RESTLESS
DEVELOPMENT
POWERED BY YOUNG PEOPLE

# YOUTH-LED CHANGE: WHAT WORKS?

AN EVIDENCE & LEARNING REVIEW OF 10 YEARS OF RESTLESS DEVELOPMENT'S WORK

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Commissioned by Restless Development and The Development Alternative

Volunteers from a Restless Development project in lower-income communities in Delhi, who mentor young women in skills to help them find jobs.

# Summary: Restless Development Evidence & Learning Review.

This report was guided by answering one question: How does Restless Development facilitate effective youth leadership?

The analysis in this report outlines the theory and practice underpinning four Restless Development models for youth-led development: community mobilisation; youth-led accountability; youth-led research; and youth CSO strengthening.

This Evidence & Learning Review was commissioned by The Development Alternative.

#### **Key Learnings & Recommendations**

- The evidence shows Restless Development's youth-led development models
   especially community mobilisation and youth-led accountability are highly effective.
- Restless Development should do more to evidence the effectiveness of its models and track their impact over time. The agency could carry out strategic evaluations that go deeper than individual programmes; pilot new techniques for measuring youth-led change, and learn from recent programmes like The Development Alternative; and regularly produce concise impact briefs.
- Communities and young people seem generally to perceive Restless Development's models favourably (based on the limited evidence available). The agency could find ways to frequently take the pulse of the public and the communities and young leaders it works with to better understand what they think of its models.
- The limited evidence does not enable a clear conclusion on the extent to which Restless Development's models are inclusive in practice. Nevertheless, more could be done to ensure programmes are explicit and intentional about inclusion. To do so, the agency could draw on gender-transformative, justice-based and rights-based approaches.
- The magic happens when Restless Development's models 'multiply leadership', equipping young leaders to reach and inspire peers and other young people. The agency could further centre young leaders in programme designs by establishing minimum thresholds for youth leadership and using tools like tests or checklists to make sure young people always play the role of leader not foot soldier in its programmes. The agency could also be more explicit and intentional about the incentives such as compensation, training or opportunities that it offers young leaders.

Many Restless Development livelihoods projects have been successful, but they operate in very different ways. Clearer direction could help avoid common pitfalls and create a more consistent approach. The agency could carry out a deep dive into its livelihoods programming to provide clarity and consistency.

The role of youth-led influence on policy and practice could be strengthened in Restless Development's models (based on the limited evidence available). The agency could establish clear, sharp agendas for policy change and connect them to youth-led research.

The adaptability of programmes can contribute to their effectiveness. The agency should continue to design its programmes to be as adaptive and agile as possible.

Integrated, multi-dimensional curricula appear to be most effective. The agency should ensure its training or education curricula integrate different issues where possible.

Digital and media have huge untapped potential for Restless Development's models. The agency could start testing how its youth leadership models could be scaled digitally.



# Looking back on ten years of youth-led development.

These supplementary sections – distinguishable by white text on black background throughout the Evidence & Learning Review – feature additional detailed analysis looking back at the past decade of youth–led development approaches at Restless Development.

The purpose of this additional analysis is to distil an understanding of how, and in what ways, Restless Development's approaches and work with young people have contributed to youth leadership and power across the agency's programmes and countries where it works.

The analysis in these sections is intended primarily for Restless Development programmes and management teams to present learnings from the evidence and strengthen future youth-led development programming.

#### The analysis is guided by one overarching question:

## 66 HOW DO RESTLESS DEVELOPMENT MODELS FACILITATE YOUTH LEADERSHIP? 99

The methodology for this additional analysis is the same as for the full Evidence & Learning Review: a desk analysis of 47 research reports, programme evaluations, toolkits and policy papers, carried out over fourteen days in August 2021.

In the first part of this additional analysis, we examine how Restless Development has supported young people to lead change, what the agency's models for youth-led development are, and how the agency facilitates youth leadership. In the second part, we examine what the evidence says about the effectiveness of Restless Development's models, when they are most effective, and what we can learn for future programming. The final part outlines key recommendations to Restless Development.

This additional analysis can also be read as a standalone document. However, we recommend reading each section after the corresponding sector-wide analysis in the full Evidence & Learning Review, which provides important context.



# How Restless Development supports young people to lead change.

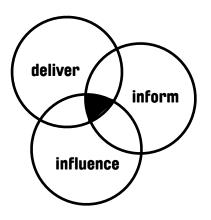
#### What does the agency mean by "youth-led development"?

For Restless Development, 'youth-led development' means unleashing the leadership of young people to solve the world's greatest challenges.

Like others working towards youth-led development, the agency views young people as an asset rather than a problem: for example, the agency's vision for 2030¹ positions the "peak youth" generation as vital to achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. The agency consistently prioritises 'youth leadership' in its design of programmes and campaigns, trusting young people to lead initiatives as agents of change, rather than beneficiaries or partners. Youth-led development is an approach, rather than the objective in itself. At its core is a belief in the contagious power of youth leadership, with Restless Development working to support "the journey of a young person to become a leader and help them multiply that leadership in their communities and around the world"<sup>2</sup>.

### What are the agency's models for youth-led development?

In its 2016 strategic vision, Restless Development articulated a core model to unlock youth leadership in development, based around the principle that young leaders are most effective when they deliver, inform and influence together:



**DELIVER:** Where young people directly improve lives through community engagement and mobilisation, with youth leadership at the heart of all interventions.

**INFORM:** Where young people create and share evidence and understanding of the real life experience of communities where young people live and work. They act as a knowledge bridge between communities and the institutions that serve global development.

**INFLUENCE:** Where young people change the cultural norms, policies and systems that affect people's lives, driving accountability from the centre to governments and aid agencies.

Restless Development's model has evolved several times, and the agency is currently in the process of reviewing and updating it again, based on a changing context and recent evidence and learning.

According to the agency's 2016 strategic vision, programmes and interventions normally work towards **one or more of four objectives**, identified by young people:



In practice, the agency values the flexibility of its youth-led development model to address urgent development challenges which may not fall neatly within these goals. According to its website, "no matter the issue, young leaders are working to achieve the same goal: improve their lives and the lives of people in their communities". For example, the agency has a growing body of work to support young leaders take action on climate change.

Over the past decade, Restless Development has developed and implemented hundreds of unique programmes across the priority countries in which it works. Programme design is guided by a set of robust quality standards.

#### In programme design, Restless Development identifies, among other things:

- 1 the specific needs the intervention will address
- 2 the goal, objectives, and outcomes
- 3 the model, theory of change and domains/types of change
- 4 the outputs and activities
- the people the intervention will target or reach
- 6 where the project will be implemented
- the role that young leaders will play
- the role Restless Development and other partners will play

With so many permutations, it is extremely rare for any two projects to be identical. On the one hand, this allows for testing, innovation and learning. On the other, it can make it difficult to isolate variables in analysis, compare and contrast approaches, categorise programmes into distinct models or draw firm conclusions about the effectiveness of different models of youth-led development.

Nevertheless, based on the evidence reviewed from Restless Development programmes over the past decade and toolkits produced by the agency, it is possible to identify four main models underpinning most Restless Development programmes, summarised in the table below. In practice, most programmes follow more than one approach.

In the next section, we will explore the effectiveness of these models.

#### **SUMMARY: RESTLESS DEVELOPMENT MODELS FOR YOUTH-LED DEVELOPMENT**

YOUNG LEADERS	Change behaviour or mobilise action in their communities	Strengthen accountability in development	Inform and influence policy and practice	Organise for long- term power and impact
RESTLESS DEVELOPMENT MODEL	COMMUNITY MOBILISATION	YOUTH-LED ACCOUNTABILITY	YOUTH-LED RESEARCH	YOUTH CSO Strengthening
COMMON FEATURES of this model	Peer education Non-formal curriculum Behaviour change Community action Participatory methods	Monitoring Data collection Dialogue Policy implementation Access to information	Research Data collection Activism Campaigning Advocacy Participation	Youth CSOs / groups Networks / coalitions Collective action Resourcing Leadership Capacity
HELPFUL RESOURCES for using this model	Community Engagement Volunteer Toolkit  Community Led Ebola Action Field Guide	Accountability in Action Accountability in Action (adapted 2018)	Youth Think Tank Toolkit  Youth-Led Research webpage	Youth Civil Society (Recommendations)
EXAMPLES OF PROGRAMMES featuring this model	Chhaupadi – NE DYNAMIC – UG	Big Idea – UG, Global Gates FP2020 – IN, TZ	Enh Youth Partpn – ZI Karamoja – UG	Action/2015 – Global  AmplifyChange – ZI
See bibliography for evaluations - also available through Restless Development	GUSO – UG Ebola/SMAC – SL	Ishiwi – ZA Kijana Wajibika – TZ	Mastercard – UG  Post-2015 – Global	Case4Space – Global MTV SAF – Global
	Save the Date – NE Saving Lives 2 – SL	SABI – SL The DevAlt – UG, Global	Voices4Dev - UK	The DevAlt - Global

RESTLESS DEVELOPMENT IS WORKING TO SUPPORT THE JOURNEY OF A YOUNG PERSON TO BECOME A LEADER AND HELP THEM MULTIPLY THAT LEADERSHIP IN THEIR COMMUNITIES AND AROUND THE WORLD.

# Effectiveness of Restless Development's models: Learnings.

The evidence shows Restless Development's youth-led development models – especially community mobilisation and youth-led accountability – are highly effective.

This review found broad, compelling evidence of impact and effectiveness within programme evaluations from the past ten years. Examples of community mobilisation and youth-led accountability – showcased in Section 5.3 of the full Evidence & Learning Review – demonstrate that these models can be impactful, add unique value, have truly national reach and relevance, and bring innovation to pressing development challenges like eradicating Ebola, improving public service delivery or strengthening health systems. Models of youth-led research and youth CSO strengthening are also effective, but so far there is less evidence available. This may be in part because these approaches can involve more complex and long-term pathways, or because they have not been as well tracked.

Restless Development should do more to evidence the effectiveness of its models and track their impact over time.

Existing programme evaluations largely look at projects in isolation, primarily assess only whether programmes delivered against their stated objectives, and are rarely able to assess impact on a longer-term horizon. Holistic reviews that cut across multiple programmes and 'domains of change' – such as the SIDA evaluation in Tanzania – could be replicated elsewhere. Programme staff could also regularly produce, as standard, concise impact briefs. Young leaders also believe that some of the deep, transformative change they are bringing about is not well captured by mainstream development techniques. Restless Development could lead the way with piloting new techniques for measuring youth-led change.

Communities and young people seem generally to perceive Restless Development's models favourably (based on the limited evidence available).

Evidence from programme evaluations, though generally anecdotal, suggests that when young leaders are embedded in or work closely with communities, they become valued and trusted. This is a standout strength of Restless Development's model.

### **66** We have observed students are so close to the peer educator. We have learned from her techniques how to get close to students. **99**

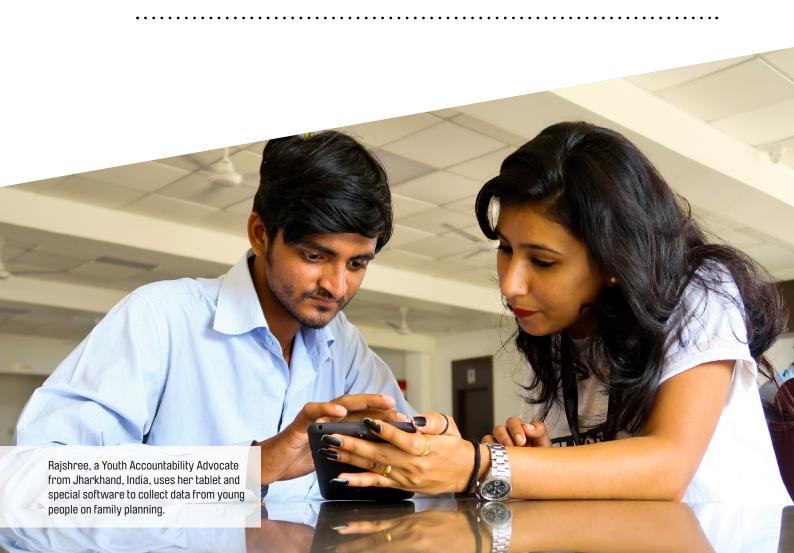
- Teacher from Bardiya, Nepal, quoted in 'Save the Date' evaluation.

However, the evidence base is weak. For an agency as committed to 'shifting the power' and 'dynamic accountability' as Restless Development, there is the risk of a blind spot here. Alongside generally negative perceptions about young people, there is risk of community pushback in contexts where young leaders work to address harmful social norms.

For example, an evaluation of a successful Nepal programme to reduce the prevalence of Chhaupadi (the practice of banishing women and girls during menstruation) found entrenched "opposition from traditional healers" and "some rejection from male members" of the community to the knowledge being shared. Similarly, youth activism and campaigning – especially where it targets radical, structural change or confronts strong interests – risks encountering pushback. Restless Development could explore (1) regularly measuring public perceptions about its work and (2) strengthening and structuring or formalising its feedback loops with communities and young leaders.

**6** The number one impact ... is the construction of the drainage system. Also, the training ... on how to embark on business and how to save money for themselves... Creating the platform on how to read, write and sing is another impact. Women are becoming bold now to stand and talk. **9** 

- Mrs. Darammy from Freetown, Sierra Leone quoted in 'Pul Slum Pan Pipul' evaluation.



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# The limited evidence does not enable a clear conclusion on the extent to which Restless Development's models are inclusive in practice. Nevertheless, more could be done to ensure programmes are explicit and intentional about inclusion.

Across the evidence reviewed, there are examples of programmes demonstrating awareness of exclusion of different kinds. For example, The Development Alternative in Uganda reported<sup>5</sup> that 7 of 30 volunteers recruited initially had a disability. Restless Development's flagship research reports highlighted "the risk of elite/urban/male capture in leadership roles" and, in Bangladesh, the agency of the "'Hijra' (transgender) community to distribute masks as a strategy to change the public perception of this excluded social group". Some entire programmes sought to address either urban exclusion (such as 'Pull Slum Pan Pipul' in eight slum communities in Freetown, Sierra Leone) or rural exclusion (e.g. youth empowerment, livelihoods and research programmes in Karamoja, northern Uganda). Almost all programme evaluations disaggregated data by gender and/or showed efforts to recruit volunteers or reach communities with an equal gender balance. The review found few analyses in the evidence of how race or class/caste might interact with youth leadership, but this does not necessarily mean those lenses had been neglected.

The evidence available gave few insights into the interventions that had been taken to promote inclusion, rather than just measure it. Many of Restless Development's programmes undoubtedly do tackle exclusions, injustices and inequalities. But it appears this could be done more intentionally and systematically in a way that promotes equity rather than equality. The agency could explore using, for example, aspects of a gender-transformative approach, a justice-based approach, or rights-based approach to ensure youth-led development models reduce, rather than reinforce, inequalities and exclusion. It is clear that there are significant recent efforts being taken within the agency to address exclusions of gender, race and disability, including for example a strong new guidance paper promoting disability-inclusive programming. These should be built on further.



### The magic happens when Restless Development's models 'multiply leadership', equipping young leaders to reach and inspire peers and other young people.

Across the agency's models, Restless Development's young leaders inspire their peers to take action. In the course of a programme, they reproduce youth leadership. When development programmes are youth-led, rather than youth-focused or youth-implemented, the evidence suggests they may be more effective. If youth leadership is Restless Development's 'secret sauce', then – just as businesses aim to move up the 'value chain' – programmes should always aim to move higher up the 'youth leadership chain'. To encourage this, Restless Development could establish minimum thresholds for youth leadership, along with tools like tests or checklists, to make sure young people always play the role of leader, not foot soldier.

Restless Development places young leaders at the heart of its work, but could also further centre them in future programming. For example, models and programmes could be more explicit and intentional in their designs about the incentives (e.g. stipend, training, skills, lifelong opportunities) offered to young leaders. The agency could also consider drawing on the principles of human-centred design in its programming. This could mean guaranteeing that programmes are systematically designed around young leaders, using programme design sessions, plans and proposals to make sure to answer questions such as:

- How do young leaders experience every aspect of this programme?
- What skills will the young leader develop by participating in this programme?
   What training or investment will they get?
- Are the incentives sufficiently attractive? Is the young leader being sufficiently compensated for their time, in line with principles around decent work?
- How will participating in this programme help the young leader on their lifelong journey, including from education to employment?
- What scope will the young leader have to design, shape and have a say over the activities they lead?
- What exactly will the young leader be doing on this programme? Are we making best use of their skills and time?
- What tailored support are we offering to each young leader as an individual?
   Who is responsible for delivering it, and how will they do it?
- Are young leaders really being supported to 'multiply their leadership'? Are their peers and other young people an explicit ally or target of their work? How else are they involved in our theory of change?



### Many Restless Development livelihoods projects have been successful, but they operate in very different ways. Clearer direction could help avoid common pitfalls and create a more consistent approach.

The past decade has seen a surge in youth livelihoods programming, and Restless Development has developed significant expertise and experience across a range of different approaches, successfully reaching hundreds of thousands of young people<sup>8</sup>. The evidence paints a nuanced, complex picture:

- Rates of youth unemployment and poverty are high in many Restless Development countries, and income can even determine food security. For example, in Karamoja, Uganda, a livelihoods programme increased the number of young people able to afford three meals a day from just 9% to 46%9.
- Models that offer livelihoods opportunities are therefore understandably popular with young people. For example, a Tanzania evaluation found young people were more than twice as likely to register for livelihoods activities than 'voice' (citizenship engagement) activities<sup>10</sup>.

• While for some Restless Development programmes livelihood opportunities are an *objective*, for others they are more part of the *approach*. For example, they may be part of an integrated curricula to reach young people on less popular issues.

The evidence hints at possible pitfalls to avoid:

- While most livelihoods programmes *focus* on youth, and some are *implemented* by youth, fewer have strong youth *leadership* components. This could limit their effectiveness.
- Livelihoods activities such as skills training, savings clubs, or group loans do not necessarily
  create new jobs or translate into new income. There may be settings where a focus on
  economic development or basic social protection (e.g. through cash transfer schemes) may
  be more appropriate or be more cost-effective.
- Where programmes benefit or are run in the interests of businesses, there is a risk of young people becoming instrumentalised. An overview of youth leadership approaches notes that "many companies have recognised that young people can help them access new markets at low cost. Many telecommunications companies in development countries use young people as sales and marketing representatives... Zanaco Bank in Zambia has worked with Restless Development to train young people as peer financial literacy trainers." In Uganda, the DYNAMIC programme linked 8,770 youth to formal financial providers<sup>11</sup>.
- Livelihoods programmes can skirt fundamental issues or root causes especially when they seem unsolvable or controversial. For example, an evaluation of the large DYNAMIC livelihoods programme in Uganda found that the interventions did not address three of the biggest barriers to livelihoods identified by interviewees as being most important: land use, high interest rates, and regulatory constraints<sup>12</sup>.
- Collective action is important to Restless Development's youth-led models, but the evidence suggests that group work in livelihoods programmes (such as accessing a loan, saving, or setting up a business together) can be ineffective or seen as restrictive, especially when group trust breaks down<sup>13</sup>.

To provide a clearer direction, Restless Development could carry out a deeper dive into its existing livelihoods work to answer some of the important questions raised by these points and to establish a more consistent approach going forwards.





### The role of youth-led influence on policy and practice could be strengthened in Restless Development's models (based on the limited evidence available).

There are powerful examples of Restless Development's young leaders influencing policies and their implementation over the past decade, from the UN Sustainable Development Goals at the global level to successfully changing district policies in Tanzania banning the re-entry of teenage mothers into schools. Young advocates are particularly effective communicators, often drawing on lived experience. Restless Development's powerful youth-led research model – which aims to put young researchers in the driving seat – could be strengthened further if it was connected with clearer, sharper agendas for policy change.



#### The adaptability of programmes can contribute to their effectiveness.

Section 4 of the full Evidence & Learning Review features three powerful examples of impact in Sierra Leone from Restless Development programmes that adapted quickly:

- In 2014–2015, former community mobilisers signed up with Restless Development within hours of being asked to help reduce Ebola infections, as part of the Social Mobilisation Action Consortium (SMAC);
- In 2018, hundreds of youth accountability volunteers from the Strengthening Accountability Building Inclusion (SABI) programme mobilised within two weeks to monitor the nationwide rollout of President Bio's flagship election policy of free, quality secondary education;
- In 2020, hundreds of community mobilisers working with public health units as part of the Saving Lives 2 health systems strengthening consortium changed their activities to sharing knowledge about how to prevent transmission of COVID-19.



#### Integrated, multi-dimensional curricula appear to be most effective.

The literature and programmatic evidence both suggest that in education activities, the most effective curricula integrate several or all of the following: (1) livelihoods / 'Living' components; (2) SRHR / 'Sexual Rights' components; (3) citizenship / 'Voice' components and (4) life skills / 'Leadership' components. For example, in Tanzania, a programme evaluation¹⁴ found that the Kijana Wajibika programme became more popular after the incorporation of an entrepreneurial skills component. Similarly, a 2012 evaluation of Restless Development Uganda's Youth Empowerment Programme – which used an integrated curriculum – found that "combining youth livelihoods and sexual and reproductive health interventions while also developing young people's leadership capabilities can enable change in one area to trigger and/or support change in another."¹⁵

### Digital and media have huge untapped potential for Restless Development's models.

Many Restless Development programmes make successful use of technology: for example, mobile data collection (SABI) and the DevelopmentCheck app (The Development Alternative) are proven in strong youth-led accountability models. The agency also regularly partners with media organisations in consortia to drive behaviour change. Nevertheless, there is untapped potential here. One programme evaluation (Kijana Wajibika in Tanzania) recommended strengthening the media component for significantly increased reach at lower cost. Although Restless Development should take care not to widen the 'digital divide', if it wants to harness the unique power of young leaders to influence their peers, it must go to where they are and engage more systematically with social media. The agency should start testing how its youth leadership model could be applied through entirely digital programmes. For example, one impressive recent project, Youth Against Misinformation, supported 23 young leaders to report and combat misinformation about COVID-19 online.



### Recommendations: Restless Development.

Carry out strategic
evaluations that go
deeper than individual
programmes and
regularly produce
concise impact briefs.

Pilot new techniques for measuring youth-led change, and learn from recent programmes like The Development Alternative. Find ways to frequently take the pulse of the public, communities and young leaders you work with to better understand what they think of your models.

Draw on gendertransformative, justicebased and rights-based approaches to **become more intentional about inclusion**. Establish minimum thresholds for youth leadership and use tools like tests or checklists to make sure young people always play the role of leader – not foot soldier – in your programmes. Centre young leaders in programme development, making sure to answer key questions upfront in the design about how they will experience and drive your programme.

Be explicit and intentional about the incentives – such as compensation, training or opportunities – that you offer young leaders.

Carry out a deep dive into your livelihoods programming to provide clarity and consistency.

Establish clear, sharp agendas for policy change and connect them to youth-led research.

Design your programmes to be as adaptive and agile as possible.

Ensure your training or education curricula integrate different issues where possible.

Start testing how your youth leadership models can be **scaled digitally**.

Restless Development (2016). *Unleashing the Power of Youth to Change Our World. A New Vision for 2030.* Available online.

<sup>2</sup>According to Restless Development's website: <u>restlessdevelopment.org/what-we-do</u>.

<sup>3</sup>See <u>restlessdevelopment.org/what-we-do</u>.

<sup>4</sup>Restless Development (2018). *Towards the Abolition of Chhaupadi in the Far- and Mid-West Regions of Nepal. Project Endline Review.* Unpublished, accessed through Restless Development. p 20.

<sup>5</sup>INTRAC (2021). The Development Alternative Model for Change: Phase 1 Developmental Evaluation of a Youth-Led Accountability Approach in Uganda and Madagascar. Unpublished, accessed through Restless Development. p 18.

<sup>6</sup>The Development Alternative (2019). *Towards a Thriving, Credible and Sustainable Youth Civil Society.* Available online. p 3.

<sup>7</sup>Allen, K., Almario, J., Beek, M., Calarco, D., Devine, B., Gonzalez, E., Inguanti-Pledger, L., Menia, R., Morgen, M. E., Mwale, L., Sarker, A. Zhang, T. (2020). *Resilient Realities: How youth civil society is experiencing and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Global Overview.* Published <u>online</u> by Restless Development, Recrear and the Development Alternative. p 8.

<sup>8</sup>This is confirmed in an evaluation of Restless Development's Programme Partnership Arrangement (PPA), funded by the UK government, which notes that all three PPA consortium members achieved strong livelihoods results, including measurable increases in household income and consumption among interviewed stakeholder groups. See *Brady*, *R.* (2014). External Evaluation of the PPA Consortium of Restless Development, War Child UK and Youth Business International. Unpublished, accessed through Restless Development.

<sup>9</sup>Restless Development (2017). Sustainable Livelihoods Programme for Karamojong Youth. End-line Evaluation Report. Unpublished, accessed through Restless Development. p 3.

<sup>10</sup>Mhando, N. and Mugisha, L. (2019). *Midline Evaluation for Restless Development 2016/2021 Strategy Evaluation Study.* Unpublished, accessed through Restless Development. p 7.

<sup>11</sup>Itad (2020). *Evaluation of DYNAMIC. Sensemaking Workshop.* Unpublished presentation, accessed through Restless Development.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid. Slides 15, 39, 40.

<sup>13</sup>See for example: Restless Development (2017). *Sustainable Livelihoods Programme for Karamojong Youth. End-line Evaluation Report.* Unpublished, accessed through Restless Development. p 3.

<sup>14</sup>Kabyemera, J. and Masanja, R. (2019). *Endline Evaluation for the Kijana Wajibika Programme.* Unpublished, accessed through Restless Development. p 11.

<sup>15</sup>Restless Development (2012). What Happens When Young People Lead Development? A Summary of an External Evaluation of Restless Development Uganda's Youth Empowerment Programme. Unpublished, accessed through Restless Development. p 4.

