

## **Formative Program Evaluation Strategies: A Reflection on the Girls' Empowerment Project and Youth Village Project Implementation in Angola**

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### **Abstract**

Formative program evaluation analyzes a project's strengths and weaknesses, draws conclusions, and provides recommendations to achieve intended outcomes. Effective implementation of formative program evaluation strategies includes designing a clear project description, gathering reliable sources, managing information systems to share data, securing financial resources, and improving organizations' capacity. However, research on formative program evaluation strategies often focuses on output indicators, such as the number of facilities built, student enrollment, or teacher training attendance, rather than identifying corrective actions, challenges, and innovations within the projects. This qualitative document analysis study explores how formative program evaluation strategies used by organizations in two public educational initiatives, (a) the Girls' Empowerment Project for primary education and (ii) the Youth Village of Success for vulnerable lower secondary students, contribute to organizational learning. The study assesses 82 of 124 digital resources published by the government and stakeholders between January 2023 and September 2024, using social capital theory as an analytical framework. The analysis reveals the following: (i) Project description strategy shares summative data, often disconnected from the students' socioeconomic and political context. (ii) Sources of information strategy primarily rely on informal conversations with target groups. (iii) Organizations use management and information systems strategy to share public information via social media, especially Facebook and LinkedIn, which limits opportunities to support educational management and policy analysis, safeguard participants' identities, and enhance the validity of both projects. The findings encourage organizations to reflect on their capacity-building practices and strengthen the connection between educational programs and socioeconomic and political outcomes.

*Keywords:* formative program evaluation, public-private partnership, Angola

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## Introduction

Girls and women face greater constraints than boys in staying in school and acquiring a strong foundational education, including household responsibilities, limited access to healthcare, early marriage, and informal employment (World Bank, 2015). In response, the government and stakeholders implement educational, health, housing, security, and other programs to address the needs of vulnerable populations (Adams, 2014).

Since 2021, the Angolan government and stakeholders have implemented the Girls' Empowerment and Learning for All 2 Project. This initiative provides sexual and reproductive health services to help keep girls aged 12 to 18 enrolled in primary and secondary education (World Bank, 2024). Investing in girls' education promotes better socioeconomic and health outcomes (Adams, 2014; Mulopwe, 2020), including household nutrition, access to better job positions and higher wages, increase resistance to violence, and intergenerational benefits.

To reduce regional socioeconomic disparities and ensure national growth (Decree No. 113, 2019), the National Institute of Employment and Professional Training (INEFOP), in partnership with various stakeholders, is implementing the Arts and Crafts Training Rural Schools - Youth Village project (Ministry of Public Administration, Labor, and Social Security [MAPTSS], 2021a; National Development Plan [PDN], n.d.).

Since 2001, the project has provided youth aged 12 to 17 in vulnerable rural areas, mainly boys considered 'unsuited' for the traditional education system, with three years of Vocational Education and Training (VET) at lower secondary education (Basic Law 13, 2001; Decree 254, 2019; MAPTSS, 2021b; Mitrelli, 2018). The training is offered in fields such as agriculture, electricity, carpentry, and other areas (MAPTSS, 2021b; Mitrelli, 2020).

Balanced partnerships between the government and stakeholders help secure financial resources for training centers, adapt curricula to meet job market demands align with national and international standards, and promote social development (Pyliavets et al., 2020). These partnerships also enable organizations to conduct formative program evaluations (Howlett et al., 2009). However, organizations report project outcomes that are misaligned with the socio-economic and political realities of target group and their own organizational learning needs. This results in duplicated data collection and delays in decision-making. This research uses the Girls' Empowerment Project and Youth Village of Success Project to explore how formative program evaluation strategies can enhance organizational practices among government and stakeholders.

## Theoretical Framework

In past decades, countries decentralized policies, empowering regional governments, and stakeholder organizations to respond to local issues and attain socioeconomic and political outcomes. According to social capital theory, integrating networks into decision-making generates trust and cooperation, regulates policy reforms that benefit citizens, and promotes sustainable interventions, and organizational learning (Beusaert et al., 2023; Fernandes, 2011; Kitivo & Kavulya, 2021; Knack, 2000; Sumkosky, 2018).

Effective implementation of formative program evaluation helps organizations identify project strengths and weaknesses and produces recommendations to attain the intended

outcomes (Howlett et al., 2009; Lodico et al., 2010; McDavid & Hawthorn, 2006). By enabling networks of organizations to share expertise and improve service delivery, formative program evaluation also contributes to organizational effectiveness, such as creating and restructuring departments of development planning, and improving evaluation capacity-building.

### **Formative Program Evaluation Strategies**

To assess the effectiveness of educational programs, governments and stakeholders collect information to support better decision-making. During the implementation phase, organizations apply strategies, such as project description, reliable sources of information, and management information systems to identify strengths and address gaps.

#### **Project Description Strategy**

Recently, governments have digitalized most public information, moving away from centralized hardcopy archives. This shift empowers civil society to access public data, engage in policy discussions, and make more informed decisions.

Project public information, including objectives, strengths and limitations, data collection and analysis strategies (Maslowski et al., 2000; Maslowski & Visscher, 1999), diagnostic assessment, target group needs, expected short and long-term outcomes, budget, and other key aspects, promotes accountability. It also enables governments and stakeholders to better respond to socioeconomic and political needs.

#### **Sources of Information Strategy**

Institutions' procedures that rely on collecting data solely from direct project participants often fail to capture critical issues and adequately address weaknesses and limitations (Maslowski & Visscher, 1999). Relying only on direct participants' perception of the project, it overlooks broader contextual factors affecting vulnerable populations, such as child labor, small-scale family farming, limited access to proper public transportation, lack of security for girls attending school, and other challenges.

To ensure project reliability, incorporating a wider and more diverse range of information sources supports identify changes, address the specific needs of target groups, and minimizes the risk of unnoticed relevant limitations (Maslowski & Visscher, 1999).

#### **Management Information Systems Strategy**

For governments and stakeholders to make informed decisions, they need to use credible procedures to collect, analyze, and disseminate information. Strategies for disseminating information, such as technical reports, case studies, in-person and virtual presentations, articles, videos, brochures, and posts on websites or social media enhance project credibility and encourage citizens to access and use reliable information for public discussion (Lodico et al., 2010; Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016).

For example, the South African National Department of Basic Education (Department of Basic Education, 2021) and the Northern American National Center for Education Statistics (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], n.d.) regularly collect and publish progress

reports on their education systems. However, the use of official and technical languages, along with exclusive reliance on public social media to share government information can limit access to credible information, especially for ethnic minority groups and illiterate individuals.

### **National Development Plan 2023-2027**

To improve the education system and socioeconomic outcomes for children, including those from multilingual backgrounds with limited proficiency in Portuguese and those affected by overcrowded classrooms, inadequate textbooks, unqualified in-service teachers, and poor school infrastructures (Bras, 2022; Ministry of Education [MoE], 2013; Peterson, 2003), the National Development Plan – PDN 2023-2027, particularly Axis 3 (PDN, n.d.) and the Long-term Development Strategy for Angola 2050 (2023) emphasize initiatives to help keep girls in schools and provide to youth in rural areas with access to vocational technical and training skills.

While both policies have improved access to education in urban areas, rural areas continue to face significant challenges. For example, primary education enrollment reaches 80.8% in urban areas but only 57.3% in rural areas (National Institute for Statistics [INE], 2022). Attendance rates are similarly uneven: 76.1% in urban areas versus 56.2% in rural areas, with 23.9% of children remaining out of school (UNICEF, 2018). Additionally, school attendance data show a slight gender disparity, 70.5% of girls compared to 71.8% of boys (INE, 2022).

Considering government and stakeholder organizations efforts to address the educational and socioeconomic challenges faced by young girls and rural areas youth, this study explores the following question: How can formative program evaluation strategies, such as project description, sources of information, and management information systems, strengthen the organizational practices of the government and stakeholders?

### **Method**

This study employs qualitative document analysis to assess pre-existing institutional reports and media produced without the researcher's intervention (Lodico et al., 2010). Manual searches were conducted on the websites of Angolan government agencies and stakeholder organizations to identify public records related to (i) the Girls' Empowerment Project and (ii) the Youth Village of Success Project, published between January 2023 and September 2024, in both Portuguese and English.

A total of 124 documents were identified that addressed the implementation of the Girls' Empowerment Project and Youth Village project in Angola. These documents originated from the following sources: *Jornal de Angola* (n = 14), Ministry of Education (n = 11), World Vision Angola (n = 11), ANGOP (n = 8), INEFOP (n = 5), TPA (n = 4), MAPTSS (n = 3), November Editions (= 3), Mwana Pwo (n = 3), RNA (n = 2), Ver Angola (= 2), Mitrelli Group (n = 2), United Nations (n = 2), UNDP (n = 2), Government of Angola (n = 2), Provincial Directorate of Education of Benguela (n = 1), Local Government of Huambo (n = 1), Center for Support Youth (n = 1), Economia Rural (n = 1), Focus Education (n = 1), UNFPA (= 1), and the World Bank (n = 1). After removing duplicates and ineligible documents (n = 42), 82 documents were retained for analysis. The following keywords were used to identify relevant materials: girls' education, girls' empowerment, reproductive health, youth village education project, and Angolan youth village and rural education.

## Tools

This study collected 82 digital resources, such as reports, videos, blogs, and newspaper articles focusing on girls’ empowerment and vocational education and training within the formal education system. For the Girls’ Empowerment Project, eight out of 52 documents were excluded because they were produced before 2023 or addressing unrelated topics such as lower and upper secondary education, adult education, procurement plans, and summative results reports. Documents were excluded due to duplicated content across websites and social media or the absence of publication dates.

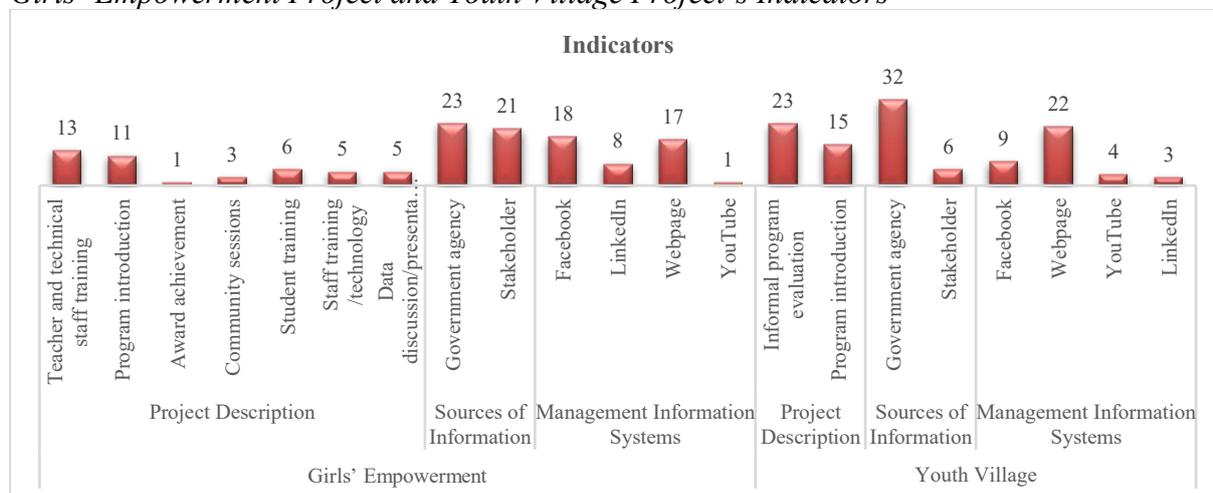
For the Youth Village Project, 38 out of 72 documents were excluded for similar reasons. These included materials produced before 2023 or those focused on short-term programs, upper secondary education, facility construction, or lacking publication dates.

## Document Analysis Worksheet

To analyze the selected documents, the researcher developed a document analysis worksheet to compare information provided by government agencies and stakeholders by identifying common themes, coding, exploring comments, and conducting triangulation (Graphic 1). Data was organized according to three key strategies: project description, sources of information, and management information systems (Graphic 1). To ensure ethical standards, the study utilized public records available online as open resources by the Angolan government and stakeholder organizations.

### Graphic 1

*Girls’ Empowerment Project and Youth Village Project’s Indicators*



## Results

This study examines the formative program evaluation strategies used in the Girls’ Empowerment project and Youth Village project to enhance government and stakeholder organizational practices. To answer the research question, the data analysis focused on the following indicators: project description strategy, sources of information strategy, and the management information systems strategy (Graphic 1).

## Girls' Empowerment

### *Project Description Strategy*

This study examined 44 documents addressing the girls' empowerment project implementation in the primary school education system (Table 1). The sources highlight improvements in the competencies of in-service teachers and technical staff in sexual and reproductive health, enhancing the skills and knowledge of girls as the main objective of the project, student training, strategies for project evaluation, community training sessions, and Angola's recognition for addressing the sexual and reproductive health of primary school girls.

**Table 1**

*Girls' Empowerment Project Indicators*

	Project Description							Sources of Information		Management Information System			
	Teacher and Education Staff Training	Program Introduction	Award Achievement	Community sessions	Student training	Staff training/technology	Data discussion	Government	Stakeholder	Facebook	LinkedIn	Websites	YouTube
Andrande (2024)		X						X				X	
ANGOP (2023)	X							X				X	
ANGOP (2024a)		X						X				X	
ANGOP (2024b)					X			X				X	
ANGOP (2024c)	X							X				X	
Caetano (2024)		X							X			X	
Government of Angola (2024)		X						X				X	
Malamba (2024)		X						X				X	
MoE (2023a)			X					X		X			
MoE (2023b)	X							X		X			
MoE (2023c)	X							X		X			
MoE (2023d)	X							X		X			
MoE (2023e)	X							X		X			
MoE (2023f)	X							X		X			
MoE (2023g)		X						X				X	
MoE (2024a)		X						X				X	
MoE (2024b)		X						X		X			
MoE (2024c)					X			X		X			
MoE (2024d)						X		X		X			
Administration of Viana (2023)	X							X		X			
Mwana Pwo (2023)						X			X	X			
Mwana Pwo (2024a)				X					X	X			
Mwana Pwo (2024b)				X					X	X			
Parente (2023)	X							X				X	
Education of Benguela (2024)	X							X		X			
RNA (2024)		X						X				X	
Rogerio (2024)		X							X			X	
Sequesseque (2023)	X							X				X	
Center for Support Youth (2024)				X					X				X
United Nations (2023)							X		X			X	
United Nations (2024)		X							X			X	
UNDP (2024b)							X		X	X			
World Bank (2024)	X								X			X	

World Vision Angola (2024a)					X				X		X		
World Vision Angola (2024b)	X								X		X		
World Vision Angola (2024c)						X			X	X			
World Vision Angola (2024d)					X				X		X		
World Vision Angola (2024e)					X				X		X		
World Vision Angola (2024f)					X				X		X		
World Vision Angola (2024g)							X		X		X		
World Vision Angola (2024h)							X		X		X		
World Vision Angola (2024i)						X			X		X		
World Vision Angola (2024j)						X			X	X			
World Vision Angola (2024k)							X		X	X			

There is considerable agreement that the girls' empowerment project intends to improve in-service teachers and technical staff competencies in sexual and reproductive health and services. 13 documents (29.55%) address teaching and education staff training (ANGOP, 2023; ANGOP, 2024c; MoE, 2023b; MoE, 2023c; MoE, 2023d; MoE, 2023e; MoE, 2023f, Municipal Administration of Viana, 2023; Parente, 2023; Provincial Directorate of Education of Benguela, 2024, Sequesseque, 2023; World Bank, 2024; World Vision, 2024b). In MoE (2023e), Philomene Carlos, director of the Provincial Directorate of Education of Luanda says:

“The training improves teachers and educational staff practices and primary school education quality.”

In opposite directions, 11 documents (25%) introduce both the girls and in-service teachers' skills and knowledge as the main objectives of the project (Andrade, 2024; ANGOP, 2024a; Caetano, 2024; Government of Angola, 2024; Malamba, 2024; MoE, 2023g; MoE, 2024a; MoE, 2024b; RNA, 2024; Rogerio, 2024; United Nations, 2024). For example, the United Nations (2024) indicates that the strategy empowers:

“In- and out-of-school girls with knowledge and skills to provide peer support, in... key reproductive health and protection rights information and related issues.”

While MoE (2024b) states that it strengthens teachers, school principals, and community skills to educate primary school students, grades 5 to 6... access to reproductive health services, sexual abuse, harassment, awareness against gender-based violence and exploitation, and complaint mechanism in schools.

Regarding student training, six sources (13.64%) introduced the sexual and reproductive school clubs (ANGOP, 2024b; MoE, 2024c; World Vision Angola, 2024a; World Vision, 2024d; World Vision Angola, 2024e; World Vision Angola, 2024f). For example, at-school sexual and reproductive school clubs support their learning. Yet, students skipped training to help their parents in cropping (World Vision Angola, 2024a).

Five documents (11.36%) emphasize the public discussion of the girls' empowerment project challenges among school principals, local government, and stakeholder organizations (United Nations, 2023; UNDP, 2024b; World Vision Angola, 2024g; World Vision Angola, 2024h; World Vision Angola, 2024k). For example, World Vision Angola (2024g) highlights that a meeting involving the MoE, Mwana Pwo, the Center for Support Youth, UNPFA, and other organizations identified project challenges and proposed corrective actions to strengthen school clubs and monitoring strategies.

Five documents (11.36%) highlight the use of technology for data collection, analysis, and evaluation of the project (MoE, 2024d; Mwana Pwo, 2023; World Vision Angola, 2024c; World Vision Angola, 2024i, World Vision Angola, 2024j). According to World Vision Angola (2024c):

“KoboCollect is a digital solution that allows non-governmental organizations to collect, analyze, and store data in a single database.”

Three documents (6.818%) focus on community training sessions. For example, local stakeholder organizations such as Mwana Pwo (2024a), Mwana Pwo (2024b), and the Center for Support Youth (2024) are primarily responsible for providing training to parents, out-of-school-students, and other communities members in health centers and through after-school activities.

One document (2.273%) highlights Angola’s international recognition by the Safeguard Young People (SYP) initiative for its efforts in addressing sexual and reproductive health and services for primary school girls (MoE, 2023a).

### **Sources of Information Strategy**

In this section, 23 documents (52.27%) were from the government. These included 11 from the Ministry of Education, seven from the Angola Press Agency (ANGOP), and one each from Public Television of Angola (TPA), National Radio of Angola (RNA), the Angolan Embassy in Türkiye, the Municipal Administration of Viana, and the Provincial Directorate of Education of Benguela (Table 1).

Government sources featured photos, videos, and comments from in-service teachers and education staff, who provided feedback specifically on the training they received, rather than on the overall project implementation. According to ANGOP (2024c). In MoE (2024b), a male in-service teacher expresses:

“My goal is to improve my knowledge to help my students and others develop a more responsible attitude toward reproductive and sexual health.”

In the same source, a female in-service teacher states:

“I’m eager to provide training to my colleagues and share information with my students.”

As shown in Table 1, 21 digital resources (47.73%) originated from national and international stakeholder organizations. These sources included notes, videos, and photos featuring students, trainers, and community members. Specifically, eleven resources came from World Vision Angola, three from Mwana Pwo, two from the United Nations, and one each from UNFPA, UNDP, Ver Angola, the Center for Youth Support, and the World Bank.

For example, the Center for Youth Support (2024) and World Vision Angola (2024a) feature students and community members participating in training sessions. Similarly, Mwana Pwo (2024a) and Mwana Pwo (2024b), which work with out-of-school students and vulnerable communities, share notes and photos documenting their training sessions.

## Management Information Systems Strategy

Of the digital resources analyzed for the Girls' Empowerment project, 18 (40.91%) were published on the official Facebook pages of government and stakeholder organizations. Both groups share informal summative reports on the project (Table 1). The Ministry of Education, in particular, frequently uses Facebook to disseminate updates on teacher and educational staff training (MoE, 2023b, MoE, 2023c; MoE, 2023d; MoE, 2023e; MoE, 2023f).

Seventeen documents (38.64%) were shared on the official websites of government and stakeholder organizations. On these sites, government agencies primarily disseminate content through public media outlets, especially radio (RNA, 2024) and print media (ANGOP, 2023; ANGOP, 2024a; ANGOP, 2024b; ANGOP, 2024c; Parente, 2023). These platforms present program goals and updates on teacher and staff training initiatives. Among stakeholder organizations, the United Nations (2023), the United Nations (2024), and the World Bank (2024) contribute with content through their institutional websites.

Eight documents (18.18%) were published on LinkedIn. For example, World Vision Angola primarily uses LinkedIn to share updates on training activities involving students and technical staff. Finally, only one resource (2.273%) was found on YouTube, posted by the Center for Youth Support (2024) to share a project-related video (Table 1).

## Youth Village Project

### *Project Description Strategy*

In the youth village project, the study examined 38 documents (Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Youth Village Project Indicators*

	Project Description		Sources of Information		Management Information System			
	Informal Program Evaluation	Program Introduction	Government	Stakeholder	Facebook	LinkedIn	Websites	YouTube
Albano (2024)		X	X				X	
Government of Angola (2023)	X		X		X			
Beu (2024)	X		X				X	
Costa (2023)		X		X			X	
Cristovao (2023d)		X	X				X	
Cristovao (2023b)		X	X				X	
Cristovao (2023c)	X		X				X	
Cristovao (2023a)		X	X				X	
Eduardo (2023)		X	X		X			
Focus Education (2024)	X			X		X		
Government of Huambo (2023)	X		X		X			
Janeiro (2023a)	X		X				X	
Janeiro (2023b)	X		X				X	
Jornal de Angola (2023a)	X		X				X	
Jornal de Angola (2023b)	X		X				X	

Jornal de Angola (2023c)		X	X				X	
Jornal de Angola (2024a)		X	X				X	
Jornal de Angola (2024b)	X		X				X	
INEFOP (2023a)	X		X		X			
INEFOP (2023b)	X		X					X
INEFOP (2023c)	X		X					X
INEFOP (2023d)	X		X					X
INEFOP (2024)		X	X		X			
Lazaro (2024a)		X	X				X	
Lazaro (2024b)		X	X				X	
MAPTSS (2024)		X	X		X			
Mitrelli (2024a)	X			X		X		
Mitrelli (2024b)	X			X		X		
Pedro (2023)		X	X				X	
RNA (2023)	X		X		X			
Rural Economy (2024)	X			X			X	
Santos (2024)	X		X				X	
Silva (2024)	X		X				X	
TPA (2023a)		X	X		X			
TPA (2023b)	X		X					X
UNDP (2024a)	X			X	X			
Victorino (2023)		X	X				X	
Zinga (2023)	X		X				X	

Of these, 23 documents (60.53%) contained informal program evaluation data on enrollment outcomes, students and teachers' satisfaction, and students and parents' expectations. For example, five documents (Beu, 2024; Government of Huambo, 2023; RNA, 2023; Silva, 2024; TPA, 2023b) highlight that the number of students enrolling in youth village boarding schools increases each year, including those who relocate from one province to another to remain in school.

Other documents report that students, teachers, and parents express positive satisfaction with the project's implementation (INEFOP, 2023b; INEFOP, 2023c; INEFOP, 2023d; Jornal de Angola, 2023a; UNDP, 2024a), which includes community-based activities, village-based schools, and access to free lower secondary education.

In a video published by UNDP (2024a), a female student states:

"I am enjoying it. We plant potatoes, tomatoes, cabbage, garlic, onions, and peppers. Before the training, I knew nothing. Now, I am also practicing at home. In the future, I hope to own a farm."

In terms of goals and objectives, 15 (39.47%) introduced the program by outlining their admission requirements, and description of subjects and educational activities (Table 2).

These documents indicate that the Youth Village project equips vulnerable youth and their families with life skills to support their households and contribute to community development (Cristovao, 2023c; Janeiro, 2023a; Jornal de Angola, 2023b; Jornal de Angola, 2024b, INEFOP, 2023c; Mitrelli, 2024a; Mitrelli, 2024b). For example, since 2018, approximately

2,233 vulnerable youth aged 14 to 17 have graduated from courses in areas such as tourism, agriculture, mechanics, plumbing, electricity, metalwork, and others (Cristovao, 2023c).

The documents also note that admission requirements vary depending on the institutions managing the Youth Villages (Janeiro, 2023b; Rural Economy, 2024; Santos, 2024). For instance, Catholic institutions enroll vulnerable students aged 12 to 14, without requiring a primary school completion certificate (Santos, 2024), whereas non-religious institutions typically require students to hold a primary school completion certificate. According to Janeiro (2023b), one Youth Village accommodates 160 vulnerable youth aged 14 to 17.

Regarding the description of subjects and educational activities, sources indicate that programs in agriculture, electricity, carpentry, and metalwork help youth develop essential skills to support their community economy. (Focus Education, 2024; Zinga, 2023). As noted by Focus Education (2024):

“The Youth Village project reflects the government's commitment to equip young people with the required skill.”

### **Sources of Information Strategy**

In this section, the government shared 32 posts (84.21%) focusing on students, teachers, and parents' perceptions of the project (Table 2).

In one post, a female student (INEFOP, 2023d) stated:

“I do metalwork. They say it is a man's job, but we say it is also a woman's job.”

The center principal adds:

“Besides providing vocational education and training to vulnerable students, we also provide indirect employment to community's members.”

Highlighting job-market opportunities, a male student (INEFOP, 2023b) says:

“Here, the activities motivate me... I have even already secured a job.”

A publication by Victorino (2023) on the Jornal de Angola website reported the graduation of 227 students. According to the center's principal:

“The institution trains young professionals with technical knowledge to develop their regions and promote employability.”

An agriculture teacher in the same article notes:

“The agriculture program empowers and strengthens small-family farming.”

Stakeholders shared six posts (15.79%) addressing the project's impact on reducing regional disparities and highlighting students and teachers' satisfaction (Costa 2023; Focus Education, 2024; Mitrelli, 2024a; Mitrelli, 2024b; Rural Economy, 2024; UNDP, 2024a). According to Mitrelli (2024a):

“We create opportunities that support personal and professional growth, benefiting the community.”

### **Management Information Systems Strategy**

Concerning management information systems, the government and stakeholders shared 22 posts (57.89%) on websites (Table 2). In one article from ANGOP (2024), the center principal highlights the challenges faced by a training center located in an isolated area with poor road and healthcare access, which led to 30 out of 120 students dropping out of the program.

According to Cristovao (2024), a report noted that non-boarding students commute two hours daily using the school bus to reach the training center.

Nine posts (23.68%) were shared on Facebook (Government of Angola, 2023; Eduardo, 2023; Government of Huambo, 2023; INEFOP, 2023a; INEFOP, 2024; MAPTSS, 2024; RNA, 2023; TPA, 2023a; UNDP, 2024). In video clips, youth village staff discussed the benefits of partnering with stakeholders. One center principal (UNDP, 2024) states:

“UNDP provided us with renewable energy materials... allowing us to access clean energy 24/7 to irrigate the crops and provide water for the chickens.”

Four posts (10.53%) appeared on YouTube (INEFOP, 2023b; INEFOP, 2023c; INEFOP, 2023d; TPA, 2023b). For example, INEFOP (2023b) presents a parent’s perception of the project:

“I am thankful because in many schools we must pay. In this school, I do not spend money.”

Three posts (7.89%) were shared on LinkedIn (Focus Education, 2024; Mitrelli, 2024a; Mitrelli, 2024b). Mitrelli (2024b) states:

“Integrative communities align with Angola’s strategy to provide vulnerable youth quality education and vocational training that addresses labor market needs.”

### **Discussion and Interpretation**

Considering the policies aiming to enhance human capital, employability, and gender equality in Angola (PND, n.d.; Long-term Development Strategy for Angola 2050, 2023), this study examined formative program evaluation strategies implemented on the Girls’ Empowerment Project and Youth Village Project, focusing on strengthening the organizational practices of the government and its stakeholders.

### **Project Description Strategy**

According to the project development objective (World Bank 2024), the Girls’ Empowerment project empowers youth, particularly girls, and improves learning quality. Improving learning quality includes teaching and school infrastructure. However, most documents emphasize in-service teacher and educational staff training in sexual and reproductive health, rather than focusing on the direct training of girls. Additionally, documents that do address the training of girls often fail to connect the project to broader socioeconomic and political development

within communities. For example, there is limited discussion on the project's short-term outcomes related to reducing school truancy, teenage pregnancy, gender-based violence, child domestic work factors that perpetuate harmful traditional female and responsibilities and hinder their academic success.

Another prevalent issue is that both government and stakeholder organizations (MoE, 2024d; Mwana Pwo, 2023; World Vision Angola, 2024c; World Vision Angola, 2024i, World Vision Angola, 2024j) conduct training on statistical data collection and analysis only in the middle of the project implementation, rather than integrating these practices into the design phase. This delay limits effective evaluation efforts and weakens evidence-based decision-making.

In the case of the Youth Village project, its goals, highlighted in 15 documents, focus on equipping vulnerable youth and their families with lifelong skills (INEFOP, 2023c; Mitrelli, 2024a; Mitrelli, 2024b). Yet, the available data analysis is limited to descriptive statistics such as enrollment rates, the number of training villages, and the types of programs offered. For example, the documents do not indicate an increase in formal jobs in vulnerable communities and in the number of returning migrants, or improvements in the allocation of public services in rural and remote areas that could help graduate students access raw materials and markets for their products and services.

A detailed project description is essential for enabling evaluators to gather relevant information, identify challenges, and make informed recommendations (Fernandes, 2011; Howlett et al., 2009; Kitivo & Kavulya, 2021; Lodico et al., 2010; McDavid & Hawthorn, 2006; Sumkosky, 2018). Furthermore, such details support the application of meta-analysis strategies, which enable evaluators to compare diagnostic data collected at the design phase with data from the implementation phase, thereby showing the projects' short-term impact on students and their communities.

### **Sources of Information Strategy**

In the Girls' Empowerment Project and Youth Village Project, data collection reveals that government and stakeholder organizations primarily rely on informal interviews with beneficiaries, such as students, teachers, and education staff, broadcasted on public television, radio and print media, and social media platforms to assess projects effectiveness. On the opposite, the United Nations is the only organization that presents summative data on the Girls' Empowerment Project in its Angola country report.

Government and stakeholder organizational learning could improve from incorporating diverse sources of information in their projects, as this strategy accommodates different expectations, interests, values, and ideals while opening space for dialogue and building trust among stakeholders (Moreira et al., 2016). This strategy should also engage private sector companies operating in the students' community in socioeconomic and political development discussions.

Therefore, it is relevant to provide external organizations with free access to project databases, enabling independent empirical studies and the inclusion of broader perspectives. For instance, concepts such as female students feeling empowered to pursue careers in male-dominated fields (INEFOP, 2023d) or transferring knowledge to new contexts (UNDP, 2024a), as reported by participants in the Youth Village Project, would be effectively addressed by organizations.

## Management Information Systems Strategy

In the Girls' Empowerment Project, data collection reveals that government and stakeholder organizations primarily disseminate public information through official Facebook pages and institutional websites. While these platforms provide visibility, the shared data often omits critical details, such as project finances, innovations, and corrective measures addressing truancy or high dropout rates, particularly regarding the Youth Village project.

Additionally, shared information on public and social media frequently includes identifiable participants' details such as photographs, videos, full names, and home and school addresses, raising ethical concerns about privacy and data protection.

In formative program evaluation, utilizing diverse reporting strategies, including hardcopy reports, academic articles, conference presentations, workshops, and digital media, enhances civil society's access to information (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). However, effective data collection and dissemination in a timely, accessible manner, and compliant with data protection regulations to safeguard participant identities, prevent data fragmentation, enhance transparency and sustainability, and improve the credibility of the information.

## Conclusions

The study examined formative program evaluation strategies implemented in the Girls' Empowerment Project and Youth Village Project to assess how they influence government and stakeholder organizations' practices.

Effective formative program evaluation supports both government and stakeholder organizations in identifying and addressing issues (Lodico et al., 2010) while reducing reliance on informal data collection methods (McDavid & Hawthorn, 2006). Yet, Girls' Empowerment and Youth Village initiatives reveal several concerns in the implementation of formative program evaluation that affect the effectiveness of government and organizations.

In the project description strategy, it is evident that girls' empowerment holds different meanings for various organizations. The most common theme identified is the emphasis on improving the quality of education in ways that are intended to benefit both girls and education staff. About the Youth Village project, the literature indicates consensus that the project targets vulnerable youth and their families. Nonetheless, it is left to the reader to interpret who qualifies as "vulnerable" and what criteria were used to select the regions where boarding schools were established.

Overall, the documents analyzed failed to clearly identify project beneficiaries and expected short-term outcomes. The absence of clearly defined beneficiaries hampers the development of regulatory mechanisms for measuring short-term impacts and linking them to broader socioeconomic and political development within communities. For example, although reports mention girls' participation in sexual and reproductive health training, they rarely correlate this involvement with updated indicators such as teenage pregnancy or child marriage rates. Similarly, data collected from the Youth Village Project is not connected to returning students to their communities or efforts aimed at reducing local inequalities.

In the Sources of information strategy, in both projects, organizations rely heavily on informal interviews with direct beneficiaries, often shared via public and social media, to

assess the projects' effectiveness. While beneficiaries feedback is vital for understanding participant satisfaction, this approach often lacks rigor. Participants may tailor their responses to align with what they believe organizations expect to hear, thus providing less objectivity and biased feedback opinions.

Regarding management and information systems strategy, in the Girls' Empowerment Project and Youth Village Project, organizations frequently disseminate information via public and social media platforms, especially Facebook and LinkedIn. However, these updates are often not guided by a coherent ethical and methodological framework that ensures participant anonymity and protects the validity of data collection and analysis. Consequently, the shared information falls short of supporting educational management, policy analysis, or informed decision-making.

Additionally, the evaluation processes are typically carried out solely by the organizations implementing the projects, emphasizing target group participation without integrating comprehensive quality data. This leads to the inconsistent and context-deficient dissemination of disaggregated data.

For formative program evaluation strategies to effectively improve government and stakeholder organizations' practices, the following actions are recommended:

1. Articulate project objectives alongside the intended short-term and output outcomes, ensuring these align with the community's socioeconomic and political development.
2. Conduct comprehensive case studies, academic articles, conference presentations, and both online and printed formal reports that integrate the perspectives of a broad range of stakeholders, including private institutions and local communities.
3. Develop and implement, at the design phase, integrated management information systems capable of collecting, processing, and disseminating relevant data across government agencies, civil society, and stakeholder organizations to facilitate evidence-based policymaking.

### **Limitations and Recommendations**

The document-based analysis of the Girls' Empowerment Project and Youth Village Project reflects on the practice of government and stakeholder organizations. Future studies should incorporate various primary data sources of information, namely students, teachers, government, stakeholders, and community members. Nonetheless, the study findings provide a useful foundation for reflection and improvement among government and stakeholder organizations aiming to enhance project outcomes and effectiveness.

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