Terms of Reference for Final Evaluation

Skills to Succeed

Youth Employability Skills Global Grant 8

December 2024

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# Project Summary

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| Type of study | External final evaluation |
| Name of the project | Youth Employability Skills Global Grant 8 |
| Project Start and End dates | June 2022 – November 2025 |
| Project duration | 3 years, 5 months, 30 days |
| Project locations: | Guangdong Province, Sichuan Province, Yangtze River Delta Region |
| Thematic areas | Child poverty |
| Donor | Accenture |
| Estimated beneficiaries | 25,000 youth and 4,030 adults |
| Overall objective of the project | This project will provide an integrated solution to enhance the economic empowerment of youth who experience inequality and discrimination in order to break the cycle of poverty, successfully participate in the green economy and become agents for climate action. The project aims to equip young women and men aged 15 to 24 with the necessary skills, opportunities and networks to access decent jobs, build their own business or continue education. |

# Introduction

This document provides Terms of Reference for the final evaluation of Youth Employability Skills Global Grant 8 (GG8) project.

The GG8 project is supported byAccenture, aims to enhance the employability of youth through innovative training programs that integrate employability skills, green skills, and growth mindset training. The project focuses on equipping young people, including those with disabilities, with the necessary tools and knowledge to navigate the rapidly evolving job market and seize emerging opportunities in the green economy. Implementation will take place across multiple locations in China. The project's timeline spans from June 2022 to November 2025, with youth aged 15–24 serving as its primary beneficiaries.

This final evaluation aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the GG8 project. Specifically, it aims to:

1. assess the outcome results of GG8 project
2. evaluate the effectiveness of the project approaches from the perspective of different stakeholders.
3. analyze successes and lessons learned.
4. provide insights for the global evaluation.

The project background, study scope, key questions, intended methodology, reporting and governance, key deliverables and timeframes for its implementation are provided in the sections that follow.

# PROJECT Background and Context

Global background:

Save the Children’s flagship youth employment program, Skills to Succeed (S2S), moreover its Global Grant 8 Program (3 years program), was designed to equip young women and men who experience the most inequality and discrimination, with employability, technical and green skills to successfully pursue decent work and economic growth, and the attitudes, knowledge, and values to develop a sustainable and resource-efficient society. This aligns with SDG 8 “Promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all” as well as Accenture’s skills to succeed agenda to help individuals around the world drive improved economic opportunities for themselves, their families, and their communities. The program is implemented in seven countries; Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Italy, Mexico, South Africa and Vietnam, and it aims to engage 135,075 youth and 38,160 adults in activities tailored to prepare them for equitable and sustainable economic opportunities. Emphasizing skill development, attitudinal shifts, and facilitating access to employment and self-employment opportunities for marginalized groups, the program seeks to empower youth to contribute meaningfully to sustainable economic growth.

Project in China:

The youth in China face significant challenges in employment and skills development despite their potential as drivers of economic growth and agents of change. COVID-19 has worsened youth labour market conditions, with many working in low-skilled industries and facing mismatched skills due to inadequate education and career guidance, particularly among vulnerable groups like migrant youth, women, and those with disabilities. Emerging opportunities in green and digital economies are hindered by insufficient "green skills" and a persistent digital divide. Entrepreneurship offers promise but is constrained by barriers such as limited training, financial support, and gender-specific challenges. Youth with disabilities face lower employment rates and stereotypes that limit their access to inclusive opportunities. Additionally, youth often lack leadership skills and platforms to advocate for critical issues like climate change, requiring greater support from stakeholders to transition successfully into decent work. The GG8 project aims to provide an integrated solution to enhance the economic empowerment of youth who experience inequality and discrimination to break the cycle of poverty, successfully participate in the green economy and become agents for climate action. The project aims to equip young women and men aged 15 to 24 with the necessary skills, opportunities and networks to access decent jobs, build their own business or continue education. The project targets youth aged 15 to 24 in Guangdong Province, Sichuan Province and the Yangtze River Delta, including migrants, ethnic minorities and youth with disabilities. The GG8 project plans to engage 25,000 youth and 4,030 adults through awareness-raising interventions to enhance their knowledge of climate change, employability skills, positive parenting, gender equality and social inclusion in the workplace. Improve the knowledge and skills of 10,000 youth and 100 adults through structured training or skills-building interventions. Support 6,000 youth to attain internships, find decent jobs, build their own businesses, continue their education or have improved career readiness and resiliency. Below are the project’s target groups of youth in three geographical areas of China:

**Guangdong Province**, which has the largest migrant population in China.[[1]](#footnote-2) An urban youth baseline survey of SC China shows that in Guangzhou, most of the youth lack employability skills, are more likely to be engaged in temporary and part-time employment and experience wage penalties, limited access to training, slow career advancement and inadequate social protection.

**Sichuan Province** has a large number of internal migrants and ethnic minorities.[[2]](#footnote-3) In Liangshan Prefecture, where nearly two-thirds of the population are ethnic minorities[[3]](#footnote-4) and where all seven national-level poverty-stricken counties in Sichuan Province are located,[[4]](#footnote-5) many youth have no formal education or formal vocational skills training, making it difficult for them to seek employment.[[5]](#footnote-6)

**Yangtze River Delta,** which includes Shanghai, Jiangsu province, Zhejiang province and Anhui province, attracts a large number of migrant workers. For migrant youth, the disadvantaged socio-economic background hinders their integration into the urban society.[[6]](#footnote-7) A large number of factories and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) schools in this area also provide a good environment to explore integration and cooperation between the industry and education.

# Scope of Study

## Purpose, Objectives and Scope

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the project in enhancing youth employability, while capturing lessons learned. The Country Office-level evaluation allows for a deeper understanding of the local context and alignment with the specific needs of youth and communities in China. Further, the findings will contribute to the global evaluation led by SC US and inform future programming.

The study's objectives are:

1. assess the outcome results of GG8 project.
2. to evaluate the effectiveness of the project approaches from the perspective of different stakeholders.
3. to analyze successes and lessons learned.
4. to provide insights for the global evaluation.

**Scope:**

* Evaluation criteria: Considering that there will be a final evaluation at global level, which includes project effectiveness, operational, and sustainability cross different countries. The domestic final evaluation of the GG8 project will focus on the criteria of effectiveness, to understand what the project results are, and what are the feedback and recommendations of different target groups on the project.
* Project components: The final evaluation should cover two components of the project’s logframe. Component 1- deliver effective services to youth; Component 3- develop an enabling environment for transformational impact
* Project sites: The GG8 project is implemented across three regions in China: Guangdong Province (primarily in Guangzhou City), Sichuan Province (primarily in Chengdu City and Meishan City), and the Yangtze River Delta Region (primarily in Shanghai City, Suzhou City, and Wuhu City). The project has approximately covered 2,400 youth in 2 schools in Sichuan Province, 2,600 youth in 2 schools in Guangdong Province, and 15600 youth in 5 schools in the Yangtze River Delta Region. For the final evaluation, an appropriate sample size, commensurate with the project's scale, should be considered to guarantee representative results.

## Intended Audience and Use of the Study

It is expected that the results of the final evaluation will be shared with different stakeholders through key findings, such as the After-Action Review, the coordination conference with government stakeholders, a summary meeting with local NGO partners or activities with community beneficiaries, etc.

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| **Intended Audience** | **Use of Study** |
| Project donor:  Accenture | * Support donor in understanding the effectiveness of GG8 in China, obtain feedback form beneficiaries on their views |
| Primary implementing organisation:  Youth Development Team, SC China | * Share key findings with multiple stakeholders * Conduct After-Action Review for project relevant group * Inform future programming based on current lessons learned |
| Implementing partners:  Shangai BeBetter Organization, Zhejiang University, Lychee Youth, WEable, Guangzhou, Renshou Friendship Social Work Service Center | * Provide feedback to partners on project outcomes * Communicate the views of different stakeholders to partners * Summarise lessons learned for future improvement * Encourage partners to promote project results through other channels |
| Government stakeholders：  Education Bureau of project sites | * Report project achievements to government officials * Advocate for continued government attention and resources for future Skilled to Succeed projects |
| Community members:  Youth, teachers, parents, volunteers | * Save the Children is committed to being accountable to youth through information sharing, participation, and feedback. * Help other community members gain a better understanding of youth career development needs. |

## Key Study Questions

The study team will be required to undertake consultation with the Save the Children at the commencement of the project to further refine the study questions. And the secondary questions may be adjusted after discussion with the external study team.

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| **Evaluation Criteria** | **Key Questions** |
| Effectiveness | 1. Did the intervention achieve its objectives and expected results？ 2. What are the perspectives of different stakeholders on the effectiveness of the project intervention? What are their suggestions for further project improvement? |
| **Target Group** | **Secondary Questions** |
| Youth including Youth with Disabilities | * What types of activities were offered to youth? How satisfied were youth with these activities? * How did youth find the activities helpful in promoting their transition from school to work? * What suggestions do the youth have for the project activities? |
| Schools/ Employers | * What did schools and employers think about the intervention to support youth for career transition? * How did the project provide for the employment of youth with disabilities, particularly in terms of supporting youth with intellectual disabilities to move into employment? |
| Implementing Partners | * Were there any challenges during the implementation process? Were the results different from what was expected? * What do implementation partners think about the interventions provided to youth? What activities are more likely to be sustained after the end of the project? * What are the suggestions for future collaboration with Save the Children? |
| Project Staff | * Were the key milestones (transformed) of the project achieved? Were there any challenges in implementing the project? * In GG7, Save the Children identified the pilot schools and implemented the training curricula directly, whereas in GG8 through the partners to select the pilot schools and implement the training curricula; were there any differences in the effectiveness of the two approaches? * What are the challenges and achievements in GG8; what are the suggestions for future project design? |

# Study Methodology

## Study Design

The external study team is expected to develop the evaluation protocol, update and/or develop tools for the quantitative and qualitative data collection, implementation of the tools, and analysis of the data. All primary data collected during the study must facilitate disaggregation by gender.

Additionally, it is important to highlight that the implementation protocol as well as all tools related to data gathering should undergo and be approved by the Ethical Review Committee.

It is expected that this study will involve:

* a non-experimental design.
* mixed methods including quantitative survey and qualitative interview.
* purposive or random sampling. The external study team should propose the appropriate sampling methodology to ensure that the data can be successfully collected, the findings and conclusions are true and representative.
* The detailed sampling methodology should be clearly presented in the inception report developed by the external study team, broken down by quantitative and qualitative sample size and methodology.

## Tools and Data Collection

There will be some data collection requirements at the global level and Save the Children will share the tools for this data collection at the inception phase. The study team should fully understand what data is required and how the tool can be used or integrated into domestic data collection. It should not be repeated data collection for study target groups.

All the raw data collected must be anonymised before submission to Save the Children. If there are practical constraints on submitting raw data to Save the Children, the study team will need to provide guidelines for the raw data analysis, detailing how the data were collected, what methods used to process and analyse the data, and the data results.

In addition, the study team should provide below information at the inception phase, including:

* Describe the sources of data to be used in the study, both primary and secondary.
* Describe the methods proposed for primary data collection, for example observations, interviews, surveys and target group.
* Describe the data collection approaches, including inclusive and participatory approaches, considering age and gender appropriate data collection methods; and highlight specific mention to consultations with youth.
* Describe the approach to data triangulation
* Describe the data ownership and storage responsibilities
* Describe the key data collection tools and survey instruments used

## Ethical Considerations

It is expected that this study will be:

* **Child participatory**. Where appropriate and safe, children should be supported to participate in the evaluation process beyond simply being respondents. Opportunities for collaborative participation could include involving children in determining success criteria against which the project could be evaluated, supporting children to collect some of the data required for the evaluation themselves, or involving children in the validation of findings. Any child participation, whether consultative, collaborative or child-led, must abide by the [9 Basic Requirements for meaningful and ethical child participation](https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/library/applying-9-basic-requirements-meaningful-and-ethical-child-participation-during-covid-19).
* **Inclusive**. Ensure that children from different ethnic, social and religious backgrounds have the chance to participate, as well as children with disabilities and children who may be excluded or discriminated against in their community.
* **Ethical**: The study must be guided by the following ethical considerations:
  + Safeguarding – demonstrating the highest standards of behaviour towards children and adults.
  + Sensitive – to child rights, gender, inclusion and cultural contexts.
  + Openness - of information given, to the highest possible degree to all involved parties.
  + Confidentiality and data protection - measures will be put in place to protect the identity of all participants and any other information that may put them or others at risk.[[7]](#footnote-8)
  + Public access - to the results when there are not special considerations against this
  + Broad participation - the relevant parties should be involved where possible.
  + Reliability and independence - the study should be conducted so that findings and conclusions are correct and trustworthy.

It is expected that:

* Data collection methods will be age and gender appropriate.
* Study activities will provide a safe, creative space where children feel that their thoughts and ideas are important.
* A risk assessment will be conducted that includes any risks related to children, young people’s, or adult’s participation.
* A referral mechanism will be in place in case any child safeguarding or protection issues arise.
* Informed consent will be used where possible.

The study team will be required to obtain approval from a Human Research Ethics Committee. If the ethic approval cannot be obtained from local Ethics Committee from the study team, Save the Children will provide assistance with this process.

# Expected Deliverables

The study deliverables and tentative timeline are outlined below. The study team and project team will agree on final milestones and deadlines at the inception phase.

**Deliverables and Tentative Timeline**

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| **Deliverable / Milestones** | **Timeline** |
| The study team is contracted and commences work | January to February 2025 |
| The study Team will submit an **inception report\*** in line with the [provided template](https://savethechildren1.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/what/me/EvtNzatd2hlFgFZvAblFe98BeYqbxHcXg_CrZTLdP7Gp8Q?e=4dDyJ6), including:   * Study objectives, scope and key study questions. * Description of the methodology, including design, data collection methods, sampling strategy, data sources, and outcome indicators to be measured. * Data analysis and reporting plan * Caveats and limitations of study * Risks and mitigation plan * Ethical considerations, including details on consent and data privacy. * Data collection tools (i.e., surveys, FGD/ KII)   Once the inception report is finalised and accepted, the study team must submit a request for any change in strategy or approach to Save the Children. | February 2025 |
| **Final data collection tools (in the report language)**:   * Survey instrument * Data collection mechanism | February 2025 |
| **Ethics submission (*if the study team cannot obtain the ethics approval form a local committee, it requires the study team submit below documents in English, Save the Children will support the ethics approval process*):**  Should approval from a Human Research Ethics Committee be required, an ethics submission should include:   * study protocols (participant recruitment, data security and storage, consent and confidentiality etc.) * considerations for consulting with children and other vulnerable groups (if applicable) * participant information statement and consent forms | March 2025  [Data collection during April to May 2025] |
| **Data and analyses** including all encrypted raw data, databases and analysis outputs | June 2025 |
| A **Power Point Presentation** including a summary of formative findings from the study. The focus will be on:   * Summary of interim findings * Any emerging program issues or risks (if applicable) * Any changes that have had to be made to the study design (if applicable) * Key tasks for the next stage of the study and any proposed refinements or changes to methodology (if applicable) | June 2025 |
| A **Draft** **Study Report (Chinese and English version)** including below elements:  All reports are to use the Save the Children [Final Study Report template](https://savethechildren1.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/what/me/EvtNzatd2hlFgFZvAblFe98BeYqbxHcXg_CrZTLdP7Gp8Q?e=4dDyJ6)   * Executive summary * Background description of the Program and context relevant to the Study * Scope and focus of the study * Overview of the study methodology and data collection methods, including a Study matrix * Findings aligned to each of the key Study questions * Specific caveats or methodological limitations of the evaluation * Conclusions outlining implications of the findings or learnings * Recommendations * Annexes (Project logframe, study ToR, Inception Report, Study schedule, List of people involved)   A consolidated set of feedback from key stakeholders will be provided by Save the Children within 2 weeks of the submission of the draft report. | July 2025  [Report revision during August to September 2025, including addressing comments from SC China team and SC US team] |
| **Final Study Report (Chinese and English version) \*** incorporating feedback from consultation on the Draft Study Report | October 2025 |
| **Knowledge translation materials (Chinese and English version):**   * PowerPoint presentation of Study findings * Evaluation Brief\*\* | October 2025 |

\*All reports are to use the Save the Children [Final Study Report template](https://savethechildren1.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/what/me/EvtNzatd2hlFgFZvAblFe98BeYqbxHcXg_CrZTLdP7Gp8Q?e=4dDyJ6). Please also refer to Save the Children technical writing guide.

\*\* The Evaluation Brief is a 2-4 pages summary of the full report and will be created using the Save the Children [template](https://savethechildren1.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/sites/PQIEL/Shared%20Documents/PQI%20KM/H.%20KML%20Tools%20%26%20Templates/KML%20Templates%20(English)/02.%20SCI%20Evaluation%20Brief%20Template.docx?d=w0b355e5f6f8b4eb3bc08b81445b2e962&csf=1&web=1&e=xMIIRR).

All documents are to be produced in MS Word format and provided electronically by email to Save the Children.

# Study Team and Selection Criteria

Interested consultants will be required to submit an Expression of Interest in line with the provided template, which should demonstrate adherence to the following requirements.

### Understanding of Requirements and Experience

To be considered, the study team members together must have demonstrated skills, expertise and experience in:

* Conducting relevant evaluations in the field of children and youth, particularly in relation to youth development
* Sound and proven experience in conducting evaluations, particularly utilisation and learning focused evaluations for development projects of NGO
* Leading youth development research, evaluations or consultancy work in China that is sensitive to the local context and culture, particularly vulnerable migrant youth
* Extensive experience of theories of change and how they can be used to carry out evaluations
* Strong written and verbal skills in communicating technical and/ or complex findings to non-specialist audiences (especially report writing and presentation skills)
* Conducting ethical and inclusive studies involving children and youth participatory techniques
* Conducting ethical and inclusive studies involving marginalised, deprived and/or vulnerable groups in culturally appropriate and sensitive ways
* A track record of open, collaborative working with clients

There is a high expectation that:

* The team should break down the evaluation budget into template provided by Save the Children.
* Members (or a proportion) of the study team have a track record of previously working together.
* A team leader will be appointed who has the seniority and experience in leading complex study projects, and who has the ability and standing to lead a team toward a common goal.
* The team has the ability to commit to the terms of the project and have adequate and available skilled resources to dedicate to this study over the period.
* The team has a strong track record of working flexibly to accommodate changes as the project is implemented.

# Annexes

**Annex 1: SCI Evaluation Scoring for perspective consultants**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Evaluation Quality Criteria** (used for internal scoring after completion) |
| **Purpose, Design and Methods** | 1. Does the evaluation report clearly identify the evaluation's purpose (including its key objectives, questions and criteria) as set out in the evaluation's Terms of Reference (ToR)? |
| 2. Are the data collection and analysis methods a clearly justified approach to addressing the evaluation's purpose and questions? (Do they provide valid, reliable and ethical data?) |
| 3. Is the methodology suitably tailored to the context and population groups to which the evaluation questions relate (e.g. re gender, disability, socio-economic status, geographic location, cultural context, ethnicity)? |
| 4. Is the size and composition of the sample in proportion to the conclusions sought by the evaluation? |
| 5. Does the evaluation build on what is already known, for example existing tried and tested frameworks and tools, existing data/evidence, and previous lessons learned? |
| 6. Are the methods used to collect and analyse data and any limitations of the quality of the data and collection methodology explained and justified? |
| 7. Has any personal and professional influence or potential bias among those collecting or analysing data been recorded and addressed or mitigated ethically? |
| **Analysis and Findings** | 8. If evaluating impact, is a point of comparison used to show that change has happened (eg. a baseline, a counterfactual, comparison with a similar group)? |
| 9. Is the explanation of how (e.g. theory of change, logframe, activities) the intervention contributes to change explored? |
| 10. Is the data well triangulated, such as by using different data collection methods, types of data and stakeholder perspectives? |
| 11. Are alternative factors (eg. the contribution of other actors) considered to explain the observed result alongside an intervention’s contribution? |
| 12. Are unintended and unexpected changes (positive or negative) identified and explained? |
| 13. Are the perspectives of children & communities included in the evidence, including the most deprived and marginalised? Note: For evaluations focused on young children, caregiver perspectives are adequate instead. |
| 14. Are the findings disaggregated according to sex, disability and other relevant social differences? |
| 15. Is there a clear logical link between the data that was collected and analysed, and the conclusions and recommendations presented? |
| 16. Are conflicting findings and divergent perspectives presented and explained in the analysis and conclusions? |
| 17. Are the findings and conclusions of the assessment shared with and validated by a range of key stakeholders (eg. communities, partners, Save the Children staff)? |
| **Communication and Use** | 18. Is the analysis and interpretation of the data well communicated through accessible language and helpful visuals (diagrams, graphs, tables as needed)? |
| 19. Are references, annexes and links included that provide additional relevant data, analysis or references (including key documents and which individuals/stakeholders were involved)? |
| 20. Is there a clear plan for how to use the results, including recommendations that are 'SMART' (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timebound) and directed toward the appropriate 'end users', a dissemination plan, and specific actions for implementing these recommendations? |

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| ToR prepared by: | Youth Development Programme, SC China |
| ToR approved by: | Skills to Succeed Programme |
| Date of sign off: |  |

1. Guangdong Provincial Bureau of Statistics, See: <http://stats.gd.gov.cn/tjgb/content/post_3283438.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. The People’s Government of Sichuan Province. See: <http://www.sc.gov.cn/10462/10758/11799/11800/2018/4/30/10300452.shtml> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Statistical Communique of Liangshan Prefecture's 2020 National Economic and Social Development. See: <http://tjj.lsz.gov.cn/sjfb/lstjgb/202105/t20210506_1899812.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. There in total 52 counties nation-wide, before the elimination of extreme poverty in China in 2020. Concentrate resources to fight against poverty, 2020, People's Daily Online See: <http://politics.people.com.cn/n1/2020/0728/c1001-31799785.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Child Labor Rings Reach China’s Distant Villages. 2008. New York Times. See: <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/10/world/asia/10CHINA.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Ling, M. 2015, "“Bad Students Go to Vocational Schools!”: Education, Social Reproduction and Migrant Youth in Urban China", The China Journal (Canberra, A.C.T.), vol. 73, no. 1, pp. 108-131. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. If any Consultancy Service Provider, Freelancer or Contingent worker will have direct contact with children and/or vulnerable adults and/or beneficiaries and/or have access to any sensitive data on safeguarding and/or children and/or beneficiaries, it is the responsibility of the person receiving the consulting service to contact the local HR team and child safeguarding focal point to ensure vetting checks and on-boarding are conducted in line with statutory requirements, local policies and best practices guidance. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)