

# **Evaluation of 4 SOLIDAR projects in Youth Employability sector in Bolivia, Burkina Faso, El Salvador and Kosovo**

THEMATIC LEARNING REPORT

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## DISCLAIMER

While being based on a desk research, discussions and workshops with members of Solidar Suisse, and their national offices in 4 countries, as well as various project partners and stakeholders, this report reflects the views of the evaluation team, and not necessarily the views of Solidar Suisse, nor any of their partners.

## ACRONYMS

<b>ABN-G</b>	Association Beoog Neere (Ganzourgou, Burkina Faso)
<b>AFI-D</b>	Alphabétisation, Formation Intensive pour le Développement (Non-formal literacy and training centers)
<b>AM</b>	Association Manegdbzanga (Oubritenga, Burkina Faso)
<b>ATY</b>	Association Tind Yalgré (Kourwéogo, Burkina Faso)
<b>COGES</b>	Comités de Gestion (Management committees, in this case of the AFI-D centers)
<b>ITED</b>	Institute for Training and Economic Development (Kosovo)
<b>MWGVET</b>	Municipal Working Group on VET
<b>VET</b>	Vocational Education and Training

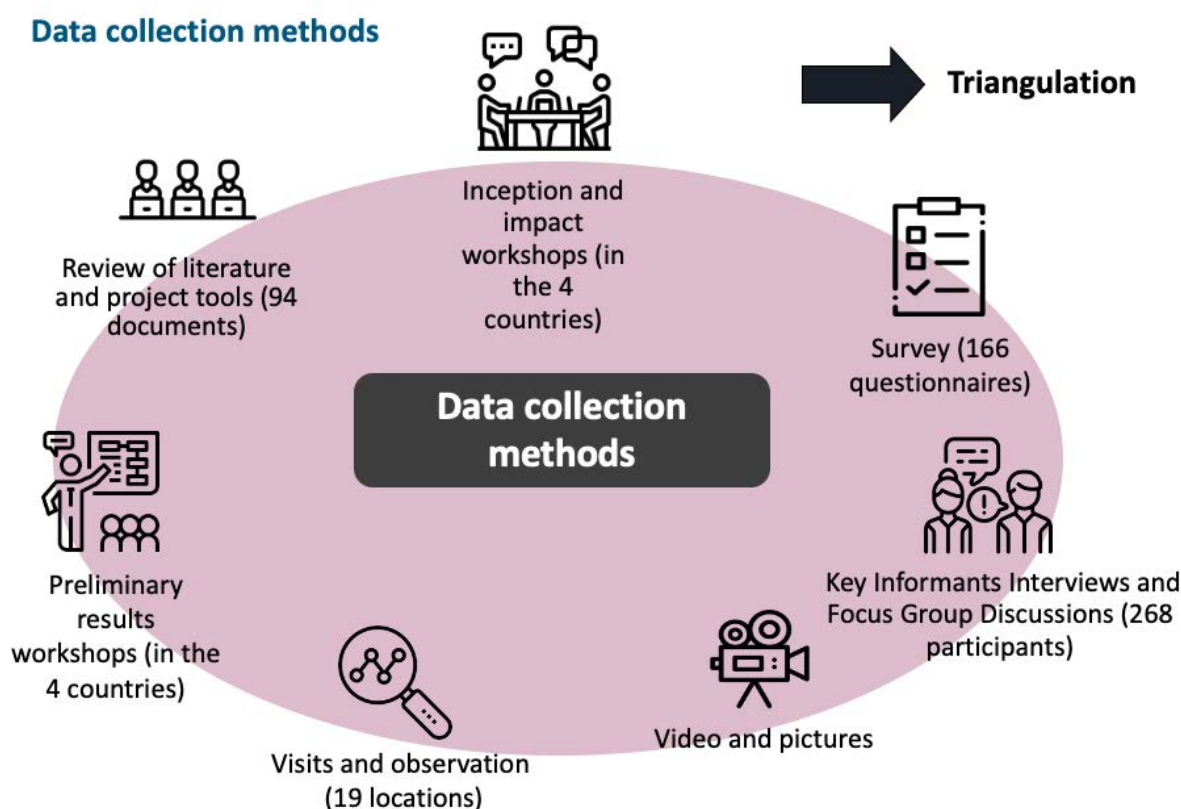
## INTRODUCTION

This Thematic learning report is the final deliverable of a multi-country Sustainability Impact evaluation of four of Solidar Suisse Youth Employability projects, namely:

- the **Fuerza Joven** project in Bolivia (running from 2018 to 2021)
- the **Basic training, training and professional integration** project in Burkina Faso (started in 2011)
- the **Violence prevention and decent work for youth** project in El Salvador (started in 2017) and
- the **Pro Skills** project in Kosovo (started in 2017).

This report presents the cross cutting analysis at a more global level, and the lessons learned and good practices drawn from each project. It therefore complements the 4 Project feedback reports that present the main findings and concrete recommendations for each specific project, as well as the data collection used in each country.

## OVERVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY USED



Some focus groups discussions have as well been implemented specifically with young women, and others separately with young men, in order to study the specific challenges they are facing, and assess the impacts with a gender lens.

Following the data collection phase and the drafting of the Feedback reports for each of the four projects, the Evaluation team conducted several working sessions to compare the findings, good practices, challenges of each project. This work took into account the specific context in which the projects were implemented.



Focus group discussion with young women trained in sewing ; Burkina Faso

From there, the evaluation team was able to draw recommendations that are cross-cutting, and can be replicated in all projects (with of course a special focus on adapting to the context).

***A more detailed description of the methodology used, and a presentation of the implementation of the evaluation can be found in Annexe 2.***

## CONCLUSIONS OF THE IMPACT EVALUATION STUDY

### 1. Relevance

#### **A relevant focus on vulnerable young people**

**All projects target vulnerable young people, and in some cases groups that are characterized by a higher level of vulnerability.** For instance, in El Salvador the project targets young people from rural areas, which present a very high level of vulnerability (wages below the relative and absolute poverty line, very limited agricultural lands, lack of public transportation, impact of recurrent natural disasters, presence of gangs, diseases caused by the spraying of glyphosate...). In Burkina Faso, the target groups are mainly out-of-school young people (who dropped out of school early on, or in some cases, who never went to school) with similar risks (work in dangerous mining sites, illegal migration, recruiting by extremists groups,...).

In Bolivia, the target group is broader: young people from urban and peri-urban areas of a specific city (Viacha), living in economically vulnerable households (identified by analyzing electricity bills). Nevertheless, it includes as well a module for young and adolescent mothers, which is relevant given the absolute lack of opportunities for this specific group that accumulates most vulnerability factors.

In Kosovo, the project until now has targeted VET students of two schools, without a specific 'vulnerability focus'. If young people in general have few opportunities, specific groups such as young women, or ethnic minority groups have even less opportunities. Not taking into account these specificities (such as the language, for minority groups) leads to a risk: reinforcing the discriminations they are facing. Since the impact evaluation conducted in March 2020, 6 students from minority groups (3 from the Bosniak community and 3 from the Roma community) are now benefiting from the project, and one company managed by a Kosovo-Bosniak has been added to the partners of the project. These efforts should further be pursued in the future.

#### **A definition process which relies on local partners**

**All projects have a relevant or a very relevant methodological approach.** Solidar Suisse doesn't have a unique and top-down methodology defined from headquarters. On the contrary, **Solidar Suisse lets local Solidar offices define the projects with their local counterparts in a multi-stakeholder-perspective.** This ensures that the activities are context-specific. For instance, the project's design involved the municipality of Viacha in Bolivia, the local NGOs CRIPDES and IDES in El Salvador, and the implementing organizations ABN-G, AM, ATY in Burkina Faso, and ITED in Kosovo. This explains why the projects' approaches are different from one country to another. This **multi-stakeholder**-approach has clearly been a key success factor.

**In some cases, such as Bolivia, the target groups – young people – have had a key role in the definition, follow-up and evaluation of the project's activities.** It enhanced the project's relevance, recognized and reinforced the role of young people as agents of their own process of change. It is a good practice that could and should be replicated for most projects that target young people.

#### **An integral approach that empowers young people**

**In most cases, the approach has been integral,** as most projects aim at reducing vulnerability factors that prevent young people from getting a decent job. For instance: preventing adolescent pregnancy (El Salvador), offering basic education and literacy skills (Burkina Faso), strengthening youth organizations (El Salvador), assessing public authorities (Bolivia), raising awareness of gender-based inequalities (Bolivia, El Salvador), reinforcing basic rights knowledge (El Salvador, Bolivia, Burkina Faso), strengthening the links between public and private actors (Kosovo)... All projects also aim at strengthening self-confidence, self-awareness of one's capacities, the capacity to socialize with others, to speak in public... They all integrate training modules that also enhance technical skills.

This integral approach is very relevant because **it empowers vulnerable young people, a powerful process of transformative change with long term effects:** even if they do not find a job directly after the training, or if their business still only generates limited income after one or two years, young people are able to project themselves, to make plans for their life. They learned to trust their capacities, to be resourceful, to be more resilient.

The only project to be almost exclusively focused on youth (direct) employability is the one in Kosovo, although it also focuses on young peoples' soft skills. This approach is nevertheless coherent with the target group (less vulnerable than target groups in some other countries,

as they are currently enrolled in VET education): the more vulnerable young people are, the more work is needed on the factors that disempower them and vice versa.

## 2. Efficiency

In general, the defined output or results indicators have been met, or should be met at the end of the current phase of the project. Difficulties have been documented and in general discussed with the respective Solidar country offices.

### **A good level of coordination at local level**

In all projects, we observed a **very good coordination between SOLIDAR and the local partners**, or among local partners. The dialogue is fluid, based on trust which allows the stakeholders to freely speak about the difficulties they encounter and how to tackle them. In Bolivia, the coordination between Solidar Bolivia and the municipality of Viacha should be underlined: the municipality supports the projects' activities with the creation and funding of a Youth Unit since 2016 that implements parts of the activities.

The coordination between ITED and Solidar in Kosovo seems flawless, both organizations trusting and supporting each other, with a similar vision for the project.

In the case of Burkina Faso, the fact that despite the widely acknowledged lack of motivation of some COGES members, no solution has been found yet, shows that coordination with Solidar could be further developed, with Solidar being a real driver for supporting implementing partners' suggestions.

### **A continuous MEL process**

Projects benefit from a very good follow-up. **Most projects incorporate a monitoring and evaluation (MEL) process**, externalized or internalized, with at least an evaluation report at the end of the project and the regular production of end-of-year narrative reports. Most projects also include surveys with current and former participants, which facilitate the impact analysis. This not only ensures a good level of transparency, but also contributes to creating a continuous learning process. Based on the findings and recommendations of the MEL process, the approach in some projects was modified. In the case of El Salvador, training programs that were proposed separately were reorganized in several training routes that combine different training modules (technical skills, soft skills, sexual education...) according to the participants' personal life projects. In Kosovo, more sectors and companies will be added to better fit the needs of the youth, and work practice for gastronomy has been implemented in school grounds, to compensate for the lack of willing companies to employ the young people.

### **A good capacity to adapt to changes in the context**

The COVID-19 pandemic hit Latin America very hard, much harder than the official figures show. In Bolivia, most young people interviewed in the context of this study have lost a close relative. Quarantine measures were particularly harsh: they lasted 3 months in Bolivia and 5 months in El Salvador, with the military ensuring the strict quarantine of communities. In El Salvador, no one could go out, not even to change the filters of the improved water system and the members of the armed forces had the right to shoot on people not respecting the

quarantine. For vulnerable communities and families whose revenues depend on informal activities, it was a struggle to survive, especially as public assistance did not reach rural areas. In that context, the projects in El Salvador and Bolivia showed a great capacity to adapt. In Bolivia, training sessions in person were replaced by online training. Solidar covered the cost of the internet connection, which allowed students (and their professors) to attend online lessons. In El Salvador, Solidar implemented humanitarian assistance in the context of another program (with Ayuda en Accion) in the areas of the project evaluated, and acted to prevent the rupture of basic services such as improved water. When the quarantine was partially lifted, they organized the training sessions in rural areas (instead of university facilities) in semi-open facilities, respecting sanitary requirements. In Burkina Faso, the situation has been different as the pandemic did not hit the countryside so hard, while in Kosovo our visit took place just before the beginning of lockdowns across Europe.

### **Training young people to replicate the projects' activities**

In El Salvador, the youth organization REDJUDE replicated the modules on sexual education with young people in the communities, reaching hundreds of youths across the 4 municipalities of the project. It is a good practice which could serve as an example in all other 3 projects as young people showed great interest in replicating the projects' activities by themselves.

## **3. Results / impacts on young people**

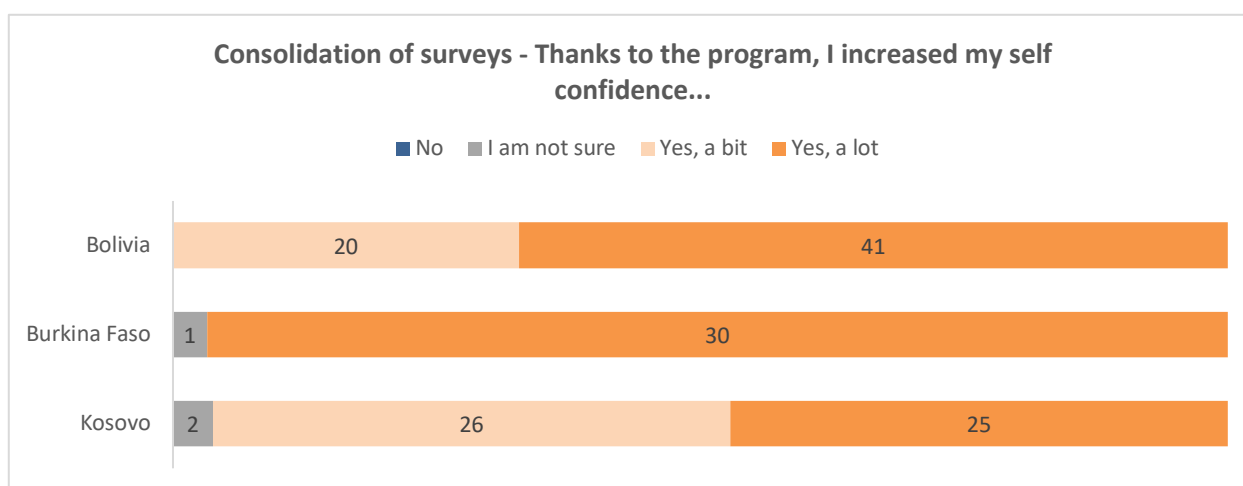
### **A transformative impact on life skills**

Thanks to an integral approach which aims at empowering young people, effects have been transformative at personal level.

**In most projects, more than 90% of the participants feel more confident** (and nearly two thirds feel much more confident in the case of Bolivia) about their personal abilities and (non-formal) skills. Their self-confidence increased a lot. They now are better able to socialize with other people or to speak in public. Some activities greatly contributed to enhancing self-confidence:

- Working in groups to identify personal abilities was key because it allows young people to have their skills validated by their peers (Bolivia).
- Getting a certificate which in several cases might be their first formal one (Burkina Faso, El Salvador).
- Receiving a grant to start their own business: In Burkina Faso or Bolivia, young people that received a grant or start up kit of material (usually worth several hundred euros) felt very proud. According to them, it gave them a special responsibility to pursue their business initiatives.

Effects have been particularly transformative for more vulnerable groups of young people: young or adolescent mothers (in Bolivia), rural single mothers (El Salvador), and out of school young people (Burkina Faso).



Source: on site surveys in Burkina Faso (October 2020) and Kosovo (March 2020), online survey in Bolivia (October 2020)

### **A positive impact on soft skills that facilitates job integration**

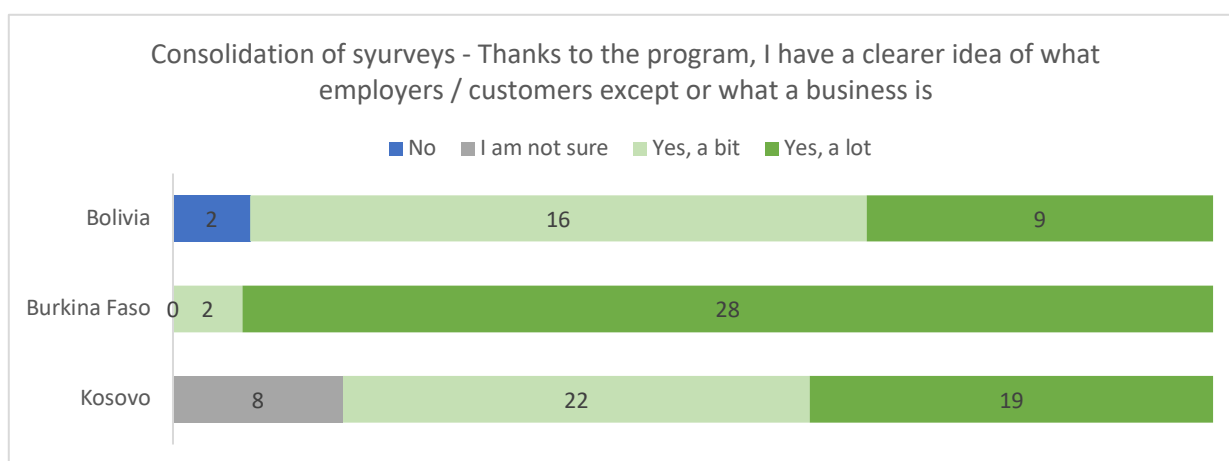
The lack of a diploma is only one dimension of the employability problem young people are facing. Vulnerable young people have also less social and cultural capital than other groups, a situation that creates another barrier: they don't have the right "codes" to interact with employers, they don't have the contacts, they do not know how to present themselves... Moreover, the lack of a diploma doesn't mean they have a lack of abilities. For instance, in El Salvador, all participants in the rural school were already farmers.

Soft skills modules usually focus on abilities that facilitate the integration into the job market: drafting a CV, being able to identify and speak about an experience, being able to build confidence with an interviewer, understanding the employers' codes...

*"Being in touch with customers really helped me to increase my communication skills and self-confidence"*  
Former student who benefited from work practice in tourism; Kosovo



Left and middle : young people participating into the soft skills module in El Salvador /  
Right : Mini-serie « Mayita te informa » filmed by a participant to the Cha'Ma Wayna project presenting the importance of soft skills



Source: on site surveys in Burkina Faso (October 2020) and Kosovo (March 2020), online survey in Bolivia (October 2020)

### **A positive impact on technical skills, which is sufficient to start a business or get a first job**

Projects have had a positive impact on technical skills. Through short (a few weeks to a few months) to long term (a couple of years) training program specialized in a specific area, projects usually allow participants to acquire the basic skills to perform the type of job they have trained for (restauration, commercial services, auto-moto repair shop, plumber, tailoring...). But they do not replace in the eyes of employers a full university degree (in some countries), or a concrete work experience (such as an internship). In Kosovo, work practice in companies was, for most young people, their first opportunity to learn very much needed technical skills, that the VET schools are not (yet) able to provide due to outdated equipment, methods, sometimes curricula, and insufficient up-to-date knowledge of the teachers.

*“When you work directly with the material you understand at once; in school I have trouble understanding because it is mainly theory”.*

Student benefiting from work practice in car maintenance in Peja, Kosovo

Regarding participants in entrepreneurship programs, they usually acquire the skills they need to start their business: the ability to make a business plan, to estimate costs / earnings and benefits, to differentiate their offer from others, etc. However they often face difficulties in finding and paying for an adequate space to set up their activity, or starting funds to pay for equipment.

In the case of Burkina Faso, the approach of supporting the work of AFI-D centers, where out of school children learn basic skills (reading, writing, counting...) along with some technical skills, and then go on to a technical training, is a process that takes several years. In this case, the impact on skills has been transformative. However, young people who followed these

long-term trainings have a harder time starting their businesses than the ones who followed short-term training and received a start-up kit.

**A better chance to get employed, but formal jobs opportunities remain scarce**



Young people being trained by their mentors from private businesses, in Kosovo (above, left, middle and right), El Salvador (below, left) and Bolivia (below, middle and right)

Thanks to the technical and soft skills acquired, and the support of local counterparts, the participants increased their chances to get access to a formal job in all four countries, as they close part of the gap compared to other young people.

However, participants who actually managed to find a decent formal job only represent a small share of all participants. Various factors explain this:

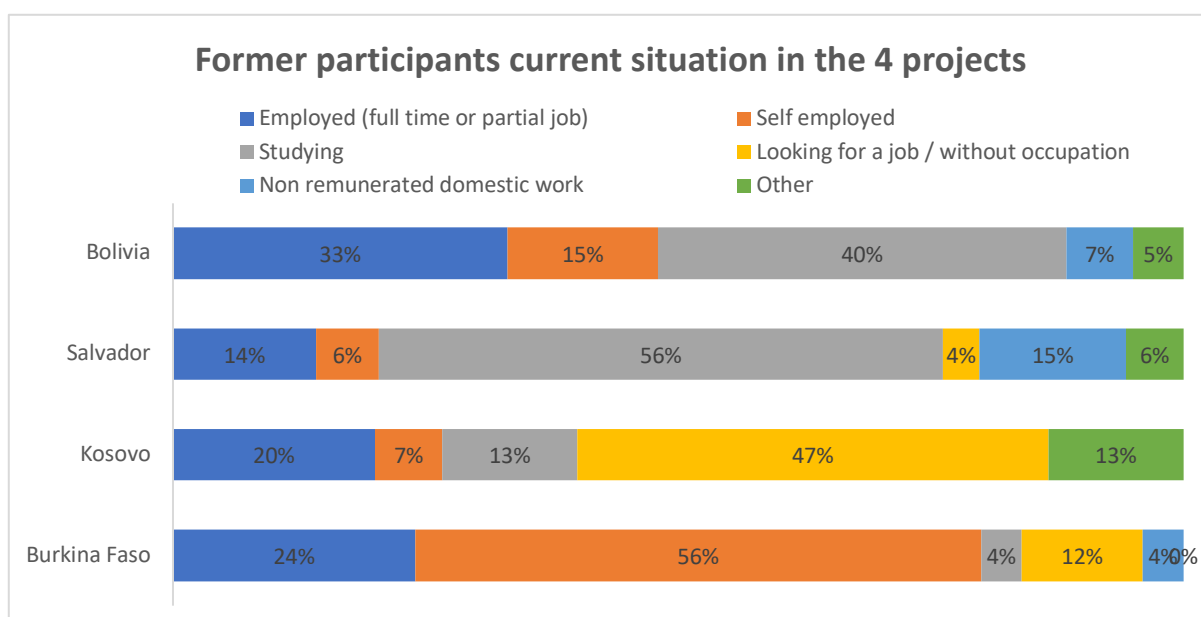
- Not all participants are looking for a job right after the program, especially when they only attended a soft skill training. Indeed, thanks to the program, they might choose to pursue or resume their studies, which is a positive impact of the project. Other participants prefer to first look for an internship to gain experience, while some will juggle between short-term jobs.
- Formal jobs are scarce (and almost nonexistent in Burkina Faso, for instance) while young people looking for a job are numerous. Employers tend to have requirements which might be very difficult to fulfil for the target groups (such as having at least one year of experience, living in the city center, etc.)
- The COVID pandemic greatly affects job opportunities in general and for young people in particular. Hiring opportunities are scarcer than ever in El Salvador, Bolivia and to a certain extent in Kosovo.

Getting access to their first job is the most difficult task for these young women and men. In Bolivia, or El Salvador, former participants have much more opportunities after the first job experience. A key success factor is a combination between a short training program (several

weeks) combining soft and technical skills modules, and the access to a work experience (internship, access to a normal job, or entrepreneurship). Publicly funded internship programs are good when they are time-limited, otherwise they might create an unfair competition, with companies replacing jobs by internships.



Yvette Tapsoba et Remi Sawadogo, trained in electricity at the ANPE Center in Ouagadougou (2013-2016), who set up their business together.



Former participants	Burkina Faso	Kosovo	Salvador	Bolivia
Employed (full time or partial job)	6	3	75	100
Self employed	14	1	33	45
Studying	1	2	296	122
Looking for a job / without occupation	3	7	19	0
Non remunerated domestic work	1	0	77	20
Other	0	2	30	15
Total	25	15	530	302
Source	On site survey in October 2020	On site survey in March 2020	Hemo and Gila data base - 2019 participants	Online Survey in June 2020

### **Entrepreneurship programs: a very relevant way to substantially improve the participants' living conditions to be further developed**

In contexts where formal jobs are scarce or nonexistent, supporting youth entrepreneurship is key. In Burkina Faso, most participants tend to start up their own business after completing their training with their "Maitre-Artisan" (craft masters) to generate income. In Bolivia, most young people that got seed capital in the previous years keep going with their business. If only a third manages to generate at least half of a minimum wage, **they all are satisfied with their activity, very proud of it and consider it as being decent**. For very vulnerable young people (such as rural young people in El Salvador or Burkina Faso and young mothers in Bolivia), the effects are particularly transformative as it allows them to get out of the poverty trap (by owning their own means of production for instance). Entrepreneurs are also more resilient, as shown during the pandemic: in Bolivia part of them found a way to keep going during the quarantine (sales through social networks, services targeting medical employees...).

Many also combined their own business or income generating activity with a non-formal job, helping the family business, or studying. In El Salvador, only rural entrepreneurship was supported by the project with seed capital (that in most cases took the form of a pregnant cow). Although it is too early to really assess its effects on income, as most participants choose

to consolidate first their capital, it seems promising and could be extended to “urban” entrepreneurship such as in Bolivia or Burkina Faso. In Kosovo, although 35% of participants would like to develop their own business, the project doesn’t support (yet) youth entrepreneurship. It’s clearly an area which could be developed in the near future, with a special focus on young women. As young women are lacking successful female role models, they have a hard time imagining themselves as business owners.

**Long term support is key.** In El Salvador, young people who graduated from the employability program or the rural entrepreneurship program get individualized support, which may last several years. Not only do CRIPDES and IDES, the local counterparts, help them to find their first job or the beginning of their rural activity, they keep as well supporting them in looking for a second or a third job, and visit rural entrepreneurs to give them technical advice. In Burkina Faso, this support exists in some cases, but is not yet standard practice. This individualized and long-term support would gain if it were systematic in all four countries, and would allow more opportunities to use former role models of the projects in the training of the new participants.

Along with individual entrepreneurship, which has been the main focus as of now, **collective entrepreneurship** (in the form of formal or non-formal cooperatives) **could be developed**. Some countries targeted already have a tradition of collective organizations at community level. Supporting it would also enable young people to pool their resources, have a greater control on the supply chain of a particular sector, and to specialize themselves in a certain activity. Cooperatives are also particularly relevant for women from vulnerable groups as “sisterhood” enhances women confidence and capacity to overcome issues arising from patriarchal systems. Collective entrepreneurship is as well advisable for young people who are working along the value chains, without necessarily having the same job: a farmer could team up with a youth trained in packaging/conditioning, and with a youth in the logistics field for instance.



Young people from Viacha (Bolivia) present their entrepreneurship initiative at the young entrepreneurship fair

**A positive impact on living conditions that should not only be measured in terms of income**

In Bolivia, in June 2020 (during the quarantine), 17% of the young people who worked or started their business after attending the program had an average income of at least Bs 2123 (the minimum wage) and 38% of them had an income of more than Bs 1000. In Burkina Faso, data are scarce, but the girls settled in weaving activity reported monthly incomes of 25,000

to 60,000 francs (the minimum wage is around 40.000 francs). In El Salvador, rural entrepreneurs are still consolidating their capital. However, the ones that received a pregnant cow managed to sell milk (sometimes cheese), generating income that they consider as being good (in general equivalent to the wages they would earn by working all week, 10 hours a day, in a sugar cane field using lots of chemicals and thus reducing their life expectancy by several decades).

**If income generation is an important indicator to assess the development of entrepreneurship, it should not be the only indicator. Part of the business is not monetized:**

in the case of rural entrepreneurship for instance (El Salvador), the first use of the production is for self-consumption, thus improving food security. Even in other cases, part of the production or services do not necessarily lead to a transaction but improve the welfare of the family or of the community. In Bolivia, one woman entrepreneur played a great role in her neighborhood. She helped several families with food during the quarantine.

Thus, to measure the (potential) improvement in term of living conditions, it makes more sense to enquire to the young people if the generated income is sufficient to cover their basic needs and the needs of their family, if they are able to save money, invest in their activity, or if they are able to hire people. For instance, in Bolivia and Burkina Faso, most young entrepreneurs interviewed said their activity was covering their basic needs, and some of them were able to hire other young people; in Bolivia, they managed to save money before the quarantine.

*"Plumbing is not an easy job for girls, but you get used to it. I have been employing 2 young boys in Ouagadougou for about 2 years. The project has supported us a lot and I am very thankful. With what I earn I manage to get by and support my mother, we're not doing bad. The project really opened doors for me. I created relationships and I manage to get clients."*  
Young woman who attended an AFI-D center and a plumbing training course in Burkina Faso

### **A transformative impact on young people's abilities to avoid paths that put their basic rights at risk**

In El Salvador or Burkina Faso, young people from rural areas face pretty similar challenges: being lured to work in dangerous gold mining sites (Burkina Faso) or in sugar cane fields with semi-slavery conditions (El Salvador), risk of falling into the hands of armed groups, to emigrate in perilous conditions, and for women, to become pregnant or to get married while being still adolescent... **The projects greatly reduce these risks for participants:** they know better the consequences of choosing a dangerous but more direct way of generating income, they are better in control of their sexuality (in El Salvador), they know more about their basic rights. The projects offer them an alternative, which is not easy, but which is no longer impossible to them. That impact was made possible because of the integral approach used by Solidar and its local counterparts that empowers young people.

**To produce an even greater impact, the projects could systematically use young people as role models** to inspire other young people, whether or not they participate in the programs. That is the case in El Salvador regarding sexual education, as the program is directly led by a youth organization (REDJUDE), which was supported and structured thanks to the project. It has led to systematic changes regarding sexual education and reproductive rights with young people. In other projects, this approach is not widespread, but nice examples emerged: one youth who left his job in a mining site, and started training with Solidar in Burkina Faso, came to talk to the children in an AFI-D center to tell them his story. One of the mentors of the

young people in Kosovo is a successful young woman, who manages the reception of a reputed hotel in the city.

Further involving these role models would be impactful, and further increase the self-confidence of the participants. Women role models particularly should be involved in the project.

*"The training allowed me to get out of the mining site. I had an accident in a mine following a landslide where I almost lost my life. That's when I really decided to leave this job and devote myself to the professional training that was offered to me."*

Young male participant in Burkina Faso

#### 4. Results / impacts on young people's environment

In the different projects, participants were able to make a positive change in their household by:

- **Raising the awareness of their parents / partners.** In Bolivia and El Salvador, young women graduated from the program acquired key knowledge on sexual education, on their rights, on the effects the patriarchal system may have on their opportunities. They were able to sensitize their parents, at least enough for them to no longer be an obstacle to their life projects. They were also able to improve their relationships with their partners or to put an end to relationships which had been disempowering for them. In Burkina Faso, the project raised the awareness of several parents on the need to establish birth certificates for their children.
- **Helping their parents with their businesses / administrative procedures:** In Burkina Faso, young people who learned to read/write are now able to support their parents and family in reading/writing important documents or messages on their phones. In Bolivia, young people who graduated from the entrepreneurship program were able to help their parents with their family business, to make it grow and become more sustainable.
- **Getting their parents involved in the project / education:** In Burkina Faso and Kosovo, parents are involved in some activities, and some are taking a greater role in the education of their children

#### **Burkina Faso, Salvador and Bolivia: systematic change at community / city level**

In Burkina Faso, Bolivia and El Salvador (it is still too early in Kosovo) we observed systematic changes as the project managed to generate an impact at community / city level:

- In Burkina Faso, communities were at the center of the approach: villagers were mobilized to build classrooms, to get involved in their children's education, to participate in other activities... AFI-D facilities are also used for other purposes for communitarian activities. The project thus generated impacts for the entire community, not only for the participants.
- In Bolivia, the project – which is supported by the municipality and progressively assumed as a public policy – managed to create a dynamic at the city level: Viacha which was always known for its industry has been transforming into a commercial and dynamic city with many businesses run by young people (many of them who graduated from the Ch'ama Wayna program).

- In El Salvador, we also observed a systematic change in the youth population in the 4 municipalities where the project is implemented in sexual education and reproductive rights. Thanks to the work of the REDJUDE, which organizes a lot of awareness raising actions, young people from rural areas have access to information about sexuality and reproductive health, which has a direct impact on adolescent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

Although it is early to assess the impact in Kosovo, some very positive changes have already been noted, through the increased cooperation between public schools and private businesses, and the successful functioning of the Municipal Working Group for VET.

## 5. Results / impacts on other stakeholders

### **A positive impact on the local counterparts' capacities**

In Bolivia or El Salvador, Solidar as well as its local partners, did not have much experience in employability. At the beginning of the pilot phase, they were trained to get the sufficient skills to be able to attend to the participants' needs. Thanks to these training sessions, they are not only able to implement the project, but they also develop youth employability as a new line of work, beyond the project. The situation is different in Burkina Faso and above all in Kosovo where local partners were, for some, already specialized in youth employability. However, in Burkina Faso, the implementing partners improved their capacities, above all in the Child Protection area which is key regarding the context, and they raised their profile by creating more connections with other organizations and with the local authorities. In El Salvador, the project also strengthened the capacity of the REDJUDE network with an important impact on its consolidation and the capacities of its members to replicate sexual education and reproductive rights modules across rural areas.

*"Our association has become more visible; we are seen as a reference in terms of AFI-D, and we have been approached by other structures".*  
Implementing organization in Burkina Faso

### **An intent to involve public authorities**

In general, Solidar and its counterparts try to create partnerships with local authorities to facilitate the implementation of activities, influence youth-friendly policies, and build capacities of some public servants. However, they face various obstacles: a lack of institutionalization, a lack of public funding, extreme political polarization, high turnover among public servants, sometimes mismanagement and corruption... Therefore, it's very difficult to find allies among public institutions, or to maintain a partnership after an election. In Burkina Faso, Kosovo or El Salvador, local counterparts have succeeded to establish relationships or partnerships with some local and national authorities but have failed with others. In Bolivia, institutionalization is more established than in other countries, with a wide range of public programs. In that context, the specificity of the Ch'ama Wayna project in Bolivia should be stressed: the project has been implemented by Solidar Bolivia and the Municipality of Viacha since the beginning (2016). Solidar Bolivia took advantage of an opportunity: Viacha was the first municipality of Bolivia in 2015 to adopt a municipal Youth Law. The partnership has been mutually beneficial: the municipality has been supporting the

project with the creation of a Youth Unit, communication on the project, or logistical and some financial support, while the project itself helped the municipality to gain experience and to structure a public policy for young people in Viacha, becoming a pioneer at national level. The municipality, with the help of Solidar, participated in various meetings with other municipalities to share its experience and inspire other initiatives. One municipality is following its path: Cobija which started a similar program with Solidar in 2019. This experience shows that at the moment of defining an intervention, Solidar counterparts could look for a municipality with an interesting dynamic to localize the project in its territory rather than looking for a partnership once the project started.

### **An intent to involve the private sector with mixed results, with the exception of Kosovo**

In every project, local counterparts try to involve the private sector (companies) to better understand their needs, create trust and present the programs so that they might hire participants. In Burkina Faso, Kosovo, and to a lesser extent in Bolivia, private companies (or small business owners) are also involved to welcome participants for an internship / work practice / short training. The relationships with the private sector are key to increase the participants' chances to find formal employment.

However, the experience with the private sector is mixed: they might participate, above all if there is a financial incentive (internship indemnity covered by a public program, payment for tutoring...), but otherwise it is difficult to raise their interest. An important difficulty is also the lack of decision centers in secondary cities. In El Salvador or Bolivia, formal work tends to be found in big companies with headquarters in the capital. Partnerships or hiring practices are defined in the headquarters, not in branch offices.

The experience of Kosovo seems very promising, and could be replicated elsewhere as the project managed to develop formal links with 25 companies with the help of the school teachers and management. Some business owners do even contact the Career center on their own to find candidates for a work position. The presence of Solidar's headquarters in Pejë is key, as they are well known and respected in the city.

*"We lived nearby, but before the project it was like we were in two different worlds"*  
Business owner in Peja, Kosovo, about his relationship with public authorities and VET school

*"All teachers are doing their best to promote career orientation and the work of the Career Center. Now I feel that we're not 4 involved in it, but 120 (all the school teachers)"*  
Member of Career Center

However, when answering the needs of the private sectors, local counterparts should remain careful to not abide by every requirement. For instance, in El Salvador, employers usually ask young candidates to strip (almost completely) to verify if they do not have any tattoos, which could be a sign of their involvement in a gang. It is clearly a practice that violates young people's dignity. The Ministry for Work in one municipality of the project is thinking about the creation of a kind of "good behavior" certificate that would prevent this practice.

Another example: in Burkina Faso, one young man is still training at a Maître Artisan, after one year, while only being paid for the cost of his lunch.



Meeting of the MWGVET in Peja, Kosovo. The group is composed of representatives of private businesses, local authorities and VET school directors

## 6. Results / impacts on gender based discriminations

### **A gender approach that should be more systematic and reinforced**

In all countries targeted, inequalities between women and men remain high. The patriarchal system and its effects greatly affect the chances for women to study, find a decent job, or create their own business. In Bolivia, as soon as women become mothers, it is almost impossible for them to keep their job, as employers (mainly males) consider it as being an obstacle to their work performance. It is not the case in El Salvador, but there, adolescent pregnancy constitutes a major problem that puts many women in a vicious circle of poverty and disempowerment. In Burkina Faso, underage marriages are widespread. Women must have the authorization from their husband, father or brother for almost any kind of procedures, while they scarcely inherit from their parents. In Kosovo, while the situation is slightly better, women still suffer from discrimination, and often lack the support of their family and community to get a decent job, even more to start their own business. As the project targets all VET students, traditionally more attended by young men, 70% of participants in Kosovo are males. Data from the survey in Bolivia also shows the persistence of a gender gap in income among former participants. Moreover, in all four countries, gender-based violence remains an important issue.

Therefore, it is key to adopt a gender approach when working on youth employability or youth empowerment. Specific activities or rules have been put into practice to foster women participation, and hinder the reproduction of gender-based discriminations among participants, among others:

- An objective of gender parity in the participation of women in El Salvador and Bolivia with women representing at least 50% of the participants.
- The integration of specific modules to raise awareness about the gender system and its effects, women rights and how to implement them (Bolivia, El Salvador)
- A specific emphasis on gender stereotypes in the job market, to increase the number of women in traditionally male dominated areas, especially in Burkina Faso and in Bolivia.
- The implementation of a specific program on sexual education and reproductive rights in El Salvador.
- The implementation of a specific program for young and adolescent mothers in Bolivia.

In El Salvador and in Bolivia, the two specific programs with a gender perspective, focused on sexual education in El Salvador and on young and adolescent mothers, were the ones with the greatest impact in both countries. It confirms the relevance of including specific actions tackling these issues. The projects in Kosovo and Burkina Faso could follow the example of their peers in El Salvador and Bolivia to develop specific programs targeting specific groups or issues related to the effects of the gender system. It would also be relevant to include sexual education modules in the project in Bolivia for participants into the soft skills program who are younger and a specific program for young and adolescent mothers in El Salvador.



Sexual education and gender based violence prevention actions and campaigns implemented by the youth network « RedJude » supported by Solidar in El Salvador

### **A transformative impact on women, particularly on the most vulnerable groups**

**Effects on women empowerment have been in general transformative.** The projects significantly raised the self-esteem and self-confidence of women participants. They also made them aware of the effects of the gender system and knowledgeable about their rights. When they developed their own businesses, the income they generated allowed them to gain a greater independence or respect from their husband / family. They also significantly reduced several risks that affect their lives such as early marriage (Burkina Faso), adolescent pregnancy (El Salvador). For many women interviewed, there is a difference between their situation before participating in the project and afterwards.

**Effects were particularly important on the most vulnerable groups of women:** young and adolescent mothers in Bolivia and young rural women in El Salvador or in Burkina Faso were able to get a basic capital to start with. For them, the generation of income through it was not just a positive effect, it was a necessity. They may not be able to earn the minimum wage, but their living conditions have improved significantly. The projects also have been able to influence their income through a better knowledge of their rights to access public support programs.

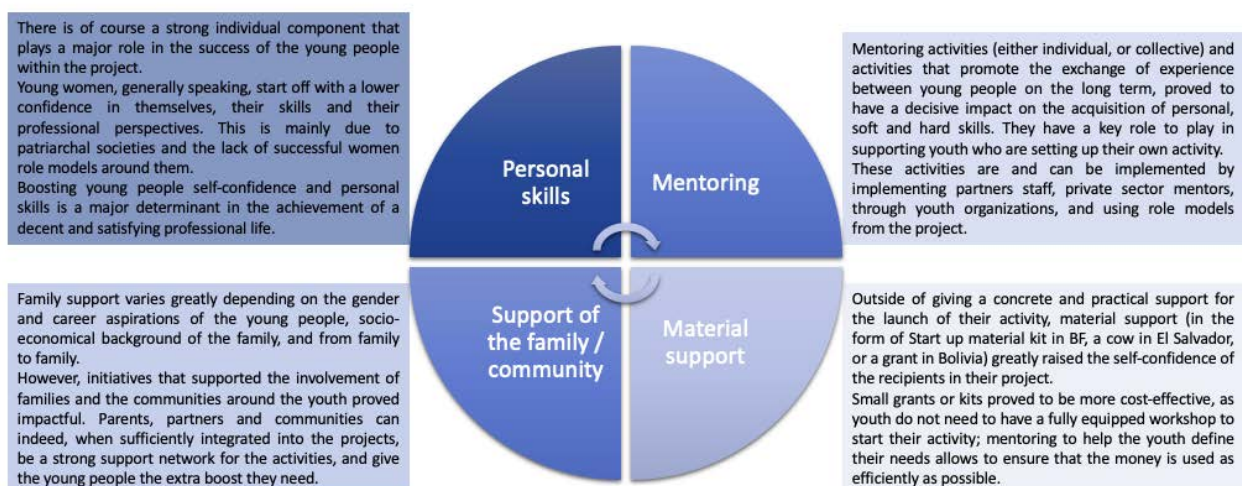
In El Salvador, the program on sexual education also greatly increased the acceptance of LGBTI+ by the participants. Some of them recognized having completely changed their opinion regarding LGBTI+ thanks to the project and are even campaigning for their rights. It's an important effect as very few projects, even with a gender approach, tackle the subject of sexual orientation.

## **SUCCESS FACTORS AND SUSTAINABILITY**

### **Success factors**

The following graph presents a summary of the success factors identified within the young people who achieved to find a job or set up their business within the four projects. It confirms the relevance of an integrated approach, especially among the most vulnerable groups of young people, who often have (very) limited personal skills, external support, mentoring opportunities and material support.

Working on these 4 areas is an effective way to bridge in the gaps, and give young people a strong basis to enter the job market.



### Key impact factors of the projects on youth

According to the analysis conducted within this study, it appears that individual examples of 'success' within the target groups benefited from at least 3 of these factors, if not all.

## Sustainability

In general, projects have produced significant and sustainable changes at individual levels for young people. The sustainability of the effects generated by the project depends on several factors:

**The implementation of an integral or multi-dimensional approach:** when this approach targets soft skills or life skills, gender issues or leadership and not only hard skills / job intermediation, long term effects are greater and remain after the project. In Bolivia, Salvador and to a lesser extent Burkina Faso, this approach was used and produced important effects on self-esteem, confidence in one's abilities, relationships between men and women or the capacity to participate into community assemblies.

**The length of the assistance provided by Solidar and its local partners to young people:** the longest the assistance, the greater the impact. Young entrepreneurs may need time to time support while developing their activity. Young people looking for a job also might need support until they stabilize their integration into the job market. In Salvador and Burkina Faso, the length of the assistance is a key success factor to produce a transformative effect on revenues. Creating a place where young people can ask for information and get support such as in Kosovo and El Salvador is a good way to attract new participants and keep supporting former ones.

**The project capacities to influence structural factors that have a negative or positive impact on young people** (public policies, business hiring practices, gender-based violence, etc.). In Bolivia, the project produced impressive changes on the municipality policies towards young people and on the small business activities. In Salvador, the project produced systematic changes on young people's sexual education in the municipalities where it is implemented.

Regarding the sustainability of the activities at a broader level, it is in most cases not guaranteed. Indeed, in order to continue the implementation of training and support to young people, a combination of financial resources and willing human resources is required.

Given the often very limited resources of the local authorities in the countries of implementation, and the lack of systematized support to the projects from their side, it would be optimistic to believe at this stage that the local authorities would be able / willing to take over some activities (with the exception of Bolivia where the Municipality is a key player and driving force of the project).

In Kosovo, despite the lack of concrete support from the Municipality or Ministry of Education, the growing ownership of the project by the two VET schools is promising. It could further be developed, and mechanisms put in place so that the Career Center and MWGVET can continue to operate after the project's end.

In all cases, it is of utmost importance for all projects to further create links with other service providers, and set up solid exit strategies so that the young participants can continue to find support after the completion of projects' activities.

## BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Best practices

Countries	Good practices to be replicated in other projects
<b>Bolivia</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Defining the project's objectives and activities with young people ensures that they will be relevant regarding their needs.</li> <li>▪ Having a partnership with a municipality willing to develop a youth policy ensures the sustainability of the projects' effect. It also gives access to additional resources which are key for the project (communication capacity, logistical help, etc.).</li> </ul>
<b>Burkina Faso</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Focusing the project on groups of young people with a high level of vulnerability is very relevant to produce transformational change for these groups; short-term technical training combined with start-up kits proved a cost-effective way to produce change.</li> <li>▪ Involving the communities from the beginning is key to ensure their acceptance and have greater impact, beyond the participants themselves.</li> </ul>
<b>El Salvador</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Working on sexual education is key to reduce risk factors such as adolescent pregnancies or gender-based violence. It's also a good instrument to empower young people.</li> <li>▪ Ensuring a long-term support is key to advance further in the empowerment process as it's not necessarily linear.</li> </ul>
<b>Kosovo</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Creating a Career Center is important for participants as well as for employers as it gives better visibility to the program.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensuring the coherence between the market's needs and the training is important to give participants a better chance to find a decent formal job.</li> </ul>
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## Areas of improvement

The areas of improvement differ, sometimes greatly, from one project to another; each project's Feedback report presents them more in detail. However, it is possible to highlight some areas where all, or at least, most of the four projects, should put a more important focus:

- **Lack of systematic links with the local authorities:** the projects would gain from having official partnerships with the governmental authorities, at a national and as well at a local level; from sharing in a systematic way the results, challenges and impacts of the project with these stakeholders; from requesting their support, especially non-financial one
- **Lack of involvement of the private sector:** having more companies involved in the projects would be extremely valuable in each project, as it would offer more opportunities to the young people. Depending on the context, these links could be created by further involving the network of parents, business organizations (ex: Chamber of Commerce), and again, public authorities.
- **Insufficient use of role models and youth themselves** as actors of the project, and not only 'beneficiaries of the activities': In each country, there are some interesting success stories of impact arising from the project (among the young participants of course, but as well, among communities, teachers, trainers, private businesses, local authorities...). Some of these individuals get further involved in the projects; however, there is until now no 'training of trainers', or good practice dissemination being formally integrated in the project.
- **Lack of exchange of good practices from one country to another** ('collective learning'). Even though the contexts widely differ from one country to another, some challenges (such as the three ones mentioned above) are common to the projects, and are being discussed at each national level. Stimulating the exchange of experience, challenges, and above all good practices, could help country teams to come up with creative solutions, and learn from one another.

## Cross-cutting recommendations

Based on the conclusions and lessons learned from the impact study, we identified the following cross-cutting recommendations:

1. Focus on youth empowerment rather than on youth employability: it's a broader approach with long-term effects but it takes time to produce the first results. In fact, most projects have had an integral approach that empowers young people rather than a methodology focused on short term employability.

2. Define, with young participants, what is a decent job or activity that generates income in their context and makes the projects activities and expected results coherent with their definition.
3. Generalize the integration of a gender approach in all projects targeting youth empowerment as it produces transformational change for women. This approach could include a work on alternative models of masculinity.
4. Generalize the support of youth entrepreneurship, especially in areas with few formal jobs available (as is the case in most territories covered by the 4 projects).
5. Test the support to collective entrepreneurship (cooperatives for instance) as it would allow young people to pool resources, specialize themselves according to their best capabilities, and better control the chain value. It's also a relevant form of work organization in the different cultural contexts where projects have been implemented.
6. Generalize the use of "role models", former participants that succeed to make a change in their lives or for the lives of others. It will boost the participants' motivation as they will see that people from the same areas with the same difficulties managed to overcome them.
7. Give long term support to young people, whether they want to enter the job market or develop their own business, as it is key to produce a transformative change in their lives. This can be done by Solidar directly, but ideally, Solidar should work with other service providers, and set up peer groups that can continue to operate after the projects end.

### **Recommendations on dissemination of findings**

- Translate the final report (or a summary) into French, Spanish, and Albanian, to allow local partners to have an easier access to it
- Disseminate the findings to the partners, stakeholders and the local authorities in each country (depending on the situation and context, this might be done by email, hard copies, or through an oral presentation)
- Organize working sessions in each country, with representatives of all groups of stakeholders (especially young people targeted by the projects) to discuss the findings and how to implement the relevant recommendations
- Organize an online workshop with representatives of Solidar HQ and the four Solidar country offices, so that each country office can present its good practices to the others. If more convenient, two workshops could be organized (for instance: El Salvador with Burkina Faso, and Kosovo with Bolivia).
- Set up a Google Drive or another online platform so that each country office can post a selection of pictures and videos of their project, and share useful documents

## **ANNEXES**

Annex 1 – Comparative projects’ analysis

Annex 2 – Impact study methodology and implementation

Annex 3 - Workplan

Annex 4 – Cross cutting data

Annex 5 – Surveys methodology and results

Annex 6 – Pictures and videos

Annex 7 – Inception note