The CAP Youth Empowerment Institute Kenya (CAP YEI Kenya) is a nongovernmental organisation founded in 2011. Initially established as an affiliate of the Indian CAP (Community and Progress) Foundation, it nowadays operates independent of technical support from India.

With funding from the MasterCard Foundation, CAP YEI Kenya is implementing the "Basic Employability Skills Training (BEST)", a workforce preparation programme for vulnerable youth. The three month-long BEST programme comprises different modules, which are all "linking learning with livelihood". The life skills training is an integral part and a foundation to all other elements of the BEST-programme.

CAP YEI Kenya currently runs 17 training centres and plans to establish more centres across the country.

CAP YEI in Kenya targets vulnerable young people between 18 and 30 years of age. Vulnerability may refer, for example, to poverty, school dropout, early motherhood or youth in conflict with the law.

Young people who
· possess a national Identity Card,
· have a minimum educational attainment of primary school,
· are neither in education, training nor employment, and
· are willing to fully attend three months of training

can be accepted into the BEST programme after a short interview. The selection favours vulnerable youth as stated above.

CAP YEI always seeks partnerships with surrounding companies, which are looking for workers. Companies that commit themselves to introduce young people to the work place and to their business and who assign mentors to supervise young people during the practice phase of training, will gain prepared and motivated young workers.
The BEST programme provides employment opportunity-oriented workforce preparation. Through this programme, CAP YEI contributes to overcome the paradox of significant unemployment in Kenya despite its growing economy, which is caused by a skills mismatch and the gap between the curriculum of training institutions and the needs of industry.

The complete training cycle covers technical as well as life skills, work readiness, and financial literacy training. It offers bridges into internships, jobs, and self-employment. The focus on life skills and work readiness in relation to technical training is a response to the increasing trend in human resources of the labour market, where "employers often hire based on technical skills but fire for lack of life skills".

The BEST training, in total, covers all basic objectives of employment services, including matching and placement. The life skills component of the training (as a module of its own and as a theme cutting across other training modules) focuses on orientation and preparation. CAP YEI requires training centre staff to ensure that all participants take part in internships, as internships are often the transitional step into jobs. In this way, it contributes to matching youth to prospective employers.

CAP YEI promotes the self-directed growth of young people. Life skills are foundational for any livelihood and are, together with labour market relevant employability skills, central part of the BEST training. Life skills training helps young people to be active and to better manage life and workplace situations.

Life skills are defined as a combination of physical, social and personal skills, which help individuals to effectively, confidently and competently handle everyday life. Life skills training aims to increase the self-awareness of young people and to prepare them for the formal labour market. This is important because employers not only look for basic technical skills but also for honesty, punctuality, communication skills and the ability to take initiative. Life skills are considered a central precondition for work readiness. With a strong emphasis on self-esteem and positive thinking, the Life Skills Training empowers youth to progress building behaviours and attitudes which help them be successful in the world of work. At the same time, it helps prevent problems such as absenteeism, drug abuse and teenage pregnancy.

Implementing the BEST model consists of nine steps. The first three steps are preparatory; the last one is evaluative, steps four to eight deal directly with participants (see “Activities”). It is noteworthy, that all training cycles start with scanning labour market demands and identifying entry-level competence profiles and company-based mentors. Technical training contents are all developed in cooperation with private sector companies.
The actual training (steps 4 to 8) is delivered by qualified facilitators (CAP YEI staff delivering the classroom training are trained in the BEST model) and by company-based mentors (work practice). Life skills are part of steps 4 to 8.

A wide range of different methods is used for skills development, such as role-plays, lectures, storytelling, games, mock interviews, case studies, small group discussions and videos. Mentor talks are another key input as they address important issues such as sexual and reproductive health, drug abuse prevention and conflict resolution.

Steps towards sustainability: since 2018, a fee of 2,000 shillings per student is levied. In addition, CAP YEI started to run a for-profit company to contribute to self-financing of the programme.

Institutionalisation and up-scaling: in the current five-year project phase, CAP YEI aims to integrate the BEST model into the country’s technical curriculum. For this purpose, CAP YEI developed capacity building training for public Vocational Training Centres (VTCs).

Participants themselves are key drivers of their own learning:

During the induction phase (step 4 of the BEST Programme), participants develop individual learning goals and agree on them with the facilitators. Participants are introduced to the participatory learning approach and its methods and choose from the labour market-relevant technical training options. At this stage, life skills training starts with self-exploration. This contains aspects such as identification of strengths and weaknesses. Participants and facilitators update the Individual Youth Learning and Development Plan (IYLDP) once per month to keep a record of and to reflect on individual learning progress.
The training (step 5) comprises different courses such as classroom training in life skills, career exploration and a variety of technical training options students can choose from. Guest lecturers and exposure visits are also part of the training. The life skills part is amalgamating self-awareness elements (identification of personal strengths, values, weaknesses, goals, reflected personal history and belief systems) with personal and inter-personal competences (communication, time- and self-management, gender and sexuality, conflict resolution, self-motivation, decisionmaking, etc.) and with other skills relevant for employment or self-employment (e.g. money management, application strategy and techniques). It is the foundation for any further technical and soft skills training, practical work experiences and transition into employment or self-employment.

Step 6 provides assignments for participants. Trainees are sent to companies for practice. Company-based training and internships that last for an average of four weeks are implemented in partnership with companies.

The Work Readiness module (step 7) supports students in preparing their resumes; it includes (mock) interviews, deals with workplace behaviour and gender aspects and provides room for peer to peer-support.

The training ends with placement support (step 9). All participants looking for wage employment are placed with potential employers for an average of four weeks to practice what they have learned. Those wishing to start their own business are referred to entrepreneurship and financial management training and support programmes (start-up schemes).

Budget

- Average gross cost per student are at a current level of about USD 400 (tendency falling). These costs include staff, technical support, facilities, equipment, materials and all operations.

Staff

- 120 members of staff (majority facilitators, centre coordinators and managers) in total;
- One national headquarters with less than 20 members of staff coordinating all programme operations, training facilitators on the BEST method, and liaising with donors, partners, and the government.

Physical Resources

- Minimum of two training rooms and one (shared) office per centre;
- Chairs, tables, desks and storage cabinets;
- Computer lab in each centre to train basic IT: Laptops and desktops;
- TV screen or projector;
- Routers for internet connectivity;
- Stationary;
- Specific additional equipment depending on the requirements of technical training courses.

Technological Resources

- Access to internet in every centre
- Management Information System
- SMS system for communication
- Customised online registration system
- Digital delivery platform (for each of the centres)
- Usage of web and social media for communication and promotion
· The well-tested BEST training modules (labour market demand-driven content and modern training methods with practice phases) are standardised into a model, which can be adopted by public Vocational Training Centres.

· Facilitator training, Individual Youth Learning, and Development Plans have proven to be supportive tools.

· 17 CAP YEI BEST Centres are established in more than 10 (out of 47) counties in Kenya. Every centre enrols up to three intakes of trainees per year with an average of 35 to 80 students per intake, depending on the centre. So far, in these centres, 11,804 youth have been enrolled and trained; 9,945 youth graduated, 7,655 youth are employed (figures from 2016).

· The average job absorption rate is at 75 percent;

· 8 percent of trainees start their own small business.

· Additional centres that are supported by various donors. A current total of 27 centres are implementing the BEST model in Kenya in March 2018.

· Within CAP YEI’s scaling up approach, capacity building training already reached 15 counties; 60 VTCs are covered with 122 instructors.

· All centres have in total reached more than 32,000 youth.

Tips for Practitioners

According to the Executive Director, success factors of CAP YEI are as follows:

1. CAP YEI focuses intensely on the needs and aspirations of young people (of which livelihood is a key one) and simultaneously considers the needs of employers (where identifying good workers is key). Bringing these needs together is a key to success.

2. CAP YEI is constantly reviewing and learning and is flexible enough to adjust tools and processes when youth are not benefitting sufficiently. Every round of implementation ends with an evaluation (step 9 of the BEST cycle). CAP YEI actively asks for feedback and is interested to learn from both positive and negative feedback alike.

3. The BEST model is a programme that is adaptable to different conditions and needs. The robust yet flexible model creates structured ways for engaging employers, providing life skills and technical skills, linking youth to opportunities, constant reviewing and providing post-training support.

4. Patience and endurance is also necessary to convince people with action and results (rather than with words).

5. The key message of CAP YEI in Kenya to practitioners around the world is, in a nutshell: „Listen closely to young people and to employers; base your major decisions on data, be willing to change when you are wrong, find as many ways to engage employers in the delivery of the programme as you can!”