



Education and Skills Strengthening Project

Education and Skills Strengthening Project (ESSP)

Beneficiary Engagement (Feedback) Survey

Report

The Republic of the Marshall Islands

May 2024

Abbreviations

AMI	Air Marshall Islands
BOMI	Bank of Marshall Islands
CMI	College of the Marshall Islands
ESSP	Education and Skills Strengthening Project
KBE	Kili/Bikini/Ejit Local Government
LHS	Laura High School
LSA	Life Skills Academy
MAWC	Majuro Atoll Waste Company
MCS	Majuro Computer Service
MIDB	Marshall Islands Development Bank
MIHS	Marshall Islands High School
MISC	Marshall Islands Shipping Corporation
MOEST	Ministry of Education, Sports, and Training
Nitijela	Parliament of the Marshall Islands
NTC	National Training Council
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PSS	Public School System
RMI	The Republic of the Marshall Islands
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
USP	The University of the South Pacific
WAM	Canoes of the Marshall Islands – Waan Aelōñ in Majel

Background

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) is one of the world's smallest, most isolated, and vulnerable nations. The country consists of 29 atolls and five individual islands (24 out of these 34 atolls and islands are inhabited). It covers an area of 1.9 million square km (around the size of Mexico) but has just 181 square km in land area (around the size of Washington, DC). The population was estimated at 58,413 in 2018, of which around 28,000 (53 percent) reside in Majuro (the country's capital) and 10,000 (18 percent) in Ebeye, the two largest urban centers. Its low elevation makes the country highly vulnerable to natural and climate related disasters threatening the physical viability of some areas of the main and more remote outer islands (OI).

Project summary

The RMI Education and Skills Strengthening Project (ESSP) aims to increase access and quality of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) opportunities and improve labor market outcomes for Marshallese beneficiaries in RMI and abroad.

This project will support the following:

- Improvement in the general secondary education to increase acquisition of foundational skills (Math and English);
- Expansion and improvements in the supply of technical and vocational training programs, specialization tracks within secondary schools, accredited college-level programs in post-secondary institutions, and shorter programs by governmental and non-governmental organizations;
- Strengthening of the labor market intermediation services in the country such as workforce planning, counseling and career guidance, employment center, recognition of prior learning, work placement program;
- Project management and monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Financing M&E activities would complement existing M&E systems in collecting relevant data for monitoring the project, inform needed course-correction, and evaluate outcomes of activities.

The project includes four components as set out below:

Component 1: Access to and Quality of Foundational and Vocational Secondary Education. This component aims to improve the acquisition of foundational skills (English and math), market-relevant skills, and practical skills of all secondary school students. The component also aims to address specific needs of students from outer islands.

Component 2: Access to and Quality of Technical and Vocational Skills Development. This component aims to increase equitable access to quality and relevant (a) TVET programs (1–2 years) leading to college-level certificate or diploma and (b) short (less than a year) skills development courses.

Component 3: Strengthening Institutions for Workforce Development. This component aims to strengthen workforce planning, recognition of skills, and employment services with a view to improving labor market outcomes for Marshallese at home and abroad.

Component 4: Project Implementation Support, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. This component provides technical and operational assistance on project implementation and management and selected cross-cutting planning, capacity building, and M&E activities.

Implementation Arrangements

The Implementing Agency (IA) for the project is the Ministry of Education, Sports and Training (MOEST). Other key stakeholders include the Ministry of Finance, Banking and Postal Services (MoFB&PS), the Ministry of Public Works, Infrastructure and Utilities (MPWIU), the Office of the Chief Secretary (OCS), the Public School System (PSS), College of the Marshall Islands (CMI) and the National Training Council (NTC).

A Project Implementation Unit (PIU) has been established within MOEST to support the ministry to manage and implement key project-related tasks including project planning, coordination, technical, financial management, procurement and contract management, environmental and social risk management, and monitoring and reporting throughout the project implementation period. The Central Implementation Unit (CIU) established under the MoFB&PS supports MOEST. The CIU support focuses on provision of services related to the preparation of project documents and management of fiduciary functions (procurement and financial management) and environmental and social risk management. To maximize coordination and efficiency, the PIU is located within the NTC's office based in the CMI in Majuro.

The PIU is entrusted with the overall coordination functions for the ESSP. The PIU is headed by the Project Manager and includes positions: two coordinators, one for NTC and one for PSS, and one administrative assistant. Additional staff includes one coordinator for Eyebe, one communication officer and one M&E specialist. NTC and PSS are the technical leads for their component(s).

Methodology

This report analyzes the findings of a beneficiary feedback survey conducted for the Education and Skills Strengthening Project (ESSP) in Majuro, Marshall Islands. The survey aimed to assess project effectiveness and gathered experiences from beneficiaries who received services and focused on Majuro beneficiaries only for this first study.

Survey Objectives

As stated in the PAD, the objective is to evaluate beneficiaries and respond to any findings.

Specific objectives include:

1. Gauge beneficiary satisfaction with the services provided, assess how well the services addressed the specific needs of beneficiaries, and evaluate whether the level of service provided met beneficiary expectations.
2. As per the PAD, results of the beneficiary engagement survey as well as plans for improvements by PSS and NTC, in response to the results, will be shared publicly through the web, social media, radio or newspaper.

Beneficiary Categories Surveyed

Paper questionnaires were distributed to beneficiaries in the following categories:

- **Counselors:** Majuro has 23 counselors who attended the training-of-trainers workshop on career counseling and guidance that was developed and delivered in the RMI between 26 June and 11 July 2023 under the ESSP. These counselors have also been involved in the implementation of the action plan agreed as part of or

following the workshop. 19 counselors out of these 23 responded (82.6% response rate). Counselors are based in education institutions: College of the Marshall Islands (CMI), Laura High School (LHS), Life Skills Academy (LSA), Marshall Islands High School (MIHS), National Training Council (NTC), and the University of the South Pacific (USP).

- **Tutoring Students:** Feedback from students who participated in the tutoring program was gathered from two out of three high schools in Majuro. This effort yielded responses from 54 of the 87 students at LHS and 20 of the 25 students at LSA, culminating in a total of 74 student responses.
- **Work Placement Program (WPP) participants:** 16 out of 17 WPP participants (94.1% response rate) that started their placements in 12 unique workplaces based in Majuro responded.

The survey was administered in English. On-site Marshallese language assistance was provided for school students, if needed.

Table 1. Beneficiary Category Distribution

Beneficiary Category	Number of Surveys Distributed (152)	Number of Responses (109)	Male	Female
Counseling Training (Counselors)	23	19	57.9%	42.1%
Tutoring Support Program (Students)	112	74	58.1%	41.9%
Work Placement Program (WPP)	17	16	43.8%	56.3%

A chart depicting the distribution of survey respondents by beneficiary category is as follows. The chart shows that students formed the largest category of respondents, constituting approximately **67.9%** of the total. Counselors comprised **17.4%**, and Work Placement Program participants made up **14.7%** of the respondents.

Counselors Male-Female Ratio

The chart illustrating the gender distribution of Counselor respondents shows a slight skew towards male participation (57.9% male, 42.1% female). While the original number of counselors attending the training have reflected a more balanced ratio, the current responses provide valuable insights from a significant portion of the counselor pool.

Tutoring Students Male-Female Ratio

The chart depicting the gender distribution of student respondents shows that 58.1% are male and 42.9% are female. This reflects the existing student demographics within the participating schools at the time of the survey.

Work Placement Program (WPP) Participants Male-Female Ratio

The chart depicting the gender distribution of Work Placement Program (WPP) respondents shows that 43.8% are male and 56.3% are female. While this indicates a relatively balanced participation with a slight majority of females, it's important to consider that not all students have begun their placements yet. This could be influencing the current gender ratio of

respondents. A more comprehensive picture of gender participation in the WPP may emerge once all placements are filled and a follow-up survey is conducted, if feasible.

Age Distribution of Respondents

The survey results show a clear distribution of respondents across different age groups for each beneficiary category (Counselors, Tutoring Students, WPP Participants). Analyzing this data is important because it helps ensure the ESSP reaches its intended audience, informs the design of activities for different age groups' needs, identifies potential outreach gaps, and allows for a more nuanced evaluation of project impact.

The survey received responses from beneficiaries across all age groups (13-15 to 31+), indicating that the ESSP project is reaching a diverse range of individuals.

	Counselors			Tutoring students			WPP participants			Grand Total
Age group	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	
13-15				14	6	20				20
16-20				29	25	54				54
21-25							7	3	10	10
26-30								3	3	3
31+	11	8	19				2	1	3	22
Grand Total	11	8	19	43	31	74	9	7	16	109

- **Counselors:** All counselors that responded fall into the 31+ age group. This suggests they likely have established careers and experience, valuable for guiding students in their career choices. This context is helpful when evaluating their feedback on the training and service provided by the ESSP.
- **Tutoring Students:** As expected, students are concentrated in the 13-20 age range, confirming the program is reaching high school students. This information is crucial for understanding the tutoring program's effectiveness for this specific age group.
- **WPP Participants:** The distribution across 21-31+ age groups indicates the WPP is reaching young adults seeking work placement opportunities. Analyzing their feedback can help assess the program's effectiveness in supporting this age group's transition to the workforce.

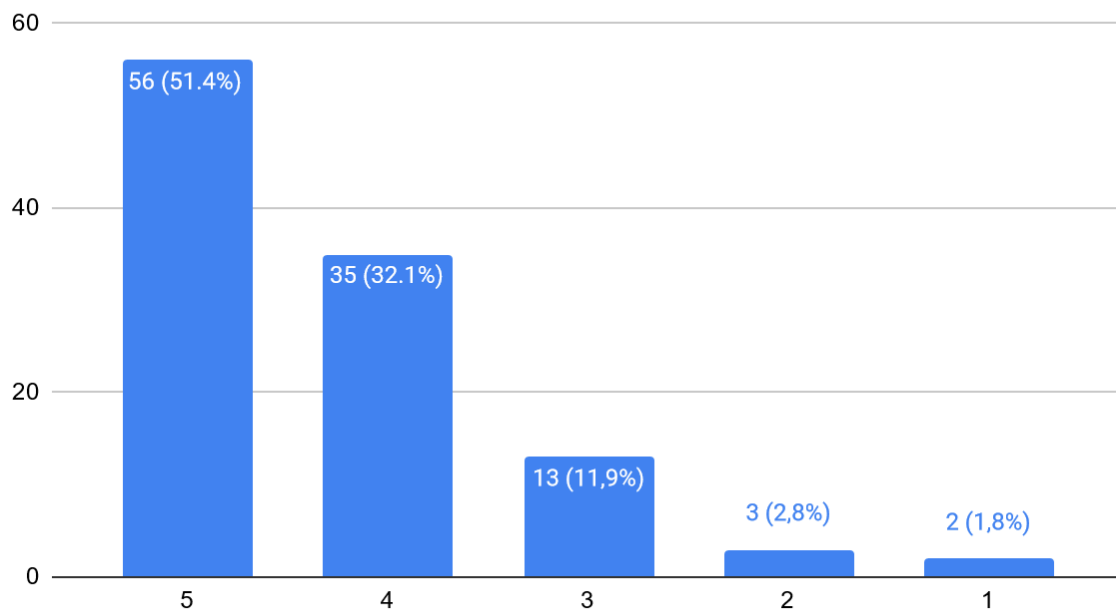
Findings

Beneficiary Satisfaction with Services Received

The survey results provide insights into beneficiary satisfaction with the services they received. A significant portion of respondents (56 out of 109) expressed their highest level of satisfaction by awarding a rating of 5 on a scale of 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). This positive sentiment is further bolstered by the 35 respondents who provided a score of 4.

Figure 1: Distribution of Service Satisfaction Scores

How satisfied are you with the service you received?



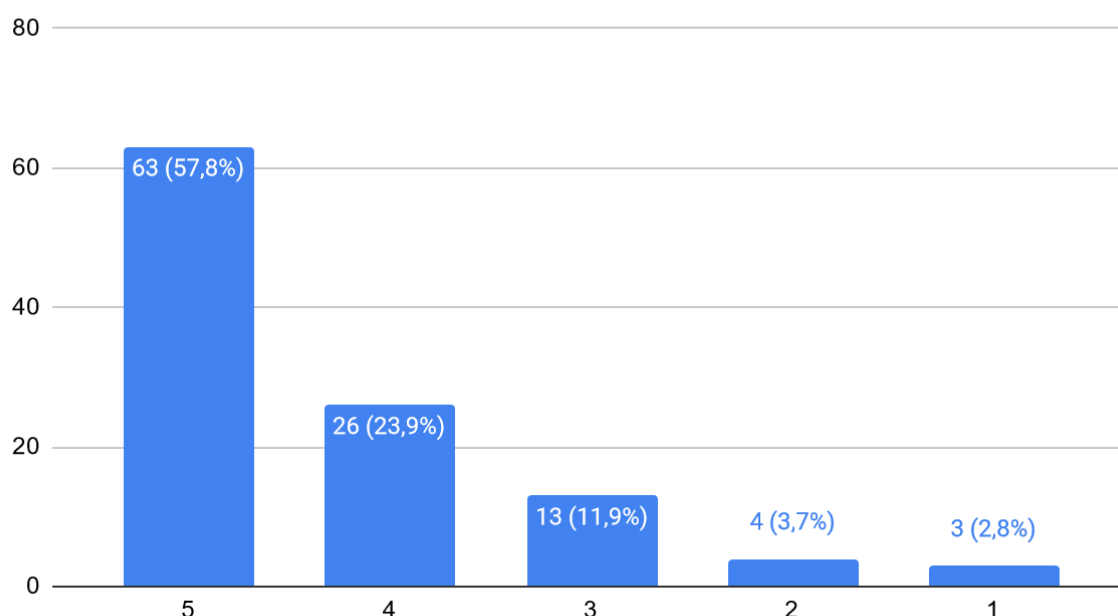
It's important to acknowledge that while the overall trend leans towards positive experiences, a smaller number of respondents did provide lower ratings (13 at 3, 3 at 2, and 2 at 1). Understanding these variations in satisfaction through the open-ended feedback section will be crucial in refining service delivery and ensuring all beneficiaries receive a positive experience.

Alignment Between Needs and Assistance

The survey also explored how effectively the assistance provided addressed beneficiary needs. The results are encouraging, with a significant majority of respondents (63 out of 109) indicating the assistance met their needs exceptionally well by awarding the highest rating of 5 on a scale of 1 (very poorly addressed) to 5 (very well addressed). An additional 26 respondents provided a rating of 4, signifying a high level of satisfaction with the provided assistance.

Figure 2: Breakdown of How Well Assistance Addressed Beneficiary Needs

How well did this assistance address your needs?



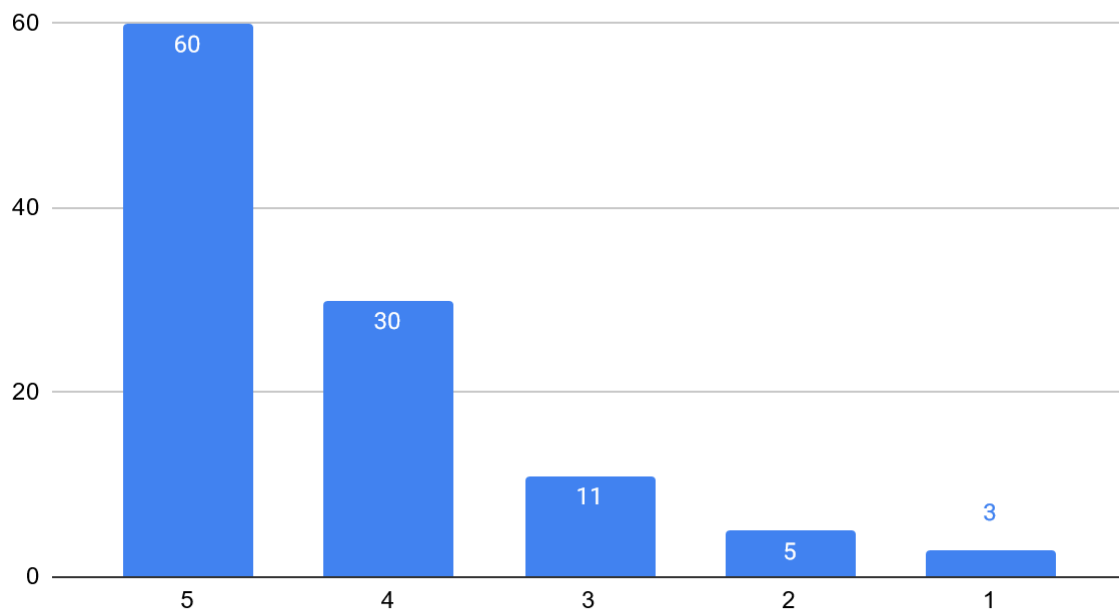
While a small number of respondents expressed a need for further improvement (13 at 3, 4 at 2, and 3 at 1), the overall trend leans heavily towards the assistance successfully addressing beneficiary needs. Further insights gleaned from the open-ended feedback can help tailor assistance strategies to ensure an even more impactful experience for all beneficiaries in the future.

Perceptions of Adequacy of Services Provided by ESSP

The survey assessed beneficiary perceptions of service adequacy using a 5-point scale (1 = Not Adequate at All, 5 = Highly Adequate). The results reveal a strong foundation of satisfaction, with 82.6% (90 out of 109) respondents expressing positive experiences. This includes a significant number of beneficiaries, 54.6% (60 respondents), awarding the highest rating (5), indicating they found the service to be highly adequate. An additional 27.5% (30 respondents) provided a rating of 4, suggesting a generally positive perception of the service.

Figure 3: Perceptions of Service Adequacy

How adequate was the service you received?



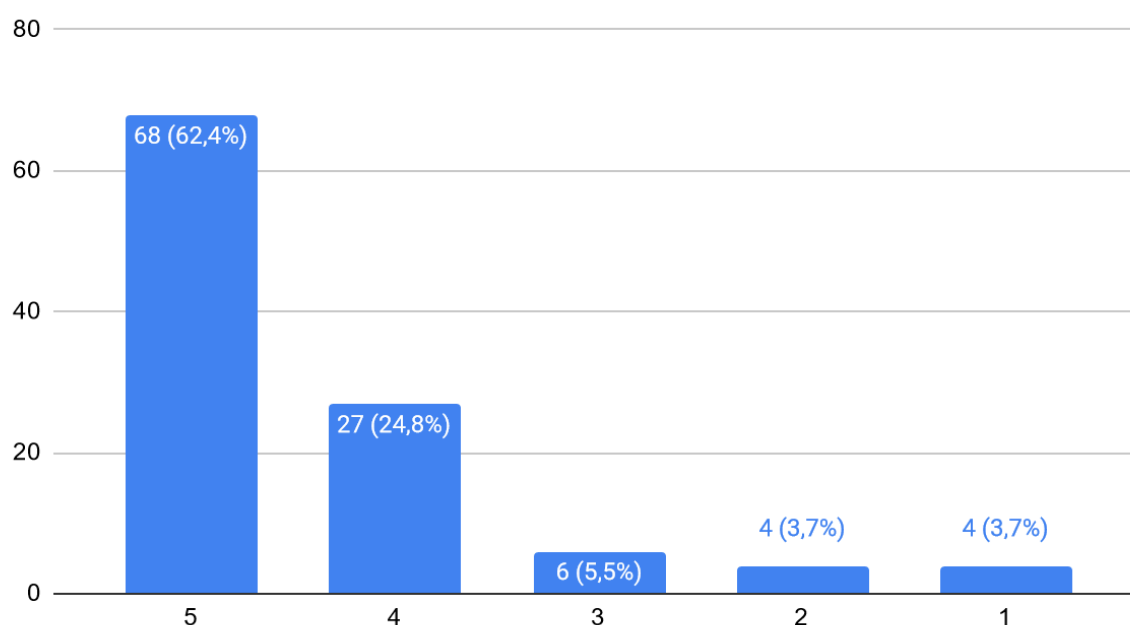
While a small number of respondents expressed varying levels of concern regarding service adequacy: 10.1% (11 at 3), 4.6% (5 at 2), and 2.8% (3 at 1), the anonymity of the survey prevents us from directly following up with them at this time. However, to gain further insights, we have delved into the comments provided in the open-ended feedback section, paying special attention to each comment. Analyzing these responses may shed light on the specific areas for improvement that can help us ensure all beneficiaries consistently receive a high-quality service experience.

Overall Satisfaction with ESSP

Overall satisfaction with ESSP leans positive. A strong majority of respondents, 62.4% (68 out of 109), indicated a high level of satisfaction by rating the service as 5 (Highly Satisfied). This positive sentiment is further bolstered by an additional 24.8% (27) of respondents providing a rating of 4 (Satisfied).

Figure 4: Distribution of Beneficiary Overall ESSP Satisfaction Scores

Overall, how satisfied are you with the ESSP?



However, it's important to acknowledge the experiences of all beneficiaries. A small segment of respondents, 9.2% (14 out of 109), expressed varying levels of dissatisfaction, with 5.5% (6) rating the service as 3 (Neutral), 3.7% (4) as 2 (Dissatisfied), and 3.7% (4) as 1 (Highly Dissatisfied). We have analyzed the comments provided in the open-ended feedback section, particularly those from dissatisfied respondents. Their insights are included in the next section of this report, which outlines specific areas for improvement and corresponding strategies to enhance the overall service experience for all ESSP beneficiaries.

Open-Ended Feedback by Beneficiary Category

In addition to the multiple-choice questions, the survey offered an open-ended question where beneficiaries could share their experiences with ESSP. This included details about any difficulties encountered while accessing services, specific complaints they may have, and suggestions for improvement. Out of the 109 respondents, 60 provided comments to this question (13 counselors, 32 tutoring students, 15 WPP participants) and provided insightful feedback on service access, concerns, and areas for improvement. Responses ranged from simple expressions of satisfaction ("good") to detailed descriptions of their experiences.

It's important to note that the survey was anonymous, so we cannot link any particular comment to an individual respondent. However, the feedback has been categorized by beneficiary category to provide valuable insights. This chapter delves into the key takeaways gleaned from these open-ended responses, grouped by beneficiary category.

Counselors

- **Positive Feedback**

- Appreciated training program, benefits of increased knowledge and skills
- Positive experience working with the ESSP team
- **Suggestions for Improvement**
 - Frequency: Counselors requested more frequent workshops to enhance their ongoing development.
 - Communication: Improved communication between counselors and ESSP staff was requested.
 - Training Content: Include additional counseling areas (e.g., academic or behavioral counseling); Deliver career needs assessments to school teachers in advance.
- **Other Issues**
 - Some counselors reported challenges receiving certificates or experiencing last-minute communication about events.
 - One counselor mentioned that did not receive information about a job fair.

Tutoring Students

- **Positive Experiences:**
 - Students from both schools (Laura High School and Life Skills Academy) reported that the program helped them improve their understanding of English and Math.
 - They expressed appreciation for the program's overall benefits in terms of learning and expanding their knowledge.
 - Students appreciated the opportunity to use laptops during the tutoring sessions
- **Suggestions for Improvement:**
 - Schedule: Multiple students requested adjustments to the tutoring schedule, specifically an earlier start time in the afternoon to avoid going home too late.
 - Snacks/Food/Drinks: Several students requested providing snacks before tutoring sessions, as they felt their energy levels were low at the current start time. Some comments mentioned a desire for food or drinks after tutoring sessions.

Work Placement Program (WPP) participants

- **Positive Experiences:**
 - Participants expressed overall satisfaction with the program, highlighting its positive impact on their future prospects.
 - Several comments indicated that the program provided valuable learning experiences and skill development opportunities
- **Suggestions for Improvement:**
 - The most consistent request for improvement was timelier receipt of stipend payments.

Action Plan

In response to the survey suggestions, the action steps agreed with PSS and NTC:

Recommendations by Beneficiary Groups	Action Steps to Address The Recommendations	Responsible	Due Date	Status
Counselors				
Organize more frequent workshops to enhance ongoing development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with MICGAC Chair on implementing the counselor action plan Organize engaging sessions for and with counselors during Career Fairs Proactively explore additional session needs and opportunities to empower counselors 	PSS / ESSP PIU	Ongoing	
Improve communication between counselors and ESSP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include ESSP Component 2 Coordinator in all major communications 	MICGAC Chair	Ongoing	
Improve communication between counselors and ESSP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow up with MICGAC Chair regarding counselor action plan implementation 	ESSP PIU (Comp. 2 Coordinator)	Last workday of each month	
Training Content: Include additional counseling areas (e.g., academic or behavioral counseling)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage counselors to take courses on career counseling offered by CMI or online platforms such as Udemy and Coursera Explore offering tuition assistance for online courses 	PSS / ESSP PIU	Ongoing	
Deliver career needs assessments to school teachers in advance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage the data from the comprehensive needs assessment conducted in early 2023 to develop a template for gathering specific career development needs in schools before planning workshops 	PSS / ESSP PIU	Ongoing	
Some counselors reported challenges receiving certificates or experiencing last-minute communication about events;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Counselors: Be proactive in reaching out to PIU with any concerns, questions, or suggestions 	Counselors PSS / ESSP PIU	Ongoing;	

One counselor mentioned that did not receive information about a job fair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PIU: Develop a dedicated mailing list for counselors to receive timely updates and facilitate information sharing. Additionally, explore hosting regular counselor forums or Q&A sessions to address concerns directly 		end of July for the mailing list	
Tutoring Program participants				
Adjust tutoring schedule, specifically an earlier start time in the afternoon to avoid going home too late	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance student engagement: encourage schools to work with students in scheduling of tutoring classes Consider weekends (Saturdays) and after-school hours 	PSS ESSP PIU	End of August	
Snacks/Food/Drinks: Provide snacks before tutoring sessions (not only after tutoring sessions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance student engagement: encourage schools to work with students to determine preferred times for snacks (consider offering before and after sessions for extended sessions) Encourage lesson sharing among schools on snack content, procurement methods, and other strategies for enrollment improvement (e.g., KAHS's procurement approach in SY2023-24). 	PSS ESSP PIU	End of August, Ongoing	
Work Placement Program participants				
Ensure stipends are paid in a timely manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the stipend request process clearly, including timesheet due dates, reporting formats, submission process Follow the Ministry of Finance (MoF) payment processing guidelines and procedures 	NTC EPP DIDA CIU	Regularly, to all WPPs	
Ensure stipends are paid in a timely manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify challenges of WPPs in accurate reporting and timely timesheet submission Organize trainings on computer skills specifically for timesheet and report submission Consider developing resources (video tutorials, guides, FAQs) Consider organizing webinars or in-person workshops regularly 	NTC EPP	Once a month	
Ensure stipends are paid in a timely manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with DIDA for timely stipend payments 	ESSP PIU DIDA CIU	Regularly	

Annex 1. Survey Questionnaire

Beneficiary Engagement (Feedback) Survey
for the RMI Education and Skills Strengthening Project (ESSP)

May 2024

Feedback from: counselor / tutoring student / WPP participant

Thank you for participating in this survey! The Education and Skills Strengthening Project (ESSP) is conducting this survey to understand your experience with the project and how it has benefited you. Your feedback is important in helping us improve the ESSP and ensure it meets your needs.

1. Gender: Male Female Prefer not to say
2. Age group: 13-15 16-20 21-25 26-30 31+
3. How did you hear about the ESSP? (Check all that apply)

School counselor Teacher Job fair/workshop Social media Other:
4. How satisfied are you with the service you received? (1 = Very dissatisfied, 5 = Very satisfied)

 1 2 3 4 5
5. How well did this assistance address your needs? (1 = Not well, 5 = Very well)

 1 2 3 4 5
6. How adequate was the service you received? (1 = Not adequate, 5 = Very adequate)

 1 2 3 4 5
7. Overall, how satisfied are you with the ESSP? (1 = Very dissatisfied, 5 = Very satisfied)

 1 2 3 4 5
8. Can you share your experience about ESSP including any difficulties accessing the ESSP services, complaints you would like to share areas we need to improve, etc.

End of the survey

Thank you!