas. Also we had evaluations being conducted in the 2012. We had evaluation conducted by DFID, and this was a YBI initiative. So the evaluation reports also helped a lot. So in the process all such kind of support from YBI contributed to us to start having learning sessions. At some point we sat together and we were able to say: we are very poor in teamwork. So what do we do?



**By now with the support from YBI we have really improved, first of all in having roles which are clearly defined, we have had the communications department that was not existing before, and there has been a very clear definition of what our roles are as an organisation and department.**

*YBI member, Africa*



### Anything didn't work?

I can't see an aspect that there is not working. When we find challenges, we try to bring together the learning we bring out of the challenges, like we did in mentoring. So what we do when we experience challenges, for example, the money we receive we also give out loans, the loans we give to entrepreneurs, and what will happen is that some entrepreneurs are not very effective implementing their businesses and making re-payments in the way we anticipated in the initial plan.

But what we do in the process, we have come up with ways to do business start-up more efficient, loan re-payments more efficient. In the initial stages we were giving out money directly but after the evaluation conducted by DFID, one of the recommendations they gave us is that we consider working with a micro-finance institution to give out loans. In that way, management of loans will give us greater efficiency.

So what I would say, there isn't really something that didn't work, but we have had aspects that had challenges. Through the challenges we have gathered together learning. After the learning, we have developed the programme and offerings in the different critical areas. So our loans, currently we have a partnership with a micro-finance institution, they administer the loans and we concentrate on training.



### Anything to improve?

One area is entrepreneurship training offering. YBI has offered significant support. YBI has invested in developing us as training coordinators. I have attended two international workshops in London that really added a lot of value to a person like myself. This has added value to us in training of entrepreneurs.

An area that YBI should consider to keep adding more value to us is how we can join hands through the network to come up with an entrepreneurship training module that is owned by YBI and can be used by the network members in their contexts.

Recently YBI visited us for the development of training capacities of our trainers and staff. In this instance YBI used Brazil – Aliança Empreendedora<sup>12</sup> – so they shared with us their training offering in Brazil and it was very important to us to see areas that are unique, that we can adopt in our context. So the context of Brazil and the context here, the communities we serve are more or less the same. If members who are working in contexts that are similar can come together, they get away developing an entrepreneurship module with the support of YBI. So then members now that within this context there is a module for them.

We are currently using a training programme developed by ILO here and we do get challenges, when it comes to buying training materials. There are times we don't have the money, so it becomes a big challenge. So if YBI could have a standardised entrepreneurship module for similar contexts, I think it will be very useful for our offerings.

# Annexes

## Annex 1: List of countries who participated in the MSC interviews

YBI Member / Country	YBI Member / Country	Interviews
Argentina	Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL), Technology	1
Bangladesh	MEL, Technology	1
Chile	Training	1
France	MEL, Technology	1
India	MEL	1
Italy	Mentoring	1
Jamaica	Mentoring	1
Jordan	MEL, Mentoring	1
Kenya – Mombasa	MEL, Technology	4
Kenya – Nairobi	Mentoring	1
Mongolia	MEL, Training	1
Paraguay	MEL	1
Peru	MEL, Mentoring	1
Russia	MEL, Technology	1
Serbia	MEL, Technology	1
Spain	MEL, Mentoring, Training	3
Sri Lanka	MEL, Mentoring, Technology	1
Sweden	Training	1
Trinidad and Tobago	Technology	1
Uganda	MEL, Technology, Mentoring	3
UK	Mentoring, Technology	2
<b>Total # Interviews</b>		<b>29</b>

## Annex 2: Methodology

### MSC question

The question posed to all interviewees during the MSC evaluation was:

*What has been the most significant change in your organisation since you received the YBI support?*

### Probing questions

A small number of specific probing questions were also identified to allow the evaluator to dig a little deeper into the main issues where necessary.

*(If not mentioned spontaneously) Have there been any changes as a result of the: mentoring/OMS/MEL/Training offering you've received? YES/NO What changes? Why?*

*What do you think didn't work from the capacity development services?*

*How can these services be improved? Do you have any concrete suggestions of services as part of the capacity development service?*

### Interviewees

We offered anonymity to participants, asking them to choose a nickname or avatar. We explained that for reporting they'd be only identified by that fictional name and the region they belong to: Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America & Caribbean. It can be difficult for staff to give negative feedback and YBI were keen for this evaluation to be as open as possible. We used this protected nickname in the learning event, MSC database and the report.

### MSC database

For future data use and safe storage, it was decided by YBI's Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning manager, Annie Barber, all the 29 stories would be stored in YBI's MSC database account, hosted by **mostsignificantchange.com** If you are interested in reading any of the stories, please get in touch with Annie Barber on **annie.barber@youthbusiness.org**

### Learning event

The event, held in April 2015, brought together the core YBI capacity development team initially to analyse the stories and a wider YBI staff group later on for selection of MSC stories.



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