



# Evaluating the Potential of a Mentoring Programme

for Tech Entrepreneurs in Rwanda





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# Chapter I

## Background



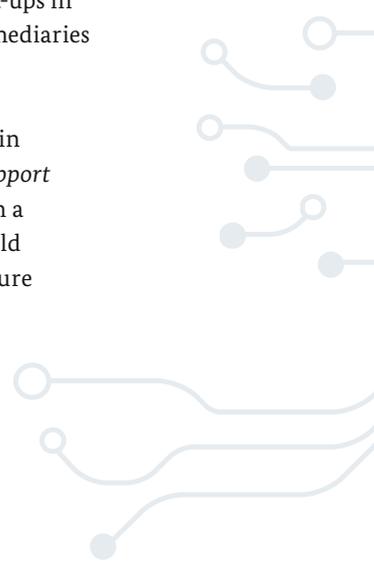
# I. Background

This report, produced by *Mowgli Mentoring Ltd.*, was commissioned by the *Tech Entrepreneurship Initiative “Make-IT in Africa”*, implemented by *Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)* on behalf of the *German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)*. The report was researched and compiled between June and July 2020 by a team of two from *Mowgli Mentoring Ltd.* (Maïa Gedde and Teminah Musyoki).

*Mowgli Mentoring Ltd* is a specialised mentoring design and implementation organisation dedicated to helping every leader find an effective mentor to unlock their potential, particularly with regards to solving global challenges as well as driving inclusive economic and social change in the Middle East, North, and Sub-Saharan Africa. They design and implement high-impact mentoring programmes with a specific focus on entrepreneurs and leaders, and have run over 125 mentoring programmes across 17 countries with over 2450 alumni (mentors and mentees).

GIZ is currently active with *Make-IT in Africa* in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda and Tunisia. As part of the BMZ initiative *Digital Africa*, it aims to improve entrepreneurial ecosystems in Africa’s digital economy. Over the course of its four-year project phase, *Make-IT in Africa* aims to support 400 tech start-ups in their early growth phase, as well as strengthen public and private intermediaries in the local entrepreneurial ecosystems.

The Kigali entrepreneurial ecosystem has seen a tremendous increase in entrepreneurial activities and the emergence of new *Entrepreneurial Support Organisations (ESOs)* over the last few years. As might be expected with a relatively new ecosystem, collaboration between ecosystem actors could be improved to better promote cohesion, avoid duplication, and to ensure entrepreneurs needs are fully served.



Through Make IT in Africa, GIZ is building up a new ecosystem-wide role, the Hub Network Community Manager, with the aim of fostering ecosystem collaborations and equipping these managers with capacity building skills to better serve entrepreneurs in their portfolios. Such managers in Rwanda have also contributed to the production of this report.

The hypothesis is that a joint understanding of mentoring across the ecosystem is key to enhance the availability of effective mentoring programmes and an effective mentoring culture overall. Mentoring programmes by definition involve more seasoned entrepreneurs and corporate leaders supporting less experienced start-ups through the growth phases of their businesses, and are generally the sign of a more mature and collaborative entrepreneurial ecosystem. At present, many services in Kigali focus on early stage start-ups with less emphasis on those at further developed growth stages. However, as these entrepreneurs mature and their businesses grow, mentoring will be pivotal in supporting their success. At this point, ensuring that there is an understanding of what quality mentoring is, and the availability of a pipeline of quality equipped mentors, is pivotal.

The research team reviewed what mentoring programmes and initiatives – targeting entrepreneurs – were already in place in Kigali, and explored their structures and formats. They also discussed with interviewees their perception of mentoring, as well as the potential for building a pipeline of mentors in Rwanda, and how this could be done taking an ecosystem-wide approach. This report explores these findings, draws conclusions, and proposes mechanisms to anchor mentoring in the ecosystem, and build up the local mentoring capacity of ecosystem actors.



# Chapter II

## Introduction



## II. Introduction

Mentoring as a concept has been around for millennia, first termed in Greek mythology<sup>1</sup> but widely referred to since the 1970s when structured mentoring programmes became popular in corporate contexts, where it was described as “an innovation in American management”<sup>2</sup>. It is a concept which has been used extensively in leadership and career development, educational contexts, and by corporate employers. There is a distinction here to be made between sponsorship and developmental mentoring, often common terminology in the US. The sponsor highlights employees for opportunities or recognition within a company, whereas a mentor acts as a mirror, enabling individuals to see themselves more clearly<sup>3</sup>.

In the last decade, with an increasing emphasis on the role of small and growing businesses in creating jobs and boosting emerging economies, mentoring is also gaining popularity as a mechanism to support entrepreneurs. Of course, mentors can also be found in everyday life, and many successful entrepreneurs seek out their own mentors if they are available. But the idea of organised mentoring programmes for business start-ups, brokered by *Entrepreneur Support Organisations* (ESOs) for example, is relatively new. A thoughtful, intentional, and focused structure is behind every great mentoring programme, enabling this highly personal and sometimes uncomfortable form of interaction, to be more focused and impactful<sup>4</sup>.

Mentoring is relevant to entrepreneurs at all stages of their business, but in the Rwandan context, where there are a large number of ESOs to support start-up businesses and develop the pipeline of entrepreneurs, mentoring would be highly relevant to these pre-break-even companies, i.e. to accompany them through the valley of death stage and help them move to growth stage<sup>5</sup>.

- 1 In Greek mythology, Mentor was the son of Heracles and Asopis. In his old age Mentor was a friend of Odysseus, who had placed Mentor and Odysseus' foster-brother Eumaeus in charge of his son Telemachus, and of Odysseus' palace, when Odysseus left for the Trojan War.
- 2 Odiorne, G. S. (1985). “Mentoring - An American Management Innovation”. *Personnel Administrator* (30): 63–65
- 3 <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescommunicationscouncil/2019/09/17/understanding-the-impact-of-mentorship-versus-sponsorship/>
- 4 <https://trainingindustry.com/magazine/issue/making-it-personal-the-four-pillars-of-high-impact-mentoring/>
- 5 Mowgli Mentoring. 10 Year Impact report (2019)



Mentoring focusses squarely on developing the entrepreneur themselves (mindset, confidence, and resilience). As it is individualised and tailored, mentoring sits at the other end of the spectrum to training. The main attraction of mentoring is that a more experienced person helps another to gain clarity of vision, helping them set and achieve their goals in a very bespoke way. The glossary at the beginning of this document highlights the range of different mentoring approaches which are available.

There are many different ways in which mentoring may take place. While each approach is useful, depending on the target MSMEs, evidence suggests cultivating one-to-one mentoring is the most effective when it comes to developing leadership skills, solving operational challenges, or building entrepreneurial mindset and capability. The benefits, best practices, and principles below are with one-to-one mentoring in mind but may still be relevant to other approaches<sup>6</sup>.

Mentoring which is holistic uniquely helps to build both capacity and capabilities. The focus is first on building the relationship and trust between the pair, to then go on to support the entrepreneur's growth, motivation, and resilience – as well as their business. If the business fails, as many do, the entrepreneur should have the opportunity to learn from this and be able to bounce back quickly and scope the market for new opportunities. There are also business and technical mentoring (focusing more squarely on the business outcomes with less emphasis on the entrepreneur), training-based mentoring (linked to a training programme), and group mentoring.

In order to maximise impact, it is widely recognised that the mentor should ideally adopt a maieutic style (i.e. oriented toward questioning the mentee), and be significantly engaged in the mentoring relationship<sup>7</sup>. Powerful questioning and listening are key skills in mentoring. It involves exploring the mentee's thoughts, and how these link to their emotions and beliefs. By placing and organising these thoughts, they can then move on to finding their own solutions. By exploring challenges and interferences (fears, limiting beliefs, and insecurities which hold them back) in their business or life, whatever these may be, solutions can be identified and then worked towards.

In order to reach a position where powerful questioning is possible, a strong relationship between the mentor and mentee needs to be built, and trust and mutual respect is at the core of this. The mentor's commitment and engagement in the relationship, such as having an active interest and firm belief in their mentee's abilities is critical. The mentor's impartiality is also essential, as the

<sup>6</sup> Evidence and Tools for the Effective Mentoring of MSMEs, July 2020, Spring Impact  
<sup>7</sup> <https://www.intechopen.com/books/entrepreneurship-practice-oriented-perspectives/should-mentors-of-entrepreneurs-be-trained-or-their-experience-is-enough>

absence of it (e.g. if the mentor has vested interests in the business outcomes in a particular direction) may impact the trust element of the relationship.

Mentors who adopt a directive style (as many untrained mentors do) and are not very engaged, significantly hinder the potential positive outcomes of the mentoring relationship<sup>8</sup>. In Mowgli's experience, a programme expecting the mentor to follow a step-by-step rule book with a check-list for success will demotivate the mentor and the mentee if it is not aligned to the particularities of the mentoring relationship. A mentor who dishes out their advice, without extensively exploring issues with the mentee can cause more harm than good, and could potentially "destabilise the entrepreneur" as one ESO manager put it, by leading them down a route that they don't really want to go down.

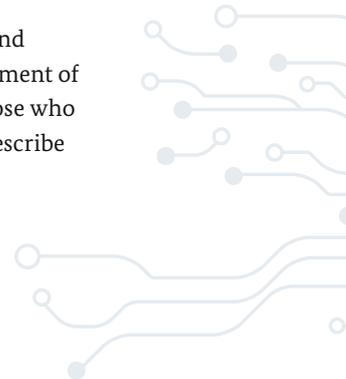
The mentee is the one who is responsible for the business and its outcomes, they therefore need to maintain independence with regard to decision-making and learn to find solutions themselves. The mentor can aid in this process, through exploration, sharing, and contacts, but cannot leap-frog forward to the solution, however tempting this may be. It is widely accepted by mentoring organisations across the board that the purpose of mentoring is to develop the whole person, and so the techniques are broad and require wisdom in order to be used appropriately<sup>9</sup>. Ultimately, mentoring is about building the entrepreneur's character, rather than focusing merely on technical aspects of their business.

What can be observed in new entrepreneurial ecosystems, such as in Kigali, is that the lack of a clear understanding and consensus of what mentoring is, exposes the term to multiple interpretations. There is often little clarity about what defines and differentiates mentoring as opposed to other targeted interventions. The result is that mentoring is sometimes used as a catch-all term for a whole range of individual support to entrepreneurs, which might be better termed coaching, advising, technical assistance, teaching, or consulting.

Mentoring is something quite specific, although the definition is broad and easily open to interpretation. The focus is on personal growth and development of the entrepreneur themselves first, and then the business behind them. Those who have experienced it and done well, talk about the power of mentoring and describe it as a turning point both for themselves and for their businesses.

8 Ibid

9 Daloz, L. A. (1990). *Effective Teaching and Mentoring*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass. p. 20.



# Chapter III

## Methodology



## III. Methodology

Mowgli Mentoring used both qualitative and quantitative approaches for the study. Primary and secondary sources of data were utilised to get information on the Kigali mentoring landscape. Semi-structured interviews were used to derive primary data, while reports provided context and secondary data, such as *Swisscontact's Social Network Analysis (SNA) Connecting the Kigali Entrepreneurial Ecosystem*. Semi-structured interviews enabled two-way communication, and allowed the team to gather information on the roles, perceptions, and challenges of Entrepreneur Support Organisation managers, as well as mentors and mentees.

Our goal was to understand the kind of support organisations were offering to their entrepreneurs, and if mentoring was part of the offer. If they ran a mentoring component, we wanted to explore what format this took: specifically, the approach to matching of mentor and mentees; the format of the mentoring relationship; the mode of communication in the mentoring relationship; and the focus of the mentoring relationship (*see glossary at the end*).



In addition to the above, we also wanted to understand if the mentoring programme took any of the following into account:

1. Mentors and mentees are carefully selected. Not every experienced entrepreneur is able to be an effective mentor. Certain criteria are important above and beyond time and commitment: humility, emotional intelligence, empathy, ability to listen, reflect, explore and learn. Equally not all mentees will be mentorable, empowered to drive the relationship, and derive equal benefit from mentoring. This will depend on their openness and ability to be flexible and learn. A selection process is usually important for mentors but also entrepreneurs who will derive value from the programme.
2. Mentors and mentees are prepared to make the most out of the relationship. After mentors and mentees are selected, both need to understand their roles and how to engage in the mentoring relationship. To support this, a mentoring agreement is signed between the two. Mentoring programmes which involve the training of mentors in mentoring – not technical/entrepreneurship skills – are found to be much more successful than those which do not (Allen et al., 1997; Clutterbuck, 2002; Forret et al., 1996; Kram, 1985a; Noe et al., 2002).
3. Mentors and mentees receive support after being matched. Programmes which do not provide follow-on support usually experience higher levels of drop-out rates, shorter duration of the mentoring relationships, and lower satisfaction for the mentors and mentees. Providing mentors with ongoing support and learning opportunities allows them to deliver greater value, have higher levels of motivation, and is part of the value which a mentoring programme brings to a volunteer mentor. Many successful programmes offer mentors relationship coaching, capacity building, and ongoing support. The mentee also benefits from similar support.
4. Programmes are monitored and evaluated. In order to ensure the value of the mentoring programme, there needs to be feedback and evaluation loops aligned with pre-defined programme learning objectives and outcomes.

In short, we wanted to ascertain which elements of an MSME mentoring programme ESOs were strong in, and where they were weak.





Figure 1. Best practice stages for MSME mentoring programme (Spring Impact, June 2020)

*Mowgli* leveraged the SNA report and referrals from the GIZ *Make-IT in Africa* programme team to identify the ESOs to interview for the study. A total of twenty ESOs were engaged (see *Appendix 1* for the full list). Through snowballing, *Mowgli* was also able to engage mentees and mentors in the ecosystem to gather their insights from being in mentoring relationships. It is important to note that the mentors we spoke with were also part of the ESOs that we interviewed. A total of four mentors and three mentees were interviewed; two of the mentees were from *Westerwelle's* entrepreneurship programme and one was from *Leapr Labs' programme*.

With all of these interview partners, *Mowgli* ran 45-minute virtual interviews aimed at exploring mentoring within the ecosystem, with a focus on the following areas:

- Understanding the support offered to entrepreneurs
- Determining whether mentoring is already part of the support offered to entrepreneurs
- Determining the understanding of mentoring by the organisations
- Understanding how mentoring is done (structured or ad hoc; group or one-to-one)
- Establishing the challenges and successes of mentoring programmes in the Kigali ecosystem and barriers to establishing mentoring initiatives
- Establishing the needs of ESOs, mentors, and mentees with regards to entrepreneurship mentoring
- Relevance of mentoring in the Rwanda entrepreneurship ecosystem
- Understand how the ESO sees mentoring integrated within the ecosystem



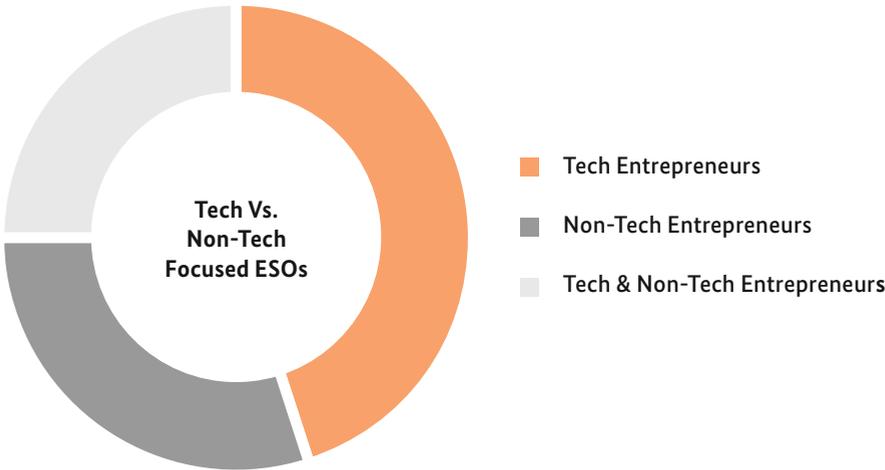
# Chapter IV

## Findings



# IV. Findings

Mowgli Mentoring engaged twenty ESOs in the study (see Appendix 1). Of the twenty organisations, nine work solely with tech entrepreneurs, six support non-tech related entrepreneurs, and five work with both tech and non-tech start-ups/entrepreneurs.



Source: Mowgli Mentoring



#### 4.1 Organisations offering mentoring

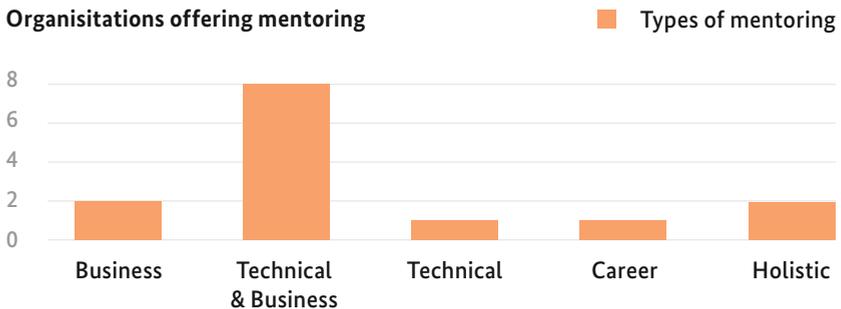
Out of the twenty ESOs, *thirteen* organisations offer a service they call mentoring. However, the mentoring typology was different across the organisations, with some organisations offering something more akin to coaching or business advisory services.



Source: Mowgli Mentoring

#### 4.2 Focus of mentoring

Mentoring, as mentioned above, has different definitions in the ecosystem, and the support offered varies from technical support, to business advisory, or both.



Source: Mowgli Mentoring

Of the thirteen ESOs offering mentoring, different aspects or types of mentoring were at the focus, as shown above.

*One* organisation focuses on just business (which Mowgli would refer to as business advisory and business consulting services), where mentors support their mentees in the areas of business advisory skills; *eight* focus on technical skills building in combination with business advisory or consulting services. Here, mentors are the ones engaged to build the capacity of their mentees. *One* organisation focuses only on building the technical skills of their entrepreneurs and another *one* focuses only on career development for their mentees. Finally, *two* organisations focus on holistic growth in their mentoring initiatives (360 degree mentoring).

### 4.3 Profile of the mentors

*Ten* organisations currently engage voluntary mentors, who are usually staff of their organisations, while *three* have full-time paid mentors, or who are consultants. Additionally, *eleven* organisations engage local mentors in the ecosystem to support mentees, while *two* organisations engage international mentors. It is important to note that “local” here does not necessarily mean people of Rwandan descent, but international people living and working in the ecosystem, i.e. local mentors could also be foreigners. *Four* out of the *ten* volunteer mentors are seasoned entrepreneurs running successful businesses with a willingness to share from their experiences. Additionally, the international mentors engaged by the *two* organisations were also seasoned entrepreneurs, though the mentoring relationships lean more towards business advisory rather than holistic.

While local mentors are good because they have knowledge of the local context, in emerging sectors such as tech, international mentors may also play a greater role, as they can offer new ideas and a broader perspective, e.g. providing mentees with a greater international outlook and exposure. The relevance of each will depend on the entrepreneur’s needs and wants for their business; an entrepreneur who is interested in expanding internationally may find an international mentor more appealing if they are unable to find someone in the local context with the relevant experience.

In Mowgli's experience, volunteer mentors are usually highly committed because they join mentoring programmes and relationships with no strings attached. Their biggest drive is usually the opportunity to give back to others through their time, expertise, and networks, as well as to upskill themselves in skills which they can utilise in their personal and professional lives. These mentoring relationships also tend to be long lasting, because relationship building between the mentors and the mentees is usually a factor which goes beyond the business. On the other hand, paid mentors, otherwise known as consultants, tend to be very formal and concentrate on the business relationship. These usually tend to be short-term interactions, because once the specific goals are met, there is little that connects them. This is only to be expected in this case, as building a personal relationship is not a priority.

#### 4.4 Structured versus ad hoc mentoring

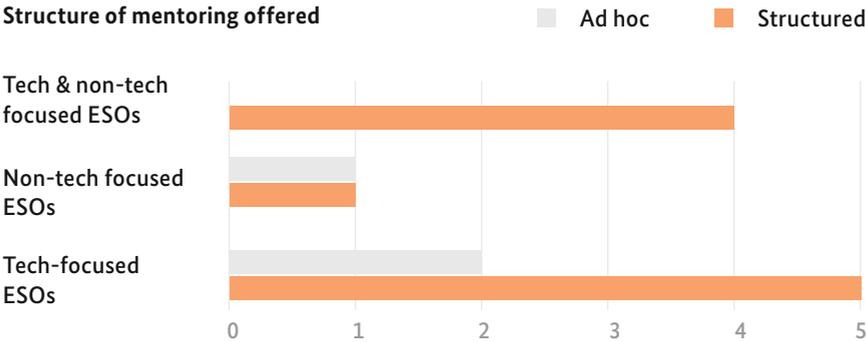
The mentoring offering within the ecosystem varies according to a structured or a non-structured programme. Structured programmes refer to those that have a matching system, where the ESOs facilitate the matching process. In the Kigali landscape, it was observed that matching is based on the industry of the mentors and entrepreneurs, experience/profile of the mentor, and the specific needs of the entrepreneurs. Non-structured or ad hoc mentoring programmes are those in which mentors and entrepreneurs self-match, i.e. either the mentor or the entrepreneur will reach out based on their interests and needs. *Ten* ESOs offer structured mentoring, while the other *three* offer unstructured mentoring programmes.

Structured mentoring programmes have a greater impact, because the mentoring relationships have specific goals as well as guidelines on how often the pairs meet, support is given, and impact data is collected to assess the performance of mentoring, addressing any challenges that may arise. They tend to be guided by the ESOs that provide them, because they are pegged to certain objectives, such as project outcomes or donor/investor expectations. Unstructured mentoring, on the other hand, offers a lot of flexibility so the pair can foster their own path and decide what works for them, yet it often neglects the needs of the ESO and such mentoring is arduous to evaluate and assess.

### 4.5 Mentoring offered by tech-focused ESOs versus non-tech-focused ESOs

It was observed that the majority of ESOs which also offer mentoring are tech-focused, while those that are not tech-specific have low uptake of mentoring. Additionally, there are ESOs which support both tech-focused and non-tech-focused entrepreneurs (categorised as ‘both’), and their uptake of mentoring is higher than those that do not support tech-focused entrepreneurs at all.

There is also a difference when it comes to whether tech-focused ESOs offer structured versus unstructured mentoring programmes. It was observed that the majority of the ESOs which offer structured mentoring programmes are tech-focused. This observation could be explained by the fact that there is a stronger need for skills transfer within the tech sector, or to have an international outlook, and mentoring programmes may be seen as an effective way to do this. Tech entrepreneurs are also more specific about what their start-ups need and want.



Source: Mowgli Mentoring



#### 4.6 Mentor preparation, training, and ongoing support

Out of the *thirteen* organisations that offer mentoring in the Kigali entrepreneurship landscape, only *one* trains their mentors before they are paired with mentees. *Leapr Labs* is the organisation which trains mentors, however the training is on technical and business advisory support, and mentors are not business owners. Mentors are trained differently according to the different stages of incubation the entrepreneurs are in. Concerning preparation, only *three* organisations prepare their participants (either mentors or mentees) before they embark on their mentoring relationships. Preparation here refers to: expectation setting, defining roles and responsibilities, presenting mentor and mentee profiles, and debriefing on expected outcomes. The other *nine* do not offer any preparation or training.

ESOs where mentors are trained	ESOs where mentors are prepared	ESOs which don't train/prepare mentors
1	3	9

Source: Mowgli Mentoring

After the mentee-mentor relationship had started there was little/no ongoing support from the organisations. This is a challenge, because it supports the perception that once mentor-mentee are matched, it is up to them to manage the relationship. This is partly true, of course, and it should really be the mentee who is in the driving seat. But as described earlier, programmes which do not provide follow-up support usually experience higher levels of drop-out rates, shorter duration of the mentoring relationships, and lower satisfaction for the mentors and mentees. Providing mentors with ongoing support, learning opportunities, and capacity building allows them to deliver greater value, have higher levels of motivation, and is part of the value which a mentoring programme brings to a volunteer mentor. Many successful programmes offer mentors relationship coaching and ongoing support. The mentee also benefits from similar support, helping them extract the most value from the relationship.



No ESO highlighted any monitoring or evaluation system of note, which again presents challenges when it comes to understanding if the mentoring is working well and is of value to mentees or mentors. This feedback is important to the ESOs as a whole as it helps them to answer whether they are investing their efforts and finances in the best way and creating value for their entrepreneurs: what is their return on mentoring investment.

#### 4.7 Mentee responses

Mowgli Mentoring also interviewed entrepreneurs who are currently mentees in mentoring programs. *Two* entrepreneurs are part of the *Westerwelle programme* while *one* is from the *Leapr Labs programme*, with two being in tech and one in the service industry. While these three mentees did not provide a representative sample, they nevertheless were able to provide insights into their experience of being mentees. They also gave valuable recommendations on what they think the landscape needs as far as mentoring is concerned. *One* specific entrepreneur has been in *five* different mentoring programmes that were offered by five different organisations, an observation also highlighted in the *Kigali Entrepreneurial Ecosystem Report*<sup>10</sup>, but also observed by *Mowgli Mentoring* in the Kenyan ecosystem. For the other two, it was their first time to be in mentoring programmes. Insights gathered from the entrepreneurs:

- **Mentoring as a condition to access other support.** Generally, mentoring is yet to be well understood and appreciated in the ecosystem. It is also offered as an add-on, and sometimes as a condition in order for entrepreneurs to access other support services, such as access to funding. While the entrepreneurs we spoke to acknowledged the value of mentoring, there was a feeling that there needs to be clarity from the ESOs on its benefits.
- **Availability of mentors.** While there are highly-skilled entrepreneurs within the ecosystem who have the potential to be quality mentors, they need to be encouraged, perhaps through formal programmes, to be willing to mentor. At present these people are unlikely to mentor organically. One mentee described attending a conference where a leader spoke about the importance and value of mentoring, but when asked whether she would mentor the entrepreneur, she responded that she had no time. Perhaps a formal programme may serve to overcome this, e.g. with clout and boundaries (2-3 hours per month involvement), selected mentors and mentees, as well as a clear structure and support.

- **Peer mentoring is valuable.** Entrepreneurs also need mentoring skills to mentor one another at their level. Sometimes this is needed because entrepreneurs relate to one another as they are on similar journeys.
- **Mentoring platform.** An entrepreneur suggested use of an online platform to facilitate their mentoring relationships in a way that mentors and entrepreneurs could be communicating and keeping each other accountable. This also speaks to their need for a structure, yet flexibility around how mentors and mentees interact and communicate with one another.
- **Sector.** Entrepreneurs generally felt it was more relevant to be matched or paired with mentors who are in the same industry as them. While this opinion was not unanimous, *two* out of the *three* who were interviewed held that industry-specific mentoring is much more useful because it means that the mentors are very knowledgeable and experienced in the same field that the entrepreneurs are in; this helps to build the entrepreneurs' confidence in their mentors. Even for the entrepreneur who was not keen on the mentor being from the same industry, they insisted that the mentor needed to be knowledgeable in that field as well as generally familiar with entrepreneurship and its challenges. In Mowgli's experience, however, the mentor should be a business professional and generalist, and being part of a complementary sector could provide valuable insights. In a small ecosystem, being in the same industry could mean they are competitors, compromising the impartiality of the relationship.





# Chapter V

## Conclusions



## V. Conclusions

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the study findings. This section provides a synthesis of these findings and, in the following section, goes on to make recommendations for embedding mentoring into the Rwandan entrepreneurial ecosystem. Key conclusions are:

### **Mentoring trends within the local ecosystem in Kigali:**

1. **Mentoring programmes are starting to become popular.**

Several organisations were providing some sort of mentoring offer. Of those ESOs identified through the SNA and beyond, 13 out of 20 were offering mentoring, representing 65%. This percentage is not representative of all ESOs in Kigali, as those with an interest in mentoring may have been more likely to respond to our request for an interview, however, it demonstrates that there is a strong recognition that mentoring has a role to play in driving entrepreneurial growth and success. Of those who did offer mentoring, seven are tech-focused and two non-tech focused, while the other four ESOs support both tech and non-tech focused entrepreneurs.
2. **Interpretations of mentoring vary enormously.**

The challenge is that there is no consistency in definition or understanding of what mentoring is. It has become a broad catch-all term for individualised support (to complement or in contrast with training). For some it is a way to impart information, for others the focus is more on technical skills and competencies, while others simply see it as the sharing of experiences. This creates challenges on a number of levels, including:

  - a. For the ecosystem and entrepreneurs to communicate more effectively, there is a need for a common understanding of mentoring and what it is/offers.
  - b. When it is not done responsibly, it gives mentoring in general a bad name and reputation.



- 3. There are strong mentoring advocates within the ecosystem**  
but these are few and far between, and tend to be staff members or managers of entrepreneur support organisations. Those who really understand the value of mentoring are people who have been mentored themselves, usually by mentors outside of Rwanda in structured programmes. Those who have not had a mentor do not seem to have a solid grasp on mentoring and confuse it with technical assistance/ coaching, etc.

#### **Programme characteristics:**

- 4. Structure of mentoring programmes vary.**  
This is normal and to be expected. Programmes may be informal, with organisations providing support in networking and connections, or mentoring relationships emerge organically. Others run more structured programmes, with an ESO brokering the relationship, recruiting the mentees, and matching or having their own staff mentors who work with a large number of mentors. Some engage local mentors, while others rely on international mentors with particular expertise.
- 5. Mentor and mentee preparation is lacking.**  
In order to get the most out of mentoring, mentors need to be adequately prepared to understand what their role involves, how they can maximise value for the entrepreneurs, and also understand when they are doing a good job. Mentoring is something which needs to be done responsibly – they cannot go around giving advice which may be in the opposite direction to where the mentee wishes to go. A mentor who tells an entrepreneur what they should do can cause more harm than good, can create dependency, and could potentially “destabilise the entrepreneur” as one ESO manager put it. Equally, mentees need to consider their mentorability – to what extent are they prepared to be open, explore and address challenges, and change.
- 6. Ongoing support and mentor coaching seem to be absent.**  
Providing mentors with ongoing support, capacity building, and learning opportunities allows them to deliver greater value, gain confidence and greater satisfaction in their work, and are more likely to continue mentoring. Mowgli Mentoring’s longitudinal study of trained mentors joining specific programmes, found that well-trained mentors would mentor on



average of two mentees per year<sup>11</sup>. Bringing in entrepreneurs as mentors in programmes where they don't receive much support is likely to cause higher drop-out rates or mentors who will not re-engage in mentoring, therefore reducing the value that the ecosystem can benefit from their engagement. Providing the right support to mentors is also critical.

### **Value-add of mentoring:**

#### **7. There is no quality control.**

Evaluation of mentoring programmes is weak, and there are no feedback loops to report impact on mentors and mentees, positive or negative. This makes it hard to build a case for mentoring and to demonstrate its value. Monitoring and evaluation are important for informing future programmes through lessons learnt and experiences shared. It would help the ESOs to iteratively adjust their programmes and approaches to better suit the needs of both mentors and mentees, during and after the programme, ensuring entrepreneurs are better served.

#### **8. Reflection on mentoring support to tech entrepreneurs.**

While it may be tempting to assume that mentoring support to tech entrepreneurs needs to be tech-focused or address specific knowledge and skill gaps, this might in fact be better termed as technical assistance, capacity building, or training. Mentoring could be seen as too 'soft' to be of value when other issues are more pressing. However, by combining targeted technical assistance or training with mentoring, you will not only build up hard skills but also resilience, confidence, and problem-solving. This better serves the entrepreneurs and delivers better results in the long term.

### **Future opportunities:**

#### **9. Entrepreneurs are keen to engage in mentoring relationships**

and find enormous value in quality mentoring, but find it hard to engage with committed mentors. In a segmented/siloed ecosystem, mentors can play an important connector role. Their knowledge of what else is happening in the sector, signposting mentees to other support opportunities, and helping them to make use of them could be very important in Rwanda.

<sup>11</sup> Mowgli Mentoring, 10 Year Impact Report, 2019

10. **ESOs running mentoring programmes, or planning to run mentoring programmes, are keen to learn more about how to manage them effectively.** The study team received high levels of interest and questions about how to run an effective mentoring programme in which mentors and mentees gain significant value and would continue to remain engaged over time. This came from a number of organisations already running mentoring programmes, and also from a number who are thinking of starting mentoring programmes, indicating that there is considerable interest to engage and learn more. Overall, there was a recognition that mentoring programmes could be important but are currently an ‘add on’ and few resources are invested in running them effectively. When funding is available, this seems to be used for paying the mentors rather than invested in the mentoring programme effectiveness.
11. **Interest from entrepreneurs to be mentors and or gain mentoring skills.** The study also received interest from entrepreneurs who opined that there was value in peer mentoring – where entrepreneurs themselves could mentor each other through knowledge and experience sharing. Additionally, entrepreneurs also expressed that they would be interested in becoming mentors, so that they too could give back. This interest is positive, because it is in this way that the ecosystem gains a pool of mentors in the long term, building a culture of mentoring and sustainability.
12. **There are likely to be good mentors within the ecosystem but it requires a structured programme, preparation, and support to engage and retain them.** Both ESOs and entrepreneurs talked about the difficulties in recruiting mentors. Entrepreneurs who approached potential mentors themselves said they often heard that the mentor had no time to help them, or perhaps lacked knowledge about how they could support them. A structured mentoring programme with a good reputation, where mentors would also derive value, could help to overcome this and engage these people.





# Chapter VI

Recommendations for  
the way forward



## VI. Recommendations for the way forward

This section draws on the findings and suggests different options for how mentoring could be embedded within the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Kigali. Given that we found a significant interest in mentoring with several programmes already in place, as well as an appetite to learn and improve upon existing programmes, there appears to be a window of opportunity to engage ecosystem actors further.

The recommendations proposed below highlight different mechanisms to anchor an understanding for mentoring in the ecosystem, and ways to build up local mentoring capacity with the ESOs. They represent potential areas of work which build on each other, with the aim of embedding quality mentoring within the entrepreneurship ecosystem in Rwanda, as well as strengthening collaboration among ecosystem actors in order to enhance quality support to entrepreneurs in Kigali.

1. **Develop a common understanding of what mentoring is.**

Interpretations of mentoring vary among ecosystem actors, which causes confusion. Entrepreneurs and mentors will have different expectations of what mentoring is, depending on the programme they join. This can result in ineffective programmes, particularly where mentors and entrepreneurs are starting to engage with or work across multiple organisations within the ecosystem. A common understanding is key to effective communication, long-term engagement, and establishing a cohesive culture of mentoring within Rwanda. How might this be done?

  - a. The feedback workshop on this report for ESOs provided by Mowgli Mentoring provides an initial opportunity to start this process.
  - b. This could then be complemented by follow-up session(s) convened by the Hub Network Community Manager, which could focus in more detail on what mentoring is and isn't, drawing on and learning from international models and definitions, not just what is currently available within the ecosystem. This would enable people to start to understand how it differs from coaching, business advisory etc., and how it effectively supports entrepreneurial and leadership growth.



2. **Develop and share current understandings of how to run effective mentoring programmes, with relevant examples from Rwanda.** While there is no one-size-fits-all approach, and effective mentoring programmes come in all shapes and sizes (one-to-one mentoring, group mentoring, structured mentoring, ad-hoc mentoring, etc.), there are some key factors which influence the outcomes and effectiveness of a mentoring programme. The study found that there is real interest in running effective mentoring programmes, and an acknowledgment that there is a lot to learn about how to run effective programmes. A starter pack/manual could be developed specifically for ESOs within the Rwandan ecosystem who want to run a mentoring programme, to guide them on the basics of how to set one up and manage it effectively. This would be very much embedded within the local context, while also drawing on local and international examples and best practice. Building on the common understanding of mentoring, this starter pack would be shared with ESO managers in charge of running mentoring programmes and could then be complemented by a Mentoring Programme Manager Training for ecosystem actors, for example.
3. **Provide a blueprint/standard for what quality mentoring is.** Due to the very personal nature of mentoring, the best advocates are those who have experienced quality mentoring themselves. We met a number of these people during the scoping study: people who had had a mentor (usually through a formal and structured international mentoring programme) and saw its value. They were now the real advocates for mentoring and regularly mentored others. They had a practical understanding of what mentoring was and how it added value, rather than purely theoretical. In order to build up a pipeline of mentors in Kigali, the starting point is to gain buy-in and understanding. While options 1 and 2 above go some way to achieve this, there is no substitute for being involved in mentoring first hand, either as a trained mentor or a mentee. Taking this into account, and also the desire to strengthen collaboration amongst ESOs and ecosystem actors in Kigali, a one-off inter-ESO mentoring programme could be run.



What could this look like?

- a. A 9 or 12-month mentoring leadership programme coordinated and managed by a third party in collaboration with the Hub Network Community Manager targeting ESO staff from 15-20 different organisations.
- b. Two people from each ESO would apply to the programme, one as a Senior, one as a Junior. The Seniors would be trained as mentors, while the Juniors would be prepared as mentees. Seniors and Juniors would then be cross-matched across ESOs in mentor-mentee pairs in order to create impartiality and promote cross-ecosystem cohesion.
- c. There were concerns raised during the scoping study about a potential lack of trust among ecosystem actors, as many ESOs could be perceived to be in competition with each other, both for funding and entrepreneurs. This would have to be explored further to understand and manage it better in the programme. The mentoring agreement is therefore as critical as ever to ensure and promote confidentiality of the partnership during relationship building. But it is also important to recognise that mentoring is a two-way process where both mentor and mentee stand to learn from each other. If managed well, a cross-generational and cross-organisation programme like this could help to build trust and collaboration within the ecosystem.
- d. Both mentors and mentees would receive partnership coaching to support them in the creation of a relationship, and overcome any discomfort or challenges they encounter at the initial stages. Mentor and mentee peer support groups would also help them to share and learn from each other as well as create a strong network.
- e. It would also be advisable to get input from experienced mentors to support and even mentor the mentors. These could be international mentors who have received mentor training, have significant mentoring experience, and who work in a similar field.

The outcomes of this work would be 30 – 40 ecosystem actors (ESO employees/ members) who:

- i. are better connected within the ecosystem in Kigali;
- ii. have a deeper understanding of mentoring and its value through personal experience;
- iii. have built their mentoring muscle, enabling them to continue to mentor others, embed mentoring within their organisation, and manage it from a position of experience;
- iv. are better leaders as well as more resilient and effective managers, leading ESOs forward in Kigali;
- v. jointly with recommendation 2 above, are better able to lead, run, or support mentoring programmes targeting entrepreneurs within their own organisations;
- vi. are part of a growing pipeline of effective mentors in Rwanda.

**4. Continue to nurture the network.**

As the network of mentors is being built through recommendation 3, their learning about mentoring/running mentoring programmes needs to continue to be nurtured. This could involve, for example, regular mentoring communications, sharing of best practices locally and internationally, and continuation of the journey together. This would ideally fall into the role of the Hub Network Community Manager, with mentoring support being firmly rooted as a central pillar.

**5. Support mentor training throughout ESOs.**

As ESOs start running their own mentoring programmes, mentor preparation and training is key, and should be done through a recognised mentor training programme which is, ideally, internationally recognised and accredited to ensure quality. In order to make this more cost-effective for ESOs, GIZ might consider providing a partial subsidy for a mentor training programme, i.e. which could offer mentor training to a number of mentors from each ESO to keep standards up. If this were run as a cohort for all mentors across all ESOs, it might also help to increase cohesion and reduce costs. This would ensure that a pipeline of quality mentors develops within the ecosystem, keeping quality and standards high. An online cohort can have up to 60 mentors trained at any one time.

6. **Help to build in mentoring feedback loops and evaluation tools across ESOs.**  
Acknowledgement and pride in running an effective mentoring programme and being a committed mentor, which provides value to the entrepreneurs both in the short term and the long term, should be measured and recognised. The only way to do this effectively is to incorporate feedback loops and evaluation mechanisms for programmes as a whole, as well as for individual mentors. This will help identify who is effective and not effective, and will continue to reinforce the mentoring culture and practice in Rwanda.
7. **Build the reputation of mentors.**  
Pride in being an effective mentor could eventually be reinforced by a professional body or accreditation programme. This would increase understanding and develop a strong pipeline of effective mentors.
8. **Strengthen already existing mentoring programmes.**  
The ESOs that already run mentoring programmes could pick up on lessons from this study and incorporate them into their own programmes, such as mentor training and robust monitoring and evaluation of mentoring programmes. Rather than re-inventing the wheel, these ESOs could work towards improving their own programmes. It is important to note that there is no one-size-fits-all approach, so it is expected that mentoring programmes will have some differences.

This is an ideal opportunity to develop mentoring in Kigali through an ecosystem-wide approach. The above recommendations would help to build a vibrant and strong ecosystem in Kigali, where mentoring offers are already present and can be used as an example for other ecosystems within and outside Rwanda.



# Appendix & Glossary



# Appendix

## Appendix 1 – Organisations engaged

### 1.0 Entrepreneur Support Organisations (ESOs) engaged

Name of ESO	Tech/Non-tech
250 Start-ups	Tech
Digital Transformation Centre	Tech
Klab	Tech
Africa Management Initiative (AMI)	Non-tech
Segal Family Foundation	Both
Leapr Labs	Tech
Inkomoko	Non-tech
DMM Hehe	Tech
Frankfurt School/Afdb Incubator	Tech
Allan Gray Orbis Foundation	Non-tech
Akilah Incubator Program	Non-tech
Norrsken Foundation	Tech
Iris Hub	Tech
Bag Innovation	Tech
Westerwelle	Both
INCO	Both
BPN	Both
CMU – Industry Innovation Lab	Tech
Challenges Group Rwanda	Non-tech
Impact Hub	Both

## Appendix 2 – Outline of questions asked

### Section A) Understanding of mentoring

1. *What do you understand mentoring to be?*
2. *How different is mentoring from advisory, training, coaching, counselling?*

### Section B) Type of mentoring offered

1. *Do you offer mentoring initiatives in your organisation? (If no, jump to section (d), if yes, continue to section (c))*

### Section C) How mentoring programmes are developed and implemented

1. *Do you match your mentors and mentees or do they self-match?*
2. *Are the mentoring relationships 1:1, group, or ad hoc?*
3. *Is industry-specific mentoring offered?*
4. *Do participants pay to join the mentoring programmes? (Mentors & Mentees)*
5. *How are participants recruited?*
6. *Are mentors trained or prepared in any way before engaging mentees?*
7. *Are mentors paid or given any other form of incentive?*
8. *Do your participants engage in peer-to-peer learning? If yes, how?*
9. *Does your organisation have a designated person who coordinates these mentoring programmes?*
10. *What challenges have you faced running your mentoring programmes?  
Possible solutions?*
11. *Does your organisation partner with other organisations to run mentoring programmes?*

### Section D) Business stages where mentoring is perceived to be more useful (ideation; start-up/market-entry; scaling & growth; expansion & maturity)

1. *In which business stage do you think mentoring is useful? Why?*

### Section E) Collaboration of ESOs when undertaking mentoring initiatives

1. *Are you aware of ESOs undertaking mentoring initiatives?*
2. *Do you know anyone who has been a mentor or mentee? If yes, can you direct them to us for a similar interview?*

### Section F) Evaluation of mentoring initiatives/programmes

1. *Are mentoring programmes evaluated?*
2. *If yes, are you aware of the results of these evaluations? If not, why is this the case?*

### Section G) Relevance of mentoring in the Kigali entrepreneurial ecosystem?

1. *Do the mentoring initiatives address the needs of entrepreneurs?*
2. *Do you think mentoring is relevant to all business sectors in the Kigali ecosystem, or are there sectors that need it more?*
3. *Are the mentoring initiatives donor-focused or entrepreneur-focused?*
4. *Do you think mentoring would add value in your organisation and the Kigali ecosystem? Why?*

### Section H) Barriers of establishing mentoring initiatives

1. *Are there any barriers that prevent organisations from setting up mentoring programmes?*
2. *What could be the possible solutions?*

### Section I) The role of mentoring in strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystem

1. *What opportunities do you see for mentoring in the Rwanda ecosystem?*



# Glossary of Terms

## General

**MSME** | Micro, small, or medium-sized enterprise

**Entrepreneur Support Organisation (ESO)** | Any organisation which has a role in supporting entrepreneurs, from access to finance, skills development, finance, etc. A tech-focused ESO only supports enterprises in the tech space. A non-tech-focused ESO supports enterprises that are not in the tech space or those which do not incorporate technology in their products or services.

## Types of support offered to entrepreneurs

**Mentoring** | While there are numerous definitions of mentoring, we'll take that of Prof. David Clutterbuck, a leading thinker of modern mentoring and co-founder of the *European Mentoring and Coaching Council* (EMCC): "Mentoring is a learning relationship between two people. It requires a range of human qualities such as trust, commitment, and emotional engagement. It involves skills such as listening, questioning, challenging and support. Mentoring has a time scale. In some contexts, it is a lifelong relationship, in others it may be a few months. The mentors help to develop insight through reflection, being a sounding board, encouraging." The best mentors for entrepreneurs are well-seasoned entrepreneurs themselves, or corporate leaders who support others through their growth stages. The experience of seasoned entrepreneurs and corporate leaders is invaluable and paramount in the context of mentoring. Mentoring is often non-transactional (i.e. unpaid).

**Coaching** | Coaching is often used interchangeably with mentoring as the approach and the techniques tend to be quite similar. Like mentoring, it is a process that aims to improve performance and confidence. Mentoring is often referred to as coaching with the addition of relevant experience and the skill to use that experience wisely to help the mentee think about their issues. Coaching usually differs from mentoring in that it is short term, focuses on a specific skill/competency improvement, and the coach is usually a coaching professional (paid), rather than a fellow entrepreneur or business owner (unpaid), as a mentor may be.

**Training** | Training is generally a one-way flow of knowledge, from trainer/teacher to the trainees. Usually it takes place in a formal classroom setting with one trainer imparting knowledge to many trainees, following a structured curriculum with set learning outcomes.

**Business Advisory Services** | Business advisory services are designed to overcome challenges or weaknesses across the range of business functions. Examples may be financial management, accounting, marketing, HR, etc. Advisory work often has a strategic focus.

**Business Consulting Services** | Consulting typically entails custom work which is tailored to a specific challenge faced by a business and includes recommended details of implementation.

**Technical Assistance** | Technical assistance focuses on specific knowledge-based areas, and can take the form of sharing information and expertise, instruction, technical support, skills training, transmission of working knowledge, and may also involve doing part of the work.

**Technical Assistance** | Financial support to entrepreneurs in the form of grants, loans, equity, etc.

## Types of mentoring programmes and focus

### Approach to matching mentor and mentees

*Structured programmes* | A third party, for example an *Entrepreneur Support Organisation* (ESO), will organise and recruit the mentors and systematically match them with mentees, based on certain criteria. Ideally, they will have a designated person managing the programme.

*Self-directed/ad hoc/informal* | A third party, for example an *Entrepreneur Support Organisation* (ESO), will organise and recruit the mentors and systematically match them with mentees, based on certain criteria. Ideally, they will have a designated person managing the programme.

*Crowd-sourced* | Entrepreneurs post problems to an online platform for response from a group of mentors. This provides access to a range of views, as well as a large pool of expertise. The risk is little control over the quality of advice/guidance mentees receive. Further, there is often no depth to the mentoring exchange, particularly when coupled with online mentoring.

### Format of the mentoring relationship

*One-on-one mentoring* | A mentee and mentor are matched, either through a programme or on their own. Mentee-mentor partners participate in a mentoring relationship with a structure and specific timeframe of their own making, or as established by a formal mentoring programme.

*Peer to peer* | Mentees are paired with others at a similar stage in the business journey in one-on-one or group mentoring. It leverages the strong, common understanding peers have of problems, and the type of support needed. Businesses which have similar characteristics but are not direct competitors are likely to be the best match. Peers may not have the same knowledge of more experienced mentors<sup>11</sup>.

*Group mentoring* | A mentor works with multiple mentees at one time as a group. The group meets to discuss topics regularly, usually at monthly intervals. The benefit to this approach is that mentees gain insight not only from the mentor, but also their peers. A risk is the lack of an in-depth personal relationship as provided by one-on-one mentoring. It also requires all mentees to be present at one time, which makes it difficult logistically<sup>12</sup>. A good group mentor needs to be equipped to deal with the dynamics of multiple relationships.

*Speed mentoring* | Consists of one-off, time-limited meetings, usually 1 hour or less, in which the relationship delivers targeted information, and often networking opportunities.

### Mode of communication in mentoring relationship

*Face-to-face/in-person* | Mentors and mentees meet face to face/in person, and know each other personally, although occasionally their interactions may be in the form of online messaging, phone call, WhatsApp chats or e-mails.

*Online/virtual* | Mentors are usually based outside the mentee's country or area, so the entire mentoring relationship takes place virtually, or in some cases mentors and mentees meet face-to-face at the start and then continue virtually.

<sup>11</sup> Evidence and Tools for the Effective Mentoring of MSMEs, July 2020, Spring Impact

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

### Mode of communication in mentoring relationship

*Business mentoring* | The focus is primarily on improving business metrics: access to finance, refining a business model, marketing strategies, etc. There is often some overlap between business mentoring, business coaching, and business advisory services.

*Technical mentoring* | The focus is firmly on developing technical skills, where the mentor is an expert and has the specialist technical knowledge which the mentee needs. There can be significant overlap with technical assistance.

*Personal mentoring* | The focus is on the personal journey and challenges of the individual, building their leadership, and supporting the mentee to gain clarity as to where they are and where they want to go. Overlaps may exist with leadership and/or life coaching and counselling, for example.

*Training-based mentoring* | This is usually directly linked to a training programme, working with the participants of the training programme to act on what they have learnt and putting this into action. The mentor needs to have in-depth knowledge of the training programme, so it could be seen as a continuation of training or tutoring.

*360 degree/holistic mentoring* | Alternatively described as 360 mentoring by Mowgli Mentoring – to differentiate a style of mentoring which adopts a holistic approach. The focus is on building capacity (confidence, resilience, mindset) and capabilities (skills, knowledge, and behaviours) of the entrepreneur themselves, and building the ability to overcome challenges. The focus of the mentoring may have elements of all the above, but be directed by the entrepreneurs based on their challenges and needs at the time.

*Career mentoring* | A mentor shares their knowledge and expertise, and supports their mentee to set goals, find solutions, and make good choices along their career path.







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