Youth Skills & Enterprise Program (Jan 2023 - Oct 2025)

Sustainability Follow-up Report

Executive Summary

This report follows up 300 young people from a youth skills and enterprise program in Bomachoge Borabu, Borabu and Nyatike, six and twelve months after their training ended (months 18 and 24). It asks whether livelihoods, businesses and new practices lasted, and what helped or hindered them. We reached 84% of participants at month 18 and 80% at month 24. Participants without an alternative contact on file were harder to reach.

72% of those reached were self-employed, employed or in further training at month 24, compared with 74% at month 18. 121 participants sustained their livelihood, 27 fluctuated, 15 recovered and 20 dropped off. 38 were not productive at either point of the follow ups.

81% of businesses operating at month 18 were still operating at month 24, below the 90% target. Revenue held or grew for 58% of businesses with data. Regular record-keeping held at 51% (target 45%), with this counting only businesses still operating.

17 participants received finance by month 18 (KES 420,000 in total) and 35 market and support links had been taken up. Participants' businesses paid 64 other people at month 24, across 43 businesses.

The themes mentioned most in the qualitative data were records and business practices, capital and finance access as well as skills and confidence.

1. Purpose and approach

The program trained 300 young people aged 18 to 30 at central hubs in three sub-counties: Bomachoge Borabu (Kisii County), Borabu (Nyamira County) and Nyatike (Migori County), from January 2023 to October 2025. Four cohorts of 75 began three months apart, between January and October 2023. Each trained for 12 months, with follow-up at months 18 and 24, six and twelve months after training ended.

This follow-up asks whether livelihoods and businesses survive, whether new practices continue, whether funding links led anywhere, and what helps or hinders participants after support ends. Section 6 answers each of these questions.

We used mixed methods. A short phone survey with the same core questions was attempted with all participants at months 18 and 24, with up to three attempts and tracing through alternative contacts and community mobilisers. We also held 38 participant interviews (at months 18 and 24, some with the same people), 6 focus groups and 8 key-informant interviews with mentors, facilitators, lenders, a local leader and a disability-inclusion partner. Participants were chosen to cover every trajectory, so interview results explain observed patterns.

2. Participants Reached

The response rate was 84% at month 18 and 80% at month 24. Both were lower for participants who withdrew during training (51% and 63%), those with low attendance (71% at both points) and those with no alternative contact on file (75% and 71%). Of the 48 participants missed at month 18, 18 were traced and reached at month 24.

Group	Enrolled	Reached, month 18	Response, month 18	Reached, month 24	Response, month 24
Women	193	159	82%	151	78%
Men	107	93	87%	88	82%
Low attendance (below 75%)	95	67	71%	67	71%
Withdrew during the program	49	25	51%	31	63%
Alternative contact on file	248	213	86%	202	81%
No alternative contact on file	52	39	75%	37	71%
Reached at month 18	252	–	–	221	88%
Not reached at month 18	48	–	–	18	38%

Response by group, month 24.

3. Quantitative results

3.1 Livelihoods after training

Among those reached, the share running a business fell from 58% to 52%, while employment rose from 10% to 19%. Further training fell from 7% to 1% as courses finished, and the share not economically active rose from 5% to 10%. Women were slightly more likely than men to be productive at month 24 (73% against 69%).

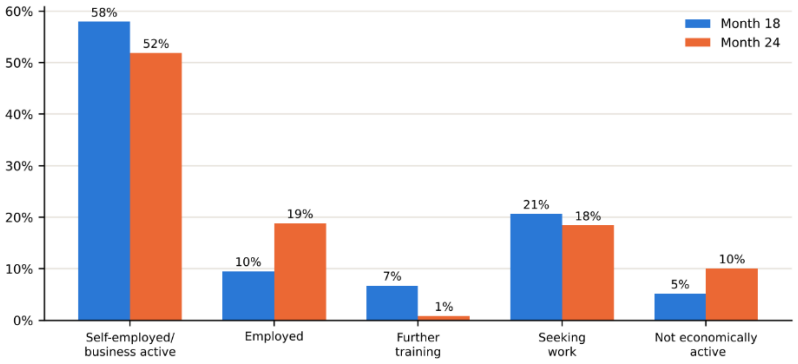


Figure 1. Livelihood status at month 18 and month 24 (share of those reached).

3.2 Trajectories

About four in ten participants sustained a productive livelihood. A further 14% fluctuated or recovered, which shows that outcomes move in both directions. 38 were not productive at either follow-up and 20 dropped off.

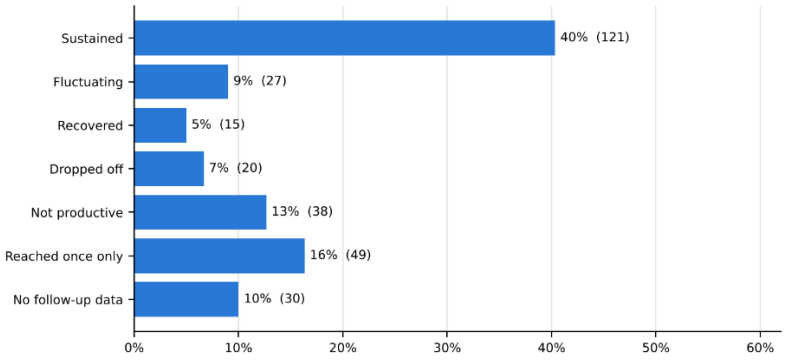


Figure 2. What happened to participants between month 18 and month 24 (share of all 300 enrolled).

3.3 Businesses

Of 130 businesses operating at month 18 and reached at month 24, 105 were still operating (81%) and 27 had closed and restarted.

Among 99 businesses with verified revenue at both points, revenue grew by more than 10% for 36, held within 10% for 21 and fell by more than 10% for 42.

For the same 87 businesses, average monthly revenue moved from KES 8,678 at endline to KES 9,290 at month 18 and KES 9,478 at month 24.

47% of operating businesses kept regular records at endline, 53% at month 18 and 51% at month 24, above the 45% target.

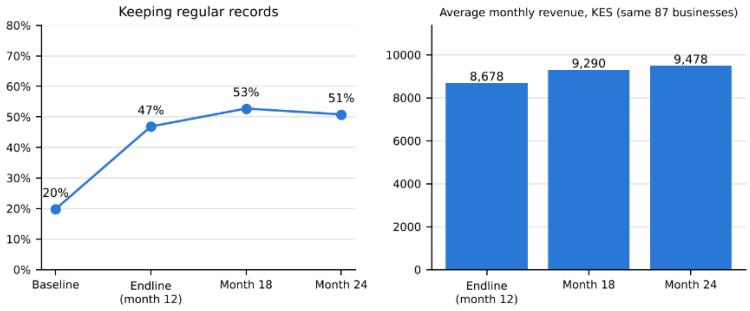


Figure 3. Record-keeping and revenue over time.

Indicator	Planned target	Result	Status
I15: Follow-up response at month 24	80%	80%	Close to target
I16: Productive livelihood at month 24	70%	72%	Target met
I17: Business survival, month 18 to month 24	90%	81%	Below target
I18: Regular records retained at month 24	45%	51%	Target met
I19: Revenue held or grew, month 18 to month 24	60%	58%	Close to target
I20: Paid jobs in participants' businesses (month 24)	40	64	Target met

Sustainability indicators against planned targets.

3.4 Differences between sub-counties

Productive livelihoods at month 24 were similar across the sub-counties (Bomachoge Borabu 70%, Borabu 76%, Nyatike 69%), but business survival differed: 92% in Borabu, 80% in Nyatike and 73% in Bomachoge Borabu.

Revenue held or grew least often in Nyatike (54%), and most often in Bomachoge Borabu (62%). Nyatike businesses paid the most people (27 jobs, against 22 in Borabu and 15 in Bomachoge Borabu).

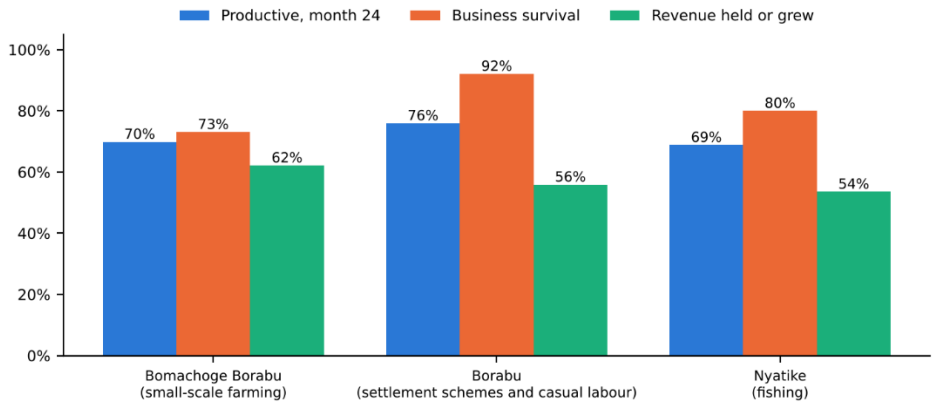


Figure 4. Follow-up results by sub-county.

3.5 Finance and market links: what came of them

Of 53 finance introductions, 17 led to funds received (KES 420,000), 17 were applied for or approved, 10 were declined and 9 had not progressed beyond the introduction.

Of 30 market links and 10 support links, 26 and 9 were taken up. Finance received by month 18 is 6.8% of those retained, well below the 20% planned, because fewer participants qualified than assumed.

4. End-of-project comparison of cohorts

After training, cohort 2 had the weakest follow-up: productive livelihood fell from 67% to 63%, only 62% of its businesses survived and revenue held or grew for 41%. Cohort 2's second follow-up fell in Apr 2025. Cohort 1, followed up in January, also saw a small fall in the productive share but kept 88% of its businesses. Cohort 3, followed up in July, had the highest productive share at month 24 (78%).

Season is one possible explanation for the cohort 2 result, but the pattern is not clean: cohort 1 shared a difficult season and did better, and cohort 4 followed up in the festive stocking period yet did not lead on every measure.

Of the 13 participants living with disability, 8 were productive at month 24.

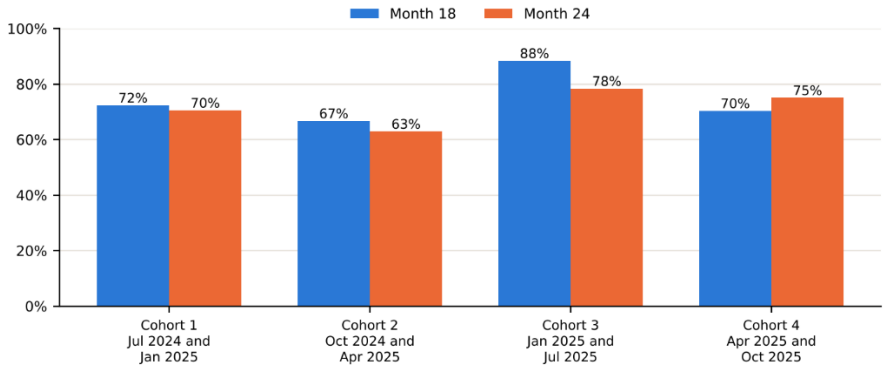


Figure 5. Productive livelihood at month 18 and month 24, by cohort (share of those reached). Labels show the follow-up dates.

5. Qualitative findings

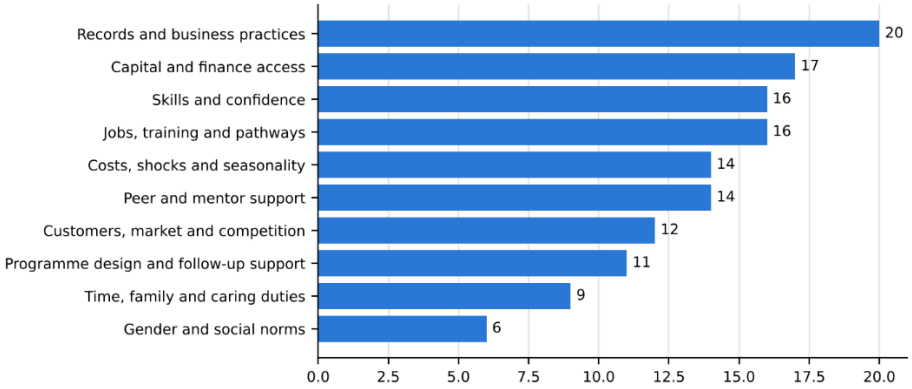


Figure 6. Mentions of each theme across all qualitative records.

5.1 Capital and finance

Those who dropped off named capital and time constraints most often, and several said they could restart with a small amount of capital. Lenders said first-time applicants often arrive without records or a group guarantee, and that repayment is hard in low-sales months. In Nyatike, men asked for finance for fishing gear and cold storage.

> *"I had to stop because family duties left me no time to trade. I would start again if I could get a small start-up amount."*
> Woman, Nyatike (dropped off), Month 24 interview, QI25

> *" We lend to those who can show their numbers; the training helps, but most first applicants still arrive without business records."*
> Key informant: partner lender, QI47

5.2 Costs, shocks and seasonality

Businesses followed the farming calendar and the fishing catch and were exposed to price rises and breakdowns. Those who restarted after a closure described keeping stock low to survive a bad month. A facilitator said deliverables were hardest to complete in planting and harvest weeks.

> *"I stopped for some time because I needed time out. I started again small, and now I keep the stock low, so a bad month does not finish me."*
> Man, Borabu (fluctuating), Month 24 interview, QI26

5.3 Records, peers and mentors

Mentors said the record-keeping habit fades without a reminder and that short monthly check-ins would help. Savings groups and regular mentor contact helped some through slow months.

> *"I keep my regular customers, but finding new ones is hard. My savings group lent me a little when the slow month came. I now pay someone to help me on busy days."*
> Woman, Borabu (sustained), Month 24 interview, QI30

5.4 Dropping off and recovering

Those who stopped trading wanted to restart with a small amount of capital. Those who recovered often began again with a smaller plan or moved into employment or training.

5.5 Women, casual labour and disability

Women raised caring duties and market-day timing and asked for earlier finish times and child-friendly arrangements. In Borabu a local leader said many young people depend on day work, so a training day can be a lost wage and a long journey to the hub is a barrier. A disability-inclusion partner said venue access and transport were the main barriers and that most participants could take part once these were sorted at the start.

6. What we learnt: answers to the follow-up questions

1. **Do livelihoods and businesses last? Mostly.** Most participants who were reached were still in a productive livelihood at month 24. Most businesses open at month 18 were still operating, though fewer than the target. Revenue held or grew for just over half of them, and together they paid a meaningful number of other people.
2. **Do new practices continue? Partly.** Regular record-keeping rose after training and held through month 24, staying above the target. This counts only businesses still operating, and mentors said the habit fades without a reminder.
3. **Did funding links lead anywhere? For a minority.** A small share of finance introductions led to funds received, well below the plan because fewer participants qualified than assumed. Market links were taken up far more often. Lenders said first-time applicants usually arrive without records or a guarantee.
4. **What helps and what hinders?** Peer and savings groups and regular mentor contact helped businesses through slow months. Capital, time and caring duties, farm and fishing seasons, day-wage work and distance to the hub held people back.
5. Survival, revenue and jobs varied between the sub-counties. Interviewees tied this to farm seasons, day-wage work and the fishing catch.
6. Participants without an alternative contact were harder to reach, and most of those missed at month 18 were never reached later.

7. Recommendations

1. **Continue support after training:** Make monthly mentor calls or messages routine through month 24. Offer restart support and job-readiness referrals to participants who close businesses.
2. **Prepare participants for funding early:** Start record-keeping from session 2 and loan-readiness coaching before session 11. Check applicants against lender requirements and agree on timelines and repayment terms early.
3. **Adapt support to each sub-county:** Keep the core curriculum but use local examples, schedules and catch-up options. Provide additional support for participants who live far from the hub.
4. **Act on early warning signs:** Use attendance, deliverables and record-keeping to identify participants at risk and provide extra mentor support before they drop out.
5. **Collect reliable contacts early:** Record two contacts and preferred contact times at registration. Begin tracing participants before follow-up starts.