

# Youth-led Evaluation across Five Countries

## Overview

The Youth Programme worked across five countries, Burkina Faso, Madagascar, Egypt, Lebanon and the Philippines, aiming to uphold young people's rights to education, protection and empowerment. But despite its wide reach, some real questions remained. Was the programme actually achieving its ambitious goals? Were young people being genuinely empowered, or just reached as beneficiaries? And how could future phases be strengthened?

Includovate was commissioned to answer these questions through an independent, multi-country evaluation. We used a Human Rights-Based Approach and participatory methods to assess the programme's coherence, relevance and effectiveness, while also involving young people as co-researchers. Tools were translated into four languages so that nobody was excluded, and we applied the Youth Empowerment Scale to measure real change in professional skills, psychosocial well-being, and social responsibility.



The evaluation found clear alignment with national policies, significant improvements in youth empowerment, and stronger capacity among partner organisations. Just as importantly, it produced credible recommendations that directly shaped the design of Phase 2 and helped the client secure sustained funding for 2024 to 2026.

## Methodology

Includovate's evaluation stood out for its youth-centred and inclusive methodology:

- **Human Rights-Based Framework:** Ensured that the evaluation focused on rights, equity, and empowerment, highlighting inequalities and opportunities for systemic change.
- **OECD DAC Criteria:** Applied coherence, relevance, and effectiveness lenses to assess the programme from multiple dimensions.
- **Diverse Data Collection:**



- Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and Most Significant Change (MSC) interviews.
- Online survey combined with direct observations for triangulation.
- A Youth Empowerment Scale Tool measured improvements in professional skills, psychosocial well-being, and social commitment.
- **Inclusivity Measures:** All tools were translated into four languages (Arabic, Malagasy, Filipino, French) to maximise accessibility.
- **Sensemaking Workshops:** Findings were validated and enriched through stakeholder input, ensuring accuracy and ownership.
- **Participatory Role of Youth:** Young people were involved in tool design, data collection, and analysis, thereby strengthening the credibility of the findings and building local capacity.

This approach turned the evaluation into more than a technical exercise. It became a learning journey for partners and young people themselves, with reflection and capacity building built in along the way.



## Key Findings

The evaluation confirmed that the Youth Programme had a real, positive impact across all five countries, strengthening young people's skills, confidence and opportunities while also improving partner capacity and policy alignment. The findings pointed to both what had worked well and where further investment was needed to sustain long-term change.

1. **Youth Empowerment:** Significant improvements in professional skills, self-esteem, confidence, and autonomy were recorded through the Youth Empowerment Scale, with young people reporting better emotional management and stronger social commitment.
2. **Partner Capacity Building:** Local CSOs enhanced their technical expertise, organisational structures, and service quality through tools such as ELSA and OCA, enabling them to collaborate more effectively with other actors.



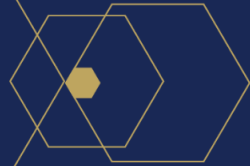
3. **Youth Integration:** The programme contributed to stronger socio-economic, professional, and educational integration through employability initiatives, life skills, and psychosocial support.
4. **Youth Participation:** Young people took active roles in governance, decision-making, and project design, with peer-to-peer approaches (youth clubs, leadership initiatives) proving highly effective in engaging peers.
5. **Protection Systems and Service Quality:** Training for social workers and educators improved psychosocial support, education, and protection services, strengthening relationships between youth and professionals.
6. **Policy Alignment:** Activities were consistent with national youth and protection policies, enhancing programme relevance and sustainability.
7. **Multi-Actor Collaboration:** The programme fostered partnerships that enabled local actors to join networks on youth, disability, and gender issues, developing synergies with government and other stakeholders.



### Includovate's Solutions and Recommendations

Based on these findings, Includovate proposed targeted improvements for Phase 2 (2024–2026):

- Strengthen Global Coherence: Adopt a more consistent global approach to foster inter-country learning and synergies.
- Clarify Youth Integration: Establish a clearer definition and related indicators to better track outcomes.
- Enhanced MEL Practices: Integrate learning indicators into the logframe and ensure regular feedback loops with youth.
- Intersectionality Focus: Move beyond combined gender/disability approaches and adopt a stronger intersectional lens.
- Parental and Community Engagement: Involve parents systematically and expand outreach through youth-preferred channels.
- Peer-to-Peer Strategy: Formalise and globalise the peer-to-peer model to ensure better preparation and strategic targeting beyond schools.
- Employment Pathways: Strengthen partnerships with employers, job centres, and vocational institutions to improve access to paid work.



- Safeguarding Enhancements: Introduce clearer reporting mechanisms and raise awareness among youth about protection and accountability.

## Conclusion

Includovate's youth-led evaluation went well beyond a traditional mid-term review. By combining a rights-based framework, inclusive methods and deep youth participation, it produced robust evidence that resonated with everyone involved, from young people to policymakers and donors.

The immediate impact was clear:

- Youth voices were amplified and integrated into programme governance.
- Partners gained actionable insights on how to strengthen their services.
- A shared understanding of “youth integration” and empowerment emerged across countries.

The long-term value was even greater:

- The findings underpinned donor confidence, leading to successful funding for Phase 2.
- Local partners and youth gained evaluation skills and a sense of ownership, creating capacity that will last beyond the programme cycle.
- Governments and civil society actors received a roadmap to embed youth empowerment more firmly in policy and practice.

This case shows how Includovate turns evaluation into a learning journey, one that doesn't just measure progress but also builds capacity, fosters ownership and drives systemic change. When young people move from being participants to co-creators of knowledge, programmes become more credible, inclusive and impactful.

