



**Fair & Sustainable  
Consulting**

# **Akazi Keza End-term evaluation**

**spark**

Utrecht, 25-07-2024

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## ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations	Abbreviation	Stands for
	ABIN	Agri-Business Incubation Networks
	AFORGER	Association des Formateurs Germe
	AK	Akazi Keza
	B(D)S	Business (Development) Services
	CEMAC	Compagnie d'Etudes Manageriales Et d'Appui-Conseils
	CREOP-JEUNES	Création des Opportunités pour les Jeunes
	CSO	Community Service Organization
	EKN	The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (in Bujumbura)
	F&S	Fair & Sustainable Consulting
	FGD	Focus Group Discussion
	IG	Infinity Group
	IGA	Income generating activities
	KII	Key Informant Interview
	M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
	MFI	Microfinance institutions
	MoVs	Means of Verification
	MTE	Mid-Term Evaluation
	MSD	Market Systems Development
	PAEEJ	Programme d'autonomisation économique et d'emploi des jeunes
	PND	Plan National de Développement du Burundi
	ToC	Theory of Change
	ToR	Terms of Reference
	ULT	Université du Lac Tanganyika

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## ***Evaluation***

This evaluation was commissioned to assess the programme's achievements and strategic impact based on the OECD-DAC criteria. It aimed to measure the outcomes, identify best practices, extract lessons learned, and provide actionable recommendations for future initiatives.

## ***Programme background***

Akazi Keza (July 2020 – December 2024<sup>1</sup>) is a programme funded by the EKN (total programme budget Euro 4,044,787) and implemented by SPARK through local partners. The programme aims for the economic empowerment/inclusion of young men and women in rural and peri-urban Burundi. The programme operates across six provinces with interventions in skill development & match-up, entrepreneurship (start-ups), business scaling (scale-up), and making 3 agri-business centres self-sufficient.

## ***Findings***

Outcome 1 -Skill-up & Match-Up: The programme successfully implemented a robust internship system where youth were placed in various industries according to their fields of study. The training component, handled by carefully selected partners CREOP-Jeunes and Infinity Group (IG), successfully addressed the skills gap that held youth back in acquiring jobs. A high level of employer satisfaction with interns' performance often translated into job offers post-internship.

Outcome 2 - Start-up: The program provided critical support to start-ups, predominantly to those active in the crafts sector. The support centred on training in business development, co-financing of equipment (matching grants), proximity coaching, and legal formalization. These interventions succeeded by and large to kick-start the businesses of these youth. They have a better grasp of what it means to be an entrepreneur and understand what is needed for their businesses to generate money. In addition, they feel and take responsibility for creating economic opportunities, rather than waiting around for those to materialize.

Outcome 3 - Scale-up: Focused on established SMEs, the main intervention was proximity coaching aimed at facilitating growth in terms of turn-over (and profit), staff employed and sustainability of their business models. The scale-ups proved to be engines for employment creation, both directly and indirectly through increased demand for inputs and services. The annual "Jua Kali Kazi Nguvu" East-African Business Fair was a major highlight, providing crucial market exposure and networking opportunities (Kampala 2022 and Bujumbura 2023).

Outcome 4 - Agri-business centres: The agri-businesses centres were inherited by AK from the ABIN programme. For all centres holds that they are in a much better position now than that they were at the start of AK, support towards building a capable management structure was instrumental in this achievement. Another achievement is that AK's support has led to current management investing

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<sup>1</sup> This end-date includes a 6 months no-costs extension that was granted to finish the handover of the Honey Centre, Agri-Business Centre and PrepAkazi Platform with selected local partners. The activities and results of 2024 have not been included in the evaluation as data collection took place in Q1 of 2024.

significant own contributions in the centres. The evaluators found it difficult, however, to assess the operational and financial sustainability post-program support as relevant challenges that are intrinsic to their operation are valued differently by respondents.

## **Conclusions**

*Relevance:* The program was highly relevant to the needs of the young men and women, addressing their urgent need for (self-)employment and the skill and experience gap that prevented them from realizing better economic outcomes themselves. This applies to the interventions of outcome 1, 2 and 3. The interventions were also aligned with the national and local government's priorities on youth employment and economic development. The programme is also relevant to the priorities of the donor, particularly private sector development and empowering young people.

*Coherence:* The evaluators focused on the coherence between AK on the one hand and PADANE, PADFIR and PAEEJ on the other hand. The former two are, like AK, EKN funded programmes for which SNV and Cordaid are in the lead respectively and which share some objectives with AK. PAEEJ, meanwhile, is a large Burundian government programme that includes instruments bear some similarities to AK, e.g., internships. PADANE, furthermore, provided direct financing, while AK and PADFIR encouraged connections with microfinance institutions (MFIs). Despite obvious differences, some initiatives undertaken jointly, ensured complementarity. For example, PADFIR supported MFIs like ISHAKA, which provided loans to AK entrepreneurs, and AK-supported businesses purchased from PADANE-supported companies (for instance Chickens). The AK programme also initiated collaboration with other initiatives, such as a pilot project with the Dutch FinTech MoneyPhone to facilitate microcredit to 50 beekeepers. This pilot failed due to a combination of the following issues; a lack of commitment from Burundi Lend & lease (the local partner); quality of the Burundian IT infrastructure; inability of lenders to repay the loan; and, MoneyPhone not being present locally. While the pilot was discontinued, a boost to honey production was realized. Additionally, AK collaborated with the University of Lake Tanganyika to establish the PrepAkazi platform, aiding graduates in acquiring job market skills and internships. However, concerns about the platform's sustainability post-AK programme were noted.

*Effectiveness:* AK is projected to realize more than 90% of all its KPIs' targets and the evaluation shows that the activities under each of the three outcomes effectively create and match jobs for youth. Discussions with male and female participants showed that the interventions were appreciated to help overcome the most relevant identified challenges for the youth targeted and that they are more job ready, are better entrepreneurs and that their businesses have grown. The sole exception may be the challenges related to access to finance, as for many entrepreneurs these appear to be insurmountable. A significant variance in job quality, does mean that the impact of having such a job differs.

*Efficiency:* The programme managed to implement its activities in a timely manner despite the challenging local context and significant (global) challenges including COVID-19, fuel shortages and inflation. The evaluators were also asked to validate a unit-price per job created in AK but have refrained from doing so. The main reason for which was the variance in the type of jobs the programme created.

*Sustainability:* SPARK played an important role in demand-based strengthening of local implementing partners' capacity. SPARK's support as well local partners' participation in executing the programme has led to them securing new contracts in which they will continue to provide crucial business development services and job matching services.

The sustainability of the agribusiness centres is difficult to assess for the evaluators as encouraging current results (e.g., better management and approaching break-even) are difficult to weigh versus challenges that appear to be intrinsic to the business models in their specific contexts.

*Impact:* The program had a profound impact on the economic inclusion of participating youth, including vulnerable youth. The economic outcomes realized for them, furthermore, also trickle down to their dependents and community members, e.g., those that are being employed in supported businesses. The evaluators have witnessed increased employment, better business performances, and enhanced social status for participating youths. However, this impact was difficult to quantify, quantify as Akazi Keza was not designed with an impact assessment in mind. As such, Akazi Keza's Inception Phase comprised a Context Analysis & Strategy Implementation Report and not profound baseline, see also Akazi Keza Mid-Term Review Report).

### **Overarching recommendations**

- Using SPARK's Global impact measurement guide that was developed in 2023 in design and planning of future programmes, sufficient resources should be dedicated to facilitating a high-quality impact measurement and assessment.
- The Netherlands embassy should ensure that funded programmes adopt synergistic and complementary approaches to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of collective donor-funded actions and allow for portfolio's to collectively address systemic constraints.

### **Recommendations skill-up**

- Extend internship durations to 6-12 months, particularly for technical fields, to ensure adequate skill development.
- Encourage entrepreneurial ventures post-internship by facilitating access to loans and coaching/mentoring, making business start-ups more feasible for interns.
- Adjust internship compensation as it is often deemed insufficient by increasing the contribution by employers, though co-financed internships seem still needed, especially in the provinces where the private sector is not very developed.

### **Start-ups and Scale-ups**

- Entrepreneurs who already have a business have the intrinsic drive to be an entrepreneur, have some experience with entrepreneurship and are more likely to have the skills needed for the occupation in which they are. Future programmes should consider whether these benefits, given the programme's context and ultimate aims, outweigh the potential results of supporting start-ups. This means that in one context, a programme focuses on scale-ups (exclusively), while in another context, start-ups are the focus.

- Focus on continuous access to finance, as SMEs typically need recurring loans as opposed to access to finance as a one-off loan or grant, consequently program duration should also be sufficient to ensure this.
- In future programmes, the evaluators advise to link program cohorts through platforms like WhatsApp groups to facilitate peer support, business opportunities, and B2B relationships.
- Differentiate support between start-ups and scale-ups, tailoring assistance to be able to meet the (advanced) needs of growing businesses. And explore mentorship programs with established entrepreneurs to provide guidance and network opportunities to young entrepreneurs.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background to the evaluation

The ToR for the end-evaluation of SPARK's Akazi Keza (AK) programme was shared by SPARK with F&S on December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023. As SPARK had obtained a waiver for sole sourcing for this assignment, no other parties were invited to provide an offer. Importantly, SPARK opted for and the EKN agreed to sole-sourcing as F&S had completed the MTR<sup>2</sup> for AK too and it was thought that F&S would be able to provide good value for money building the end-evaluation on the MTR. The EKN granted the exemption to SPARK under the condition that EKN takes part in the reference group and the report is publicized in the public domain. The former foresees a quality control role for EKN, specifically in carefully approving deliverables. For the evaluation, F&S offered a team consisting of Wouter van Bruggen and Canésius Ndayikeza. A first proposal was submitted on January the 8<sup>th</sup> 2024. After feedback, a revised proposal was submitted and approved on January the 29<sup>th</sup>. The contract between SPARK and F&S was signed on January the 29<sup>th</sup> 2024. The fieldwork by the international consultant took place between March 17<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>, which was followed by some additional interviews by the local consultant up until April 5<sup>th</sup>.

## 1.2 Objectives of the evaluation

The ToR as approved by the EKN states three objectives for the end-evaluation:

- 1- Evaluation of results (confirmation of the results, outcomes/outputs, over-achievement/under-achievement, causes/reasons, linkage with Mid-Term Review (MTR) AK);
2. Identify key success factors & key fail factors and from here on define best practices (approaches) in relation to the targeted objectives (in the context of post-conflict countries, fragilities (fuel & energy & foreign currency shortages, rule of law, among others), cultural context (gender transformative), time period and set targets / achieved results and NEXUS perspective for youth);
3. Key lessons learned & how to apply/adapt this in the design of new programs (i.e. value inputs for proposal and baseline for a possible new program).

The evaluation follows the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

## 1.3 Programme description

AK (July 2020- June 2024) is implemented by SPARK Burundi, through local partner organizations. Currently these partners are: CREOP, Infinity Group (IG), CEMAC and AFORGER<sup>3</sup>. A small number of independent (local) experts also implements (has implemented) elements of AK. These elements include training/expertise in various value chains such as honey, fish and fruit processing as well as coaching, also of local partner staff. The programme is funded by the EKN and has a total budget of Euro 4,044,787. The mix of programme activities is executed in six provinces of Burundi: Makamba, Rumonge, Gitega, Cibitoke, Bubanza and Bujumbura.

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<sup>2</sup> The report of the mid-term review can be found here: [link](#)

<sup>3</sup> AFORGER is still a partner but negative feedback from entrepreneurs led to downscaling. Specifically, SPARK continued with only those two AFORGER's business coaches that provided the agreed upon quality of coaching. Meanwhile, some of the SMEs that were supported by Aforger were transferred to CEMAC, while others were let go.

The objective of the programme is to improve and enhance economic prospects and job opportunities for rural and peri-urban youth (through creation of 6000 direct, indirect, permanent and temporary jobs in cooperation with the local private sector). To this end the programme has 4 pillars that should contribute towards this objective. Findings on each of these pillars (outcomes) are provided in dedicated sections that follow this one (4.2. to 4.6.), the four pillars (also called outcomes) are:

1. **Skill-up & Match-Up:** Enhanced skills of young job seekers through training and coaching according to skills demanded by the labour market and placement into professionals internships. This helps these young job seekers overcome the observed skills gap. Improved matching services, furthermore, are expected to result in more youth in jobs. The activities under outcome 1 should result in 2000 jobs (1200 internships and 800 jobs) created via matching.
2. **Start-up:** Igniting of promising start-ups through tailored training, coaching and improved access to finance. The activities under outcome 2 should result in 500 jobs created.
3. **Scale-up:** Scaling- up of capable SMEs through training, individual coaching and improved access to finance. The activities under outcome 3 should result in 3,500 jobs created.
4. **Sustainable business models for 3 selected agri-business centres.** Support to these centres should capacitate them to continue operating independently after 2023, without having to rely on external funding.

The corresponding updated programme ToC is provided below and includes the 4 pillars, a specific objective, the assumptions and expected impact. For a reflection on the ToC, the evaluators refer to the MTE and section 3.6. of this report, as only the target numbers are updated following the 2022 MTE.

Figure 1 Updated ToC for AK

Theory of Change AkaziKeza				
Impact:	To contribute to increased stability of Burundi through poverty reduction of rural and peri-rural communities in Burundi.			
Specific Objective: Improved and enhanced economic prospects and job opportunities for rural and peri-urban youth through job creation in cooperation with the local private sector: 6000 jobs (direct, indirect, permanent (>6 months) & temporary)				
Outcomes	<b>Skill-Up &amp; Match-Up</b> 2000 direct jobs (internships & permanent) 1200 internships (3 months) 800 permanent jobs (>6 months)	<b>2. Start-Up (&lt;1 year) Support:</b> 500 jobs (direct & indirect) 250 direct 100 permanent	<b>3. Scale up (&gt;1 year) support to SMEs:</b> 3500 jobs (direct & indirect) 1750 direct 1100 permanent	<b>4. Sustainable Agri-Business Centres</b> 3 Public-Private Partnerships
Outputs	<b>1. Matching to jobs:</b> 2500 Youth trained for Job Market PrepAkazi Soft Skill-Learning Realised & Functional (>500 youth)	<b>2. Support to start -ups:</b> 400 potentials trained 104 start-ups created & coached 65 A2F / A2Equipment / Matching Grants	<b>3. Expand existing SMEs:</b> 1083 existing trained 333 coached & scaled 235 A2F	<b>4. Sustainable incubators:</b> 3 Centres handed over  Key-Condition: financially independent via break-even
Inputs	Funding from EKN; (Local) partner network, knowledge and capacity; SPARK expertise; Global M&E; Learning, knowledge management and sharing; Continuous Beneficiary feedback.			
Assumptions:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Job creation, in both the formal but also in the informal sector are important interventions to promote stability in Burundi</li><li>• Increased support, enhanced skills and proximity business + technical for Start-Ups &amp; Scale-Ups lead to increased business creation, expansion and jobs among youth</li><li>• Partners &amp; Stakeholders collaborate with transparency and mutual respect</li><li>• Political, social and economic context remains sufficiently stable to implement activities, also in relation to Covid-19</li><li>• Governments and donors continue to prioritise employment and entrepreneurship for youth</li></ul>				

## 2. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Evaluation approach

The evaluation team approached this evaluation with the aim of answering to the three objectives for the evaluation provided in the ToR (see 1.2.).

The ToR also provided 15 evaluation questions (included in Annex 1) which are answered based on the data collected. The basis for evaluating AK is its theory of change (Toc) and the evaluators have loosely adhered to the principles of realist evaluation to establish what worked for whom, to what extent, under what circumstances and over what duration.

The findings of the evaluation served as input for achieving objective 2 (key success and fail factors in the Burundi context) which helped achieve objective 3 (key lessons learned and recommendations). This mandated an iterative approach and the evaluators have attempted to adapt questions based on what they learned in previous engagements. Triangulation of findings was central to the approach.

### 2.2 Data Collection

The evaluation team used three main tools for data collection: a document review, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussion (FGDs).

#### **Document review**

The desk review informed the evaluation team on the programme implementation strategy and activities, policies (of the donor and the Burundian government), various studies conducted and (preliminary) results of AK. Besides directly contributing to the evaluation questions, the desk study also informed all other data collection tools. The review considered the secondary data sources provided to the evaluators by SPARK. Secondary data is primarily used to contextualise and/or triangulate the primary data, and thus inform the synthesis of the findings keeping in mind the evaluation questions. Please find the list of documents made available to the consultants in annex 4.

#### **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)**

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) are qualitative interviews with persons who have first-hand knowledge on the topic of interest, allowing for in-depth answers and divergent views that may be difficult to collect in group settings. The purpose of the KIIs was to collect qualitative information from a wide range of people – participants in programme activities, staff, experts, local partners and key stakeholders such as relevant officials.

The evaluation team ensured that the set of respondents was as representative as possible to include the different relevant groups while considering the limited time in the field. Draft interview guides consisting of probing questions about the respondent's role in activities related to each outcome of the programme were used in these meetings. Being semi-structured, the KIIs allowed for free discussion of specific issues deemed relevant to the respondents.

#### **Focus Group Discussion (FGDs)**

FGDs were carried out with AK participants in the various activities/outcomes. The aim of the FGDs was to understand how the programme impacted their lives, what they perceived as the most valuable outcomes of the programme and possible avenues for improvement. The discussions also focused on

the perceived sustainability of results, e.g., how do they see the future of their business? As best as possible, the evaluators requested FGD participants to reflect on each other's answers and discuss to collect rich data. This worked in most instances.

## 2.3 Sampling strategy and fieldwork

The consultants used stratified random sampling to select participants for KIIs and FGDs based on lists of programme participants. In sampling, the consultants have aimed for the inclusion of participants that represent as much as possible the breadth of the programme. That means that participants from both urban and rural locations are included that are active in various value chains. Where there are more partners working on one outcome, the evaluators took care to include participants that are supported by all local partners. Finally, the consultants have attempted to include an equal number of male and female programme participants.

## 2.4 Process of the evaluation

Overall, the process of the evaluation was smooth. SPARK went out of its way to facilitate the evaluators in their fieldwork and was, overall, very accommodating. As sampling was left to the evaluators, they had a largely free reign in selecting whom to engage with in the evaluation after an initial demarcation based on locations for the fieldwork. After an introduction by AK or local partner staff, ample room was provided for the evaluators to engage with participants in confidentiality. As such, the impression of the evaluators was that respondents felt relatively unburdened to speak their mind freely.

## 2.5 Limitations

- Evaluators engaged only with a very limited number of employees of supported start- and scale-ups, while this group represents a significant share of the 6000 jobs (to be) created and matched. For a more complete picture of what the programme means for indirect beneficiaries, additional FGDs could have been held, at the expense of engagement with participants who are direct beneficiaries of the programme. The same applies to those indirect beneficiaries that are indirectly employed, e.g., in not supported companies. The choice was made to predominantly focus on direct beneficiaries of AK.
- Given the available days for fieldwork, the consultants could not cover all provinces in which the programme works. Peculiarities in the programme's performance that are related to specific areas, therefore, may not have been included in the review.
- While SPARK and the donor are interested in generating knowledge of the impact of the programme, the scope and budget Akazi Keza as well as this end-term evaluation in combination with the unavailability of relevant baseline data (Akazi Keza Inception Phase comprised a Context Analysis & Strategy Implementation Report (and not profound baseline, see also Akazi Keza Mid-Term Review Report). , does not allow for an impact assessment.<sup>4</sup> The evaluators did keep an eye out for anecdotal evidence of socio-economic impacts of the programme for participants and their dependents.

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<sup>4</sup> The inception report provides in a more detailed discussion on what the evaluators deem possible or not in terms of impact.

## 3. FINDINGS

This section provides an overview of relevant findings of the evaluation grouped according to AK programme elements as well as relevant themes topics. By presenting these findings here, chapter 5, in which the answers to the evaluation questions are presented can be more concise.

### 3.1. Outcome 1

Outcome 1, or the skill-up & match-up component of AK, concerns the placement of young people in internships. For this component, SPARK realised partnerships with CREOP and Infinity Group (IG) who are responsible for advanced labour market skills demand analysis, selecting youth & enterprises, training of selected young people, coaching them during their internships (including extra trainings based on their needs), facilitating youth into internships that eventually become (permanent) jobs.

The evaluators have exchanged with (former)interns and learned from them that the majority appreciates what participating in the skill-up & match-up component of AK brought them. It is crystal clear that one of the main impediments to entering the labour market (or self-employment) after completing their technical education, is the lack of work experience and technical skills. And this is exactly the challenge that the skill-up component of AK helps them overcome.

The skill-up component of AK provides two main components that are highly complementary: the employability training provided by the local partner (CREOP or IG) and actual working experience with an employer. In the view of those (former) interns, employability training equipped them to deal with everyday challenges at their place of internship, including managing their own expectations, being somewhat more patient where it comes to financial benefits derived and professional behaviour towards colleagues and customers.

The experience with the tasks relevant to their profession, furthermore, was of enormous importance too as interns explained that their education had been too theoretical. That is, materials to practice with are often missing or only available in very limited quantities. The materials/machinery they were supposed to work with during their education, furthermore, were often outdated or in a state of disrepair.

Finally, as employers are asked to pay their AK interns, it means that they are expected to function much more like regular employees than typical Burundian interns. The latter are often only utilized for menial tasks and sit around to watch a lot. AK interns on the other hand, are expected to gradually pick-up more and more of the available work. And, according to the admittedly small sample of employers with whom the evaluators engaged they are good at what they do. A hospital director for example, explained that the interns in no-way underperformed when compared to regular employees. Given how pleased he was with their performance, it comes as no surprise that he hired most of them afterwards. As the same director explained that he had literally hundreds of applications once a position opened-up, AKs internship programme proves to be a true springboard for participants.

## **PrepAkazi**

PrepAkazi<sup>5</sup> was not part of the original scope of the evaluation and was added while in the field as the topic came up a number of times. As such, the evaluation deals only superficially with the intervention. The PrepAkazi platform exists next to the other interventions under outcome 1, its goal was to start a career development centre and to realize a cost saving. The platform offers trainings that contribute to increased employability (and ultimately employment) under outcome 1 and was supposed to be not only accessible to ULT students but also others after development of a revenue model by ULT. ULT and SPARK entered into a partnership to develop the platform recognizing the need for such training among university students. The platform was technically developed by Doutti Digital for AK and Université du Lac Tanganyika, while content was further developed by Maison Marc as PrepAkazi was not part of the initial scope of the evaluation, no users of the platform were asked about their experience. Over 500 youth completed the training, which led to internships and jobs for some of them.

The partnership between ULT and SPARK went sour over time due different expectations related to , amongst other things, financial commitments<sup>6</sup>. Nonetheless, SPARK aims to recycle Prepakazi as a platform in new programming but will do so without ULT. ULT, meanwhile, could opt to continue making use of the platform too. However, the evaluators do not know if they plan on doing so.

### **Challenges:**

- AK offers three-month internships which may be long enough for trainees in fields such as catering, but not in more technically demanding fields, such as (electro-)mechanics and ICT. This situation was observed in young people who had completed their internship in the electromechanical equipment maintenance department of the coffee picking and packaging company in Gitega. The trainees revealed that the three-month internship they had been given as part of the programme was not long enough for them to master the maintenance of all the machinery used in the company. The issue of the insufficient duration of the internship was also raised by young people who had completed an internship in the maintenance of computer equipment. They felt that three months was not sufficient to acquire the skills they needed to be autonomous enough to set up their own business or to be competitive on the job market.
- Many interns express a desire to become self-employed rather than employed after their internship. They feel that this offers them more economic opportunities. While the evaluators are somewhat skeptical that these inexperienced youth can successfully run a business without additional support (e.g., coaching), it may be worthwhile exploring if challenges to starting a business such as starting capital, can be reduced.

### **Good practice:**

In AK, interns receive a salary which is made up of one part paid by the employer (minimum 50%) and one part paid by AK. Payment of interns by employers is unusual in Burundi but appears to work in the AK programme. This demonstrates the extent to which employers value interns. Furthermore, it

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<sup>5</sup> <https://prepakazi-ult.com/>

<sup>6</sup> Due to time constraints the evaluators were unable to dig deeper into what it is exactly that caused this disagreement, nevertheless, ULT and SPARK are currently discussing how to continue the platform (part of 6 month NCE Akazi Keza)

is a practice that is a potential indication of systemic change. For the evaluators to conclude that the programme effected systemic change, however, the practice of paying interns should have been observed to be reproduced outside of the programme (e.g., with interns that are non-programme participants or employers not involved in AK). The training provided to interns is valued by employers as they observe the interns through AK to be more employable than others and attribute this to the support these interns receive from IG/CREOP.

#### **Recommendations:**

- A longer internship period of 6 – 12 months, especially for those jobs that require more technical skills.
- Facilitate those that have finished their internship in starting their own (group-)business. While the interns requested a grant, the evaluators suggest that facilitating a loan would be more sustainable. Two considerations should be taken into account before following up on this recommendation: does the internship duration (currently 3 months) build adequate technical skills for independently running a business, and does offering interns this opportunity diminish the appeal for employers as their interns may be less likely to continue as employees.
- Interns explained that the pay they received was too low, e.g., to pay for travel related costs. If the programme would want to make any changes in response, the evaluators would recommend to not reduce the share of the costs paid by employers as that would reduce the programme's push for increasing how interns are valued.
- Allow candidates to approach a potential employer themselves rather than depend on employers found by SPARK's local partners alone. The evaluators can imagine that this would lead to potentially better matchmaking but also foresee some serious challenges, reviewing a greater number of employers is one of the more prominent ones.

## **3.2 Outcome 2**

Most of the start-ups that were supported by AK had, at the time of the evaluation, progressed into scale-ups having completed their 1-year of support. This support, provided by CEMAC (and CREOP for a selected few), consists of support in the formalization of the business, business development trainings and proximity coaching. This mix of interventions helped young men and women that generally lacked (formal) entrepreneurial experience to try their hand at doing business, oftentimes in a (small) group.

The start-ups with whom the evaluators engaged in Bujumbura explained that the most important results of CEMAC's support was a better understanding of the profitability of their businesses, understanding what is needed to secure a loan (although that is no guarantee for getting one) and help with the formalization of their business. The latter also includes, so the evaluators understand, formal, written contracts for staff. The start-ups supported by CREOP, in addition, explained that a key take-away of the support was the learning to concentrate their activities into one core business activity rather than an array of activities. The entrepreneurs' participation in AK also led to a change in their mind-set. This translates into a shared understanding that they themselves are responsible for creating economic opportunities, rather than waiting for others to offer these to them. The good news is that they also report to have gained the confidence needed for doing so through their participation in AK.



### Challenges:

- Accessing credit is explained to be a major challenge for the (former) start-ups interviewed. The main reason that is provided for these difficulties is the lack of collateral. The evaluators understand that accessing loans is difficult and that a sustainable solution is not so easily devised as most potential solutions come with serious downsides.
- Despite technical coaching and visits to entrepreneurs in other regions that were provided through the programme, some participants felt they lacked skills and equipment to be more innovative or efficient than their competitors.

### Recommendations:

- Explore if cohorts that are in the programme together can be linked, e.g., in WhatsApp groups. This is a low-cost way to establish potentially sustainable networks to explore peer-support (e.g., how do you balance family life with running a business), business opportunities (competitions, fairs, etc.) and even and B2B relations. If funds are available, it is worthwhile to explore if peer-to-peer coaching sessions can be facilitated.

## 3.3 Outcome 3

The evaluators note that there is significant variety in the measure of professionalization from one scale-up to the other. And the same applies to their size in terms of turn-over and number of employees. This is not surprising as it is very difficult to determine up-front which business will take-off and which one will plateau. It stands to reason that funds for scaling-up are best spent towards those companies that just need a little push to take-off.

Entrepreneurs explain that their participation in AK has brought them increased skills, a better grasp of their business and business growth. The latter includes growth in terms of turnover/profit as well as the number of employees. Interestingly this was not always explained to result in an improvement in the economic situation for their families, though this was expected to come over time, provided that their incomes would grow further. Through their coaching they had also learned not to expect unreasonably fast improvements, but to be patient. For those that did observe change, they reported to e.g., be able to send their kids to school, buy better clothing or even get married.

The evaluators also observed differences between the scale-ups in the palm oil value chain and for example those in crafts. This was explained by participants to result from differences in their initial point of departure, those in palm oil typically have land. Those in crafts are often IDPs. Naturally such differences also impact what challenges are most pressing, as access to land means that securing a loan is much easier.

The business fair (Jua Kali Kazi Nguvu) in December 2023 in Bujumbura (and in 2022 in Kampala) proved to be a highlight for those entrepreneurs the evaluators engaged with and that had participated in the fair<sup>7</sup>. Not only did they value the (additional) sales realized during the fair, but the whole experience that resulted in exposure for their company as well as meeting numerous other entrepreneurs within and outside of their respective sectors was a valuable experience.

The great majority of the entrepreneurs the evaluators engaged with asked for additional assistance in securing capital. While most agreed with AK's approach that they should get that through loans,

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<sup>7</sup> According to the 2023 narrative report, a total of 47 entrepreneurs participated.



they saw few opportunities to secure those by themselves. Collateral was most often mentioned to be the main problem. For the evaluators it is not easy to determine whether collateral was indeed the most pressing issue as the evaluators observed that entrepreneurs aim for rather high loan amounts. Staff of AK, for example, deemed the loan amount that MFIs are willing to provide not being in line with what entrepreneurs expect, to be a bigger challenge.

### **Challenge**

- Some of the scale-ups felt that, once they had matured beyond a certain point, coaches were not always able to provide them with the support they needed.
- Once the programme ends, coaches are likely out of reach of entrepreneurs as they are no longer being paid. Meanwhile, some of these SME's are still quite vulnerable and may depend on continued support.
- KPI 6 (see also 4.3.1.), about the growth of existing businesses, lacks elaboration. Questions such as, when is turn-over or profit growth significant enough to qualify as successful scaling, are not answered.

### **Recommendation**

- Ensure that the support provided to scale-ups is distinct from the support provided to start-ups and tailored toward scale-ups' or individual start-up's needs. This may require additional training to business coaches.
- Explore if mentoring of scale-ups by established entrepreneurs is feasible. From similar programming in West Africa, the evaluators find that mentors that are engaged based on their intrinsic motivation to help young entrepreneurs get ahead and not by monetary rewards, are most likely to help these young people overcome challenges by sharing their own experience and sharing of their network<sup>8</sup>. It is quite feasible that those mentors do require some training, e.g., in coaching, to ensure that they make use of tried and tested tools. If the programme can provide such training, this might be an additional draw for potential mentors provided that it does not take too much time. Support by mentors is likely more sustainable than by paid coaches alone, as the former relations are more likely to persist once the programme ends.

## **3.4 Outcome 4**

The evaluators have assessed the agribusiness centres predominantly with a view towards their sustainability after SPARK disengages. However, this proved to be quite challenging. Generally speaking, all three of the centres appear to hold certain promise given the equipment they contain, and the effort invested by SPARK to find and foster better management structures. The evaluators are convinced that the centres now are in a significantly better position than they were earlier, e.g., during the end-evaluation of ABIN. On the other hand, the evaluators' engagement with the management (in some case users) and respective experts as well as during site-visits, also gave rise to a more mixed picture. The elephant in the room is that during the visits to the respective centres, there was no activity to speak of in any of them, for various reasons. While the evaluators understand that activity is sometime seasonal, or periodic, management in all cases was unable to provide much clarity on when and how processing would resume as they explained to be facing difficult to navigate challenges

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<sup>8</sup> This is the experience of the evaluators in other programmes, e.g., in West-Africa, i.e., Mali.

intrinsic to the production process. To do justice to that mixed impression, the evaluators provide a list of strengths and challenges to sustainable operation per centre which were deducted from the literature, primary data collected and field visits.

### 3.4.1 Rutumo fish centre

#### **Strengths**

The Rutumo fish centre is the only facility of its kind in the Burundian context, as there is currently no other centre specialising in fish freezing equipped with similar facilities. As a result, the centre is a source of pride for the fishing industry in Burundi and of interest to all those involved in it. Interviews conducted with fishing sector entrepreneurs revealed a strong interest in using the centre's freezing and refrigeration equipment. Discussions with the fishermen's federation, which managed the centre at the time of the evaluation, confirmed this. In fact, the federation is in negotiations with contractors who can use the freezing and refrigeration equipment with fish imported from Tanzania.

The facility for smoking fish is of interest to a women's cooperatives that occasionally sells smoked fish, predominantly when there are bigger events. Smoked fish fetches a relatively high price and if there is demand can be profitable, as the evaluators learned from the female entrepreneur selling smoked fish.

Finally, the high costs of maintaining the fish centre and its equipment including the cold rooms, can for a large part be covered with what is earned through solar powered charging of batteries that are utilized to operate the lights needed for fishing at night. This is a popular service which is used daily by numerous fishermen. All in all, this revenue stream is a significant contributor to the centre's overall income while requiring minimal operating costs.

#### **Challenges**

Despite the significant potential of the Rutumo fish centre, the evaluation identified numerous challenges to its long-term sustainability.

The first and most significant challenge is linked to a reduction in the quantity of fish in Burundi's territorial waters<sup>9</sup>. As a result, local fish production is declining significantly. This has diminished the need for storing fish that is caught locally. As demand outpaces supply, fish is sold fresh immediately. The evaluators have heard of supposedly ingenious ways to catch more fish, provided that the capital to invest in equipment can be gathered. Experts, however, explained that these expectations come from limited local knowledge about fish, e.g., their migration and their life cycle.

Given limited demand for cold storage of locally caught fish, the centre can potentially play a role in storing fish that is imported from neighbouring countries. For that, however, importing fish needs to hold significant economic promise that outweighs the risks. The first related challenge is that this requires capital to buy and transport fish in sufficiently large quantities. While the evaluators have heard of single traders that are interested in this, we have also heard that capital is a challenge. If the cold rooms store fish from more than one trader, cold storage room management becomes more of

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<sup>9</sup> In fact, so we were told by an expert, fish stocks throughout the lake are dwindling and the ecological outlook for the lake is rather grim. While conservation plans are being discussed, they are a logistical nightmare and the funds required for executing them are likely not available. As Burundi's territorial waters are rather shallow, issues that impact fish such as pollution and increased sediment run-off are even more pronounced here.

an issue which can potentially be challenging given the lack of experience of the current management. This is related to the next challenge: the management's lack of experience in managing but also the price or availability of capacity to repair the expensive equipment at the fish centre.

The evaluation revealed that women's cooperatives make minimal use of smoking ovens for fish. This is due fish for smoking becoming increasingly scarce and more expensive. In other words, as fish becomes scarcer, the women consume the capital they have, and when the time comes that larger quantities of fish are available, the women may no longer have sufficient capital to purchase enough. This situation is further compounded by the challenging economic circumstances facing Burundian households in general. The cost of smoked fish is prohibitive for most Burundian households. Consequently, most smoked fish is exported or sold in Bujumbura market.

## **Conclusion**

The evaluation finds that SPARK, through the AK programme, has made a significant effort to make the incubator viable. Transferring the management of the fish centre to the fishermen's federation is a logical solution for local ownership. However, the experts believe that for centre to be sustainably used in the long term, factors that are beyond the control of the programme are crucial. Most prominently that concerns an increase in local fish production through fish farming<sup>10</sup>, an increased financial capacity of entrepreneurs to import large quantities of fish, and the introduction of regional regulations to close the lake to fishing for a certain period to boost local production. Based on these considerations, the evaluation concludes that the battery charging station is a viable long-term investment.

### **3.4.2 Fruit and cereal processing centre**

#### **Strengths**

The fruit juice processing incubator is situated in the Cibitoke province. The province is renowned for its significant mango, pineapple and watermelon production. The incubation centre is ideally positioned to capitalise on this local production, preventing shortages or losses during the peak season. The centre has suitable premises and equipment for processing fruit to the standards recommended by the Burundian Bureau of Standards (BBN), which has resulted in certification by this regulatory body<sup>11</sup>. The centre has a cold room for storing fruit when production is high, allowing the centre to utilise the stored quantity when there is less fruit available. Another advantage of the incubation centre is that COIEDE, the entrepreneur who manages the centre, can produce, maintain and repair the equipment and machinery it needs to run its fruit juice production unit. This local technical expertise ensures that the centre's equipment and maintenance needs will be met in the future. Finally, COIEDE's motivation to develop the activities of the agri-business centre for fruit juices is a source of hope for the centre's long-term sustainability.

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<sup>10</sup> In May 2024, while the evaluation report was being finalized, the AK team informed the evaluators that the Fish Federation is in talks with a considerable fish farmer (ELARGA, supported by RvO, see: <https://elaga.bi/en/about/>).

<sup>11</sup> Certification has been a very lengthy process but finally came through during the evaluation period. The evaluators have tried to probe the reasons for the length of the process, also with BBN, but this was inconclusive. Lack of staff and insufficient funds and testing equipment were blamed for it, and it was mentioned that these issues had now been resolved.

## Challenges

At the time of the evaluation, it was noted that the facilities at the fruit juice incubation centre in Cibitoke were underused. This was evidenced by the low level of use of the premises, which suggested that a long period had passed without using the equipment. This under-utilisation is also evident in the cassava and maize line. The exception is the mill which is being used by the community.

The apparent under-usage was explained by the lack of BBN certification. Further discussions with the operator, however, revealed that the lack of sufficient capital to purchase large enough quantities of fruit to process and retain for periods when fruit is unavailable is also a significant obstacle to the business. When fruit is freshly produced, furthermore, consumers tend to prefer fresh fruit to processed juice, as the latter is more expensive, and money is tight. Only in periods when a limited supply of fresh fruit is available, there is a corresponding increase in demand for juice. In the case of the cereal line, the administrative measure requiring mill owners, including COIEDE, to receive customers only twice a week is preventing the line from achieving its full profitability.<sup>12</sup>

## Conclusion

Considering the aforementioned considerations, the fruit juice/cereal processing centre is confronted with a number of challenges. Despite these challenges, COIEDE attaches significant importance to this line, which represents an additional potential source of income for the cooperative, and the provincial authorities are determined to monitor the centre's activities. Therefore, it is expected that the incubator will become sustainable in the long term, especially given that BBN certification has now been secured. In fact, the cooperative that runs the centre generates sufficient income to cover the rent and electricity payments that the centre requires. The evaluators furthermore conclude that SPARK's intervention, first through ABIN and later through AK, has added to the opportunities in the (fruit) juice value chain for fruit producers.

### 3.4.3 Honey centre

#### Strengths

The honey processing incubator in Cibitoke is the only honey processing unit in Burundi with BBN certification. As a result, it attracts the interest of several stakeholders interested in honey production, marketing and processing in Burundi, including institutions such as the Bubanza diocese. The interviews conducted showed that there are entrepreneurs (COOPACI, COJAD and UBUBUCO, united in Ubuki Solutions) who want to invest in processing honey to keep the equipment used by the Incubator running at full capacity. Having modern equipment to produce quality honey that can compete on the regional market (export potential) is another strength of the centre.

#### Challenges

The honey processing equipment has been installed on the premises of the Diocese of Bubanza which is the cause for debate over who owns the equipment. While all of this may be technically and legally clear, it is not always a guarantee for a carefree operation. Potentially, issues will arise for the current

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<sup>12</sup> Finally, a conversation with the local authority revealed that they were afraid that the costs for use of the mill would increase after SPARK disengaged. While a higher price for usage may be necessary from a sustainability perspective, the authority explained that the price may be too high for users. The evaluators were unable to assess this statement.

management in accessing the equipment after SPARK disengages. This has been compounded by the continuous issue in which the Diocese claims a significant sum (19 million Burundian Francs) from the centre/SPARK for unpaid rent during AK, however, ABIN (with EKN funding) renovated the building for 40 million BiF in 2015-2016, as well as that Akazi Keza continued funding development and maintenance of the centre (repairs, security fees, etc.). Diocese and SPARK are on speaking teams to solve this challenge, together with the Cibitoke Governor as well as Ubuki Solutions.

The income generated over the three-year period (2021, 2022 and 2023) is 637,600, 400,000 and 500,000, Burundian Francs respectively. The total income earned over the three-year period was 1,537,600, with a monthly average of 42,711 BIF. The monthly average income appears to fall short of the rent, which is 600,000 (or 250,000 Burundian Francs after further negotiations). This places significant pressure on entrepreneurs to meet the centre's operational costs.

A further significant challenge has to do with the combination of location (in the country) and access to capital for buying enough honey. Given the relatively large volume of honey needed to run the equipment profitably, the entrepreneurs that manage the honey centre depend on buying and aggregating honey also from far away. As such, capital for buying honey and funds and possibilities for transporting honey are key to their operation. This was said to present a significant challenge for the entrepreneurs.

While the higher price of processed honey compared to traditionally produced honey means that most households cannot afford it, and this was explained to be a challenge by the management, SPARK staff explained that there is sufficient demand in Bujumbura and regionally.

## **Conclusion**

The results of the evaluation demonstrate the willingness of entrepreneurs to utilise the facilities of the honey Incubator. However, the evaluation also indicates that the centre is underused to the extent that it would be unable to cover operating costs without programme-level support. With the income generated, the question arises as to whether the entrepreneurs can maintain/repair or replace the equipment when needed. Despite these challenges, the recent obtaining of a BBN certificate for UBUKI Solution is likely to increase the interest in use of the centre by the three entrepreneurs, as well other entrepreneurs (who can pay a fee to Ubuki Solutions for usage). However, the rental fee issue needs to be solved between the partners, therefore the engagement of a legal expert is recommended. Uptake of MTE recommendations

The mid-term evaluation reflected positively upon the results of the AK, commending the fact that the programme managed to create job opportunities for young men and women. Based on the evaluation, the MTE report also included recommendations to improve the programme. These recommendations are provided in the table below while a concise assessment of the uptake of these recommendations is also provided. This assessment is based on narrative report 2023 and interviews with SPARK staff. The assessment is instrumental in explaining whether certain in the MTE identified challenge persist, or whether they have been resolved. It is important to note that when the evaluators conclude that limited to no progress has been made on a recommendation, it does not mean that the programme should have done so. Given the context and resources, after all, the programme team may have had valid reasons for deciding not to implement certain recommendations. The assessment here, furthermore, informs the recommendations that are formulated as part of this end-term evaluation.

Table 1 Uptake of MTE recommendations

Recommendation	Uptake
<p><i>Broader M&amp;E role and function</i></p> <p>M&amp;E should extend to (all different levels of) outcomes and impact. The M&amp;E of outcomes and impact should take place at regular intervals, quarterly or half-yearly in a sample of selected communities. This allows AK to verify if they are on the right track and assess which adaptations to its programming should possibly be made. The quality of this M&amp;E also requires an active role of its stakeholders.</p>	<p>Budget constraints, so the evaluators understand, stood in the way of improving on the role and function of M&amp;E. Thus, outcomes and impact were not monitored more than what happened before the MTR. The programme did, however, provide some training on M&amp;E to its local partners, provided by its M&amp;E manager at HQ level. This training focused mainly on understanding what it means to focus and steer on outcomes and impact rather than on outputs.</p>
<p><i>Unpacking impact</i></p> <p>AK should formulate what impact they want to see at the individual level and make explicit how that relates to impact at the community level. This is valid in general, but even more so in the case of AK as the assumption that employment programmes lead to stability has little scientific backing. Once such an aim is formulated, this should be unpacked into outcomes, outputs accompanied by explicit assumptions on how one leads to the other. Finally, these should be accompanied by indicators that allow for measuring progress.</p>	<p>Since the MTR, SPARK at the global level has engaged with the concept of impact and how to measure it. Amongst other things, an impact measurement guide was developed by ISDC (finalized in 2023), and an impact assessment of the LEAD 2 programme in Tunisia and Somalia was performed.</p> <p>Within AK, there was no concerted effort to unpack the aimed for impact since the MTR. As such, the challenges as identified in the MTR still apply.</p>
<p><i>Periodic updates and revisions of the ToC</i></p> <p>An M&amp;E framework that incorporates the above recommendations, and a thorough review of results by the entire AK team and management allows for updating and revising the current ToC. This should go beyond the simple revision of target numbers and include the identification of additional outcomes, the reformulation of current outcomes and the review of assumptions. A more narrative format of the ToC, describing all steps and result levels in a clear language would be a good first step towards such a review. The updated ToC should be added to each annual report. Finally, this exercise allows for a much better understanding of the dynamics of the programme and allow for adaptive management provided that the donor is on-board that such is required and leads to better results.</p>	<p>AK has updated the numbers included in its ToC so that they more closely resembled what was thought to be feasible. The new organizational ToC, furthermore, was unofficially introduced in the programme to build staff and partner familiarity with relevant concepts and mechanisms introduced in the ToC. This has, however, not led to differences in practice and neither to a formally updated ToC. It is important to note that the donor was not in favour of amending the programme's ToC.</p>
<p><i>Payment for business development services to safeguard sustainability</i></p> <p>Sustainable service provision depends on the willingness and ability of clients to pay for it. As these costs are currently borne by AK in full, the evaluators encourage piloting partial payment</p>	<p>AK deemed this recommendation largely unfeasible given the Burundian context and this was therefore not pursued. Nonetheless, local partners (e.g., CEMAC) describe that some of the supported SMEs do make use of and pay for additional services that they offer. AK did</p>

by clients (AK participants) for the services that are being provided. Given that there is now a track-record of the average benefits to SMEs resulting from these services, there is a business case for new SMEs to do so. Advice is for the payment to cover part of the costs of the service as this is expected to be feasible. Meanwhile such an innovative approach, when successful, contributes to the programme's ability to elicit systemic change.	promote the signing of MoUs between the local partners and the entrepreneurs that they support.
<p><i>Outcome 1 as a pipeline for Outcome 2 or 3</i></p> <p>AK should assess if outcome 1 dropouts are an interesting pool for outcome 2 interventions. As they have received significant training, "recycling" them in outcome 2 may be cost-effective. For outcome 3, a similar consideration should be made. As these growing SMEs require competent staff, the feasibility of matching them with ex-interns should be investigated.</p>	Outcome 1 has become a pipeline for outcome 2 which has resulted in 15 start-ups in Bujumbura and Cibitoke province. The latter ones are supported by CREOP, while the ones in Bujumbura are supported by CEMAC.
<p><i>Business case for interns to boost demand</i></p> <p>Employers that make use of AK interns are overwhelmingly positive about their added value as they get a motivated and skilled worker for the costs of an intern. AK should utilize these experiences to build a business case for AK interns that is easy to communicate and will help boost demand for AK interns.</p>	The programme showcases the achievements of their participants through videos, case studies, etc. <sup>13</sup> . While the evaluators have seen a selection of these materials, they have not assessed whether this has specifically led to a higher demand for interns.
<p><i>Facilitate exchange between MFIs</i></p> <p>AK could play a more active role to facilitate the exchange of successful loan products that resonate with SMEs needs and capacities.</p>	The evaluators are unaware of this having taken place or not. In relation to access to finance, the evaluators know that the pilot with MoneyPhone was discontinued. From the narrative report 2023, the evaluators learned that that was due to lack of motivated and capable Burundian partners (was analysed for Palm-Oil and Fish sectors in Rumonge Province with ISHAKA and WISE). <sup>14</sup>
<p><i>Boost innovative capacity for outcome 2 and 3 participants</i></p> <p>Explore if participants' selection can include testing for innovation. Alternatively, incorporate exercises that build innovation capacity.</p>	AK has aimed to boost innovation through facilitating exchange between entrepreneurs based in different locations. Selection of entrepreneurs into the programme based on innovative capacity has not been implemented.

<sup>13</sup> Naturally, the use of such materials is standing practice for SPARK. As such, this is not necessarily related to the recommendation provided in the MTR.,

<sup>14</sup> See also narrative report 2023.



### 3.5 Quantity and quality of AKs jobs

The main outcome of the different interventions under AK is jobs, either through creating them in supported enterprises, growth of these enterprises leading to jobs elsewhere in the value chain, or by training young and subsequently matching them to jobs. This is reflected in the AKs KPIs, which are expressed in the number of jobs that are aggregated to reflect a grand total of jobs created and matched through AK (target is 6000 in total). As the programme puts emphasis on these numbers, accurate measurement of these jobs is very important. From available articles, guides etc. on this topic<sup>15</sup>, emerges that this is not a simple task. A review of such literature, shows that the following important issues are ideally all reflected in measurement practice: the extent to which results (jobs) can be attributed to the programme<sup>16</sup>; job quality; where is growth in jobs expected (direct, indirect or induced<sup>17</sup>), for whom the programme aims to create jobs; displacement<sup>18</sup> and substitution<sup>19</sup>; and the method/approach to measuring jobs.

Job quality is a very important concept in any youth employment/entrepreneurship programme. This is particularly true in relation to expected impact of programmes and in monitoring results. To put it simply, a job that pays BiF 30,000 and lasts only for 2 months, is likely less impactful than a job that pays BiF 150, 000 and is permanent<sup>20</sup>. While AK speaks of decent jobs in its proposal, the MTE showed that this was not such a useful concept in the context of Burundi. Instead, the programme differentiates temporary and permanent jobs.

- Temporary jobs are jobs for less than 6 months in duration and also include seasonal jobs. The latter means that such jobs can recur each year (or more often). AKs monitoring protocol, in-line with what is agreed on with the donor, counts these recurring jobs all towards the aggregated outcome of jobs created.
- Permanent jobs are for a duration that extent beyond f 6 months.

Both permanent and temporary jobs in AK can be counted as:

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<sup>15</sup> See for example the detailed guidance provided by DCED: Spierings, E. (2018). Methodological Guidance for 5 Private Sector Development Indicators. Or this working paper, also by DCED: Fowler, B., & Markel, E. (2014). *Measuring Job Creation in Private Sector Development*. Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED).

<sup>16</sup> Is there a causal pathway between the interventions of the programme and the growth in jobs? Is the intervention the only reason for these results, or are there other factors that also contribute to the growth? Examples of the latter are other development programmes, or services provided by other ecosystem services such as an MFI. In the case of the latter, who can say that the jobs result from their intervention, the programme that provides proximity coaching and training? Or is it the MFI that provides a loan to the company?

<sup>17</sup> Induced jobs, despite the concept being used in AKs proposal, are not measured. Induced jobs refer to those jobs that result from increased spending of new employees that have a job as a result of the programme. As an example: after an increase in income due to being employed they buy new clothes for their families from local tailors more frequently than before. The latter in turn have to hire new employees to produce these clothes.

<sup>18</sup> Simply explained, the growth in jobs at one company leads to the reduction of jobs in another company. As an example; a successful tailor that hires more employees may lead to another tailor finding less demand for his products and having to stop work or dismiss employees. This is very difficult to measure!

<sup>19</sup> Substitution refers to new employees leaving their previous employment because of having found the new employment. The latter may be less relevant in a context in which labour supply vastly outpaces labour demand such as in Burundi.

<sup>20</sup> Both of these amounts occur in salary information provided to the consultants by AK. It is good to note that permanent jobs are those jobs that are 6 months or more according to AK's definition.



- Direct jobs, which are jobs in the SMEs (start-up, scale-up) that are supported through the programme activities, as well as the jobs that result from the internships facilitated under outcome 1. For direct jobs, the MoVs are contracts between the SME and the employee. These include the duration, position and salary of the position. This information is collected by the local partners and provided to AK.
- Indirect jobs, which are jobs in not-supported SMEs that result from the increased demand in goods or services of supported SMEs<sup>21</sup>. For measuring and reporting on indirect jobs, AK depends on so called *pay slips*. This is a less precise way of collecting information on the number and type of jobs created than the contracts for direct jobs. After all, if a soap producer signs a contract with a palm nut producer to buy x kilogrammes of nuts this season, the palm nut producer may, for example, want to either do all the work himself; make use of family members (without paying them); offer more work to his existing employees; hire additional (seasonal) workers, or a mix of the above. All of which has implications for the number and quality of the indirect jobs that are created as a result of the growth of the supported company.

At the HQ level, SPARK is developing a qualification of jobs (basic, good and golden jobs) but the evaluators understand that this qualification has not yet been rolled out into its programmes. The evaluation showed that salary is the most prominent job quality concern for AK participants<sup>22</sup>. Through its MoVs, AK collects detailed salary information. It is, however, difficult to contextualize these data, as Burundi lacks a meaningful legal minimum wage, and living wage or income information available appears to be very far removed from AK participants' incomes.<sup>23</sup> This puzzle is made even more complex by the lack of information on the extent to which the employment/entrepreneurship that AK supports is the single most important, or one of many income generating activities. The evaluators learned that even for (some) business owners who worked full time in their business, other sources of income may be equally important<sup>24</sup>. This observation is supported by entrepreneurs stating that (additional) savings were to be invested in various other economic activities on the side (e.g., rearing pigs, buying inventory of certain goods for reselling, etc.).

Supported entrepreneurs, when probed about their own salaries, and those of their employees, explained that they considered the salaries of their employees largely insufficient for covering basic needs. The exception that was made by some, concerned employees that did not (yet) have families and lived at home, for them the salaries were thought to be sufficient. Entrepreneurs explained that they were unable to raise salaries, as margins are so slim. Salary data does show that over period of

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<sup>21</sup> The category of indirect permanent jobs has been dismissed since 2022, with the exception of 66 indirect permanent jobs through CEMAC.

<sup>22</sup> Other characteristics, such as whether the job is in the same line of work as what they studied for, was also considered to be important.

<sup>23</sup> This information is available behind a paywall (link). The values provided appear to be far removed from what AK participants receive in income or profit.

<sup>24</sup> This includes for example farming or other seasonal activities performed by them/their families. In addition, some (group) SMEs explained that they engaged in other activities too than the ones supported through AK. In some cases these activities generated more revenue too.

three years, some salaries did increase. Interviews showed that business success allowed for raising salaries, but that inflation played an important role too.

The evaluators conclude that there is likely a significant difference in the impact of the programme on those that benefit from it and that this is, to a significant extent, connected to job quality. Furthermore, there is likely a big difference between participants in the programme (including business owners and those whose internships result in permanent jobs afterwards) and indirect beneficiaries (which includes those who are hired as employees by those supported SMEs). Unfortunately, the evaluation's scope and budget did not allow for extended engagement with the latter group (see also 2.5. limitations).

### **Challenges**

- As also pointed out in the MTE, job quality is ill-defined in AK. Because there is no qualitative disaggregation (beyond direct/indirect permanent and temporary) it is difficult to interpret what each job means to a participant. While it is clear that the salary derived from a job adds to the total individual or household income, the interviews show that employees depend on a portfolio of activities in which the job created is not always the main source of income.
- As indirect jobs are currently measured through pay slips, it is difficult to assess whether the programme under- or overestimates the number of indirect jobs created. The evaluators concur with the assessment of AK and SPARK staff at HQ that finding a method to measure these jobs more accurately which can be implemented at field level, is difficult and depends on the capacity to do so among country staff.

### **Good practice**

- The MoVs make that AK can convincingly present data on the number of direct jobs and the salaries that are earned as a result. While such an analysis is out of the scope for this evaluation, one could, based on these MoVs calculate the total amount of additional earnings in direct jobs resulting from AK. Such information can be of use to show tangible results of the programme versus its costs.

### **Recommendations**

- Come up with a contextualized system for categorizing jobs according to quality. This categorization should be closely related to the impact the programme aims to make in the given context, and how that is expected to result from young people in jobs as entrepreneurs. SPARK's categorization of jobs into basic, good and golden jobs could be a good start.
- Rather than including recurrent jobs towards the total number of jobs that result from the programme, the evaluators argue that the impact of the programme is better reflected if the nett job effect was monitored.
- To be able to execute both above recommendations, a future programme should ensure that sufficient MEL budget is available. This allows for the inclusion of a MEL lead in the programme team and to build the MEL capacities of programme staff and partners.

### 3.6 Empowerment and capacity of the programme to transform gender norms.

Objective 2 of the ToR (see section 1.2.) calls for assessing the extent to which the programme's outcomes are gender transformative. The evaluators interpret this as the extent to which the programme contributes to changing restrictive gender norms in the context.

In conversations with local partners and female participants, the consultants have explored specific needs of female participants as well as the differentiated results of the programmes, including on norms. The evaluation found that some business coaches apply a tailored approach. And it also found instances of women participants that overcame challenges related to gender norms (duty to care outweighs duty to earn and income/find meaningful employment, etc.). As with male participants, female business owners also mentioned to be seen as role models and inspiring other young women. This is what, according to the consultants, comes closest to observed transformations in gender norms.

From the interviews with SPARK and partner staff, the evaluators observed that the programme does present an operationalized "gender or empowerment strategy". In the view of consultant, as such aimed for effects are rather complex, a strategy would help to focus such activities and measure the programme's achievements.

In practice, the evaluators observe that AK's focus on gender primarily revolves around their aim to achieve that 40% of the jobs created are for women. In the view of the consultants, this is not a very sophisticated approach to this topic, and this should in ensuing programming be better developed. To do so, the consultants recommend adhering to established frameworks that can provide guidance, for example the so-called reach-benefit-empower (and transform) framework<sup>25</sup>. Reach corresponds most with what AK is doing (setting quantitative goals for the inclusion of women), while benefit and empower invite the programme to take a closer look at how women benefit from the programme (Vs. men) and the extent to which the programme results in the empowerment of its women participants. Such an analysis allows for tweaking interventions so that the outcomes for women more closely resemble that what is aimed for.

#### Challenge

- By focusing on output (target numbers of women reached) the programme does not know if women benefit to the same extent as men and what should be tweaked to improve that.
- Reaching the targeted 40% of jobs created and matched are eventually occupied by women is a challenge. While in direct targeting, i.e., participants, SPARK and partners can ensure that enough women are reached, they have less control over who is being hired by supported SMEs. As it turns out, about 30% of the jobs that are created in these companies are fulfilled by women and the rest by men.

#### Recommendations

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<sup>25</sup> See for example how CGIAR applies this approach to agricultural programmes <https://gender.cgiar.org/tools-methods-manuals/reach-benefit-empower-transform-rbet-framework>. While this framework is primarily focused on women in agricultural programming, its focus on measuring outcomes and impacts may also be of interest for follow-up programmes more broadly. Can it also be applied to youth?

- Give more thought to differentiated needs of men and women by involving gender expertise in programme design, including in what to monitor to ensure that the programme achieves what it aims for. This would also allow the programme to confidently report on and do justice to the results it achieves related to empowerment and the transformation of gender norms.
- Future programmes could opt to emphasize support to businesses that, once they grow, provide more employment opportunities for women. Before doing so, however, it is important to assess how jobs in these businesses compare to those in other sectors. This may lead to focusing on transforming gender norms so that women are hired in non-traditional jobs, as the net result is better, which requires different interventions.

## 4. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

### 4.1 Relevance

#### 4.1.1 How relevant was the program to the needs of its target group?

Un- and underemployment is a major issue in Burundi and even more so among young men and women that are the target group of AK. Broadly speaking, AK aims to contribute to their chances for “decent” (self-) employment. And, by the end of 2023, the programme has managed to create and match a total of 5,334 jobs<sup>26</sup>. While section 3.8 and 3.9 on measuring jobs and job quality put these numbers somewhat into perspective, this is an incredibly relevant outcome for the young men and women targeted.

For each of the components of the programme, skill-up, start-up and scale-up, holds that the respective interventions directly address the most prominent needs of the target group and that is the reason why those targeted, by and large, report better economic outcomes after participation. Sections 3.1, 3.2. and 3.3. offer more detailed information on the different programme components and what the evaluators have observed. These sections also detail why interventions such as employability training in combination with (limited) technical training and an internship help youth in outcome overcome three challenges that stand in the way of gainful employment post-education. The same applies to the interventions under outcome 2 and 3, where individual proximity coaching (amongst other things) is of huge significance to those inexperienced entrepreneurs targeted for navigating the challenges they face. For the start-ups, furthermore, co-financing of equipment was considered to be an enormous boost and for those Scale-ups that managed to access sizable loans this was very significant too.

#### 4.1.2 How relevant was the program to the local/national government’s priorities?

The Burundian government's priorities are outlined in the National Development Plan<sup>27</sup>. AK’s objectives and the interventions clearly align with those priorities and is therefore very relevant.

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<sup>26</sup> This figure is derived from the 2023 annual report. Elsewhere in the report, e.g., in 3.7. and 4.3, these jobs are assessed in some more detail.

<sup>27</sup> The latest version is the NDP 2018-2027, which can be found [here](#).

Specifically, AK supports strategic axis number 7 of the plan aiming to promote decent employment with a particular emphasis on youth.

The Youth Economic Empowerment and Employment Programme (PAEEJ) and the Youth Investment Bank are two major mechanisms the government utilizes to provide employment opportunities for Burundi's youth. As the government emphasises the importance of first job internships in empowering young people, AK providing internships to 1,030 young individuals is in-line with that policy. Coaching and support to 422 individual entrepreneurs, resulting in the establishment of over a hundred new businesses, clearly is too. The fact that a good portion of these entrepreneurs have secured credit from financial institutions such as banks and microfinance institution including BIJE is testament to AK's alignment with the government's goals too.

This was also reflected in how local authorities unequivocally voiced their support for and appreciation of AK. According to PAEEJ staff, the two programmes pursue a similar objective and make use of similar instruments, e.g., training, internships and business coaching. PAEEJ, furthermore, has significant financial backing allowing them to guarantee participants access to some kind of funds (there are different modalities and conditions). In scale, furthermore, PAEEJ outpace AK. Nonetheless, AK through its proximity coaching approach is able to offer tailored and intensive support to entrepreneurs that is unavailable in PAEEJ. In a similar vein, the evaluators find that AK's internship approach in which employers pay part of the interns' salaries trumps the approach of PAEEJ as it aims to address a systemic constraint in the Burundian context.

#### **Challenges:**

- Interviews with programme staff and local authorities at the decentralized level indicate that SPARK's contribution to local development may be underappreciated due to a lack of integration of SPARK's activities into the strategic development planning documents (PCDC<sup>28</sup>) of the communes that benefit from SPARK's activities.
- The reason is that AK insufficiently provides space and resources for the involvement of local authorities<sup>29</sup> at the community and "colline" (lowest administrative division) level. This extends to both the implementation of activities as well as monitoring visits. Concretely, SPARK activities, which are very important for the empowerment of young people, are not included in the community development plans<sup>30</sup>. To conclude, the programme's actions remain coherent and aligned with national priorities, but less so with local (community) priorities.

#### **Best practices:**

- AK has established good relations at the national level with key players, including PAEEJ and BIJE and relevant line ministries.
- Some of AK's participants have managed to also benefit from participation in PAEEJ or secured a loan through BIJE. This offered additional (financial) opportunities not provided by AK. In the case of BIJE especially, it opened the way to larger sums of credit.

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<sup>28</sup> PCDC : Plans Communaux de Développement Communautaire = Community Development Plan, The Community Development Plans (CDPs) are documents designed to guide and coordinate the priority development actions of each commune.

<sup>29</sup> chief of colline and communal authorities are not sufficiently informed/involved in Spark activities

<sup>30</sup> official document where all development initiatives (at commune level) are compiled: localization of national development plan of Burundi

### 4.1.3 How relevant was the program to the donor's priorities?

The Dutch Embassy in Burundi has established its priorities in the multi-annual strategy 2023-2026<sup>31</sup>. The programme contributes to Private Sector Development, which is one of the main themes for Dutch development Assistance to Burundi. The MACS 2023-2026, furthermore formulates the following two strategic results that are in line with what AK also aims for:

- Stronger enabling business environment in which the government fulfils its role to support the private sector and enables the latter to flourish. This in turn will generate employment and income for the population, unlock economic potential and encourage foreign investment and supports the private sector components of the other themes. A performing private sector will also leave less room for (political) clientelism and corruption and contribute to a vocal middle class that demands more democracy, transparency and accountability in governance.
- Greater capacity and stronger performance of the local private sector to support agricultural development, nutrition, renewable energy supply, recycling of waste, job generation for young people as well as regional trade.

The MACS mentioned above includes two priority themes: private sector development and empowering young people to participate effectively in the decision-making process and economic development. The evaluation team found that the AK programme has contributed to the implementation of the donor's strategic priority actions by laying the foundations for the development of a viable private sector. This has been achieved through business formalisation and coaching for access to credit. Additionally, the programme has created permanent and temporary jobs for Burundian youth, empowering them.

## 4.2 Coherence

### 4.2.1 To what extent the program's objectives and implementation aligned with other (relevant/development) interventions and initiatives within its context? (other donor programs, especially PADANE (SNV) and PADFIR (CORDAID))

The AK programme was implemented by SPARK, while the PADANE and PADFIR programmes were carried out by SNV and CORDAID respectively. The evaluation analysed the extent to which these interventions were complementary or synergistic. It should be noted that the three organisations involved in implementing these three programmes did not have harmonised approaches to stimulating youth entrepreneurship and therefore the development of the targeted value chains. For instance, the PADANE programme had allocated funds to directly finance the most promising entrepreneurial ideas, whereas the other two programmes encouraged entrepreneurs to connect with microfinance institutions (MFIs) to obtain the credit they needed to finance their economic activities. Despite this difference in approach, initiatives have been taken to ensure that the three programmes funded by the EKN complement each other. For instance, the PADFIR programme supported MFIs such as ISHAKA in Rumonge province, where the AK programme was being implemented. The programme facilitated the institution's ability to adapt its financial services to align with the needs of the entrepreneurs supported by the AK programme. Consequently, 27 groups of entrepreneurs from the AK programme have benefited from loans granted by ISHAKA. In the case of the PADANE programme, the evaluation notes that some companies supported by AK have purchased products or services from companies supported by PADANE. An illustrative example is the Rusake

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<sup>31</sup> See also the MACS 2019 – 2022, relevant given that AK started in 2020.

chicken farm in Cibitoke, an SME supported by AK, which purchased chickens from a farm supported by PADANE (with a loan via BIJE). Another noteworthy example of complementarity in the Cibitoke province is the connection between the Cibitoke fruit juice processing centre (Fruit Agri Business Centre) and Maracuja production cooperatives supported by the PADANE programme. This connection has been made with the intention of stimulating the Maracuja value chain in the province, as was foreseen by PADANE.

Another angle of analysis was to determine the extent to which the AK programme had initiated collaboration with other development initiatives. AK had initiated a pilot phase using Money Phone in collaboration with FinTech Partner MoneyPhone and Burundi Lend & Lease. Money Phone was designed to facilitate access to microcredit for entrepreneurs, particularly beekeepers, in order to boost local honey production in the provinces of Cibitoke and Bubanza. Unfortunately, the pilot phase of Money Phone was not a success for reasons beyond SPARK's control; a lack of commitment from Burundi Lend & lease (the local partner); quality of the Burundian IT infrastructure; inability of lenders to repay the loan; and MoneyPhone not being present locally. While the pilot was discontinued, a boost to honey production was realized. Finally, the evaluation is pleased to note that the programme, in collaboration with the University of Lake Tanganyika, has established the PrepAkazi platform. The objective of this platform was to equip graduates of this university with the fundamental skills required for the job market, including time management and professional communication. This platform has benefited the university by facilitating the acquisition of internships for its graduates, some of whom have subsequently secured paid employment. Despite concerns raised by the university regarding the sustainability of the platform beyond the AK programme, the evaluation asserts that this initiative was tailored to the needs of students and the university for the professional integration of students.

### **Challenge**

- The EKN insufficiently ensures the synergies and complementarities of the activities by organizations funded by them. This has led to some contradictory approaches impeding the formation of synergies. PADANE, for instance, provides financial support to entrepreneurs, whereas SPARK and Cordaid encourage the utilization of credit services offered by microfinance institutions or banks.
- The PrepAkazi platform is at risk of ceasing to operate once the AK programme ends. This is due to concerns raised by the University of Lake Tanganyika about its ability to manage the platform in the absence of external support.
- Although all three programmes in their proposal promise to collaborate (according to the EKN), this was not sufficiently achieved. Developing a collaboration agreement or an MoU at the start would likely have helped.

#### **4.2.2 To what extent the program creates synergies with other (relevant/development) interventions and initiatives within its context? (especially governmental programs/interventions, MINCOM, PAEEJ, BIJE, provincial administrations)**

The AK programme and PAEEJ align in terms of objectives, as both programmes aim to meet the needs of young Burundians. Their approach, however, differs markedly as AK focuses much more on proximity coaching of young entrepreneurs rather than funds and training alone.

In terms of synergy, some AK supported entrepreneurs have also been selected into PAEEJ, adding to the support they receive. Some 15 AK participants, furthermore, received a loan through the Banque d'Investissement pour Jeunes (BIJE) while some are still being reviewed. It can be argued that AK's support to these small and medium-sized enterprises has facilitated their access to finance through BIJE, leading to a win-win-win for AK, BIJE and the entrepreneur. The bank has provided its financial services, while AK's beneficiaries have gained access to credit. The evaluation team noted a positive response to the programme's actions within the General Directorate of Crafts regarding the synergy between the programme's actions and those of the Ministry of Trade and/or the provincial authorities. The national and provincial authorities of this ministry acknowledge AK programme's contribution to achieving the ministry's objectives, which include promoting the craft sector (outcome 2 and 3 includes crafts SMEs) and formalising entrepreneurial activities in Burundi, enabling them to meet their tax obligations. The AK programme has implemented actions in line with provincial authorities and the Ministry of Trade guidelines.

### Challenge

- Entrepreneurs in the agri-food processing sector face a major challenge in obtaining certification for their products from the Burundi Bureau of Standards (BBN) of the Ministry of Trade, despite good collaboration between the AK programme and the Ministry of Trade. This hampers their growth (potential), as they are unable to market their products.
- PAEEJ is a political programme and is therefore less in-line with good practice from a market-based perspective. That means that some of their practices are not in line with what how AK works and the systemic change they aim for. As PAEEJ is such a big programme, there is a risk that some of the good practices of AK (e.g., employers paying for interns) risk being countered or overlooked.

## 4.3 Effectiveness

### 4.3.1 To what extent the program achieved its intended results (outputs and outcomes), as per the targets set in its (adapted) ToC?

The KPIs table below<sup>32</sup> shows that AK is largely on track to meet its updated targets<sup>33</sup>. The projections provided for the end of the programme point in the same direction, i.e., a combined projected achievement of 93% of target. The evaluators, relying on the data collected by the programme, have no reason to question these projections. As such, the extent to which the programme has managed to achieve its goals adhering to its inherent criteria for measurement is clear.

#	KPIs	Definitions	Target: 2020-2024	Total (20-23)	Over-/Under-Achievement <sup>34</sup>	%
1	# of youth offered internship	Youth who formally sign a contract) are placed in an internship position after receiving SPARK's support (e.g. accountability training)	1200	1030	170	86%
2	# of youth found employment	Formal Employment Youth who acquire a formal job (i.e. sign an	800	536	264	67%

<sup>32</sup> from the detailed monitoring protocol included in the 2023 annual report

<sup>33</sup> The evaluators refer to the numbers as updated after the MTR.

<sup>34</sup> if Akazi Keza would be finished as per 1-1 2024



		employment contract) after receiving SPARK's support (e.g. employability training).				
3	# of entrepreneurs received coaching/mentoring	Entrepreneurs who received individual entrepreneurship coaching/mentoring on how to develop or set up their business by SPARK or by a local partner	450	422	28	94%
4	# of new business created	Commercial activity (i.e. enterprise) created (not previously existing)	104	89	15	86%
5	# of loans/grants provided/facilitated for entrepreneurs	Entrepreneurs who received a financial service (e.g., loan, grant etc.) directly by SPARK or by third party (after SPARK's facilitation/support for this)	300	284	16	95%
6	# of existing businesses that grew (i.e. increase in revenue/profit or number of employees)	Commercial activity, which grew in terms of revenue/profit or number of employees	300	338	-38	113 %
7	# of jobs created	Work position, permanent (6 months) or temporary (< 6 months or part-time)	6150	5334	816	87%

The table above, in combination with the projections for 01-04-2024, shows that:

- For all KPIs, the programme expects to reach more than 90% of the target.<sup>35</sup>
- For KPI 2, AK expects a significant number of interns to find permanent employment, this is related to the numbers currently in internships. The evaluators have no reason to dispute these projections.

### How sustainable are “permanent jobs”?

Triggered by a question during an interview with the EKN, the evaluators together with SPARK and the local partners, set out to explore the permanence of AK's permanent jobs. It is important to note that keeping track of permanence is outside of the scope and obligations of the AK programme as well as the evaluation. However, wanting to maximize learning, the evaluators and SPARK agreed to perform the assessment.

Permanent jobs in AK are defined to be jobs for 6 months or longer. That means that it is certainly not a given that jobs created in 2021, 2022 and 2023 are still there. After all, this threshold of 6 months was inspired by a context that is fragile and in which change, especially for the worst, can happen quickly, take for example the current closure of the border with Rwanda that severely affects (some) businesses.

To determine whether jobs created earlier are still around, the local partners were asked to present their records for all the direct permanent jobs they had created throughout their involvement in the programme up until 31-12-2023. Subsequently, they were asked to reach out to all those individuals, to check if they were still engaged in those permanent jobs or that they were doing something else. The exercise did not include all approximately 1300 direct permanent jobs. Instead, a sample of 781

<sup>35</sup> For some elaboration on the (expected) rate of achievement of the various KPIs, the evaluators refer to

jobs were checked of which 79%, amounting to 615 jobs, were still there. The table below shows the numbers per partner.

Partner	Created 2021-2023	Checked*	Still there	%
CREOP	249	233	173	74%
IG	231	231	169	73%
CEMAC	344	282	248	88%
AFORGER	303	35	31	89%
Total	1139 <sup>36</sup>	781	621	79%

\*For CREOP there is a slight discrepancy (6%) between the total number of jobs created and checked, while all IG jobs were checked. As the table shows, CEMAC did not check 62 of its 344 jobs (18%). These jobs were created in SMEs that are no longer supported due to either lacking motivation (and possibly collapsing) or because they “graduated” from the programme and became independent. AFORGER checked only 35 out of 303 jobs, or 12 % of the total. As the evaluators understand, these are the jobs created in the 16 SMEs that continue to be supported by the two business coaches retained after downscaling of the partnership.

The evaluators caution against interpreting these data as absolute values. For one, not all direct permanent jobs have been checked and sample selection is mostly clear but not 100% as described above.

Given the above considerations, the evaluators feel confident concluding that the direct permanent jobs resulting from outcome 1 turn out to be relatively stable, with approximately 75% of those jobs still being around (or 342 of 464 checked jobs). As expected, data per year shows that while all jobs created in 2023 are still there, this is progressively lower for 2022 and 2021<sup>37</sup>.

The assessment for the permanence of jobs created in supported SMEs by AFORGER and CEMAC, is somewhat hampered by the extent to which data is missing. Going by the data on CEMAC jobs, it is clear that a good portion of the permanent jobs created is still there. Going by the assumption that maybe half of the not-checked 74 jobs disappeared, it is not unreasonable to assume that approximately 75% of the jobs are still around. A conclusion based on the data provided by AFORGER, is that it appears as if AK continued with capable coaches that support viable SMEs.

### Challenges:

- The monitoring framework of AK currently does not foresee in the collection of data on permanence, while this exercise shows that it can be very relevant to demonstrate sustainable effects of the programme. It is clear to the evaluators, however, that any request for (additional) data should be communicated clearly, preferable in-person and in writing, to local partners. And, even then, it is of the utmost importance to check and re-check the data submitted.

<sup>36</sup> A further approximately 200 direct permanent jobs were created outside of this structure of the four partners, e.g., in relation to the agri-business centres, through PrepAkazi, as staff of local partners.

<sup>37</sup> Out of the direct permanent jobs created in 2021, approximately half of the jobs created by CREOP are still there and about a quarter of the jobs created by IG. For 2022, these figures are 65% and 85% respectively.

- Definitions are important here too. While checking whether the same person still does the same job is one-way to look at permanence, one risks underestimating permanence of jobs. After all, while the person may have moved on, the job may now be done by another person.

### **Recommendations:**

- This exercise, as well as the discussion on job quality show that direct permanent jobs are the surest bet for sustainable impact on the lives of AK beneficiaries. That would argue for a programmatic and measurement focus on this type of jobs over indirect, induced or temporary ones. Such a narrower focus would allow for collecting additional information on those jobs (including setting criteria) that would bring reporting on the impact of jobs closer. However, this is only a feasible or desirable focus if the donor backs such an approach as the above exercise shows that about a quarter of all jobs in AK are direct permanent jobs.

### **Unpacking AK's A2F results**

Just like the analysis above on the permanence of jobs, this exercise was not foreseen in the original scope of the evaluation and required additional effort by the SPARK team and the evaluator. As the KPI table shows (KPI #4), SPARK is close to realizing the target set for A2F. As with jobs created, AK's monitoring protocol offers limited opportunities to disaggregate between the different A2F results as grants and loans are piled together into one indicator<sup>38</sup>. Within these number are included: matching grants for start-ups and the scale-ups (in the palm oil sector); group solidarity loans (in which e.g., 7 members of a group business receive a small loan), the 50 loans provided through the MoneyPhone pilot; and the individual (much more sizable) loans for individual entrepreneurs from MFIs and Banks.

The additional data that was presented to the evaluators for this exercise, shows that 45 out of 104 AK supported start-ups had access to finance because of the programme. 22 of those accessed matching grants financed by AK, while for 19 of them matching grants were provided by Enabel. An additional 4 start-ups managed to access bank loans.

95 supported scale-ups out of more than 200, accessed finance in one form or another as a result of the programme. 40 of those, active in the palm-oil value chain, received matching grants<sup>39</sup>, 5 others were reached through the Moneyphone pilot and subsequent redistribution of beehives while the remaining 50 managed to secure loans (in various forms) from banks and MFIs.

Summarizing, the KPI and the outputs formulated help establish whether AK is on-track for reaching its aimed for quantitative targets. The evaluators also conclude, however, that the KPIs and monitoring protocol lack explanatory power in terms of what those results mean for (individual) entrepreneurs/businesses.

### **Challenges:**

- Despite the success of AK in facilitating access to finance according to the programme definitions, the evaluation found that supported entrepreneurs including those that accessed

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<sup>38</sup> Specifically, this refers to outputs 2.4 and 3.5. of the detailed monitoring protocol as included (for example in the narrative report for 2023).

<sup>39</sup> The justification for use of matching grants for scale-ups, which goes against AKs philosophy, was that COVID-19 mitigating measures, i.e., subsidizing the production of soap by the Burundian biggest soap producer, made doing business impossible for other soap makers. AK decided to help them on their way through this one-time intervention.

finance, still consider this to be the main challenge to productivity and revenue growth. The evaluators assess this to be partially right. While their need may be expressed as having trouble accessing finance, the factors that contribute to that are diverse and include:

- **Unrealistic expectations:** The evaluators have the impression that these entrepreneurs sometimes aim too high (from zero to a hundred) when it comes to loans. In those instances, it is not surprising that banks/MFIs refuse to provide a loan, as risk is their main concern. This was also mentioned by the Bank/MFI staff interviewed.
- **Loan products that are not a good fit for young entrepreneurs:** Loan products on offer require significant collateral or repayment conditions that are unattractive to the entrepreneurs.
- **Programme supported entrepreneurs:** Programmes sometimes attract youth that are only in business because of the programme, which may not make for the most business-minded entrepreneurs. These youth are not interesting clients for banks/MFIs. Some of these programmes, furthermore, may also take up so much time of the entrepreneurs, that they hardly have time to run their business and generate money.

#### **Reflection:**

- An often-heard suggestion is a guarantee fund that would remove the need for a collateral. At least one of the banks the evaluators spoke with thought that this could be a solution. However, only under one very strict condition and that is that loan takers are unaware of the guarantee fund. Because if they are, they feel less responsible, and this will hurt repayment of loans. The evaluators can imagine that this could be a solution for an otherwise rather big and persistent challenge for many of the entrepreneurs. However, they are also aware of the opinion of SPARK staff that such a fund is unwanted.

#### **Recommendation:**

In future programming, the monitoring protocol and KPIs related to A2F should be designed to better explain what the programme achieved. While exact outputs should be defined according to the future programme's logic, hypothetical examples include:

- 25% of all supported scale-ups (target number = x) have been able to access a bank loan after 1 year of (coaching/training) support.
- after 2 years of support, 75% of those SMEs are on-track repaying the loan
- 25% of the supported SMEs manage to secure more than 1 bank loan, amounting to at least x amount.

#### **4.3.2 To what extent the local partners of the program were enabled to bring their individual added value in its implementation? (locally sustained development, ecosystem strengthening, VC development, private sector development (including A2F via MFIs))**

The local partners were instrumental to AK's success as all implementation related to outcome 1-3 went through them. A sound partner selection in which their capacities were reviewed, and a due diligence process are the basis for AK's partnerships. In AK, SPARK had need for skills that were in short supply in Burundi. This applies to the businesses coaching for outcome 2 and 3 as well as the type of employability training and matching services related to outcome 1.

With the partner selection process completed, SPARK invested in building the capacity of partners based on assessed needs in areas such as financial reporting, leadership skills, business coaching and M&E. Some of this capacity building was done for individual members of staff (e.g., through Douiti coaching) other interventions built the capacity of the organization as whole<sup>40</sup>. The M&E capacity building, finally, also involved the M&E manager of SPARK HQ, who visited Burundi and provided training on outcomes and impact. Overall, the support was largely perceived as being useful, although there were some doubts about the effectiveness of the coaching offered to partner staff. Interestingly, these doubts were not observed during the MTE.

Given that SPARK carefully selected the right organizations and assisted those organizations with capacity building activities, they were able to bring their individual added value to the implementation. The business coaches of CEMAC were able to connect with and coach start- and scale-ups operating at very different levels of professionalism. They were able to do so despite some of their staff being inexperienced because the organization is headed by two people who have a lot more experience as business coaches (and in running a business) that were able to support this inexperienced staff.

CREOP was able to, in the different regions, entuse employers to take on interns and treat them as employees so that it was a valuable experience for both. They did so, despite this concept of paid interns being new in the context. CREOP, furthermore, grew as an organization through their participation in AK. So much so that they secured another big contract on their own for similar services as in AK.

Infinity Group was a great pick as they brought a level of professionalism, according to SPARK staff, not often encountered in Burundi. For that reason, they had little need for capacity building by SPARK. Their professionalism allowed them to connect with bigger employers in Bujumbura, including banks and insurance companies that offered high quality internship positions to AK interns.

Overall, the evaluators assess that AK contributes to an ecosystem in which more professional business development services are available and this will continue to benefit young people including starting entrepreneurs.

## **Challenges**

- Overall, all local partners commented that the partnership between their organization and SPARK sometimes felt a bit unequal. While this is to be expected given that payment for services flows only one way in these partnerships, they hinted difficulties with how SPARK communicated. In summary, this was felt to be too directive and not always taking their perspective sufficiently into account. As there are always (at least) two sides to a story, the evaluators do not attempt to reconstruct exactly what did or did not happen, but simply point out what was observed during the interviews.
- Aforger turned out to be a more difficult partner to work with than e.g., CEMAC or CREOP. One of the partners, being a loose association of individual business coaches (consultants), proved to be more difficult to steer. Eventually, all but two of the business coaches were not prolonged in the programme as they turned out to prioritize other contracts and did not do what they promised. The two business coaches retained, meanwhile, appear to have done a very good job. They were

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<sup>40</sup> See also the Akazi Keza context analysis and implementation strategy report

also engaged to discuss gender in AK interventions and appeared to have utilized a personal but elaborated approach.

- Université du Lac Tanganyika (ULT) was engaged in the frame of the PrepAkazi platform. As a university they were instrumental in reaching students/graduates to make use of the training offered through the platform. Unfortunately, the relationship soured between SPARK and ULT and the narratives deviate as to why that is the case. As such, PrepAkazi has likely not become all that it was hoped to be. Nonetheless, SPARK is determined to recycle the platform, without ULT, in a new programme.

## 4.4 Efficiency

### 4.4.1 How timely was the program's activities implementation?

The programme has largely been implemented timely and according to schedule. While this a good result in any circumstance, that the programme has managed to do so in times of COVID-19 and in such a challenging context as Burundi makes that even more commendable. The evaluators conclude that SPARK has managed to assemble a strong team, including a motivated and capable Country Representative / Programme Lead without whom this would likely not have been possible. In addition, SPARKSPARK has invested significant effort in building the capacity of local partners to ensure that the programme delivered (see 4.3.2.). Finally, SPARK has let go of partners that did not deliver, rather than have such partnerships drag-on.

### 4.4.2 How (value for money) efficiently the program's budget has been spent? (usage of same indicators as in Akazi Keza MTR)

The annual report for 2023 provides an insight into how AK calculates unit prices (cost per job). In the table below, the disaggregated prices are provided for permanent jobs/all jobs for the period 2023 and 2020-2023. The disaggregation between direct and indirect jobs is not made. While that is less relevant from a perspective of improving efficiency as one can hardly focus on creating indirect jobs alone, it is relevant given the level of information available about the quality of direct Vs. indirect jobs.

Type of job \ period	2020-2023	2023
All	675	576
Permanent	2.031	1.441

*Figure 1 Costs per job in euro's as calculated in the Annex to the 2023 report.*

While these unit prices appear to provide relatively unambiguous information on the efficiency of the programme, i.e. at what cost is AK able to create jobs, the evaluators would like to put this in some perspective. First of all, in the MTR this unit-price was only used to assess relative cost-efficiency between outcomes within AK to help assess if funds could be better spent in one outcome or the other. And, as explained there, the approach was very much "quick and dirty" and comes with numerous caveats.

Zooming in on the most important of those: one job is not the other, even when the disaggregation into permanent and temporary direct and indirect jobs is considered. This diversity is rooted in

differences in the salary derived, time invested, permanence (see also section 3.9.) as well as even more difficult concepts such as displacement (see section 3.8.).<sup>41</sup>

Adding to the complexity is the fact that some jobs created may be counted more than once, e.g., recurring (seasonal) jobs and internships that become jobs later on. The extent to which this is an issue is not known. All-in-all, the evaluators refrain from validating or re-calculating the unit-price provided by AK. One observation that may be of note, although it was to be expected, is that the value for the unit price, as calculated by AK is reduced over time. That means that the value for 2023 is lower than the value for 2020-2023.

#### 4.4.3 To what extent a robust operational model has been established in the program's implementation? (especially balance between implementation speed & control)

AK has, in the view of the evaluators, done a good job in establishing a robust operational model. During the period of implementation, SPARK grew into their role of a facilitator alone and implementation became more and more a task independently executed in all its facets by the local partners. This is in line with the role of SPARK as envisioned in the updated organizational ToC<sup>42</sup>. As such, ensuring that partners are selected with a vision that is compatible with the programme's and that have the capacity to execute activities independently is of the utmost importance. To that end, periodic partner assessments were carried out, their reporting was subject to critical review and capacity building was provided<sup>43</sup>. Based on these assessments and the results of partners' work, AK made the decision to continue or discontinue its partnerships.

AK's procedures were, according to local partners, rather rigid which resulted in friction related to having to re-submit improved (financial) reporting and final approval. SPARK staff. Nonetheless, explained to the evaluators that targeted capacity building (e.g., related to financial reporting) resulted in better reporting by local partners and SPARK as an organization is committed to high standards in reporting for its local partners.

Given the events that transpired in Jordan<sup>44</sup>, SPARK put emphasis on improving its control procedures. To that end, manuals and guidelines were finalized in 2023. The current protocols mandate country and programme teams to have more people sign off on any transactions up-front, e.g., service contracts, purchases, etc. According to the SPARK Burundi staff, these manuals signal progress in terms of professionalization and correspond with good-practice examples within the sector

#### Challenges:

- There is a delicate balance between speed & control. This applies to the relation between SPARK Burundi and SPARK SSA/global as well as between SPARK Burundi and local partners. Related to the latter, short contracts combined with sometimes long reporting (approval) procedures stood in the way of continuity of activities or fully utilizing the total period available for activities<sup>45</sup>. The measure of control demanded by SPARK SSA Hub/global was felt

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<sup>41</sup> In the MTR, the potential difference in impact was highlighted between an internship at a bank that eventually becomes a permanent job that pays well and a part-time or seasonal job that pays very little. While the latter job may be cheaper to create, it may not be efficient use of resources from an impact perspective.

<sup>42</sup> For that ToC, see

<sup>43</sup> Local partners received capacity building on, amongst other things, financial reporting and MEL.

<sup>44</sup> See SPARK global Annual report 2022 ([link](#))

<sup>45</sup> See also AK MTE, e.g., p. 36

by the AK staff to be sometimes restrictive. More so than before the revision of these procedures, up-front approval for expenditures was detrimental to speed of implementation.

- Local partners complained to the evaluators that their allocated budget was too tight, mainly due to it being in Burundian Francs that suffered from a more and more unfavourable exchange rate Vs. the euro. This deteriorating exchange rate was even said to jeopardize the activities being profitable at all for the local partners.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Explore whether the duration of contracts with local partners can be extended (e.g., 2-years) to maximize the effective period of implementation, without incurring risks that are considered too great. Given that future programming involves some of the same local partners, trust built during AK may allow for that.
- Draw-up partner budgets in euros instead of Burundian Francs to hedge against changes in the exchange rate.
- Explore if there is room for a higher threshold for up-front approval of expenditures considering that (local) controllers provide in a measure of guarantee too.

## **4.5 Impact**

### **4.5.1 To what extent the program contributed to improved economic inclusion of vulnerable youth (specifically youth and women (gender-transformative) in its context?**

All three of the interventions (skill-up, start-up and scale-up) contribute to the economic inclusion of the target group<sup>46</sup>. Particularly vulnerable youth among those targeted by AK, may be those youth who have attended CFP given that they were unable to complete formal education. Many more of the youth, however, would likely qualify as vulnerable if a definition had been drawn up within AK. After all, the interviews and FGDs show for example that even relatively small investments could not be secured within their own respective networks. Some of the businesses that were supported employed, on purpose, mostly female heads of households. This is a group that is typically also considered vulnerable.

Looking beyond these vulnerable youth alone, the programme certainly contributes to the improved economic inclusion of its target group as the evaluation found that targeted youth have, for the majority, managed to find some sort of (self-)employment and attribute that, at least to some extent, to the programme. They also report to be more confident in their own ability to create economic opportunities, rather than waiting for others to point those out to them. In addition, the evaluators learned that some youth, after no longer finding employment, managed to start for themselves or branch out to other economic activities to be more resilient. The income they derive from their combined activities is used for securing basic needs, provide a better standard of living for themselves and their families or to invest in additional income generating activities (IGAs). Those who have businesses hire others and sometimes manage to secure loans independently. The above is valid for young women and young men that are targeted.

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<sup>46</sup> The evaluators cannot assess the extent to which this is vulnerable youth, as a definition for this group has not been provided in the programme. Some of those the respondents clearly were in a more precarious position than others, but relevant data on these characteristics was not collected by SPARK.



#### 4.5.2 Are there any indications that the program makes/made a positive contribution to the (stability of the) communities within which it was implemented?

An evidence-based conclusion on impact of the programme on the stability of communities cannot be drawn based on the evaluation's approach and findings. This is due to the same reasons that were also found in the MTE (see also section 3.5)<sup>47</sup>. Just as in the MTE, however, the evaluators observed that youths and other respondents adhere to a narrative about idle youth being up to no good. As such, the connection between providing youth with something useful to do and reducing risk or increasing "stability" was often by respondents.

Exploring impact more broadly (rather than only tied to stability), the evaluators found indications of programme impact on the community level in the form of positive economic impact on programme participants' dependents (as described by participants), allowing for a more stable provision of food (e.g., for children) and the ability to pay for education. In addition, start- and scale-ups tend to hire new employees from the communities in which they are situated. The salaries thus derived by these employees benefit them and their families.

Respondents also described that they were prouder of themselves and had more confidence in their own capacities. This also translated to other areas of life than only their work, e.g., in how they interacted with others in the community. Adding to that, respondents also described a noticeable change in how they were being perceived by community members, including family. They were more often seen as role models due to their success in (self-)employment and parents in the community send their children to them to learn and look for work. For the business owners, the fact that they were able to provide jobs for others appeared to be a specific source of pride. All-in-all, the evaluators conclude that there are ample indications of positive impact of the programme on participants, their dependents and communities.

#### **Challenge:**

- Impact, e.g., increased stability, is not operationalized by AK and therefore cannot meaningfully be measured. The perceived positive impact of employment programmes on stability, furthermore, continuous to be elusive and hinges on limited academic and empirical backing. It is, therefore, in the view of the evaluators risky to hinge the success of a programme on its positive impact on stability, especially when that is not well defined.
- There was no baseline performed that is relevant for assessing impact, thus impact cannot be meaningfully measured nor attributed.

#### **Recommendations:**

- SPARK aims to continue to demonstrate that its employment programming contributes to stability. To that end, it should engage with local partners and stakeholders in exercises that elaborate the programme's ToC and contextualized needs for this change to come about. These exercises should allow for answering questions about the local context such as: What are the main drivers for instability in Burundi/at the local level? And, given the context, what can our

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<sup>47</sup> As section 3.5 shows, while the current ToC contains updated targets, the new organizational ToC has not been implemented in Burundi, despite having been discussed. That is, programme practice has not changed (e.g., on who to target, what to measure and how to adapt programming based on these measurements). Therefore, this new ToC cannot be the basis for assessing impact on stabilization for this evaluation.

interventions reasonably achieve towards stability? Concretely, that should help programme design in that it results in a clear-cut answer to: who should we target and why? What are the expected outcomes at the individual level that contribute to stability (if any) and how is that for outcomes for the communities in which we work.

- SPARK should use its newly developed impact measurement guide in future programme design, including in shaping a monitoring, evaluation and learning protocol and budget. A baseline that is appropriate to what the programmes aims to measure should be a prominent feature of future programming.

#### 4.5.3 Are there any unintended/negative impacts of the program in the context that it was implemented?

The evaluators have looked hard for negative or unintended impact in their engagements with youth and others but found only few examples.. At an individual participant level, the evaluators observe a small number of youths that ended up, through the discontinued Moneyphone pilot, with loans that they were unable to repay. While this is a negative consequence at a personal level and it is unfortunate that it happened because of a pilot that was discontinued, it is uncertain if that should be categorized as a negative impact. Finally, in the understanding of the evaluators, SPARK will ensure that these loans are repaid to take away that burden. A further negative consequence at a personal level is that some youth experienced conflict within households over how to spend increased income. None of those interviewed, however, explained this to be a serious thing. In addition, the dispute involving the Diocese and the honey centre, which was fuelled through the programme, should be included as a potential negative impact. Depending on how this will eventually be resolved, after all, the viability of the honey centre is in jeopardy.

## 4.6 Sustainability

#### 4.6.1 How sustainable are the (outcome) results achieved by the program?

The most prominent results of AK are (1) jobs for individual participants, (2) formalization and growth of supported businesses, and (3) the self-sufficiency/sustainability of the agri-business centres. Potential systemic changes, very relevant too when sustainability is being considered, will be covered in the next section.

##### **Jobs**

The sustainability of individual jobs is difficult to assess. In AK this is even more pronounced, given that even permanent jobs are defined as lasting 6 months or more. Given how precarious the Burundian context is, this is not surprising. The evaluators would, for that reason, not first look at these jobs for sustainable results. For the establishment and growth of the supported companies the consideration is a bit similar as for the jobs. The context brings forward numerous challenges that may at any time disrupt the business model of the supported businesses. Throughout AK's lifecycle, such events have occurred. One such example is the difficulties of doing business that originate from the enduring shortage of petrol, the unreliability of power availability and the current closure of the border with Rwanda. All of these issues may collapse business models as they may disrupt supply or demand of necessary goods and services.

There is, however, also a more positive story to tell about sustainable effects at the individual level. As, almost without fault, the participants with whom the evaluators engaged explained that their

experience in AK changed their mind-set. They feel more responsible for their own success and that is coupled with a felt increase in skills and capacities to seize opportunities and positively change their economic outlook. This extends, so the evaluators were told, beyond the original opportunity in which they were supported by AK. This was illustrated by youth that have started companies after internships led to employment, youth that engaged in other economic activities next to their main business, etc. They also explain how they propagate this mind-set to others and that the fact that they have success doing so, makes this mind-set stick with others (siblings, neighbours, etc.).

### **Agri-business centres**

As the evaluators describe at length in section 3.4. for each of the centres, they have difficulties assessing their sustainability. This is due to some of the relevant positive changes having only been made very recently, e.g., in terms of management, and their sustainability is therefore difficult to assess. Meanwhile, the evaluators saw very little activity at each of the centres and that was said to be due to challenges over which there appeared to be no consensus between SPARK, experts and management.

#### **4.6.2 To what extent the program contributed to (any) systemic change in the local business development/ job creation / job matching ecosystems?**

SPARK defines systemic change “as the positive modification, enabled through our programmes, in the local systems of SME development, job creation and job matching, which enables these economic activities to continue after our programmes’ end in a sustainable, scalable and resilient way.”<sup>48</sup> As determining the extent to which observed changes are sustainable, scalable and resilient is difficult, the focus was on indications of contributions to systemic change. The most relevant findings are presented below:

- AK contributed to the strengths and capacities of its local partners which (e.g., CREOP and CEMAC) are involved in (future) programming without SPARK. Their increased capacity to provide better (business development/job creation and job matching) services to young people in Burundi could indicate potential systemic change to which AK contributed. However, for such change to truly be systemic, reproduction of these changes, e.g., among other actors should occur. The latter is not monitored by the programme
- AK participants having success as entrepreneurs, contributes to the appeal of pursuing entrepreneurship to improve one’s economic position. This can be perceived as a change in attitude beyond direct programme participants.
- AK has contributed to the willingness of MFIs to provide loans to young entrepreneurs. Provided that MFIs continue to provide loans to young entrepreneurs outside of AK or other programming, this is indicative of systemic change.
- Despite the evaluators’ findings in relation to potential sustainability issues, the services that are provided by the 3 different Agri-business centres change the equation for those involved in production in those respective value chains. Good examples, provided that they continue to be used are state-of-art (for Burundi) cold rooms in the Fish centre and BBN certification for the honey and fruit centre. If these services will continue to be provided sustainably and without further support, they could be indicative of systemic change.

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<sup>48</sup> SPARK systemic change definitions and measurement framework.

**Challenge:**

- The above identified indications of systemic change still require proof of sustainability, resilience and scalability. The reproduction of aimed for (behavioural) changes, e.g., among service providers in the relevant system, would be a good indication of these three criteria. Currently, such reproduction is not consistently monitored.

**Recommendations**

- In future programming SPARK should, making use of the referenced note, define the type of systemic change that they aim for in the relevant context and ensure that they meaningfully monitor whether these changes occur.
- A single programme is unlikely to lead to systemic change. However, longer programmes are likely to provide a more significant contribution of such change, also because they can pilot and scale interventions. As such, SPARK should pursue longer programmes.

## 5. LESSONS LEARNED

This chapter summarizes the lessons learned per AK outcome and answers to objective 2 of the evaluation's ToR.

### Skill Up

- Young people leaving secondary and university education need internships that combine on-the-job practical skills training and job readiness training, as their (mainly) theoretical training provided in traditional schools does not prepare them for the type of vacancies employers seek to fill.
- The use of third-party (job matching) organisations such as CREOP and IG to select interns is beneficial for client companies. This approach increases the chance of retaining the right candidates, who are selected based on objective criteria
- The greater the technical skills a trainee candidate needs to acquire, the longer the internship should be. A three-month traineeship is not appropriate for trainees who are selected in more technical fields. It is crucial that the length of the internship is not standardised for all candidates, but rather tailored to their specific area of training.

### Start Up

- Co-financing remains an appropriate strategy for the success of Start-ups. It has been observed that in order to commence their operations (start-ups), entrepreneurs frequently require start-up equipment, which is often inaccessible to them due to a lack of sufficient financial resources. An effective support programme to promote youth employment would be to devote part of its budget to co-financing start-up equipment, as AK has done.
- After having commenced a start-up, e.g., making use of a matching-grant, access to follow-on finance continues to be a challenge. While this is not unexpected, this systemic constraint threatens the sustainability of impacts.
- Entrepreneurial activities carried out in groups (cooperatives or associations) are less successful than individual businesses. Despite the encouragement provided by the AK programme and the financial institutions, the results of running a business as a group were found to be less effective due to the differing interests of the group members. The programme has been most successful with individual businesses. The evaluators would not conclude that group businesses should not be pursued as they offer certain advantages, e.g., pooling of funds and capacities. However, a thorough selection of members is of the utmost importance, and this was not necessarily the basis for group businesses that AK inherited from other programmes.

### Scale Up

- The coaching and support offered to scale-up companies must be tailored to the company's needs and size. The standard coaching programme, which typically involves drawing up a business plan, formalising the business and connecting to financial institutions, should be reviewed to include new chapters that meet the needs of scale-up companies, depending on their size. This could include customer relationship management, human resources management or any customised training.
- MFIs are willing to finance young entrepreneurs if they have a sound business plan and reasonable expectations in terms of financing needs.

- National or regional trade fairs are a powerful tool for raising the profile of scale-up companies. Trade fairs attended by entrepreneurs with the support of the AK Programme have boosted the visibility and sales of beneficiary companies.
- The complementarity between the AK Programme and other government initiatives such as PAEJ and BIJE has been beneficial for entrepreneurs when it comes to access to finance. It has been observed that at certain times, entrepreneurs supported by AK required credit amounts that exceeded the thresholds granted to them by MFIs. In this context, government initiatives such as PAEJ or BIJE have provided these loans to the satisfaction of the entrepreneurs.

#### **Outcome 4**

- Pioneering initiatives in the agribusiness sector, outfitted with modern equipment, do not automatically make for successful business cases. A thorough understanding of what is needed in the value chain, including an assessment of required Vs. available management skills, should precede any such investment. In some cases, this may mean that smaller initiatives are more likely to operate sustainably than bigger ones.
- BBN Certification is thought to be an important precondition for scaling of a company and generating better profits after the significant investments required to professionalize the production process. Given that certification is a lengthy and unpredictable process, it may dissuade entrepreneurs from investing in the agribusiness sector.

#### **Overarching:**

- When a donor aims for synergy between the programmes it funds, it is useful to depart from a shared analysis of the issues at hand. In the design and approval of programmes, complementarity should be a key factor. Only in that way, interventions can be organized avoiding redundancy and competition. Importantly, this also helps to ensure that there are no gaps in addressing relevant systemic constraints.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the presentation of the report's findings, the evaluation team has formulated general recommendations addressed to the Embassy of the Netherlands in Burundi, as the donor, and SPARK, as the organization in charge of implementation.

### General recommendation

- The evaluation recommends that the Netherlands embassy ensures that programmes/projects approved for funding include synergistic, rather than contradictory approaches and actions as it facilitates complementarity between programmes. Such concerted efforts allow for the portfolio of programmes to address systemic constraints more effectively. An example could be ensuring that approaches are largely market-inspired, or that obsolete tools such as per diems for participants are not utilized in any programme.
- If programmes are expected to contribute to addressing systemic constraints, longer time-horizons are required because it takes time for these changes to emerge, and programmes learn by doing. Thus, a longer period of implementation is a precondition for evidence informed adaptive management and subsequent systemic change.
- SPARK should be careful to ensure that partnerships with local partners do not go sour due to ill-matching communication styles.
- Invest in designing a more robust monitoring framework for job and jobs quality. This includes setting minimum standards for jobs, the departure points of which is the impact the programme aims for.
- Related to the above, A2F outputs and targets should also be developed with a view towards the intended impact of the programme (e.g., are you aiming for an equipment grant or for recurrent loans that increase in size?). The reason for this is that the impact of a small solidarity loan for a group of members in a group SME differs from the impact of a second or third bank loan for a growing scale-up. While the former is likely to contribute to the livelihood of the individual member, the latter may indicate growth take-off (jobs and turn-over) of the company.
- If the EKN finds that impact assessments should be conducted for all its programmes, it should only approve and fund those programmes that include a theoretically sound and practically feasible impact assessment, including sufficient budget for the collection of data pre- and post-intervention. SPARK should, in future programming, make use of their newly developed impact measurement guide to design and budget for impact assessments in line with what befits a programme in the given context.

### Outcome 1

- A longer internship period of 6 – 12 months is more useful for promoting youth employability, especially for those jobs that require more technical skills.
- Consider facilitating those that have finished their internship and show interest/ambition/dedication to become entrepreneurs in starting their own (group) business. As those youth have added exposure to the tasks required in the job, they may be a good source for selection into start-up programming.
- Ensure that the internship salary covers transportation costs, especially when internships have a longer duration. The evaluators argue that such an increase should originate from the part that is provided by the employer rather than that of SPARK. This, after all, is in the spirit of employers

valuing their interns by paying a fair price for their services and makes to model less dependent on external funding.

- Formal and informal education curricula should better match job market demands. Future programme should explore how to their activities can contribute to the improvement of curricula. Public-private partnerships, in which entrepreneurs transfer practical skills to students, can be a meaningful tool and future programmes should seek to establish those.
- Given the success of the internship component of the programme, employers should be enticed to participate. Future programmes could lobby for such incentives, e.g., certain tax exemptions for companies that participate in such meaningful internship programmes.

### **Outcome 2 & 3: Startups and Scale ups**

- Explore if cohorts that are in the programme together can be linked, e.g., in WhatsApp groups as a low-cost way of establishing potentially sustainable networks. These networks can be used for peer-support (e.g., how do you balance family life with running a business), business opportunities (competitions, fairs, etc.) and even B2B relations.
- Ensure that the support provided to scale-ups is distinct from the support provided to start-ups and tailored toward scale-ups' needs. Scale-ups typically have need for more advanced training, e.g., in HR, accounting, delegating (management) tasks etc.
- Explore if mentoring of scale-ups by established entrepreneurs is feasible. When these mentors are engaged based on their intrinsic motivation to help young entrepreneurs get ahead and not by monetary rewards, they are most likely to help these young people overcome challenges by sharing their own experience and sharing of their network.
- Future programming should consider the extent to which a narrower focus on specific value chains contributes to more sustainable results. Such an approach mandates thorough value chains analyses and selection to ensure that the programme sustainably addresses systemic constraints. Once value chain actors can overcome these constraints, the sustainability of results becomes less dependent on the programme and is secured through the mutual benefits of the various value chain actors. The donor could play a role in ensuring coherence between programmes that it funds.
- Given that natural disasters (e.g., flooding) occur regularly in Burundi, future programming should explore if a focus on sectors that are resilient to or mitigate the effects of these disasters offer opportunities at scale.

### **Outcome 4**

- The evaluation recommends that SPARK should seek a focal point at BBN level to advise entrepreneurs interested in agri-food processing on the procedure for applying for or renewing a BBN certificate.
- Continue to support beekeepers who are members of UBUKI to increase local honey production as the honey centre facilities are underused and transporting honey is expensive.
- Avoid conflicts such as those related to the honey centre by ensuring that all agreements (e.g., related to land-use) are open to a single interpretation alone.
- The local supply of wild-caught fish is a serious issue as stocks are dwindling. All the while, there continuous to be a demand for fish and there is a fish centre with state-of-the-art facilities available. Thus, given the investment in the fish centre, a future programme should explore if it is sustainable to support the farmed-fish value chain.





# ANNEX 1: EVALUATION QUESTIONS

#	Evaluation question
<b>Relevance</b>	
1	How relevant was the program to the needs of its target group?
2	How relevant was the program to the local/national government's priorities?
3	How relevant was the program to the donor's priorities?
<b>Coherence</b>	
4	To what extent the program's objectives and implementation aligned with other (relevant/development) interventions and initiatives within its context? (other donor programs, especially PADANE (SNV) and PADFIR (CORDAID))
5	To what extent the program creates synergies with other (relevant/development) interventions and initiatives within its context? (especially governmental programs/interventions, MINCOM, PAEEJ, BIJE, provincial administrations)
<b>Effectiveness</b>	
6	To what extent the program achieved its intended results (outputs and outcomes), as per the targets set in its (adapted) ToC?
7	To what extent the local partners of the program were enabled to bring their individual added value in its implementation? (locally sustained development, ecosystem strengthening, VC development, private sector development (including A2F via MFIs))
<b>Efficiency</b>	
8	How timely was the program's activities implementation?
9	How (value for money) efficiently the program's budget has been spent? (usage of same indicators as in Akazi Keza MTR)
10	To what extent a robust operational model has been established in the program's implementation? (especially balance between implementation speed & control)
<b>Impact</b>	
11	To what extent the program contributed to improved economic inclusion of vulnerable youth (specifically youth and women (gender-transformative) in its context?
12	Are there any indications that the program makes/made a positive contribution to the (stability of the) communities within which it was implemented?
<b>Sustainability</b>	
13	How sustainable are the (outcome) results achieved by the program?
14	To what extent the program contributed to (any) systemic change in the local business development/ job creation / job matching ecosystems?

## ANNEX 2 – FGD GUIDES

### Outcome 1: internships

FGDs are foreseen with interns in Gitega and in Cibitoke, the consultants aim for a diverse group of participants (men/women and sectors).

Suggested topics:

- Relevance: How relevant was the programme to their needs (e.g., do youth feel they are more employable than they were before, why?)
- Effectiveness: To what extent has the programme achieved its intended results (explicate individual economic outcomes during and post-intervention)
- Efficiency: Value for money of the intervention, which ties in with the above, e.g., internship/job quality.
- Impact: What are the ultimate (un)expected implications of (participation in) the programme at the individual level? What has securing an internship/receiving training meant for participants?
- Sustainability: Has the programme changed how internships/interns are viewed?
- Considerations for future programming, what could have been done differently and why?

### Outcome 2: Start-ups/crafts

Suggested topics:

- Relevance: How relevant was the programme to their needs (e.g., what needs have training and coaching received resolved, what challenges persist?)
- Effectiveness: To what extent has the programme achieved its intended results (explicate outcomes for the start-ups during and post-intervention).
- Efficiency: Value for money of the intervention, how does the outcomes (e.g., jobs for owner/staff) compared to other outcomes within AK?
- Impact: What are the ultimate (un)expected implications of (participation in) the programme at the individual company level?
- Sustainability: Has the programme changed how internships/interns are viewed?
- Considerations for future programming, what could have been done differently and why?

### Outcome 3: Scale-ups

- Relevance: How relevant was the programme to participants' needs (e.g., what needs have training and coaching they received resolved, what challenges persist?)
- Effectiveness: To what extent has the programme achieved its intended results (explicate outcomes for the scale-ups during and post-intervention).
- Efficiency: Value for money of the intervention, e.g., how do the jobs for staff created compare to other outcomes within AK?
- Impact: What are the ultimate (un)expected implications of (participation in) the programme at the individual company level?
- Sustainability: How sustainable are the results achieved for individual companies? Has the programme led to changes in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, business development services that are on offer?
- Considerations for future programming, what could have been done differently and why?

### Outcome 4: Agri-business centres

Suggested topics:

- How relevant was the programme to their needs (how does the service that the Agri-business centre provides resonate with the needs of the producers that make use of them?)
- Systemic changes in the entrepreneurial landscape resulting from the services that are provided at/by these centres, e.g.: has the new service resulted in changes in service provision by others?
- Impact of the agri-business centre on the local economy.

## ANNEX 3: LIST OF DOCUMENTS PROVIDED TO CONSULTANTS

Fol der- pref ix	Folder name	Document name		
A.	Relevant Documentatio n			
				Burundi CPSD Exec Sum English_Jun3.pdf
	1			SME Tracer Study August 2021.pdf
	2			SPARK Budget Akazi Keza BURUNDI 1-7-2020.xlsx
	4			SPARK Concept Note Skills for PSD for EKN Burundi 31012024 V1.3.pdf
	5			SPARK_Akazi Keza Proposal_30042020.pdf
	6			071022_AK_MTE_report_SPARK_Burundi.pdf
	7			AKAZI KEZA – Context Analysis & Implementation Strategy Report SPARK 29102021 v1.0.pdf
	8			Akazi keza Grant Decision 30072020.pdf
	9			Burundi CPSD English_Jun3.pdf
B.	Annual donor reports			
	2020			
	1			SPARK_Akazi_Keza_Narrative_2020_22062021_Revised_Version.pdf
	2			Annex 3 Akazi Keza Financial Statement as at 31.12.2020 adapted version 22062021.xlsx
	2021			
	3			SPARK_Akazi_Keza_Narrative_2021_31032022_V1.2.pdf
	4			ANNEX 1 Akazi Keza Financial Statement as at 31.12.2021.xlsx
	2022			
	5			SPARK_Akazi_Keza_Narrative_2022_31032023_V1.0.pdf
	6			ANNEX 1 Akazi Keza Financial Statement as at 31.12.2022_V1.0_31032023.xlsx
	7			ANNEX 3 ToC, Risk & Mitigation Overview and Monitoring Protocol.xlsx
	8			ANNEX 4 Case Stories & Videos & Photos.pdf
	2023			
	9			Akazi Keza Results as per January 2024 1202204 DRAFT
C.	Annual Plans			
	2021			
	1			Akazi Keza 2021 Annual Plan Narrative 28022021.pdf
	2			AkaziKeza Annual Plan 2021 28022021 v1.2.xlsx
	2022			
	3			Akazi Keza 2022 Annual Plan Narrative Letter 29102021
	4			AkaziKeza Annual Plan 2022 11022021 V1.2
	2023			
	5			Akazi Keza 2023 Annual Plan Narrative Letter 08122022 V1.1

	6		Akazi Keza 2023 Annual Plan Narrative Letter 08122022 V1.1
		2024	
	7		Akazi Keza 2024 Annual Plan Narrative Letter V1.1 1412023
	8		Akazi Keza 2024 Annual Plan Narrative Letter V1.1 1412023
	9		AKZ - forecast 2024 V1.1 08122023
D	Partner reporting		
		AFORGER	
			Report January 2024
	1		02_02_2024 Canevas Excel des 16 PME trimestre II Partenariat Spark Aforger 2023
	2		02_02_2024 Comparaison annuel 2021 2022 et 2023 pour les 16PME SPARK- AFORGER
	3		02_02_2024 Rapport trimestre II Partenariat SPARK-AFORGER
	4		Copy of loan of CPS-CBG
	5		Emplois Permanent et Temporaires
	6		SOURCE DE VERIFICATION EMPLOIS INDIRECT TEMPORAIRES
			Report September 2023
	7		MOVs September 2023
	8		1st Term Report Partenariat SPARK-AFORGER 2023 7 11 2023 corrigé
	9		Canevas Excel trimestre I Partenariat Spark Aforger 2023 7 11 2023
			ToR proposal Contract
	10		AFORGER Signed contract-2023 Partnership
	11		Canevas PME, Planning trimestriel détaillé des activités des PME
	12		CV Business coach Claudine
	13		CV Business coach Nailla
	14		CV Coach technique en couture Manassé
	15		CV Formatrice en éducation financière Yvette
	16		CV Responsable finance Sandrine
	17		CV_ Coach technique MUNEZERO Josaphat
	18		INTEGURO Y_ UMUGAMBI MU KIRUNDI
	19		Partnership Agreement AFORGER 2023 19072023
	20		PROPOSAL BUDGET SPARK_AFORGER 07.07.2023
	21		PROPOSAL BUDGET SPARK_AFORGER BudgetLinesAKZ 17072023
	22		PROPOSAL_SPARK_AFORGER_JUIN_AKAZI_KEZA 07 07 2023
	23		TdR Akazi Keza 2023 Parternship AFORGER 15062023 V1.2
	24		TdR Akazi Keza 2023 Parternship AFORGER 15062023 V1.2
	25		Templates, Plan d'affaire, plan d'action et contrat de coaching
		CEMAC	
			Report January 2024
	26		09 02 2024 RAPPORT CEMAC SEPTEMBRE DECEMBRE 2023

	27			09 02 2024 RAPPORT CEMAC SEPTEMBRE DECEMBRE 2023
	28			09_02_2024_CEMAC_SPARK_CANEVAS_FINAL_D_AKAZI_KEZ A_98_PMES_DE_MISE_A_ECHELLE (fin)
			ToR Proposal Contract	
	29			BUDGET CEMAC 2023 VB 26-05 V1.1 AKbudgetcodes11072023 DRAFT
	30			Contract Partnership CEMAC SPARK 2023 SignedSPARKSignedCEMAC May 2023
	31			MEMORANDUM D_ENTENTE CEMAC et PMEs
	32			OFFRE D_ACCOMPAGNEMENT DE 99 PMEs 05-05-2023
	33			organigramme 2023 CEMAC BURUNDI
	34			PLANIFICATION OFFRE 2023 05-05-2023
	35			RESULTATS ATTENDUS PAR CHAQUE TRIMESTRE 05-05-2023
	36			RISQUE ET MESURE DE MITIGATION CANEVAS 05-05-2023
	37			TdR Akazi Keza 2023 CEMAC 20122022 V1.1 15042023
		CREO P		
	38			CREOP 2023 5 SMEs avant stagiaires Update January 2024
	39			CREOP Rapport Narratif juin_Aout_Décembre 2023 V1.1
	40			CREOP_Final Report 2022 V1.1
	41			Rapport Final de mise en œuvre du projet_CREOP-SPARK 2021
	42			ToR proposal Contract
	43			Budget_CREOP-Spark_collaboration 2023 0306023 V1.1 AKbudgetcodes06072023
	44			Narrative Proposition CREOP Akazi Keza 2023 23052023
	45			Partnership 2023 SPARK Burundi & CREOP 07062023 Signed
	46			TdR Akazi Keza 2023 CREOP 20122022 V1.3 03052022
		INFIN ITY		
	47			Rapport final JRP2 avril 2022- janvier 2023
	48			Rapport Narratif et Financier JRP I (final) 2021 Infinity
	49			Rapport narratif et financier Sep - Dec 2023 (DRAFT 1202204)
				ToR proposal Contract
	50			Annexe 8- Budget Revised vs Commentaires de Spark 260523 RN AKbudgets06072023
	51			Infinity - JRP brochure2 01
	52			Partnership 2023 SPARK Burundi - Infinity signedSPARKandINFINITY May 2023
	53			Proposition narrative et financière JRP3 130523
	54			TdR Akazi Keza 2023 INFINITY 15042022 V1.1
E.	Agri business centers			
		Overa II		
	1			EKN Donor Handover Approval for Fish Center, Honey Center, Agri- Business Center and Cooking Equipment Oct 2023.pdf
	2			Final Report ETR ABIN 300323.pdf
	3			SPARK Formal Request Handover of Equipment Agri-Business Service Centers 2208023 V1.2.pdf
	4			ABIN_Narrative_2014-2022_30082022 V1.0.pdf

		FISH		
			Contracts Fish federation	
	5			Convention Akazi Keza FFPB SPARK Juillet 2022.pdf
	6			Fish Center Equipment Handover Agreement Signed Nov 2023.pdf
			Documentation Analysis	
	7			Expert Leonie Analyse & Recommendations Solution Durable CIR 04052023 V1.0
	8			Fish Fed SPARK Fish Center Pres 05122023
	9			Rapport de l'étude de la valeur ajoutée de l'incubateur de la Pêche de Rutumo 2021
			Reports Fish Federation	
	10			Rapport financier FFPB 2 million aout.pdf
	11			Rapport naratif du septembre.pdf
	12			Rapport narratif du CIR pour le mois de Mars.pdf
	13			Rapport narratif mois d_aout 2022.pdf
	14			Rapport narratif mois d_Octobre OK FFPB.pdf
	15			Rapport narratif mois de Novembre.pdf
	16			Rapport de mission du Tanzanie Juillet 2022.pdf
	17			RAPPORT DU C.I.R DU MOIS DE DECEMBRE 2022.pdf
	18			RAPPORT DU C.I.R, Avril.2023 FFPB.pdf
	19			RAPPORT DU C.I.R, Juin.2023.pdf
	20			RAPPORT DU C.I.R, Mai 2023.pdf
	21			Rapport du CIR juillet 2023.pdf
	22			RAPPORT DU MOIS DE FEVRIER 2023 IC Peche.pdf
	23			RAPPORT DU MOIS DE janvier 2023 FFPB draft.pdf
	24			Rapport du mois de juillet 2022 CIR.pdf
	25			RAPPORT FINANCIER DU MOIS DE MARS 2023.pdf
		Fruit Juice		
	26			29_1_2024_COIEDE_Plan_d_Affaires_Centre_Agri-Business_2024_-2026_V1.0.docx
	27			Annex 1 Rental Contract Cibtioko Agri Business Center Province SPARK 2023.pdf
	28			Centre AgriBusiness Cibitoke Utilisation 2021 - Janvier 2024.xlsx
	29			Convention Cession Equipements Centre Agri-Business Cibitoke COIEDE 31012023 DRAFT.docx
	30			JANVIER AVRIL 2024 PLAN D_ACTION COIEDE.xlsx
	31			PROJECTION DES VENTES 2024 2025 ET 2026 COIEDE.xlsx
		Honey		
			Honey VC deve;lopment	
	32			Beehives Receival 5 SMEs April 2023 confirmation SMEs SIGNED.pdf
	33			Facture pour les abris des ruches des 4 sites ALOYS 23012024.pdf
	34			Rapport final revu Domitien 16032023.pdf

	35			Rapport spark Aloys Miel 19012024.pdf
				MinCom communication
	36			Lettre à Madame la MINICOM 29052023.pdf
	37			Lettre MinCom Oct 2023.jpg
	38			MinCom Rappel BBN UBUKI Solutions 03082023.pdf
				UBUKI Solutions documentation
	39			Etiquette UBUKI Solutions Draft 24012024.jpg
	40			Letter UBUKI Solutions Provence Cibitoke janvier 2024 .jpg
	41			MdE BBN Certification UBUKI GROUP FINAL signed 05042023.pdf
	42			Miellerie Ubuki Solutions Break-Even et Plan d_Action 2024 DRAFT 09022024.xlsx
	43			NIF et RC ANACOOOP 26042023.jpg
	44			Certification CNTA 23012924.PDF
	45			Convention Cession Equipements UBUKI SOLUTIONS Miellerie Cibitoke 06022024 DRAFT.docx
	46			Convention Cession Equipements UBUKI SOLUTIONS Miellerie Cibitoke 06022024 DRAFT.pdf



## ANNEX 4: LIST OF KII RESPONDENTS

Category	Who
SPARK	Country director, programme staff and HQ staff
(former) implementing partners	CREOP CEMAC AFORGER Infinity Group Kazozah ULT
Donor	EKN
Other programmes	Cordaid (PADFIR), SNV (PADANE), PAEEJ
Financial institutions	BIJE, ISHAKA
Third party stakeholders	Ministry of commerce, Chef de Colline Cibitoke, Cibitoke/Gitega/Rumonge provincial administration
Outcome 1, 2 and 3	Employer of interns in Gitega and in Cibitoke, selected participant entrepreneurs during company visits.
Fish Center (outcome 4)	fishermen federation and 2 Fish experts, fish entrepreneur, entrepreneur involved in smoking of fish.
Fruit and cereal agri-business centre (outcome 4)	COIEDE Representative and expert involved
Honey centre (outcome 4)	UBUKI Solution Representatives and honey expert involved

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