

Empowering Entrepreneurs for a Better Future; The Case of Enterprise Uganda ETW Program

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Abstract—This paper examines the impact of the Enterprise Uganda Empretec Training Workshops (ETW), and participation in other training programs has had on the Entrepreneurs who undertook the training between 2009 – 2017. Digitally designed Google Questionnaires were administered to 330 respondents and responses analyzed in Stata. Although the response was modest, the analysis can be used for a high level understanding or explanatory analysis to conceptualize the patterns for future studies. The results show most Entrepreneurs who undertook the trainings are still in business, making more profits on average especially for male entrepreneurs, and those with tertiary education, and still consult the training manual on a regular basis. Persistence is a common thread as the most applied most helpful and biggest driver for success. Commitment comes in second place. Systematic planning, persuasion and networking, and independence and self-confidence were rated poorly in terms of application, helpfulness and driving business success. Nonetheless the trainings and other services offered were considered important and beneficial to the Entrepreneurs, and they would recommend the same to others.

Keywords—Entrepreneurship, Expansion, Growth, New Enterprises, SMES.

I. INTRODUCTION

UGANDA has been described as a ‘land of entrepreneurs’. It is estimated that half of the adult population (28% of total) or about 13 million Ugandans are entrepreneurs, and catalysts for community development. Through their ventures, they address local needs, provide essential services, and drive social change. By taking an active role in community development, entrepreneurs are not only improving the quality of life but also inspiring others to pursue their entrepreneurial aspirations. With the establishment of startups and small businesses, entrepreneurs are contributing to the country's overall economic development. Their ventures are not only creating employment opportunities but also diversifying the economy and adding value to various sectors.

The fact that entrepreneurship is a vital force in driving economic growth and creating job opportunities was recognized by the Government of Uganda as far back as early 2000 and underscored the need to train as many entrepreneurs as possible, through the creation of Enterprise Uganda, a mandate they have carried out for the past 22 years through various programs.

The programs and corresponding number of entrepreneurs supported from the time the entity was created are; Business &

Enterprise Start-up Tool (BEST), [130,720] Agri-Business Entrepreneurship Training [30,168]; Specialized Trainings, [8,384]; Growth-Oriented Tool (Go-Tool) [4,587]; Entrepreneurship Training Workshop (ETW), 2,362; ETW Hybrid, [1,923]; Others, [604]; Mini BEST, [338]; Business Health Check (BHC) [210]; making a Total of 179,296 entrepreneurs trained (Enterprise Uganda, 2024).

The focus of the research was the Entrepreneurship Training Workshop (ETW) 6-day EMPRETEC program designed in partnership with the United Nations Conference on Trade & Development's (UNCTAD), aimed at promoting entrepreneurship and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) to facilitate sustainable development and inclusive growth. The training is based on a distinctive behavioral approach to entrepreneurship. Some of its key features are emphasis on being interactive, using own experience and self-assessment. Participants trained receive a UNCTAD-endorsed certificate. Enterprises Uganda has so far carried out 69 Entrepreneurship Training Workshops; with a total of 2,362 Empretecs as of December 2023. UNCTAD supports similar programs in other countries, and delivered over 5000 workshops between 2014 -2021 (UNCTAD, 2021).

II. OBJECTIVES AND JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

A. Objectives

The main objectives of the study were to:

- (i) Assess the ETW Program impact in terms of business growth, expansion or new enterprises
- (ii) Determine the energy generated from the program;
- (iii) Assess knowledge retained and to what extent the trainees continue to utilize the skills and knowledge learned.

B. Justification

Uganda, as a country is brimming with potential and opportunity, that is seeing a surge in entrepreneurship that is shaping a better future for its people. As the entrepreneurial spirit thrives, individuals are taking charge of their destinies, driving economic growth, and reshaping the business landscape in Uganda.

Entrepreneurs in Uganda are breaking through barriers and embracing innovation to carve their path to success. They are

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harnessing their creativity, resourcefulness, and resilience to address societal challenges and create opportunities for themselves and others. By doing so, they are not only driving economic growth but also fostering a culture of innovation and empowerment. But as Uganda's entrepreneurial landscape continues to evolve, sustaining and scaling the success of entrepreneurs is paramount. Uganda also has the highest rate of business failures, especially at start up (The Gurdian, 2016)

It requires ongoing support from various stakeholders, investment in education and skills development, and creating an enabling environment for business growth. By doing so, Uganda can ensure that entrepreneurship remains a driving force for positive change and a better future.

The aim of this study therefore was to explore the extent to which the ETW program had impacted the entrepreneurship landscape, and eventual growth and expansion of the trained entrepreneurs. It was hoped that results of the study would shed more light and understanding of how the ETW training is impacting entrepreneurship, which tools were most effective, as well as providing opportunity to appreciate areas that could be improved.

C. Methodology

The study was mainly explanatory and desk oriented. The research commenced with a review of the program for appreciation, followed by data collection listing all entrepreneurs that have benefitted from the training and their contacts; email and WhatsApp numbers. Since the program has been running for 22 years, securing data for as far back as 2001 was found problematical. On the other hand, for the newer beneficiaries from 2019 onwards, the research considered these cohorts to have been more recent and therefore with limited impact. Therefore, the new trainees were not considered. Although accessible data run from 2008 – 2019, some the data sets were incomplete. Eventually the research focused on cohorts between 2009- 2017 from which 330 complete trainee datasets were generated.

A questionnaire was digitally designed using Google forms. Pre-testing of the questionnaires was done among some Entrepreneurs-non beneficiaries. The final questionnaire was formulated and administered online to all the 330 trained beneficiaries.

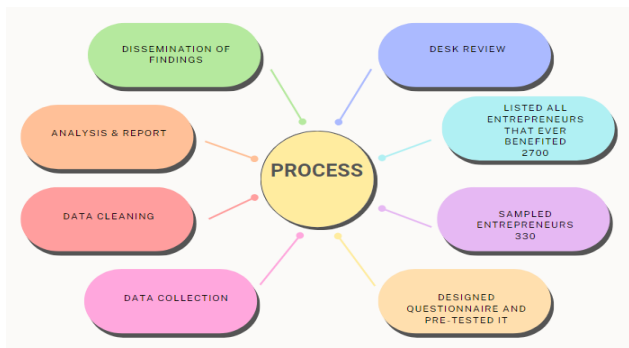


Fig. 1 Research Process

D. Participants Consent

Participants were asked to consent before filling in the questionnaire. In addition, they were informed, and the research ensured that participation in the research presented no potential risks to either the participants, or their organizations, since the results are pooled and generalized.

E. Data Analysis

Data from Google form was automatically embedded into Google sheets and then exported to Stata Version 15 statistical software for analysis. Descriptive analytics of all the variables was done. Cross-tabulations of sales at the time of doing the training, profits at the time of training, and new investments since the time of the training compared to their status as of December 2023; against dimensions of Gender, Educational level, Sector, Type of business, Age of business and reference to manual in order to determine any changes or differences between the year the training was undertaken and the present.

Although 330 invitations for the questionnaire to be filled were sent out, only 15 people responded with consent. The analysis can therefore, only be used for a high level understanding or explanatory analysis to find interesting patterns for future studies.

III. RESULTS

A. Characteristics of the Entrepreneurs

Most of the respondents (73%) were male, while the most dominant age group was the prime working age between 25-54 (86%) of the Entrepreneurs, 93% of the Entrepreneurs were married and only 7% were single. 93% of the businesses had existed three years and above before the training and the average number of years since the entrepreneurs undertook the training was 6 years.

TABLE I
CHARACTERISTICS OF ENTREPRENEURS

Variable	Response	N=15
Consent	Yes	15(100%)
	No	0
Gender	Female	4(27%)
	Male	11(73%)
Age grouping	25-54 (Prime)	13(86%)
	55-64 (Mature)	1(7%)
	65 plus (Elderly)	1(7%)
Marital Status	Married	14(93%)
	Single	1(7%)
Education Level	Tertiary	3(20%)
	University	12(80%)
Location of business	Central	10(77%)
	Western	3(23%)
Type of business	Limited Liability	13(86%)
	Company	
	Sole proprietorship	1(7%)

80% of the Entrepreneurs were University Graduates, while 86% operated registered businesses in form of Limited Liability companies

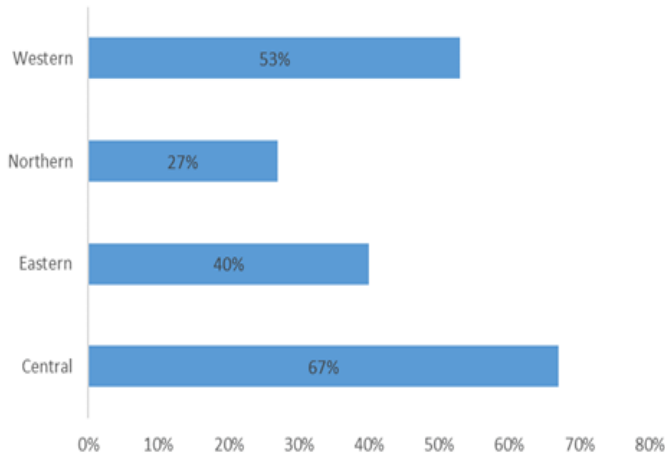


Fig. 2 Business Operations by Region

Most of the businesses (67%) operate within the Central region of Uganda followed by the western region ((53%). The least covered region is Northern with only 27% of the businesses operating in that region.

■ ≤ 5 years ■ 6 plus years

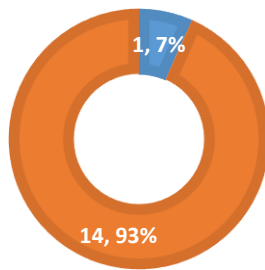


Fig. 3 Number of years since training was undertaken

Over 93% of the businesses had been running for over six years since they had the training.

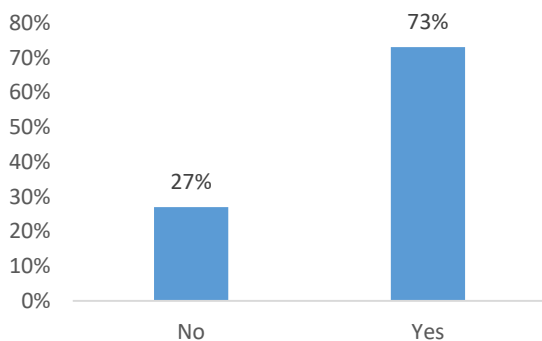


Fig. 4 Business Continuity

Most of the businesses (73%) are still in the same business as

at the time the training was undertaken, and had made changes to the business as a result of the training.

Some of the changes made included, expanding on the services offered; registering the business with Uganda Registration Standards Bureau (URSB); improving marketing; less personal involvement in production, and improving on record keeping.

Those who closed businesses, reasons for closure included; high cost of finance and non-availability of finances to continue with or establish new business; limited trade incentives for local businesses; going back into employment; and one ran bankrupt.

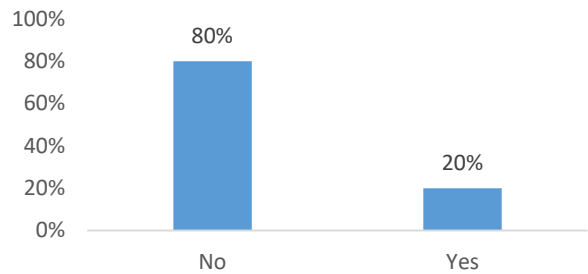


Fig. 5 Businesses exporting their services/products

A small number of businesses (20) export some of their services/ products.

B. Profitability

All the respondents 15(100%) said the training helped them to achieve their goals.

TABLE 2
AVERAGE SALES, PROFITS AND NEW ADDITIONAL INVESTMENTS

Item	At time of training (Ugx)	In 2023 (UGX)
Sales	20,000,000	60,000,000
Profits	3,000,000	20,000,000
New Investments		36,000,000

There has been a remarkable increase (over 6-fold) in average profits for the profits from an average of UGX 3.000.000 per year per the time of undertaking the training compared to an average of UGX 20.000.000 in 2023.

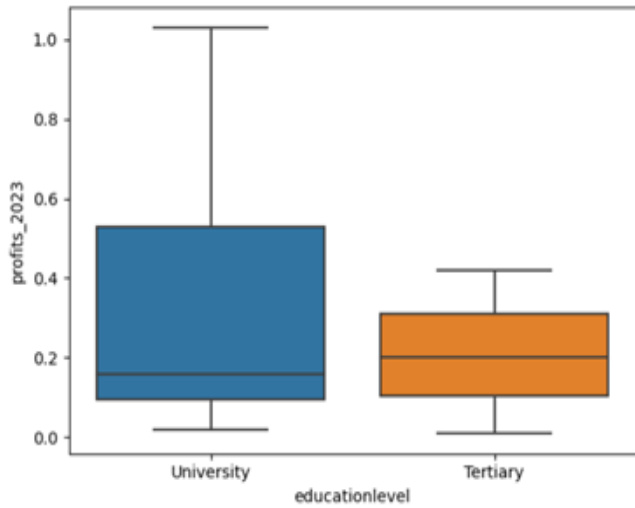


Fig. 6 Comparison of average profits in 2023 by education level

In 2023, businesses run by Entrepreneurs with Tertiary level education had higher average profits (UGX 20,000,000) compared to business run by Entrepreneurs with University education (UGX 10,000,000).

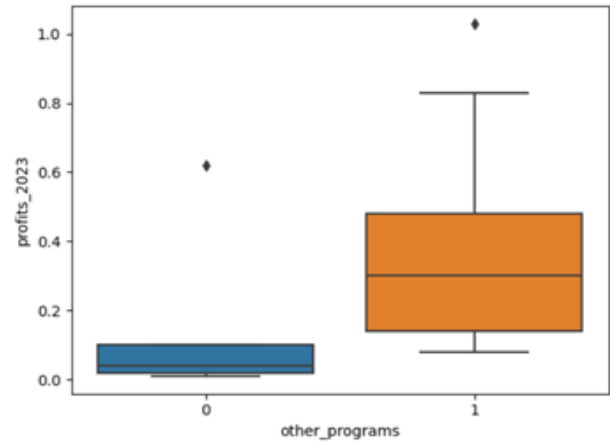


Fig. 8 Comparison of average profits and Engagement in other Enterprise Uganda Programs

IN 2023, businesses of Entrepreneurs who participated in other Enterprise Uganda programs had higher average profits (almost 8 times) (UGX 30,000,000) compared to businesses Entrepreneurs who did not receive other EU programs at only UGX 4,000,000 average annual profits

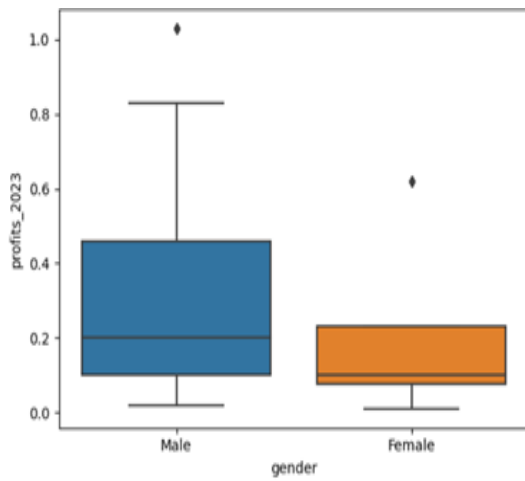


Fig. 7 Comparison of average profits by gender

In 2023, businesses run by Male Entrepreneurs had higher average profits at UGX 20,000,000 compared to business run by Female Entrepreneurs with average annual profits at UGX 10,000,000).



Fig. 9 Reference to Training Manual

Most of the Entrepreneurs (33%) refer to the training manual only twice in a year

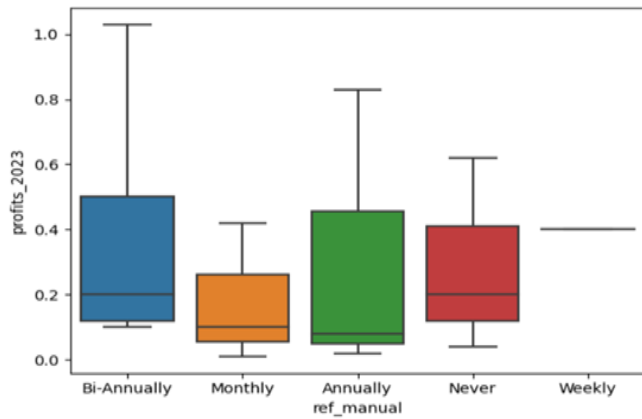


Fig. 10 Comparison of average profits in 2023 by reference to training manuals

In 2023, businesses run by Entrepreneurs who refer to their training manuals weekly had higher average profits (UGX 40,000,000) compared to Entrepreneurs who refer to the manuals annually (UGX 20,000,000), Bi-annually (UGX 20,000,000), Monthly (UGX 10,000,000), although the profits of the entrepreneurs who never referred the manual was also considerably high at UGX 20,000,000

C. Utilization of Personal Entrepreneurial Competencies

Entrepreneurs reported to have utilized the Personal Entrepreneurial Competencies (PECS) in several ways. One of the ways was in improving networking, knowledge seeking and generally having an inquisitive nature. Other aspects of utilization were; applying the competencies in both business and family, seeking information where necessary; planning better, through making plans, goal setting, and projecting ahead; record keeping and disciplined expenditure. For others it helped in winning contracts and collaborating real estate jobs. while for the others, the PECs helped in not looking at the failure of the business, but picking up new ideas and giving a hand to other entrepreneurs who are thriving and being able to start again.

D Impact of the training program on the business

The respondents had varied positive responses on the impact the program has had ranging from creation of jobs and better quality products; having a cleaner environment and timely garbage management; improved livelihood of community by buying their art craft products; supporting own communities in planning a project. The other was that the community has benefited from the new breeds and quality genetics for both pigs and chickens that are brought on the farm. There were also aspects of socioeconomic transformation, and creating more business. Some reported that a number of people

became interested in similar business, some have a training component for women run, some had provided some jobs and opportunities to entrepreneurs including distribution. The enterprise is being built for sustainability and therefore employs more people in the business. Several sited creation and provision of employment.

There are some who reported working with people who would not find work easily, training them in different hands on and life skills.

Although generally the enterprises reported having a positive impact, one business closed soon after the training, and later switched to another business using the same competences.

E Features appreciated most about the ETW program

Most of the Entrepreneurs reported that the case studies and exercises were handy and practical. The requirement to practically implement an actual business venture as well as practical aspects like setting up a new business within the workshop schedule were considered very critical. Networking and benchmarking with the different entrepreneurs, and having a clear vision and mission were other aspects considered important.

Other Entrepreneurs reported that the training important because it was tailored to the current business challenges, and the behavior instinct of entrepreneur's, that people are vital for business. Others appreciated the value of seeking information; persistence and dedication, marketing, and the Personal Entrepreneurial Competencies themselves.

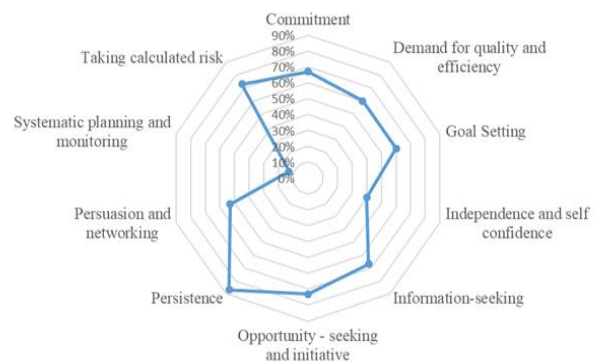


Fig. 11 Personal Entrepreneurial Competencies still being applied

Most of the Entrepreneurs (87%) applied the Personal Entrepreneurial Competency of persistence; while 67% of the Entrepreneurs reported commitment, opportunity seeking and initiative as the driving force of their business.

Important to note was that Systematic planning and monitoring is the least applied PEC followed by Independence and self-confidence.

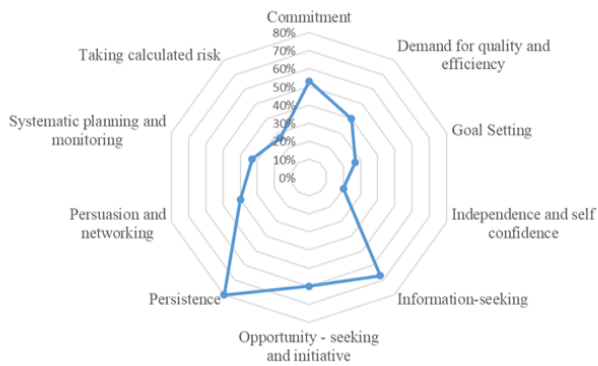


Fig. 12 The Most Helpful Personal Entrepreneurial Competencies

Persistence followed by Information seeking PECs are still considered the most helpful by most of the Entrepreneurs at 80% and 70% respectively, whereas independence and self-confidence, and taking calculated risks are considered the least helpful.



Fig. 13 Competencies driving business success

Most 67% of the Entrepreneurs reported commitment, opportunity seeking and initiative followed by persistence and demand for quality and efficiency as the major driving force of their business. The PECs less likely to drive business growth was considered to be persuasion and networking, followed by systematic planning and monitoring.

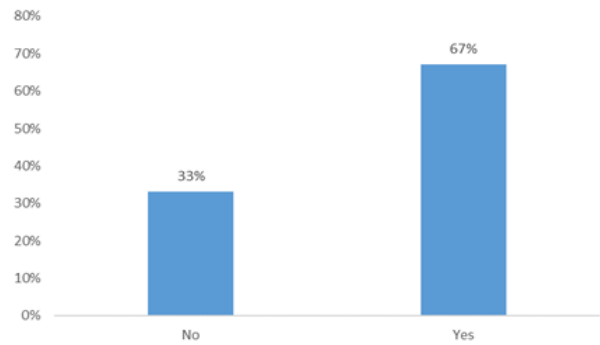


Fig. 14 Additional services received

A considerable number of Entrepreneurs received or participated in other Enterprise Uganda programs. Suahs Workshops, YouTube and Zoom trainings, Networking sessions through Global Entrepreneurship Week, Monthly trainings after ETW, NSSF HI-innovator training and funding, and the Business clinic and Mentorship program.

There have been a couple of exhibitions to which respondents were invited as well as information sessions where persons running successful businesses have given motivational and experience sharing talks These have helped in Cash flow management, using calculations to grow business, managing business in a volatile economy.

One of the companies was selected for the SEE- Change training of Empowered Entrepreneur Training.

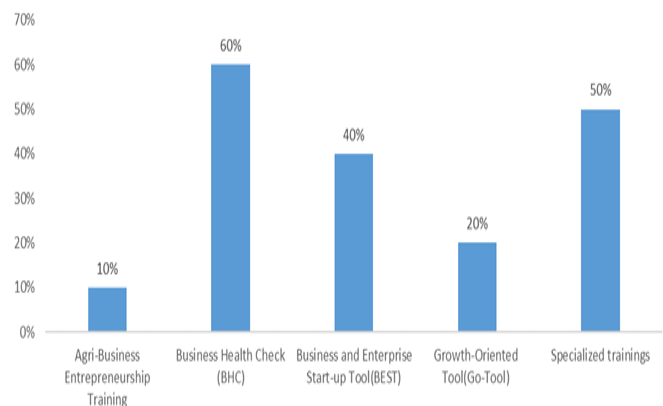


Fig. 15 Other Trainings Attended By Respondents

60% of the Entrepreneurs participated in the Business Health Check program, while 50% participated in special training. The least percentage (10%) of Entrepreneurs received Agri-Business Entrepreneurship Training as an additional service, followed by Growth Oriented Tool at 20%.

F Contribution of Additional Services to Business

Some of the areas in which the additional services helped businesses stay afloat, were in form of providing platforms to promote their businesses, as well as platforms for further inspiration and information sharing. The additional services helped meet potential clients. For fresh entrepreneurs, the Business Model Canvas, Goal setting and the Tree of Life were impactful, and enabled the trainees to train others. For others, trainings in financial Management, human resource management, and customer care were considered most helpful, while others considered having accurate information at all times, setting Goals, improving marketing skills as the additional benefits.

One business indicated that they learnt that one can fail and pick up again.

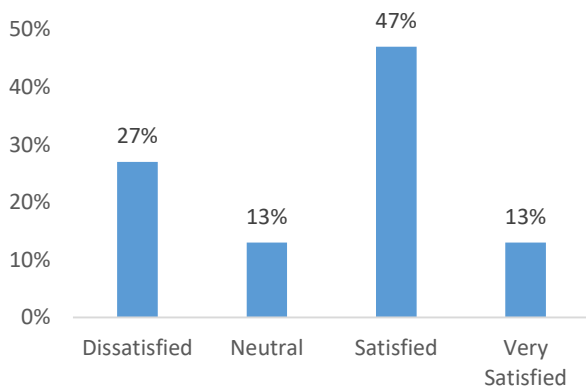


Fig. 16 Satisfaction with Enterprise Uganda's Continuous support

A large number of Entrepreneurs (60%) were either satisfied or very satisfied with the continuous support. A quite considerable number (27%) indicated being dissatisfied with Enterprise Uganda continuous support, whereas 13% were neutral.

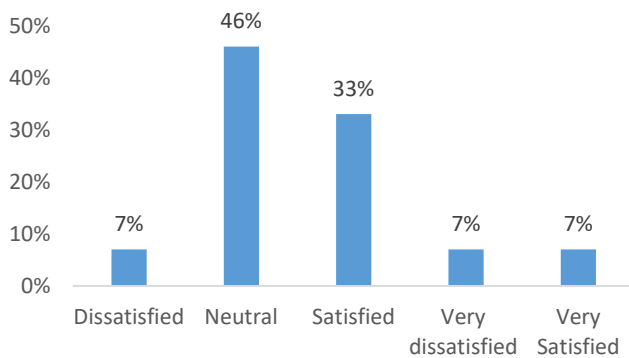


Fig. 17 Satisfaction with Enterprise Uganda Other Programs

Interestingly about 60% of the Entrepreneurs were either neutral (46%), dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with Enterprise Uganda other programs. Only 40% were either satisfied or very satisfied.

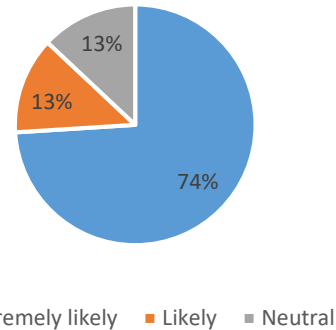


Fig. 18 Likelihood to Recommend Enterprise Uganda's to others

Although 60% of the Entrepreneurs were either neutral (46%), dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with Enterprise Uganda other programs, 87% indicated that they would recommend Enterprise Uganda to other colleagues and friends.

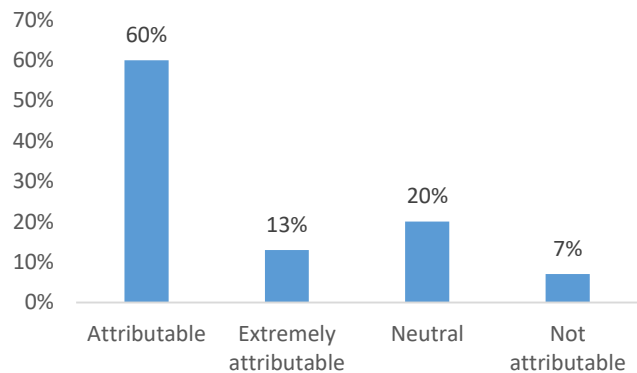


Fig. 19 Extent Success is Attributable to the Training

Again, a significant percentage (73%) attributed their business success to Training, 20% were neutral; whereas 7% could not contribute their success to the training.

IV. ASPECTS OF THE TRAINING THAT NEED IMPROVEMENTS

Given the dissatisfaction, or neutrality on the contribution of the ETW training and other Enterprise Uganda Programs, Entrepreneurs had various views on how the training and other program could be improved, both in terms of program and time allocated for the training components. These are:

- o Be more focused on sustainability strategies for the businesses being supported.
- o Embed technology not just in program delivery but in the business support afforded to entrepreneurs.
- o Offer more tailor made trainings.
- o Undertake proper follow up of trained persons.
- o Take trainings to regions; ETW trainings need to be out of Kampala
- o Monthly trainings need to be resumed
- o Provide specialized training such as enterprise startup-tool
- o Offer more training on Self-confidence, record keeping and financial literacy, book keeping, marketing, and proposal writing
- o Actions on Competencies Project proposal 6 days is a bit too long - cut to 5
- o Integrate the ETW trainings with affordable financial resources

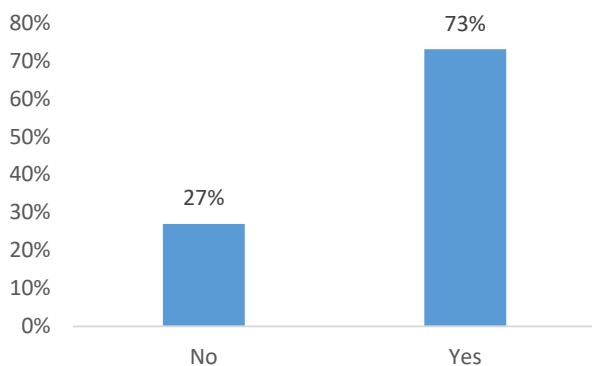


Fig. 20 Belief that Enterprise Uganda can address Entrepreneur there Challenges

A high percentage of the Entrepreneurs believe that Enterprise Uganda can help solve their challenges; while 27% do not believe Enterprise Uganda can help.

A. Features that distinguish Enterprise Uganda

There were several aspects in which Enterprise Uganda has distinguished itself from other entrepreneurial training organizations, such as:

- o The trainings are practical and by practitioners.
- o Enterprise Uganda is the only known government agency for entrepreneurial training workshops.
- o Applicability to the local business aspects
- o Commitment to knowledge sharing
- o Catering for all sectors and all entrepreneurial stages.
- o Focusing on the individual growth in business
- o Continuous engagement
- o They listen
- o Enterprise Uganda has expertise in all aspects of business and readiness to transfer the skills
- o Training are aimed at mindset change.

B. Voices from the respondents

Entrepreneurs had a lot to say about the ETW program and Enterprise Uganda in particular. *“It would be great to actually visit some of the businesses selected for the training. The hotels where the trainings happen are great, but it would be very tangible and impactful if the trainers visited the different businesses, cut on the hotel accommodation money to cater for trainer’s transport costs to visit and interact with the day to day activities and to better understand the entrepreneur needs, challenges and successes”.*

“After our training in 2013, we never had anything again, I even met a cohort member whose business had collapsed”

“They are also concrete, look basic but impactful reality with business people”.

“The training approach is really simplified and practical. It is also interesting that the Empretec trainings bring together novices as well as pretty well established business people, an indication that there is continuous learning for successful business management.”

“They reach out to the last common man. Mr Ocici sums it all.”

V. DISCUSSION

Given the importance given to the role Enterprise Uganda and especially the ETW program has played in the business continuity and expansion of the enterprises, as well as the positive reviews on what Enterprise Uganda can do, underscores the fact that it still has a role to foster and support the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in Uganda. It is a positive sign that 73% (Figure 4) of the businesses still are in the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem well after the training at an average of 9 years from the time the Entrepreneur took the Entrepreneurial Training Workshop.

The average profit margin is higher in 2023 compared to the time training was done. Even when the average inflation index of about 3.1 for the those trained in the early years from 2009, the difference is still significant. The research also established that education level, gender, engaging in other Enterprise Uganda programs and reference to the training manual have an effect on the profit margin of their businesses.

VI. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Results might not be generalized to the population due to the non-response bias, those who did not respond might be fundamentally different from those who responded. Low statistical power, conclusions may not be reliable.

It is recommended that the study needs to be redone using a larger sample size

VII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The Entrepreneurs that undertook the ETW training have experienced growth and expansion since the time of the training. The profit margins have increased when you compare the 2023 to the year the trainings were undertaken. More funding has been put into new investments. From the findings it is highly likely the training generally impacted most of the businesses and Entrepreneurs positively

The analysis can be used for a high level understanding or explanatory analysis to conceptualize the patterns for future studies and may not be used for inference given the small sample size.

VIII ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I wish to acknowledge Enterprise Uganda for their support in providing Entrepreneurs' contact lists, and contribution in designing the questionnaire. I also thank Afayo Victor for his assistance.

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