



**2017-2018 YOUTH THINK TANK REPORT:**

# **Harnessing the Potential of Hospitality and Tourism for Young People's Employment**

SEPTEMBER 2018





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**ON THE COVER:**

**CLARA BEMMAH ANTWI,  
A 22-YEAR-OLD YOUTH THINK TANK  
MEMBER FROM GHANA.**



**2017–2018 YOUTH THINK TANK MEMBERS  
FROM GHANA, KENYA, MALAWI, RWANDA,  
TANZANIA, UGANDA, AND ZAMBIA.\***

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\* This year's cohort was divided into two groups. Half of the members in this photograph conducted research for the 2017–2018 Youth Think Tank Report on the hospitality and tourism sector. The other group shared their research on agricultural technologies in January 2018.

## Preface

In February 2017, as a team of young researchers, we set out to better understand young people's awareness and perceptions around employment in the hospitality and tourism sector. We also looked at the drivers of and constraints to their employment in the sector. We conducted this research in the countries where we are from: Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia.

Our experience during the research process was fascinating. We especially enjoyed the opportunity to interact with fellow young people. We appreciated their interest in leading similar processes, and their eagerness to be part of the solution to the challenges they face. Our research achievements are a reflection of our diversity.

We believe that when young people are trusted and supported to lead research, they can better connect with their peers and generate insights that could be missed through conventional research approaches.

With this research, we have elevated young people's voices around hospitality and tourism and how this sector impacts youth employment. We've also generated evidence for informed discussion and action for the different sector players. With these findings, stakeholders will gain a deeper sense of how sector opportunities can be packaged and promoted to reflect young people's career aspirations and to drive them to maximize available opportunities. As a result of our engagement in this research, we now have a better understanding of the complexity and the skillset required for young people's employment in the hospitality and tourism sector.

**We believe that when young people are trusted and supported to lead research, they can better connect with their peers and generate insights that could be missed through conventional research approaches.**

As a diverse group of young researchers, we are committed to using the information and findings from this report to engage others in discussions on the topic. We hope to inform decisions at different levels where young people's employment in the sector is impacted.

We call upon all young people employed in the sector, young people that aspire to enter the sector, employers, training institutions, governments, the private sector, development partners, and civil society organizations to embrace the findings of this report and use the insights that emerged to help shape their decision-making process.

We wish to thank our colleagues with whom we walked this journey. We would also like to thank the young people and employers who were willing to share their thoughts and ideas for this research. Finally, we would like to thank the Mastercard Foundation in partnership with Restless Development for their commitment to young people and for contributing to the development of this report.

*Regina Geraldine Nakawuki,  
on behalf of the Hospitality and  
Tourism Research Team*

# Executive Summary

## BACKGROUND

With over one billion young people set to enter the global labour market over the next decade, the opportunity for the largest youth generation in history to reshape economies is upon us. With this opportunity comes an urgency to find solutions that unleash the agency of young people to build their confidence, amplify their voices, and ensure they have the skills needed for work. To date, however, how to support young people in leading economic change has remained unclear for employers and policymakers alike. All too often, this is because young people are not engaged as experts who are capable of not only answering these key questions, but also adding unique value and perspectives that decision-makers may lack.

This youth-led research into the hospitality and tourism sector highlights the voices of young people who were interviewed by their peers regarding the challenges and opportunities presented by the sector. All too often, the perspectives and voices of young people are absent when this sector is examined. This research attempts to fill this gap by elevating these voices.

Policymakers and development practitioners have identified hospitality and tourism as a key growth sector in Sub-Saharan Africa and a means to increase youth employment. Sector thought leaders stress that solutions to economic and employment challenges faced by young people require addressing key

gaps, most notably the gap between what employers require and what skills candidates have to offer. Our research speaks directly to these gaps. Through our unique youth-led research methodology, this report captures lived experiences that identify opportunities for young people to shape their own successful career paths.

Perceptions of young people not working in the sector complement this lens by suggesting what needs to be done to encourage more young people to pursue similar career paths.



## OUR FINDINGS

### *Youth leadership can promote the hospitality and tourism sector.*

Young people not working in the hospitality and tourism sector do not always see its potential, often because they do not see it as offering earning potential and career growth. For the sector to grow, young people must see the opportunity that the sector presents.

Young people who have a positive opinion of hospitality and tourism, including those working in the sector, attribute their positive views to seeing others succeed there. There is a need to give successful youth, particularly young women, platforms within the sector to increase their visibility.

To address negative perceptions and stereotypes, the experiences and voices of these young people must be heard, encouraging diverse groups of young people to explore their own options and opportunities in the sector. Greater youth voice and agency can similarly influence perceptions of families and communities, supporting greater uptake of roles within this sector.

Young employees indicated that they found their current jobs through informal social networks and through their own initiative, as opposed to advertisements and formal recruitment processes. To attract top talent, employers must share available roles beyond formal channels, thinking creatively about how to mobilize existing social networks.

### *Young people must co-lead initiatives to broaden access to training and jobs.*

Young employees and their employers identify the biggest gap in hiring as candidates' lack of practical experience, including those who have received prior formal training. Young people stress that they struggle to find opportunities to build their practical experience prior to entering the job market.

Training institutions and employers must work together with young people, bringing youth voices and experience to identify how best to prepare young people for day-to-day work in the sector. Each can play a complementary role: training institutions match trainees with job placements and internships with interested employers, while employers consult

### **A YOUTH THINK TANK MEMBER INTERVIEWS RESPONDENTS.**

training institutions to determine how best to structure follow-up, on-the-job training. If young people do not have a voice and a role in shaping that learning and support, initiatives will continue to fail.

### *Employers must invest in young employees' growth to support sector stability.*

Employers and their young employees agree on the qualities that a young person must demonstrate to ensure they are retained. Employers, however, struggle to retain young employees, particularly young people who come from urban areas and young female employees, for reasons unique to each group.

To strengthen retention of young urban employees, employers should consider providing non-financial incentives such as skill-building opportunities, departmental rotations, and secondments to enable young people to grow and invest in the sector. This would combat attrition and loss of experience while building potential for growth at the same time. Young women often struggle to balance jobs and family responsibilities. In a sector where young

female employees tend to have more of the soft skills needed for front-of-house and customer support roles, policies supporting flexibility, such as maternity leave, should be introduced.

### *Governments must engage with young people and deliver their priorities for employment.*

Young employees expressed that opportunities for advancement with their current employers are limited because of a lack of financial means or space in organizations for promotion. It is no surprise, then, that young people aspire instead to set up their own businesses in the sector or to use the sector as a stepping stone to a role outside of it.

This does not reflect a lack of will to invest in youth by employers. Rather, those who do have specific promotion mechanisms prefer to hire internal candidates. The challenge is creating the space to do this. Employers can think of creative ways to honour young employees' growth beyond salary increases and promotions, such as levels within roles through which young employees can advance as they gain more experience.

Governments, too, should engage young people to inform policies and investments, recognizing that youth play a role in shaping the future. They should prioritize supporting viable opportunities for both young employees' career growth and their development of small and medium-sized sector enterprises.

### *With confidence and support, young people will take control of their own career paths.*

Across all steps of career growth – at hiring, in retaining their positions, and in attaining promotions – young people and their employers identify the same key qualities that contribute to a young person's success: work ethic, positive attitude, flexibility, interpersonal skills, and integrity.

Most of these qualities can be taught or developed. Young employees have demonstrated the ability to grow their discipline and self-control, their self-confidence and self-awareness, and their social skills. Governments, training institutions, and other actors can support them by developing curricula and practical exercises intentionally targeting these priority soft skills. These skills will not only take them through recruitment processes but will also support them in their professional development.

### *A call for action.*

This research highlights challenges and gaps and suggests measures to address them. It calls for specific actions. The findings also identify a "missing role" in the sector – that of promoters who can support its growth. It calls on actors, who might not be intentionally working to support the sector, to take a more active and decisive role in doing so.

Governments must take the step of prioritizing youth engagement and sector development, mobilizing resources to support youth to shape the agenda, and developing a supportive policy structure to deliver this. Training institutions must take a stronger leadership role in the sector, helping to develop industry standards that respond to priorities identified by and delivered for young people. Organizations in civil society and those working in communities must play a connecting role, working with young people to raise awareness of sector opportunities at the community level and convening strategic discussions of how to approach sector solutions that incorporate all actors, including young people.



1 tsp pink salt  
1 tsp black pepper  
Procedure  
Mix all thoroughly in a big bowl and serve chill before serving

Ingredients  
1/2 Cabb  
2 Corns  
1/2 yea  
1/2 Fed  
1/2 ma  
Salt u  
4 Tab  
Melt  
Mix  
pep  
Lo

TRAINEES PLATE A MEAL AS PART OF THE CAP YOUTH EMPOWERMENT INSTITUTE HOSPITALITY TRAINING IN KENYA.

PHOTO CREDIT: CAP YOUTH EMPOWERMENT INSTITUTE.

# Research Methodology

We are sharing the findings of our research as 14 members of the Mastercard Foundation Youth Think Tank. We come from and collected data in seven countries: Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. We used Restless Development's youth-led research methodology to conduct this research, where we directly led every stage of the research process. Our findings reflect the lived realities of young people, captured by young people.

## RESEARCH CONTEXT

With this report, we aim to contribute to discussions on how to maximize the involvement of young people in the hospitality and tourism sector.

For this research, we used the following definitions for hospitality and tourism:

*"Tourism is defined as a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which imply tourism expenditure."*

*"Hospitality is the business of helping people feel welcome and relaxed and to enjoy themselves."<sup>iii</sup>*

We use "hospitality and tourism" to describe a diverse range of service industry activities, from tourist support services to food service to accommodation to transportation and logistics. Within Sub-Saharan Africa, the sector is diverse in terms of the size of businesses included, ranging from single individuals who work independently to

large-scale businesses. The sector offers both employment and self-employment opportunities to young people.

The hospitality and tourism sector is expanding worldwide, and it offers opportunity for economic growth and employment creation in Sub-Saharan Africa, where it contributed US\$40.1 billion in 2016, which is 2.6 percent of the GDP.<sup>iii</sup> Others note that the sector can also provide an engine for inclusive growth, as small, medium-sized, and micro-enterprises developing products and services use local labour in regions of developing countries that are linked to the broader value chain. However, one of the key challenges to harnessing the potential of this sector is in addressing the skills deficit between what employers need and what candidates possess.<sup>iv</sup>

It often forces employers to hire applicants who are not appropriately skilled for the roles they receive. Additionally, where employees do come to roles with previous training, assessing whether this training has adequately prepared them can be difficult, as training institutions often do not use standardized training guides.<sup>v</sup>

While some research in this area indicates that candidates for employment in the hospitality and tourism sector need a combination of technical and soft skills to be competitive, these studies do not identify which soft skills young people seeking employment should prioritize for both securing employment and advancing their career path.<sup>vi</sup>

## RESEARCH FOCUS

Through this research, we wanted to learn how young people who are not engaged in hospitality and tourism work view the sector:

- How aware are they of the opportunities in the sector?
- What factors affect how positively or negatively young people look at sector opportunities?
- How do these perceptions affect their interest in exploring opportunities in the sector?

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**One of the key challenges to harnessing the potential of this sector is in addressing the skills deficit between what employers need and what candidates possess.**



A YOUTH THINK TANK MEMBER INTERVIEWS AN ARTISAN.

## DESIGN, SAMPLING, AND DATA COLLECTION

Because young people who have experience in the sector have direct insight into what facilitated their employment and growth, we also wanted to understand their career journey from their perspective:

- What skills supported their hiring, retention, and promotion?
- Similarly, at each of these points, what gaps did they identify in their skills and abilities?
- What platforms for learning and building those skills did they have access to?

We also sought to understand the experience of employers:

- What are they looking for when hiring, retaining, and promoting candidates?
- Where do they see gaps and opportunities in young people's skills and abilities at each of these points?

Our study is predominantly qualitative, which enables a deeper understanding of young people's experience in hospitality and tourism. While this data is not representative of all young people, the rich narrative detail we captured provides a nuanced picture of young people's realities that are often lost in exclusively large-scale quantitative studies.

We collected data through focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews from March through May 2017. For both the focus groups and interviews, respondents were purposively sampled<sup>1</sup> – that is, focus group participants were selected to capture the perceptions that young people who are not in the sector have of it, while participants for the semi-structured interviews and surveys were selected to capture the perspectives of those with experience in the sector.

1. Our purposive sampling entailed selecting participants not randomly and representatively and instead around certain parameters of the expertise, experience, and perspectives that were needed to meet the objectives of our research questions.

In order to understand the varied perceptions of those outside the sector, focus group discussions targeted young people not based on their involvement in the sector but instead on demographic characteristics. We held separate focus groups targeting participants with similar criteria, including:

- i) gender (young men and young women, separately);
- ii) location (rural young people and urban young people, separately); and
- iii) schooling status (in-school young people and out-of-school young people, separately).

The primary focus of the semi-structured interviews was to capture the lived experience of those in the sector, which included both employers and young people employed in hospitality and tourism. The employers were predominantly from businesses that focus on accommodation and food and beverage services, though we also interviewed a small number who are working in craft production and excursion services. We interviewed a diverse group of young employees who work in a variety of areas, including hotel housekeeping, wait service, tour group leading, and handicraft sales.

Some semi-structured interviews also targeted young people not engaged in the sector to get a deeper understanding of how those outside of it perceive it. These young people were selected from among those who were able to share deeper insights in the focus group discussions.

Table 1 summarizes the number of focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews we conducted.

**TABLE 1. QUALITATIVE RESPONDENTS**

DATA TYPE	No.
Focus Group Discussions, Youth Not in the Sector	30
Interviews, Employers	19
Interviews, Youth in the Sector	14
Interviews, Youth Not in the Sector	23

We captured our qualitative data electronically through a two-step process. We recorded discussions and interviews in full and in local languages through a tablet application. We then typed full transcripts of the recordings, translating them into English. We uploaded both the audio files and transcriptions to our electronic system.

To complement our qualitative analysis, we also collected quantitative survey data on young people's experience working in the sector. We did so in November 2017, after completing the preliminary qualitative analysis to determine which questions were of greatest importance. For the surveys, we sampled only young people who are currently employed in the sector. Across all seven countries, we surveyed 350 respondents.

Table 2 summarizes the basic demographics of our survey respondents.

**TABLE 2. SURVEY RESPONDENTS**

TOTAL	N=350	
Geographic Location	Rural 137 (39%)	Urban 213 (61%)
Sex	Female 165 (47%)	Male 185 (53%)
Age	15–24 years 194 (55%)	25–35 years 156 (45%)

Unless specified, the mention of "respondents" refers to qualitative respondents. We specifically mention "survey respondents" when we refer to those captured through survey data.

## ANALYSIS

We took a deductive approach to the analysis of the qualitative data, where we drew out general themes emerging from the data that we later condensed into specific findings.

We coded, transcribed, and reviewed data according to pre-specified key codes of interest drawn from our primary and secondary research questions. We then analyzed the coded data to find emerging patterns that could be developed into themes. We re-verified themes against our dataset to ensure that every emerging theme had a strong basis in our primary data. Finally, we mapped evidence-based themes against one another, drawing connections between them, and described them in detail.

We complemented our thematic qualitative analysis with descriptive statistics of survey respondents employed in the sector.

The report was then written under the leadership of four dedicated young researchers from Rwanda, Zambia, Tanzania, and Malawi.

## VALIDATION

We presented our initial findings to the communities we worked with, in order to ensure that the report accurately reflected their perspectives and experiences, adjusting anything that did not.

This process allowed respondents to understand how we used the information that they shared. We were also able to get additional insight from the experiences of youth employed in the sector, which was critical input that further informed the report.

For more information on the methodology used in this research, please visit: [restlessdevelopment.org/our-youth-led-research-methodology](http://restlessdevelopment.org/our-youth-led-research-methodology).



AN ARTISAN WEAVES A BASKET.

# Findings

## YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE MIXED OPINIONS OF THE TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY SECTOR.

Some young participants in our focus group discussions hold negative views of the sector in that they do not perceive it to be a “serious” sector — meaning that they do not see it as a sector with high-paying jobs and highly skilled workers. Those who have a positive view of the sector indicated that they consider it to be “serious.”

Our respondents used the word “serious” — or “not serious” — to describe a number of things, from the behaviour of an employee to their working conditions. However, negative perceptions of the sector are guided by two components of what respondents think it means for a job not to be “serious” — that those who work in the sector do not have strong qualifications and that they do not earn reasonable salaries.

Our respondents connected the lack of qualifications that they perceive are needed for jobs in hospitality and tourism with the lack of earning potential they offer. A Kenyan focus group respondent voiced that in-sector “jobs are for the uneducated who, in turn ... earn meagre salaries.”

Respondents who hold a similar perspective expressed that they see this sector as a last resort for those who are “trapped by the issues and difficulty of life,” as a Rwandan respondent described. This respondent sees this sector as one explored by young people who do not have other options.

This is not an isolated perception. Even young people who expressed interest in the sector described that those around them hold similar views. A respondent in Uganda explained: “I fear to tell my friends that I do tourism because I know they will laugh. People always chose this course as a last alternative ... most people don't really wish to be here.”

A Tanzanian focus group respondent identified that the challenge of reconciling negative sector perceptions is broad, explaining: “Opportunities are available, but some [view them] to be improper, and sometimes [pursuing them] depends [on receiving] permission from your parents.” In this respondent's opinion, parents' and communities' negative opinions of some hospitality and tourism jobs play a role in whether young people pursue them.

Those respondents who described how their perception of the sector has become more positive attributed this change to an increased awareness of how jobs in hospitality and tourism are not so different from jobs in other sectors. There are “good” jobs available, such as secretarial work or accounting.

A Rwandan focus group respondent explained how his opinion changed: “At first, I also had the same mindset of undervaluing these jobs, thinking of someone working in a saloon [hair salon] as someone doing a cheap job, but as time went on and our country [has been] developing, I have now understood that these are jobs like others ... Now they [young people working in the sector] are perceived as people that are helping in building and developing the nation, like any other workers that are in [a] different job market.”



Other young people we spoke with expressed a similar change of perception: “Some years back, we used to take them as jobs for uneducated people, but now things have changed for the better. When we see people working in these big hotels, we consider them as people who have developed themselves from one stage of life to another.” This Rwandan focus group respondent attributed the change in community perception to seeing a higher level of careers in the sector and associating that with a level of success — not just the lack of a better option.

The experience of both of these respondents suggests that changing negative perceptions of the sector can perhaps be done by showing that jobs in hospitality and tourism are not so different from others and that they also offer opportunities for success.



AS A PARTICIPANT IN HANGA AHAZAZA, A MASTERCARD FOUNDATION INITIATIVE, THIS YOUNG WOMAN RECEIVES TRAINING IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM IN RWANDA.

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Some young focus group participants — particularly those who have seen their peers' success — said that they look favourably on jobs in hospitality and tourism because they perceive that they can provide a good income while building connections to future opportunities.

Young respondents who held positive perceptions of the sector said the incomes of those working in the sector meet — and exceed — basic needs.

A Rwandan focus group respondent described jobs in hospitality and tourism as “good” and that they offer “a way to [personal] development, as [those in the sector] generate income to sustain their lives by covering basic needs from [their] salaries.” Beyond being able to cover their necessary expenses, another Rwandan respondent emphasized that those in the sector “are financial[ly] well [off], rich, and they['ve] got a nice lifestyle.”

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**Those respondents who described how their perception of the sector has become more positive attributed this change to an increased awareness of how jobs in hospitality and tourism are not so different from jobs in other sectors.**



Our young focus group respondents linked their interest in pursuing careers in hospitality and tourism to their perception of the potential for financial gain. A Kenyan focus group respondent explained: "The employees are well paid. I would be willing to take up any type of job in the sector."

Beyond financial gain, other respondents described that part of what attracts them to the sector is the opportunity to interact with people that they would not otherwise get the opportunity to. Focus group respondents in Rwanda said that the sector involves "work that opens you to the outside world; you meet different people."

"Different" in this context also refers to "important" people who provide useful connections to future opportunities. A respondent in Ghana explained that "those who work in the hospitality and tourism sector get the avenue to meet and make friends with foreigners and diplomats and business-minded people. Hence, it is a good place to work."

While some respondents perceived that those who work in hospitality and tourism are immoral, other young people we spoke with described their positive opinion of those working in the sector. Referencing the soft skills displayed by those in the sector, a Kenyan respondent described that he saw that they "uphold high levels of courtesy."

Young people we spoke with described having a favourable impression of those they have seen succeed in the sector. A Rwandan focus group respondent explained: "I honour them, give them much respect, because they are at a step ahead. They have improved their standards of living through the income they earn. They are the people I can go to seek advice from when it comes to experience because they already know how the situation is in the field."

What is common to both of these respondents' favourable opinions is that they have in-person exposure to how young people like them work in the sector. In their descriptions, examples of success are fundamental to their positive perceptions of the sector and those who work in it.

**A GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE RECEIVED TRAINING IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM THROUGH HANGA AHAZAZA, A MASTERCARD FOUNDATION INITIATIVE IN RWANDA.**

Respondents' gendered ideas of opportunities in hospitality and tourism suggest that young women have a unique opportunity in pursuing some roles but may also hesitate when considering whether to enter the sector.

Some young respondents perceived that both genders were treated the same. A Rwandan focus group respondent expanded on this to say, "We don't see any difference between the opportunities for young women and young men [in the sector], as there is gender balance in the country."

However, not every young person we spoke with perceived this to be the case. A Kenyan focus group respondent said that socially constructed differences between young men and young women constrain what roles are seen as appropriate to each gender: "Young women are given jobs that can be considered lighter, like chefs, waiting, unlike the young men who are given the hard jobs. I think this difference is seen due to the societal norm of thinking women are weak."

Focus group respondents in Malawi, Ghana, and Zambia expressed that young women perform better in customer interaction, in part because of aspects of their temperament. Because roles in the sector predominantly involve customer service, some respondents believe there are more opportunities for women.

Respondents described how their view of which sector roles are appropriate for young women changed when they saw other young women in roles that they perceived to be masculine.

**"Seeing a woman in transport was strange. We thought such jobs were specifically meant for men, and saloon [hair dressing], restaurant, [and] hotel [jobs] for women, but now we can do all the same jobs and very well."**

*Rwandan focus group respondent*

While some respondents could point to an example of a young woman who challenged her assigned gender role, other respondents suggested that not every young woman feels comfortable doing so. As a Zambian focus group respondent explained, "Communities perceive such people [young women in the sector] as indulging in bad behaviour, such as prostitution."

A Ghanaian respondent went further to explain that negative associations of sexual immorality with work in the sector contribute to young women "los[ing] value in the community" when they work in hospitality and tourism. This perception suggests that while a young woman might be individually interested in the sector, she might also be constrained by the consequences of how she would be perceived in her community.

Respondents' perceptions therefore suggest that responding to gendered perceptions of young women's role in the sector could require looking beyond the perceptions of individual young women to looking at the perceptions held by those in their broader community.



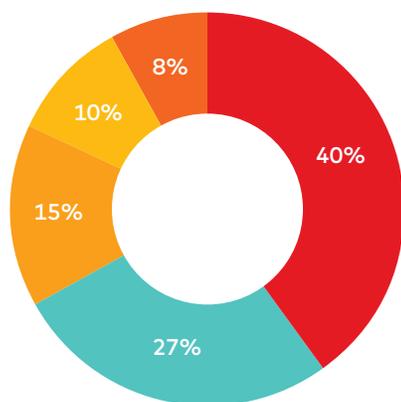
## YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE DIVERSE MOTIVATIONS FOR PURSUING WORK IN THE HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM SECTOR AND OFTEN SECURE EMPLOYMENT THROUGH INFORMAL SOCIAL NETWORKS.

Young people have a variety of motivations for pursuing opportunities in the sector.

When young interview respondents were asked why they pursued opportunities in hospitality and tourism, a number of drivers emerged. The key motivations that they cited were earning potential, the nature of the work, and – sometimes – lack of another employment option.

These key motivations, particularly the first two, were also identified by our survey respondents, as Figure 1 below shows.

**FIGURE 1. SURVEY RESPONDENTS' PRIMARY<sup>2</sup> MOTIVATION FOR PURSUING EMPLOYMENT IN THE SECTOR (N=350)**



- Earning Potential
- Career Growth Potential
- Exciting Work
- No Other Option
- Other

A young Tanzanian working in the sector described how she became interested in the sector because of the earning potential: "The hospitality and tourism sector is one of those sectors that contribute a lot of revenue to our country, and so jobs pay well."

For other respondents, it is not just that the pay is high. As a young Malawian said: "Mainly I was attracted to the industry because of the financial opportunities ... as well as the availability of opportunities that are not capital-intensive."

Other young people said that it is the work itself that excited them. A young Tanzanian man remarked he was attracted to the sector because those in it "do a lot of different activities that would help increase [their] knowledge and skills." A young Tanzanian woman emphasized how the activities in the sector matched her desired lifestyle, saying: "I prefer jobs that don't let me settle in one area for a long time, and so that's how I found myself in this sector."

While some young people we interviewed wanted to work specifically in the sector, others said that they entered the sector because they did not have other options. A Rwandan employee described: "I never envisioned myself working here because I didn't even study any hotel-related course. I just wanted a job."



2. Unlike interview data, survey respondents could not express more than one motivator for seeking sector employment. It is possible – and likely – that they had multiple motivations for seeking sector employment. Therefore, these responses reflect their primary motivation, not all of their possible motivations.



A YOUTH THINK TANK MEMBER INTERVIEWS A COFFEE SHOP OWNER.

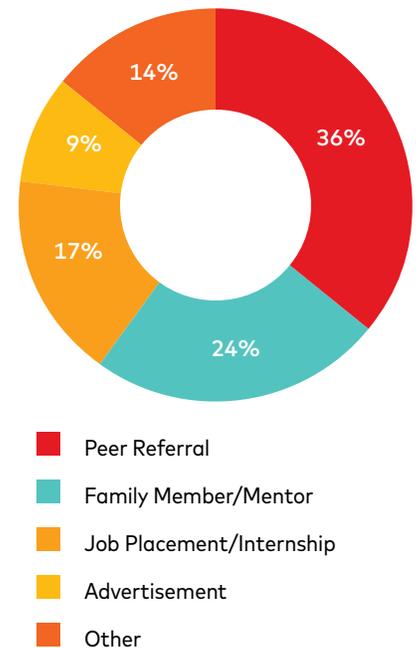
Some young people who took jobs in hospitality and tourism because they lacked other options said that they feel trapped there. Another young Tanzanian employee expressed: "I'm not interested in working in this sector. ... But I have to keep working here because of the tough economic times right now. I can't get money from anywhere else."

For young people who work in hospitality and tourism because they lack other options, learning first-hand about other, more exciting opportunities in the sector may help to support their retention.

Young people who have secured employment in hospitality and tourism have largely found out about opportunities through their personal networks and initiative, not through formal advertisement and recruitment processes.

Among both survey and interview respondents, the majority of young sector employees found their current positions through those in their social network. Figure 2 below shows the method by which survey respondents found their current role.

**FIGURE 2. SURVEY RESPONDENTS' METHOD OF HEARING ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITY (N=350)**



The majority of survey respondents (60 percent) learned about their job through personal connections — through their peers, families, or mentors. Only nine percent of survey respondents learned about the opportunity through advertisements using various types of communication channels.

Young employees we interviewed also learned about their job through personal connections (58 percent or seven out of 12).

For one Tanzanian woman, it was her sibling who made the connection: "I told my sister that I wanted a job [in the Maasai Market], and she linked me with her friend who was looking for someone to hire."

For this young employee, personal connection was the exclusive method she used to pursue her job hunt.

**"I had been asking my classmates who were already employed, and I asked other people who were employed in a hotel and restaurants to identify where there [was] a vacancy. ... Finally, I got a friend who recommended me to a boss who had vacancies for jobs in a restaurant. He recommended me because he ha[d] seen me in [an] internship, and he was a good friend."**

*Young Rwandan woman on mobilizing her social network to find work*

## The importance of personal connections and initiative described by our young respondents suggests that employers' recruitment procedures might not be reaching young prospective employees as effectively as they could.

This is not to say that personal connections were all that these young people needed to secure a job. All identified that it was their individual qualifications that ensured that they were hired. However, personal connections filled an information gap in knowing what roles were available that they could apply for or pursue.

Young people we interviewed who did not have personal connections often took their own initiative to connect with employers who might — or might not — be hiring (33 percent or four out of 12). These young people all described how they approached company managers directly — without responding to an advertised vacancy — until they were able to secure something. A young Rwandan man expanded: "When I felt like I needed something to do, I didn't fear to approach the owner, and luckily I got it."

Some (two of 12) young employees described that they did follow formal recruitment processes. However, they also indicated that personal connections facilitated their hiring. A young Malawian man who followed formal processes attributed his success in this process in part to his personal connections: "I found my employers through networking at tourism-related events. To be honest, I did not really face challenges because of the networks that I already had."

The importance of personal connections and initiative described by our young respondents suggests that employers' recruitment procedures might not be reaching young prospective employees as effectively as they could.



## EMPLOYERS IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM EXPECT EXPERIENCE, COMMUNICATION SKILLS, AND A POSITIVE ATTITUDE, BUT ALSO HAVE TO PROVIDE PRACTICAL, ON-THE-JOB TRAINING.

Employers we spoke with expect employees to have practical experience in the sector and a positive attitude — supported by other soft skills.

When describing which characteristics they look for in a candidate, employers (63 percent or 12 out of 19) most often reference the importance of having had practical experience — having performed tasks required for the job previously either in previous employment, internships, or practical training. A Ugandan employer explained: “What we look out for in a candidate is the skills they have, the experience.”

Employers that we interviewed also identified that the lack of experience is where they have seen the biggest gap in young candidates.

Employers in Malawi and Rwanda (four out of 19) indicated that even those who have been through formal training institutions

lack this practical experience. As a Malawian employer described, “You will find that the candidate went through training and is able to understand the theoretical and managerial aspects of how the organization is run, but when it comes to actual operations, they may be lagging behind due to the lack of experience they have.” The gap that this employer described is the lack of practical exposure provided by formal training programs which would provide a theoretical understanding of how to operate in the field.

The employers we spoke with described having to fill this gap in practical skills themselves. As a Rwandan employer explained, “The gap is that when they come, they just have the theory but less practical skills, and we have to put more effort [into] putting them to a standard level that we need.” In this employer’s perspective, the available formal institutions do not produce candidates who are ready for the workforce; instead, employers must take on the responsibility of upgrading their skills.

A positive attitude was the second most common trait that employers said they desired (58 percent or 11 out of 19). One Ugandan employer explained the significance of a candidate’s attitude, stating that “all jobs here are recruited based on attitudes.”

Apart from their practical experience and attitudes, employers reference three other core qualities that they look for in job candidates: their work ethic (47 percent or nine out of 19); their integrity (47 percent or nine out of 19); and their communication skills (37 percent or seven out of 19).

Employers did not go into detail describing why work ethic was significant to them when hiring. However, a Malawian employer explained why integrity is important: “Because if one is not honest, then they are in the wrong industry because they may bring down their reputation and that of their [company].” Integrity is important to the reputation of the company, which is significant in a service sector where customer opinions are so important.

A Ugandan employer said that communication skills are important because employees “deal directly with clients, and they need to understand how they need to be handled.” In a service industry where customer interactions make up the bulk of several sector roles, strong communication skills are essential.

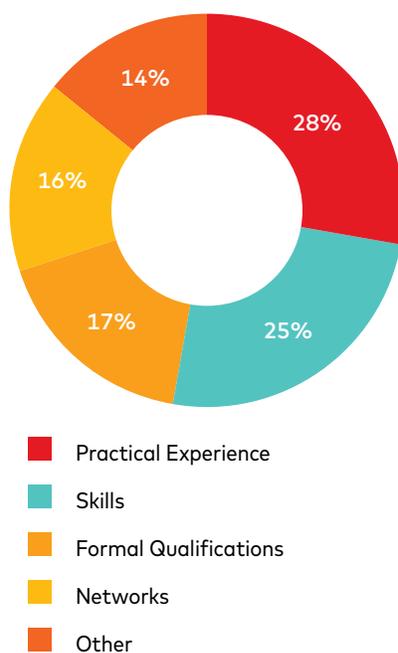
While the employers were clear about what they look for in a candidate, they did not explain how they determine that a candidate possesses qualities such as integrity. This suggests that it could be difficult to measure these qualities in a recruitment process and that young prospective employees could face a challenge in demonstrating them.

Young people who are employed in tourism and hospitality identify that the same qualities that employers prefer facilitated their employment — with practical experience being the biggest driver of employment.

Reflecting on what was instrumental in securing their employment, young employees identified many of the same characteristics that employers mentioned — communication skills, positive attitude, and work ethic. However, an aspect that both survey and interview respondents found to be significant was their practical experience.

Survey respondents reported that practical experience was the most important factor<sup>3</sup> driving their employment, closely followed by skills, as Figure 3 below shows.

**FIGURE 3. SURVEY RESPONDENTS' REFLECTIONS ON THE FACTORS DRIVING THEIR EMPLOYMENT (N=350)**



Interview respondents identified practical experience as being important more frequently than their survey counterparts. Almost all the young employees we interviewed indicated that experience was an important component to their hiring and to getting acquainted with their new job.

For those who had experience, they attributed being hired to the skills that they developed through their previous experience. A Tanzanian employee explained that she acquired the skills that helped her secure her current job “from a previous job [she] was doing at a different hotel. Those skills are the ones that [she’s] using here [in her current role].”

For those respondents who do not have previous experience, this gap was a challenge that they felt in both securing employment and in adapting to their new role. A Rwandan employee outlined this gap — and how his employer helped him to address it: “I had no special skills at all, but when I came, they gave me a briefing on how it is done, and as time went on, I adapted to it.” While his employer selected him despite this gap in his technical expertise, the employer still had to address the gap through on-the-job training.

Our respondents' experience suggests that while both employers and employees identify practical experience as important in attaining a role, young prospective employees might have a gap in their practical experience as they are entering the job market.

While employers prefer hiring young people with formal sector training, they also prefer complementing this with on-the-job training to best acquaint the employees with the companies' systems and approach to work.

Employers we interviewed expressed differing opinions on whether or not they would prefer to hire employees with formal training.

The employers who expressed a preference for candidates with formal training identified that the training prepared candidates for work in the industry. A Ugandan employer — who also mentioned offering on-the-job training — explained having a preference “mostly [for those with] formal training, since [the company] require[s] someone to have some small [sic] knowledge about the industry.”

3. The survey respondents who identified practical experience as the primary driver of their employment do not constitute a majority of survey respondents. Other survey respondents see skills as almost equally important. However, survey respondents could only select the single most pressing factor in their hiring. So, for others, practical experience still could have been an important — but not the most important — driver of their employment.



AS A PARTICIPANT IN HANGA AHAZAZA, A MASTERCARD FOUNDATION INITIATIVE, THIS YOUNG MAN RECEIVES TRAINING IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM IN RWANDA.

A Zambian employer explained that the difference is in the level of soft skills that an employee brings: "Those that acquired skills [from formal institutions] have better people skills which they acquired from the college, such as communication and empathy, as compared to those that just learn them on the job."

However, in the perspective of the employers that we interviewed, even where they have a preference for those with formal qualifications, this does not preclude them from also taking on staff without formal qualifications, offering on-the-job training to close gaps in their skillsets (74 percent or 14 of 19). A Ugandan employer explained that "there is generally love for trained staff, but we also take on a few who we can train ourselves."

Some employers expressed that this flexibility in hiring is born out of necessity. A Rwandan employer explained: "We prefer those with formal training, but we don't get them." Instead, this employer offers on-the-job training to bring employees' skills up to the level needed to perform the job.

Other employers (42 percent or eight out of 19) provide on-the-job training not out of necessity, but as a useful tool to help acquaint new employees with their roles. These employers described that they prefer to offer on-the-job training to employees as a pathway to helping them understand the way the company works. A Zambian employer explained in greater detail: "We take the formally trained but do prefer on-the-job training to best acquaint employees with our systems."

Other employers indicated that it also helps close skills gaps that they identify, even among those who have received formal training.

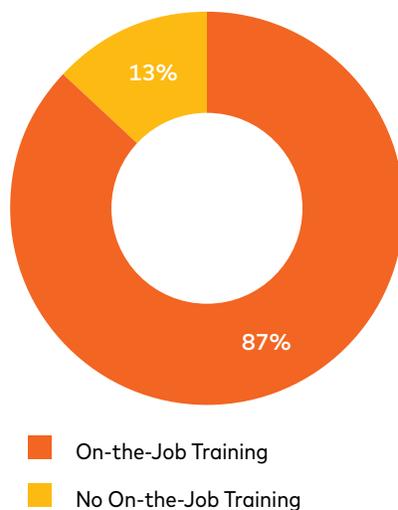
A Ghanaian employer said that it is not just that trained employees have gaps in the skill areas that they are instructed in, but that "[we] offer them on-the-job training because we believe that day in, day out, new systems develop."

Where employers already have to train every employee on the job, the flexibility that those without formal exposure offer is sometimes preferred, as a Malawian employer explained: "We train workers on the job regardless of whether they went through formal training or not. ... Sometimes it's better to hire those that are less educated because they tend to be more eager to learn new skills that will help them keep their job."

Most of our young respondents who are employed in the sector — even those who have been formally trained — have had access to on-the-job training opportunities, which they identify as being useful in closing their practical skills gaps.

Young people we interviewed and those we surveyed mentioned that they had received some form of on-the-job training to polish their skills. In the case of our survey respondents, 87 percent have received this support from their employers, as Figure 4 below shows.

**FIGURE 4. SURVEY RESPONDENTS' EXPOSURE TO ON-THE-JOB TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES (N=350)**



The young employees (75 percent or nine out of 12) we interviewed also mentioned that they had received some form of on-the-job training to polish their skills. Some (67 percent or eight out of 12) said that this was the only form of training that they received and that they had not received any formal training prior to this.

For some young employees, the on-the-job training that they received was more formal. Three young respondents in Malawi each mentioned a distinct period over which they received on-the-job training from their employers — of either one month or one week.

For others, their on-the-job training was more informal. A young Tanzanian employee explained: "I didn't have any skills that aligned with my job when I got here, but my employer told me about the dos and don'ts of work." While this employer provided on-the-job guidance, the employee did not describe that this guidance was delivered in a formal way; instead, it just took the form of coaching.

**"[The formal training I received] was theoretical rather than practical, which makes it hard to apply or execute ... on the job. The skills that I have learnt on the job have been more useful and practical to my day-to-day activities."**

*A young Malawian employee on the value of on-the-job training*

From the perspective of these young employees, on-the-job training offered a powerful pathway to close gaps in their practical skillsets. Their experience suggests that with greater formalization of their on-the-job training, employers can be more intentional about supporting the growth and development of their young employees.

## EMPLOYERS AND THEIR EMPLOYEES HAVE SIMILAR EXPECTATIONS OF WHAT EMPLOYEES CAN DO TO BE RETAINED, BUT EMPLOYERS STRUGGLE TO RETAIN CERTAIN TYPES OF YOUNG PEOPLE.

Employers and young employees both identify that work ethic, flexibility, and interpersonal skills are instrumental to an employee's retention.

Employers (68 percent or 13 out of 19) we interviewed expressed that demonstrating a strong work ethic — described most frequently as “commitment” or “hard work” — is essential if employees are to retain their jobs. A Malawian employer stated this explicitly, explaining that “enthusiasm and hard work are the main determinants in deciding which candidates to retain.”

Conversely, employers said that a lack of work ethic is sufficient grounds to not retain an employee. As a Ugandan employer described, “retaining a lazy person is a cost because they don't add value.” Another Ugandan employer reflected that the biggest gap between those who are retained and those who are not is “in [their] performance and commitment to work.”

Young employees we interviewed (42 percent or five out of 12) also attributed their job retention to their work ethic.

**“I've been working in my current position for almost three years now. I always try to be extra — going that extra mile to get things done. I'm disciplined, punctual, and very confident. I also love my job, so I do it wholeheartedly.”**

*A Tanzanian employee on the importance of work ethic*

Some employers (32 percent or six out of 19) also stressed that they retain employees who demonstrate flexibility — a combination of adaptability and a capacity to learn. A Ghanaian employer mentioned how important it is for employees to “develop on the job quickly.” He said, “the biggest gap [he has seen] is in the inability of the staff to acquire and apply more knowledge on the job.”

Employers explained that employees can demonstrate their flexibility by taking the initiative to try new things. A Rwandan employer emphasized, “We also like employees who are innovative. So, if we see that he or she has innovations in work, nothing can stop us from retaining this person.” They also are looking for an eagerness for growth in staff. As a Malawian employer explained, “Once employers see this eagerness of the staff to grow in [their] career, then the more they are willing to retain or keep them on the job.” They also want employees to have the ability to receive feedback and put it into practice. A Zambian employer explained that employees who are retained “should be persons that accept correction when they [are] wrong.”

Young people also identified that their flexibility and a willingness to learn have been instrumental in retaining their jobs. A young Tanzanian employee attributed her continued employment for over a year to her ability to “adapt to any working environment easily.”

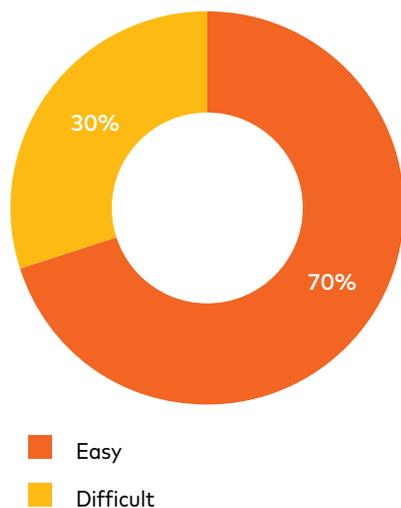
In a service-oriented sector, it is not surprising that employers (32 percent or six out of 19) specifically mentioned interpersonal skills as important to job retention. In particular, approachability and customer courtesy help an employee retain their job.

Conversely, demonstrating poor interpersonal skills could result in employee dismissal.

An employer in Zambia expanded, "If a customer complained to this waiter about a certain service, and they always responded in a rude and disrespectful manner toward the customer, I may have no reason to keep such workers." Individual employers and employees also highlighted the importance of showing good teamwork and a willingness to collaborate with fellow employees.

With similar perspectives on employee retention, it is not surprising that 70 percent of young people expressed that they do not struggle to determine how to retain their jobs, as Figure 5 below shows.

**FIGURE 5. SURVEY RESPONDENTS' EXPERIENCE OF HOW DIFFICULT IT HAS BEEN TO RETAIN THEIR JOBS (N=350)**



Some employers perceive certain demographic categories of young people as not "stable" as employees.

Employers we interviewed have mixed opinions as to whether young employees are easier to retain than older employees. However, on average, young people are perceived positively by these employers. Forty-seven percent or nine out of 19 responded that young employees are easier to retain, two out of 19 or 11 percent had the opposite opinion, and the remainder said that no age group was easier to retain.

Those employers who perceive their young employees as easier to retain pointed to two characteristics of young people that contribute to this – their energy and their flexibility. An employer in Rwanda explained that young people are easier to retain because "they are energetic, strong, and hardworking."

Other employers said that young people in particular show the flexibility to learn new skills. A Ugandan employer reflected that "young people are flexible ... [and] they give room to learn something new." For those employers who hold this perspective, young people's malleability contributes to increased performance over time, such that young staff are an asset worth investing in by retaining them.

One employer said young people's baseline skills are also higher. As another Ugandan employer described, young people often "have both hard and soft skills more [sic] as compared to adults [those over 35]."

Those employers who do not see either group as more or less retainable either perceive that individual characteristics matter more or that both are equally retainable but for different reasons.

Employers holding the latter perspectives perceive that, despite their strengths, young people are more challenging to work with than their older counterparts. As one described, "They are fit enough, and that's why we employ and retain them. Only that they are difficult to deal with."

Where employers have a negative perception of young employees, it is not related to their performance but instead to their instability. A Rwandan employer explained that older staff "don't like changing work." In contrast, a Ghanaian employer indicated that young staff are "always on the lookout for jobs that are high-paying." This suggests that the challenge is not in young employees retaining their jobs but in employers retaining employees who are always looking for better opportunities.

Employers expressed very similar perspectives around whether young people who hail from rural or urban areas are easier to retain. A majority of employers (68 percent or 13 out of 19) expressed the view that it is rural young people in particular who are easier to retain. Employers who have this positive perspective indicated that rural young people show particular zest for learning and growing on the job. As a Ghanaian employer put it, "Rural youth want to learn and gain more knowledge and are anxious for jobs." This employer described a perspective that other employers share: young people from rural areas show a high willingness to learn, as well as a higher level of commitment to their jobs.

A Malawian employer stressed that young staff from rural areas "work harder and work better and are usually more willing to do any job."

# The varying perspectives suggest that it is not their performance on the job that differentiates the retention of young men and young women, but rather in how stable employers perceive them to be.

A Ghanaian employer mentioned that young staff from rural areas are “determined and have plans to work for the company longer than more urban people, who only work for a year.” In contrast, a Rwandan employer explained that young people from urban backgrounds tend to “go with change. When there’s a new hotel opening up in town, they feel like leaving where they were for another hotel. They are not stable.”

These perceptions suggest that the combination of their flexibility and their commitment to their jobs make young employees from rural areas a better investment for employers. They look favourably on building the skills of young rural staff over time because they expect to retain them longer.

Most employers that we interviewed (74 percent or 14 out of 19) did not believe that it is easier to retain employees of a particular gender. However, of those who did, all but one indicated that they have found it more difficult to retain young women than young men.

One employer said the challenge is that “most young women at some point quit to handle family issues, such as raising their children and getting married.” The way that this employer stated the problem appears to convey that the challenge is on the side of the employer, who struggles to retain young female staff.

However, not every employer said they had a challenge in retaining young female staff when they start families. Instead, they

focused on the time off they had to give their young female employees. One Ghanaian employer said it is difficult to retain young women because “they go on maternity leave, and most of [this] business is based on active engagement.” What this employer suggests is that granting employees maternity leave compromises their ability to meet the expectations of their role.

This raises a larger question of what structures need to be put in place to allow female employees the flexibility to reconcile their role in the family with the demands of work in the sector.

One Rwandan employer, however, expressed that — in contrast to young men — young women are more “stable” in that they do not “move from one job to another, [whereas] men like change.”

The varying perspectives suggest that it is not their performance on the job that differentiates the retention of young men and young women, but rather in how stable employers perceive them to be.

Employers’ negative perceptions — irrespective of which demographic category young people are in — are tied to a perspective of how stable these categories are seen as employees. The challenge that employers expressed is less about a perceived difference in the ability of a particular type of employee to perform, and more about the perceived risk of investing in a particular type of young person, given the perception of how challenging it can be to retain them.



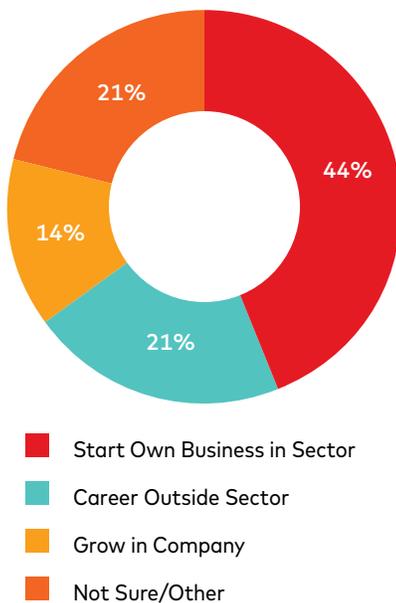
AS A PARTICIPANT IN HANGA AHAZAZA, A MASTERCARD FOUNDATION INITIATIVE, THIS YOUNG WOMAN RECEIVES TRAINING IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM IN RWANDA.

**EMPLOYERS WHO HAVE INTENTIONAL POLICIES REGARDING ADVANCEMENT LOOK FAVOURABLY ON PROMOTING YOUNG STAFF. HOWEVER, YOUNG EMPLOYEES FEEL THAT THERE IS NOT A STRONG POSSIBILITY THAT THEY WILL BE PROMOTED, SO THEIR CAREER AMBITIONS ARE ELSEWHERE.**

Young employees we interviewed did not see the possibility for their advancement in their current employment, and instead their career goals were focused on self-employment in the sector or employment outside the sector.

Survey data shows that advancement in their current role is not young people's primary ambition. Figure 6 shows the main aspirations of young people in the sector whom we surveyed.

**FIGURE 6. SURVEY RESPONDENTS' CAREER ASPIRATIONS (N=350)**



As the figure shows, only a small percentage of the young people we surveyed aspire to grow their career with their current employer. Instead, the largest proportion of survey respondents aspire to start their own businesses in the sector.

Those who seek advancement in their current role (50 percent or six out of 12) said that they have not been promoted because of the small structure or limited finances of their current employer, and as a result do not expect to advance in the near future.

Even among those who do want to attain higher positions in their current work, this is not their only career goal. Young employees we interviewed (75 percent or nine out of 12) described having more than one aspiration and are interested in pursuing self-employment or opportunities outside the sector entirely. Advancement in the sector is not their only – or primary – focus.

The most common aspiration of the young people we interviewed (67 percent or eight out of 12) is self-employment, predominantly in the work that they are employed in at the moment.<sup>4</sup> A young Rwandan waitress mentioned wanting to start her own restaurant, leveraging what she has learned through her current role: "Even if I can start with a canteen, the good thing is that I have much experience [in] restaurant management, and I know what is needed to generate benefits. This job is helping me to [secure ... capital to] start that restaurant, and I think in the future I will definitely be self-employed."



4. This positive attitude toward self-employment was also expressed by both of the young people we interviewed who are currently self-employed. Both would like to continue their self-employment, with their only ambitions being to grow their business.



A COFFEE SHOP OWNER POURS A HOT BEVERAGE.

Her ambition is not unique. Other young people who aspire to set up a business in the sector are interested in doing so in the same line of work that they are doing currently, leveraging the expertise that they have gained. As a young Tanzanian man stated, “I plan on opening a curio shop like the one I’m working at right now. This job has prepared me ... I’m confident that I can handle my own business since I’m able to handle this one.”

Other young people see the experience they are building as less integral to their future success. Instead, they attribute more value to the intangible benefits of working in this people-focused sector.

When reflecting on how he will use what he gained through his current job to support his aspirations, a young Tanzanian man did not reflect on his skills and experience. Instead, he stressed, “The job I’m doing now is linking me with people who could mentor me down that road.” For him, as with other young people we spoke with — particularly those with ambitions outside the sector — the network they develop through interacting with customers is what they expect to use to develop their future career.

Young employees expressed that securing a career outside hospitality and tourism is important to them. A young Zambian described holding precisely this perspective herself: “My position in the sector is merely a stepping stone. I intend to advance my career into the education or health sectors.” She did not mention how she intends to transition into

these other sectors, but several shared her view that roles in the sector can help them grow. A young Zambian man said, "I think that most youth see the sector as a stepping stone to another career."

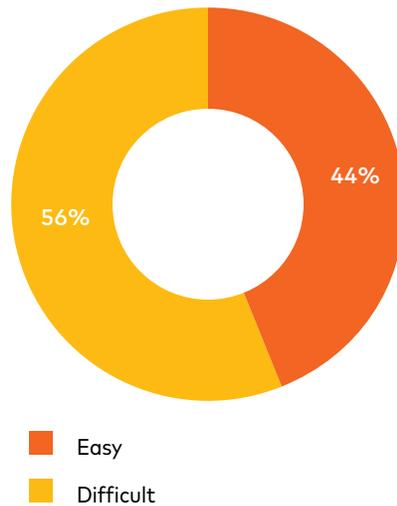
A young Tanzanian respondent further explained why young people seek jobs elsewhere: "Young people have opportunities for career growth in this sector, but the problem is most people regard the jobs in this sector as those for the under-achieved youth." Negative perceptions about who the sector is for — young people without other options — prevent some young employees from forming long-term career goals in the sector, or exploring the sector at all.

Young employees we interviewed struggle to find promotion opportunities in companies that do not have the space — either financially or in the company structure — to absorb them.

There could be a relationship between the low numbers of young people who aspire to higher positions in their current employment and their feelings as to whether this is a possibility. As many young people described, promotions within their current employment are often not available.

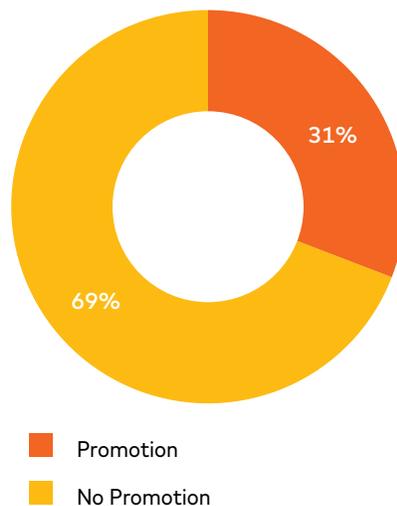
A majority of survey respondents indicated that it is difficult to secure a promotion within their current company, as Figure 7 shows.

**FIGURE 7. SURVEY RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTION OF PROMOTION POTENTIAL (N=350)**



These data capture young people's perceptions of the potential for promotion. However, when examining their lived experience, far fewer have directly experienced a promotion.

**FIGURE 8. SURVEY RESPONDENTS' EXPERIENCE OF PROMOTION (N=350)**



As Figure 8 shows, less than a third of the young people we surveyed have been promoted. That their perception is higher than their experience suggests that their perception conveys a combination of what they have experienced and their optimism.

Young people affirmed this perception, expressing that they (67 percent or eight out of 12) felt that securing a promotion was not a possibility within their current institution.<sup>5</sup>

These young people also stated that — irrespective of their performance or skill level — promotion is not possible because the companies and institutions that they work for do not have the "space" to absorb their promotion. Not every young person we interviewed explained why they did not think promotion was a possibility, but those who did attributed it to one of two limitations: whether the company's profit margin allowed for the increased pay that would come with a promotion, or whether the company's organizational structure offered positions to move into.

A young Zambian employee explained that "promotion is not very possible because of the current low rate of business, owing to the current economic conditions." The employee also said that without more [customer] traffic, the business is not profitable enough to allow for his promotion.

Another constraint to promotion is the shortage of positions. A young Malawian man explained: "I have not yet been promoted because the organization I am currently working for is a small organization, and there are not enough positions for promotion."

None of these experiences reflect any unwillingness on the part of employers to offer promotions, nor do they reflect on the job performance of young employees. Instead, the challenge has more to do with what is realistically possible given the state of the companies and institutions that they are working for.

5. For those young people who expressed that promotion was possible, half had received a promotion or a salary increase. All others expressed clarity around what they felt they needed to show in order to be considered — which all identified as primarily "commitment" to their work. This suggests that personal experience and clear expectations help to support young people's perception that they can expect a promotion.



A TRAINEE PLATES A MEAL AS PART OF THE CAP YOUTH EMPOWERMENT INSTITUTE HOSPITALITY TRAINING IN KENYA.

Where they do have intentional policies around promotion, employers we interviewed expressed a preference for promoting internal candidates.

While young people we interviewed felt that securing a promotion is difficult, employers expressed overall that there is a mechanism in place for promotion within their institutions.

Where employers mentioned that there was no promotion mechanism within their companies, this was due to constraints in the organizational structure. One employer in Ghana indicated that promotion to higher

positions cannot be made “because the owner and his family occupy those positions” – though promotions from entry-level positions are possible.

Another employer in Malawi said that because the company “is a growing enterprise with a small organogram,” they have not yet offered promotions. However, with growth, they could expand to allow for promotion. Even in these more restrictive cases, both described some possibility of promotion, even if it is not immediately possible.

All the employers who expressed constraints to promotion had 11 or fewer employees. It is understandable, then, that there might not be positions available to be promoted within such a small organizational structure.

Other employers (63 percent or 12 out of 19) indicated that promotion is possible in their company and were also able to give specific examples of current employees who had been promoted from entry-level roles. It is worth noting, though, that all of these employers were larger businesses, with the smallest size being 14 employees.

This suggests that the challenge is less around whether or not employers seek to promote strong employees and more about whether these businesses are able to grow.

Just over a third (37 percent or seven out of 19) of employers we interviewed explicitly mentioned a preference for hiring internal candidates for higher positions that become available.

**“We prioritize hiring internally because these are the people that have been in the company and know more about it, and it makes it easy for us to train them into [sic] new responsibilities. They even know the working structure and conditions of the company.”**

*A Rwandan employer on why they prefer to hire internal candidates*

Employers recognize that pre-existing knowledge of how the company operates allows employees to more easily take on new tasks. Also, being familiar with the candidate helps the employer. A Ghanaian employer said that internal candidates are “preferred, since these people know the policies of the enterprise and the management gets to know these staff more over [time].”



**A YOUNG WOMAN RECEIVES TRAINING IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM AS PART OF HANGA AHAZAZA, A MASTERCARD FOUNDATION INITIATIVE IN RWANDA.**

Employers described financial incentives for hiring internally for higher roles. A Malawian employer mentioned that the company is “able to reduce a lot of costs associated with recruitment” by hiring internally. However, cost reductions extend beyond recruitment. A Kenyan employer explained that “those in the company already know much about it, and therefore they can easily lead and will incur less cost of training.”

While employers place value — even financial value — on hiring internally, they said that this value does not offset the need for staff to be qualified for the roles that they undertake. A Malawian employer explained that prioritizing internal hires does not necessarily mean that they will further train those who are not ready to take on the position. “For higher positions, we prioritize hiring internally first, but if our staff don’t have the desirable competencies for the position, then we hire externally.”

Similarly, employers we spoke with who do not have a preference for internal candidates do not necessarily prioritize external candidates. Instead, they prioritize expertise — wherever it comes from. An employer in Rwanda emphasized that “either internal or external [candidates are considered] as long as [they are] found qualified. Fitting experience is the first factor that we consider.”

The perspectives of employers suggest that there could be greater potential for young employees to secure promotions if smaller sector enterprises are able to grow.

When considering which employees should be promoted, employers look at the same qualities as they do for retention with an added dimension — the employees' integrity.

When the employers we interviewed discussed character traits they look for in employees they hope to retain, they mentioned the same characteristics they consider for retention — work ethic, flexibility, and interpersonal skills. However, they also indicated that they consider an employee's integrity — using words such as "trustworthy," "honest," and "disciplined."

Nearly two-thirds of employers (63 percent or 12 out of 19) expressed that work ethic was a driving factor in the promotion of young employees. While only one employer mentioned work ethic directly, others mentioned components of work ethic — such as demonstrating "commitment" and being "hardworking."

A Zambian employer said that "for someone to be promoted, they need to be committed, hardworking, and take their job seriously."

When reflecting on promotion potential, employers mentioned work ethic more than performance. This suggests that reaching specific task output targets is less important to employers than the way young employees deliver on these tasks.

Nearly half of employers (47 percent or nine out of 19) also mentioned components of integrity as characteristics that employees should demonstrate to be considered for promotion. When describing these characteristics, employers (seven out of 19) regularly mentioned "honesty" specifically.

## It is flexibility — demonstrating adaptability and an interest in learning — that employers we spoke with valued most when assessing whether employees have developed qualifications to support promotion.

While employers mentioned work ethic and honesty most often as factors in promotion, there are also other specific qualities that young people can demonstrate to facilitate their advancement.

Employers indicated that how well employees "work with others" and "build friendship with their colleagues" also have a bearing on their promotion, as mentioned by Ugandan and Ghanaian employers respectively.

A Rwandan employer elaborated on why demonstrating good interpersonal skills with colleagues is important: "If this person does not work with others in the team, maybe because of different behaviours, it's so hard for us to promote him. Teamwork gets us moving, and everything goes well when people are working together as a team." In this employer's perspective, for a young employee to be promoted, demonstrating good social skills with customers is not enough; they must also do so with their peers.

What all the employers focus on when considering employees for promotion are their quality-based characteristics, not their skill-based qualifications. Only one employer directly mentioned the necessity of having formal qualifications in order to secure a promotion. While formal qualifications might be important for promotion to the highest

managerial roles, they appear to matter less to employers we spoke with for promotion from entry-level to mid-level roles.

Skill development is still important, and a Kenyan employer explained that for those who have been held back from promotion, "it's due to lack of growth." Employers also indicated that employees could build their expertise by demonstrating a "willingness to learn" on the job, as a Ghanaian employer mentioned.

A Rwandan employer indicated that employees who have been promoted are those who "showed [an] interest in learning new things from different positions, and this encouraged us to give them a chance to gain more experience."

A Ghanaian employer stressed the importance of demonstrating flexibility, mentioning that employees are promoted "based on ... adaptive work ability to learn faster on the job assigned to them and to develop themselves with the little knowledge they acquire from the job."

It is flexibility — demonstrating adaptability and an interest in learning — that employers we spoke with valued most when assessing whether employees have developed qualifications to support promotion.

# Recommendations and Conclusion

## PRIORITY SECTOR SOFT SKILLS

Following young people's journeys in the hospitality and tourism sector highlighted the skills and qualities that supported their success at each step – being hired, retaining their roles, and being promoted. Among these skills and qualities, the following were most prominent: work ethic, positive attitude, flexibility, interpersonal skills, and integrity.

While some qualities, such as integrity, are harder to learn, other qualities are soft skills that can be taught. Table 3 below identifies which key soft skill areas<sup>vii</sup> employers would like employees to possess.

**TABLE 3. PRIORITY QUALITIES IN EMPLOYMENT AND THEIR RESPECTIVE SOFT SKILL AREAS**

QUALITY	SOFT SKILL AREA	RELATED WORKPLACE BEHAVIOURS
Work ethic	Self-control	Punctuality and attendance; pacing effort
Interpersonal skills	Social skills	Sense potential conflicts and act to prevent; coordinate the work of others
Positive attitude	Positive self-concept	Demonstrate self-confidence and self-awareness

As Table 3 indicates, self-control, social skills, and positive self-concept are the most important soft skill areas for success in the hospitality and tourism sector.

What is also interesting is what employers and employees did not reference. They made reference to communication skills but not to the same extent as the other skill areas.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, none made reference to higher-order thinking skills – analytical skills and complex problem-solving skills. While these are undoubtedly important to youth employment generally, in the experience of our respondents, they are less important than other soft skills.

When equipping young people to pursue roles in the hospitality and tourism sector, actors should prioritize targeting skill development in these soft skill areas.

6. We recognize that communication skills are important for customer-facing roles in this predominantly service sector. In fact, employers and employees did frequently mention communication skills as key to some sector roles. However, communication skills did not come out as prominently as these other priority soft skills. In part, this could be because we interviewed a broad range of sector employees and employers, speaking on roles beyond customer-facing roles, including transportation, logistics, and food production and processing.



# Calls to Action

In addition to identifying these key skill areas, our findings suggest specific actions to improve how the sector functions.

## To training institutions:

*Develop programs that are more responsive to prospective employers' needs.*

Training institutions should design curricula that target the priority soft skills identified above, establishing standardized guidelines on how they are instructed and how student performance is measured. They should consult the private sector in designing curricula to ensure that they are responsive to employer environments and needs. They should also design training programs that are more flexible in duration and content, providing a diverse menu of training programs, including professional development opportunities for mid-career young practitioners in the sector.

*Embed opportunities for practical exposure in training programs.*

Training institutions should include practical components in their training programs by providing direct sector exposure through work placement programs, attachments, or internships. They should work with employers to design these programs to meet company needs as well as building in training and experience with priority hiring skills. Additionally, they should provide pre-employment services to graduating students in the form of coaching, mentoring, and field visits to help enhance their practical skills while also expanding their network.

## To employers:

*Broaden recruitment.*

Prospective employers should communicate opportunities through means other than print media. They should consider how best to make use of existing informal social networks to communicate available positions.

To better assess potential candidates, employers should contribute to the development of industry guides on soft skills measurement and integrate these into their recruitment processes. They should incorporate more practical exercises in recruitment to assess young candidates' soft skills and practical exposure.

### *Allow for employees' continuous skill development.*

In order to maximize what young employees can learn through their practical experience, employers should consult with training institutions to formalize the on-the-job training that they offer. They can do so by collaborating with the training institutions to offer short course certificates for the on-the-job training the employers offer following a well-structured, high-quality training module. They should make intentional time and cost investments to ensure on-the-job training is a priority. This could include developing practical training centres as social enterprises, providing services, and training youth at the same time.

### *Intentionally design business policies that support employee retention.*

Employers and policymakers should put employee-protective policies into place, particularly around maternity leave to accommodate young women's gender roles in their families. Employers should also support staff retention by developing a range of non-financial incentives to encourage young employees to continue with the company. These non-financial incentives are best structured around providing leadership and learning opportunities, such as job rotations, formalized skill growth opportunities, secondments, and mentorship arrangements.

### *Deepen promotion opportunities.*

The companies and institutions that do not have formal structures and mechanisms in place for promotion should build them. They should complement this by providing intentional professional development plans to employees to prepare them to take up these roles.

Where employers are unable to provide salary increases or promote employees to higher roles, they should think creatively about how to reward the additional skills that employees gain through experience. For example, they could consider adding levels to roles, so that employees can move up levels within a specific position.

### **To young people interested in the sector:**

#### *Take an active role in ensuring you get what you need.*

Young people should recognize that they already have some of the support that they require to succeed in the sector. They must leverage their existing social network through their communities and social media to share their experience and aspirations of working in the sector. Where they have success in the sector, young people should promote these stories widely to their peers, highlighting the benefit that they have found working in the sector (low barriers to entry, developing skills transferable to other opportunities, etc.).

Young people should develop job search skills, taking initiative to develop job networks relevant to their role of interest, while continuing to learn and adapt to the ever-changing employment landscape in the hospitality and tourism sector. Where they have needs that are unmet by existing opportunities, they should ask for them to be designed — being sensitive to ensuring they are delivering the right ask to the appropriate actor.

# Collaborating to Solve Sector Gaps

Our findings suggest that there are other actions that can be taken to improve the sector and its image for young people. However, there is no specific actor who can solve these challenges independently. Instead, making these improvements will require better collaboration among all actors in the sector — government, private sector employers, training institutions, donors, and NGOs/CSOs with interest in the sector. These sector actors should play a stronger, more intentional role in prioritizing this sector through coordinated solutions, including targeted resourcing and innovative sector reforms.

Our findings have identified three key areas that these actors could collaborate holistically on:

- Addressing negative sector perceptions;
- Mainstreaming soft skills; and
- Supporting job creation in the sector.

## **To address negative sector perceptions, actors should collaborate to:**

*Share positive examples of young people succeeding in the sector.*

Sector actors should profile a range of young people who are succeeding and growing in the sector — particularly young women — to share through community outreach programs. Emphasis should be made on presenting the sector as a “serious” sector. Recognizing the heterogeneity of the young people they are targeting, they should focus on a range of young people who entered the sector for a variety of reasons and who have found different forms of success. These stories can be shared peer-to-peer at the community level by identifying and mobilizing youth Sector Ambassadors from among those in the sector actors’ networks.

*Change negative perceptions at the community level, not just those of individual young people.*

Sector actors should be intentional about addressing negative sector perceptions by ensuring that they target broader community members, including parents of young people and community elders. They should make use of existing peer networks and informal social information channels to share this information.

*Offer young prospective employees a variety of services through a centralized space.*

Sector actors should build safe spaces — online and physical — that young people and other actors can use to access information and networks as well as connect to learning and earning opportunities in the sector. If designed appropriately, these spaces can play a number of roles simultaneously: operating as a resource hub to connect young people with a range of employment opportunities and mentorship as well as providing incubation space for emerging business ideas.

*Support inclusion and promotion of women’s leadership in the hospitality and tourism sector.*

Sector actors should adopt gender-sensitive policies and practices, while providing inspiration and mentorship opportunities for young women interested in the sector.

**To mainstream soft skills, actors should collaborate to:**

*Encourage reforms of the training and education system.*

Sector actors should collaborate to ensure that priority soft skills are included as part of education curricula and should support teachers' initiatives and innovation in teaching these skills. They should also bring in the expertise of young people and private sector actors to expand the practical content of training programs and develop standard assessment tools to evaluate these skills.

*Ensure that employers bring these reforms into their internal systems.*

Sector actors should incentivize private sector actors to mainstream soft skills development at all steps of their HR process, showing employers the business case of adopting and adapting these reforms. These incentives can also target the increase in training in management skills through mentorship to help young employees enter and advance in the sector, while working closely with training institutions to formalize how this mentorship is delivered.

**To support job creation in the sector, actors should collaborate to:**

*Provide targeted micro-enterprise support to young entrepreneurs.*

Sector actors should provide supportive services to help young people develop their self-employment ambitions. Micro-enterprise support could include business and financial skills education, seed capital in the form of grants or loans, training in marketing, etc. Sector actors should come together to assess what young people need to foster this ambition and to determine which support each actor can provide from their comparative advantage and expertise.

*Develop supportive services to grow small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).*

Sector actors grow and provide more sector jobs to absorb the emerging labour supply. Sector actors should not just consider how to provide additional financial resourcing for the sector, but also how to mobilize more sector investment. In addition to financial investment support, sector actors could also meet private sector actors' needs in areas such as the digitization and market development of their businesses, product and service diversification and improvement, and financial and managerial skill development. Supporting the growth of the private sector actors who employ young people could also help unlock their potential promotion.

# 2017–2018 Mastercard Foundation Youth Think Tank Biographies



**Clara Bemmah Antwi**

22, Ghana

Clara is a student at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana, studying to become a cardiothoracic surgeon. She feels the YTT role exposes her to the social dimensions of her profession.



**Benedicta Dawson-Amoah**

23, Ghana

Benedicta is a graduate of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology specializing in probability and statistical methods. She worked as a Nation Services Personnel at Global Communities Ghana. Her role includes monitoring and evaluation, rapporteuring, and the development of an in-house television station for the Youth Inclusive Development Initiative for Employment (YIEDIE) Project.



### Irene Njeri Gachigua

19, Kenya

Irene is pursuing a bachelor's degree in economics and a certificate in hospitality at CAP Youth Empowerment Institute (CAP YEI). She is passionate about the hospitality sector and hopes to open a hotel where she will employ students from hospitality programs like CAP YEI.



### Kenneth Osawa

19, Kenya

Kenneth is a marketing intern in the banking sector and an alumnus of the Equity Bank Wings to Fly initiative. He is passionate about youth empowerment and continues to mentor students at the Equity Group Foundation on the value of life skills and how to ensure they always stand out!



### Emmanuel Bob Chisamba

22, Malawi

Emmanuel is a volunteer with the Malawi Red Cross Society and the Community Initiative for Social Empowerment. He was the President of AISEC in Malawi and has also worked for Exploits University and the World Bank Youth Network. Together with his colleagues, Emmanuel started a company that collates and recycles refuse into manure.



### Charles Mankhwazi

20, Malawi

Charles is an economics graduate and is currently a Research and Evaluation Associate at the National Youth Council of Malawi. In this role, he led nationwide consultations which resulted in the publication of the Malawi Youth Status Report, an important resource mobilization tool for stakeholders working with youth, and the public and private sectors.



### Peace Aradukunda

23, Rwanda

Peace is in her final year of an environmental engineering degree at the University of Rwanda and recently completed a two-month internship at the Water and Sanitation Corporation (WASAC). She is eager to put her engineering skills to good use and is working on a project that will take water from the wetlands to irrigate highlands in Rwanda.



### Alice Igiraneza

22, Rwanda

Alice is a YALI alumna and youth ambassador for the Building Bridges Foundation and the Road to Nairobi project. She is a medical student at the University of Rwanda and is passionate about community development.



### Angela Joshua Kileo

24, Tanzania

Angela is a graduate from the sociology program at St. Augustine University in Tanzania and is passionate about community development. As a UN club counsellor in high school, she led outreach initiatives in support of disadvantaged youth and children and has encouraged the university's sociology foundation to do the same.



### Joyce Anderson Nyato

23, Tanzania

Joyce is currently in her second year of the master of arts in applied economics program at the University of Dar es Salaam. She also works as a research assistant focused on policy analysis. She is passionate about research for personal and professional development.



### Regina Geraldine Nakawuki

22, Uganda

Regina is a student at Makerere University Business School pursuing a bachelor's degree in entrepreneurship and small business management and a YALI alumna. She is also the co-founder of Bivamuntuuyo-Transformation SACCO and has been the volunteer Student Ambassador at Global Business Labs Uganda. These experiences have inspired her to engage in community advocacy initiatives that drive youth economic transformation.



### Joseph Okia

22, Uganda

Joseph is a law student in his final year at Uganda Christian University and an alumnus and team leader of Restless Development's International Citizenship service and dance4life programs. Joseph is keen on using his experience in leadership, legal training, and humanitarianism to support projects, programs, and organizations focused on upholding the rule of law, social justice, equality, and youth empowerment.



### Gabriel Fulilwa

18, Zambia

Gabriel is a high school graduate in his gap year. As an aspiring engineer, he is passionate about technology, graphic design, and video and sound production. Gabriel was head prefect and an active member of the peer educators and scripture union groups. He is driven by the desire to see fellow young people find solutions to overcome day-to-day challenges.



### Clarence Sakala

24, Zambia

Clarence is a graduate in development studies with economics from the University of Zambia. He is passionate about research and development, especially how it applies to impact on the day-to-day lived experiences of young people.



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