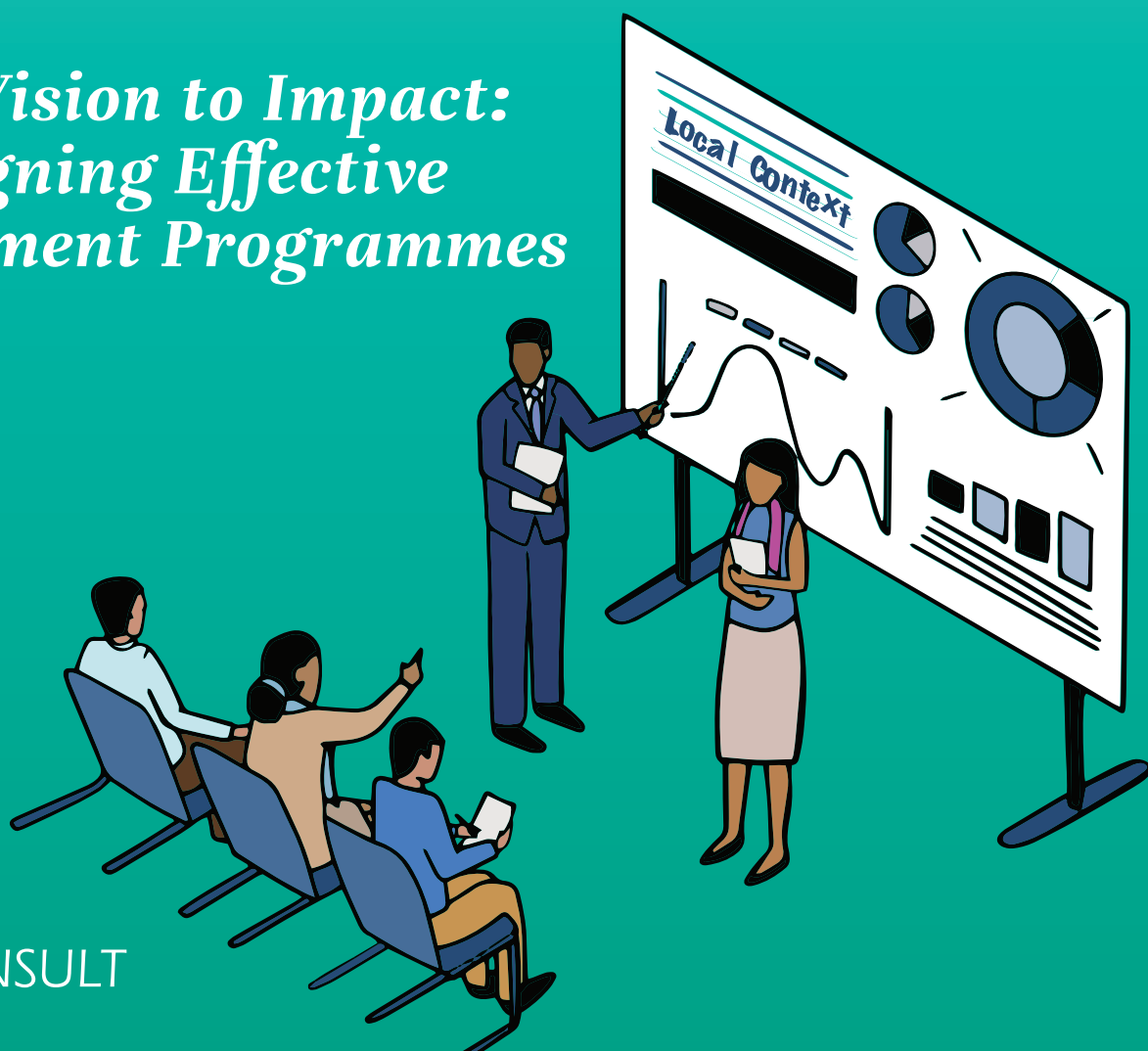




*Knowledge and insights from
our development initiatives and partnerships*

From Vision to Impact: Designing Effective Development Programmes



FIRST  CONSULT

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Designing Effective Development Programmes

Lessons from the Programme Lead of BRIDGES

FIRST CONSULT



Henok Tenna, Programme Lead of the BRIDGES Programme, puts on his thinking cap to share lessons about designing and implementing development programmes in Ethiopia.

Focusing on lasting impact and poverty alleviation, most development programmes in developing countries like Ethiopia work to address the underlying constraints in key sectors such as education, health, job creation, and infrastructure. The main driver behind effective design and implementation of development programmes is the potential for meaningful, sustainable impact.

At FC, we have designed and implemented multiple programmes that have collectively resulted in lasting impact. Our efforts have resulted in:

- **499,843 individuals trained**
- **914,858 jobs supported**
- **379,496 enterprises supported**
- **\$427,082,760 facilitated in access to finance**
- **\$371,911,957 facilitated in investments**

The key to our success lies in meticulous programme design and implementation.

Key elements of programme design

Successful programme design begins with a clear vision of the desired impact, which usually comes from the fund sponsor. However, challenges may arise when donors' top-down imposition of programme goals differs from the context on the ground and for the community we intend to benefit sustainably. This misalignment can lead to resource wastages and should be mitigated by starting with a co-creation process involving all partners.

Working in-depth on the following matters will determine the success of a programme: creating alignment between the funder and the country context, forging partnerships, targeting participants, analysing underlying constraints, identifying resources (financial and non-financial) and defining delivery approaches. These elements need to be critically considered early on.

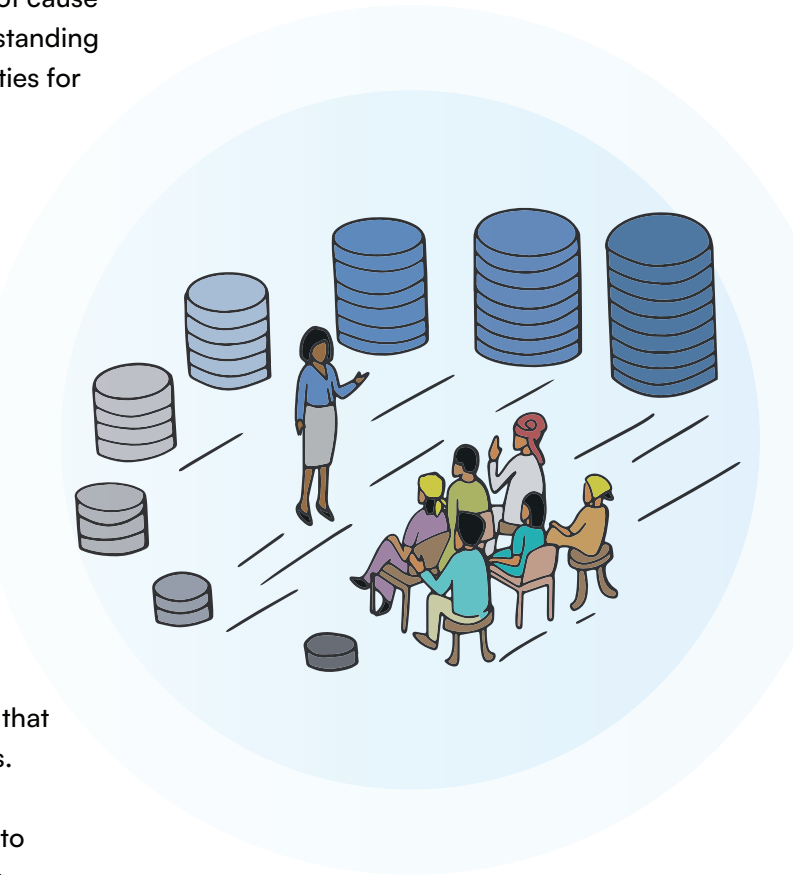
Based on my experience leading BRIDGES¹, below are the critical factors in designing a successful programme:

- **Co-creation** - Designing programmes is a collaborative activity that actively involves stakeholders such as funders, relevant government bodies and target participants. These parties need to be in alignment to ensure shared ownership and relevance to local contexts.
- **Evidence gathering** - Evidence strengthens a programme's rationale, grounding it in real-world insights and can be collected through desk reviews, surveys and focus group discussions.



¹ BRIDGES is a 5-year job creation programme implemented by FC in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation.

- **Root cause analysis** - It is crucial to understand the root cause of the problem the programme is aims to solve. Understanding the core issue helps target resources and design activities for lasting impact.
- **Delivery approach** - This requires defining the most effective approach for delivering results — whether direct delivery, a market-based approach, or a hybrid model — based on the nature of the problem and target participants, objectives, resources allocated and scale of impact.
- **Measuring for impact** - Early planning for monitoring and evaluation ensures that outcomes are measured and aligned with goals. This allows us to properly identify indicators at each level, as well as data collection methods and timing, ensuring that the programme's impact is effectively tracked. Inversely, inadequate planning can lead to misaligned indicators that fail to capture the impact, resulting in unmet objectives.



What is important in designing a successful programme is to embrace **adaptive management** that emphasizes flexibility, continuous learning, and responsiveness to changing circumstances to accommodate uncontrollable internal and external factors, such as changes in funding to evolving needs of target participants' and socio-economic dynamics. Focusing on learning and continually monitoring situations enables adaptive changes in the courses of action during the implementation process.

Turning Design into Reality: Program Implementation

Implementation involves a shift from planning to action, focusing on bringing the programme's objectives to life through efficient resource allocation, strong coordination, and continual measurement of progress.

In the implementation process, it is paramount that resources are available and efficiently allocated, human capital is in place and coordination among various stakeholders occurs on a continual basis. Moreover, sustainability of the programme needs to be increasingly built in by contributing towards long-term benefits such as capacity building for local actors, promoting ownership of processes by relevant stakeholders, and creating functional market systems.



Co-creation



Impact Measurement



Adaptive Management

With careful design and flexible implementation, development programmes can achieve sustainable improvements that resonate far beyond their timeframe. ■

Does business development service BDS really work?



FC's work in enterprise development employs a variety of modalities for business development services (BDS), including group and individualized trainings, both in-person and digital training with post-training follow-up.

From December 2023 to September 2024, as part of the MESMER Programme², FC in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, has provided business development service (BDS) training to 12,500+ formal micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) across Ethiopia. This number has now grown to 23,793.

In the last quarter, we took a moment to assess if BDS training is meeting its objectives and fostering changes in MSMEs' business practices. The rapid assessment was conducted through phone interviews with 67 enterprise leaders, 82% women, who received a 2-day BDS training and post-training follow up in 12 regions of Ethiopia.

The study reiterated the effectiveness of BDS in enhancing business performance, operational efficiency, and market competitiveness. 66% of enterprises reported that they have since acquired new customers, and 94% showed interest in more intensive one-to-one BDS training.

Respondents benefited from the finance topics covered in the training. 37% of enterprises said they were encouraged to begin bookkeeping. Sixty-six percent had never taken out a loan, although nearly all (97%) expressed interest in doing so. Additionally, 44% said they started applying lessons in communication skills learned in the trainings to engage with banks. Customer service also improved among the enterprises, with 93% of enterprises indicating that they started handling customer complaints more formally. ■

23,793

MSMEs trained

66%

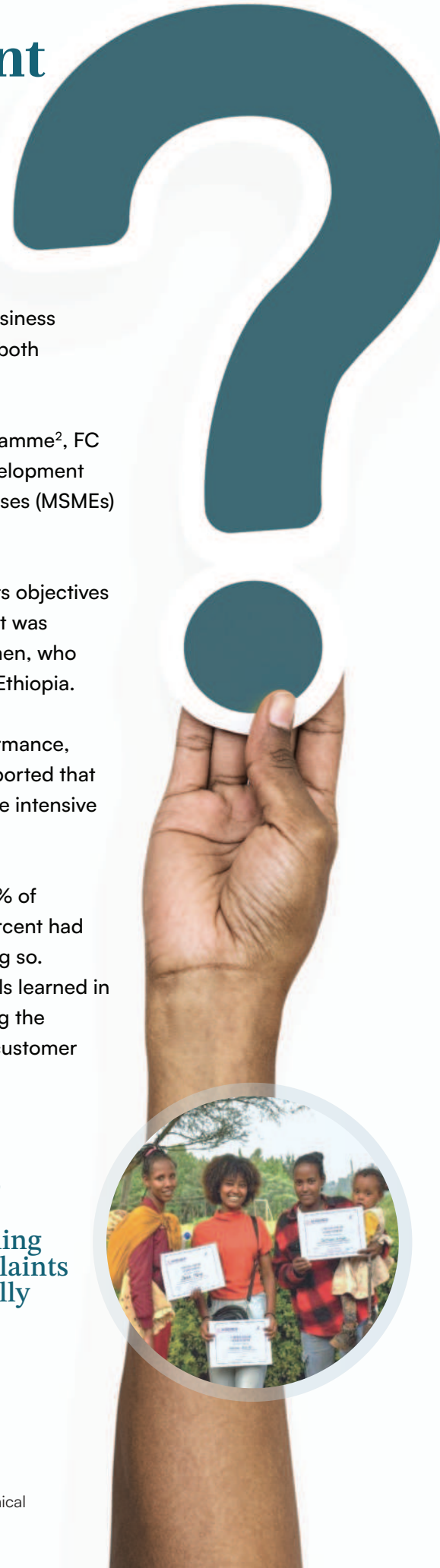
Gained
new customers

93%

Started handling
customer complaints
more formally

Click here to read the full report [Link](#)

² MESMER is a resilience programme implemented by FC in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation and Abyssinia, Awash, Dashen and Hibret Banks. It aims to facilitate soft loans for 72,200 enterprises along with business development services, psychosocial support, and technical assistance to financial institutions.



Impact Story:

Training for success at home — The Story of Yemeketwork



A mother to a three-year-old daughter, Yemeketwork, 28, faced a major life disruption when her home was demolished due to construction. Forced to find a new place to live, she and her husband moved into a rented house without the safety of a security fence. "It wasn't easy, especially with my husband frequently traveling to different cities for work. Because he couldn't leave us alone in this house, he had to leave his job and stay with us," she explains.

Adjusting to their new reality was challenging. "For months, it felt like everything was up in the air," Yemeketwork recalls. "Both my husband and I needed to find jobs quickly but we both struggled."

Her turning point came when she discovered ELBEE's training programme. "As soon as I heard about it, I didn't hesitate. I joined right away," she says. She quickly learned the art of crafting *zembil*, traditional Ethiopian baskets, and the ropes required to make them. While she initially trained in both skills, she chose to focus on rope-making for practical reasons.

ELBEE Manufacturing focuses on handcraft skills training and job creation for women in weaving, basketry, leatherwork, garment making, and more. Located in Ayat, Addis Ababa, it employs nearly 600 women. Through the Mastercard Foundation's BRIDGES programme, 500 women received handicraft-making training for home-based employment, enabling them to work from home and earn based on their productivity. According to the Central Statistical Agency's Employment/Unemployment Survey (2022), 34.3% of females and 17.3% males aged 15-29 are unemployed in urban Ethiopia. The BRIDGES Programme focuses on supporting youth jobs, particularly for women, and has so far reached 800,000+ youth like Yemeketwork.

"As the only one working at the time, I had to prioritize what earned more money. Making ropes is faster, and since they're essential for basket-making, there's always a demand," she explains. She gets the palm leaves weekly, which is what she twists to make ropes. "It's really simple, and I can do it while spending time with my daughter."

The flexibility of her work has been great for her family. "This job has given me the chance to provide for my family while still being present for my daughter," she says happily. Her dedication pays off; earning 5 birr per meter of rope, she can make up to 4,000 birr a month, with the potential for even more during busy periods. ■



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FC's Young Professionals

Readying high-potential youth for the world of work



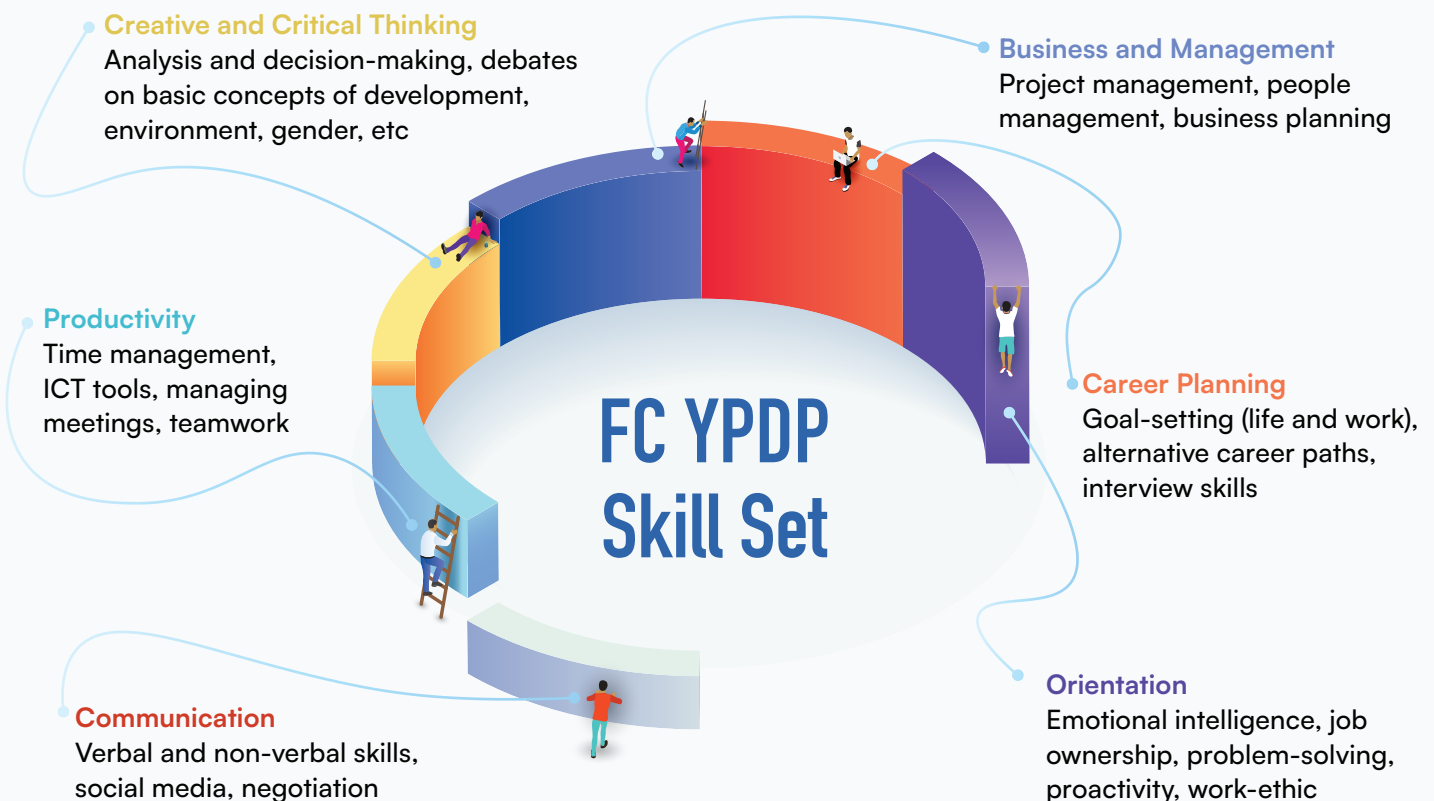
Fresh graduates in Ethiopia are often criticized by employers for being academically educated but lacking soft skills. The complaint is they have neither the preparedness nor the attitude to perform well in the workplace.

Instead of unsustainable approaches to get the scarce talent, FC set out to create a pool of young professionals ready for careers in and beyond First Consult, by launching the FC Young Professionals Development Programme (YPDP) in 2008, after only two years since establishment.

FC's YPDP is a modest institutional investment in the professional future of today's youth, the local job market, and the succession of its own workforce.

FC YPDP at a glance

- **Four rounds so far:** 2007, 2008, 2017-18, 2022-23, 2023 – 24 (ongoing)
- **Total YPs participated:** 45
- **Unique Features:** Classroom training, on-the-job training, individual mentors, department rotation, outplacement
- **Specialization areas:** Public sector organizational development, Private sector consulting, Access to Finance, Communications



By developing talented young professionals who demonstrate both technical and professional effectiveness, FC ensures a sustainable and skilled workforce for the future. As a matter of fact, FC hired 99% of last year’s cohort.

In the current round, FC noted the disciplinary gaps in the job market and focused the programme on two streams, Communications and Access to Finance as specialisation areas. Eight YPs are currently training in these fields working in intensive internships in the A2F and Communications teams of FC and partners.

Alumni and current YPs testify to the programme serving as a capacity building platform and as a networking mine, significantly upgrading their career prospects. The mentorship provided them with a nurturing and supportive framework reducing any stresses. They say they gained a deep understanding of professionalism and workplace dynamics, successfully transitioning from academic mindsets to real-world settings.

Notable alumni:

- Eden Getachew, Centre of Government and Delivery Lead at Tony Blair Institute for Global Change
- Liya Frew, General Manager at Saint-Gobain Weber Ethiopia
- Wengelawit Tessema, Deputy Programme Lead at FC
- Biruk Abayneh, Senior Consultant



Wengel Tessema
Deputy Programme Lead and Partner at FC



YPDP was a turning point as I left college and was wondering how to deliver in real work environment as i did in school. It addressed a range of topics around professionalism that are critical to thrive in a transition from school to work life.

Are you ready to shape the future with us?

Reach out to learn more about the programme or explore partnership opportunities.



Our 2024 YPs

MESMER in Numbers



The Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise Recovery and Resilience (MESMER) Programme, a five-year programme launched in October 2022, works to support 72,200 MSMEs and create 410,800 jobs within enterprises by building the resilience and growth prospects of MSMEs through access to finance. The Programme is supporting MSMEs by providing business development support, psychosocial services and technical assistance to financial institutions.

Total Applications Received

108,133



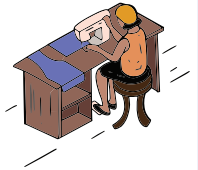
Micro Enterprises

44,086



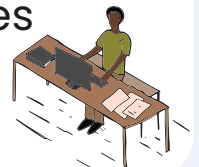
Small Enterprises

29,180



Medium Enterprises

12,744



Startup Enterprises

21,231



Loans Disbursed

6,045



Psychosocial Support Service (PSS) Provided

16,273





**Yemeketwork Andarge
Working in rope-making, BRIDGES Participant
Addis Ababa**

First Consult is the leading development consulting organisation in Ethiopia. Founded in 2006, First Consult (FC) has grown to design and implement economic development projects across the agriculture, manufacturing and service sectors. Our multidisciplinary teams combine a capacity to execute with clarity of the local context. We leverage on our partnerships with public and private organisations as well as a networked on-the-ground presence in most regions of Ethiopia. We have delivered at-scale real impact in terms of jobs & wealth creation, business formation & growth, and investment attraction & mobilization.

Projects featured in this edition of *The Context*:



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BRIDGES is a five-year programme (2019-24) aiming to create and support 718,000 youth jobs, mostly for women. It's implemented by First Consult in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation. The Programme focuses on the manufacturing sector, covering all regions and city administrations to address unemployment in Ethiopia.



The Young Professionals Development Programme (YPDP) is a one-year initiative that equips recent graduates with hands-on experience, theoretical training, and mentorship to build skills, industry knowledge, and networks. The programme prepares young professionals to navigate the development sector and drive meaningful impact in their communities.

Join us on this transformative path as we unlock opportunities and shape a brighter future for Ethiopia.