

Supporting Mauritian Youth with Little Education in their Job Search

PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE
FROM A BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Thanks to impressive gains in the macroeconomic and social sectors since independence, extreme poverty has been eradicated and considerable progress has been made in boosting shared prosperity in Mauritius. However, over the past decade, inequality has been rising as income growth among the bottom 40 percent of the income distribution (the bottom 40) has lagged. In countries such as Mauritius, which has a rapidly aging and shrinking population, harnessing the potential of all is key to sharing growth more widely and making progress in achieving high-income status without undermining the fiscal stance of the economy. Youth, together with women, have the lowest participation rates in the labor market. Youth with low educational attainment, in particular, are more likely to be out of school and out of the labor market and therefore more highly exposed to economic and social vulnerability. While a number of factors may hinder the participation of youth in the labor market and employment, behavioral barriers are oftentimes overlooked though they play a key role in the case of Mauritian youth with low educational attainment.

The World Bank, in cooperation with the Employment Services Division of the Ministry of Labor, Human Resources Development, and Training, has designed and begun the implementation of a behavioral intervention aimed at activating youth with low educational attainment who are registered with public employment offices, that is, the employment information centers (EICs). This randomized control trial is aimed at equipping such youth with the soft skills necessary to conduct meaningful job searches. Although the intervention had to be interrupted prematurely because of the COVID-19 outbreak and the extraordinary social and economic circumstances that have followed since then, it offers several useful lessons. First, the intervention had positive and encouraging impacts on the employability and job search behaviors of the youth, namely, preparing, revising, and submitting a curriculum vitae (CV), requesting a referral, and developing a job search plan. Second, evidence also suggests that the intervention may have been more effective in raising the job search efforts of young men than of young women. Although this finding requires further investigation, it could point to the importance of sex-based constraints such as women's disproportionate engagement in care and other unpaid family work that, without family support services, limit the time women participants had to follow up on the activities and look for jobs. Sex differences in time allocation may have been intensified by the closure of schools and other aspects of the COVID-19 curfew. Third, the moderate cost of the intervention and the low cost of one of its component (boost training) highlight the potential for expansion. Materials, activities, and strategies can be distributed, undertaken, or applied through the network of EICs or online at a minimum cost. However, the low levels of education, underdeveloped job search capabilities, and limited experience with the labor market characteristic of the target population suggest that the instruments refined for the intervention should be supported by concise mentoring interactions with EIC officers in person or through phone calls.

The rest of this note is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a brief description of the context of Mauritius and the motivation for the intervention. Sections 3 and 4 examine the structural and behavioral constraints to labor force participation and employment among youth with low educational attainment. Sections 5 and 6 illustrate the design and implementation of the behavioral intervention. Section 7 describes the data used in the analysis, presents basic descriptive statistics,

and illustrates the methodology of the impact evaluation. Section 8 discusses key findings of the implementation of the behavioral intervention. Section 9 concludes and proposes policy recommendations.

2. CONTEXT AND MOTIVATION

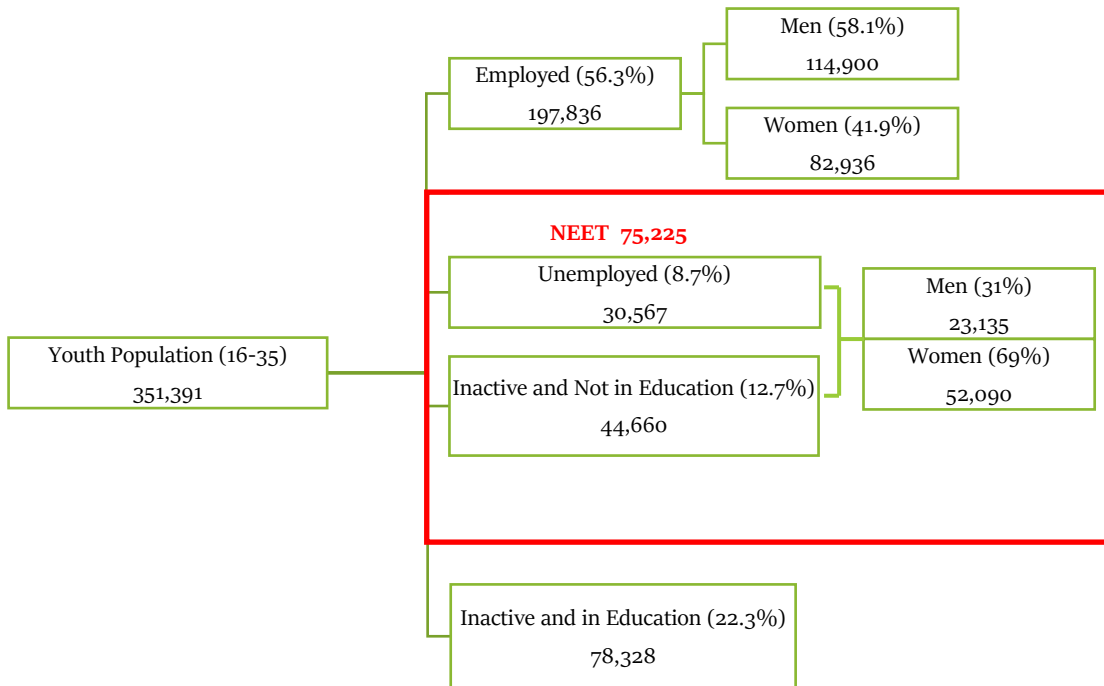
Mauritius is, for good reason, often cited as an African success story. It has one of the strongest economies in Africa, with a per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of US\$23,751 (measured in current international dollars) in 2018. Over the past decades, it has achieved an extraordinary structural transformation from a low-income monocrop exporter to a diversified service-based economy that has brought about steady economic growth and poverty reduction. The long-lasting economic success has recently fallen short of expectations in both growth and shared prosperity. As poverty has continued to decline, income inequality has been widening, primarily because of the dynamics of labor income. Fiscal redistribution has partially offset the expansion in labor income inequality, while contributing to erosion in the fiscal space.

The population of Mauritius is aging rapidly and the labor force is shrinking. The dependency ratio is projected to increase from 40.8 in 2018 to 62.5 by 2058. Mauritius will therefore need to pursue a new growth model to reignite productivity growth and share the resulting benefits more widely. This will require innovation, the adoption of new technologies, investments in skills relevant for a service-oriented knowledge economy, improvements in the quality of learning, support for labor force participation among youth and women, and attracting and retaining highly skilled foreign labor. Such a growth model could help ensure that a larger share of the population currently inactive contributes to economic growth, enjoys the benefits of the growth, and becomes less dependent on fiscal redistribution.

Two partially overlapping population groups show significantly lower than average labor force participation rates: women and youth. Gender gaps in education have been narrowed, and girls now outstrip boys in schooling outcomes among young cohorts. However, this achievement is not carrying over into the labor market. Women's labor force participation is estimated at 57.5 percent in 2018, compared with 89.0 percent among men. Almost 70 percent of inactive women have at best completed the certificate of primary education, and about one inactive woman in two is living in a household in the bottom 40. Meanwhile, there are over 351,000 youth ages 16–35, and about 21 percent of these youth (around 75,000 individuals) are not in education, employment, or training (NEET): 12.7 percent are idle (out of the labor market and out of school), and 8.7 percent are in search of jobs (unemployed).² Almost 70 percent of NEET youth are women (figure 1).

² The NEET group comprises unemployed youth and youth who are inactive (neither employed nor looking for jobs) and not in education.

Figure 1. Youth (Ages 16–35) in the Labor Market, 2018

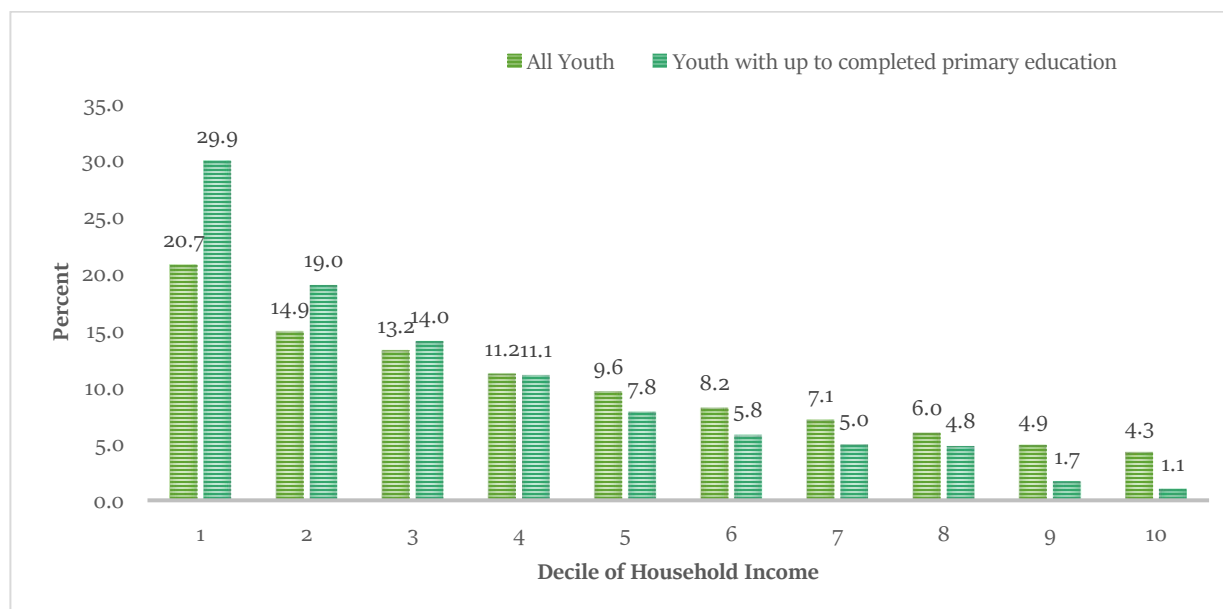


Source: Based on data of the CMPHS (Continuous Multi-Purpose Household Survey) (database), Statistics Mauritius, Port Louis, <http://statsmauritius.govmu.org/English/CensusandSurveys/Pages/Continous-Multipurpose-survey-Lists.aspx>.

Note: The percentages in brackets are calculated as a share of the level displayed in the higher-level cell.

About 39 percent of NEET youth have at best completed primary education. Of the approximately 75,000 NEET youth, almost 30,000 (about 8 percent of the country's youth population) exhibit low educational attainment. NEET status and low educational outcomes are typically accompanied by poor living standards. About 74 percent of NEET youth with low levels of education are living in households in the bottom 40, and about 30 percent are living in poor households (figure 2). NEET youth with low educational attainment (84 percent) tend to be supported by their parents or by their spouses (especially in the case of young married women). Only about one of these youth in two has ever worked. Young women mention household duties and dissatisfaction with jobs as the main reasons they have left employment, whereas young men report reasons such as completion of contracts, dissatisfaction with the jobs, and health issues. About 81 percent of young NEET women with low education report they are not available to work because of household or family duties. Young NEET men with low education are more likely to mention a permanent or temporary disability or an unspecified reason.

Figure 2. Share of NEET Youth (Ages 16–35), by Decile of Household Income, 2018



Source: Based on data of the CMPHS database.

The large share of NEET youth should be a particular concern of governments for at least two reasons. At the macrolevel, NEET youth could contribute to economic growth rather than rely on family support or public transfers to make ends meet. At the microlevel, youth disengaged from both formal learning and work miss the opportunity to develop and grow at an age that is crucial to future social and economic outcomes. In addition, the living conditions and surroundings of NEET individuals, particularly young men, often lead to economic vulnerability, social marginalization, and, potentially, exposure to risky and violent behavior. Among young women, detachment from the labor force creates economic dependency that may be difficult to reverse at later stages of life. There are also good equity reasons for fostering labor force participation and employability among young NEET individuals with little education. To avoid perpetuating marginalization and low-income traps, NEET youth with little education should be supported in developing technical, cognitive, and behavioral skills that foster their engagement in the labor market and increase their chances of becoming employed.

A large number of youth employment programs have been implemented in Mauritius that focus mostly on developing job-related skills and providing work experience. Annex A, Table A.1, provides a list of youth employment programs, together with the responsible agencies, a brief description of the programs, and information on the target populations. The programs are all targeted at individuals with at least school certificates (lower-secondary education).³ An exception

³ An exception was the National Certificate in Adult Literacy–Level 1 offered by the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development. The training program, discontinued in 2018, aimed at providing numeracy and language skills (350 hours in total) to unemployed school dropouts ages 16–21 and reorienting them to a vocational program. It included a strong emphasis on life training skills and provided psychological and social backup.

is represented by ad hoc counseling services that are offered by the EICs to registered job-seekers and that include support in the preparation of résumés and for job interviews. These counseling services, however, do not address relevant technical and soft skill barriers that youth with little education face in approaching the labor market. In rapidly changing labor markets, successful workers need to be equipped with a bundle of skills that range from cognitive skills, such as foundational literacy and numeracy, problem-solving, and creative thinking skills, to socioemotional skills, such as self-control, grit, empathy, and curiosity, and also technical skills (Carranza and Pimkina 2018). The counseling services offered at the EICs emphasize basic job search skills, but do not seek to address some of the broader technical and soft skill gaps (see sections 3 and 4).

3. STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINTS

This section lays out the structural barriers affecting the labor force participation and employment of youth with little education. Structural constraints are broader macroeconomic, institutional, or otherwise predetermined factors, including those related to formal education, that limit the participation of youth in the labor market.

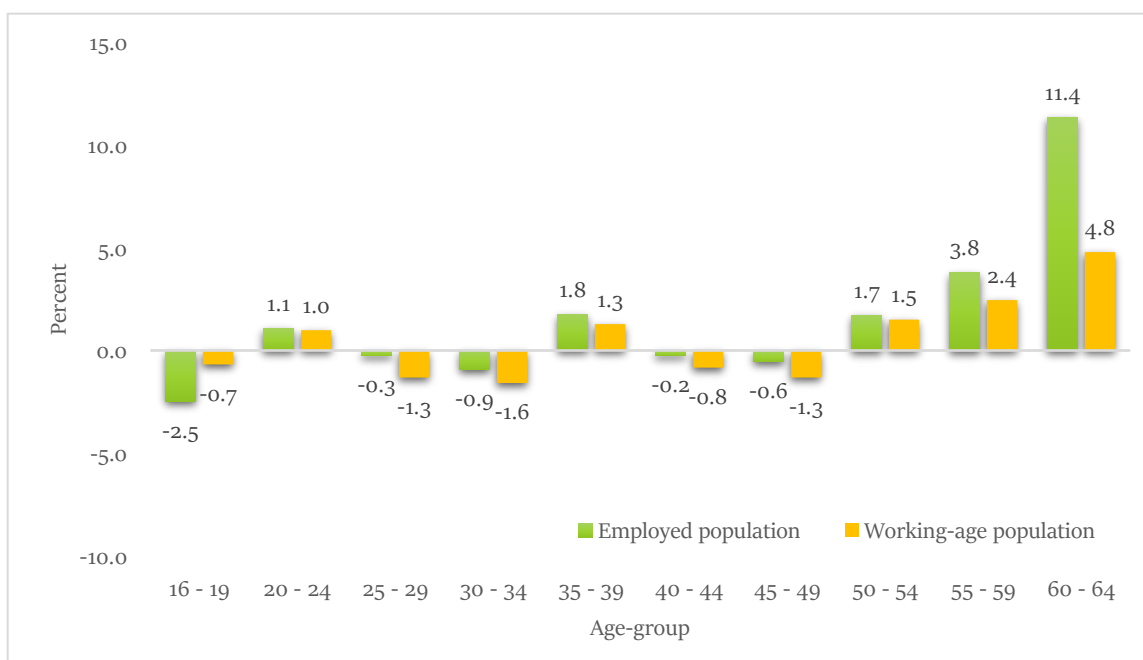
Labor demand and the macroeconomic environment

Over the past decade, steady economic growth at an average of 3.6 percent a year has translated into sustained growth in labor demand. The economy has created jobs at a rate of 1 percent a year, for a total of over 55,000 jobs in 10 years. The growth in the size of the working-age population (ages 16–64) has been much slower, at an annual rate of 0.35 percent. A breakdown of the changes in employment and the working-age population by age-group indicates that employment has risen much more quickly or decreased less rapidly than local labor supply within each age-group (figure 3). One exception is the 16–19 age-group. Among this age-group, employment fell by 2.5 percent a year, whereas labor supply declined by 0.7 percent a year. This can be explained by a rise in enrollment rates, while youngsters are staying longer in school today than a decade ago. The number of jobs created in the economy is greatly outpacing the increase in local labor supply, and employers are hiring a growing number of foreign workers. According to Statistics Mauritius, the number of foreign workers employed in large establishments in 2008 was estimated at about 24,000 individuals.⁴ Foreign workers have largely tended to fill low-skill jobs in manufacturing and construction.⁵

⁴ The number had increased to about 29,200 by 2018. These figures are likely to be an underestimate of total foreign employment because they do not account for foreign workers employed in small establishments. As of December 2018, the total number of valid work permits was 42,818, which is about 30 percent more than the number of foreign workers employed in large establishments.

⁵ As of January 2020, about 68 percent of valid work permits had been issued to workers employed in manufacturing, 20 percent to workers in the construction sector, and 4 percent to workers in commerce. Almost two valid work permits in three have been issued to workers who come to Mauritius to work as sewing machine operators, masons, fish cutters, carpenters, and machine operators in bakeries.

Figure 3. Change in Employment and the Working-Age Population, by Age-Group, 2008–18



Source: Based on data of the CMPHS database.

Structural transformation, technological progress, and automation have led to a considerable growth in the number of medium- and high-skill occupations and a decline in the number of low-skill occupations that are typically filled by individuals with low educational attainment. However, the decline in low-skill jobs was driven by the dynamics of the labor market in agriculture and construction, sectors that now contribute about 7 percent each to total employment. By contrast, there was a rise in the number of elementary occupations in services, especially in occupations that do not face automatization in the near future, including hotel and office cleaners and helpers, food preparation assistants, messengers, package deliverers, porters, and domestic helpers.

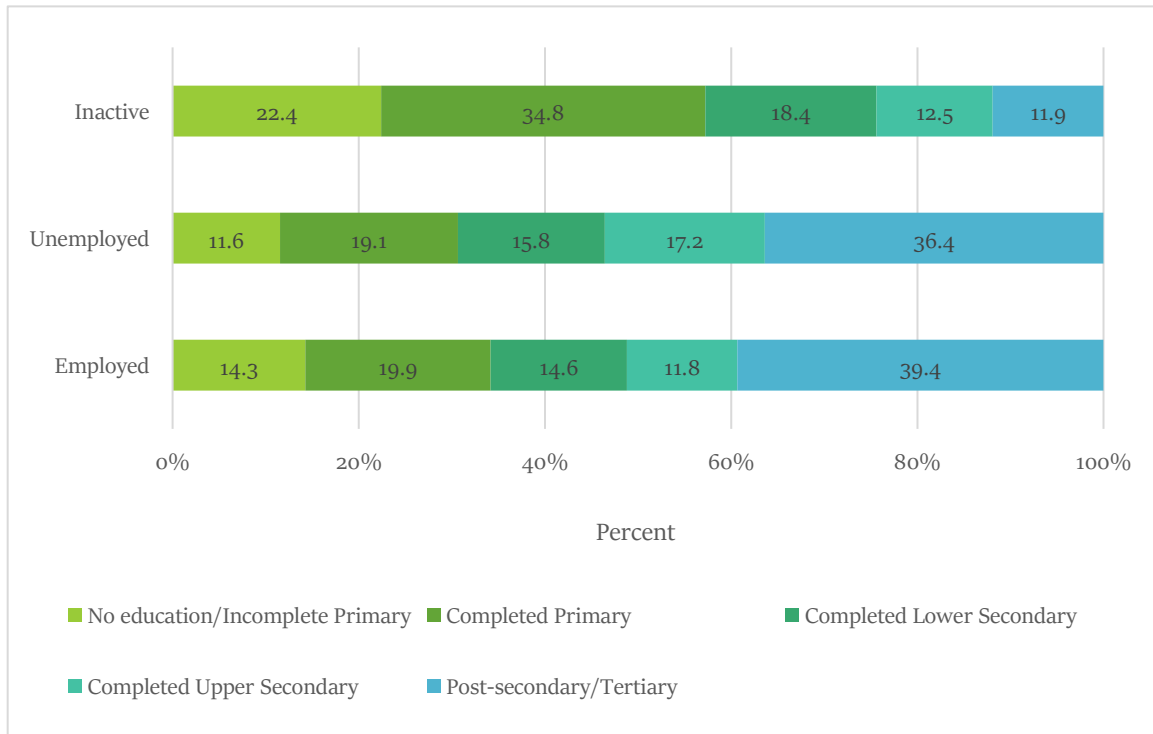
Labor supply and human capital

About 60 percent of NEET youth are inactive and out of school, while the remaining 40 percent are unemployed. Most NEET youth have low educational attainment. About 57 percent of idle youth have completed primary education (figure 4). This compares with 31 percent among the unemployed and 48.5 percent among the employed and indicates that, while low educational outcomes certainly increase the odds of not finding a job, a nonnegligible share of employed youth share the same low levels of education.⁶ However, illiteracy is slightly more prevalent among idle

⁶ The gap expands considerably in terms of upper-secondary and tertiary education, which are key in a services-oriented economy such as Mauritius. About one in employed or unemployed youth in two holds a diploma or a university degree, whereas the share is 24 percent among inactive and out-of-school youth.

youth (at 5.9 percent) relative to unemployed and employed youth (around 1 percent). Moreover, family background, as captured by household income, seems to be poorer among NEET youth with little education relative to employed youth with little education, possibly pointing to barriers to employment beyond education.

Figure 4. Distribution of Educational Attainment, by Labor Market Status, Youth Not in Education, 2018



Source: Based on data of the CMPHS database.

Institutional constraints on matching labor demand and supply

Information asymmetries about job characteristics and worker skills abound in the labor market. This means that matching individuals to job vacancies can be a costly process, particularly in the case of low-skill and entry-level jobs (Autor and Scarborough 2008). In Mauritius, youth with little education rely mostly on their networks and do not follow a formal process to look for jobs. Word of mouth is the main source of information on low-skill jobs available to these youth. Employers report that individuals with low educational attainment typically present themselves at the place of employment to inquire about jobs. Interviewees typically said that connections were required to obtain a job. A network of 14 EICs that operate under the supervision of the Employment Service Division of the Ministry of Labor, Human Resources Development, and Training are not considered effective by most youth, who register only to search for jobs in the public sector.

Every month, EICs are notified of an average of 3,500 job vacancies. About 90 percent of the vacancies refer to middle- or low-skill jobs because employers typically use private employment

agencies to fill high-skill jobs.⁷ The placement rate through EICs is low because of a mix of factors, including job preferences among job-seekers and the requirements set by employers. Most job offers, on which information about wages is available, pay around the minimum wage, and some require work in shifts or at night. In some cases, particularly in the case of elementary occupations, which are supposedly the best match for individuals with little education, employers require lower- or upper-secondary education in one vacancy in four. On average, around 20 percent of the job-seekers registered at the EICs are placed within a month.⁸ About two in three are not selected by employers, and the rest either decline the job offer or the job interview.

Lack of affordable family support services

There is a lack of affordable family support services, particularly services related to childcare. Early childhood education in Mauritius includes day-care centers (for under-3- year-olds) and preprimary schools (children ages 3–5). These centers serve, on average, a population of between 86 (Black River) and 180 age-eligible children (Port Louis), which is insufficient to meet the demand of all parents with young children, especially in relatively underserved regions (Tandrayen-Ragoobur 2019). Besides, cost is a fundamental barrier among low-income households. Most care centers are privately owned, and these typically charge fees in the range of MUR 2,500–MUR 3,500 per month, which amounts to approximately 30 percent–40 percent of the average wage of women with low educational attainment. Moreover, many centers have limited opening hours that do not cater to the needs of working families. These institutional constraints in the provision of affordable childcare services, combined with traditional gender norms that assign women broad responsibilities for care and other domestic work, constrain employment, particularly among married women.

4. BEHAVIORAL CONSTRAINTS

The results of the diagnostic analysis identified six areas in which inactive youth and women present behavioral barriers to accessing the labor market: (a) lack of achievable and realistic aspirations, (b) prevalent gender roles, (c) mental models and biased expectations about the labor market, (d) lack of individual socioemotional skills, (e) inexperience and lack of job search skills, and (f) lack of on-the-job socioemotional skills.

Aspirations are defined as an underlying ability to set future goals and to sustain the motivation to pursue these goals. As is well documented, unrealistic aspirations or the lack of aspirations can hinder future-oriented behavior or investments (Janzen et al. 2017). Among the participants in the group discussions, some exhibited a lack of achievable and realistic aspirations and, at times, an absolute absence of aspirations. While some aspired to gain more education (languages, cooking, vocational education) and to obtain stable jobs, the current situations of the

⁷ As of July 2019, 62 private employment agencies were authorized to operate in the country.

⁸ This includes placements by the central employment service office through other programs, such as the Youth Employment Program, the Workfare Program, the Back to Work Program, or the Dual Training Program.

interviewees were at odds with these goals, and there was little clarity on the what might be required to reach the goals. Some inactive women mentioned that they had to abandon plans to continue studying or follow certain career paths after becoming pregnant and said they no longer entertained hopes or aspirations for the future beyond childcare and household responsibilities.

In line with the available data, there was evidence of the prevalence of gender roles affecting household responsibilities and labor force participation. Many women commented on the difficulty of balancing work with care for young children and other unpaid household work and the lack of a division of labor in the home. When asked about the main reason why they are not engaged in the labor market, most inactive women mentioned household responsibilities and childcare; the lack of education was mentioned, but only in a few cases. According to data of Afrobarometer (2017), 7 Mauricians in 10 report that it is better for a family if a woman has the main responsibility of home and childcare, and almost half of Mauricians agree with the statement that men should be given preference in jobs. Data from the 2018 Living Conditions Survey show that women ages 25–34 spend on average over five hours a day on production activities that are not covered in the System of National Accounts, including both care work and unpaid domestic work, compared with only about 1 hour and 20 minutes among men. This highlights the importance of cultural and social norms as constraints to women’s engagement in paid work.

Additionally, there was evidence of mental models regarding the desired working conditions. Stable, well-paid government jobs were linked with many benefits and considered good jobs. These shared beliefs feed back on the establishment of unrealistic aspirations because they are not synchronized with market conditions, including the jobs available for individuals given their current qualifications and skills. For example, the stigma associated with work in certain sectors, such as agriculture and export-oriented enterprises, in which foreign workers are prevalent, may prevent low-skill youth from taking jobs in these sectors (HRDC 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2012d). In line with the observation that most young NEET men are supported by their parents and virtually all young married NEET women are supported by their spouses, several job-seekers indicated that parents would continue to provide for them as long as they could not find good jobs. This mindset may affect motivation and effort in searching for a job.

Several constraints were observed in terms of socioemotional skills. Sometimes referred to as soft skills, these include interpersonal skills—how people perceive themselves and regulate their emotions—and workplace readiness. Socioemotional skills have been shown to predict success in life and to be strongly correlated with labor market outcomes (Chakravarty, Das, and Vaillant 2017; Heckman and Kautz 2012). Group discussions suggest that these are low self-efficacy (beliefs about one’s capacity to complete a given task or achieve a goal), little resilience before setbacks, and limited self-worth. Participants showed fear about entering the labor market and declared they did not have sufficient skills or not know how to acquire such skills. There were also reports that the few participants motivated to look for jobs became easily discouraged after experiencing rejection during the job search process. Some also expressed feelings of rejection and exclusion in connection with past unsuccessful applications. This perceived lack of skills is consistent with the perceptions

of employers, who often report difficulties in finding workers with adequate technical and soft skills and sufficient work experience for the jobs they are offering (HRDC 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2012d).

Several barriers pertaining to the ability of youth to apply for jobs effectively were also identified. Beyond low educational attainment and lack of work experience were inexperience and lack of knowledge about various channels for undertaking job searches (for example, navigating web portals or look through want ads) and formal application processes (search strategies, the planning and preparation of applications or interviews). Word of mouth within personal networks appears to be the main source of information on available low-skill jobs. Youth with little education rely mostly on their families and friends as a strategy in looking for jobs, and a few rely on walk-ins. Employers reported that individuals with low educational attainment, not only youth, typically show up to places of employment to search for jobs without standard application documentation, such as CVs, reference letters, or IDs. Program participants typically expressed that connections were needed to find work. However, they did not feel that social networks were asymmetrically distributed in favor of people with greater social, political, or economic power.

Employability and employment skills were largely lacking. There was limited use of CVs and inexperience with CV writing, as well as literacy issues in the languages used in the job application process, mainly English and French. If they were questioned about their job searches, youth exhibited a lack of familiarity with market conditions, including the types of jobs available to individuals with their education and skill profile and the other options available to them, for example, in terms of employment services and vacancies advertised at EICs.⁹ Cognitive biases, coupled with inexperience and lack of employable skills are likely to place relatively uneducated youth at a particular disadvantage. Several inactive program participants also expressed the belief that experience is needed to obtain work. These multiple factors contribute to an inability to communicate employable qualities and a lack of motivation to carry out job searches. Self-regulation strategies, such as motivation control over plans and goals, the management of disruptive emotions, or work commitment and goal orientation, help predict job search intensity (Creed et al. 2009).

Some employers reported issues with on-the-job skills, such as punctuality and absence without permission; constraints linked with time management and sex discrimination affecting women, such as little or no flexibility in work schedules; and low retention in some sectors mainly because of lengthy shifts and work intensity. Nonetheless, many women reported that working hours did not allow them to manage household responsibilities, especially childcare. The discussions also highlighted that that lack of affordable day-care centers and the restrictive opening hours were significant structural constraints on women with children, but little education (see section 3).

⁹ Employers may submit job vacancy announcements to EICs using a standard form. This information is then filtered by EICs to preselect candidates according to job requirements, the amount of time since the job-seeker registered with the EIC, and current availability. The resulting list is reviewed by employers, who then contact candidates. The EICs receive feedback on placements.

5. INTERVENTION DESIGN

Youth seem to face more behavioral constraints than structural constraints in their decision to participate in the labor market. However, structural constraints, particularly in the case of young women, might contribute considerably to the likelihood that youth participate in the labor market. The unavailability or cost of childcare might thus hinder the participation of young women with little education.

Building on the behavioral diagnostic analysis, the findings of the 2018 Continuous Multi-Purpose Household Survey and a literature review of local and international experiences, potential behavioral solutions were identified.¹⁰ Using a randomized trial, the study examined the impact of an intervention that provides job-seekers with training in job searches, goal setting, and planning and an informational leaflet, the Job Search Primer. The one-page primer included data on local labor market conditions, resources, and tips. Though not initially foreseen, the intervention eventually involved boost training through a 20-minute phone call about four or five weeks after the initial training. The boost training consisted of a motivation and mentoring activity to follow up on the job search plans of participants using a structured script. The decision to include the boost responded to the suspension of the intervention on March 19 as a consequence of the preventive lockdown enforced by the Mauritian authorities because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The intervention thus consisted of three main components across two points in time: (1) start of the intervention: job-seekers participated in the training (in-person delivery); (2) simultaneous distribution and review of the jobs search primer; and (3) four to five weeks after the start of the intervention, the job-seekers received the boost training (phone delivery).

Training in job searches, goal setting, and planning

The training in job searches, goal setting, and planning focused on two main elements: (1) the job search journey: reference letters and résumés using simplified templates that were easy to navigate; and (2) soft-skill training to promote goal-orientation and the use of planning tools. Before the session, participants were provided with the Job-Seekers Workbook, which included four modules encompassing various activities, with space to record responses in each module. The workbook was in French, except for the CV and reference letter templates, which were in English in line with the relevant practice in Mauritius in job applications.

The training session lasted two hours, and the modules were designed to be stand-alone so that facilitators could deliver the content consistently without extensive training and to allow independent use of the workbook by job-seekers following the training. A summary of the modules

¹⁰ See CMPHS (Continuous Multi-Purpose Household Survey) (database), Statistics Mauritius, Port Louis, <http://statsmauritius.govmu.org/English/CensusandSurveys/Pages/Continuous-Multipurpose-survey-Lists.aspx>.

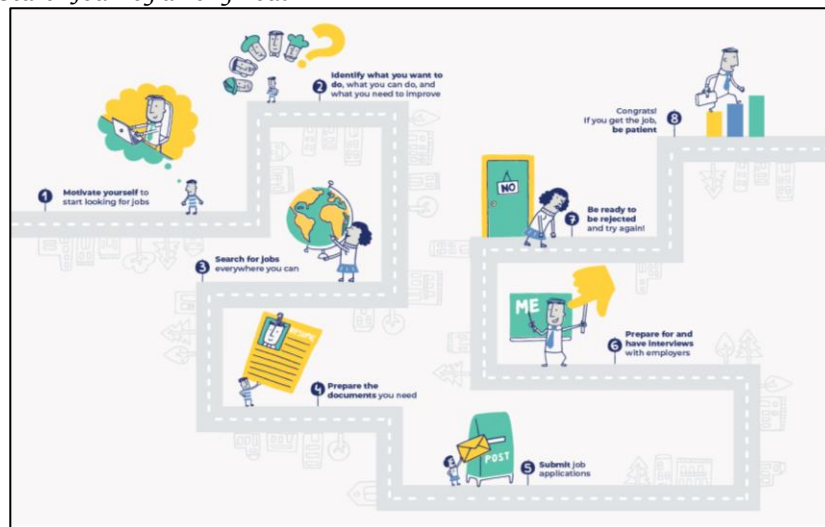
included in the workbook and the training is presented in figure 5. Not all modules were covered in the training.

Figure 5. Components of the Job-Seeker’s Workbook, Training, and Primer



Job search training. The job search training provided information and guidance about the search process and the required documentation to apply successfully for jobs. It was aimed at supporting youth in setting more realistic expectations, planning more effectively, and persevering in the face of obstacles. The diagnostic analysis found that many youth lacked experience in applying for jobs, which meant that there was uncertainty and misconceptions about the necessary steps, channels, and duration of the process of looking for employment opportunities. The initial activity involved a description of the job search journey, including the main steps, the requirements, the potential difficulties, and the possible outcomes. Trainers introduced the concept of the journey through an infographic (figure 6) and walked participants through a simplified process, stressing the potential challenges (lengthiness, substantial competition, the complexity of the options, uncertainty), the required soft skills (proactivity, goal setting, planning, perseverance) and the usefulness of completing the required documentation.

Figure 6. The Job Search Journey among Youth



The presentation then focused on two main documents to be prepared during the session: the reference letters and the CV. The inexperience in applying for job vacancies was reflected in the lack among youth of awareness of the basic documentation required by employers. The activity therefore sought to motivate and guide participants to fill out simplified templates of the reference letter and CV made available in the booklet that could then be used in applying for positions. After introducing each template, the trainer presented an example of the document and explained the contents of each section. Participants then filled out the fields with the available information, while the trainer answered questions and prompted participants on planning on how to obtain the missing pieces of information.

In the case of the reference letters, for example, participants would be asked to first complete a list of their professional references with full contact information. Those who had no work experience were asked to fill in information on personal references, such as teachers, community leaders, or relatives. The reference letters included sections on soft and hard skills, together with a rating to be used in the reference material. Abel, Burger, and Piraino (2017) and Carranza and Pimkina (2018) show that providing low-skill job-seekers in South Africa with reference letter templates increases the likelihood of callbacks from employers and then of employment. The template used in this study drew on this previous work, but relied also on lists of hard and soft skills that were adapted based on feedback by employers on the skills that were the most valuable. (The feedback was gathered during the diagnostic analysis through key informant interviews.)

Training in goal setting and planning. The training focused on goal setting and planning, two major soft skills for effective job searches that fieldwork revealed were largely absent among job-seekers. There was also evidence of a lack of achievable and realistic aspirations. The training included three main components and leveraged insights from behavioral science, such as simplification, implementation intentions, commitment devices, and the concept of making it social (instead of individual). Job-seekers were invited to set specific weekly job search goals in terms of the number of hours spent searching for jobs, identifying opportunities, and sending out applications. They also created weekly job search plans. They were provided with a weekly planning tool, a template structuring each activity into what, when, where, and how, and they were supplied with a checklist on job search channels. This was designed to respond to a knowledge gap identified during the diagnostic analysis. Job-seekers signed a commitment statement on their weekly goals and plan and were asked to write down the name of someone with whom they would share the plan. The goal setting, planning, and commitments established during week 1 were completed during the training sessions with guidance from the facilitators, and templates filled out during weeks 2-4 were included in the workbook.

The design and content of this part of the training built on early work by Gollwitzer (1999) on the positive effect of implementation intentions on effective goal pursuit as well as behavioral studies with job-seekers. For instance, in the United Kingdom, an intervention encouraging job-seekers to set job search goals, establish work plans, and commit to these goals and plans increased job search intensity and off-flow rates from unemployment benefits over the 11 months of the trial

(BIT 2015; Briscese and Tan 2018). Abel, Burger, and Piraino (2017) show that completing a detailed job search plan leads to a rise in the number of applications submitted and diversification in search channels, which translates into employment gains.

The Job Search Primer

The diagnostic analysis found that many youth lacked knowledge on the labor environment, job search channels, and the application process and that there were barriers linked with childcare responsibilities. The primer aims to provide accurate information to trainees on the local labor market, while reminding them of the main strategies they can apply to improve their job search and motivating themselves to succeed. The content and design of the primer were influenced by previous work with job-seekers. Thus, Altmann et al. (2015) find that a similar leaflet raised employment and earnings among German job-seekers facing great risk of long-term unemployment. In Turkey, a similar guide was found to have a positive effect on the take-up of active labor market services at job centers and on the utilization of more varied job search channels (Levin et al. 2019). Building on this evidence, a primer was designed that contained the following: (1) information on the number of vacancies available for job-seekers in EICs during the previous year and the number of job-seekers who had found a job; (2) the average duration of an unemployment spell and emphasis that the amount of job search effort increases the chances of finding a job; (3) five tips for effective job search, including being active, determined, social, flexible, and strong; (4) steps to start a job search and effectively apply for jobs; (5) information about childcare facility options and social support programs; and (6) EIC contact information. See annex C for a version in English.

Additional activities

Two additional activities that focused on socioemotional skills were included in the workbook, but were not covered in the training sessions because this would have required extending the duration of the training sessions. The Best of You was covered as part of the boost training, however.

The Best of You. This activity was designed to induce job-seekers to visualize a positive future self and increase positive feelings. The purpose was to motivate the participants to change their unemployment situation. It was meant to address perceptions of low self-worth and beliefs about their inability to achieve a goal, which were identified as barriers during the diagnostic analysis. Research has shown that visualizing one's best possible self raises the immediate positive effect (King 2001; Sheldon and Lyubomirsky 2006). During the activity, which was built on this work, the participants are instructed to close their eyes and imagine themselves in the future at a time when, after working hard, they have reached all their goals and dreams in life. Participants then write about the best self they had visualized. Repetition is encouraged.

Stories. The story activity was designed to reduce perceptions of threat and frame social adversity as a transitory situation shared by peers and not individually experienced. It was built on the psychological literature on social belonging as a way to decrease psychological perceptions of

threat in challenging situations and generate adaptive interpretations of situations to motivate adaptive behaviors. Research shows that generating social belonging favors the state of general well-being and a receptive attitude toward growth possibilities (Walton and Cohen 2011). The activity included in the workbook entails reading testimonies by two fictional individuals. This is followed by a reflection exercise, during which participants write advice to a friend also searching for a job; they also write about how their own experiences compare with those in the stories and what they learned about solutions that can be used to overcome the obstacles they are facing. These steps are important in encouraging participants to internalize the message.

Boost training

The boost training activity consisted of a brief motivation and mentoring session over the phone for roughly 20 minutes on average. It covered two main components: The Best of You activity (included in the workbook and described above) and a mentoring activity to reinforce the training and guide participants in the job search tasks covered during the training. The boost training was delivered by the facilitators involved in the training to induce reciprocity and increase morale (Sanders and Kirkman 2019). It was anticipated that a personal and individualized call by the facilitator to offer guidance and check how the job-seeker was doing could encourage greater motivation to follow through with the planned actions and to persist in job searching. Moreover, at the end of the boost, the facilitator summarized back to the job-seeker the tasks agreed during the call and prompted the job-seeker to commit to follow through and thereby increase the chances of finding a job.

The Best of You exercise was included because of its focus on promoting positive feelings and improving resilience, which was considered particularly relevant in the context of COVID-19. At the end of the exercise, participants were encouraged to repeat the exercise each day and prompted to specify the preferable time of day. Self-regulation strategies have been shown to predict job search intensity and to foster dimensions such as the management of disruptive emotions (Creed et al. 2009). The mentoring activity mainly focused on identifying and contacting people to provide references. It encompassed (1) reinstating the value of references and offering guidance on who to ask; (2) prompting job-seekers to identify and complete any missing details in their workbooks for two possible references, including name, phone number, and role or position; if they could not recall some of this information, job-seekers were prompted to make a specific plan for obtaining it later; and (3) encouraging them to contact each of the two references, including making a specific plan for when to do so. This task was based on the qualitative analysis of the templates completed by job-seekers during the training sessions, which revealed incomplete information in most cases. It was also based on evidence from past work on the positive effects of encouraging job-seekers to obtain and use references (Abel, Burger, and Piraino 2017; Levin et al. 2019), and the feasibility for implementation over the phone. The mentoring activity encompassed a brief discussion about the CV and guidance on the completion of some of the missing sections.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

Sampling and random assignment

According to data of the 2018 Continuous Multi-Purpose Household Survey, the estimated population ages 16–35 with up to completed primary education (including prevocational education) was approximately 86,250 across the nine districts on the island of Mauritius.¹¹ Economically active youth accounted for 67.5 percent of the youth population with low educational attainment, and 60 percent were employed. Thus, inactive and unemployed youth with low educational attainment on the island of Mauritius, that is, the target population of the intervention, was equivalent to about 34,615 individuals.

Power calculations considered job search as the main outcome of the intervention. For the target population, 20.4 percent of youth had been looking for jobs during the four weeks before the survey. According to previous work of the World Bank in the implementation of a similar intervention in Turkey (Levin et al. 2019), the probability that participants would be looking for work following the intervention might increase by 20 percentage points, the minimum detectable effect assumed in these calculations. Considering that the number of participating EICs or intervention clusters was fixed and equivalent to seven, the sample size required to detect an impact from the training was 520 per treatment group, that is, effectively, 1,040 youth.

Participants in the intervention were identified using the list of job-seekers ages 16–35 with low educational attainment (up to the certificate of primary education) registered at EICs (2,450 in January 2020). Individuals were considered eligible if they were NEET as well as if they had done only a small amount of paid work (up to six hours) in the seven days prior to the interview.

Participants were recruited through phone calls and SMSs by a third-party survey firm. Eligible participants were invited to participate in a study where they would be asked about their job searches and work experience. It was indicated that they would be provided with a complimentary meal and would also enter a lottery for a free job search training session upon completion of the questionnaire. Participants selected their preferred date and time to participate in the study at the EIC where they had registered or at a specified location near their homes in the case of weekend sessions. Participants were sent an SMS reminder one day prior to their scheduled session.

Randomization was carried out at the job-seeker level within each data collection session. Participants were thus invited to visit a specified venue to complete the baseline survey, which was administered through a computer-assisted personal interview by the third-party survey firm. Upon completion of the survey, participants were randomly assigned to a control arm (no training and no primer) and a treatment arm (training in job searches, goal setting, and planning, plus primer) following a random assignment algorithm embedded in the computer-assisted personal

¹¹ The estimated youth population with low educational attainment on Rodrigues was approximately 5,250 in 2018.

interviewing system. This design was chosen to avoid self-selection bias and ensure balance between the treatment and control arms.

Implementation of the training

The intervention was implemented in 8 of the 14 EICs, in partnership with the Ministry of Labor, Human Resources Development, and Training.¹² Participating EICs were located in 7 of the 10 districts of Mauritius, and adequate space and infrastructure for the training were the main criteria used in selection.

The implementation of the intervention started on March 9, 2020. The baseline survey and training were planned to take 18 calendar days and to finish on March 27. A fourth implementation week was scheduled to begin immediately thereafter, during the week of March 30, in case activities had been delayed. In addition, the end line survey collection was planned to start five weeks after the launch of the intervention, on April 13, 2020, and last for three weeks.

The training session lasted about two hours and was delivered by two specialized facilitators to groups of up to 12 job-seekers. In general, there were two training sessions per day (weekends included) in EIC venues and in external locations to accommodate training outside EIC operating hours. Five facilitators with degrees in social work or psychology and previous professional experience with the target population were recruited and trained by the World Bank team to deliver the training. Although it did not occur as initially planned, close remote monitoring was carried out of the implementation of the intervention by the World Bank team, particularly to oversee and provide support to facilitators during implementation and to address any issues in a timely manner.¹³ (See annex B for additional details on the implementation.)

Implementation of the boost training

The boost training consisted of a brief motivation and mentoring activity and was delivered by phone by four of the five facilitators involved in the training. Facilitators received a detailed, structured script in advance of calls to ensure consistency and coverage of the intended content. The calls took place in Creole. Implementation of the boost training started on April 15 and was completed on April 18, 2020. Date, starting time, and end time of the calls were recorded. Each call took an average of 21 minutes. Attrition was low. Of the 160 participants in the treatment arm, 142

¹² All EICs across the island of Mauritius have been undergoing a renovation of facilities and an upgrade of information technology infrastructure. At the time of the intervention, eight EICs had completed the upgrade and were deemed suitable by the Ministry of Labor, Human Resources Development, and Training. Youth registered in the remaining EICs across the island of Mauritius were distributed across the selected EICs based on geographical proximity. The following eight EICs were part of the intervention: Central Flacq, Curepipe, Port Louis, Quartier Militaire, Rivière des Anguilles, Rivière du Rempart, Triolet, and Vacoas.

¹³ The cancellation of missions because of the pandemic impeded travel to Mauritius to supervise the initial implementation of the intervention. See the timeline of field activities and challenges.

were successfully contacted and completed the boost training (89 percent); 16 could not be reached (10 percent); and 2 refused to participate (1 percent).

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic severely compromised the chances of success of the intervention. Although the health and economic shocks have been conceivably similar across all individuals in both the treated and the control arms, the sanitary curfew and movement restrictions imposed and enforced by the government meant that individuals were prohibited from going out except for grocery shopping. They could thus not search for jobs along traditional avenues. For instance, they could ask previous employers only by phone for reference letters. This and other obstacles drastically reduced the number of available job vacancies. In addition, confinement measures and increasing economic hardship generated uncertainty, anxiety, and stress about the future and potentially canceled any potential positive effect deriving from the training session.

7. DATA AND METHODS

Descriptive evidence

When the implementation was halted on March 19, 17 data collection sessions had taken place, and the sample consisted of 306 job-seekers. This included 160 participants in the treatment arm who had participated in the baseline collection and training sessions (52 percent) and 146 participants in the control arm who had participated in the baseline survey collection only.¹⁴ Given the unplanned interruption of the intervention, the number of job-seekers participating in the intervention falls short of the estimate based on power calculations (520 per arm and 1,040 in total).

The sample of participants consisted predominantly of women (64 percent), and women were more broadly represented in the control group (8 percentage points greater), though the shares are not statistically different. Participants were, on average, 27 years of age, and the majority were ages 22–32. There was no difference between the groups. In both groups, half the participants each had at least one child, and, on average, they were living with almost five additional members in the household. Youth in the control group tended to be living in slightly more well off households relative to their treatment group peers, as captured by the greater share of participants in the highest quintile and the smaller share in the lowest quintile on a composite wealth index of assets.

Table 3 summarizes the characteristics of the study sample at the collection of the baseline survey through three main sets of 25 indicators: sociodemographic, labor market and job search, and socioemotional skills. Additionally, the table reports the values of the averages for the treatment and control experimental groups, the test of the differences between these values to assess the balance before intervention, the assignment rate, and the overall compliance of the intervention.

¹⁴ Another five participants were assigned to the treatment arm, but excluded from the sample because they refused to take part in the training portion of the program. Additionally, 8 participants assigned to the treatment arm started the training, but left before it had finished.

Table 3. The Main Characteristics among the Sample and the Balance across Groups at Baseline

	Sample	Treatment	Control	Difference	p-value
<i>A. Sociodemographic analysis</i>					
Women	0.64	0.60	0.68	0.08	0.20
Years of age	27.29	26.78	27.76	0.98	0.16
Single	0.39	0.43	0.34	-0.09	0.13
Has a child or children	0.49	0.46	0.53	0.07	0.30
Number of household members	4.58	4.51	4.65	0.14	0.45
Lowest 20 percent of wealth index	0.26	0.27	0.24	-0.03	0.61
Highest 20 percent of wealth index	0.20	0.19	0.21	0.01	0.75
Literate in French	0.78	0.77	0.79	0.02	0.54
Literate in English	0.73	0.70	0.75	0.05	0.25
No education or incomplete primary	0.53	0.55	0.51	-0.04	0.51
Complete primary or incomplete lower secondary	0.41	0.39	0.43	0.04	0.54
Complete lower secondary	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.00	0.92
<i>B. Labor market and job search</i>					
Worked last week	0.12	0.10	0.14	0.04	0.29
Looked for work last week	0.47	0.41	0.52	0.11	0.07
Months unemployed	32.52	31.69	33.32	1.63	0.57
Has worked in the past	0.74	0.67	0.81	0.14	0.01
Has looked for work before	0.30	0.33	0.27	-0.06	0.34
Willingness to work	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.00	0.98
<i>C. Socioemotional skills</i>					
Self-efficacy:* I won't be very good at job searching	0.38	0.39	0.38	-0.02	0.86
Control:* I can't control finding a job	0.40	0.50	0.30	-0.20	0.00
Valence: work is an important part of life	0.98	0.99	0.98	-0.01	0.65
Subjective norm:* it is useless to look for a job	0.14	0.19	0.10	-0.09	0.03
Growth mindset:* intelligence can't be changed	0.61	0.62	0.60	-0.02	0.83
Grit: setbacks don't discourage me	0.59	0.62	0.57	-0.05	0.43
Diligence: I finish what I begin	0.90	0.87	0.93	0.06	0.05
<i>D. Intervention</i>					
End line information	0.91	0.90	0.93	0.02	0.61
Assigned to treatment arm	0.52	1.00	0.00		
Attended training in job searches, goal setting, and planning	0.48	0.92	0.00		
Participated in boost training	0.47	0.90	0.00		

Note: A selection of baseline indicators is reported. The *p*-values are from a Mantel-Haenszel chi-square test of differences between categorical variables, except for Years of age, Number of household members, and Months unemployed, which come from a t-test of differences of means. Socioemotional skill indicators show the share of responses strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement presented.

* Reverse coded items.

The low educational attainment among participating youth is confirmed by the baseline information. Around a quarter of youth in the sample (73 percent–78 percent) reported that they were able to read and write in both English and French, with slightly less literacy in the former and no statistically significant difference between the treatment arms. Half the participants (53 percent) had not obtained a certificate of primary education, and the absolute majority (94 percent) had not completed lower-secondary school. These patterns are observed homogeneously among both experimental groups.

The labor market and job search indicators, the primary outcomes of interest of the study, reflect the difficult conditions of the NEET population with low educational attainment in Mauritius. The employment rate reported is low, at 12 percent, and only half of the youth who were not working had actively looked for jobs over the previous week (47 percent). The average unemployment spell was more than two and a half years (32 months), which contrasts with the large share of participants who expressed a willingness to work (96 percent). The experience of this population in the labor market was limited; 25 percent had no previous job experience, and 70 percent of those looking for jobs were doing so for the first time. The treatment group participants had less work experience (67 percent versus 81 percent) and were less likely to be looking for jobs (41 percent versus 52 percent) than their control group peers.

Socioemotional skill levels, as reported by the level of agreement with statements presented to the respondents, replicate the observations drawn from the diagnostic analysis. In general, a considerable portion of the sampled youth were not confident in their capacity to look for a job (self-efficacy: 38 percent) or in the control they can exert to influence the outcome of their job search (control: 40 percent). Although nearly all the youth surveyed valued work as a relevant activity in their lives (valence: 98 percent), a share exhibits feelings of hopelessness while looking for jobs (subjective norm: 14 percent). Among the general skills, many perceive themselves as perseverant (grit: 59 percent) and diligent (diligence: 90 percent), although the majority consider intelligence as an inflexible trait (growth mindset: 61 percent). Compared with the control group, participants assigned to the training report less control, are less hopeless about their job search outcomes (differences of 20 and 9 percentage points), and perceive themselves as less diligent (difference of 6 percentage points).

In the end line, 280 participants were surveyed, including 148 in the treatment arm and 132 in the control arm, representing 10 percent and 7 percent attrition, respectively, without significant differences between the groups. For the assignment of the intervention, 52 percent were randomly selected to participate in the training sessions, while the remaining 146 were part of the contrast group. The compliance rate of the intervention was extremely high; 91.9 percent (147) of the participants assigned to the treatment arm attended the training, and 90.0 percent (144) received the boost training, while none of the control group took part in the training or received the boost training.

Methods

The first evaluation model is aimed at capturing the intention-to-treat effect of the intervention. In real world interventions, individuals assigned to participate in a program can decide whether to take part in the program or not, unlike in laboratory settings. In cases in which some individuals decide not to participate, there is no full compliance, and impact evaluations can only estimate the effect of offering the intervention, not necessarily of participating. This estimated effect is known as the intention to treat and is obtained by comparing groups of individuals to whom the intervention has randomly been offered, regardless of whether or not these individuals in the

treatment group actually participate. Mathematically, the model estimated follows a linear probability specification, as follows:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta A_i + \sum_{j=1}^J \gamma_j X_{ij} + \nu_d + \varepsilon_i, \quad (1)$$

where Y_i is the outcome variable measured at end line (for example, job search) for youth i ; A_i is a dummy variable taking the value 1 for youth assigned to the treatment group; and the X_{ij} individual and household baseline control variables, namely, age, gender, educational attainment (no education or incomplete primary, complete primary or incomplete lower secondary, and complete lower secondary), and a composite wealth index. Finally, ν_d is the randomization-level fixed effect, and the error term is given by ε_i . The coefficient β identifies the intention-to-treat effect.

In the absence of full compliance, the impact of an intervention among the group of individuals who are offered the intervention and actually take it may be a point of interest. This impact is known as the treatment on the treated. The following linear probability model is estimated:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta TB_i + \delta T_i + \sum_{j=1}^J \gamma_j X_{ij} + \nu_d + \varepsilon_i, \quad (2)$$

where TB_i is a dummy variable taking the value of 1 for youth who were assigned to the treatment and took the training and the boost training, and T_i is a dummy variable taking the value of 1 for youth who were assigned to the treatment and took the regular training, but not the boost training. The coefficient β identifies the treatment-on-the-treated effect of the full treatment (training and boost training); δ measures the treatment-on-the-treated effect of the main training sessions only, without the boost training.

To examine whether the intervention has a differential effect according to sex, the intention-to-treat and the treatment-on-the-treated coefficients are interacted with a dummy variable for women.

8. RESULTS

The impact of the intervention over eight selected outcomes is summarized in table 4. The outcomes can be aggregated into three main groups: job search and employability, socioemotional skills, and labor market outcome. The results discussed in this section cover the intention-to-treat effect, which considers the effect of the initial random assignment to the treatment arm on the outcomes, and the treatment-on-the-treated effect, which captures the impact of the actual participation in the training and boost activities on the outcomes, after controlling for those who did not take part in the boost training.

Table 4. Intervention Impacts on Selected Outcomes: Intention to Treat and Treatment on the Treated

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	<i>Prepared or posted CV</i>	<i>Requested references</i>	<i>Worked on search plan</i>	<i>Looked for work</i>	<i>Grit</i>	<i>Growth mindset</i>	<i>Expectations</i>	<i>Worked</i>
<i>Intention to treat</i>								
Assigned	0.338*** (0.0632)	0.210*** (0.0335)	0.135** (0.0529)	0.139* (0.0659)	0.0143 (0.0908)	0.0112 (0.0474)	-0.0438 (0.0983)	-0.0545 (0.0622)
Constant	0.402** (0.119)	0.0995 (0.236)	-0.207* (0.0915)	0.377* (0.198)	4.007*** (0.4460)	0.730** (0.2760)	4.582*** (0.2100)	0.108 (0.230)
<i>Treatment on the treated</i>								
Training and boost	0.332*** (0.0547)	0.208*** (0.0414)	0.130** (0.0406)	0.123 (0.0669)	-0.0447 (0.0957)	0.0755 (0.0579)	-0.0564 (0.0908)	-0.0488 (0.0653)
No boost	-0.154 (0.133)	-0.154 (0.124)	-0.0578 (0.129)	-0.0472 (0.106)	0.00561 (0.1770)	0.13 (0.0912)	-0.246 (0.2460)	0.00107 (0.192)
Constant	0.454*** (0.120)	0.130 (0.234)	-0.186* (0.0940)	0.399* (0.196)	4.011*** (0.4490)	0.733** (0.2820)	4.569*** (0.2190)	0.0988 (0.235)
N	280	280	280	280	280	280	280	280

Note: Estimates from an ordinary least squares regression, including individual sociodemographic controls (female, age, marital status as single, and educational attainment), and fixed effects dichotomous variables (6) for the day of random assignment. Standard errors are clustered at the EIC level. Dependent variables 1-4, 6 and 8 are defined as dichotomous variables set equal to 1 if respondent reported the stated activity at the end line survey, and dependent variables 5 and 7 are the averages of 2 and 6 respective items, scored on a Likert agreeableness scale ranging from 1 to 5.

Significance level: * = 10 percent, ** = 5 percent, *** = 1 percent.

Job search and employability

The training had highly positive impacts on job search behavior and the employability of the participating youth (column 1-3). Participants in the training and the boost training showed a greater compliance with the specific job search strategies covered during the training activities, namely, preparing, revising, or submitting a CV (33 percentage points, column 1); asking for a referral or requesting a recommendation letter (21 percentage points, column 2); and developing a plan for the job search process (13 percentage points, column 3). The combination of the training and the boost training exerted a positive, though not statistically significant, impact on the probability of looking for a job among the treated compared with the control group (column 4).

Socioemotional skills

The intervention did not have any effects on the socioemotional skill dimensions covered (column 5-7). These null effects are perhaps not surprising if one considers the content of the training and the features of the implementation. Specifically, the training in goal setting and planning focused on two soft skills for effective job searching, goal setting, and planning. Significant differences were found in job search intensity and reference seeking in line with previous research

(Abel, Burger, and Piraino 2017; BIT 2015; Briscese and Tan 2018). A significant difference is absent between the control and treatment groups on job search expectations, that is, the number of months to find a job. The intervention included guidance and information about the Mauritian labor market (job search training and the primer) to encourage job-seekers to form more realistic expectations. While no effect was observed, interpretation is made difficult by the disruption and level of uncertainty that the COVID-19 outbreak introduced into the labor market.

Specific activities focusing on socioemotional skills were included in the workbook, that is, Stories (belonging) and The Best of You (motivation), but these were dropped from implementation because there was insufficient time considering the planned duration of the training sessions. While The Best of You exercise was covered as part of the boost training, research suggests that the immediate positive effect can be increased by visualizing one's best possible self, but that repetition is required to achieve more lasting effects (King 2001; Sheldon and Lyubomirsky 2006). While job-seekers were encouraged during the boost to repeat the exercise daily and prompted to specify the preferable time of day for doing so, compliance could not be verified. Disruptions to the fieldwork because of the COVID-19 pandemic prevented validation of the psychological scales that were used. Although the scales were based to a large extent on previous work with job-seekers in Turkey (Levin et al. 2019), this does not reduce the need for pilot interventions. Considering the need for double translation (English to French and then to Creole) and the low educational attainment among participating youth, the lack of a pilot exercises prevented an effort to check for misunderstandings. Moreover, the scales had to be shortened for the end line because of the time constraints associated with administration carried out over the phone using computer-assisted telephone interviewing.

Labor market outcomes

The intervention did not have any effects on the employment of participants (column 8). Even if one considers the youth assigned to the treatment arm who actually participated in the activities, there is no statistically significant impact. This is not surprising for at least two reasons. First, the time between the intervention and the end line data collection, that is, the exposure time, was short (about four or five weeks). Thus, it would have been difficult to observe any impacts on employment, which are a combination of several factors, including labor demand, labor supply, and matching. Second, the intervention was interrupted because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated sanitary curfew. The pandemic led to a sudden decline in economic activity and labor demand worldwide as well as restrictions on the movements of people.

Sex differences

Women constituted the majority of participants in the intervention (64 percent). At the same time, the focus group discussions revealed clearly that women face specific barriers in participating in the labor force because of societal norms concerning the roles of women and men and the intrahousehold division of labor.

To test whether the intervention had differential effects on men and women, the intention-to-treat and the treatment-on-the-treated analyses were repeated, including interaction effects between the main treatment variable(s) of interest and the dummy variable for women. The results are presented in table 5.

Table 5. Intervention Impacts on Selected Outcomes: Intention to Treat and Treatment on the Treated, Sex Heterogeneity

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	<i>Prepared or posted CV</i>	<i>Requested references</i>	<i>Worked on search plan</i>	<i>Looked for work</i>	<i>Grit</i>	<i>Growth mindset</i>	<i>Expectations</i>	<i>Worked</i>
<i>Intention to treat</i>								
<i>Assigned</i>	0.352*** (0.0980)	0.286*** (0.0483)	0.187* (0.0799)	0.261 (0.163)	0.0797 (0.1260)	-0.0522 (0.0662)	-0.103 (0.1380)	-0.0659 (0.105)
<i>Assigned x female</i>	-0.0230 (0.0799)	-0.120* (0.0589)	-0.0829 (0.113)	-0.192 (0.183)	-0.103 (0.0807)	0.100 (0.0885)	0.0934 (0.1100)	0.0179 (0.138)
<i>Combined effect, females</i>	0.329*** (0.056)	0.165*** (0.039)	0.1045 (0.0719)	0.0687 (0.0691)	-0.023 (0.0830)	0.048 (0.0630)	-0.010 (0.0910)	-0.048 (0.0825)
<i>Female</i>	-0.217** (0.0734)	-0.00424 (0.0814)	0.0308 (0.0652)	-0.0548 (0.107)	-0.268* -0.123	-0.0619 -0.0901	-0.245** -0.0964	-0.0828 (0.0794)
<i>Constant</i>	0.398** (0.118)	0.0764 (0.252)	-0.223* (0.102)	0.340* (0.174)	3.987*** (0.4560)	0.749** (0.2880)	4.599*** (0.2080)	0.111 (0.241)
<i>Treatment on the treated</i>								
<i>Training and boost</i>	0.326** (0.117)	0.355*** (0.0489)	0.214** (0.0661)	0.230 (0.168)	0.041 (0.1410)	0.0145 (0.0991)	-0.0679 (0.1350)	-0.0967 (0.0770)
<i>Training and boost x female</i>	0.00903 (0.108)	-0.229** (0.0772)	-0.132 (0.0891)	-0.168 (0.203)	-0.135 (0.0898)	0.0955 (0.1200)	0.0179 (0.1310)	0.0735 (0.106)
<i>Combined effect, females</i>	0.335*** (0.035)	0.125* (0.0588)	0.0827 (0.0513)	0.0619 (0.0832)	-0.094 (0.0820)	0.11 (0.0700)	-0.050 (0.0940)	-0.023 (0.089)
<i>No boost</i>	-0.246 (0.293)	-0.427*** (0.0789)	-0.313*** (0.0598)	0.154 (0.272)	0.24 (0.3510)	0.246** (0.0731)	-0.193 (0.4730)	0.444 (0.357)
<i>No boost x female</i>	0.138 (0.401)	0.415* (0.178)	0.386* (0.188)	-0.300 (0.370)	-0.351 (0.4060)	-0.177 (0.1950)	-0.0800 (0.5840)	-0.669 (0.367)
<i>Combined effect, females</i>	-0.1079 (0.1819)	-0.0123 (0.1859)	0.0736 (0.1917)	-0.1461 (0.1776)	-0.111 (0.2370)	0.069 (0.1480)	-0.273 (0.3060)	-0.225* (0.1117)
<i>Female</i>	-0.241** (0.0784)	0.0268 (0.0746)	0.0370 (0.0561)	-0.0657 (0.103)	-0.244** (0.1030)	-0.0532 (0.1060)	-0.202 (0.1090)	-0.0873 (0.0636)
<i>Constant</i>	0.458***	0.0635	-0.224*	0.348*	3.969***	0.761**	4.574***	0.118

	(0.105)	(0.246)	(0.0975)	(0.165)	(0.4480)	(0.3090)	(0.2130)	(0.244)
<i>N</i>	280	280	280	280	280	280	280	280

Note: Estimates from an ordinary least squares regression, including individual sociodemographic controls (female, age, marital status as single, and educational attainment), and fixed effects dichotomous variables (6) for the day of random assignment. Standard errors are clustered at the EIC level. Dependent variables 1–4, 6 and 8 are defined as dichotomous variables set equal to 1 if respondent reported the stated activity at the end line survey, and dependent variables 5 and 7 are the averages of 2 and 6 respective items, scored on a Likert agreeableness scale ranging from 1 to 5.

Significance level: * = 10 percent, ** = 5 percent, *** = 1 percent.

The results relating to specific job search activities suggest that the intervention may have been more effective among men than among women. In table 5, columns (1)–(3), the parameter estimates for treatment assignment (in the intention-to-treat estimations) and the training and boost training (in the treatment-on-the-treated estimations) remain positive and significant after including the interaction effects, which shows that the training had positive effects on the three different job search strategies—preparing or posting a CV, requesting references, and working on a job search plan—among men. Among women, however, the effects are more mixed. For prepared or posted CV (column 1), the relevant interaction effects (assigned x female; training and boost x female) are small and not statistically significant, while the combined effects for women participants are positive and significant. There is thus no evidence of sex heterogeneity in the intervention’s effectiveness in nudging participants to prepare or post a CV. For the strategy reference requested (column 2), the interaction with women is negative and significant, though the combined effects among women are still positive and significant. This shows that, while the intervention increased the likelihood that men and women participants would request reference letters, the effect was larger among men. On the indicator worked on search plan (column 3), the interaction effect is negative, but not statistically significant, and the combined effect among women participants is also insignificant. This could reflect either that there are no significant differences between men and women participants or that the intervention is underpowered. The latter would not be entirely surprising, given that the intervention had to be stopped prematurely, with less than one-third of the anticipated sample size.

For job search (column 4), the point estimates for treatment assignment (in the intention-to-treat estimations) and training and boost (in the treatment-on-the-treated estimations) are larger in table 5 than in table 4 (albeit in both cases statistically insignificant), while the interaction effect in table 5 is negative and also insignificant. This suggests that the intervention may have been more effective in increasing the probability of looking for a job among men than among women, though this cannot be said with certainty given the lack of statistical precision in the estimates (which is most likely a reflection of the smaller than anticipated sample size).

Consistent with table 4, there is no evidence that the intervention had any impact on the socioemotional skills of men or women participants (columns 5–7). However, women in both the treatment and control groups scored significantly lower than men on grit and job expectations. This could reflect sex differences in noncognitive skills and personality traits, but it could also be an indication of systematic sex differences in response scales (Bertrand 2020; Montgomery 2016).

As in the full sample, there is no evidence that the intervention had any effects on the employment status of participants. This holds for men and women participants alike (column 8).

The results presented in this section suggest, albeit not fully conclusively, that the intervention may have been more effective in raising the job search efforts of young men than of young women. A possible explanation for this heterogeneity is that women may face additional (external) constraints that were not addressed by the intervention. For example, the focus group discussions highlighted traditional gender norms and women's disproportionate engagement in care and other unpaid family work as constraints on female labor force participation. Moreover, sex differences in time allocation may have been intensified by the closure of schools and other aspects of the curfew (for instance, lack of access to domestic services and confinement of the elderly). Because the intervention collected some information on gender norms at baseline and on time use at baseline and end line, the team may be able to explore these hypotheses in subsequent stages of the analysis.

9. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This note investigates the effect of a behavioral intervention targeted on young Mauritian job-seekers with limited education who were registered at EICs. The intervention delivered training on job search, goal setting, and planning skills, as well as relevant labor market information. Despite the COVID-19 outbreak that caused a premature interruption of the training and the subsequent extraordinary economic circumstances, a few lessons can be drawn from this intervention.

First, the intervention helped youth with low educational attainment, as shown by the results of the impact evaluation, which identifies encouraging impacts on employability and job search behaviors. There was a positive impact on the adoption of job search strategies that were at the core of the training sessions and that may have positively influenced the probability that program participants would look for jobs by preparing, revising, and submitting CVs, requesting a referral, and developing a job search plan.

Second, there is also suggestive evidence that the intervention may have been more effective in increasing job search efforts among young men than among young women. This finding requires further investigation, but it could point to the importance of sex-based constraints to labor force participation and the employment of young women, particularly the lack of family support services in light of traditional gender norms.

These positive results in the midst of an unprecedented social and economic crisis indicate the potential of behaviorally informed interventions among vulnerable populations. It shows how well-designed, yet simple training sessions or even mentoring phone calls tailored to the needs and conditions of youth with low educational attainment can be effective in motivating them to follow through in job searching. However, the implementation intervention revealed relevant factors that structurally limit the scope of vocational and skills training. The lack of intrahousehold and family support for women or considerable literacy gaps in English or French (the former is the standard

language for CVs in Mauritius) are two examples of entry barriers to the labor market among youth with limited education. Cost-effective actions are needed that complement support services and formal training, allowing inactive youth to at least enter the playground.

The cost of the intervention is moderate, at about US\$170 per trainee. This includes printing and the salaries of trainers and supervisors. It excludes staff time, travel missions, the shipping of material, and baseline and end line data collection that could be replaced by administrative data if the intervention were implemented by the Ministry of Labor, Human Resources Development, and Training. A low-cost alternative is the boost training. Considering that the universe of youth with low educational attainment who are registered with the EICs consists of about 2,450 individuals, this translates into an upper-bound estimate of the cost of about US\$416,500. This would require one employment officer for each EIC dedicated to the delivery of the training program for a few days each month. While this intervention does not pay a stipend to youth and does not offer job placements to participants, it can equip youth with useful labor market information as well as instruments key to a successful job search that can ultimately increase the odds of getting a job. It could be particularly useful in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, which is having unprecedented social and economic consequences. To put things in perspective and aware of the differences between the two schemes, the cost to the Ministry of Labor, Human Resources Development, and Training for the Youth Employment Program managed by the ministry, in collaboration with the Human Resource Development Council and the Skills Working Group, is estimated at about US\$655 per trainee.¹⁵

The intervention was prematurely interrupted by the outbreak of the coronavirus. It is recommended to resume the intervention once conditions allow to monitor the impact on job search strategies and employment in the medium term and expand the sample of youth. Should the findings be confirmed, this may be an opportunity for the government of Mauritius to apply the lessons learned through the intervention. Specifically, the materials, concrete activities, and strategies could be distributed or applied to youth with low educational attainment through the EIC network or online at minimum cost. Given the low levels of education, the low job search self-efficacy, and the limited or lack of experience on the labor market, instruments should be accompanied by concise mentoring interactions with EIC officers in person or through phone calls (as in the boost training). Beyond offering minimum guidance to a population that has never or rarely been involved in the labor market, these instruments, coupled with mentoring interactions, could help secure continuous engagement and active job search. These activities could be easily adapted and complement the current efforts of the Ministry of Labor, Human Resources Development, and Training to improve job-readiness training and advisory services among the unemployed population through the offer of workshops and online resources.

¹⁵ The estimate is based on the 2019/20 budget estimate for the program of MUR 125,000,000 and an average number of youth placed per year of 4,800. Exchange rate US\$1.00 = MUR 39.8. The estimate excludes the stipend and training costs borne by employers.

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11. ANNEX A: YOUTH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

Program name	Responsible agency	Program description	Target population
National Skills Development Program (NSDP)	Human Resource Development Council (HRDC), in collaboration with the Ministry of Labor, Human Resources Development, and Training and the private sector	<p>The program is implemented by HRDC, in collaboration with the private sector and the ministry. NSDP trains and provides job placement around 4,000 unemployed youth with a High School Certificate or below between 16 and 35 years of age. It focuses on technical skills in the areas of ICT, Construction, Tourism and Hospitality, Nursing and Paramedics, Manufacturing, Financial services and Logistics. The duration of training is between 3 and 12 months.</p> <p>Trainees are paid a monthly stipend of MUR 6,000 including travelling expenses, and based on attendance and upon satisfactory participation to the training. The stipend ceiling is MUR 30,000 per trainee for a training of up to 6 months, and MUR 60,000 per trainee for a training between 6 and 12 months. As of September 2019, 6,183 trainees were enrolled, and 2,696 secured an employment.</p>	Unemployed youth aged 16-35, with at maximum a High School Certificate
Graduate Training for Employment Scheme (GTES)	HRDC, in collaboration with the ministry and the private sector	<p>The program is implemented by HRDC in collaboration with the private sector and the MLIRET. GTES aims at enhancing the employability of unemployed graduates by providing them the opportunity to get tailored training and a job placement, for a duration of 3-12 months.</p> <p>It offers a monthly stipend of MUR 6,000 up to a maximum of MUR 80,000. Employers identify training for subsequent possible employment. Examples include a Master's Degree course in Applied Software Technologies at the University of Mauritius and placement at Accenture Technology. As of September 2019, 560 graduates were enrolled in a course under this scheme, and 431 have secured an employment.</p>	Unemployed graduates, no age limit
National Apprenticeship Scheme	Mauritius Institute of Training and Development; funding managed by the HRDC	<p>The scheme enables training of youth with some lower secondary education, combining on the job learning and technical knowledge taught at Mauritius Institute of Training and Development training centers for a duration of one or two years. Apprenticeships can take three forms: dual apprenticeship training, in-house apprenticeship training, or tailored apprenticeship training. In the first case, trainees spend four or five days a week in an enterprise and a minimum of one day a week at the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development training centers. In the second case, employers provide both theoretical and on the job training. In the third case, training is designed and delivered based on specific demand from employers. Apprentices need to identify an employer willing to offer employment under a contract as an apprentice. At the end of the training, apprentices have to take an examination for National Certificate Level 3.</p> <p>It offers a monthly stipend of MUR 5,000, plus MUR 1,000 to cover transport costs. According to the a recent tracer study of the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development, 38 percent of all graduates of the institute in 2018 participated in the apprenticeship scheme, compared with 62 percent of graduates who studied in the full-time mode.</p>	Youth aged at least 16-18 depending on sector with Form III up to School Certificate

Table A.1. Youth Skill Development and Employment Programs			
<i>Program name</i>	<i>Responsible agency</i>	<i>Program description</i>	<i>Target population</i>
Youth Employment Program (YEP)	The ministry, in collaboration with the HRDC and the Skills Working Group	YEP provides training and job placement for an initial period of one year, with the possibility of one additional year at another enterprise, to unemployed youth aged 16 to 35. Trainees are paid a monthly stipend of MUR 8,000 if they hold a HSC, MUR 10,000 if they hold a Diploma, and MUR 15,000 if they hold a university graduates. 50 percent of the monthly stipend is refunded to the employer by government, as well as 50 percent of the training cost. A total of 33,618 have been registered as November, 30, 2019, with 22,855 job-seekers placed (13,854 males and 12,438 females). The main sectors of placement are wholesale and retail trade; professional, scientific and technical activities; ICT; and manufacturing. A third of people placed had HSC, 40 percent a SC or below, 21 percent a Degree, and the rest a Diploma or Certificate.	Unemployed youth aged 16 to 35, holding a HSC, Diploma, or Degree
Trainee Engineer Scheme	The ministry	The scheme is implemented by MOLHRD and is designed to help graduate engineers to get their license by providing practical training for two years. It pays a monthly stipend of MUR 23,975 and traveling costs up to MUR 3,000. As of November 30, 2019 it received 1,164 applications, placing 344 engineers in the public sector, and 177 in the private sector.	Graduate engineers, no age limit
Dual Training Program (DTP)	the ministry, in collaboration with the HRDC and the Skills Working Group	The scheme is implemented by MOLHRD in collaboration with HRDC and the Skills Working group. It provides a mix of on-the-job training and classroom studies at tertiary education institutions. It targets youth aged 16-35 to enroll in a Diploma/BA Degree in fields required by the labor market. In the case of new trainees, employers are refunded 40 percent of course fees (diploma and degree courses) up to a maximum of MUR 50,000 per year and per trainee, and also for a monthly stipend of MUR 6,000 paid to trainees for a maximum of 3 years. In case an existing employee is registered under the DTP, employers are refunded 60 percent of course fees (diploma courses only). The Mauritius Export Association (MEXA) is one of the main stakeholders that has participated in the scheme since 2014. The program has enrolled 262 trainees with 129 having completed the program, at the end of November, 2019. 45 companies have participated.	Unemployed job-seekers. May hold HSC, as required by employer to enter tertiary education institutions
Back to Work Program (B2W)	the ministry, in collaboration with the HRDC and the Skills Working Group	The program provides training and job placement to unemployed women above 35 years of age. It places participants in a job for an initial period of one year. It provides a monthly stipend of up to MUR 5,000 and a refund of training cost up to a maximum of MUR 7,500 per woman. It trains women in around 15 occupations (e.g., wholesale and retail, manufacturing, administrative and support service activities, accommodation, education, information and communication, etc.). At the end of November 2019, the program had registered 4,482 women with 2,396 eligible to be placed, and 1,181 were placed (33	Unemployed women above 35 years old

Table A.1. Youth Skill Development and Employment Programs			
<i>Program name</i>	<i>Responsible agency</i>	<i>Program description</i>	<i>Target population</i>
		percent of those eligible).	
SME Employment Scheme	SME Mauritius	The scheme aims to provide and develop entrepreneurial skills to unemployed graduates with at least a first degree from a recognized tertiary education institution. Trainees are employed in a SSME for a period of up to 2 years and is renewed after the first year upon satisfactory completion. Trainees are paid a monthly stipend of Rs. 14,000 based on attendance, while the employer pays travel costs.	Unemployed graduates with a degree from a tertiary education institution.
<p>Note: Additional programs include the Basic Safety Training (job-seekers to work on board; duration=16.5 days; requirements=proficiency in English, above 18 years of age), the Proficiency in Security Awareness (job-seekers to work on board; duration=1 day; requirements=proficiency in English, above 18 years of age);</p> <p>Source: Own elaborations and CEM - Closing the Skills Gap (2020), World Bank.</p>			

12. ANNEX B: IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

Qualitative fieldwork

A summary of activities is presented below. The diagnosis is based on nine group discussions with inactive women and youth with low educational attainment (n = 41, 11 men and 30 women), two group discussions with social workers working with nongovernmental organizations (n = 8), and one with EIC officials (n = 6), one nonparticipatory observation in the same EIC of Port Louis, semistructured interviews with representatives of seven firms and recruiting agencies (human resources, services, wholesale and retail sectors), and with one nongovernmental organization specializing in youth development. Regarding the group discussions, four were carried out with inactive women (n = 22), three with unemployed and inactive youth (n = 13, 5 men and 8 women), and two with employed youth (n = 6, 5 men and 1 woman). All activities were carried out in October 2019, except for the interviews with firm representatives (October and December 2019). Additionally, the team held consultations with government counterparts to gather information on EIC operations as well as registration and follow-up with job-seekers, the labor market information system, which compiles information on job-seekers registered with the EICs, and existing programs. This work allowed the identification of several behavioral barriers, as detailed next.

Table B.1. Diagnostic Activities

<i>Target population</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Participants</i>
Women and youth	Group discussions	9	41
Social workers and officials of nongovernmental organizations	Discussions and semistructured interviews	3	9
Employers and recruiters	Semistructured interviews	7	7
EIC officials	Semistructured interviews and observation	1	6
	Total	20	63

Data collection

For the purpose of the evaluation, both survey data and administrative data were to be used in the study. However, the latter have been requested, and, although they are not available at the time of writing, they will be analyzed subsequently, and the results will be updated accordingly. The surveys (baseline and end line) were administered in Creole by trained enumerators through computer-assisted personal interviews and computer-assisted telephone interviews. The questionnaires included six main sections: demographic and educational characteristics; job search attitudes, activities, and labor market outcomes; time use; socioemotional skills assessed through psychometric questionnaires; gender roles; and contact information (see the end line questionnaire in annex D).¹⁶

¹⁶ The baseline questionnaire is available upon request.

The baseline questionnaire covered a wider set of questions and more comprehensive set of psychological scales than the end line, with a total of 79 questions and 10 psychological scales that took an average of 50 minutes to complete per respondent. During the administration of the questionnaire, an average of 24 recruited participants per session attended the EIC center or selected venue. A complimentary meal was offered such that half the participants were surveyed on arrival, while the other half enjoyed the meal; groups then rotated. Once both groups had been surveyed, the training started among the randomly selected participants. The end line collection took an average of 20 minutes to administer per participant and was significantly shorter than the baseline, as in-person interviewing was replaced by telephone surveys through computer-assisted telephone interviewing because of the COVID-19 lockdown. The end line questionnaire had 28 questions and three specific psychological scales. It included a section with three questions dedicated to the COVID-19 response.

Administrative data based on the EIC database will be provided by the Employment Services Division of the Ministry of Labor, Human Resources Development, and Training. Administrative data include basic sociodemographic information (age, sex, educational level, years of work experience, occupation), date of registration with EICs, skills, employment status, enrollment in and completion of skills development and employment programs offered by EICs, or unemployment insurance or benefit receipt. Job-seekers are required to update their information with the EIC every four months (job-seekers who fail to update their information are deregistered and are not considered for job vacancies).

Implementation of the intervention

Field activities were planned to take place in the months of March and April, with additional weeks for material and team preparation at the end of February, and final interviews for the end line survey early in May. The COVID-19 outbreak, however, interrupted and delayed many of the activities initially planned and posed unexpected challenges in the fieldwork. A list of activities, planned dates, and revised dates are presented in table B.2.

Table B.2. Timeline of field activities

	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Planned dates</i>	<i>Revised date</i>
1	Material delivery	March 2	March 5
2	Material and survey validation	March 2	Canceled
3	Training of trainers	March 5–6	March 6–8
4	Piloting of intervention	March 5–6	Canceled
5	Training and baseline collection	March 9–27	March 9–19 Canceled
6	End line collection	April 13–May 8	April 28–May 8
7	Boost training	Not planned	April 15–18

At the beginning of March 2020, shortly before the rollout of the intervention, five facilitators were trained by the team members on the content and delivery of the training in job searches, goal setting, and planning. In addition to the Job-Seekers Workbook, the training relied on the Facilitators Guide. The latter provided a brief introduction to the objectives, material, and duration of each activity, together with step-by-step instructions on how to deliver these. Training took place remotely over three days for a total of about eight hours, and an interactive format was used, with role-play and extensive feedback for each of the training components. Logistical details were also covered, and facilitators were provided with a one-page checklist to guide them before, during, and after the training activities.

The team had scheduled a mission to conduct activities related to the preparation of the intervention rollout (1 to 4) and to supervise and monitor the administration of training sessions and data collection. However, the early ban on flights and the other preventive measures undertaken by the World Bank delayed the team's travel and, ultimately, led to the cancellation of the preparation mission. Consequently, the team decided to reduce the scope of the adaptation and validation of the survey and intervention materials and instead requested a limited group of youths to review and validate the language of the materials and test the administration of the survey. The training of the trainers was gravely affected as the sessions had to be held virtually, and practice and piloting in the field had to be canceled to meet the start date of the training sessions agreed with the Ministry of Labor, Human Resources Development, and Training.

At the start of the training session, each participant was provided with a Job-Seekers Workbook to record their responses to exercises conducted during the session. Participants were asked to keep this workbook for future use, as it contains information to help them with their job search, together with a set of templates that they could use in the process. As part of the final activity, participants were also provided with the Jobs Search Primer. Prior to leaving, participants completed a session evaluation form, and the facilitators recorded pictures (upon consent) of filled-in materials for four randomly selected participants per session.

Monitoring of the implementation of the intervention by the World Bank team was adapted so that it could be done remotely. Specifically, facilitators completed a structured debriefing form for each of the sessions, which was shared with and reviewed by the World Bank team daily. Additionally, a field supervisor was locally deployed to support logistically the work of the facilitators and enumerators, and a WhatsApp group, including facilitators and World Bank team members, was created. This enabled direct and prompt communication and allowed immediate support during the implementation and monitoring of the progress with the training sessions. Finally, a local consultant who was familiar with the project observed some of the training sessions and completed a training fidelity checklist (capturing the facilitators' adherence to the instructions and the quality of the support provided during the sessions).

After the training sessions and the baseline collection had started as planned, on March 9, the Mauritian authorities enforced a lockdown following the outbreak of COVID-19 in the country.

Thus, the implementation of field activities was suspended only 10 days after the start. While further training sessions were halted, the boost training was introduced for treated participants, and the end line survey was adapted to allow administration through computer-assisted telephone interviewing by the survey firm.

13. ANNEX C: JOB SEARCH PRIMER

EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION CENTRES

The Employment Information Centres help Jobseekers to find employment.

	ADDRESS	TELEPHONE
Central Flacq	Ground Floor, Ramtohol Building, Durbarree Lane, Central-Flacq	413 0334
Curepipe	Sir C. Antelme St Forest Side	675 1115
Mahebourg	Hollandais Street, Mahebourg	631 9518
Mapou	School Lane, Near Post Office, Mapou	266 1577
Port-Louis	Malleck Plaza (Near Chisty Shiffa Clinic), Labourdonnais Street, Port-Louis	211 6126
Quartier Militaire	Ramessur Building, New Curepipe Road, Quartier- Militaire	435 5530
Quatre Bornes	2nd Floor, France Centre, Corner St Jean Road / Victoria Avenue, Quatre Bornes	427 4439
Riviere des Anguilles	Railway Square, Riviere des Anguilles	626 4849
Riviere du Rempart	Ground Floor, Prayag Building, Royal Road, Riviere Du Rempart	412 6925
Rose Belle	Diocese Lane, Rose Belle	627 4833
Rose Hill	2nd Floor Arcades Bholah, Royal Road, Rose-Hill	464 2081
Triolet	Royal Road, 7ème mile, Triolet	261 4524
Vacoas	Ground Floor, Vacoas/Phoenix Municipal Complex, Independence Road, Vacoas	696 4031

More information at <https://mauritiusjobs.govmu.org/>

Ready to look for a job?

ACT NOW AND FIND THE JOB YOU WANT!

You can also be part of those who have a job!

40,000 vacancies and 6,500 placements in 2019 with the Employment Information Centres.

Job opportunities for everyone! Women, men, young, older, and people with disabilities, all have a chance!

Your language and social skills are appreciated by employers, especially for women!

Your Job search effort will pay off.

Normally Jobseekers have been looking for a job for over 9 months, so don't feel discouraged.

Studies show that an active search improves the chances of finding a job.

Studies also show that having a job improves your health and life satisfaction, and brings you new contacts.

Smart job search with sustained effort are key!

5 TIPS FOR A SMART JOB SEARCH

- ACTIVE**
Focus on things in your control send more applications, find more options to search and apply, learn new skills, or volunteer to gain experience.
- DETERMINED**
Initiative, effort, and Intensive job search pay-off. Define your goals, plan your job search step by step, and prepare for interviews.
- SOCIAL**
Share your plan with family or friends and ask them to help you stick to it. Ask them to connect you with employers.
- FLEXIBLE**
Keep all options open and consider part-time jobs or work outside your area. If a job opportunity arises, take it.
- STRONG**
Maybe you can't find the job you want or it takes you too much time. This is normal, and don't take it personally. Keep at it!

Start now!

- Prepare your CV.** Keep it simple, well written, and updated.
- Get a reference letter** from a previous employer or someone you volunteered with. References are valued by employers.
- Expand your Job search.** Look in more places and more regularly. Here are some ideas:
 - Online: mauritiusjobs.govmu.org, myjob.mu, hellojob.mu, Jobs.mu
 - Magazine de L'emploi
 - Facebook and social media
 - Job ads in newspapers, radio, or TV
 - Ask relatives and friends
 - Visit offices, factories or websites of employers
 - Private employment agencies
- Use the services from the Employment Information Centres.**

Employment Information Centres are here to help!

The Employment Information Centres can show you how to search successfully.

The most wanted occupations include mason, cleaner, driver, electrician, helper, waitress and waiter, welder, valet and chambermaid, and many more!

FIND YOUR NEAREST OFFICE ON THE NEXT PAGE.

IT MAY BE DIFFICULT TO LOOK, ACCEPT, OR CONTINUE A JOB IF YOU HAVE HOUSEHOLD RESPONSIBILITIES, BUT THERE ARE OPTIONS FOR YOU.

In Mauritius, there are **387 child day-care centres** for children up to 3 years old and **851 pre-primary schools** for children over 3 years.

- Many are public and free.
- Private ones normally have monthly fees of Rs 3,000

THERE ARE MANY SUPPORT PROGRAMMES. Ask at the EICI

- **Social Register**, with subsistence and child allowances, crèche vouchers, and school support.
- **Pensions and benefits**, for families not in the Social Register.
- **Social Aid**, for single mothers and people without support.
- **Services for elders**, such as allowances, carers, and care homes.

Information from: Statistics Mauritius, Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare and Ministry of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training.

14. ANNEX D: END LINE QUESTIONNAIRE

Behavioral Intervention

to Activate Youth with Low Educational Attainment in Mauritius

Impact Evaluation Survey

Introduction

Greetings!

My name is _____. I work for the independent research company Syntheses Mauritius and I am calling on behalf of the World Bank and of the Ministry of Labor.

I am trying to reach [NAME OF PARTICIPANT], is this the person I'm speaking with? _____

(If not NAME OF PARTICIPANT) Could I please speak with [NAME OF PARTICIPANT]?

Great, thank you. You participated in a survey on the XXth of March at the Employment Information Centre of XXX. I'm contacting you to follow-up with you on employment conditions and job search. This interview would take around 30 minutes. Any information you share with us will be kept strictly confidential and only be used for statistical purposes. This call will not cost you any airtime. Are you willing to participate?

0. INTRODUCTION

The government of Mauritius ordered a curfew starting on Monday, March 23rd, which means that people were required by the law to stay at home. This was [DAYS FROM DATE OF INTERVIEW] from today.

Please consider the WEEK BEFORE THE CURFEW STARTED, between Monday 16 and Sunday 22 of March.

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| 0.1 Did you do any work for pay, profit or family gain, even if it was only for <u>one</u> hour? | a. Yes
b. No → 0.3 |
| 0.2 How many hours did you work during that week? | Number of hours |
| 0.3 Did you look for work or try to set up your own business? | a. Yes
b. No |

Please consider the period SINCE THE CURFEW STARTED

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 0.4 Did you do any work for pay, profit or family gain, even if it was only for <u>one</u> hour? | a. Yes
b. No → Section 1.B |
| 0.5 How many hours did you work the last week from DATE X and DATE Y? | Number of hours |

1. LABOR FORCE

A. Employment SINCE CURFEW

1.1 <u>SINCE THE CURFEW STARTED</u> , what kind of work have you done? <i>Record response verbatim</i>	Description of main occupation
1.2 How much did you derive as income, including overtime pay and net of tax, from your main job/business last month?	Amount in Rupees
1.3 How did you apply to your current job? <i>Record response verbatim</i>	Description of application

→ Section 1.C

B. Unemployment and Job search SINCE CURFEW

1.4 Have you been looking for work or trying to set up your own business <u>SINCE THE CURFEW STARTED</u> ?	a. Yes → 1.6 b. No
1.5 Why were you not looking for work or trying to set up your own business? <i>Record response verbatim</i>	Description of main reason
1.6 At present, do you want to work?	a. Yes b. No
1.7 Are you willing to accept...?	<i>Yes / No (for each option)</i> a. A full-time job b. A part-time job c. A permanent job d. A temporary job e. A job in the public sector f. A job in the private sector g. A job outside your likes and your training
1.8 What is the lowest monthly salary you would accept to take a new job?	Amount in Rupees <i>If 1.4 = Yes → 1.9</i> <i>If 1.4 = No → 1.14</i>
1.9 <u>SINCE THE CURFEW STARTED</u> , how many jobs have you applied to?	Number of jobs applied to <i>If 0 → 1.13</i>
1.10 For these jobs you applied for, how many times were you contacted back?	Number of times
1.11 For what kind of job? <i>Record response verbatim</i>	Description of job
1.12 How did you <u>apply</u> to the last job you applied to? <i>Record response verbatim</i>	Description of application
1.13 How many hours did you spend searching for work <u>SINCE THE CURFEW STARTED</u> , that is, during the <u>LAST X DAYS</u> ?	Number of hours
1.14 How long do you expect it will take you to get a job?	Number of months

C. Awareness of employment and job search services

1.15 Have you done any of the following tasks SINCE MARCH 16, that is, SINCE THE WEEK BEFORE THE CURFEW STARTED?

Yes/No (for each option)

- a. Searched for jobs online or in papers, journals, etc.
 - b. Posted your CV online
 - c. Prepared or revised your CV.
 - d. Sent CV to a possible employer
 - e. Submitted a job application.
 - f. Telephoned a possible employer
 - g. Had a job interview with a possible employer
 - h. Asked for a referral to someone who might have info or advice about my career or field
 - i. Talked to my friends or relatives to get ideas about possible job leads
 - j. Completed the “my best self-exercise”
 - k. Prepared or revised a job search plan
 - l. Prepared a motivation letter
 - m. Requested a reference letter
 - n. Checked my *Guide de recherche d'emploi*
-

2. SOCIOEMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

<p>2.1 Using the following five-item scale, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:</p> <p>I will now list a few statements to you. Can you please say whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree with each of these statements?</p>	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. Overall, I don't expect to be very good at job search					
b. What I do shapes my life					
c. Finding a good job depends on things I cannot control					
d. I believe that my future will work out					
e. I am confident that I will be able to find the job I will really want in the near future					
f. I have important goals for my life					
g. You have a certain amount of intelligence and you really can't do much to change it					
<p>2.2 Using the following five-item scale, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:</p> <p>I will list a few statements to you. Can you please tell me how often do you experience each of these situations?</p>	Almost always	Quite often	Sometimes	Rarely	Almost never
a. Setbacks discourage me.					
b. I finish whatever I begin					
c. I am confident I get the success I					
<p>2.3 Using the following five-item scale, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:</p> <p>I will now list a few statements to you. Can you please say whether you strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree with each of these statements?</p>	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. Most people who are important to me think I should be looking for a job in the					
b. Work is an important part of life					
c. Work means more to me just money					
d. It is wise for me to look for a job in the					
e. It is useless for me to look for a job in					

f. I think job search is an enjoyable					
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3. DEMOGRAPHIC AND EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

3.1 What is your main source of income or support to meet your daily needs?	<i>Select one</i>		
	a.	Parents	
	b.	Spouse/partner	
	c.	Children	
	d.	Other relatives/non relatives	
	e.	Maintenance alimony (ex-spouse)	
	f.	Savings/property income	
	g.	Government pension/assistance	
	h.	Other pension/work compensation	
	a.	Other, specify	
3.2 <u>SINCE THE CURFEW STARTED</u> has your main source of income or support to meet your daily needs ...?	a.	Increased	
	b.	Stayed the same	
	c.	Reduced	
3.3 <u>SINCE THE CURFEW STARTED</u>, was there a time when you, or any other adult in your household, ate less than you thought you should because of a lack of money or other resources?	a.	Yes	
	b.	No	
3.4 Do you own a smartphone?	a.	Yes	
	b.	No	
3.5 Do you have access to the internet at home?	c.	Yes	
	d.	No	
3.6 <u>SINCE THE CURFEW STARTED</u>, have you spent less, the same, or more time than usual on:	Less time	Same time	More time
a. Cleaning the house, washing, ironing or gardening			
b. Buying food or other items for use by the household			
c. Cooking food or preparing drinks			
d. Construction work or household maintenance work			
e. Providing care or assistance (without pay) to household or family members aged 18 years or older (e.g. due to disability, illness or old-age)			
f. Looking after children			
g. Taking education or training courses			
h. Doing recreation activities or gaming or using social media, phone, etc.			

4. COVID-19

<p>4.1 OVER THE LAST 2 WEEKS, have you or any of the members of your household experienced...? <i>Read each item</i> <i>Record Yes or No</i></p>	<p><i>Yes/No</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. fever b. dry cough c. Sore throat d. Trouble breathing e. Fatigue f. Aches and pains g. Headaches h. Runny or stuffy nose i. Diarrhea j. Sneezing
<p>4.2 To your knowledge, what actions can you take to avoid getting infected with the coronavirus? <i>Do not read response options</i> <i>Record those mentioned</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Handwashing b. Use of sanitizer c. No Handshake / physical greetings d. Maintain distance of at least 1mt e. Avoiding touching your face f. Use of mask g. Use of gloves h. Avoid travel i. Staying at home and avoid going out unless necessary j. Avoid crowded places or gatherings k. Other_____
<p>4.3 DURING THE PAST SEVEN DAYS, please indicate how difficult has it been for you with respect to your experience with the COVID crisis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. I thought about it when I didn't mean to. b. I felt alert or on-guard c. Other things kept making me think about it. d. I was aware that I had a lot of feelings about it, but I didn't deal with them e. I tried not to think about it f. I had trouble concentrating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Not at all b. A little bit c. Moderately d. Quite a bit e. Extremely