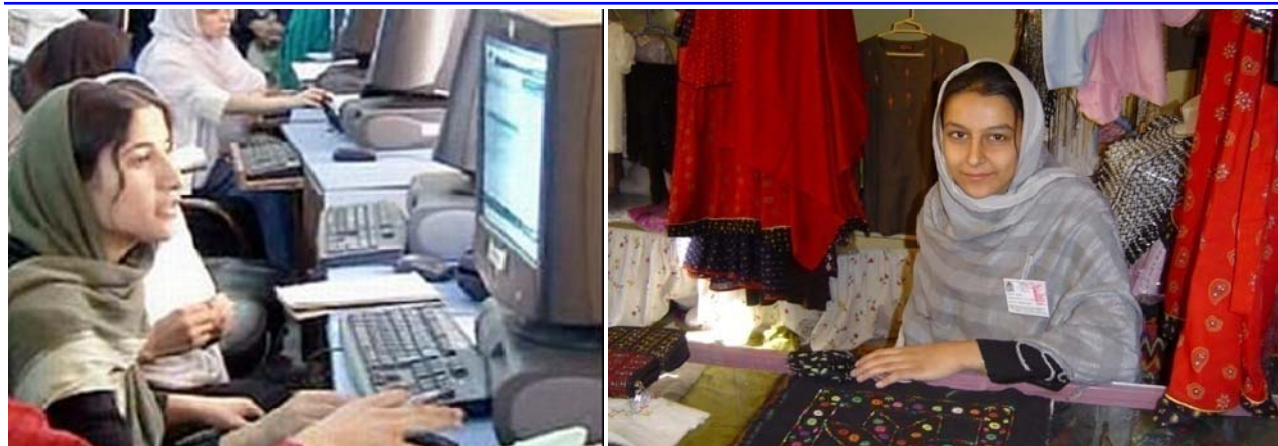




The World Bank in South Asia

Afghanistan Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Note Series, No. 4
Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)



Afghan women become computer literate (left); a woman is trained in tailoring as part of the National Skills Development Program (right).

Increasing Women's Employment Opportunities through TVET

The Afghanistan Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Note Series disseminates the findings of sector work in progress and best practices to staff of the Government of Afghanistan (GoA), its implementing partners and agencies, and other practitioners, all of whom are responsible for developing and implementing government programs. The objective of this particular Note is to discuss gender issues in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Afghanistan. It will explore the experience of recent TVET programs with regard to training and employment outcomes, flag gender gaps in these outcomes, and identify determinants of these gaps. Finally, it will present applicable best practices and recommendations for improving TVET outcomes for women, particularly in terms of increased participation in training programs and higher rates of job placement following training programs.

Background

Throughout three decades of conflict, Afghan women have faced pronounced obstacles in their access to education and job skills development, culminating in exclusion from formal education and minimal involvement in public life under the Taliban (1996–2001). This has left a generation of women with low literacy rates and limited skills for any kind of paid employment. Studies estimate 18 percent literacy among women over age 15 and as low as 10 percent in rural areas, where 70–80 percent of the Afghan population resides (MoE 2006, p. 49). Women's participation in economic activities remains largely agricultural, family based, and not monetarily compensated – even in urban areas where, for example, female household members are responsible for vegetable gardens and backyard poultry production. Aside from these agricultural contributions, most women's work (even that which is supported by microfinance) is limited to tasks that are traditionally relegated to females, such as carpet weaving, tailoring, embroidery, and other types of sewing, all of which are performed within the household. Among urban residents employed outside of agriculture, only 17.8 percent are women, and most of these women work in the health and education sectors of the civil service or in nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (MAIL 2008; MoLSAMD 2008; World Bank 2005).

Unemployment is a problem for all young people in Afghanistan; however, the pool of unemployed or underemployed women is vastly greater than that of men, given high dropout rates among female students past age 12.¹ In view of this gender disparity, it is especially important for vocational training programs to increase attendance of poor women as well as girls aged 13 to 17 from both urban and rural communities.

1. Starting at grade 7, female enrollments drop from more than 35 percent of the total to less than 28 percent, and continue to decline thereafter; in higher education, only about 20 percent of university entrants are female (MoE 2007).



Vocational training activities enable young women to acquire appropriate knowledge and skills to meet basic needs, open doors to job opportunities, and ultimately raise women’s standard of living and status in Afghan society. Nationwide, female participation in TVET programs is very low. In 2007, only 10 percent of Ministry of Education (MoE) TVET students were female (MoE 2007). Table 1 displays MOE’s vocational training enrollments by gender and geographical zone.² Female enrollments are highest in the West and Northeast. Somewhat surprising is the relatively low percentage of females in the North, where female general education tends to be more prevalent than in other zones with low female enrollments in vocational training programs. The National Skills Development Program (NSDP), run out of the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs, and Disabled (MoLSAMD), has achieved greater success in ensuring a nationwide minimum of 35 percent women among trainees, though female participation rates vary by region in NSDP as well.

Table 1: Afghan Students in Ministry of Education TVET (2007), by Zone and Gender Group

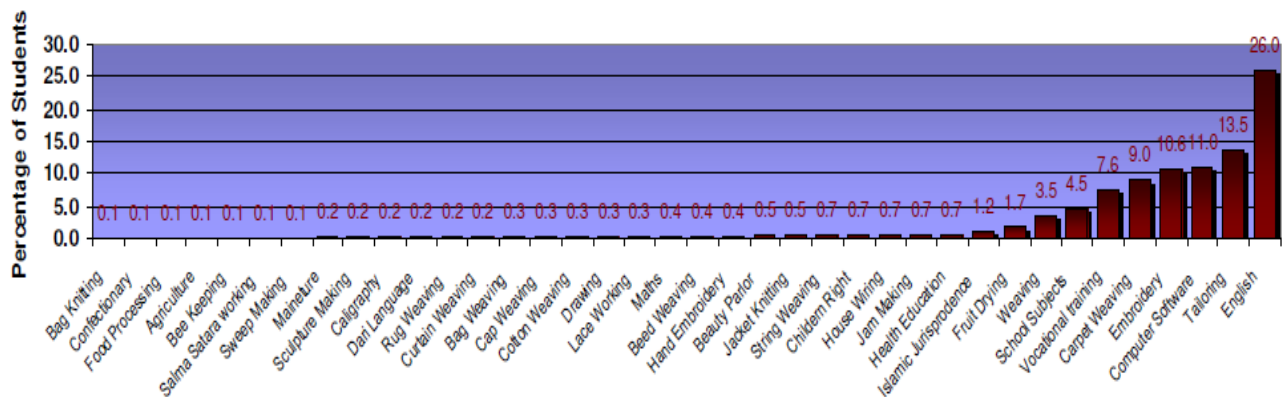
Zones (provinces)	Total students	Male	Female	% Female
Central (Bamiyan, Parwan, Panjshir, Kabul, Kapisa, Logar, Wardak)	6,325	5,835	490	8%
Southeast (Paktia, Paktika, Khost, Ghazni)	141	141	0	0%
South (Uruzgan, Zabol, Kandahar, Helmand)	504	438	66	13%
West (Badghis, Daykundi, Ghor, Farah, Nimroz, Herat)	926	722	204	22%
North (Balkh, Jawzjan, Sar-i-Pul, Samangan, Faryab)	1,267	1,111	156	12%
Northeast (Badakhshan, Baghlan, Takhar, Kunduz)	827	698	129	16%
East (Kunar, Laghman, Nangarhar, Nuristan)	376	376	0	0%

Source: Ministry of Education 2007.

Started as a national government program in April 2004, NSDP aims to contribute to the socioeconomic recovery of Afghanistan through building a national TVET system that responds to labor market needs and provides Afghans with the knowledge and skills for decent work. The program has a steering committee that comprises several ministries, and it has set national standards for TVET. Prior to NSDP, the focus of all TVET programs had been access and attendance

rates, with little attention given to quality and placement of trainees. By creating national standards, NSDP prioritizes both access and quality issues in TVET, strengthening systems rather than just delivering training. According to an NSDP study, vocational training in urban areas is provided by NGOs (50 percent), the private sector (40 percent), and government (10 percent) (MoLSAMD 2008). About 45 percent of training providers use their own curriculum, however, which may not meet NSDP standards in terms of relevance and being up to date. NSDP is developing standards for a levels-based and competency-based qualifications framework for TVET, but it will take years before all TVET providers adopt these standards. Based on current enrollments in TVET, English, computer software, and tailoring are the most demanded skills in the urban areas of all provinces, followed by construction sector skills. Oversupply of female trainees in tailoring and embroidery (Figure 1), however, can lead to high rates of unemployment following training (MoLSAMD 2008, p. 55).

Figure 1: Percentage of Female Students Enrolled in Vocational Courses



Source: Lifted from MoLSAMD 2008 (original spelling intact).

2. MoE’s TVET schools are unevenly distributed throughout the country; 17 provinces – Badghis, Bamiyan, Paktia, Paktika, Panjshir, Takhar, Daykundi, Zabol, Sar-i-Pul, Ghazni, Ghor, Laghman, Logar, Nuristan, Nimroz, Wardak, and Kabul – lack any such schools.



Barriers to Female Participation in TVET and Related Job Placement

Aside from cultural constraints, the main determinant of women's unemployment is their lack of marketable skills. Vocational training that provides women with skills and knowledge specific to a particular job, trade, or vocation enhances their ability to do that job and their marketability as labor suppliers. Although women's enrollments in training have increased in recent years, overall rates remain low due to persistent obstacles.

Insufficient Educational Foundation

Many TVET programs require basic literacy and numeracy skills at entrance, which may effectively screen out a large share of potential female applicants, given women's low literacy rates. Even in secure areas, women's families are not likely to permit them to attend literacy training when the training does not have obvious applications to income-earning activities or when training centers are not in close proximity to villages.³The lack of integration between MoE's literacy and TVET programs thus undermines enrollment rates.

Low Numbers of Female Staff and Trainers in TVET Courses

In all types of TVET delivery in Afghanistan, the dearth of female teachers, trainers, and staff discourages girls and women from attending vocational courses. MoE does not provide centers to train women who could become TVET trainers, as it does with teacher training centers for education. Women returning from Pakistan and Iran may have the required vocational skills, but lack the pedagogic skills to be hired as effective TVET trainers. In 2007, only 221 of MoE's 1,089 TVET teachers and staff were women; moreover, women teachers were concentrated in only eight provinces – Baghlan (1 woman teacher), Balkh (23), Parwan (5), Jawzjan (5), Samangan (9), Kunduz (12), Helmand (8), and Kabul City (158) (MoE 2007). Male teachers and staff, on the other hand, were present in vocational training institutions in 17 provinces, plus Kabul City. A considerable number of trainees in NSDP participate as apprentices under masters of a trade, which also discourages prospective female trainees since the prospect of a female apprentice working under the tutelage of a male master is culturally unacceptable for the girl's family. Masters of trades linked to higher-paying jobs in growth sectors (for example carpentry, metalwork, plumbing, and repair of electronic equipment) are almost invariably male, which preempts the possibility of females learning these skills through apprenticeship.

Insufficient Attention to Job Placement for Women in Demand-Driven Training

Labor market studies that identify areas of skills demanded by growth sectors and inform program design do not pay sufficient attention to skills areas that are culturally appropriate for women. A 2008 survey projects that the service sector will present the greatest demand for urban employees (over 30 percent), while construction will demand almost 25 percent, business and commerce about 20 percent, agriculture 10 percent, and industry 5 percent (MoLSAMD 2008). Employee demand by sector is projected for provinces and urban centers, but there are no data relevant to how much of this demand could be met by trained women. The vast majority of women are still trained in skills that produce goods requiring high labor inputs (carpet weaving, tailoring, embroidery) for which there is little market demand (*Box 1*). The system also lacks linkages between training providers and potential employers, which could facilitate job placement of female graduates.

Safety Constraints, Poor Working Conditions, and Household Responsibilities

Security risks inhibit families and communities from allowing women to participate in TVET programs. Training centers are largely located in urban areas, with training opportunities in rural areas almost nonexistent (World Bank 2008a, p. 32). The distance to training centers makes it difficult for rural women and girls to attend vocational courses. Families may also fear that, even if safe dormitories are provided, female students are still at risk of harassment and damaging gossip if they are trained alongside male trainees, and later are in workplaces where men are present and working conditions are poor. According to staff in the Economic Department of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and NSDP, work facilities often are not sufficiently sanitary or appropriate for women; there usually are no suitable toilet facilities for them. Although NSDP standards cover safety and good working conditions, many training providers and employers do not abide by these standards and even violate labor laws.⁴ In 2003, although 98 percent of urban and rural women interviewed expressed interest in attending a vocational training course, many felt prohibited by families "not allowing" them (18 percent), "household responsibilities and family work needs" (16 percent), and mobility

3. Wardak, Rahim. Personal interview. 14 December 2008. The World Bank's gender team for Afghanistan thanks NSDP Coordinator Eng. Rahim Wardak and other NSDP staff in the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD) for their valuable inputs.

4. These comments were made by participants in the World Bank-sponsored Stakeholder Consultation Workshop to review a draft version of this Implementation Note on May 26, 2009 at the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD) in Kabul, Afghanistan.



Box 1: Skills Training for Women under National Skills Development Program (NSDP)



NSDP has achieved high female enrollments (more than 35 percent) in its training programs, but most skills training is for production of goods for which there is little market demand. Pictured: Salma sitara training in Nangarhar (left); carpet weaving in Jawzjan (center); and tailoring in Kabul Province (right).

issues (8 percent) (Agnew 2003). Pervasive among all regions and social groups is the cherished ideal that men are the breadwinners of the household, while women take care of domestic chores. Female wage labor often is still viewed as a solution of last resort

for households in desperate straits – although skilled, non-manual and well-paid (office) jobs are acceptable for women, provided their child-caring obligations can be managed.

Lack of Relevant Curricula

Although girls' general education enrollments have increased from nearly 0 percent in 2002 to 35.38 percent of total enrollments in 2006/7, women are still significantly underrepresented in TVET programs (MoE 2007). One of the reasons for such low female participation is the limited relevance and appropriateness of curricula to the needs and aspirations of women. Currently, TVET courses are primarily oriented toward engine and mechanical repair and construction, fields that do not employ women (World Bank 2008a, p. 28). There is little skills training in health services, accounting, management, and business, even though potential employers express an interest in hiring women with these skills, particularly in the health sector (World Bank 2008b, p. 33). While NSDP mandates that implementing partners must ensure a minimum of 35 percent female participation, this requirement pertains to universal enrollments, such that training courses can be highly gender segregated – with women predominating in training for traditional women's work and absent from training programs for technical skills with higher marketability – and still meet the universal minimum.

Inadequate Tracking of Progress in TVET, Including Gender Considerations

Vocational training systems tend to lack up-to-date, accurate, gender-disaggregated labor market information and other data necessary to effectively monitor progress, identify problem areas, and correct gender-sensitive approaches to skills training programs. This inadequacy is not unique to Afghanistan, but is typical of TVET systems across the globe (UNESCO 2004). NSDP's 2006 pilot program achieved high rates of female enrollment – women actually outnumbered men among center-based trainees – and overall high rates of stated employment among both male (96 percent) and female (92 percent) traced trainees (World Bank 2007). Women had notably low employment, however, among those trained in computing (52 percent of traced females), compared to over 90 percent employment among males trained in computing and traced by the study. Women's low employment indicates that employers are still not used to hiring women, and that women do not have access to the same networks about job information that men do.

Recommendations: Increasing Women's Employability through TVET

The following recommendations address the barriers and constraints to female participation in vocational training that is linked to sustainable employment opportunities.

Strengthening Women's and Girls' Educational Foundation

Make literacy and numeracy training a standard part of skills development programs. By tying basic literacy and numeracy training to vocational skills programs, TVET training will be accessible to a greater pool of girls and women. The programs will appeal more to them and their families because the literacy training is directly linked to enhanced income-earning opportunities, providing greater incentives for families to send female members of households to these trainings.



Add business development services to the existing skills training programs for women. As Afghanistan's economy is mostly informal and working conditions are not adequate for women, many graduates may prefer self-employment as an income-earning option. Adding business development training to TVET programs will increase women's self-employment opportunities and income-earning potential.

Increasing Female Trainers and Staff in TVET Courses

Identify Afghan women already trained in technology and other growth sector skills to serve as trainers. Many of these women have recently been repatriated from locations abroad where they acquired skills they can now teach to other women. Women with a sufficient skills foundation can also be sent to train with female masters outside Afghanistan and then return as trainers or masters themselves (*Box 2*).

Compensate for a Lack of Female Trainers. Internships and traineeships can increase numbers of female trainees when no female trainers or trade masters currently exist for trades in which women do not traditionally participate. If accompanied by a male family member or other male individual acceptable to families, Afghan women can undertake internships that train in skills which the sponsoring employer would require of a permanent employee. Traineeships focus even more on helping students transition from school into the labor market (*Box 3*). Both internships and traineeships are appropriate for women in the Afghan context, as these approaches have proven successful in Afghanistan. In 2001, CARE International was among the first organizations to start an internship program for male and female high school graduates with few or no marketable skills for employment. Interns devote 50 percent of their time to working for CARE programs and 50 percent to training in

skills such as human resource management, finance, procurement, logistics, and administration. The one-year internship program operates in every Afghan city with a CARE office. CARE hires most interns upon graduation, though some go on to jobs in NGOs or government agencies (*Box 4*).

Making Demand-Driven Training More Appropriate and Relevant to Female Trainees

Increase gender orientation of market research. Urban labor market surveys have identified services, construction, and business and commerce as the top three growth areas for labor demand (MoLSAMD

Box 2: Bpeace Model in Afghanistan

The Business Council for Peace (Bpeace) has been involved in Afghanistan since 2004 (Bpeace 2009), sponsoring "fast runners" – women entrepreneurs identified by on-the-ground partner organizations or through their response to advertisements on radio or television – who run businesses that will be large enough to train or employ other women in the community. Bpeace sponsors the selected fast runners for three years, during which they receive a mix of consulting, training, mentoring, business site visits, and out-of-country apprenticeships, as well as equipment, technology, branding and marketing, and employee technical training, as necessary. Bpeace has sponsored fast runners in a diverse set of trades and activities that include printing, radio announcing and other radio station work, and carpentry. Many of the Afghan women selected as runners have lived abroad – often in Pakistan or Iran – for some years, during which they acquired skills training not available in Afghanistan. Such women have great potential to serve as TVET trainers of nontraditional female skills for girls and women in either the center-based training or apprenticeship systems. The Bpeace model introduces one way in which vocational training programs can identify Afghan women already trained in growth sector skills to serve as trainers in courses. Currently, 21 entrepreneurial Afghan women are involved in Bpeace programs, with seven women engaged in businesses such as freight forwarding, construction, media, and human resource services. The others are engaged in apparel and accessory production in Kabul, and each employs at least 12 and up to 300 women doing piecework in their homes and small workshops.

Box 3: Joven Program

In Argentina and Chile, the Joven programs combine technical training and internship experiences under employers with life skills training and additional support services to ensure job readiness and social integration of trainees (Aedo 2002). Contracted via public bidding mechanisms, both private and public institutions organize the internships and provide the training. Programs target the poor, women, and other vulnerable groups, and have increased the likelihood (for example by more than 10 percentage points over a control group for women over age 20 in Argentina) that beneficiaries secure employment upon graduation, as well as increased earnings over a control group. Chile's program increased the probability of employment by 21 percentage points, with strongly significant results for young people up to age 21 (Aedo 2002).



2008). Qualitative research suggests that each of these areas can absorb women's labor in ways that conform to Afghanistan's cultural norms. Focus group discussions reveal, for example, that communities find it acceptable for women to work in the repair of computers, mobile phones, and other electronics, and in management of community water systems, as long as they are not carrying heavy objects.⁵ As early as 2003, at least 30 percent of urban business owners surveyed would consider hiring women; this percentage has continued to increase (Agnew 2003; World Bank 2009a). Labor market and enterprise surveys that inform TVET systems planning should include questions to ascertain what skills women would need for employers to hire them. Survey information could be used to develop training packages for female trainees.

Box 4: Internships in the Caribbean

Quite effective in the Caribbean, traineeships put unemployed young people to work for approximately four months with a mentor in a workplace, while employers pay part of a monthly stipend. In St. Lucia's Young Apprenticeship Program, more than half of program apprentices are offered jobs by the employers at the end of traineeships (World Bank 2007).

Identify subfields of growth sectors where women already comprise a large part of the labor force. This can be achieved by including more focused questions in labor market surveys and other studies of sectors in which there is already high female labor participation. In addition, MoLSAMD and other relevant GoA agencies should ensure that all government job vacancies in the health and education sectors are filled with the required female staff. This would be the preferred approach for professional jobs in all sectors in which it is socially acceptable to employ women. In health and education in particular, such an approach would result not only in increased female employment, but also in dramatically improved health and education outcomes for girls and women, as they would have greater access to services.

Undertake gender sensitization of training providers. TVET system planners could require that vocational training institutions undergo gender sensitivity training as part of their certification process. Sensitized training institutions could be given small grants to encourage recruitment of women trainers and masters and to train women in nontraditional female activities. Large TVET programs such as NSDP could select training providers based on their qualifications for and history of inclusive training, not just based on lowest cost.

Incorporate community inputs. Most Afghan communities already accept women's involvement in a broad range of agriculture and livestock production activities. TVET planners and those who conduct research for planning should, once they acquire permission from community leadership, further consult communities on their views of what is appropriate work for women outside the household. NSDP already employs this good practice to some degree; its training curricula for women now include fruit and vegetable processing, animal husbandry, and poultry raising, as well as the usual carpet weaving, tailoring, and embroidery (NSDP 1386/2007). Before launching programs for women in the traditional fields, it is critical to ensure that such training adds value and leads to lasting income opportunities.

Overcoming Barriers Related to Safety, Working Conditions, and Household Responsibilities

Facilitate safe access to training. Programs can provide transport, female dormitories, and stipends to male escorts in very conservative communities. An alternative is to establish training centers close to the target beneficiaries so that communities feel it is safe to send girls to training. In addition, training providers need to encourage male members of households to allow women to participate in TVET programs and to seek employment outside the household after graduation. Some international best practices include the following:

Village educational centers. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and other organizations monitoring best practices in TVET have identified the village educational center (VEC) as an effective, practical, and relevant mode of training delivery, particularly in remote rural areas. A VEC serves as part adult learning center, part day-care center, and part primary school, and already-literate or skilled adults are responsible for much of the teaching. VEC timetables adapt to agricultural seasons, and the community is integrally involved in decisions regarding what needs to be learned and how to meet those needs (*Box 5*). Communities do require outside assistance in establishing VECs, such as advice on market-based training opportunities that realistically in-

5. Various World Bank researchers have held focus group discussions on such topics with women's *shuras* (community groups) in Kabul City (April, Sept–October 2007), Mazar-e-Sharif, and Ghulm district of Balkh province (February 2009).



crease income opportunities for both men and women.

Mobile workshops. Mobile workshops could be used to train women and girls in areas that are rural, remote, or highly restrictive of female mobility (*Box 6*).

Distance learning through information and communications technology (ICT). Distance learning through ICT provides new opportunities for education and training to girls and women, especially those who are time constrained or cannot travel long distances to on-site training. Women tend to report having had positive experiences with ICT-facilitated distance education, in part because the flexibility of access allows them to study at convenient times while juggling family responsibilities. In Asian settings women have often had to overcome family opposition to distance education, though this resistance often dissipates when the family as a whole experiences the benefits of the learning, such as improved income generation, helping women to support their families and send children to school and university (Kanwar and Taplin 2001). Research on gender and distance learning in Barbados indicates that ICT is helping encourage young women to pursue science and technology as areas of study (World Bank 2009b). In Afghanistan, distance learning can be made more accessible and affordable to women in urban areas if vocational training programs can fund the equipment and online access costs for a common computer, for example in a community center.

Improve working conditions so that female TVET graduates can seek employment outside the household. The Department of Labor under MoLSAMD needs to ensure that both formal and nonformal working conditions are properly monitored for safety and the physical, mental, and social well-being of women workers. Because conditions in training sites and workplaces often are not sufficiently clean or safe for women, the TVET Deputy Ministry within MoE is working on creating female-only schools for different technical programs.

Improving Methods of Tracking Progress in TVET

Establish monitoring and evaluation frameworks for vocational training programs. Such frameworks should incorporate select qualitative methods for recording community views on culturally appropriate jobs for females, documenting gender issues at training sites, and reporting progress in and barriers to gender inclusiveness. Gender inclusion experts should be consulted for monitoring vocational training programs to trace whether women actually obtain employment and keep jobs. TVET programs in Afghanistan also should take into account the tracking of programs in other countries in order to stay up to date with international standards. In addition, MoLSAMD should alert potential employers about women's ability to manage computing and information technology-related jobs.

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Box 5: VEC in Kenya

Village Educational Center (VEC) approaches have met with success in Kenya. Returning ownership of training and education to the community leads naturally to a reexamination of its purpose, content, and relationship to employment; to enhanced productivity; to a focus on developing life skills; and to an education and training system likely to complement rather than conflict with family responsibilities (UNESCO 2004, pp. 74–75).

Box 6: Youth Truck in Uganda

This approach has worked well in Uganda, where GTZ used a “youth truck” to travel to rural areas. The truck was equipped with materials regarding career promotion and training (for example how to launch simple businesses with low initial capital) and a computer with an interactive database that explained how to develop different types of businesses, and was attended by staff to provide skills training and make future visits to villages in order to track progress (Klugman 2005; YSA Uganda).



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