

## Helpdesk Report: Best Practices for Vocational Skills Training in Africa

Date: 29 November 2010

**Query:** I would like to request any documentation you have on best practice in Africa for vocational skills, or a literature review on best practices.

**Enquirer:** DFID Northern Nigeria

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### 1. Overview

The literature on vocational training discusses practices in both the formal and informal sectors and from both government and non-government providers. One best practice common to all of these emerges. It is fundamental that the objectives and outputs of training systems meet a country's economic and social requirements. Vocational education must deliver skills for existing jobs through labour market analysis. Informal sector training projects should start with a needs assessment of market niches and growth prospects and avoid saturated markets. Scheme planners should find out which industries are hiring and what enterprises are succeeding.

Apprenticeships are found to be one of the most successful forms of vocational training and are generally cost-effective. Girls are often left out of traditional apprenticeship programmes so efforts for inclusion should be increased. Best practices for apprenticeships and other informal sector training include:

- Literacy training is an important pre-condition for effective business development.
- Quality assurance mechanisms should be adopted.
- Master craftworkers should be encouraged to enter the training market. They may also need training themselves to ensure apprentices are learning the latest skills.
- Training should be linked with credit assistance and follow-up support.
- It can be helpful to work through informal sector associations.
- Shorter courses can be more effective.
- End-of-training assessment tests should be introduced.
- Self-help/solidarity groups can be useful.

Best practices for public provision of vocational skills training include:

- Authority should be devolved so training institutions administer themselves and keep funds they raise through fees and production, forcing them to find their own markets.
- Competency-based training should be included.
- Training should be strategically focussed, covering gaps not filled by the private sector.
- The quality of training should be improved through setting and enforcing standards.
- Entrepreneurial and business skills should be taught in schools.

## 2. Key Documents

### Skills Development in Sub-Saharan Africa

The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, 2004

<http://info.worldbank.org/etools/docs/library/235731/Skills%20Development%20in%20Sub%20Saharan%20Africa.pdf>

This World Bank report discusses four types of vocational training in Africa: government-owned training institutions, non-government providers, enterprise-based formal sector training, and apprenticeships.

Reform suggestions for public training in vocational skills include:

- The objectives and outputs of training systems must meet a country's economic and social requirements. Technical and vocational education must deliver skills for existing jobs.
- Budgets must allow for updating facilities, equipment and staffing.
- Training should be anchored in the new "basic school".
- Links between vocational training and local, regional and national socioeconomic conditions should be strengthened. All sector stakeholders should cooperate with education managers and developing curriculum.
- Increasing and diversifying supply and designing flexible programmes centred on skill acquisition through labour market analysis is required.
- Developing an entrepreneurial spirit that can lead to self-employment through entrepreneurial training and support is important.
- Authority should be devolved so training institutions administer themselves and keep funds they raise through fees and production, forcing them to find their own markets.
- Innovations in service delivery such as dual modes of training, competency-based training and distance teaching may be beneficial.

Non-government training institutions are discussed. One problem is that high fees are often charged to students. However, government subsidies and tax incentives can stifle innovation. The report suggests land grants and soft loans for financing initial investment, grants for students, and tax reductions to reduce overheads. Reports comparing government and non-government run training show strengths in different areas. The report concludes that the regulatory environment should facilitate the growth and development of non-governmental provision, while providing appropriate protection to consumers.

Formal sector employers in sub-Saharan Africa often provide training on the job (enterprise-based training). Substantial benefits of enterprise-based training have been found. There is a perceived need for greater cooperation between the government and private training providers.

Skills development is more problematic among small enterprises in the informal sector but of great importance. Improving awareness of and access to skills development in the informal

sector remains a challenge for public intervention. The report suggests increasing the skills of informal sector operators to see the need for skills development for themselves and their workers. Traditional apprenticeship is the most important source of training. Strengths are practical orientation, self-regulation and self-financing. Apprenticeships also cater to individuals who lack the educational requirements for formal training, serve important target groups and are generally cost-effective. However, traditional apprenticeships are often gender-biased, screen out applicants from very poor households, perpetuate traditional technologies and lack standards and quality assurance. Some recommendations for informal sector training include:

- Training projects need to start with a needs assessment of market niches and growth prospects and avoid saturated markets.
- Demand for training among master craftspersons cannot be assumed and must be cultivated.
- It can be helpful to work through informal sector associations.
- Collaboration among small training providers can help to raise quality.
- A participatory approach between producers and trainers should be used in planning the training.
- Literacy training is an important pre-condition for effective business development.
- Shorter courses can be more effective. Projects in Ghana found job-oriented competency is achieved more quickly in shorter courses (6-12 weeks) that focus on practical skills rather than lengthy theoretical classroom instruction.
- Training has to be delivered in a flexible manner, taking into account the opportunity cost of the time and labour of the participants.
- End-of-training assessment tests should be introduced.
- Providers should link training with credit assistance and follow-up support.

### **Planning for technical and vocational skills development**

King, K. & Palmer, R., 2010, UNESCO: International Institute for Education and Planning  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001895/189530e.pdf>

This document discusses technical and vocational skills development reform initiatives in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East. The authors draw on international experience and note that planners should be wary of assuming what worked in one country will also work in another. The economic, social and political context is important. Reform initiatives are outlined for different levels and types of training.

Suggestions for pre-employment public school- or college-based skills training under ministries of education, and vocational training centres under ministries of labour include:

- Training should be strategically focussed, covering gaps not filled by the private sector (such as addressing equity issues or providing training in demand-oriented areas not covered by private providers).
- Poorer youth should have a chance to access tertiary-level skills training through targeted scholarships or loans. The problem here has always been the difficulty of setting up a system, and efficiently and equitably administering it.
- Diversified secondary schooling is costly and may be difficult to implement. It may be better to teach entrepreneurial and business skills in schools and to link students to the labour market through work-experience programmes.
- Technical secondary schools (where the main focus of the course is technical and vocational education) should not be treated by planners in the same way as general or diversified secondary schools.
- Competency-based training should be adopted for both tertiary and pre-tertiary public training providers.

- The financing of public institutions should divert its focus away from inputs and towards the adoption of composite funding formulas that consider inputs, outputs, and outcomes. A performance-based approach should predominate.
- Incentives (financial and non-financial) should be offered to institutions, departments, and individual instructors or managers to encourage better performance and higher training standards.
- Greater autonomy should be given to both tertiary and pre-tertiary public training providers.
- The quality of training provision should be improved through setting and enforcing standards.
- Emphasis should be in consolidation of existing public providers before any expansion.

Suggestions for pre-employment private for-profit and private non-profit institution-based skills training include:

- Private training providers need to adopt quality assurance mechanisms and resources need to be allocated to monitor and assess them.
- The private sector needs to be encouraged to enter the training market and expand its provision of services. Government has a key role to play in creating an enabling environment; this may include subsidies, grants, or non-monetary incentives to private providers.
- To offset a lack of capital resources, especially for high cost industrial and technical courses, governments may offer development loans or subsidies, particularly in strategic areas, to assist these firms in their start-up phases.

A suggestion for pre-employment youth and adult non-formal skills programmes is:

- National-level technical vocational skills development (TVSD) reforms should recognise the emerging innovative practices some NGOs use to deliver non-formal skills programmes. Such innovations include flexible training delivery that responds to the needs of hard-to-reach groups, or the integration of skills training with other measures to empower weaker groups and give them post-training support.

On-the-job formal private enterprise-based skills training suggestions include:

- This type of training should be encouraged through tax rebates or a levy-grant mechanism.
- Where firms are not training, or do not recognise lack of skills as a constraint planners should determine why this is and design appropriate policy responses.

Recommendations for on-the-job informal sector training include:

- Attempts to redirect formal TVSD provision to meet the needs of the informal economy have proved difficult, but some successful cases exist, for example the National Vocational Training System (NVTs) project in India.
- More attention should be paid to the role of NGOs and informal sector trade associations in delivering training in the informal economy.
- Attention should be paid to upgrading informal apprenticeship training, but great care is needed to ensure sustainability and system-wide impacts. Interventions should focus first on upgrading the skills of master craftworkers through pedagogical and technical training, giving apprentices supplementary literacy and numeracy training, regulating quality, and ensuring certification skills.

### 3. Best Practices for Vocational Skills Training in Africa: Case Studies

#### **Entrepreneurial and Vocational Skills Training for Poverty Alleviation: Common Practices, Lessons, and a Strategic Framework**

Williamson, S., University of Washington, Evans School of Public Affairs, 2007  
[http://evans.washington.edu/files/Williamson\\_2007.pdf](http://evans.washington.edu/files/Williamson_2007.pdf)

This project examines common practices in entrepreneurial skills training and vocational education for poverty alleviation and international development. This degree project was commissioned specifically for BeadforLife, a non-governmental organisation in Kampala, Uganda, to inform the programme planning and implementation of their income generation/entrepreneurial development programme, and vocational education and training programme.

BeadforLife is aimed at poor women and youth in urban Uganda. It aims to reduce poverty through the provision of income generation activities, skills development, vocational or technical training, and by linking people in Uganda with people in North America through the production and purchase of beads, jewellery, and other related artisan crafts.

The research consisted of the examination of nearly 100 documents, case studies, reports, and websites related to microenterprise development, entrepreneurial skills training, livelihood training, and vocational education, in addition to qualitative interviews and observations of programme implementation. The most overwhelming finding from the cases was that due to the heterogeneity of programmes, clients, and contexts, as well as the lack of hard, clear evidence of programme impact on poverty alleviation, there is no single set of best practices in either entrepreneurial skills training or vocational education and training.

However, some recommendations for programme implementation emerged:

- Utilise the group mechanism of self-help/solidarity groups (buddy groups) early on and more often in programmes. Group work provides a platform for independence and self-motivation, creating a network that can be sustained once a programme ends.
- Know the market for labour, goods and clients. Invest time in investigating, in a systematic and intentional way, what industries are hiring, what microenterprises succeed, and what markets are available for growth.
- Orient the organisational focus, of BeadforLife and similar organisations, to long-term goals related to non-beading skills training.
- Implement supplemental and/or ongoing training and support. Additional training could include pre- and post training, business training and more targeted training.

#### **Sustainable Vocational Skills Development for Poverty Reduction in Northern Ghana**

Imoro, B. & Nti, K. O., 2009, Journal of Sustainable Development Africa.

[http://www.jsd-africa.com/Jsda/V10N4\\_Spring2009/PDF/Sustainable%20Vocational%20Skills%20Development.pdf](http://www.jsd-africa.com/Jsda/V10N4_Spring2009/PDF/Sustainable%20Vocational%20Skills%20Development.pdf)

This paper analyses the effectiveness of a vocational skills development model in tackling unemployment and migration by the Social Investment Fund in the Northern and Upper East Regions of Ghana. The study revealed the usefulness of the initiative in terms of employment generation and reduction of out-migration through the cost effective utilisation of master craftsmen as trainers. The sustainability of such programmes can be guaranteed through the establishment of an enabling environment for effective private sector.

The report recommends that in addition to ensuring that the trainees do not drop out, the provision of start-up capital to enable them to establish their businesses remains critical. Start-up support and post-graduation monitoring through the involvement of the various trade associations is one strategy of intervention that could improve sustainability. The trainers could be motivated to support the interventions through the payment of apprenticeship fees, support for provision of training materials, continuing refresher courses for trainers, monitoring of sponsored apprentices, support for the issue of certificates, and organization of graduation ceremonies.

The report suggests that traditional apprenticeship training holds the key to the rapid development of relevant skills and that interventions should be based around this.

### **Upgrading Apprenticeship Systems in Africa: Experience and Lessons from Ghana**

Palmer, R., 2007, ILO.

[http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/---ifp\\_skills/documents/presentation/wcms\\_104749.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/presentation/wcms_104749.pdf)

This document is a presentation on the Vocational Skills and Informal Sector Support Project (VSP) in Ghana.

Lessons learned include:

- VSP made some impact on redirecting the provision of VTI training towards short, practical training for people already in employment; more likely in private rather than public training institutions.
- Training fees are acceptable for participants when training is felt to be relevant, but there is a need to pay allowances to poorer trainees.
- (Financial) Incentives for trainees, training institutions and other participants is important.
- VSP demonstrated complexity of procuring and distributing tool kits for individuals under a project. Consideration should be given in future projects to the provision of cash subsidies for graduates to purchase their own tools in the marketplace.
- Information on demand for skills is crucial for adjusting training offerings.
- The involvement of informal sector associations (ISAs) in the design of training programmes is important but a strong role of ISAs in the selection of participants can cause problems.
- Vouchers allow students to choose their training providers, which fosters competition among the providers (result = either lower cost / higher quality). VSP shows that a concentration of VTIs is needed for a voucher system to provide real trainee choices and stimulate competition among providers.
- In order for graduates to get integrated post-training support, relationship between key government and non-government institutions concerned with vocational training and employment start-up needs to be improved.

### **GTZ Developing Skills to Enhance Employment in South Africa: Programme Description**

German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), 2009.

[www.gtz.de/en/weltweit/afrika/suedafrika/24658.htm](http://www.gtz.de/en/weltweit/afrika/suedafrika/24658.htm)

The programme aims at assisting the South African government in building a labour market-focused skills development system that is suited to enhance the employment and self-employment prospects of unemployed persons, employees and emerging entrepreneurs and contribute to sustainable economic growth.

## 4. Other Useful Documents

### **Training for Work in the Informal Sector: New evidence from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda**

Hann, H.C., 2000, ILO

[http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/---ifp\\_skills/documents/publication/wcms\\_103995.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_103995.pdf)

This study reviews current policies, programmes and projects that concern skills for informal sector operators and draws lessons that may be pertinent for the design and implementation of future policies and programmes/projects. The paper seeks to document interesting cases of formal and non-formal training programmes directed at informal micro and small enterprises (MSEs) and to identify emerging needs and new trends, if any, and their possible consequences.

The study suggests the need for analysis of the exact training requirements of the informal sector operators. Further research is required in the area of training cost recovery. In the case of pre-employment training, and in view of low-cost or even free general education it could be argued that minimal fees ensuring a clear commitment to skills development would suffice. On the other hand, in the case of skills upgrading of small producers who are already in business, it would appear to be reasonable that a substantial share, if not all, of the cost should be borne by the beneficiaries.

### **A Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Strategy for UNESCO. A Background Paper**

King, Kenneth, 2009, RECOUP

[http://recoup.educ.cam.ac.uk/publications/KK\\_Tech\\_Voc\\_UNESCO.pdf](http://recoup.educ.cam.ac.uk/publications/KK_Tech_Voc_UNESCO.pdf)

This outline review of issues for the UNESCO TVET strategy covers:

- the crucial normative dimension of skills, capacities and qualifications; the role of new upstream policy analytic work on skills development
- the concerns with capacity, critical mass and a skills development community of practice
- the statistical challenge of skills development data
- and the relation of these suggestions to the current draft of UNESCO's Programme and Budget for 2010-2011.

### **Skills Development, Employment and Sustained Growth in Ghana: Sustainability Challenges**

Palmer, R., 2006, RECOUP

<http://recoup.educ.cam.ac.uk/publications/Skillsdevelopment.pdf>

Against a backdrop of some two decades of sustained economic growth in Ghana, this paper argues that there are a series of sustainability challenges related to technical and vocational skills development (TVSD) that need to be addressed. This paper analyses several sustainability dimensions of TVSD related to:

- promoting the sustainability of education-for-all achievements through expanding post-basic education and TVSD
- identifying sustainable financing mechanisms for an expansion of TVSD



- promoting and sustaining equitable access; ensuring that expansion in quantity does not lead to a compromise on the achievement and sustainability of quality and relevance issues
- promoting the sustainability of TVSD expansion by widening opportunities for lifelong learning
- creating an enabling environment for skills utilization through sustainable employment growth.

#### **Promoting skills development. Report of an interregional seminar**

UNESCO: International Institute for Education and Planning, 2004

[http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001376/137643e.pdf#xml=http://unesdoc.unesco.org/ulis/cgi-bin/ulis.pl?database=ged&set=45506184\\_0\\_70&hits\\_rec=2&hits\\_lng=eng](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001376/137643e.pdf#xml=http://unesdoc.unesco.org/ulis/cgi-bin/ulis.pl?database=ged&set=45506184_0_70&hits_rec=2&hits_lng=eng)

This report presents findings of work in Lao PDR, Mali, Nepal and Senegal on equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes. It also reports on the proceedings of an interregional seminar held in Paris in January 2004.

#### **School for Life**

<http://www.schoolforlifeghana.org/>

The School for Life project works to improve and sustain access to and quality of basic education in Ghana through functional literacy and advocacy as a means to address poverty, under-development and gender inequality.

#### **Meeting EFA: Ghana School for Life**

<http://www.equip123.net/docs/e2-GhanaCaseStudy.pdf>

School for Life is a nine-month education programme for 8 to 15 year olds living in Ghana's rural Northern Region, where there is very little access to primary education. School for Life teaches local language literacy, numeracy, and general academics equivalent to three primary school grades in nine months.

### **5. Gender-specific Materials**

#### **Technology-based vocational skills training for marginalized girls and young women**

UNESCO, 2008

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0016/001626/162605e.pdf>

From 2002 to 2005, pilot scientific, technical and vocational education (STVE) skills development activities for impoverished, out-of-school girls and young women were undertaken at four upper secondary vocational schools (SMK) in West Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. The programme was implemented in close cooperation with KSU Annisa (a women's development non-governmental organisation), the Women's Study Centre at Mataram University (PSW), the local district and city education offices, and the home communities of the girls and young women. Local businesses also participated in the programme by offering apprenticeships, teaching and material assistance.

The Ministry of National Education and participating organisers found that the pilot programme was an effective model for expanding the role of technical and vocational schools to include shorter-term, non-formal vocational and technical skills development for marginalized out-of-school girls and young women. The Ministry, therefore, has decided to expand the programme to other locations. The overall purpose of this manual is to facilitate this process of expansion.

#### **Making Education work. The gender dimension of the school to work transition.**



UNGEI, 2008

[http://www.ungei.org/resources/files/UNC\\_UNGEI3\\_130109\\_Final\\_Web.pdf](http://www.ungei.org/resources/files/UNC_UNGEI3_130109_Final_Web.pdf)

This report examines some of the existing disparities by comparing and contrasting the situation of males and females in the East Asia and Pacific region at different levels of education – including in technical and vocational education and training – and in the labour market. During the course of the analysis, and with the help of three case studies from Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam, this report examines an essential question: how does parity in education, or lack thereof, translate into labour market outcomes for women?

In attempting to answer this overarching question with both quantitative and qualitative information, the study overviews how countries in the region fare in terms of gender parity in the enrolment rates of females and males in primary, secondary and tertiary education. It examines the extent to which boys and girls opt for technical and vocational education and training and ultimately how females and males are represented in different occupations and whether certain patterns can be observed in terms of 'masculine' and 'feminine' professions. In examining the aforementioned issues, a picture of the divergent paths that females and males undertake in their transition from school-to-work emerges.

### **Towards Equal Opportunities for All. Empowering Girls Through Partnerships.**

East Asia and Pacific Regional UNGEI, 2007

[http://www.unicef.org/eapro/UNGEI\\_book\\_Final\\_250607.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/eapro/UNGEI_book_Final_250607.pdf)

Chapter called: *Providing vocational education for ethnic minority girls*, p127. This gives information on a case study from China. One hundred minority girls in three middle schools were given scholarships to continue their schooling; at the same time, they received technical and vocational training. The new learning process therefore became more relevant to the minority girls' needs and living environment.

### **Gender and skills development. A practical tool to mainstream gender equality into skills development projects for better employment opportunities**

Author, year and publisher unknown

<http://bit.ly/hyYKDY>

This tool was designed to be a guide to facilitate context assessment in terms of gender inequalities and the differing needs between women and men. It does not include best practice information but maybe useful with regard to the purpose of this helpdesk query.

### **Scientific, Technical and Vocational Education of Girls in Africa**

UNESCO, 1999

[http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/ste/pdf\\_files/girls/background.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/education/educprog/ste/pdf_files/girls/background.pdf)

A relatively old document but may be of interest. Recommendations are given at the end of the document but are aimed at government/policy level rather than giving practical advice.

## **6. Additional information**

### **Author**

This query response was prepared by **Laura Bolton** l.bolton@ids.ac.uk

### **Contributors**

Kenneth King, University of Edinburgh

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