



ANNUAL PLAN 2017

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Contents

- CONCEPT ANNUAL PLAN 2017 1
 - Introduction 4
 - External environment..... 4
 - Internal organisational development 5
 - The Focal Points for 2017 5
 - Finance 7
 - Own Equity and Overall Financial Position 9
 - Human Resources 10
 - Recruitment & Contracting and a basic introduction into SPARK for new staff 10
 - Staff Remuneration..... 10
 - Staff performance appraisal 11
 - Management of HR data 11
 - Training & personal development..... 11
 - HR Team 11
 - Communication..... 12
 - Overall objective 12
 - Sub objectives 13
 - Target groups 13
 - Strategies..... 13
 - SPARK..... 13
 - External Communication 13
 - Internal Communication..... 14
 - Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning 16
 - Quality Management 16
 - M&E Team..... 16
 - MIS developments 17
 - Performance Measurement Frameworks for Private Sector Partners 17
 - Toolboxes for Designing Programmes and Connection with Academia 17
 - Long Term Planning 18
 - ICT 19
 - Programme based solutions..... 19
 - Organisation Wide Development Agenda 20
 - Acquisition Plan 2017 23
 - Private Sector Support 23
 - Philanthropy..... 24
 - SPARK Solutions & Access to Finance..... 24

Access to Finance	25
Projects.....	28
Higher Education for Syrians Programme, HES	28
LEAD	28
Agribusiness Creation Programme (ABC): Burundi, Yemen.....	29
PicoCap Liberia	31
Exxon Liberia.....	31
TetraTech project Ivory Coast.....	32
Improve employment opportunities in Jordan	33
Cooperatives Support Program in Rwanda – Summary of achievements and annual plan 2017	34
ABIN	36
IBCM Kosovo.....	37
Turkish Language preparatory Programme	37
Talent Beyond Boundaries	37
United Work.....	38
Migrant Start-up.....	38
GCC Syrian Refugee Response programme; SME development pillar in Gaziantep	39
Migrant/Diaspora Entrepreneurship Program (MEP) – Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan, Ghana, Morocco, Somalia, Suriname	39
Consulting Services for the Establishment and Management of a Somali SME Facility (SMEF) .	40
Kosovo Education and Employment Network, KEEN	41
Scholarships for Western Balkans – www.S4WB.eu	42
SPARK Targets for 2017:	43
Mission:.....	43
Main end-of –year results at the programmes level:	43
Key Performance Indicators for programmes outcomes (including programme sustainability) 2017	44

Introduction

This annual plan lays out SPARK's ambitions and targets in 2017.

It will be a year in which several new programmes take off and several programmes draw to an end. Our programmes grow particularly strong in the MENA region and Turkey. With strong and growing teams in place in our MENA field locations, additional new programming is under development, which is expected to lead to scaling of these new programmes by summer. At the same time, several older programmes are winding down in locations such as East & West Africa, leading to end of operation and new programming on the back of these.

With decentralisation, the strengthening of capabilities of the local offices will receive special attention in 2017. Sector-wide programming, financing and implementation are increasingly taking place in the areas of operation and having strong offices in these locations is instrumental to respond to this trend.

After a year of reduced budgeting, SPARK overall is experiencing clear growth again. Last years' sustained investment in new programme development and acquisition has well paid off. Importantly it has not only brought new resources, but has significantly diversified the funding base of the organisation towards new partnerships with the EU, Qatar and the private sector. This will enable important investments in strengthening field operations, but dedicating resources to strengthening the international organisation such as more focussed human resource management, increased training possibilities, communication & M&E capabilities and the introduction of new integrated (financial) management software. It also necessitates continued strong investment in new programming. On the one hand this will occur in locations now winding down existing operations to ensure valuable expertise is retained and results made sustainable. On the other hand the new MENA locations can be scaled and also opens the way to start exploring entirely new innovative partnerships, with private sector and philanthropists.

External environment

Several trends that were identified in 2016 are very likely to persist. Working in fragile state contexts, no doubt the external environment in the MENA region will determine a dynamic year for the SPARK operations there. In 2002, five Arab states were mired in conflict. Today 11 are. By 2020, predicts recent UNDP report, almost three out of four Arabs could be "living in countries vulnerable to conflict". Arabs make up just 5% of the world's population, but account for about half the world's terrorism and refugees it further concludes. Since migration and anti-radicalisation are topping the Western policy agenda, the existing SPARK supporters all indicate they prioritise the MENA region the coming year(s) in their policies. Most of these refer to the region as "the "Ring of Instability around Europe". This also includes the Eastern region including Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, where SPARK has no intention to commence programming in 2017.

This development has also led to a re-prioritisation of governments and multi-lateral organisation to move development funds away from traditional development locations into countries located within this ring.

Thematically, there is a clearly visible increase in attention for several areas that SPARK has been strong in over the last years. We clearly observe increased attention for matters pertaining to the migration crisis as well as radicalisation and instability. The SPARK annual Ignite! Conference in November 2016 had a clear focus on such topics and by inviting dozens of expert organisation to think along with us, we have laid the basis to feed and built our programming in these areas in 2017.

Obviously the increased attention for migration and radicalisation needs to be understood within the wider context of an increased concern of the implications of these trends not only for the countries that are at the root of the problem, but also the wider consequences this will have internationally.

Therefore, we foresee matters pertaining to addressing the root causes of migration, radicalisation and instability, especially in locations that have a direct impact on wider international instability will persist in 2017.

SPARK's mission and track record is therefore expected to remain attractive the donor community whilst our relative cost efficient way of working through strong field presences will lead to an expected growth of our programmes in 2017. This growth will need to be managed carefully to ensure the quality of programming.

SPARK still has a strong position in a growing niche market specialised in enterprise development in fragile states, creating jobs for youth, women and marginalised communities. We are well positioned in most of our countries and recognizable with this focus.

Our growth will be used for strengthening our internal organisation, as well as build up new innovative programming both on the back of operations that otherwise may have to be wound down, but also by piloting entirely new partnerships with, for example the private sector and philanthropists.

Internal organisational development

Whilst at a first glance our budget shows steady growth relative to 2016, the underlying developments are more radical. With several field operations drawing to an end, new field locations were opened in 2016 and will grow rapidly in 2017. This in combination with increased importance of strong field operations will require sustained efforts in strengthening our implementation capacity and quality of operations in the field. The new and growing programming in the field will require a dedicated effort especially in Q1 and Q2 to ensure programmes have a solid start and offices are well equipped to deal with the related challenges.

As the same time, field locations where operations may end will either require attention to ensure operations are wrapped carefully or new programming arrives timely to sustain operations on the fundamentals on past programming. Offices South Sudan and Myanmar have closed and operations in locations such as Kosovo, Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia have decreased. At the same time we expect scaling in Lebanon, Jordan, Tunisia, Turkey, Libya, Iraq, Somalia and Syria.

Due to the uncertainty of income and new programming in 2016, the publication of a new Multi-Year Annual Plan was postponed in 2016. Certainly, several strategic meetings were held in Africa and the MENA region with the teams and SPARK staff attended dozens of strategy meetings of our partner organisations such as ANDE, IFC, UNDP, UNHCR, NL MFA. Moreover, larger new programmes were designed and in the process wide consultations with local partners and stakeholders were held. Moreover, the Ignite! Conference brought together over 25 organisations to discuss many of the trends in the thematic areas and countries we operate in. With the new programming now coming online the time has come to reflect on the overall course of the organisation.

By the end of April 2017 SPARK aim to have a new Multi Annual Strategic Plan to guide the course of the organisation until 2020.

The Focal Points for 2017

In addressing the identified main challenges and in building towards the vision above, the organisation has prioritised the focal points for 2017 below, some of which imply a continuation or intensification of ambitions already planned in 2016. With the formulation of a new MASP underway, re-alignment of these is expected in Q2.

- Focus on a smaller number of countries: A more restricted span of control will provide opportunities to increase the quality and effectiveness & efficiency of our work. Quality track record and scalability are attractive ingredients for donors. SPARK does not intend to open

offices in new countries, whilst it will decrease footprint or close in a few countries in 2017. Focus will be locations with existing strong operations;

- Focus on expertise: SPARK is an organization that possesses a high level of relevant expertise in the niche field of higher education and entrepreneurship in FCAS, which leads to quality results. Lessons learned and results are integrated in new programme planning. In addition, our expertise would be requested in programme design and policy making processes (of third parties). It would increase our credibility which would in turn enhance our lobbying and advocacy activities and project acquisition efforts. This ambition requires SPARK to build an evidence base for its work or proposed activities and possibly implies investment in knowledgeable staff, training of staff, internal learning, a strong management & administration of results information and even pre- and post-project research (contextual analysis, diagnostics, baselines, tracer studies and evaluations at an almost scientific or scientific level). In combination with a more limited geographical coverage it may also imply highly specialized knowledge about the countries we do cover;
- Focus on Solutions development: The practical end result of SPARK's learning capacity, obtained expertise and quality track record evolves into innovations and adjustment of activities. These solutions are learning and expertise based and have been designed and packaged in such an advanced manner so that they enhance acquisition. The finalization of programmes such as MFS II and the related external evaluations facilitate the fine tuning, incorporating of lessons learned and possibly new more innovative innovations, as well as the further development and enhancement of our vision on MSME and entrepreneurship development and job creation for youth and marginalized groups in fragile and conflict affected states (FCAS). In more concrete terms, these may lead to improved and new solutions related to for example Arabic language SME development training and coaching packages;
- Focus on acquisition capacity: The quality of proposals can be increased through content related expertise as well as higher proposal-technical standards, which require organizations units and staff that can deliver content and draft high quality proposals. However, it also requires highly networked staff with the capability to formally and informally open doors towards a diverse range of donors. In addition, it requires the ability to present SPARK activities, solutions and proposals in a most attractive way, which demands more sophisticated marketing, sales & communications. Acquisition staff has been increased to reduce the extent to which acquisition still relies on a few and dedicated training & coaching for field staff will be organised;
- Focus on decentralizing programme management, M&E and financial administration and controlling: In the light of the decision to decentralise: decision making, programme design and management would be further decentralised to country levels. This also includes business development and acquisition. SPARK Amsterdam will move increasingly in a supporting and facilitating role combined with financial and quality control. Although SPARK is expected to have fewer field offices, there remain a significant number of field offices – HQ relations for which decentralization would imply more efficiency and less bureaucracy. It may also facilitate future geographic and field office expansion again.

Finance

The year 2016 marked a transition period for the finance team. SPARK's largest program so far, MFS, was concluded and programs backed by new donors were initiated. Also, the majority of the finance team left SPARK and was replaced. The start of 2017 will mark the completion of the transition period. This means that the main objectives for 2017 for the finance team are:

To prepare final financial reports for multi-year programs that are ending in 2016 or during 2017 (including MEP, CSP, ABIN and IBCM phase 3), and to prepare financial interim reports for ongoing projects, as well as providing management information, support with budget reallocation, partner audits, etc.

For most of the ending projects a (short) extension into 2017 has been requested. This means that the finance team will give priority to the delivery of financial project reports for 2016, so comprehensive information on unspent funds will be available during Q1. Projects running beyond Q1 will be audited by the new auditor. Budget vs. Spend overview are an essential part of project controlling and management in running projects. To support the initiation of new projects with financial training, advice and project specific manuals;

A number of new projects, including EU Madad, Al Fakhoora and Jordan, will initiate in early 2017 or during the last months of 2016. For these projects, the finance team will contribute to a clear integration of financial donor requirements into financial procedures and work plans;

To finalize the annual accounts 2016 within the pre-established time frame (no later than 30 April 2017);

The annual accounts 2015 could not be finalized before the summer break, so were not delivered until November 2016. This was partly due to strong delays in bookkeeping during 2015. During Q4 2016, most of these delays that accrued in 2016 have been solved. This, in combination with increased control, has led to the planning of the audit for the week of 27 March 2017. An important part of this is the appointment of a General Ledger Accountant per 1 January 2017 and the appointment of regional finance managers. These will be responsible for up to date bookkeeping, both at project/country level and general level. This is an important step in the process of decentralisation: the local capacity will be strengthened to assure the quality of the financial administration and compliance. With this, monthly management information will be provided to project/country managers, BoD and SB. All will be prepared for quarterly (and if possible monthly) hard closures.

After the interim audits of country offices/project partners, the SPARK –wide interim audit will be scheduled for September 2017. The outcomes of this audit can then be taken into account for the preparation of the year plan 2018 and consequently in the budget 2018.

To integrate new software solutions to support existing processes and to prepare for migration to an ERP by 1 January 2018.

The latest developments in software solutions that can support the processes within SPARK require transition into a SPARK-wide ERP. The ICT team will, in close consultation with the Head of Finance, take the lead in assessing the appropriateness of Microsoft Dynamics, and start with its introduction. This involves the preparation of a more detailed planning for the transition to the new software. It is expected that part of this transition can take place in 2017 and would have to be completed in 2018.

To adjust and implement procedures to guarantee maximum control, efficient financial processes and monthly availability of management information;

Due to the transitions in the finance team some of the finance procedures have not been implemented sufficiently in processes and work plans of existing programs. This will receive specific attention to

avoid future delays or limits to control. This includes at least 2-monthly budget vs. spent overviews for programme management. After the delivery of the annual accounts 2016 a series of internal audits of SPARK Country offices and project partners will be planned. These will be planned for May/June. These and other measures to enhance project controlling have been included in the road map for financial and administrative improvements. The main objective is to simplify procedures, to then be able to apply more effective and stricter. The key elements in the road map have been incorporated in the table below on milestones and outputs planned for 2017.

The finance team for 2017 will be led by a Head of Finance and will further include two project controllers (one for all programs related to scholarships for Syrian refugees and one for other projects), one general ledger accountant and one finance officer (the latter two working from the Belgrade office). This team will rely heavily on the cooperation with local finance officers and regional finance managers, who will be hired based on project volume. Furthermore, budget will be needed for travel (trainings, interim audits, intra office travel) and training (in particular in case of projects with new donors).

Milestone/Output	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Next year(s)
<i>Bookkeeping</i>	General Ledger Accountant appointed Budgets integrated in accounting software.	Hard closure Q1	Hard Closure Q2	Hard Closure Q3	
<i>BvS</i>	Preparation annual Audit 2016 Start preparation monthly BvS information (for internal use) and quarterly reports	Delivery annual accounts 2016 and interim report Q1 2017	Interim report Q2 2017 and adjusted budget 2017	Interim report Q3 2017 and DRAFT budget 2018	
<i>New Accountant contracted</i>	Offers received, Contract signed, and start up meetings held				
<i>Control</i>	Prepare project manuals, revise and implement procedures and train	Operational audits country offices and partners All project archives fully	Interim Audit SPARK	Preparation annual accounts 2017	

	(local) staff	up to date			
<i>New finance & management software introduced</i>	Technical Needs Analysis conducted for MS Dynamics	Negotiations; Contracted	Transition Plan	Implementation for finance & book keeping	Implementation for finance & book keeping
<i>Staff Training</i>	Training of finance staff for new projects (EU) completed	Training of local staff for partner auditing	Budget training for non-financials		
<i>Own Equity</i>	Proposal for an updated Own Equity Policy		Approval updated Own Equity Policy		Implementation in budget 2018

Own Equity and Overall Financial Position

2014 SPARK had a negative result, whilst 2015 the result was positive again. On January first 2016 SPARK had an own equity position of almost 0.9 million euro. In 2012, the minimum level of own equity for SPARK was determined at 785.000 euro in consultation with the external auditor Dubois and & Co. Due to the increase in turnover, diversification of operations and donors, and increased exposure in fragile states, a new study will be done in the first quarter of 2017. VFI guidelines for our sector have stipulated guidelines for generating own equity. This implies that reserves represent a maximum factor of 1.5 of annual organisational costs, and should allow basic operations and acquisition for a period of 12 months. Following a minimum scenario, SPARK would be able to comply with the 12 months minimum to run basic operations and acquisition, which is higher than the current own equity position.

Human Resources

With the ending of large programmes such as MFS, which involved downsizing of some offices and the start of new programmes such as HES, which involved the start-up of new offices the work load on human resources has grown significantly over 2016. Early 2017 will show a significant number of new staff being contracted. With the number of full-time and part-time staff (excluding IBCM and including free-lance consultants) growing towards 100 across multiple offices, 2017 shows a number of HR related challenges such as recruitment and new staff introductions. The sheer number of mostly temporary contracts constitutes a significant amount of work. The following ambitions have been set for 2017:

Recruitment & Contracting and a basic introduction into SPARK for new staff

Late 2016 and early 2017 will show a bulge in recruitment activities. About 20 positions (including interns) need to be filled for new programmes such as United Work, HES and SME Jordan. This will take up most of the HR capacity in SPARK in the first quarter of 2017, involving the HR Manager as well as capacity from the country managers and officers in the target countries. Growth in terms of staff is expected at field offices mostly. SPARK manages the entire recruitment process itself from beginning to end. Each recruitment procedure therefore involves a significant commitment of time from both head office and local staff. Resulting from the above mentioned developments an important task for early 2017 will be to define regulations, especially regarding tax and social security payments to comply with. In all new locations, by late 2016 legal offices were hired to conduct compliance advisory papers for SPARK, results are available all by early 2017. The finance department coordinates this effort and HR will establish contracts accordingly. If desired, timely renewal of temporary contracts requires additional attention in order to avoid staff to be expected to continue work and get paid while formalities still need to be finalised. The relatively basic process of recruitment and the management of staff contracts vis-à-vis the salary administration is a priority in 2017.

New staff also implies the need to introduce new colleagues to the staff manual, hour registration system, declarations, holidays, insurance, security, ISO and non-ISO procedures, backup of data among others. Some procedures and content have changed meanwhile, or require amendment, including the staff manual. In 2017, both existing and new staff needs to be informed about SPARK's procedures and other basic organisational information. In order to do so, 'mini-trainings' could be conducted either via skype or during visits to country offices. The staff manual needs will be updated. In addition to this, programme and country managers will act as first point of contact for local staff members for questions about SPARK's basic procedures and also require training in order to be prepared for this task.

Staff Remuneration

With the number of staff growing across various countries and programmes over the past years the questions rises as to what extent SPARK's pay across countries and positions remains and can be fair and comparable. The fact that the organisation runs with definite contracts for as long as legally allowed and with limits of what can be considered good employer-ship (in order to reduce risks and financial compensations in case indefinite contracts need to be ended) also result in the frequent renegotiation of contractual terms including salaries; contracts simply require renewal more often. This practice is partially induced by donors demanding certain (different) pay structures and remuneration levels.

At the moment, SPARK employs project driven contracts and remuneration policies that lead to discussion between and within offices on the fairness of labour conditions. Whilst this maybe partially inevitable,

SPARK will explore the appropriateness and possibilities of a more systematic salary (and bonus) structure and how this could be best introduced.

Staff performance appraisal

Another focal point for 2017 concerns staff performance appraisal. SPARK's current (ISO) Evaluation & Assessment procedure is complex and has not been used consistently over the past year.

Consequently, in many cases appraisal interviews on a regular basis did not take place. A new simplified staff appraisal procedure lower the threshold for conducting staff appraisals is expected to be implemented in the first two quarters of 2017.

Management of HR data

At the moment, HR data on contracts, contract durations, appraisals, salaries, but also overall staff numbers, staff mutations etc. are stored in SPARK online and in the documents folder on the Z-Drive. In 2017, SPARK aims to introduce a more robust and user-friendly system to administer data which can also be linked to financial processes and software (salary administration), either via Microsoft Dynamics or the SPARK online app.

Training & personal development

In 2015 and 2016 there was no budget available for individual staff trainings. In both years the only training possibilities were on-the-job trainings and the possibility for staff to join trainings provided to beneficiaries. The 2017 budget again features a training budget available for 2017. This budget will be increased per 1 July in case additional revenue can be obtained during the year. At the same time the possibility for on-the-job trainings and the possibility to attend trainings provided to beneficiaries will remain available. In 2017, the focus of training is on existing skills and knowledge needed in core processes of our work, e.g. to strengthen the capabilities in the HR department itself (already planned), evaluation skills (M&E), financial reporting for EU programmes (Finance – already planned). The HR department will prepare a Training Needs Assessment for 2017 which will be the basis for training programmes and the allocation of training budget, before actually identifying trainers and/or training institutes and SPARK staff to be trained. Training in 2018 and further could include areas that would help SPARK obtain capabilities and expertise to realise any new and longer term strategic directions.

HR Team

Due to budget restrictions there was no dedicated HR capacity in 2016. An important change per 1 January 2017 is the appointment of a dedicated HR Manager (0,8 FTE, i.e. the Advisor to the Directors becomes the HR Manager) and an HR intern (0.5 fte). At the turn of the year 2016/2017 the BoD assigned staff members in Kosovo (1fte for at least 6 months) and Belgrade (0.5 fte for 12 months) to support the HR Manager, especially in order to overcome the recruitment bulge early 2017.

The HR Manager will continue in his role as secretary to the Supervisory Board (about half a day of work per month).

Milestone/Output	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Next year(s)
Increased Capacity HR	1 HR manager (0.8 fte), 0.5 fte Intern, 0,5 fte HR support BGD for 12 months. 0,5 fte	M&E Manager trained on basic HR matters			

	HR support Kosovo for 6 months.				
Recruitment & staff introductions	About 20 positions filled; staff manual etc updated, and introductions to new staff conducted				
Remuneration & Salaries		Report on appropriateness/possibilities Salary Structure & Decision	Introduction plan (if positive decision)		Implementation of Salary Structure
Performance appraisal	Updated A&E procedure (ISO) introduced	A&E procedure promoted and internally audited			
HR data	Completed personnel files on Z-drive	Explore possibility of integration into MS Dynamics		Implementing Plan for integration into MS Dynamics or SPARK app	Software app for HR data
Training and PD	Training on the job and in programmes facilitated throughout the year.	TNA and final budget for training; Training Plan	Implementation of training plan	Implementation of training plan	
HR Policy	Determine strategic direction; needed competencies assessed		HR Policy and plan July-Dec		

Communication

Overall objective

The communication department has two main objectives: firstly, to consolidate and strengthen existing partnerships and secondly, to generate new resources from new partnerships. As many of the new partnerships come about through referrals and recommendations from existing partners and networks, the two are closely intertwined.

Sub objectives

In order to achieve the overall objective it is vital that the communications team continues to communicate to its target groups who SPARK is and what SPARK does. As we strive to be a leader in the niche of the development aid sector we are operating in, supporting entrepreneurship and higher education in fragile and conflict affected regions, SPARK offers a wide range of solutions and services for (potential) young entrepreneurs and (refugee) students. Support for our line of work cannot be taken for granted in these contexts (we constantly face questions such as 'Isn't humanitarian aid more important?' or 'Is economic development in these regions possible and effective?'). Therefore SPARK needs to put entrepreneurship and higher education in these regions higher on the political and public agenda and demonstrate that its work has impact.

Target groups

The primary target group of SPARK is (potential) partners and donors to ensure SPARK creates the necessary networks and mobilizes the resources to achieve its mission. The communication team works closely together with the acquisition team. Our secondary target group are the beneficiaries of our programmes in the field locations we operate in: entrepreneurs, (increasingly) refugee youth, students and local NGO's and government actors. Here, the communication team works closely with the regional managers and field officers.

Strategies

Different strategies enable SPARK to achieve its communication goals. First of all, our communication is story and data driven. Stories, if told and used well and backed up by data, improve one's credibility and authenticity. Data as such are important to show donors results and the 'value for money'. Secondly, strong visibility is crucial: in design (website, promo materials, events, video) and also in the media (free publicity). Thirdly, communication needs to show a more integral and multi-media approach. From headquarters in Amsterdam to our local offices, the message has to be same, SPARK's story needs to be coherent and everyone should use the means at hand to the fullest, in particular social media.

SPARK

A few key words which form the building stones of the organisation's message. This is what sets us apart from other organisations. SPARK operates in fragile and conflict affected regions and promotes and supports entrepreneurship development and (access to) higher education. SPARK is a full service organisation: this means for example, we train entrepreneurs, find access to finance, guide the entrepreneurs during the process of starting up and support them in growing their company. It also means: we reach out to youth, including vulnerable refugee students, select them for scholarship, provide the scholarships, support leadership and economic empowerment and guide them through the process. SPARK works with local NGO's. And SPARK is flexible, fast and shows value for money.

External Communication

Design and promotion

SPARK's corporate design will undergo an update (style, fonts, colours) as the last update was completed in 2012. The current design style is still relevant, but the update will improve the corporate and business style elements. However, not in way that we will lose the more philanthropist and already existing development donors. This design update will be followed by a full update of the general SPARK brochures, capacity statements and sales sheets (updated content, shortened, newly designed with style changes).

Website

SPARK's website needs an update. Most important is that the website needs to become user-friendly again. The website is 'heavy' on information and has become somewhat of a labyrinth. The website should only communicate highly necessary info and become lean and mean – and more visual. Lastly, the information should be framed differently, better linked to today's political, economic and social reality in the areas we operate in. In doing so, our work will be presented as more relevant and urgent.

Social media

In 2016 significant improvements were achieved in the use of social media (outreach and engagement). In order to continue this trend, the communication team will, for example, collect more and better researched stories which show SPARK's results and push them through social media channels. Online content will be better linked to our different target groups (1. donors and partners; 2. beneficiaries). The use of photography and video will be intensified; for example with the collected audio-visual content from IGNITE 2016. We also plan to make more videos directly linked to the programmes. In 2016 we made a first step by making several videos for the Syrian scholarship programme was a first step.

Events

Focus will be on IGNITE 2017, the 5th edition of our annual event. This year's budget is almost completely dependent on external funding and sponsorships which requires acquisition. It is important to guard the quality of the event and aim for 'A-list' keynote speakers and strong and relevant participating organisations (which organise a high-level workshop). Special attention should be given to the involvement of the private sector. As in prior years, we need to 'ground' the event in trends within the niche sector we operate in, and ensure SPARK's expertise is well showcased at the event. During the year it is important to have an overview of the international agenda in order to be able to join activities and events of others (partners, donors, stakeholders) in order to maintain and expand our network and increase our visibility. These are thereafter invited to join our conference.

Public Affairs (PR; lobby and advocacy)

First of all, the improvement of our journalist network (international and national) is crucial. Given the current state of affairs (politically, economically), SPARK has to be able to increase its free publicity results. As we operate in countries that top the media agenda (Syria, Libya, Turkey), and touch upon matters which feature high on the media priority list (migration, radicalisation), building and nurturing relationships with journalists and search for collaborations (with academics, influentials, local NGO's) in order to create content for media should yield further results in 2017.

A matter for special attention in 2017 will be the Dutch elections and therefore the need to invest in 'political' relations in The Hague (in particular since there are elections coming up in March 2017). SPARK traditionally has good relations with all main political parties and these relations should be well maintained in a year during which a new government will be formed.

Internal Communication

In the first quarter of 2017 the communication guidelines, dating back to early 2014, will be updated for both central and field offices. As part of this, and in line with the decentralisation of the organisation, the communication functions in the regional offices (especially Tunis and Gaziantep) will be strengthened both in terms of (project financed) positions and in delegating responsibilities. HQ remains responsible for the overall policy and provides guidance and capacity building for the field offices.

Various innovative tools were introduced in the past, but have not received the traction that was hoped for. Therefore, the international communication tools of staff in the organisation will be evaluated and either boosted or replaced depending on the outcome of the evaluation.

Milestone/Output	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
IGNITE Conference	Concept & focus, including: short list keynote speakers; fundraising plan and list of preferred partners; decision on location; list of preferred companies to be involved	Budget through existing programmes determined; draft programme; promotion plan; first keynotes programmed; contract location signed; promotion started	Final budget; 2/3 of funding realised; programme outline clear; workshop partners committed; promotion full strength	Conference mid-November; possibly first week of December (due to better deals with location and hotels); 350 visitors (min.10 donors); 2 items for Dutch tv; 3 items in national news; 3 in int. news; for social media results see promo plan
Video & photography	8-10 videos for programmes (financed from programme budgets); new photography (10 – 20 portraits entrepreneurs and refugees)	General video about SPARK; 3-5 videos for programmes (financed from programme budgets); new photography (10 – 20 portraits entrepreneurs and refugees)		
Design	Update realised; general brochure published and distributed	Production promotion materials (including new cap statements and sales sheets)		
Website		Update realised	Adapt website towards IGNITE 2017	
Social Media	1 online media campaign	1 online media campaign	1 online media campaign	Total 2017 <u>Facebook</u> : 6000 likes (now 4600) FB average page post reach: 650 (now 500) FB engagement: 5% of people seeing a post react and comment (now 3) <u>Twitter</u> : 2200 followers (now 1600)

				Engagement rate: 1 % (now 0,7)
Journalist network		National: 10 journalists in network. International: 5 journalists in network		
Free publicity				Total 2017: 30 news items (10 national newspapers; 18 online; 2 television) 6 op-ed (online, offline)

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

SPARK plans to further develop the capacity of its monitoring, evaluation and learning team and improve the central Management Information System (MIS). In addition, SPARK will integrate performance measurement frameworks that address the specific needs of (potential) private sector partners. The M&E manager will strengthen our connections to research institutions and academics that we traditionally partner with to enhance the organisation's capacity in measuring the impact of its programmes (through participation in applied research initiatives) and understanding more thoroughly how its interventions can contribute to peace and stability in fragile states (creating valuable references). Finally SPARK's M&E team in 2017 will coordinate various evaluations for ongoing programmes, set-up new programmes within the organisation's M&E infrastructure and train SPARK staff and local partners in M&E systems and procedures.

Quality Management

The ISO 9001: 2008 external recertification audit by BSI took place in December 2016 and with proposed measures pending for approval for 4 minor non-conformities recertification is expected in January 2017. In 2017, SPARK will transit from the ISO 9001:2008 Certification into the revised standards of the ISO 9001:2015 certification.

Despite the ending Partos membership per 1 January 2017 SPARK will request BSI to also audit the organisation on the Partos norm 9001:2015, which possibly helps to reduce the work load incurred by acquisition applications for NLMFA.

M&E Team

In 2017, SPARK's M&E team will include an M&E Manager (1 fte Amsterdam), an M&E Data Officer (1 fte, Belgrade) and an M&E Intern (0,5fte). The M&E Manager placed in Amsterdam will have the general oversight of SPARK's monitoring, evaluation and learning processes. The M&E Data Officer placed in Belgrade will be responsible for data collection primarily as well as limited analysis. Finally, the M&E Intern, placed in Amsterdam will also support data collection and analysis, as well as reporting of programme results to donors.

MIS developments

For 2017, SPARK also aims at improving and enhancing the Management Information System that the organisation uses. In order to do so, the ITC and M&E team of SPARK will improve the platform's interface and the distinction of roles within it, as well as its reporting functions and capacity to (automatically) extract results. A further enhancement in SPARK's MIS will be its integration with the Student Service System (SIS) of the Syria programme, in order to enable the automatic migration of data from SIS to MIS. Similarly, a tracer study will be conducted in 2017 provided that funding can be attracted, which will facilitate the completion of Salesforce records. In turn, this data will feed into MIS. Funding is largely dependent on M&E budget in existing and new programmes. Finally, as SPARK is moving towards a potential new integrated software solution that primarily will serve its finance department but may well include other core functions as well, the team may migrate the system to such new package if deemed feasible and desirable.

Performance Measurement Frameworks for Private Sector Partners

With an eye on establishing more partnerships with private sector actors, SPARK's M&E team in 2017 will explore relevant performance measurement frameworks that address the specific needs of such actors. More specifically, SPARK will target the introduction of frameworks/platforms and surveys/assessments that will allow a clear and accurate monitoring of activities related to private sector investments, value addition, trade, research and development, credit/financial markets, competitive business development, etc.

Toolboxes for Designing Programmes and Connection with Academia

In 2016, SPARK contributed to a research project that provided insights into the perceptions of vulnerable groups that the organisation targets and developed a toolbox for NGOs to utilize when they develop their Theories of Change (ToC). In 2017, SPARK will use such findings and toolbox when steering its active programmes, as well as when designing new programmes with research institutions. Moreover, in 2017 SPARK plans to cooperate with research institutions to measure impact of its programmes towards increasing stability in fragile states. With such collaborations SPARK also aims at developing a clearer understanding of how private sector development and higher education interventions can contribute to stability in fragile states, besides having impact on job creation and economic development for the beneficiaries.

Regarding programme evaluations, for 2017 SPARK's M&E team plan to:

- Complete the final evaluation of the ABC & MEP programmes
- Conduct the mid-term evaluation of the ABIN programme

Regarding the incorporation of programmes into SPARK's monitoring systems, for 2017 the M&E team plans to:

- Introduce the HES, LEAD, Jordan SME, TBB, United Work and other new programmes into MIS and connect it with the HES SIS
- Introduce the LEAD and Jordan SME programme into the Salesforce platform (Business Tracker) that the organisation utilizes for tracking business-development related data and produce a new report by Q4.

In terms of **staff training** in the organisation's monitoring procedures/systems, SPARK's M&E team plans to:

- Train new programme staff in MIS
- Train LEAD staff in MIS and local partners in the Salesforce platform

Long Term Planning

Moving beyond 2017, SPARK's M&E team will contemplate long term solutions that can enhance the monitoring and evaluation of the organisation's programmes, as well as provide better learning from implemented activities for the organisation. In order to do so, the M&E team will explore collaborations in data and lessons learned sharing with similar organisations and relevant research institutions. Thereby, SPARK will contribute to and draw from a pool of data that will benefit the overall understanding and measurement of private sector and higher education interventions. Finally, the M&E will aim at contributing to the validity and relevance of the ToCs that the organisation employs, but supporting and engaging in research projects that provide empirical evidence of the impact of private sector development and higher education interventions in fragile states.

Milestone/Output	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Next year(s)
Increased capacity and expertise of M&E team	M&E Data Officer recruited; Exploratory meetings with research/knowledge institutions	M&E Manager recruited; Partner with research institutions (MoUs)		On joined initiative with a Research/Knowledge Inst. (in existing or new programme) started.	
Programme Evaluation conducted	ABC, MEP and ABIN				
Programmes introduced into MIS/Salesforce	HES, Jordan SME, TBB, United Work and Human Safety in MIS/Salesforce	New programmes introduced into MIS/Salesforce	New programmes introduced into MIS/Salesforce	New programmes introduced into MIS/Salesforce	New programmes introduced into MIS/Salesforce
MIS improved	Connection between SIS and MIS established	More user friendly interface introduced	Reporting functions improved and enriched	Reporting functions improved and enriched	Fully integrated software employed
Staff and LPS trained	M&E Data officer, HES, LEAD, TBB, United Work and Human Safety staff trained in MIS/Salesforce	New (relevant) staff trained in MIS/Salesforce	New (relevant) staff trained in MIS/Salesforce	New (relevant) staff trained in MIS/Salesforce	New (relevant) staff trained in MIS/Salesforce
Connections with private sector actors established	New M&E frameworks explored	Private sector M&E frameworks introduced	Private sector M&E frameworks introduced	Private sector M&E frameworks introduced	Private sector M&E frameworks introduced
SPARK's Evaluation and Learning frameworks enhanced	Connections with actors from academia / research institutions	Connections with actors from academia / research institutions	Connections with actors from academia / research institutions	Connections with actors from academia / research institutions	Contribution to research projects and data shared with relevant research

	established	established	established	established	institutions
ISO 9001	Corrective Actions implemented; Transitional Review performed and procedures updated	Internal audit conducted	BSI Transitional Audit	BSI External Audit	

ICT

The SPARK ICT team in 2017 will continue to focus on two main areas. On the one hand the design and maintenance of tailor made software solutions for specific SPARK projects. On the other hand the introduction of new software solutions for the overall organization. The team will consist of 3.5 fte in 2017.

Programme based solutions

ICT support for Programmes

1.A. Upgrade of the Higher Education Enrolment System

The enrolment system for the HES (www.he4s.eu) which has been designed in 2015 and enhanced in 2016 will be upgraded in Q1 of 2017 and opened for new enrolments latest 31 March 2017. This system, which saw over 18.000 applications for our Syrian refugee scholarships in 2016 will see various improvements as based on the evaluation of its workings and shortcomings in 2016. Easier and more user friendly data entry for applicants living in refugee camps or with limited computer literacy. A simplified staff user Dashboard Section is implemented, which will provide an easy overview of key indicators, including the eligibility batches of applicants, a regional breakdown of application trends in the last 7 days, etc. as well as targets vs attained information. The application system will be fully integrated with the SIS system (see further). A 24/7 support line desk linking to the ICT team will be in place to ensure rapid trouble shooting.

A fully functional student information system (www.sis.he4s.eu) has already been developed in 2016, but will be completed in Q1 of 2017. The system will help both SPARK programme staff to retain full control over the student population data but will also allow for direct access to donors, partner institutions and students. In the system, student grades, study progress as well as participation in all extra-curricular activities will be logged. It also contains information on all student counselling sessions held with each students and outcomes thereof. The status of the student as enrolled, dropped-out or graduated is retained including copies of their student contract, stipend payment information as well as a copy of the final diploma attained. A statistics and report section will provide real-time information to field officers and coordinators on number of enrolled students, gender balance, ethnic breakdown, region of origin, location and fields of current study, special needs, and flags if students are at risk of dropping out when lagging behind. Donors will be given access to this section to facilitate real time reporting, and the reports generated in this section as based on the reporting formats already agreed with these donors. A notification section will enable direct SMS (developed with Vodaphone) and email services to all students individually, or as groups defined by relevant filters.

1.B. Diploma Certification System (DCS)

The diploma certification system (www.diploma.spark-online.org) is the back office system for the university diploma verification system SPARK implements on behalf of the EU between Kosovo and Serbia. This system enables candidates to enter all their data and apply online, or field staff to enter and manage all such information. A report section will be developed for various kinds of reports for the purposes of the both parties such as how many diplomas needs to be recognized for the given University and Faculty, how many diplomas we have per provinces, how many diplomas we have between Serbia and Kosovo and other type of reports based on the Donor needs. As this project is currently suspended its development is placed on hold until its re-instated by the EU.

1.C. United Work

Under the current Work Programme approved in Turkey, 200 Syrian refugees will be placed in vacancies made available by Dutch firms investing in Turkey. The ICT team will align the HES systems to the systems in use by United Work.

1.D. SME Jordan

Under the recently approved SME Jordan programme, several software solutions will be needed such as summer university software (adjusted from existing programme designed for earlier summer universities), SME mapping software and student scholarships and traineeship software.

1.E. Scholarships for the Western Balkans

Scholarship system for the Western Balkans will be upgraded with additional notification modules who will help to field officers to receive notifications once the new scholarship has been entered into the system and also will continue with the full support on daily bases.

1.F. MEP and ABC closing out ICT support

ICT team will continues to give the support to field officers on daily bases on various issues such as data-entry for the MIS Indicators, Email Issues, Timesheet problems and also problems with their computers.

Organisation Wide Development Agenda

File Server moving to google drive

In 2016 the entire email server of SPARK was migrated to Google GMAIL. This system is both more stable and cheaper than retaining an own email server and will be continued. In Q1 of 2017 as a new step the entire SPARK central file server will be migrated to Google Drive. This cloud based service is integrated with Gmail, and thus will enable staff with one account to access all the SPARK files as well.

MIS System

The existing MIS system will be further upgrades based on feedback regarding its user friendliness and will be integrated with the HES SIS/MIS system. The MIS system will be integrated with, or replaced by an integrated software solution due Q4.

Migration of the Finance Software into a new integrated existing software solution

In coordination with the Finance team, the current Pluriform system will be migrated to a more holistic and integrated system such as Microsoft Dynamics. The migration itself is planned for Q4 to enable a careful preparation and analysis and prevent loss of data and functionality. As part of this process a roadmap is developed to migrate other existing systems to the new system unless the current systems have a better functionality. In these cases the systems, which are likely both Microsoft based, will be linked.

Support of existing systems and development of additional futures

Supporting of the existing systems such as <http://app.spark-online.org> will be continued (i.e. Timesheets, Declarations, Holiday Requests, etc.).

ICT Infrastructure

As a significant investment was made in a Finance Server in 2016, no large infrastructure investment is expected in 2017. An assessment of the speed of internet at all field offices will be made by Q2 and upgraded if required. Increase in licences for file server and email service packs is foreseen and a modest amount for replacement of faulty hardware.

Milestone/Output	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Next year(s)
Upgrade of the Higher Education Enrolment System www.he4s.eu www.sis.he4s.eu	Analyses of the newer requirements. Development of the new functionalities.	Development of additional futures on request by Donors. Support the Enrolment process for 2017/2018.	Development of additional futures on request by Donors. Continuation of the Support.	Development of additional futures on request by Donors. Continuation of the Support.	
Diploma Certification System www.diploma.spark-online.org	Development of the new functionalities.	Support of the data entry.	Continuation of the Support.	Continuation of the Support.	
United Work		Analyses of their system and system Integration with our systems.			
Scholarships for the Western Balkans www.s4wb.eu	Support	Analyses of the newer requirements. Development of the new functionalities.	Continuation of the Support.	Continuation of the Support.	
File Server moving to google drive	Migration of the Z-Drive data into Google Z-Drive.	Launching the Google Z-Drive. Continuation of the Support.	Support	Support	

MIS System	Development of the new functionalities.	Support.	Support	Support	
Migration of the Finance Software into Microsoft Dynamics	<i>New finance & management software introduced</i>	Technical Needs Analysis conducted for MS Dynamics	Transition Plan from ICT Side such as required infrastructure and data migration.	Support	

Acquisition Plan 2017

In 2015 our application to the NL MFA for a follow-up programme to the SPARK MFS2 programme was rejected, leading to a potential drop of 55% in income. A back-up plan which had already been put in place in anticipation was executed leading to a 2017 budget growth of 19% relative to 2016. This was a consequence of the strengthening of the Belgrade acquisition team to 5fte and prioritising BoD time to acquisition efforts. Even more important than the increase in portfolio is that this effort has led to making significant headway in a long time target of SPARK: diversification of partnerships. Significant new partnerships were not only concluded with multilaterals such as the European Union, IFC, World Bank and EBRD, but also multinational corporations such as Generali and Virgin United. This in addition to a new Gulf partner, Al Fakhoora, and the philanthropist Asfari. Exciting new innovative pilot partnerships were signed in the field of SME development, job creation and employability with Talent Beyond Boundaries and United Work. Moreover, several longer term strategic partnerships have been signed, such as a new framework contract with the European Investment Bank in consortium with BDO. Parallel to working in proposal development the acquisition team worked with the BoD and senior staff members from the field offices on mid to long term strategic planning and capacity building of SPARK staff in programming¹. For 2017 the existing two tracks of tendering and unsolicited proposal writing will both be improved and expanded and additional efforts will be made into new market segments especially the private sector and philanthropy.

In 2017 the acquisition team will be expanded from 5 fte to 6 fte to keep pace with the workload and increase the quality of programmes designed. The unsolicited bi-lateral and multilateral & governmental donor acquisition will continue and quality improved based on our evaluation of the 2016 results. This also creates the required space to press on into the two new field of acquisition that have shown interesting results in 2016: the private sector and philanthropy.

Geographically, focus will be on the existing locations SPARK works in. Only in an exceptional case programming in a new country will be started. The MENA region will remain a crucial area as new programmes can be cost efficiently built on the back of the newly started programmes, it has pressing and growing needs that SPARK can contribute to and the world's attention is squarely on this region. Moreover, SPARK will devote special attention to countries where attention for diminishing, but needs remain high or are even growing in particular Burundi, Yemen, Rwanda, Liberia and Kosovo.

Private Sector Support

In the past, SPARK has worked with several private sector parties, such as Heineken, Chevron, Google, Microsoft and Virgin United. In 2017 we will be building on the earlier partnerships with Heineken in Burundi and Virgin United in Africa, whilst expanding on our new partnership with Generali¹. At least one entirely new private sector partnership will be built up, aiming for strategic partnerships, in line with the 'shared value' approach of Michael Porter². To support this effort, SPARK will continue to be participating in international forums of the World Bank, IFC, the UN Global Compact and continuing the co-chairing role in the working group on "Engaging the Private Sector in finding solutions for forced Migration" with UNDP, as well as initiative SPARK is leading with IFC and Clingendael as part of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation on sourcing local SMEs in the value chain of multinational corporations. Most of the interesting programmes traditionally arise from such participation and networking.

¹ http://85.18.73.150/clientsection/Next/Next_Generali_Refugee_GLG_Parigi_10.mp4

² <https://hbr.org/2011/01/the-big-idea-creating-shared-value>

Philanthropy

In the field of philanthropy, the acquisition team aims to develop at least one new meaningful partnership in 2017 in addition to fostering the existing partnerships. The partnership with the Asfari Foundation will be strengthened and several new ongoing conversations will be taken forward with others.

Based on these strategic directions the following main ambitions in terms of acquisition have been identified for the coming year:

The acquisition team will be strengthened with a new Portfolio Manager with experience in, and focus on gaining (financial) and programmatic support from at least one new private sector actor and one new philanthropist;

The acquisition team will organise again two strategic planning & programming training events in spring (Africa) and autumn (MENA) 2017 for senior SPARK staff leading to increased local resource mobilisation;

Expanding the roster of dedicated consultants to 10 experts in programme design in the field of SME development (5) and Higher Education (5, with a focus on entrepreneurship) to be assigned by the acquisition team to local SPARK offices to develop at least 20 significant new unsolicited proposals; Secondly through continuous capacity building of new staff to be recruited for different positions within field offices and scanning potential recruits for business development experiences;

Special attention for enhancing scalability of existing and newly designed activities;

Close cooperation with the Communication team to improve the information and branding products of SPARK and ensuring the track record and capabilities are well highlighted in external events organised, especially the experts meetings and the Ignite! Conference;

Mobilising the internal expertise and skills of SPARK staff so that they can offer their services in tenders won.

SPARK Solutions & Access to Finance

No separate solutions have been developed in 2016 and budget has been reserved for further developing new solutions. Elements of BSC Advisory Services and the BSC Academy have been incorporated in to existing programmes and acquisition, e.g. with CVs of SPARK staff sharing relevant expertise in future programmes through tenders. This follows a trend under which solutions are developed as part of ongoing programming and costs are covered thereunder.

First exploratory sessions with a focus group of SPARK staff on strategic opportunities and ideas for new services were held in Beirut in July 2016 and December 2016 in Amsterdam reconfirm the anticipated market for Solutions such as the BSC Concept, Business Skills Training, Curriculum Development etc., but that more must be done to brand, market and sell them towards institutional donors, in tenders or towards private sector. It was also concluded that increasing and mobilising expertise (in project staff mostly occupied in on-going projects) remains a challenge. Furthermore, the sessions revealed a desire to develop services or solutions specifically focusing on de-radicalisation and refugees. This input will be taken along in our upcoming development of a Multi Annual Strategic Plan 2017-2020. The process in order to come to a final MASP including ideas for new services and solutions will take from January to April 2017.

Access to Finance

Loan Guarantee Funds

A Loan Guarantee Fund facility is made available through many SPARK entrepreneurship programmes. The LGF compensates for the lack of collateral of small growing business in obtaining debt finance. The LGFs provide a partial cash guarantee to the local financial institutions that provides the loans in the range of 2000 to 20000 Euros to entrepreneurs in SPARK programmes.

A significant amount of provisions in 2015 can be caused by a number of factors, including the role/performance in terms of loans management of local financial institutions (and SPARK in case of direct loans), the selection of entrepreneurs (usually an independent jury plus the FI's credit committee), the quality of pipeline in SPARK's programmes, SPARK's role in pushing entrepreneurs to repay in time, external factors including conflict and climate, etc.

Mid-2016, SPARK introduced a procedure for the selection of financial institutions providing the guaranteed loans as well as a procedure to manage the contract (and reporting) with the FI concerned. SPARK will continue to apply these procedures to, for example, the MEP and LEAD programmes.

Management of LGFs requires close monitoring of local FI and entrepreneurs by SPARK. An increase in capacity and capabilities in SPARK are required to improve the management of this process.

A LGF manager will be recruited in January 2017 (0.8 to 1 fte) fully focussing on the management and capabilities to implement the funds. The LGF manager will also analyse defaults incurred over 2016. The LGF Manager will start discussing with our donors the financing of LGF management out of the funds themselves in the longer run (management fee) rather than from programme management fees.

Access to finance together with an effective selection of SGBs and entrepreneurs and the TA provided to them remains an essential part in our strategy and result chain, and as such we will continue to include access to finance in our programme budgets where possible. However, early 2017, through strategic sessions leading to the MASP 2017-2020, SPARK will revisit the way LGFs are facilitated. This includes exploring possibilities to outsource access to finance activities to an external party that is entirely dedicated to facilitating loans/guarantees in the SPARK countries/fragile states, and possesses the core capabilities necessary to do so successfully. A side effect of this measure would be that the LGF's no longer interfere with the SPARK overall financial results.

Direct Loans

Direct loans are not desirable as they require SPARK to have loan management capabilities, which is not a SPARK core capability but of local financial institutions. Involving local institutions is also preferred because it helps to strengthen local capacity which is from a development perspective more sustainable. Same practice is applied to business support services (TA), which are preferably also delivered through local business support organisations. In 2014 and 2015 exceptions were made in those cases where local entrepreneurs in our programme's pipelines needed access to finance, but local financial institutions were not willing or not present to facilitate loans with partial guarantees. Investments through other direct loans, such as for Mido Dairy and Ask Food were provided because they represented excellent opportunities to invest in businesses in fragile states at the time. Together with the Rwandan investments they would represent a portfolio and emerging track record deemed necessary to attract funding for Ignite Fund (see below). Direct loans, particularly small ones for a number of programmes have not been successfully implemented in the past and we have stopped facilitating new ones in 2016. Direct lending is not a structural solution for SPARK, and no direct lending has been planned for 2017 (or later).

Grants

As we have stopped facilitating direct loans through SPARK in 2016, the only remaining option in particular cases would be to provide grants. In many cases, the option of providing grants (in absence of a FI that could facilitate guaranteed loans) had been considered before choosing to work through direct loans. Grants would by definition mean that funds do not revolve and actually may do harm in terms of undermining development of the local banking sector and give the wrong incentives to local business. Donors are also often simply not approving this modality (whilst other may encourage). No grant schemes have been planned for 2017.

Ignite Fund

Ignite Fund was set-up as a quasi-equity fund with an envisaged fund size of 25mIn serving SGBs in fragile states in need of 50k-750k investments. In 2016, for fundraising purposes, the funding the structure had been revised under the (fund) management of Independent Portfolio Managers (IPM) in the UK. IPM and its managed accounts fund structure was selected given their potential to raise funds among commercial and institutional investors. Towards the end of 2016 this had not resulted in new investors, apart from one insurance company that SPARK had acquired itself. The managed accounts structure and IPM's lack of track record in frontier markets was not attractive to institutional investors. Fundraising has not been successful within the envisaged period ending in December 2016.

During the first quarter of 2017 SPARK will explore whether a small fund, or first close can be realised with the two identified investors managed by a Fund Manager with relevant track record and offering a more conventional structure. Should this not be feasible, SPARK will stop fundraising and other efforts to fully launch Ignite Fund and propose to the insurance firm to allocate their committed funding to other SPARK activities or access to finance services, i.e. LGFs in the light of the CSR programme currently under development with another unit of the firm. The time period of three months runs parallel to MASP related strategic sessions and will not obstruct SPARK in pursue of new strategic opportunities identified in the MASP (published in April 2017), e.g. by absorbing capacity that would otherwise be needed to realise identified opportunities.

Ignite Foundation

In 2014, based on legal advice, Ignite Foundation was initiated by SPARK as a vehicle to channel pilot and future Ignite Fund investments with SPARK resources (avoiding that SPARK would be the formal investor). IF has its own SB and BoD and in terms of governance. In the long run and once Ignite Fund would fully run, the foundation's operations would be financed out of the repayments from investees. With fundraising lagging behind and fund operations postponed, no substantial income will be generated for the foundation in 2017 which currently employs a part time head of finance and director to run the very few activities. The current pilot investments in Rwanda generate too little revenue for Ignite Foundation to run operations.

SPARK has facilitated loans to entrepreneurs through Ignite Foundation in Liberia, i.e. to disburse direct loans in these particular cases where we did not have the opportunity to do so through local financial institutions. The foundation has so far executed this successfully with no defaults at all. There are no intentions to continue facilitating/expanding this through Ignite Foundation. For Ignite Foundation this does not generate sufficient revenue to run operations in 2017.

The BoD of Ignite Foundation has shown interest in facilitating loans and guarantees, including taking over LGF facilities from SPARK. However, for Ignite Foundation to become financially viable it would have to attract a significant portfolio of funds generating sufficient revenue out of management fees.

Ignite Foundation remains relevant for as long as SPARK wishes to facilitate the two investees in Rwanda. On the part of Ignite Foundation this would not constitute a tremendous work load and

therefore budget. However, for as long as Ignite Foundation remains an essential intermediary for the current investments in Rwanda there remains an obligation to maintain this structure including Ignite Foundation on the part of SPARK.

In January – March 2017, with the support of the new LGF manager SPARK will prepare two internal proposals on how to continue its relation with Ignite Foundation in the situation of (i) Ignite Fund getting started, and (ii) the Ignite Fund initiative being stopped in April. This would have to incorporate a solution for the two investees in Rwanda

Milestone/Output	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Next year(s)
Development of Solutions	Strategic opportunities and ideas identified (as part of MASP process)	MASP providing input for (new) solutions to be developed in Q3 and later.			
Loan Guarantee Fund	LGF/A2F manager recruited	Study incl Proposals for decision on how to structurally facilitate LGFs, e.g. in house or outsourcing.	Implementation of approved proposal		
Ignite Fund	Worked out scenario's; Funds raised and available for immediate investment	Go/no-Go Decision for Ignite Fund continuation			
Ignite Foundation	Ignite Foundation collaboration proposal I and II; Adjustment of contracts with Ignite Foundation and presence in governance structure.	Possibly the adjust in contracts between the investees and Ignite Foundation and SPARK			

Projects

Higher Education for Syrians Programme, HES

The higher education for economic development program for Syrian refugees and IDP's experienced a rapid scaling in 2016. After a pilot for 80 students in Gaziantep in the academic year 2015/2016 it was scaled to 1500 by early 2016 and towards 3.000 at the end of 2016. Not just the size increased, but also the regional scope, now being active in Jordan, Lebanon, the Kurdish region of Iraq and in Syria.

Aiming to prepare a new generation for the (economic) reconstruction of Syria, this programme places refugees and IDPs in study programmes that have the potential to lead to employment in the host communities they now reside in and in the future in Syria itself.

SPARK has partnered with the Netherlands Foreign Ministry, the Education Above All foundation in Qatar and the European Union (MADAD).

In 2017 SPARK aims to increase the number of scholarship holders to 4.000 by the end of Q1 and start extra-curricular leadership and entrepreneurship training and SME development support for selected scholarship recipients by Q2.

KPI	Target 2017
# of individuals trained and found formal employment	950 (trained but not necessarily found job)
# Entrepreneurs trained and/or coached	950 (another 950 than the above)
Enrolled in full time Higher (Vocational) study programmes	4.000
Average direct participant satisfaction score	80% in accordance to project KPIs

LEAD

The LEAD programme, which is supported by local partners TAMSS and IACE (Tunisia), Shaqodoon (Somalia) and Enala (Libya) aims to create a total of 4.000 direct and 22.000 indirect sustainable jobs by the end of 2018. In 2016, a number of activities have been implemented to help achieve these results. Together with local partners in each country, Spark has implemented a number of activities to support SME's. By 31st December 2016, we aim to have supported a total of 1328 SME's and entrepreneurs through training and coaching and business strengthening initiatives. In 2017, our focus

will be on continuing supporting SME's through access to new markets and finance. In Somalia, we will continue to focus on core sectors of growth: agribusiness, fisheries and expand our activities to Puntland and Mogadishu. In Tunisia, with the support of our local partners TAMSS and IACE, we will focus on providing targeted coaching and training through a live platform geared towards providing real-time solutions for struggling entrepreneurs and SME's that require immediate assistance. This service will be followed up by specialised consultants who will continue to track the SME/entrepreneur as part of the assistance program. In addition to this, our local partner will work with other existing SME support bodies in the cities of Kef and Kairouan to provide value add to the entrepreneurial ecosystem. In Libya, together with our local partner, Enala, Spark will continue to provide targeted assistance and coaching to SME's in the newly established entrepreneurship centre in Tripoli. To ensure that SME's are given access to new markets, our local partner will be focusing on specific value chain activities to connect businesses together and encourage trade and investment. Additionally, we aim to work with education institutes to introduce entrepreneurship within the curricula in early 2017. This activity is a continuation of activities that occurred in 2016, including meetings with various higher education institutes and a roundtable to discuss the needs of the academic institutes.

KPI	Target 2017
# of businesses started	20
# of jobs created in started SMEs	335
# Entrepreneurs trained and/or coached	3954
% increase 5C score	not in LEAD M&E
Average direct participant satisfaction score	not in M&E but will be evaluated per activity

Agribusiness Creation Programme (ABC): Burundi, Yemen

The Agri-Business Creation (ABC) programme aims at rapid job creation, entrepreneurship development and improvement of government legitimacy. It coaches emerging entrepreneurs through training, mentoring and support of business plans. In collaboration with financial institutions, loans are then provided for these start-ups, which empower local entrepreneurs to be part of new economic opportunities that arise. The core of the ABC programme was the same for all countries involved, but its implementation and progression has ultimately been distinct. In other words, different contexts, from the type of value chains available to work with, to presence of on-going conflict in each country, to the availability of strong local partners and staff, meant that in each country the results of the programme have been unique and outputs varied.

In Burundi, the ABC program activities projected for 2017 are already taking place as programmed albeit with some delays due to the instable environment. One important element involves training and the training of trainers to staff, trainers and teachers of the partnering Business Development Organisations (BDO), Financial Institutions (FI) and Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) in relation to new fresh packaging materials in the honey and fruits value chains. Job creation and enterprise development objectives will be implemented by strengthening farmers' associations and cooperatives in business capacity in the white sorghum value chain and the honey value chain mainly.

Since July 2016 the security situation inside RSS has deteriorated substantially and SPARK was forced to evacuate their staff from Yei to Uganda. The existing programme had to be completely overhauled to see to what extent activities could still be implemented. A new programme outline was made however its activities were suspended due to resurgent violence and no activities are foreseen in 2017.

Provided the ABC programme is prolonged in Yemen, SPARK expects capacity building to continue with local partners Vision for Development (working in and around Taiz on honey, dairy and vegetables value chains) and For All Development (coordinating administrating and budgeting three local partners: Tawteen, Improve and Knowledge for Development). With respect to job creation and enterprise development, SPARK aims to assist existing SMEs to continue to operate in the various value chains in which they operate. SPARK will furthermore assist new start-ups in a conflict context in conjunction with the incubators in Sana'a and Aden which target young entrepreneurs and provide them with business skills trainings.

In Taiz, SPARK staff continues to visit the local dairy farmers (500 female beneficiaries who continue to produce milk and local cheese). In Hodeidah, Knowledge for Development is providing on-going technical training to date farmers and is expected to deliver business skill trainings to this target group. In Sana'a the strawberry value chain located in the sub-urban areas of the city still operates. In the Haraz area, Improve is providing technical support for coffee production and is projected to provide training for product branding and marketing. Finally the SPARK initiated Business Service Centre (BSC) based in Sana'a and newly opened in Taiz, will continue to provide business skills trainings. A presence in both North and South Yemen in 2017 is the best guarantee for SPARK's future engagements in Yemen, as such a geographical representation signals neutrality to internal and external actors

KPI	Target 2017
# of businesses started	133
# of jobs created in started SMEs	85
# of individuals trained and found formal employment	34
# Entrepreneurs trained and/or coached	1348
Number of partners and government officials with 50% increase or more in their 5 Core Capabilities score	0

Average direct participant satisfaction score	4 (1 to 5 – very unsatisfied to very satisfied)
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PicoCap Liberia

The goals of PicoCap Liberia are to: 1. Enhance the entrepreneurial ecosystem of support for SMEs in Liberia; 2. Enable Liberian SMEs to be more competitive and strengthened; 3. Foster linkages between Liberian SMEs and early stage investors, and; 4. Facilitate scalable employment generation.

Since 2009, SPARK has supported over 500 businesses in Liberia through technical assistance, capacity development, and business support programs. In addition to business incubation and advisory services, more than 30 companies have received small business loans through local partners and financial institutions supported by SPARK's partial risk guarantee instruments. Many of these businesses as well as other promising businesses identified by our investment team are now ready for larger investments to rapidly scale their businesses. In Liberia, however, a financing gap persists for investment sizes between \$25K and \$250K. PicoCap was initiated as a local (Liberian) fund along the lines of Ignite Fund with seed funding from Humanity United and 200k committed by IFC and the Liberian Ministry of Commerce and Industry LIFE fund. PicoCap is to build world-class investment and portfolio management teams to support Liberian businesses with both direct investments and technical assistance. Matching funding from US private investors in order to reach 600k would allow the start of 10 investments. Additionally, a credit line with KIVA will be established. This capital will be used to grow the portfolio and thereby increasing the growth of our high potential entrepreneurs. The 2016 Branson/Virgin Unite scholarship programme has delivered potential pipeline of PicoCap. The seed funding provided by Humanity United covers the development expenses (fund set-up and initial management and fundraising). The period to use this seed funding ends in March 2017. A proposal for an extension is being prepared.

KPI	Target 2017
% of started businesses that survive three years	10
# of individuals trained and found formal employment	150
KPI	Target 2017
# Entrepreneurs trained and/or coached	10

Exxon Liberia

The Business-in-a-Box Program is a one-year effort by ExxonMobil, NOCAL, SPARK, Single Spark, and BSC Monrovia to boost the SME ecosystem in Liberia, by analysing the Liberian context, incubating promising business models, and start-ups to harness economic growth and identify new

innovations and market potential. As a result of the efforts, new business opportunities are identified, new start-ups are created and existing SMEs are strengthened – creating growth in the SME sector, allowing Liberia to recover after the Ebola outbreak and its negative economic impact. It is expected that this growth is a result of increased sales and turnover and translates into new jobs created in the supported businesses. An increased entrepreneurial spirit and employment creation, in turn, are expected to contribute to the socio-economic and political stability among unemployed youth in particular. This is the primary social impact and overall objective of our intervention. In 2016 the program was officially launched at the MSME conference in Liberia.

The overall goal of the program is to contribute to economic development and (youth) employment in Liberia by introducing new proven business concepts as an opportunity to SMEs in their growth. The project purpose is to support young women entrepreneurs to identify new business opportunities and create new business start-ups.

In 2017 this program will be implemented fully, which means the participants apply, the best ones are selected and will do the feasibility study, out of that the best candidates will be selected that will develop the entire business in a box. That will be presented to the jury and the best 20 entrepreneurs will receive funding and can start their business.

KPI	Target 2017
# of businesses started	20
# of jobs created in started SMEs	30-60

TetraTech project Ivory Coast

The diamond community livelihoods program Ivory Coast is a 9 month effort by TetraTech, SPARK, Single Spark, and Business Start-up Centre Abidjan to improve the lives and livelihoods of artisanal mining communities by developing the SME ecosystem in Ivory Coast. The main objective is to identify committed entrepreneurs with promising business models who have the potential to launch successful start-ups. SPARK, Single Spark and BSC Abidjan will assist these entrepreneurs by analysing the needs and value chain requirements of Ivory Coast’s diamond mining communities, incubating promising business models and start-ups to harness economic growth and identify new innovations and market potential. As a result of such efforts, new business opportunities will be identified, new start-ups are created and existing SMEs are strengthened, thus creating growth in the SME sector and providing resilience to the diamond mining communities of Tortiya and Séguéla through economic growth, inclusion and diversification. It is expected that this growth is achieved as a result of increased sales and turnover, and translates into the creation of new jobs in the supported businesses. An increased entrepreneurial spirit and employment creation are expected to contribute to the socio-economic and political stability, particularly amongst unemployed youth. This is the primary social impact and overall objective of our intervention.

Most of the project implementation took place in 2016. It ends in Q1 of 2017 in which the entrepreneurs will do their feasibility study and then gradually start to build their business in a box. Another major activity will be to attract start-up capital for the entrepreneurs. The BSC Abidjan

provides the services to the entrepreneurs. SPARK trains and coaches the BSC in providing these services and takes care of the monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

KPI	Target 2017
# of businesses started	15
# of jobs created in started SMEs	15-30

Improve employment opportunities in Jordan

This programme will be active from December 2016 until the end of 2018 and will assist more than 1000 Syrians and vulnerable Jordanians to find their way through education and the labour market, through different measures. These range from training and coaching to 800 new and existing businesses, access to finance through a loan guarantee fund, providing internships to 120 Syrians and Jordanians for vocational education and introducing or improving entrepreneurship modules in higher education institutions to setting up an internship program for 500 mainly Syrian students to match them to those companies that need their labour as well as a conflict-oriented training for all participants involved. SPARK partners with local organizations such as the Jordan Chamber of Industry and Jordan University, as well as several local business service providers, educational institutions and others.

The first year will start with an extensive media campaign to attract different target groups of potential scholarship students, aspiring entrepreneurs and owners of existing businesses to cooperate in the programme. The scholarship students will be selected and will start their study in various courses. The internship programme will start its first cohort of students and the first entrepreneurship modules will be piloted in a summer course. Business plan competitions will be organized, resulting in the first businesses being set up. Last, a sustainable partner will be sought for the loan guarantee fund and this will be set up as soon as possible.

KPI	Target 2017
# of businesses started	150
# of jobs created in started SMEs	200
# Entrepreneurs trained and/or coached	200

Cooperatives Support Program in Rwanda – Summary of achievements and annual plan 2017

Brief remark on achievements so far on main outputs and outcome

CSP program has embarked on the last year of its implementation with an exit strategy to make sure recorded outputs are capitalized, sustained and scaled up. A total of 99 agriculture cooperatives have been enrolled to the program in two different phases and supported through an intensive capacity building trajectory (trainings, coaching and value chain linkages). They have realized progress and business performances towards improved management and organizational competences, as indicated by the last Mid Term and Review (conducted August 2015). In the growth and sustainability assessments (conducted September 2016) the cooperatives have been profiled according to their performances in terms of services to members, market values, access to finance and managerial competencies.

The major part of the overall program budget has mainly been spent on the direct support of the target cooperatives (CSP component 1). While the 2nd component (Agri-BDS capacity building trajectory) has been mainly implemented through the local collaborative partnership engaged with RICEM and Agri-ProFocus (APF). The program had by October 2016 indirectly reached out 29,381 members of 99 cooperatives compared to initial target of 14,595 beneficiaries. The project has taken up bigger numbers than expected to which is impacting on the programs ability to trickle down the benefits to the membership of the cooperatives. The large numbers of beneficiaries reached stem from the size of cooperatives recruited and the need to reach a maximum number of members.

SPARK undertook in partnership with RICEM a 1,5 years pilot capacity building pilot program to a number of Agri-BDS providers (40) wishing to offer professional BDS services to agricultural cooperatives and Agri-SMEs. The capacity building employed a course curriculum to equip the participants with consulting, training and mentorship skills needed for the provision of fee for service BDS and introduce participants to the principles of marketing, clients mobilization strategies and ethical professional code of conduct. Trained services providers have been professionally mentored and started to pilot demand driven services to agri SME heading to a professional accreditation process. A total of 35 Agri-BDS providers have completed the course, graduated and established a network body of Agri-BDS professionals.

Objectives

In 2016 Spark has revised the implementation strategy of CSP with an aim of filling the gaps indicated by the Mid Term Review study and ensuring capitalization and ownership of recorded results. The re-design of the program strategy leads to enhancing the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of actions to ensure the realization of a critical mass of viable agribusiness cooperatives and Agri-BDS providers toward sustainability and ownership. The collaboration between SPARK, Agri-ProFocus (APF), RICEM, and ICCO Terrafina, central and local governments has brought in new expertise into the program and with proper coordination should be able to leverage it and pave the sustainability way over the next few months to close the program. The role of the trained Agri-BDS providers shall be crucial to ensure a high quality of program delivery, ownership and sustainability.

Types of activities & results planned for 2017

For the year 2017, interventions that directly target the membership of cooperatives will be strengthened and scaled up to complement the Meso - level interventions delivered during the last three years of the project implementation. This is crucial to ensure a proper connection between the growth of members and the overall growth of the cooperatives, for enhancing accountability, loyalty,

membership retention and commitments strategy as an effort to entrench sustainability to ensure continuity and future survival of the target cooperatives.

Taking the advantages of the provided Agri-BDS course provided by SPARK and RICEM, SPARK has invited interested Agri-BDS providers to submit bids in a form of Agri-BDS competition to be considered as main anchor BDS providers to support sustainable business growth model for the target cooperatives with potential to become the real collective business entities. For that to happen, qualified and competent BDS shall establish BDS models that will enable cooperatives demand their services on a commercial service and responding to the identified growth and sustainability gaps. Services shall focus on organizational management, setting up more tangible business models and incentives to members, value to the market and access to finance.

For the few weak cooperatives ranked in the category II, SPARK will focus on boosting crop yields, basic organizational aspect simultaneously with support to reach to markets. This will be done using other SPARK internal capacity building resources (trainers and coaches) and connecting them to other potential capacity builders.

Further sustainability of the cooperatives will call for a systematic capacity building process in which the role of the coaches and SPARK as whole shall diminish gradually in those cooperatives that attain the managerial and growth threshold that allows them to be weaned off mostly using Agri-BDS model. This shall require setting certain specific benchmarks and performances tracking systems for the target cooperatives on which a proper scale down the support will be based. A tripartite performances agreement with an exit strategy shall be signed between Agri-BDS providers, target cooperatives and SPARK. This will ensure a smooth transition to a business operational model which will be fundamental to avoiding the “traditional shocks” experienced when projects scale down and wind up in the exit process.

Cooperatives for which organizational and business performances stands high will serve as learning reference centres to tie up/demonstrate the Agri-BDS concept efforts that ensure incentives to pay services without relying on external support. The Wean off point will be the demonstration of the cooperatives capacity thereafter to afford fee for service support through Agri-BDS schemes. The envisaged strengthening of the Agri-BDS providers makes the need to wean off cooperatives desirable and critical by orientating them towards self-reliance and use of professional BDS services available in the market.

The last 6 months of the program implementation will also be dedicated to final evaluations, capitalization of lessons learnt and assessing upscale up possibilities. Discussions with potential Donors (including EKN which financed the first phase) have started. Further activities targeting the sustainability of Agri-BDS professional network recently established shall be undertaken.

In collaboration with ILO, an end line for a started program comparative analysis study will be established to investigate whether the program delivered support activities as planned to target cooperatives, whether there were changes in cooperative level of business, management and other intermediate level outcomes and to what extent these changes are perceived to be attributed to the program. This will complement an overall final program evaluation planned at the end of the project.

KPI	Target 2017
# of corporates strengthened	7
# of jobs created i	105
Average direct participant satisfaction	> 3.5

score	
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ABIN

The ABIN program, officially launched in December 2014, aims at promoting and encouraging the creation of SMEs in the agricultural and agro-food sectors in the provinces of BUBANZA, CIBITOKÉ and RUMONGE. The mission of the 3 Incubation Centres it consists of is to foster innovation and give business ideas to future entrepreneurs and provide them with technical skills and business skills to manage their SME.

In 2015 and 2016, the program devoted at establishing the first incubation centres in CIBITOKÉ, at working with local entrepreneurs on their business ideas, providing trainings, researching markets for agro-processed products and building partnerships with local and international organizations.

It is planned that each of the before mentioned centres in CIBITOKÉ will be operational by the end of 2016, so as to start welcoming future entrepreneurs and to make them aware of the agribusiness world. In the first quarter of 2017, a third incubation centre will be implemented in RUMONGE to develop both the fishery and poultry products. In 2017, SPARK will continue to support the creation and development of SME (40) working along selected value chains. The capacity building will entail training of trainers, advisors and coaches in hygiene standards and manufacturing principles, export process, sales techniques and merchandising. SPARK is also looking to expand innovative concepts developed under ABIN including artisanal cooler and selling points for fruits and vegetables. Coaching, business, financial linkages and exchange visits will be organized for local entrepreneurs (50).

In the second quarter of 2017, a national agribusiness forum will be organized to give the opportunity to different actors to showcase their products and services, to collect information, exchange during workshops and network. Tailored women entrepreneurship activities and outreach program to stimulate integration of women agribusiness ventures (30) will be also developed.

KPI	Target 2017
# of businesses started	40
# of jobs created in started SMEs	120
% of started businesses that survive three years	n/a - first SMEs under ABIN were created this year
# of individuals trained and found formal employment	100
Business barriers index improved in target areas	5-10%
# Entrepreneurs trained and/or coached	320
Average direct participant satisfaction score	> 3.5

IBCM Kosovo

The international Business College Mitrovica (IBCM) is a not-for-profit inclusive higher vocational business school that provides Danish double degrees in the field of business, public administration and agriculture & environment. All programmes are taught in English. Since it opened its doors in 2010 and has since graduated 161 students with Bachelor degrees and maintains an employment rate over 81%, within six months post-graduation.

IBCM'S main achievements in 2016 included the opening of the new south campus, providing easier mobility between north and south communities which now occurs on a daily basis between students and staff. New student enrolment increased by over 30% to 106 for the 2016-2017 academic year, half of which come from the non-majority communities. Income generation has improved in professional services, reaching its revised sustainability target of 60k. Most significantly for the sustainability of IBCM beyond 2016 is a pending decision of the central Government of Kosovo's to provide long term operational funding to IBCM starting in January 2017. This will require Spark to phase out in the first quarter so that IBCM would now operate independently. A new IBCM Director will also be appointed at that time.

As at the time of writing the agreement with the government of Kosovo is pending, no detailed plan for 2017 with targets is included in the AP, but will be annexed as soon as a decision has materialised.

Turkish Language preparatory Programme

In Turkey, Syrian students are generally required to attend education delivered in the Turkish language and for many this is a serious challenge. The best pathway for Syrians to enrol at Turkish universities is through the so-called TOMER exam in Turkish language academic proficiency. For students from more disadvantaged backgrounds this is very challenging since the certificate is costly.

In 2017 under this project support by the Asfari Foundation, 56 young Syrian students between 17 and 20 years old will be enrolled in the Tomer programme. Besides TOMER classes they will additionally receive psychosocial support and remedial classes. Final result will be to successfully enrol the participants in the academic year 2017/2018 at Turkish higher education institutions in selected study programmes relevant to the host community labour market as well as the anticipated labour market in a post-conflict Syria.

KPI: 56 Syrian refugees graduate from the Tomer Programme and enrol in a BA programme.

Talent Beyond Boundaries

Talent Beyond Boundaries "TBB", a US non-profit corporation, in partnership with SPARK in 2016 launched a pilot aims to open a new safe and legal pathway to international careers for refugees in Jordan and Lebanon, connecting them with international employment in countries where their skills are needed. A second phase of the project started in 20 September 2016 and will end on 4 September 2017. In 2017 SPARK will support programme activities in Jordan and Lebanon amongst Syrian, Iraqi and other refugee populations with the ultimate goal of demonstrating that labour mobility is a viable pathway that provides refugees with the opportunity to support their families in a safe, legal way and can lead to durable solutions.

During this pilot project until September 2017, SPARK will support TBB in establishing systems for employment matching with multinational corporate partners, skills verification and will address other key barriers to labour migration for refugees. SPARK will focus on the development of an online Talent Catalog, registering individual refugees in Lebanon and Jordan, documenting their employment

experience, skills, credentials, education and language capabilities for potential global employers. TBB will liaise with international corporations and unlock vacancies that the refugees can be matched with.

Targets in 2017:

- Number of refugees participating in the programme that have increased access to wage employment opportunities: 10,000
- Number of potential corporate partners identified: 5
- Number of refugees successfully matched and placed in vacancies: 10

United Work

In 2017 SPARK and Holland Group will start in Turkey with the United Work programme. United Work provides a refugee to become an employee.

Syrian refugees lack the support to obtain work and to provide in their own subsistence. Large contingents of Syrian refugees represent work forces that will be utilised by Dutch companies. Currently they are deprived of the opportunity to work and provide a positive contribution to society and to sustain themselves and their relatives. Though, companies are willing to provide a positive contribution to refugee related issues but lack access to an employable workforce for current and future vacancies. Syrian refugees, despite their potential, are insufficiently employable and lack relevant skill sets, work attitude and rhythm, as well as knowledge. An experienced intermediary agency is currently lacking – with capacity to build an employer’s network, fulfil job matching, and providing training in appropriate skills to increase employ-ability of candidates. And this programme will fill this gap.

<i>KPI</i>	<i>Target 2017</i>
# of individuals trained and found formal employment	200

Migrant Start-up

In 2017 the 'Human Safety Net - Migrant entrepreneurship' programme will take off, funded by Generali. What makes this programme interesting for SPARK is the private sector involvement: this programme will be one of the three core CSR goals of Generali, an insurance company with 77.000 employees. The programme contains the training and coaching of migrants to start a business, in six European countries. Starting a business can have a positive impact on human rights in terms of participation, resilience and empowerment. This is necessary since more than a million migrants and refugees crossed into Europe in 2015. In 2017, during the first year of this programme, SPARK will start this programme in Germany, France and Turkey.

<i>KPI</i>	<i>Target 2017</i>
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# of businesses started	290
# of jobs created in started SMEs	1000
% of started businesses that survive three years	80
# of individuals trained and found formal employment	1562
# Entrepreneurs trained and/or coached	4688

GCC Syrian Refugee Response programme; SME development pillar in Gaziantep

Starting in January, SPARK will be part of a project of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (“EBRD”), it is a Syrian Refugee Response programme consisting of three pillars: infrastructure, economic inclusion and SME development.

This project is part of the SME development pillar which aims to support small- and medium-sized enterprises (“SMEs”) in provinces with a large refugee presence to strengthen integration and resilience, as well as support employment of Syrian refugees by strengthening the SME ecosystem in southeast Turkey through supporting the Gaziantep Chamber of Commerce (GCC).

SPARK activities focus on the capacity building of the GCC in support of an overall SME enabling infrastructure, involving business support organisations to address the needs of refugee-driven companies and help them to develop their businesses. To this end GCC establishes Business Resource Centres for these refugee driven companies.

SPARK is involved in the consortium as a local implementing partner, chosen because of the broad network and implementing experience SPARK has in Turkey.

In 2017, the focus of this programme will be on capacity building and strengthening services. The impact thereof in terms of business development and jobs is not expected to become visible before the end of 2017.

Migrant/Diaspora Entrepreneurship Program (MEP) – Afghanistan, Iraqi Kurdistan, Ghana, Morocco, Somalia, Suriname

In 2016 the MEP programme reached its final year of implementation. The programme’s 2016 activities focused on training and coaching of returned diaspora as well as local entrepreneurs. In KRG and Somalia these activities were implemented on a large scale. In KRG and Somalia the programme

also succeeded to establish close collaborations with local financial institutions. These collaborations focused on enhancing their financial instruments for start-ups and SMEs. In terms of direct SME support, the programme supported SMEs via local matchmaking in Somalia, franchise for development in Ghana and Rwanda and support of SME's working in Ghana. In fact, in Somalia SMEs were granted a matching fund through a German SME fund.

In 2017 a no-cost extension for 3 months was granted to the programme by the ministry. Hence, the support trajectory of the programme's beneficiaries will be completed, through business coaching in The Netherlands as well as through SPARK's local Business Support Organisations in the programme's countries. The aim for such an extension is to accompany supported entrepreneurs up until the final phase of the formal registration of their business and to finalise loan agreements in Somaliland and North Iraq for the entrepreneurs with the highest potentials. For this, it is expected that 25 entrepreneurs receive such additional-concluding support in the first quarter of 2017.

KPI	Target 2017
# of businesses started	25
# of jobs created in started SMEs	30

Consulting Services for the Establishment and Management of a Somali SME Facility (SMEF)

This technical assistance project is to be implemented in association with SPARK and IPE global, supported with BDO East Africa as a lead. Despite more than 20 years of civil war, Somalia has a remarkably strong private sector, particularly in the trade, money transfer, telecommunications, and livestock spheres. This is no small achievement, given that Somalia lacked a functioning government for more than 20 years. Recently, significant progress has been made in peace, state-building and in the economic recovery programme. This project, aimed at expanding economic opportunities by creating a business environment that supports skills formation and private business capacity building will be critical in the economic development of Somalia. Specifically the establishment of the Small and Medium Enterprise Facility (SMEF) will help address skills gaps in the labour market and through direct and indirect capacity building in business and technical services will support SME development. There is a special focus on women and youth owned enterprises as these are critical to the long-term development and stability of Somalia. The SMEF will support SMEs through capacity building in business and technical services by offering, inter alia: on site advisory services; coaching services in SMEF offices; classroom based training; 'town hall' training and demonstration events; mentoring and coaching (e.g. in the case of young entrepreneurs); business plan competitions; specialized training programs on demand (e.g. from individual subsectors); advanced seminars and workshops (e.g. training of trainers and consultants); and, promotion of business linkages through 'matchmaking' services. In 2017 SPARK aims to reach the following targets under this programme:

- 90 Business development service providers trained;
- 500 Individuals who received subsidised BDS or advice financed by SMEF;
- 400 Individuals who received subsidised TVET or other forms of training financed by SMEF;
- 70% of women job skills recipients placed in gainful employment through the STEP pilot;

EU Diploma Acceptance Project – phase 2, Higher Education

The purpose of this project is to facilitate the successful implementation of the Diploma Acceptance Agreement between Pristina and Belgrade. It does so by providing an independent and trusted verification of diplomas obtained from higher education institutions in Kosovo and Serbia, and by monitoring the process of recognition of verified diplomas by respective parties, as well as their acceptance by education institutions and employers in Kosovo and Serbia. The overall objective of the project is to ensure that former student can use their qualifications in seeking job opportunities (majority of the cases) or continue their studies.

Within the project scope SPARK will work on: Coordinated, coherent and diligent verification and confirmation of relevant diplomas on behalf of the EU; Field operations, including document collection, completion and verification; Monitoring of the level of mutual acceptance of the HEI diplomas in Serbia and Kosovo; Capacity building of educational establishments and institutions in Kosovo.

As based on result attained in the first phase of the project, over 300 new diploma verifications are expected in 2017.

Kosovo Education and Employment Network, KEEN

Kosovo Education and Employment Network, KEEN is a strategic coalition of four Kosovo – based civil society organizations focused on field of education, employment and social policies. KEEN is implemented by a coalition led by Kosovo Education Center, KEC in partnership with Employment and Promotion Agency in Kosovo (APPK), Balkan Sunflowers Kosova (BSFK), Academy for Training and Technical Assistance (ATTA) and Stichting SPARK. Other main institutional partners are the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (MLSW), Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS), Association of Kosovo Municipalities (AKM), Kosovo Chamber of Commerce (KCC) and Alliance of Kosovo Business (AKB).

Keen is an EU funded project which aims to improve the employability of vulnerable groups in Kosovo and their inclusiveness in both the education sector and the labour market by participating in decision making, policy development and policy monitoring at central and local levels, and by facilitating approximate the interconnection between education and training programs with labour market needs. KEEN four pillars are: strengthening the KEEN, participation in policy making, monitoring of implementation of policies and Linking Education & training with labour market. KEEN will contribute to the national and local policies and legislation from the field of education and employment, giving priority to policies addressing the needs of vulnerable groups. KEEN will support 15 municipalities willing to develop local action plans for implementation of national policies in the field of Education and Employments. Furthermore KEEN will monitor at least three national policies in the fields of education and employment and at least 15 local (municipal) action plans for implementation of local policies. At the end KEEN will publish 9 monitoring reports on implementation of national policies in the field of education and employment and 30 monitoring reports on implementation policies of local action plans. In addition KEEN will conduct a study to assess links between education and training with labour market needs, assessing the nature and extend of existing and creating possible new links between the labour market and VET sector in Kosovo. As a result 10 education and training institutions will be supported to establish links with businesses.

The targets for 2017 are:

- 2 thematic trainings for 40 persons on policy development and policy monitoring.

- 2 organizational development trainings for 30 persons for KEEN members
- 3 day Strategy Planning Workshop for 25 persons to develop a Network Strategy for KEEN
- Three study visits to EU on CSO`s participation in policy making, and best good practices in the dialogue between government and businesses on making education more relevant to the labour market
- Monitoring 3 national policies focusing on: education, employment and communities and setting up 5 working groups to develop 3-6 national policies or legislation in the field of Education and Employment

Scholarships for Western Balkans – www.S4WB.eu

This relatively small project consists of an online database of scholarships for students from the Balkan region who want to study abroad. The aim of the project is to facilitate accessibility to scholarships for Western Balkans students. It helps Western Balkans students to integrate into the European higher education system and increase their interest and support them in studying in the EU. The project goal is to better inform students from the Western Balkans about opportunities available to them to study abroad, scholarships and stipend through an integral inventory of them all. The website has drawn 288.131 visitors and is most frequented during the spring and autumn, because of the enrolment periods of the universities. The database currently contains 290 scholarships. There are 120 active scholarships and 170 are pending for the new deadlines. Pending scholarships are closely monitored for re-opening and updated.

EBRD (GS)

MEP (MR)

CSP (MR)

Access to Finance / LGFs/ Ignite (MR)

SPARK Targets for 2017:

Mission:

SPARK develops higher education and entrepreneurship so that young ambitious people are empowered to lead their conflict affected societies into prosperity.

Main internal objectives to achieve this mission:

- Successful implementation of current project portfolio (i).
- Establish a continuously learning organisation for sustained quality, efficiency and sustained growth (ii).
- Successful growth of project portfolio; thereby reaching a greater number of institutions, and ultimately, young people (iii).

i and ii are a precondition for iii

In line with best practices in Monitoring and Evaluation, SPARK follows a results chain model that allows us to plan our results on three levels, those of activities, outputs of these activities, and outcomes these outputs help realize. A fourth level of results – impact, is difficult to plan for but can be measured by evaluations that take place 2-3 years after outcomes have been measured. In previous annual plans and reports, sustainability indicators have been mentioned separately. These are now subsumed under results at the outcome level.

The below presents the KPIs' target values for 2017 that help us plan SPARK's performance at the level of the programmes, and at the level of the organization.

Main end-of –year results at the programmes level:

In 2017, 4000 youth are expected to be enrolled in post-secondary higher education programmes, due to the HES programme's interventions.

As a result of programme activities 2017, 693 new businesses will be started. The Human Safety Net – Migrant Entrepreneurship, the Improve Employment Opportunities in Jordan and the ABC programme will contribute mainly to this target.

For the Human Safety Net – Migrant Entrepreneurship programme we would have to realise 1000 jobs and for the LEAD programme 335 jobs. In other programmes this can be expected to amount to 604 jobs, making a total of 1939 jobs planned to be created in 2017.

In 2017, SPARK plans to train and coach 11470 entrepreneurs for enabling them to start/grow their businesses. The Human Safety Net – Migrant Entrepreneurship and the LEAD programmes contribute significantly to this target, as SPARK expects to train and coach 8633 entrepreneurs through these programmes' activities.

For 2017 we continue to anticipate that high numbers of individuals go through SPARK's business education and training activities, without actually starting a business. They do find employment in a formal job more easily, as a result of their skills development and employability gains developed under SPARK entrepreneurship and higher education programmes. Therefore, we estimate that 996 individuals trained will find another, formal employment in 2017.

**Key Performance Indicators for programmes outcomes (including programme sustainability)
2017**

KPI	Target 2016	Target 2017	Remarks
# of youth enrolled in post-secondary higher education programmes	260	4000	Applicable for HES
# of businesses started	1524	693	LEAD 20 ABC 113 Exxon Liberia 20 Tetra Tech Project 15 Improve employment opportunities in Jordan 150 ABIN 40 Human Safety Net – Migrant Entrepreneurship 290 MEP 25
# of jobs created in started SMEs	2747	1939	LEAD 335 ABC 85 Exxon Liberia 40 Tetra Tech Project 22 Improve Employment opportunities in Jordan 200 ABIN 120 Human Safety Net – Migrant Entrepreneurship 1000 MEP 30 CSP 107
% of started businesses that survive three years	0,95	0,45	PicoCap Liberia 10% Human Safety Net – Migrant Entrepreneurship 80%

# of entrepreneurs trained and coached	n/a	11470	HES 950 LEAD 3945 ABC 1348 PicoCap Liberia 10 Improve Employment opportunities in Jordan 200 ABIN 320 Human Safety Net – Migrant Entrepreneurship 4688
# of individuals trained and found formal employment	660	2996	HES 950 ABC 34 PicoCap Liberia 150 ABIN 100 United Work 200 Human Safety Net – Migrant Entrepreneurship 1562
Business barriers index improved in target areas	0,1 3190	7.5% 11470	Applicable only to ABIN HES 950
# Entrepreneurs trained and/or coached			LEAD 3954 ABC 1348 PicoCap Liberia 10 Improve employment opportunities in Jordan 200 ABIN 320 Human Safety Net – Migrant Entrepreneurship 4688
Average direct participant satisfaction score	>4.5	>4	1-5 scale, very dissatisfied to very satisfied

A 2-week strategic planning and coaching event was held in June 2016 in Kigali, for the African offices and local partner organisations. A three day strategic planning and training was held in Beirut in the first week of July for all key North Africa, Somalia and Middle-East staff. Finally, on 17 November in Amsterdam a strategic planning session was held with senior staff present at the Ignite Conference.
