



TRAINING OF UNEMPLOYED YOUTH IN THE PRODUCTION OF PAVERS THROUGH PLASTIC WASTES



ACTIVITY'S REPORT

Organized and executed by COOPERATION TO SAVE THE WORLD AND HUMANITY "COSAWOH"

Supported by RESCUE DEMOCRACY INTERNATIONAL « RDI »

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1. Executive Summary

This report details a six-day training initiative conducted in July 2025, aimed at empowering unemployed youth in Bukavu with the skills to manufacture paving stones from plastic waste. Organized by COSAWOH with financial backing from RDI, the project successfully trained 61 participants, exceeding its initial target of 50. The training combined theoretical knowledge with practical application, covering waste management, recycling principles, entrepreneurship, and business plan development. Key outcomes include the production of paving stones, the formation of 12 youth teams, and the creation of 12 business plans. The initiative not only addresses youth unemployment but also contributes significantly to environmental protection through waste recycling. Notable successes include expanding the training capacity within the original budget and fostering strong collaboration with local government entities. Challenges encountered included limited tools, adverse weather, and site changes. Recommendations focus on continued support for the youth teams, securing seed funding, expanding the training to other areas, and enhancing logistical resources for future programs.

2. Introduction

In 2025, plastic pollution became one of the most urgent ecological threats. According to the OECD, global plastic production reached nearly 460 million tons in 2023, and could double by 2050 if no structural actions are taken. However, only 9% of these plastics are currently effectively recycled worldwide¹.

This alarming trend leads to severe environmental degradation, including soil and water pollution, and poses significant public health risks, particularly through diseases linked to inadequate waste disposal practices.

Paradoxically, what is often discarded as waste today once served as a vital resource and holds the potential to be transformed into valuable products tomorrow. This perspective prompts a fundamental question: **Why discard when one can recreate?** In an era characterized by overflowing landfills and diminishing natural resources, the promise of recycling emerges as a beacon of hope for COSAWOH to assist vulnerable populations and protect the ecosystem.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, youth unemployment remains a pervasive issue, with 78% of young people out of work and 25% struggling to find employment opportunities aligned with their fields of study. This dire situation contributes to numerous societal problems. Consequently, there is an urgent need to invest in job creating sectors that can bridge the gaps in an educational system failing to meet labor market demands. Such investments are crucial for fostering both individual well-being and broader community stability within Congolese society.

Recognizing this dual challenge of waste management and youth unemployment, COSAWOH sought technical and financial assistance from RDI. The objective was to equip 50 unemployed youth with practical skills in plastic waste recycling, specifically for the production of paving stones intended for urban landscaping and decoration. This initiative is strategically aligned with two core pillars of COSAWOH's 2025-2029 strategic vision: hygiene and sanitation, and youth

¹ [Gestion des déchets dans le monde : enjeux, impacts et solutions](#)

employability. In a dynamic environment where young people are increasingly demonstrating creativity and innovation, it is imperative to provide them with the necessary resources and support to transform their innovative ideas into sustainable and flourishing enterprises. Furthermore, sustained investment in education and vocational training is an indispensable component of any comprehensive strategy to combat youth unemployment.

This report serves as a comprehensive account of the project's implementation, ensuring transparency and accountability to all stakeholders, including RDI as the primary donor, the direct beneficiaries (the trained youth), and the broader community and governmental entities.

3. Project Objectives and Achievement

The overarching goal of this project was to empower 50 unemployed youth with the technical expertise required for manufacturing paving stones from recycled plastic waste. The project significantly surpassed its target, successfully training 61 young individuals, thereby achieving an impressive 122% of the initial objective. This high level of participation underscores the strong demand for such vocational training and the commitment of the beneficiaries.

Beyond the primary objective, several specific aims guided the project's implementation:

3.1. Socio-Economic Empowerment

One key objective was to contribute to the long-term socio-economic improvement of unemployed youth. While this is a long-term outcome that does not yield immediate results, the foundational step of imparting valuable skills to these young individuals was successfully accomplished. This initial empowerment is crucial for their future economic independence and serves as a vital pathway toward enhanced socio economic conditions.

3.2. Promotion of Waste Management and Recycling

Another critical objective was to promote effective waste sorting and recycling practices, encouraging their adoption within both households and local businesses. This goal was effectively met through the immediate engagement of the trained youth, who actively disseminated information and promoted these practices within their communities. Furthermore, as they prepared to launch their own enterprises, the newly trained individuals established robust strategies for waste collection, sorting, and recycling. This shift in perspective has significantly elevated the perceived value of materials previously considered waste, leading to a substantial reduction in overall refuse. Each team independently developed and implemented its own collection and sorting network, demonstrating a decentralized yet effective approach to waste management.

3.3. Business Development Support

Providing support for the development of comprehensive business plans and conducting thorough market studies was also a core objective. A total of 12 distinct business plans were formulated by the youth, who organized themselves into 12 teams, each comprising five members. These meticulously crafted plans are designed to streamline the entrepreneurial journey for the participants, enabling them to efficiently launch their ventures once funding opportunities arise. The plans also incorporate detailed market analyses, competitive assessments, and projected viability studies, alongside clearly defined objectives. It is important to highlight that the

beneficiaries received invaluable guidance from professional reintegration specialists, whose expertise was specifically sought by COSAWOH to ensure the acquisition of necessary business development competencies.

3.4. Youth Networking and Collaboration

Facilitating networking among young individuals with shared ambitions and motivations to foster team-based work was a significant component of the project. This objective was successfully realized, resulting in the formation of 12 collaborative teams. COSAWOH guided participants to connect with peers based on existing relationships, mutual trust, and aligned aspirations. This exercise served as a practical test of credibility, effectively aligning team members around a common vision and clearly delineating individual roles and responsibilities within each group.

4. Training Process and Curriculum

The training program, meticulously designed to impart both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, spanned a comprehensive six-day period. The curriculum was strategically divided, allocating the initial three days to theoretical instruction, followed by two days of intensive practical sessions, culminating in a dedicated session for business plan development. This structured approach ensured a holistic learning experience for all participants.

4.1. Day-by-Day Breakdown

Day 1: Official Launch and Foundational Concepts

The inaugural day commenced with a formal welcoming ceremony for all attendees, featuring an official opening address by representatives from the state service. This was followed by insightful interventions from various COSAWOH officials, including the national coordinator, who emphasized the critical importance of entrepreneurship and effective waste management for fostering a sustainable environment. The official launch of the training program was marked by the first theoretical session, which included a 30-minute break and a meal. Key foundational concepts, such as rational waste management, were thoroughly discussed and explored.

Day 2: Principles of Recycling and Paving Stone Manufacturing

The second day delved deeper into theoretical instruction, focusing on the fundamental principles of recycling, the intrinsic properties of various materials, and the step-by-step process involved in manufacturing paving stones. A scheduled break and meal provided participants with an opportunity for refreshment before the session concluded at 2:30 PM.

Day 3: Entrepreneurship and Economic Project Development

On the third day, the training shifted its focus to entrepreneurship, job creation, and the development of viable economic projects directly linked to recycling initiatives. This session equipped participants with the business acumen necessary to transform their technical skills into sustainable ventures. The theoretical phase concluded with an individual assessment designed to evaluate the participants' comprehension and retention of the knowledge acquired.

Day 4: Practical Waste Collection and Sorting

Beginning on the fourth day, the training transitioned into its crucial practical phase. This day was dedicated to hands-on waste collection activities within the city of Bukavu, specifically targeting the Elakat landfill in Ruzizi. Participants actively engaged in the collection, sorting, and drying of plastic waste, gaining firsthand experience in the initial stages of the recycling process.

Day 5: Material Transformation and Paving Stone Production

The fifth day involved trainers presenting the essential equipment required for transforming plastic waste into paving stones. Comprehensive demonstrations were conducted, allowing participants to observe the entire manufacturing process. Following the demonstrations, participants actively engaged in manipulating the tools under the close supervision of the trainers, participating in every stage of paving stone production.

Day 6: Project Finalization and Post-Training Planning

The final day was dedicated to the culmination of the practical work on the field and detailed explanations on the proper techniques for laying paving stones. A significant component of this day involved the formation of team groups and the planning of post-training activities for the rest of the theoretical parts. After a comprehensive briefing by the organizers, each team collaboratively developed its own business plan. These plans were then subjected to immediate review and amendment by other participants and supervising mentors, fostering a collaborative and iterative development process.

5. Methodology

The methodology employed throughout this project was fundamentally participatory, interactive, and heavily practice-oriented. This approach ensured that participants were not merely passive recipients of information but active learners engaged in every stage of the training.

5.1. Theoretical Sessions

Theoretical sessions were expertly delivered by seasoned trainers specializing in recycling and entrepreneurship. These sessions were supported by tailored educational materials designed to facilitate understanding. The instruction was enriched with concrete examples and followed by dynamic group discussions, encouraging participants to apply theoretical concepts to real-world scenarios and to share their insights.

5.2. Practical Sessions

During the practical sessions, a demonstrative method was predominantly utilized. Participants first observed detailed technical demonstrations conducted by the trainers. This observational learning was immediately followed by hands-on activities, where participants actively engaged in the processes under the direct supervision of the instructors. This iterative approach of 'see one, do one' proved highly effective in skill acquisition.

5.3. Collaborative Learning and Support

Working in sub-groups was a cornerstone of the methodology, fostering strong cohesion among participants. This collaborative environment facilitated the exchange of experiences and significantly enhanced collaborative skills. Each group was assigned specific responsibilities during practical exercises, simulating the operational dynamics of a cooperative business. Consistent technical support was provided throughout the entire process, ensuring that participants received guidance whenever needed. Furthermore, a continuous formative evaluation process was in place to assess the comprehension of key concepts, allowing for immediate adjustments to the training as required. In essence, the training seamlessly integrated classroom instruction, practical demonstrations, and collaborative group exercises to maximize learning outcomes.

6. Achieved Results

The project successfully delivered on its objectives, demonstrating significant impact across several key areas. The outcomes highlight the effectiveness of the training program and the dedication of the participants.

6.1. Training Participation and Output

Youth Trained: A total of 61 young individuals successfully completed the training program, surpassing the initial target of 50 participants. This represents a remarkable achievement rate of 122%, indicating strong engagement and demand for the initiative.

Product Manufacturing: Participants actively engaged in practical sessions, resulting in the successful manufacture of paving stones. This hands-on experience ensured that theoretical knowledge was effectively translated into tangible skills.

6.2. Team Formation and Business Development

Team Formation: The project facilitated the formation of 12 distinct youth teams for collective projects, significantly exceeding the initial goal of 5 teams. This outcome underscores the collaborative spirit fostered during the training and the participants' readiness to engage in group ventures.

Business Plan Development: A total of 12 comprehensive business plans were developed by the end of the training, surpassing the initial target of 10. These plans provide a strategic roadmap for the participants' future entrepreneurial endeavors.

6.3. Certification

Certificates of Participation: All participants who successfully completed the training received official certificates of participation, recognizing their newly acquired skills and commitment to the program. As a symbol for the public, the certificates will be given to the young winners during the Conference on July 20, 2025. These results collectively affirm the project's success in empowering youth, fostering entrepreneurship, and promoting sustainable practices within the community.

7. Review of Performance Indicators

To comprehensively assess the project's impact and effectiveness, several key performance indicators (KPIs) were established and meticulously tracked. The analysis of these indicators reveals the project's success in meeting and often exceeding its predefined targets.

7.1. Indicator 1: Number of Youth Registered for Training

Target: 50 youth

Achievement: 80 youth registered

Achievement Rate: 160%

This indicator significantly surpassed its target, with 80 young individuals registering for the training opportunity provided by COSAWOH. This overwhelming response highlights the high demand for vocational training and skill development among the youth. Due to COSAWOH's limited resources, a rigorous selection process was implemented based on mutually agreed-upon criteria with participants and other stakeholders. The 160% achievement rate for this indicator is a clear testament to the project's strong appeal and successful outreach efforts.

7.2. Indicator 2: Participation Rate in Training Sessions

Target: 95% of participants

	Boys	Girls	Total	Average
1 st day	32	29	61	100%
2 nd day	32	29	61	100%
3 rd day	32	28	60	98%
4 th day	31	29	60	98%
5 th day	30	29	59	97%
6 th day	32	29	61	100%
Total	189	173	362	99%

Average	52%	48%		100%
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Achievement: High average participation (61 persons (100%))

Throughout the training sessions, participants demonstrated exceptional engagement and diligence, actively seeking to acquire knowledge and skills. While precise daily attendance figures (represented as 61 in the original report) are pending, the overall observation confirms a high level of active participation. The average participation rate, once calculated, is expected to meet the 99% target. Any minor discrepancies are attributed to unforeseen circumstances such as sudden illness or temporary security concerns within the city, which are beyond the control of the project organizers.

7.3. Indicator 3: Participants' Expectation of Skill Acquisition

Target: 95% of participants

Achievement: Majority of participants

A post-training survey revealed that the vast majority of participants enrolled with the explicit expectation of acquiring practical skills to launch their own businesses. This finding confirms that the training program effectively addressed a critical need among the learners and that the participant selection process was well-aligned with these aspirations. For the concern of the age, people between 18-35 years old were selected. A comprehensive database detailing participants' expectations is maintained by COSAWOH for future reference and program development.

7.4. Indicator 4: Participants Meeting Final Evaluation Criteria

Target: 40 participants (scoring 60% or higher)

Achievement: 55 out of 61 participants (82%) scored above 60%

Practical Output: 85 paving stones produced

The final evaluation demonstrated outstanding results, with 55 out of 61 participants (approximately 82%) achieving a score of 60% or higher. The remaining 18% either met the average or scored below it. This high success rate in the evaluation underscores the effectiveness of the training methodology and the participants' ability to assimilate complex technical information. Furthermore, the practical sessions resulted in the production of 85 paving stones, serving as tangible evidence of the participants' acquired technical proficiency.

Beyond technical skills, the training significantly raised awareness among these young individuals regarding the critical importance of recycling and its multifaceted implications—environmental, economic, and social. In terms of fostering collaboration and continuity, twelve distinct groups were formed. These groups are poised to continue their recycling and paving stone manufacturing initiatives within their respective neighborhoods. Each group has already developed preliminary business plans during the training, and their primary need now is seed funding to cover logistical expenses and officially launch their entrepreneurial ventures.

8. Success Stories and Key Lessons Learned

The project yielded several significant successes and provided valuable insights that can inform future initiatives. These lessons highlight the adaptability of the program and the potential for broader impact.

8.1. Expanded Reach within Budget Constraints

Success Story: The training program initially aimed to accommodate 50 beneficiaries. However, due to overwhelming and persistent demand, COSAWOH successfully expanded the training to include 60 participants, effectively providing an opportunity to 10 additional young individuals who were not part of the original cohort. Remarkably, this expansion was achieved without any increase in the overall budget, through strategic adaptation of existing budget lines. This demonstrates exceptional resourcefulness and efficiency.

Lesson Learned: This experience unequivocally proves that substantial impact and broader reach can be achieved even with limited financial resources. It underscores the importance of flexible budget management and innovative approaches to maximize program benefits.

8.2. Collaborative Support from State Services

Success Story: A highly beneficial collaboration was established with relevant state services, notably the Urban Division of Vocational Training, Arts and Crafts. This collaboration facilitated the deployment of state inspectors to the training site, who provided crucial moral support to both COSAWOH and the participating unemployed youth. Following their observations at the training location, the state office issued a formal letter of appreciation to COSAWOH and its partner RDI. This letter expressed profound admiration for the project, recognizing its dual contribution to job creation and urban sanitation.

Lesson Learned: This collaboration revealed a critical insight: local authorities, once adequately sensitized to the benefits and objectives of such initiatives, are highly willing to support efforts undertaken by local organizations. This opens a significant pathway for exploring sustainable funding mechanisms and integrating community led approaches into broader public policies for local development. It emphasizes the importance of stakeholder engagement and advocacy.

8.3. Promoting Gender Inclusion

Success Story: The project achieved commendable gender inclusion among the trained individuals. Of the 60 young people who participated, 35 were boys (58.3%) and 25 were girls (41.7%). This significant representation of women marks a substantial step forward in a community where responsibilities and development initiatives have historically been predominantly reserved for men.

Lesson Learned: The notable participation of women demonstrates their keen interest in the fields of sanitation and entrepreneurship, proving that these areas are not exclusive to one gender. This success underscores the importance of intentionally designing future interventions to be inclusive of both girls and boys. Furthermore, it highlights the necessity of implementing proactive measures to ensure that women, who are often marginalized, are not deprived of any opportunities made available to them. This involves addressing systemic barriers and actively encouraging their participation from the outset.

9. Challenges Encountered

Despite the project's overall success, several challenges were encountered during its implementation. Addressing these difficulties in future initiatives will be crucial for optimizing program delivery and impact.

9.1. Resource and Logistical Constraints

Insufficient Tools: A notable challenge was the lack of an adequate quantity of tools to accommodate all participating groups simultaneously. This limited the efficiency of practical sessions and required careful scheduling to ensure equitable access to equipment.

Site Unavailability: The initially planned training site became unavailable, necessitating a sudden and disruptive change in location. Such unforeseen logistical hurdles can impact the smooth flow of the program.

9.2. External Factors

Adverse Climatic Conditions: Unfavorable weather conditions occasionally disrupted scheduled training days, leading to delays and requiring adjustments to the program timeline. This highlights the importance of contingency planning for external environmental factors.

9.3. Financial and Demand Pressures

Inadequate Funding for Expenses: Insufficient funds were available to cover some pertinent expenses, which could have enhanced the quality or scope of the training. This points to the need for more comprehensive financial planning and securing sufficient resources.

Overwhelming Demand: The project experienced a growing and pressing demand from potential candidates that far exceeded the planned number of participants. While a testament to the program's appeal, this overwhelming interest presented a challenge in managing expectations and resource allocation.

Addressing these challenges through proactive planning, increased resource mobilization, and flexible operational strategies will be vital for the sustained success and expansion of similar training initiatives in the future.

10. Recommendations

Based on the experiences and outcomes of this project, the following recommendations are proposed to ensure the long-term success of the trained youth and to guide future initiatives:

Recommendation	Addressed to:	Period
Support teams in the implementation of their projects. This includes providing ongoing mentorship, technical assistance, and guidance as they transition from training to entrepreneurship.	COSAWO H	As soon as possible
Provide a seed fund for the most committed groups. Supporting their business plans with initial capital is crucial for ensuring their socio-economic and professional reintegration.	RDI	As soon as possible
Repeat this training in other neighborhoods or territories. The high demand and positive impact of this project strongly justify its replication and expansion to reach more beneficiaries.	COSAWOH RDI	As soon as possible
Strengthen logistical means, including technical equipment and materials, during future training sessions. Ensuring an adequate supply of tools and resources is essential for effective hands-on learning.	COSAWOH	As soon as possible
Support a regular follow-up mechanism over 6 months. A structured follow-up process will help monitor progress, address challenges, and provide timely support to the newly formed enterprises.	RDI	As soon as possible
The duration of the training could be extended. A longer training period would allow for a more in-depth exploration of technical subjects and more comprehensive follow-up on the developed projects.	COSAWOH	As soon as possible

11. Conclusion

This training initiative has demonstrably strengthened the technical and entrepreneurial capacities of unemployed youth in Bukavu, while simultaneously making a significant contribution to environmental protection. The enthusiastic interest generated by the program, the diligent participation of the trainees, and the tangible practical results achieved collectively underscore the profound relevance and effectiveness of such an initiative within the local context. The project serves as a compelling model for addressing both socio-economic challenges and environmental concerns through integrated community-based interventions.

For COSAWOH/Asbl

TUOMBE KATULANYA Christophe

Country Coordinator



REPUBLIQUE DEMOCRATIQUE DU CONGO
MINISTRE DE LA PREPARATION PROFESSIONNELLE ET METIERS
PROVINCE DU SUD-KIVU
SOUS-DIVISION URBAINE DE BUKAVU



Bukavu, le 13 Juillet 2025

N° 050 /FPM/SKV/SD/BUKAVU/202

Annexe

1:

Objet : remerciement suite à
la formation dispensée aux
jeunes désœuvrées

A Monsieur le coordinateur de
COSAWOH/ASBL à Bukavu

Je viens par la présente vous adresser mes sincères remerciements pour l'opportunité exceptionnelle que vous avez offert à une cinquantaine des jeunes en leur permettant de participer à la formation sur la fabrication des déchets plastiques, organisée par votre organisation COSAWOH en collaboration avec RDI, du 04 au 12 Juillet 2025. Cette formation est pour la jeunesse une expérience enrichissante à plusieurs égards en ce sens qu'elle permettra non seulement d'acquérir des compétences pratiques dans un domaine porteur et innovant, mais aussi de se lancer à entreprendre des initiatives concrètes, en lien avec l'assainissement et la création d'emploi au sein de ma communauté. Notre service tient salut cette initiative qui a tant semé l'espoir et le courage d'entreprendre.

En effet, ces jeunes dotés des compétences sans équipements se heurteront toujours à des défis majeurs et qu'ils ne seront pas à mesure de surmonter pour la continuité logique des apprentissages recus. c'est ainsi que nous continuons à vous solliciter avec d'autres acteurs pour la réinsertion professionnelle de cette équipe des jeunes en vue de les permettre de lancer leurs petites entreprises de transformation. En espérant que d'autres jeunes bénéficieront à leur tour de cette initiative, je vous renouvelle mes félicitations et ma reconnaissance

Veillez recevoir, Madame, Monsieur, l'expression de ma profonde gratitude.

Pour la Sous-Division Urbaine de BUKAVU

OLIVIER ITONGWA
Sous-Proved


Acknowledgement letter addressed to COSAWOH and RDI by Urban Division of Vocational Training, Arts, and Crafts

Appendices 2: **Some images for illustrating the activity:** for more pictures, the link before leads to <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1apD2Ly0ZrUUjWWsLCeGUKB9uCI4-D24I>



opening of the training by the inspector of the Vocational Training service



COSAWOH Coordinator's Awareness Raising Speech to Youth



Prise du repas par les participants



