Testing the Contexts Framework

What youth entrepreneurship initiatives work, where and why?
Understanding context is essential. The constraints facing young people differ enormously across countries, cultures, markets and resources. The needs of a young entrepreneur in rural Sierra Leone are very different from those facing a young person in Freetown, the capital city, and even more different from a young person in Montevideo, Uruguay, or another middle-income country.

One organisation can’t know all of this itself, but working with local agencies and partners we can better understand what we need to do to help young people achieve their goals.

Mattias Lundberg, Senior Economist, Human Development Network, World Bank
Phase 3 (Testing phase) of the Contexts project has been a fascinating journey. The consultation under Phase 2 of the project clearly showed that the Framework could not be ‘all things to all people’. Rather, we needed different tools for different audiences. We decided to start with those with first-hand expertise in how best to support young entrepreneurs – namely, practitioners and young entrepreneurs themselves, using their experience to complement the secondary data available in the original version of the Framework. Needless to say, we have learnt a lot from running the workshops.

We are now thinking about how else we could incorporate use of the Contexts Framework into ‘business as usual’ as YBI. For example, we hope to use it in our processes for expanding our international network to new contexts, and in thinking through how we can most effectively develop and adapt our capacity building programmes for members around the world, in areas such as entrepreneurship training and mentoring.

In addition, the Contexts Framework will be used as a lens through which to view findings from research and evaluation studies undertaken in line with YBI’s 2014-17 Research and Learning Agenda, aligned to the organisation’s 2014-17 Strategic Plan. YBI also plan to use the Contexts Framework and testing approach as a set of comprehensive guiding questions to feed into the design of new projects or programmes to ensure that they are based on the needs and realities of each specific context.

Overall, we would like to thank the Department for International Development (DfID) for funding this much-needed initiative, and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) for their involvement in the initial research phase, as well as our Consortium partners – it was great to see all three agencies represented at the testing workshop I co-led in Chennai.

Laura Rana
Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Advisor
Youth Business International

“This project – although not providing sufficiently granular recommendations at this stage - was a first and significant step in the right direction, with much sharing and learning experienced amongst practitioners.”

Laura Rana
Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Advisor
Youth Business International

Rex Joshua
International Research and Evaluation Manager
Restless Development

Ideally, a Framework would have been developed with tailor-made ready-to-use solutions for different contexts. However, the Contexts project has revealed how little industry knowledge exists about what works best, where and how in the field of youth entrepreneurship. This project – although not providing sufficiently granular recommendations at this stage - was a first and significant step in the right direction, with much sharing and learning experienced amongst practitioners. Looking ahead, there is definitely scope to focus more on the existing Framework’s recommendations for the benefit of the wider sector.

Rex Joshua
International Research and Evaluation Manager
Restless Development
The Contexts project implemented by Restless Development, Youth Business International (YBI) and War Child UK is a highly commendable initiative, as it provides a rich resource for those working in the livelihoods sector and the wider business community. It captures the essence of the variables to be considered when conceptualising a business and an understanding of the intricate web of factors that can work in one country but may not work be transferrable to another; for example, in the case of War Child UK, what may and may not work in a post-conflict country like Afghanistan.

War Child UK has been working in Afghanistan since 2003, focusing on three thematic areas: protection, education and livelihoods. My participation in the regional workshop in Chennai conducted by Youth Business International (YBI), and attended by PPA consortium partners from Restless Development, Youth Business International (YBI) and War Child UK, was eye opening. I learned the importance of understanding context, and that the challenges faced by young entrepreneurs in other Asian countries may not be the same as the issues and challenges faced by young entrepreneurs and practitioners in a post-conflict country.

I then went on to replicate the workshop approach with my team in Afghanistan and our local partner organisation, Saneezy Development Organization (SDO), along with a group of young entrepreneurs we support. The inputs of our participants from SDO and a group of young entrepreneurs who benefited from our previous business development trainings not only identified the major issues preventing businesses from flourishing in the country - issues largely linked to the unstable social and political situation, which is affecting the safety and security of areas in which to do business - but also provided us an insight of the kind of livelihoods programming that will be most useful in understanding the variables to be considered when conceptualising a business. 

Needless to say, our gratitude and heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to all the PPA participants from SDO, along with a group of young entrepreneurs we support. The inputs of our participants from SDO and a group of young entrepreneurs who benefited from our previous business development trainings not only identified the major issues preventing businesses from flourishing in the country - issues largely linked to the unstable social and political situation, which is affecting the safety and security of areas in which to do business - but also provided us an insight of the kind of livelihoods programming that will be most useful in understanding the variables to be considered when conceptualising a business.

Helen Guillermo
Country Director
War Child UK

The Contexts testing workshops revealed the following:

The design of the Contexts Framework
Some common challenges emerged across contexts, most notably, fear of failure, gender discrimination, infrastructural constraints, and navigation of complex administrative procedures – while dependency culture was seen as an additional major challenge in post-conflict contexts.

Further definition of concepts and indicators is required for each dimension of the Framework to ensure we are comparing what matters at local and regional levels, not only the national level. For example, what exactly do we mean by ‘civic participation’ of young people? Are we talking about voting, or running for office, or both?

Uncovering discrepancies between national level secondary data and the reality on the ground through these workshops has really highlighted the need to discard national perspectives, which can often be misleading, and instead focus on the local and regional context when developing both the diagnostic Framework and recommendations for what works.

Ultimately, the testing workshops confirmed that there really is no one size fits all. Indeed, it led the consortium to question whether there is even a one size fits many solution in terms of what works in supporting young entrepreneurs. While it is useful for the purposes of knowledge transfer to put things into neat boxes in order to share relevant lessons learned across contexts, the diversity of the different contexts in which the Framework was tested highlighted the complexity of the issue.

It needs to be remembered that context is not a stable thing – it’s constantly changing. As such, one of the key challenges in taking this project forward is thinking about how to account for that fact through the Framework.

The testing workshop approach
The workshop approach that has been developed is indeed useful in producing a more nuanced understanding of context, and using this to generate practical recommendations based on participants’ real-life experiences.

Practitioner organisations supporting young entrepreneurs are not operating in a vacuum. Rather, use of the Contexts Framework should support them to understand where they fit in relation to other key stakeholders (such as other NGOs, government institutions, private sector organisations etc.) operating within their context.

Prioritising depth over breadth: it is not possible to effectively cover all dimensions of context during the time available. It therefore makes more sense to brainstorm and rank the most significant constraints faced by young entrepreneurs operating in that particular context. This will ensure that the key constraints can be explored with greater focus and in more detail.

Building the “What Works” evidence base
Building up the evidence base on what works is a mammoth task. The testing workshops have revealed that tapping into insights from the real experts – those who work with young entrepreneurs, and indeed the young entrepreneurs themselves – is a useful input in tackling this challenge, given the very limited nature of the literature on this topic. However, ultimately it is clear that we need to invest in rigorous evaluation in order to generate the evidence that is needed in order to truly understand what works.
Recommendations for taking Context into account when designing and implementing youth entrepreneurship programmes

Geographic analysis of deprivation is important to underpin branch location and operating decisions. It is crucial to understand the cultural and historical factors behind the social and economic issues faced, as well as understanding the way urban planning and government policies have contributed to, or could improve the situation.

Proximity is vital. Branches providing services for young entrepreneurs must be located within the targeted neighbourhood(s) or must be very accessible for target beneficiaries. The Entreprendre en Banlieue programme, implemented by YBI’s member in France, operates through a number of local neighbourhood associations, called ADAMs (Association for detection and mentoring of candidates micro entrepreneurs). This model depends on economies of scale and is only possible in urban areas. With sparse populations in rural areas, the accessibility and number of branches would not be economically viable: EEB has a target cost of €4,000 per business created, and each local EEB branch targets the creation of 30-40 new businesses per year.

Importance of local staff: Because levels of development in the sensitive urban zones targeted by EEB differ so significantly to the situation at a national level, programme staff strongly believe in the importance of recruiting local staff for each branch. This ensures practical understanding of the levels of deprivation and realities experienced by the target beneficiaries, and means beneficiaries feel more comfortable interacting with the staff.

Overcoming cultural constraints to entrepreneurship in South Asia: Involve those who influence the perceptions and decisions of youth, such as parents and teachers - get everyone together, and ask the young people to share their dreams and the teachers/parents to explain what their objections are, so they can start to understand each other better. Family plays such a major role in Asian culture – you need to get them on side.

Use the reality show trend to promote youth entrepreneurship – bring shows like Dragon’s Den and The Apprentice to India.

Make more use of role models to inspire young people: when holding an event, invite a successful local entrepreneur to be the chief guest, rather than a politician or a film star. But remember, they may not be confident speakers, so they need to be briefed and encouraged to talk from the heart.

How to incorporate gender dynamics in youth entrepreneur programming in Uganda:

Consider gender targets: Enterprise Uganda target at least 40% young female participation in their programmes. This target applies throughout the programme cycle, from output to outcome level. It is informed by experience with other projects focusing on rural areas, where female participation was less than 20% in the absence of explicit targets.

Directly address barriers at mobilisation stage: Extensive awareness campaigns on women’s rights are conducted through focus groups, radio campaigns and presentations. Enterprise Uganda does not only engage with women as an isolated group but involves husbands and parents, who are also encouraged to attend the training.

Use female role models: Enterprise Uganda use female role models throughout the programme to raise awareness of women’s rights, encourage women to participate and reassure family and household members. This has been cited by young entrepreneurs as an especially powerful strategy for increasing female participation and retention.

Consider time and place of mobilisation activities: Enterprise Uganda shifted mobilisation to take place during market days to enable face-to-face interaction with increased numbers of women. This was in response to initially low female participation, related to the difficulty in locating and accessing large groups of women to raise awareness of the programme.

Encourage spouses and parents, as well as nannies and carers to attend: Involving husbands early not only increases the chances of female participation, but also their chances to access family capital to start (or expand) a business.

Tackling a dependency culture in post conflict contexts:

Consider a small screening and registration fee: Enterprise Uganda charge a registration fee of 5,000 Ugandan Shillings (circa £1). In the context of a prevalent hand-out mentality and a proliferation of NGO interventions, this is intended to increase the worth of the programme and encourage only the motivated to attend. It also acts as a strong commitment device. In a recent evaluation, 93% of respondents to a representative survey claimed that “paying the fee had made them more attentive during the training”.

Infrastructure constraints:

Consider communal transport: High transportation costs are tackled by Enterprise Uganda through the organisation of communal transportation for project participants from remote areas. This was identified as a way to mitigate geographical disadvantage without handing out cash-payments.

Supporting young entrepreneurs affected by bureaucratic constraints:

Raise awareness of the incentives for becoming part of the system: When working with long-term unemployed and highly marginalised beneficiaries, EEB believes it is crucial to raise awareness of the benefits of collaborating with - and contributing to - the State through business formalisation and pension funds, etc. This will be a central factor for longer-term success and business growth.
The Testing Approach

Phase 3 of the project focused on developing and implementing a workshop approach to test the use of the Contexts Framework with youth entrepreneurship/livelihoods practitioners and young entrepreneurs.

The purpose of the testing process was to:

- Further validate and enhance the design and contents of the Framework.
- Build up a more granular set of recommendations that can be of practical use to those working in the sector, through drawing on real life best practice.
- Understand where and how the Framework is useful for practitioners.
- Understand how best to engage young entrepreneurs themselves in the process.

The Testing approach was developed by YBI’s Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning specialists. It was designed to be conducted over the course of three days and cover the three core dimensions of the revised Contexts Framework: (i) Where I Work (the external environment); (ii) Who I Work With (target beneficiaries); and (iii) How I Work (organisational capacity). The basic approach was to present secondary data as a starting point, to be localised by workshop participants through structured discussions, and using the more detailed picture that was built up through this process to (i) categorise the Framework’s existing recommendations as to their utility, and (ii) generate additional recommendations, based on participants’ real life experience of working directly with/being a young entrepreneur, as well as any available evidence or findings from evaluations and impact assessments.

A session with young entrepreneurs was also included, in order to validate the information gathered through the practitioner workshop, by asking them about (i) the opportunities they have encountered for setting up a business in their locality; (ii) the challenges they have experienced in both starting/growing their businesses; (iii) the support they have found useful to date; and (iv) additional support needs.

After piloting the Testing approach with YBI’s member in France (Entreprendre en Banlieue), the consortium2 conducted further testing workshops in India, Uganda, and Afghanistan.

Reflections

The testing process has revealed that it is crucial to find the balance between developing a nuanced Framework that is also user-friendly and manageable, but that is also comprehensive and detailed enough to be useful.

Piloting the workshop approach in France, India, Afghanistan and Uganda has been invaluable in highlighting ways for improving the Framework as further testing workshops are rolled out in other contexts (as outlined in the main body of the report.)

Ultimately, it is clear that this is an iterative process – and while the Contexts Framework may never be able to provide all the answers, it is certainly helpful in working out the questions that should be asked. The Contexts Framework can only grow in line with development of the evidence base. As such, there is a clear need for stakeholders across the sector to commit to generating evidence for transferrable learning through use of this Framework.

Proposed Next Steps

- Develop an online platform for organisations to access workshop materials, workshop findings and other key documents from the project (e.g. examples of good practice tools for incorporating context into programme design/implementation uncovered through the Your approach to Context sessions.
- Once a wider range of testing workshops have been undertaken, run follow-up workshops with participants to share the overall findings i.e. an enhanced understanding of what DOES work where, with who, and WHY.
- Use workshop findings to support matchmaking of organisations for peer-to-peer capacity-building/expertise-sharing (undertaking joint workshops involving multiple organisations is particularly effective in this regard, as the workshop itself has a relationship-building function).
- Further incorporate practical tools (like stakeholder mapping) that organisations can introduce and use in their everyday work.
- Use of the Contexts Framework needs to account for the fact that context changes over time. One suggestion is that the testing workshop is carried out at different stages of a project or programme cycle to feed into programme adaptation in relation to a changing context.

2. YBI, Restless Development and War Child UK are partners in a DfID funding consortium, through which this project is funded.
3. The Contexts Framework

3.1 Introduction

The current global youth population is the largest in history. Approximately 1.3 billion people are between the ages of 15 and 24, making up a quarter of the world’s working population, but representing half of the world’s unemployed. Just under half of these youth live on less than two dollars a day, as estimated by the UN. The majority of young people in the developing world face little prospect of obtaining a job in the formal sector; for many, self-employment is the only option. As such, helping young people to earn a living through entrepreneurship can make a crucial contribution to poverty reduction.

Furthermore, future innovation and economic growth requires the nurturing of leaders with entrepreneurial skills and attitudes. Thus youth entrepreneurship is a key tool to develop the human capital necessary for the future, unleash the economic potential of youth, and promote sustainable growth.

Multiple initiatives exist to promote youth entrepreneurship, from the delivery of training to youth who want to start their own business, to the provision of venture capital funds to help promote these businesses. Yet there is little systematic impact evaluation, and a lack of robust evidence about what works best – and particularly what works best in different contexts.

It was this realisation that led Youth Business International (YBI), Restless Development, and War Child to conceive a study exploring how youth entrepreneurship support initiatives need to be prioritised and adapted in different contexts in order to maximise impact.

This study resulted in the development of the Contexts Framework, a tool designed to help key stakeholders in the youth entrepreneurship sector to:

- Understand how programme delivery needs to be adapted to operating contexts to maximise impact.
- Share good practice and lessons learned more systematically across different operating contexts.
- Allocate resources to support youth entrepreneurship most effectively in different contexts.

Who is the Contexts Framework intended to support and how?

- **Policymakers and donors**: to be informed about how to allocate resources to support youth entrepreneurship more effectively in different contexts.
- **Programme decision makers**: to understand how to design and prioritise youth entrepreneurship interventions more effectively in different contexts.
- **Programme implementers**: to understand how to adjust delivery of interventions more effectively in different contexts.
- **Evaluation specialists**: to be informed how to compare impact results from one context against another.
- **Young entrepreneurs**: to be included and consulted in a process to improve support in line with their realities.

3.2 Phase 1: Developing the Framework

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) were engaged to conduct the study, whose goal was to review a broad range of sector evidence and experience in order to produce a user-friendly youth entrepreneurship Contexts Framework to guide decision making. The Framework was intended to guide five key audiences (as outlined above).

The ODI developed an initial Framework for prioritising and adapting interventions by context. The original idea was to base the Framework on the result of rigorous studies of the impact of youth entrepreneurship initiatives across different contexts. However, it soon emerged that sufficient evidence did not exist. Instead, the analysis underpinning the Framework focused on assessing how the determinants of and constraints to entrepreneurship (for which cross-country comparable data is consistently available, as outlined in more detail in the end-of-Phase 1 report) vary in different contexts, in order to propose some conclusions about which entrepreneurship-promoting interventions are likely to be most effective in these different contexts.

The Framework diagnosed context along three key dimensions: rural vs urban; level of conflict; level of economic development. This diagnosis resulted in 18 context scenarios (see Figure 1 below).

![Figure 1: Contexts Framework](http://www.unhabitat.org/pmss/listItemDetails.aspx?publicationID=2928)

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Output sheets were created for each scenario, providing detailed analysis of that particular context, and including a set of recommendations for operating within that specific context (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 2:

Andrew Kiwaga is a young entrepreneur from Mayuge in Uganda. Support from Restless Development has helped his business develop and thrive.

3.3 Phase 2: Sector consultation

The initial Framework required further validation by experts and practitioners in the field, both in terms of the analysis of the binding constraints by context and in relation to the interventions and adaptations that were recommended. Thus, during Phase 2 of the project, a sector-wide consultation was conducted.

Consultation activities:
- Formation of an Advisory Group.
- Online consultation activities: a dedicated website, blogs and social media, e.g. Twitter.
- Interviews: with experts, policy makers, programme decision makers, programme implementers and young entrepreneurs themselves.
- Presentation of the Framework and toolkit in Washington D.C at the Global Youth Economic Opportunities Conference.
- High-level roundtable discussions with leading multilateral institutions in the sector.

Consultation findings:

Overall, the consultation process served to confirm the appetite for the Contexts toolkit and validate the overall approach, but also to highlight areas for development. The main findings from the consultation are outlined below:

1. Perhaps the strongest sentiment expressed was that the lack of an existing evidence base on the implications of context for youth entrepreneurship initiatives meant the recommendations included in the toolkit were not sufficiently granular to be valuable.

2. The Framework was seen to be neglecting key dimensions of context, such as entrepreneurship culture (i.e. a consideration of factors such as fear of failure) and institutional setting (the extent to which excessive bureaucracy/corruption etc. acted as constraints to entrepreneurship).

3. Definition of entrepreneur type was found to be a weak element in the Framework – it was stressed that a stronger emphasis was needed on tailoring interventions by dimensions such as gender, stage

4. Consultees suggested a need to consider organisational capacity as a key element of context, pointing out that factors such as geographical reach of operations, human resources, and budget available affected the feasibility of implementing various recommendations.

5. Many of those consulted highlighted the importance of defining context at the local level (i.e. the level at which stakeholders using the Framework actually operate – many practitioner organisations do not operate on a nationwide basis).

6. It was suggested that the Framework should draw more extensively on the existing good practice guidelines that have been developed in the sector – particularly in relation to conflict/post-conflict contexts - and look for ways to adapt them to youth entrepreneurship specific programmes/projects.

Godavari Satpute, a young entrepreneur supported by YBI member BYST in India, launched a business designing and producing decorative paper lamps from waste material.

Where I work
- Conflict level
- Economic
- Degree of urbanisation
- Institutional context
- Cultural perceptions of entrepreneurship
- Levels of gender equality

Who I work with
- Entrepreneur motivation
- Stage of development of the enterprise
- Ethnicity
- Age group
- Gender

How I work
- Scale
- Organisational capacity

3.4 Phase 3: Testing the Framework

Purpose
Phases 1 and 2 of the project revealed that the literature does not have all the answers. The overall aim of the testing process was to build up the evidence base around what works from the ground up.

It had also become clear that it was going to be impossible to develop a single tool for undertaking the process of diagnosing context and gathering recommendations that would be appropriate across all the key stakeholders this project aims to support.

As such, it was decided that the Testing phase should initially focus on (i) practitioners working directly with young entrepreneurs, as well as (ii) young entrepreneurs themselves.

The purpose of conducting workshops to test the revised Framework with youth entrepreneurship/livelihoods practitioners and young entrepreneurs themselves was to:
- Further validate and enhance the design and contents of the Framework, through:
  - determining whether any key dimensions of context were still missing; and
  - localising the national level data contained in the Framework, reflecting the fact that practitioner organisations working support young entrepreneurs are often operating at sub-national levels – for example, focusing their efforts on areas with particularly high levels of unemployment and deprivation among young people.
- Build up a more granular set of recommendations that can be of practical use to those working in the sector, through drawing on real life best practice.
- Understand where and how the Framework is useful for practitioners.
- Understand how best to engage young entrepreneurs themselves in the process.

Revising the Framework
In response to the consultation, the diagnostic aspect of the original Framework was revised, to incorporate these missing dimensions. The revised Framework (Figure 3) widened the concept of context, which was previously restricted to the external environment (Where I work) by acknowledging the importance of additionally considering target beneficiary traits (Who I work with) and organisational capacity (How I work).

Best practice reviews
In addition to the testing workshops, which form the focus of this report, two literature reviews were commissioned, as follows:
- A review of the existing good practice guidelines on how context informs the design and delivery of youth entrepreneurship/livelihoods interventions, with a focus on conflict/post-conflict contexts, identified through the Phase 2 consultation.
- A review of Organisational Capacity Assessment Tools (OCATS) used in the development sector to inform the development of the ‘How I work’ module under the revised Framework, presented above.

The findings from the literature reviews fed into the overall testing approach, presented below.
4. The Testing Approach

The testing workshop approach was conceptualised by YBI’s Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Specialists. It was designed to be conducted over the course of three days, following this structure:

After an icebreaker activity to help everyone relax and feel comfortable with each other, the workshop kicked off with an introductory session to introduce the project, explaining the background and purpose – this session concluded with a brainstorming session, asking participants why they felt it was important to consider the issue of context within their work.

At the core of the testing approach are the three key modules of the Contexts Framework:

1. Where I work
2. Who I work with
3. How I work

Modules One and Two (Where I Work and Who I Work With) followed the same structure, outlined below.

Part A: For each dimension included in the module (see the revised diagnostic Framework on page 16 for a list of the dimensions considered), secondary data were presented, as a starting point for discussion. The data presented drew on the indicators/data sources used in ODI’s original Framework, and supplementing these where necessary, in order to provide data on the new dimensions incorporated in the revised version.

Part B: After taking workshop participants through the secondary data, the following validation questions were asked, in order to localise the data:
- Are any key dimensions/indicators under this module missing?
- Are all the dimensions/indicators of equal importance in your context?
- How relevant is this national level data to the level at which you work?
- And to what extent is it out of date?
- What does the data NOT reveal?

Part C: This more detailed diagnostic approach was then used to generate additional recommendations (to add to those developed through the initial research phase of the project) based on workshop participants’ real life experience of working directly with/being a young entrepreneur, as well as any available evidence or findings from evaluations and impact assessments.

Module 3 (How I Work) commenced with a simple categorisation of the participating organisation according to the scale at which they operate (see Figure 5), before a brainstorming of organisational strengths and weaknesses (see Figure 6).

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**Figure 4: An example of secondary data. This is sourced from the World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Report 2012-2013**

**Figure 5: Simple Categorisation**

**Type A**: Supports 300+ young people per year (with combined package of entrepreneurship support/ livelihoods i.e. more than just training); Active in 2+ regions

**Type B**: Supports 50+ young people per year OR Active in 2+ regions

**Type C**: Supports 10+ young people per year

**Type D**: Supports less than 10 young people per year

**Figure 6: Brainstorming**

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7. In order to ensure data were comparable across contexts, national level data sources that were available for all/the majority of countries in the world were used in the original Framework.

8. Data on these internationally comparable sources tend to be collected on a less than annual basis, for example, the latest data on urban population as a % of total population is available for the period spanning five years (2009-2013). – see http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS

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A session with young entrepreneurs was also included in order to validate the information gathered through the practitioner workshop, by asking them about (i) the opportunities they have encountered for setting up a business in their locality; (ii) the challenges they have experienced in both starting/growing their businesses; (iii) the support they have found useful to date; and (iv) additional support needs.

The testing workshops wrapped up with a concluding session, in which participants were asked to reflect on (i) how they might use the Contexts Framework in their work going forwards; and (ii) how both the Framework itself and the testing workshop approach could be enhanced.

The findings were then used to feed into a session to categorise existing recommendations in the Framework, according to the four categories presented in Figure 7 below. During this session, workshop participants were also asked to provide further details, based on their own experience, in relation to any recommendations they agreed were ‘best practice’.

Figure 7: Categorisation of Recommendations

1. Relevant and already implemented
2. Relevant and aspire to implement
3. Relevant but not possible to implement
4. Not relevant

Key learnings from the pilot:

Overall, the piloting process helped to enhance the overall testing approach, by highlighting key three points:

1. It is important to acknowledge that participation in these workshops will not be the first time organisations have ever considered the issue of how context affects their work. Indeed, it was clear that EEB had various good practice tools for assessing how context affects programme design/implementation. As such, a session called Your Approach to Context was added to the workshop structure, following on from the introduction session. Uncovering such tools through this session can feed into further enhancement of the Contexts Framework and testing workshop approach.

2. Practitioner organisations supporting young entrepreneurs are not operating in a vacuum. Rather, use of the Contexts Framework should support them to understand where they fit in relation to other key stakeholders (such as other NGOs, government institutions, private sector organisations etc.) operating within their context. This can help them determine how they can most effectively use the limited resources at their disposal to add value. As a result of this insight, a Stakeholder Mapping session was added to the workshop structure, following on from the new Your Approach to Context session.

3. Prioritising depth over breadth: Firstly, the piloting process revealed that the revised diagnostic Framework, while more comprehensive than the original, was still missing some key dimensions, namely:
   - A more considered understanding of inequality and deprivation, beyond just considering the overall level of economic development.
   - Human capital – both education levels and access to healthcare are important to look at. Level of education affects the opportunities available for young entrepreneurs, while poor access to healthcare reduces risk-taking abilities and the overall ability to succeed as a small business owner. Brain drain is also an important factor in many contexts.
   - Discrimination: Our gender equality category should be broadened to include other forms of discrimination, related to religion, geography, disability, age, and gender and ethnicity.

5. The Testing Workshops

**Piloting the testing approach with YBI’s member in France**

Entreprendre en Banlieue (EEB), YBI’s member in France, was chosen to undertake the piloting process – partly due to the relative logistical ease/limited costs associated with travelling to France. But, more importantly, because EEB was experiencing context very much as a live issue in that they were considering expanding their model internationally.

Initial pilot workshops were undertaken in January 2014: one with staff from EEB’s head office in Paris; and one with staff from their branch in St Quentin (an hour north of Paris). Follow-up workshops were then conducted in both locations in March 2014.

During the January pilot workshops, Modules One ‘Where I Work’ and Two ‘Who I Work With’ were undertaken, while inputs were also sought from EEB staff as to what would be the most effective approach for Module Three ‘How I Work’.

The second pilot visit focused on testing the revised approach that had been developed for conducting Where I Work and Who I Work With, as well as piloting the young entrepreneur workshop and the third How I Work module.
Wider infrastructural issues – such as access to transport and utilities such as electricity – should be considered, rather than just the extent to which the context is rural or urban – young entrepreneurs operating in rural contexts in developed economies are often in a much better position in these regards than their urban counterparts in situations where infrastructure is less developed.

We need to incorporate a more holistic perspective with regards to the overall situation of young people, including factors such as cultural attitudes towards youth, and young people’s access to resources.

As such, when finalising the workshop approach post-piloting, these dimensions were added. However, it was clear that there was a need to prioritise depth over breadth when undertaking the ‘Where I Work’ module. It would not be possible to effectively cover all dimensions during the time available – and it would be difficult to ask participating organisations to set aside more than the three-day period required by the existing workshop approach.

Therefore, it seemed to make more sense to add a session prior to commencing Where I Work, in which participating opportunities brainstormed the key constraints faced by young entrepreneurs operating in their context (as well as the main opportunities, to keep things positive) after which they were taken through a ranking process, to select the top three constraints, which were then mapped onto the dimensions included in the updated Framework. In this way, three dimensions were prioritised to be explored under Where I Work while also enhancing our understanding of the relative importance of different dimensions of the external environment in different contexts.

Figure 8: Brainstorming

What are the key types of opportunities young people have for starting a business in your context?

(Add thoughts from the group)

Example: Market opportunities in agriculture

Selverasa and Ravajoty Karunairasa set up Chez la Belle Famille with support from Entreprendre en Banlieue in France.

Key findings from the Testing Workshops

Building the ‘What Works’ evidence base

Building up the evidence base on what works is a mammoth task. The testing workshops have revealed that tapping into insights from the real experts – those who work with young entrepreneurs, and indeed the young entrepreneurs themselves – is a useful input in tackling this challenge, given the very limited nature of the literature on this topic.

The testing workshops confirmed that there really is no one size fits all. Indeed, they led us to question whether there is even a one size fits many solution in terms of what works in supporting young entrepreneurs. While it is useful for the purposes of knowledge transfer to put things into neat boxes in order to share relevant lessons learned across contexts, the diversity of the different contexts the Framework was tested in highlighted the complexity of the issue.

However, some common challenges emerged across contexts, most notably:

1. Fear of failure was seen as stemming from lack of safety nets in contexts where state social welfare systems do not exist (namely, India, Uganda and Afghanistan), while it was also cited in the French workshop, as a cultural factor particularly facing those in EEB’s target communities. Fear of failure was seen as ‘infectious’ in Uganda, with young people being dissuaded by seeing their peers’ attempts at starting businesses fail, while in France it was suggested it was suggested that being risk averse was associated with a general sense of social dis-alienation.

Improving youth entrepreneurship programming by considering context: recommendations by Entreprendre en Banlieue

Geographic Analysis of Deprivation is important to underpin branch location and operating decisions. It is crucial to understand the cultural and historical factors behind the social and economic issues faced, as well as understanding the way urban planning and government policies have contributed to, or could improve the situation.

Proximity is vital. Branches providing services for young entrepreneurs must be located within the targeted neighbourhood(s) or must be very accessible for target beneficiaries. The EEB programme operates through a number of local neighbourhood associations, called ADAMs (Association for detection and mentoring of candidates micro entrepreneurs). This model depends on economies of scale and is only possible in urban areas. With sparse populations in rural areas, the accessibility and number of branches would not be economically viable: EEB has a target cost of €4,000 per business created, and each local EEB branch targets the creation of 30-40 new businesses per year.

How to overcome cultural constraints to youth entrepreneurship: recommendations by workshop participants in India

- Involve those who influence the perceptions and decisions of youth, such as parents and teachers - get everyone together, and ask the young people to share their dreams and the teachers/parents to explain what their objections are, so they can start to understand each other better. Family plays such a major role in Asian culture – you need to get them on side.
- Make more use of role models to inspire young people: when you hold an event, invite a successful local entrepreneur to be the chief guest, rather than a politician or a film star – but remember, they may not be such natural speakers, so you will have to give them a briefing, encouraging them to talk from the heart.

- Use the reality show trend to promote youth entrepreneurship – bring shows like Dragon’s Den and The Apprentice to India.
Incorporating gender dynamics in youth entrepreneurship programming: recommendations from Enterprise Uganda

- **Consider gender targets:** Enterprise Uganda target at least 40% young female participation in their programmes. This target applies throughout the programme cycle, from output to outcome level. It is informed by experience with other projects focusing on rural areas, where female participation was less than 20% in the absence of explicit targets.

- **Directly address barriers at mobilisation stage:** Extensive awareness campaigns on women’s rights are conducted through focus groups, radio campaigns and presentations. Enterprise Uganda does not only engage with women as an isolated group but involves husbands and parents, who are also encouraged to attend the training.

- **Use female role models:** Enterprise Uganda use female role models throughout the programme to raise awareness of women’s rights, encourage women to participate and reassure family and household members. This has been cited by young entrepreneurs as an especially powerful strategy for increasing female participation and retention.

- **Consider time and place of mobilisation activities:** Enterprise Uganda shifted mobilisation to take place during market days to enable face-to-face interaction with increased numbers of women. This was in response to initially low female participation, related to the difficulty in locating and accessing large groups of women to raise awareness of the programme.

- **Encourage spouses and parents, as well as nannies and care-takers to attend:** Involving husbands early not only increases the chances of female participation, but also their chances to access family capital to start (or expand) a business.

**2. Gender discrimination** was cited as an issue occurring across Uganda, Afghanistan and the underprivileged communities located in Sensitive Urban Zones (known as ZUS in French) where YBI’s French member works, which contain a high percentage of Muslim inhabitants. Traditional views around gender roles and male control over household finances were seen to hinder female entrepreneurship.

**3. Dependency culture:** In post conflict Afghanistan and Northern Uganda, the upheaval caused by protracted conflict mean young people often lack the basic skills needed to become entrepreneurs, while dependency culture was seen as a major issue in post-conflict contexts: young people are not inspired to take the initiative to start businesses, as they used to a proliferation of aid agencies offering handouts.

**Tackling a dependency culture in post-conflict contexts:**

**Consider a small screening and registration fee:** Enterprise Uganda charge a registration fee of 5,000 Ugandan Shillings (circa £1). In the context of a prevalent hand-out mentality and a proliferation of NGO interventions, this is intended to increase the worth of the programme and encourage only the motivated to attend. It also acts as a strong commitment device. In a recent evaluation, 93% of respondents to a representative survey claimed that “paying the fee had made them more attentive during the training”.

**“Cactus, stones and thorns”: The case of Karamoja**

Karamoja, a remote and impoverished sub-region of northern Uganda, suffered four consecutive years of drought, leaving 90% of the population reliant on food aid. Much of Karamoja’s land is semi-desert and little can be cultivated. This contrasts sharply with the fertile soils of other parts of Uganda.

Karamoja was not majorly affected by the Lord’s Resistance Army insurgency, which destroyed much of northern Uganda, but suffers ongoing conflict and instability. Sharing a border with Kenya and Sudan, cattle and livestock raids have been a constant source of conflict with neighbouring tribes, both within and outside of Uganda. The immense social, cultural and economic importance of livestock in Karamojong society exacerbates this.

These factors, combined with very low levels of education and a tumultuous history, have resulted in a proliferation of aid agencies and non-governmental organisations in the area. This seems to have created a general culture of dependency. Begging and a severe ‘hand-out mentality’ is prevalent, say Enterprise Uganda, which can act as a key barrier to entrepreneurship. “People go to Karamoja to give”.

**4. Infrastructure:** While transport and connectivity are generally good in France, it was stressed that young people living in the ZUS communities, where the EEB programme works, are hindered by limited mobility, and lack of internet access. Perhaps less unsurprisingly, infrastructural constraints were cited as major barriers in both Uganda and Afghanistan, in terms of access to adequate roads, water, electricity, and internet connection.

**Supporting young entrepreneurs where transport is a challenge**

**Consider communal transport:** High transportation costs are tackled by Enterprise Uganda through the organisation of communal transportation for project participants from remote areas. This was identified as a way to mitigate geographical disadvantage without handing out cash-payments.

“Over the course of the week I learnt that risk aversion could be linked to family size and the number of dependents, which means Sexual Reproductive Health education assumes an inalienable part of livelihoods education.”

Workshop participant, Chennai workshop
5. Navigation of the complex administrative procedures involved in starting a business was cited as major challenges by young entrepreneurs across France, India and Uganda.

Supporting young entrepreneurs affected by bureaucratic constraints: recommendations from Entreprendre en Banlieue

Raise Awareness of the Incentives for becoming Part of the System: When working with long-term unemployed and highly marginalised beneficiaries, EEB believes it is crucial to raise awareness of the benefits of collaborating with - and contributing to - the State through business formalisation and pension funds, etc. This will be a central factor for longer-term success and business growth.

Case study: Variation in entrepreneurship culture in India - “Would you rather marry a government worker or an entrepreneur?”

This was the question asked to women participants in the testing workshop that took place in Chennai, India. The answer revealed some of the challenges, but also subtleties about the Indian environment for entrepreneurs. Whilst many said that they would feel pressure from their families to go for the safe option - the government worker - some preferred the riskier choice.

“Due to lack of education, young entrepreneurs can be exploited by local money-lenders and ‘middle-men’, charging fees to complete the administrative aspects of the start-up process.”

Workshop participant in India

Key Recommendations from the workshop in Afghanistan:

Develop Public and Private Partnerships: The Provincial Government of Herat should develop a medium and long-term industrial development plan, in partnership with the private sector, in order to set its direction towards priority sectors whose development will enhance economic growth. Improvement of the National Skills Development Program of Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA): Once this direction is set, human resource development should focus on vocational skills training for women and youths on areas that will equip them with the skills needed in line with anticipated future labour demand. Otherwise such training programmes will produce graduates that will struggle to be absorbed by the expanding industries, due to skills mismatch, as has been evident in the past. War Child UK, in conjunction with the MoLSA, is providing short-term business skills development training for women and youth in order to prepare them to run their own businesses, for earning additional incomes to support their families.

Recommendation from Entreprendre en Banlieue (France) to support context-based programming:

Importance of Local Staff: Because levels of development in the ZUS differ so significantly to the situation at a national level, EEB strongly believes that Entrepreneurial Culture is a key barrier to developing both the diagnostic Framework and recommendations for what works, as per the original version of the Framework, developed in Phase 1. This suggests the workshop approach that has been developed is indeed useful, in developing a more nuanced understanding of context, and using this to generate practical recommendations based on the participants’ real life experience.

The design of the Framework

Uncovering discrepancies between national level secondary data and the reality on the ground (and indeed, the diversity of that reality within a country context, which was particularly apparent in the India workshop) through these workshops has really highlighted the need to discard national perspectives, which can often be misleading, and instead focus on the local and regional context when developing the Framework, to ensure the Framework captures what matters at local and regional levels, not only the national level. For example, when examining the national-level data in Uganda in relation to Entrepreneurial Culture, Uganda scored very highly in comparison to other countries. However, when examining the issue with practitioners in Kampala, it was clear that Entrepreneurial Culture is a key barrier to entrepreneurial success in the communities targeted. The reasons for this were related to attitudes towards failure, as well as a prevalent hand-out mentality and dependency culture as a result of the influx of aid agencies in the North of Uganda following the conflict. These issues, which are crucial at a local level, were not considered by the national-level data, meaning that it was misleading and the recommendations it led to were not relevant.
What about non-youth?

Older community members are able to access the facilities available at Restless Development’s Community Resource Centres – this is considered essential as this helps overcome issues systemically at the family level. BYST (YBI’s member in India) are considering working with those aged above 35, as they have identified a new generation of mid-career professionals looking to venture into entrepreneurship, and would also like to provide a second chance to entrepreneurs who were not successful first time round.

Figure 9: Start-up challenges
Note: This is indicative-only and based on the views expressed by young entrepreneurs who participated in the workshop.

Overall, it is crucial to find the balance between developing a nuanced Framework that is also user-friendly and manageable but is detailed and comprehensive enough to be practically useful. The initial design of the Framework in Phase 1 included a total of 18 different context scenarios. While this would have dramatically improved ease of knowledge transfer across contexts, there are clearly more than 18 different context scenarios and many different dimensions of context to consider, as highlighted in the Phase 2 consultation. The testing workshops served to highlight this point further.

While each workshop raised additional and important dimensions of context to add to the Framework, for example, environmental concerns (e.g. the susceptibility of the region to flooding, drought or natural disasters), there is a risk of creating a Framework that is too vast to be manageable and user-friendly if dimensions are not limited. The challenge therefore, is to strike a careful balance between limiting the dimensions added to ensure manageability of the Framework, yet including enough dimensions to ensure that the Framework is comprehensive and nuanced enough to be useful.

Figure 10: Revised Diagnostic Model

2014 Global Youth Economic Opportunities Conference

Immediately after completion of the testing phase, representatives from YBI, War Child and Restless Development presented initial findings from Phase 3 at the Global Youth Economic Opportunities conference, held by Making Cents International in Washington DC in October, 2014. The purpose was not only to share and disseminate early findings, but also to elicit initial feedback from the sector to feed into this report and inform next steps. Overall, feedback confirmed our main findings, with calls to manage the crucial balance between usability and a comprehensive Framework, as well as feelings that the testing process could act as a useful tool and set of guiding questions for programme design purposes.
6. Conclusions and Next Steps

Why do practitioners need the Contexts Framework?

“It is important to consider the fact that Afghanistan is a post-conflict country. For example, there are many contextual factors related to rehabilitation efforts that need taking into account when designing entrepreneurship initiatives, while the socio-political climate is more complicated than ever, due to the uncertainty around the government’s leadership – this makes it particularly difficult to predict the investment climate. The pull out of international security forces in December 2014, after 12 years in the country due to the widespread and grave insecurity that has characterised Afghanistan that has characterised Afghanistan in recent times, is another key factor to consider.”

Workshop participant, Afghanistan

“Understanding the operational context tells us what local resources (including the degree of social support from family/community) and market opportunities are available. It is important to consider context when you are undertaking needs analysis, to help you come up with context-specific solutions. We need to balance thinking about the local, national, and global contexts, and how we can support young entrepreneurs to think about these different levels. And it's important to remember that, even within a sub-geography, different people have different needs – you need to consider WHO you are working with – one size does not fit all.”

Workshop participant, India

“It emphasises the importance of experiential knowledge – the things you can’t tell from books and secondary data – about ‘invisible barriers’ arising from the social/political context. Often, the ‘official picture’ does not reflect the reality – for example, it ‘officially’ takes 1-2 months and 400 euros to create a business, but in reality it’s closer to 1-2 years and 6,000 euros.”

Workshop participant, France

“We work with many aspects of context automatically when it comes to programme design and delivery. However, it is so very useful as a team to analyse the most challenging contextual issues and ensure that we address these with innovative solutions.”

Workshop participant, Uganda
9. Participant in the testing workshop that took place in Chennai, India

Recommendations to improve the Contexts Framework

Further definition of indicators and concepts is required for each dimension of the Framework, to ensure we are comparing what matters at local and regional levels, not only the national level. For example, the situation of youth sub-dimension under Where I Work needs more definition around it, particularly the areas of political participation and civic participation of youth, while questions under the Who I Work With module need tightening, in order to generate a more meaningful discussion.

Recommendations to improve the Testing Approach

Vary the workshop delivery approach more – currently workshop sessions predominantly use a brainstorming/group discussion format. The format should be varied through the use of role plays, case study analysis, ranking methods etc.

Add case studies of entrepreneurship support organisations operating in different contexts (to demonstrate the different models that exist).

Further incorporation of practical tools (like stakeholder mapping) that organisations can introduce and use in their everyday work.

“Why should organisations get involved in the testing process? It is a great way to take a step back and look at your processes from a different perspective, helping you to federate your team around your mission. At Head Office level, the Contexts workshop was useful in challenging our existing methodology and identifying key factors behind our decision making – and we also got really positive feedback from our branch staff who took part in the workshop.

When undertaking one of the workshops, it is important to (i) mobilise the right people for the right amount of time; and (ii) be willing to look honestly at your processes and challenge your approach.”

Stephanie Mestrellet, Operations Manager, Entreprendre en Banlieue

Taking the project forward – building the ‘What Works’ evidence base

Following the Testing workshops that have been conducted under Phase 3, next steps include:

Rolling out the Testing workshops to the wider sector: As well as running testing workshops within the three lead agencies, there is interest from the broader sector to get involved in the testing process, enabling valuable inputs through the practical experience of a wider set of people and organisations within the industry. The testing workshops are being designed for use by any youth entrepreneurship practitioner. Already, the Dutch NGO SPARK, who support young entrepreneurs in post conflict contexts, have expressed a strong interest in conducting a testing workshop of their end, to support design of a joint programme with Mercy Corps in Liberia.

In order to mobilise engagement across the sector, the testing process has been promoted through two key events during Phase 3:

- A webinar, forming part of Making Cents International’s Apply It! webinar series, held on May 6th 2014.
- An in-person event, held at YBI’s London office on May 14th 2014, attended by a selection of invited organisations already engaged or potentially interested in participating in the testing process, based on the consortium’s existing relationships across the sector/their involvement in the Phase 2 consultation.

Organisations participating in the events included Comic Relief, Bond, VSO, Y Care International, Raleigh International, the International Rescue Committee (IRC), SPARK, Balloon Kenya, and Young Enterprise.

The following workshop materials are available for sharing with any organisation interested to apply the Framework to their programming and/or evaluation design and analysis:

- The workshop presentations, to be adapted.
- Key reports that act as secondary data sources.
- The pre-workshop questionnaire.
- Sample evaluation forms.
- Sample agendas.
- Sample participant certificates, etc.

The materials are available via a Dropbox folder. If you would like access to the folder, please contact Laura Rana, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Advisor at YBI, on laura.rana@youthbusiness.org.

From left to right: Restless Development staff member, Lawrence, works with young entrepreneurs in Tanzania as part of the organisation’s livelihoods programme.
The Development of a transferable knowledge base: A primary application of the Contexts Framework is in the design and development of an online library, containing youth entrepreneurship resources (such as research findings and programming tools) for relevant transferable learning according to the dimensions and indicators of context, as set out under the emerging Framework. For example, the results of an evaluation of a mentoring intervention for young female entrepreneurs delivered by a small-scale organisation in a rural, conflict-affected region of a less developed country would be tagged, or indexed, by the various specific dimensions and indicators. Other stakeholders operating or interested in the context types could then locate relevant knowledge accordingly.

In particular, as a global network of independent expert youth entrepreneurship practitioners operating in diverse markets with a range of beneficiaries through varying delivery capacities, YBI is committed to generating an accessible evidence base that provides practical value to different stakeholders across youth entrepreneurship programming and evaluation/research. Building up knowledge libraries through a systematic approach to context helps overcome the challenges of comparing and applying learning from one specific intervention to another.

As a next step, with support from the London School of Economics, investment will be made in scoping the design of an online platform that enables systematic knowledge sharing across contexts, sourced from both within the YBI membership and the wider sector. Interested parties are invited to get involved in this initiative.

YBI’s 2014-17 Strategic Plan states the ambition to: “develop and host for the network and for the sector the most comprehensive evidence base in what works in supporting under-served young entrepreneurs”. Ultimately, it is clear that building up the evidence base around youth entrepreneurship is an iterative process, most effectively achieved through collaboration over time. The design and use of the Contexts Framework can only grow in line with the development of the evidence base. If we are to reach our collective ambition of building a comprehensive evidence base on youth entrepreneurship, so that stakeholders can improve their interventions, investments, and ultimately their impact, a commitment is required from across the sector to invest in the generation and sharing of evidence for transferable learning.

About Youth Business International

Youth Business International (YBI) is a global network of independent non-profit initiatives helping young people to start and grow their own business and create employment. By helping young people to start up in business, YBI members help to transform lives and bring long-term prosperity and stability to local communities and economies around the world. From China to Canada, and from Australia to Saudi Arabia, our members have helped over 100,000 young people to start up their own business – and these entrepreneurs have gone on to create hundreds of thousands of extra jobs.

About War Child UK

War Child UK (WCUK) provides life-changing support to the most vulnerable children whose families, communities and schools have been torn apart by war. WCUK is a successful international not-for profit organisation. Its mission is to improve the protection and care of children and young people who live with a combination of insecurity, poverty and exclusion in some of the worst conflict-affected places in the world. WCUK’s three pillars of work are direct service-delivery to children, capacity building of duty bearers and advocacy. To deliver against these pillars, we adopt a thematic approach of Protection, Education and Livelihoods, with Protection being our key theme.

About Restless Development

Restless Development is a youth led development agency founded in 1985, working in 8 countries across Asia and Africa. Restless Development places young people at the forefront of change and development, aiming to show the world ‘that young people can, young people do’. Restless Development India, legally known as Students Partnership Worldwide (SPW) India Project Trust, works with young people between the age of 10-30 years around Young People and Health Rights, Livelihoods & Employment and Governance & Civic Participation.

In the last year, the organisation has reached out to about 100,000 young people through 150 schools and communities across 6 states: Tamil Nadu, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan.
Youth Business International
www.youthbusiness.org

War Child
http://www.warchild.org.uk/

Restless Development
http://restlessdevelopment.org/