External Evaluation of the Imarisha Mentoring Programme

Mowgli Mentoring Management Response (July 2021)

Introduction

This is the management response to the findings and recommendations arising from the external evaluation of the Imarisha Mentoring Programme. The Imarisha Programme (2018-2020, Kenya), implemented by Mowgli Mentoring and funded by the Argidius Foundation, was evaluated by Genesis Analytics. The evaluation's primary purpose was to understand the effectiveness, outcomes and learning from the piloting of an online mentoring programme alongside Mowgli Mentoring's traditional in-person facilitated programme approach, for the purposes of comparison and optimisation, and to inform future programmatic (and organisational) strategy.

Summary management response

Mowgli Mentoring is grateful to the evaluators for their consultative approach, and for the synthesis of their observations derived from various quantitative data sources and qualitative engagement with beneficiary stakeholders. We particularly appreciate the insight arising from entrepreneur case studies.

The evaluation made 13 programme-related recommendations. The table below indicates whether Mowgli Mentoring agrees, partially agrees or disagrees with each recommendation. Overall, we agree or partially agree with the each of the evaluation's recommendations, and provide comments on associated actions taken or planned. We offer three broad reflections/ responses in relation to the evaluation's utility and learning:

(1) The evaluation was conducted from late 2020 to early 2021; it focussed (necessarily) on the Imarisha programme which had at its core a design and testing intent in relation to piloting online versus in-person mentoring programming. Meanwhile, in parallel, one of the obvious effects of the Covid pandemic was the shift to online delivery for all Mowgli Mentoring's programmes. Given the real-time learning from the Imarisha programme, our other rapidly and substantially adjusted programme delivery modalities, alongside various sector consultation, research and analysis, there are themes across a number of recommendations which had already been implemented (and/ or adapted) by the time the Imarisha evaluation was underway.

(2) Similarly, the evaluation was ongoing during the same period as the development of Mowgli Mentoring's organisational strategy for 2021-25. Given the strategic nature of the Imarisha programme, earlier engagement between the evaluators and members of the Mowgli Mentoring senior management team may potentially have enhanced orienting the evaluation within a broader programmatic/ organisational/ sector context. We draw learning from this regarding further strengthening the consultation and engagement approach for future external evaluative exercises.

(3) We look forward to drawing out and sharing additional insight on entrepreneur outcomes and impact from our planned Imarisha (outcome) evaluation activities in 2021 and 2022.

Evaluation recommendations and management response

#	Recommendation	Management response	Observations and actions taken (if applicable)
1	Part of the Imarisha Mentoring Programme's success has been due to Mowgli Mentoring's ability have full autonomy and control over the design, operation and adaptation of the programme. This adaptability was supported by: The ability to pivot quickly from planned activities; responsive compliance mechanisms; a lean, engaged team; and, staying connected with changes in ecosystem. This adaptability should be carried forward in future programming.	Agreed	Noted and continue.
2	Mentorship is still a nascent idea in many parts of Kenya. This demonstrates the need for Mowgli Mentoring to conduct training and/or sensitisation of professionals and potential mentors to create overall ecosystem awareness of what mentorship looks like, and why giving back to budding entrepreneurs is important, prior to the roll-out of their mentoring programmes.	Agreed	Mentorship nascence, as well as the absence of a common definition and understanding of (entrepreneurial) mentoring, applies across many of the contexts where Mowgli Mentoring works. We have seen the need for ESOs/entrepreneurial ecosystems to come together to develop a common definition of mentoring as a transformative approach that supports both personal and business growth. (See for example the Mowgli Mentoring/ Make-IT study on mentoring and entrepreneurship in Rwanda). Mowgli Mentoring's 2021-2025 strategy includes a range of initiatives to foster a greater shared understanding of mentoring, as a concept and practice, within and across ecosystems as well as offering a variety of pathways, programmes and products to meet different learning and engagement needs as well as price points.
3	During the promotion of future online and blended programmes, participants need to be carefully informed about the design and activities of the programme, specifically as they relate to the delivery channels, in order to avoid participants dropping out as a result of these reasons.	Agreed	Beyond the Imarisha programme, Mowgli Mentoring's programme delivery modalities were adapted significantly over the past 18 months (due to the Covid pandemic and its associated restrictions on in-person interactions which had been at the centre of Mowgli Mentoring's

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	During the selection of mentors and mentees in future online and blended programmes, potential mentors and mentees need to be made aware of the requirements for participation in the programmes, including access to internet and regular participation in programme activities. Their ability to participate in these programmes needs to be gauged by the programme team and included as part of the selection criteria.		approach). The piloting/ testing of the online and blended approach within the Imarisha programme provided a strong foundation for these rapid adaptations; and we have observed an increase in the openness and interest of stakeholders – funders and participants – to adopt online and blended learning and engagement as effective alternative approaches for mentoring programmes. The comments regarding the setting and management of expectations, connectivity requirements and ability to participant have been well noted and taken forward within our processes.
4	The rigour of the recruitment process for mentors and mentees ensured that the Imarisha Mentoring Programme team selected mentors and mentees who were motivated individuals who understand the importance of mentoring in accelerating and transforming their personal capacities and professional capabilities. This rigour should be replicated in future programming.	Agreed	Noted and continue; a robust mentor and mentee recruitment approach is a core feature of Mowgli Mentoring's end-to-end mentoring programmes.
5	Given that mentors struggled to grasp the training content delivered via NovoEd, in future programming, Mowgli Mentoring can utilise a blended approach during training, where not only is training delivered through NovoEd, however also take a multiple pronged approach where mentors participate in a live virtual training with Mowgli Mentoring's facilitators, thereby giving them an opportunity to ask follow-up questions on content for example. To mitigate against chances of poor participation in live virtual training sessions, at the beginning of future online and blended programmes, Mowgli Mentoring can provide a timetable to mentors so they are aware of planned dates and times, and can plan their schedules accordingly.	Partially agreed	We note that some mentors found it less straightforward to engage with the online training, although 89% responded that "the online training content was easy to follow" and that "the training was adequate to prepare me for the mentoring relationship". Whilst the Imarisha programme was intentionally testing an online delivery model with minimal intervention from the programme team, Mowgli Mentoring designed and delivered, in parallel during 2020, blended and hybrid programme approaches using a range of technologies coupled with facilitated (online) peer engagement and learning. Online delivery requires creative and innovative approaches and a diversified use of technical tools and media to ensure participants' active and self-driven engagement and learning. This programme helped us prove the

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			hypothesis that blended/ hybrid can be an optimal alternative to in-person.
6	In future programming, there is a need to communicate the purpose of the reflection books with mentors when they are being shared with them. For future online or blended programmes, it is also suggested that the book complements some of the material from the online training so that mentors are more aware of the content in the reflection books and how this relates to the training, thereby supporting the ongoing usage of the book during their journey as mentors. Regular messages to the mentors can also be make references to the books to encourage mentors to reflect on the material every quarter, for example.	Agreed	Noted and actioned in 2020 across Mowgli Mentoring's other programmes, in the context of revisions to our approach from in-person to online/ blended; all materials adapted and further integrated with the overall online learning and engagement approach.
7	During the implementation of future online and blended programmes, there is a need to match mentors and mentees immediately following the mentor training and activities need to be put in place to kick-start the relationship.	Partially agreed	Through Mowgli Mentoring's adjusted delivery modalities across all our programmes during 2020, we have designed and (effectively) delivered modules using a range of formats and varying schedules between phases/ modules; this has included new approaches to online accelerated relationship-building which mirrors the in-person approach.
8	In future programming of online or blended programmes, the programme should take an active role to link the mentor and mentee together, and provide an introduction and prepare the pair for the mentoring relationship. This will allow for building rapport and set expectations between the mentor and mentee. This will enable them to clarify and gather an understanding about the goals of mentoring by highlighting the main roles of the mentor versus the mentee, such as who drives the conversation. Additionally, matched mentors and mentees then have the ability to immediately begin working together in order to co-develop their working agreements and start their mentoring relationship.	Agreed	Actioned in 2020 across Mowgli Mentoring's other programmes, in the context of revisions to our approach from in-person to online/ blended, and drawing on emergent learning from the hypothesis we were testing through Imarisha. We have concluded that a potential algorithm approach to matching mentors and mentees (as tested for the online component of the Imarisha programme) has substantial limitations. Mowgli Mentoring has developed a range of approaches to (online) matching which retains person-centred, holistic features, keeping relationships – and accelerated relationship-building – at the core of this part of our end-to-end programmes whilst allowing for scaling.

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9	There is a need to orientate both mentors and mentees on possible digital solutions that are used for future programming of online and blended programmes, as well as provide compulsory tutorial videos on navigating such solutions, so that programme participants are aware of their use and benefits.	Agreed	The Imarisha programme included guidance and tutorials on the digital elements (participants' uptake/ usage of those orientation materials was in some cases limited). More widely this recommendation was actioned in 2020 across Mowgli Mentoring's other programmes, in the context of revisions to our approach from in-person to online/ blended; all online/ blended programmes include technical briefings and digital orientation sessions before commencement on main programme phases.
10	So as to ensure the mentors and mentees remain engaged and invested in the mentoring programme and their relationship, during future programming of online and blended programmes, the mentoring journey of these groups needs to be closely monitored, and there needs to be the provision of ongoing support and communication with mentors and mentees.	Agreed	The online cohort of the Imarisha programme were closely monitored and additional support and follow-up (not initially intended as part of the pilot) was provided. This area was also actioned in 2020 across Mowgli Mentoring's other programmes, in the context of revisions to our approach from in-person to online/ blended (due to changes catalysed by the Covid pandemic).
11	Programme alumni could possibly be drawn on to share their experiences of the Imarisha Mentoring Programme with others and may even be willing to engage in other Mowgli Mentoring programmes, during for example programme recruitment and during MAS, which could in turn reduce some of the pressure on programme staff. There is therefore a need for Mowgli Mentoring to determine the ideal alumni association, documenting the value it would bring to both to the organisation/future programmes as a whole, and the members. As part of this, Mowgli Mentoring will need to identify what roles would be particularly relevant, and useful, for the alumni to adopt and document a clear, transparent process for facilitating that.	Agreed	Mowgli Mentoring's alumni strategy is a component of our 2021-25 organisational strategy.

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12	While Mowgli Mentoring's programmes are generating significant impact amongst entrepreneurs, Mowgli Mentoring have the potential to catalyse even greater impact. Specifically, the finding that seven entrepreneurs said they have tried to raise external financing but were unsuccessful, and nine entrepreneurs have said they would like to raise external financing but do not know how to highlights the opportunity that Mowgli Mentoring looks towards identifying other market players and facilitates linkages between these players and its programme entrepreneurs. Mowgli Mentoring should specifically focus on building linkages with institutions offering access to finance and business incubators, which would help entrepreneurs that are unable to access this knowledge or services from their mentors.	Agreed	The Imarisha programme included a successful collaboration with Mkono for access to finance (with uptake from entrepreneurs who were able to meet the eligibility criteria at that time). More widely, during 2020-21, Mowgli Mentoring delivered a range of programmes with partners offering complementary technical and/ or financial support interventions for entrepreneurs, alongside mentoring, e.g. business skills and commercialisation training, micro-grants, social business coaching, networking, pitching and investor events, etc. Further collaboration with other specialist providers – to amplify the impact of support to entrepreneurs – is a feature of Mowgli Mentoring's 2021-25 strategy.
13	Given Mowgli Mentoring's successful implementation and delivery of the mentor training to the mentors from the online facilitated cohort, as well as the ease in which the organisation recruited mentors in to the programme, Mowgli Mentoring can develop and rollout a mentor training programme which can be provided to potential mentors, with the purpose of ensuring there exists a group of well-equipped mentors that can deliver effective, quality, impactful mentoring in the Kenyan entrepreneurial ecosystem. This is especially important given that mentorship is still very nascent in Kenya, especially outside of Nairobi. Mowgli Mentoring can also provide training to other organisations with the potential to train mentors and create overall ecosystem awareness of what mentorship looks like, and why giving back to budding entrepreneurs is important.	Agreed	Mowgli Mentoring, in the context of our 2021-25 strategy, is diversifying the mentoring-related product and service offering, including (1) mentor training course (online, modular) for ESOs and others, and (2) training programme for mentoring managers/ coordinators to strengthen ESOs' (and others) capacity to effectively design, set up, implement and evaluate their own mentoring programmes.