



Broadening the perspective on technical education and life skills



Youth in Vanuatu take part in the '350' campaign to raise awareness on global warming. Life skills need to be adapted to a life-long learning perspective and not just be restricted to vocational training.

Goal 3 of the Education for All (EFA) Framework for Action adopted in Dakar, Senegal in 2000 codified a commitment of governments and the international community towards “Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes”. Although it is widely recognized that Goal 3 (as with Goal 4 of adult literacy) has received

scant attention in over a decade since the Dakar promises were made, governments in richer and poorer countries are gradually directing attention to this area of education work. The steep rise in unemployment, especially of young people in the last 2 years on account of the ongoing financial crisis, highlighted the value and importance of skill-building in facilitating access to work, poverty reduction, and a means to economic recovery and growth.

UNESCO likewise observes that as education aspirations increased with gains in universal primary education in developing countries, systems have been pressed to expand in general secondary, and technical and vocational education.

Enhanced interest in life skills has however been largely premised on ‘life skills’ as being almost synonymous with technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and in the case of life skills for young adults, as being within the purview of formal post-primary education. UNESCO Bangkok’s 2011 End of Decade Note (EDN) on Goal 3 of EFA, for instance, treats its appraisal of Goal 3 with “...a focus on expanding educational opportunity at post-primary levels through expansion of quality secondary education with an emphasis on ...social and health-related challenges of adolescence, the world of work, and future adult life.” The EFA Global Monitoring Report, to be released in 2012, is also deliberate in limiting its coverage of the review of EFA Goal 3 to, ‘Youth, Skills and Work’, cognizant of serious data and information gaps in an attempt at a wider scope of ‘life skills’.

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Life skills are features of capacity building initiatives for self-help and for organizing communities to assert their rights and entitlements

There are various definitions of ‘life skills’ advanced by different groups - with unfortunately, or perhaps expectedly, no definition enjoying universal acceptance. UNICEF has defined life skills as psychosocial and interpersonal skills that are generally considered important. Life skills have also been defined as competencies that assist people in functioning well in environments in which they live, characterized by 4 Hs: Head - knowledge, reasoning and creativity competencies, Hand - vocational/citizenship competencies, Health - health/physical competencies, and Heart - personal/social competencies (Norman, M. and Jordan, J). These have also been defined as including **“...competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, ability to organise, social and communication skills, adaptability, problem solving, ability to co-operate on a democratic basis that are needed for actively shaping a peaceful future”** (Singh, M.).

From a life long learning perspective, **‘Life’** skills are viewed as essential throughout life, interacting with a variety of contexts (political processes, the work place, at home, schools, in the community), sectors or domains (health, environment, gender, work etc.) of human existence. It is in the milieu of these different life situations that ‘life’ skills - needed by children, young people and adults - have to be adapted and defined (Singh, M.).

While indeed the formal systems of education provide vital terrains for learning life skills, these are reinforced and effectively imbibed especially in non-formal and informal settings. The long tradition of innovative teaching-learning approaches advanced by community

educators, civil society organizations, and NGO workers to fight poverty and injustice evidence this: Life skills are organic features of capacity building initiatives for self-help for organizing communities to assert their rights and entitlements. These are assimilated in the efforts to broaden awareness and democratize information for responsible citizenship, in the tools to acquire the know-how for improved health, sustainable livelihoods, productive work, in the responses to emergencies, disasters, the impact of climate change, and in the measures promoting tolerance and peace.

EFA Goal 3 needs to be more explicitly articulated and pursued within this wider intention and ambition.

Without a doubt, learning and life skills programmes to equip young people and adults specifically for work and livelihoods are crucial.

Proponents of the right to education and social justice need to ensure however that TVET policies and programmes, and education for work initiatives, should be located squarely within the right to and aspiration for ‘decent work’. A commitment to meeting the internationally agreed minimum standards for decent work – freedom from forced labor; child labor; equality of opportunity and treatment at work, the right to organize and to bargain collectively over working conditions – should underpin the framing of TVET and education for work policies and initiatives.

TVET programmes and strategies should address concerns of exclusion as well – where marginalized groups and communities such as women, the rural poor, and people with disabilities, who can stand to benefit the most from skills for work have had limited access to quality trainings for livelihoods and work.

The strong tendency to consider TVET solely within the narrow task of providing training

for industry and occupation-specific skills should also be challenged. Even as early as 1999, the Seoul International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education already argued that TVET can play an instrumental role in developing a new generation of individuals who will face the challenge of achieving sustainable socio-economic development. The Congress agreed that TVET should **“...further be understood to be: (a) an integral part of general education; (b) a means of preparing for occupational fields and for effective participation in the world of work; (c) an aspect of lifelong learning and a preparation for responsible citizenship; (d) an instrument for promoting environmentally sound sustainable development; (e) a method of facilitating poverty alleviation.”**

There are great expectations that TVET can contribute to reducing poverty, promoting social inclusion, and building sustainable development. Widespread reforms in public policies, including increased financing, will have to be set in place to help realize this potential.

The 3rd UNESCO International Congress on TVET, 14-16 May 2012 in Shanghai, the launch of the 2012 EFA Global Monitoring Report on Youth, Skills and Work in September 2012, and the ongoing post-CONFINTEA 6 follow-up processes offer important policy spaces for civil society organizations and the adult education community to proactively shape the emerging policies on life skills and TVET within a rights, social justice, and sustainable development framework.



There are great expectations that TVET can contribute to reducing poverty, promoting social inclusion, and building sustainable development

EDITORIAL



- **By Nitya Rao**

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The Dakar Framework for Action expressed a strong commitment to young people and their learning needs through both equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes (Goal 3) and improving all aspects of the quality and delivery of such programmes to ensure excellence in learning outcomes. Gender equality, a separate goal at Dakar (Goal 6), has also variously been seen as a fundamental human right, a driver of poverty reduction and economic growth, and a prerequisite for a just and humane society.

Many countries have made considerable progress towards achieving gender parity at the primary level, but gaps still persist, more so at the secondary and tertiary levels of education, and for a range of reasons. Girls are at high risk of dropping out in the transition from primary to secondary school due both to demand and supply factors such as poverty, the poor quality of provision, lack of safety and suitable infrastructure, gender-insensitive curriculum, and the possibility of a disempowering learning experience, but also due to cultural and ideological factors around honour, reputation, and marriage prospects. Unlike boys, they are less able to access alternate learning opportunities (e.g apprenticeship), which may involve staying away from home for considerable periods of time. Secondly, educational credentials don't necessarily translate into labour market outcomes for women, noticeable particularly in South Asia, given the social expectation of women's primary role as reproducers and home-makers, alongside the high burden of domestic tasks and the increasingly rigid gender division of domestic labour with little additional infrastructural support for the majority of poor women. This emphasis on reproduction is not surprising when located within the larger macro-economic

and structural context of globalization and free markets, where women start from a lower level, and remain confined to low-end, low-paid sectors of the labour market, especially within the informal economy. While the ILO has developed a 'Decent Work' agenda, global, regional, and national laws, policies, and market mechanisms remain largely gender-blind, if not outright gender-discriminatory.

A livelihood for girls and women then is more than just labour market engagement. It includes a whole set of strategies for making a living, such as savings, changing consumption patterns, developing social networks, or using new technologies. Quality primary education for girls and young women does have the potential to enhance access to information and break down some of the gender disadvantages that hinder the development of key life skills. But it does not necessarily equip them with the skills and knowledge they need to overcome the many contextual constraints they face. As highlighted by the MDG 3 Task force on gender equality, education becomes more beneficial when women have greater access to services, control over their mobility, access to resources and opportunities, and a voice in decision-making processes.

This implies both a life-course and a process dimension of gendered skill acquisition, acknowledging the need for different skills at different times, but also their multi-dimensionality. Specific job skills that address emerging market opportunities and value-added activities such as literacy, numeracy, languages, vocational training, and information and communication technologies are essential to face the reality of large-scale and rising youth unemployment globally, but are not enough. Also needed are more flexible 'social' and 'soft' skills that can contribute to an expansion in choices and improved wellbeing outcomes, such



Girls are at high risk of dropping out after primary school due to factors such as poverty, lack of safety and suitable infrastructure, and a gender-insensitive curriculum

as learning to learn, critical thinking and analytical skills, self-confidence, negotiation, team work and networking, and entrepreneurial life skills. Such a holistic, lifelong approach can usefully draw on innovations from the field of adult and lifelong learning. Initiatives like setting up Local Resource Centres that help women start up and operate their own businesses and establish networks with other women entrepreneurs, Village Training Centres, based on community ownership of training and education, peer education to create a supportive environment of change based on equitable gender norms, after-school or school-to-work programmes that include apprenticeships and skill-building, and using the mass media to change gender stereotypes are few examples of ways forward, enabling young women to realize their full potential alongside young men.



Promoting livelihoods for girls and women should include strategies for making a living such as savings, changing consumption patterns, developing social networks, or using new technologies.

GMR ADVISORY BOARD MEETING 12-13 October 2011, Paris, France



The life skills agenda should extend beyond just employability and aim for overall empowerment of young people

ASPBAE is represented in the Advisory Board of the Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (GMR) as one of the civil society representatives. On 12-13 October 2011, the Advisory Board was convened to plan for the next GMR 2012 issue on Youth, Skills and Work. A significant part of the meeting was devoted to discussions on the outline of this issue.

GMR 2012 is dedicated to EFA Goal 3 - 'Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes.' While EFA Goal 3 advances a broader ambition, severe data constraints will limit the focus of the report to skills related mainly to work, especially for young adults.

ASPBAE however argued that the GMR issue should not pass up on the opportunity to explain the full vision of Goal 3. Silence would run the risk of implying that the international community committed to far less than it actually did in Dakar. The GMR team agreed to set out the rationale for the scope of the Report, noting the aspects of EFA Goal 3 that will be covered while identifying related areas that are important but not within its scope.

Participants of the Board meeting agreed that a focus on young adults was timely and highly universal. It was stressed however that the life skills needs of young people extend beyond just employability. Young people are demanding for greater participation in governance and polity; are concerned about their health and well-being; and are eager to learn more about the world and others. These should be addressed in a skills agenda that aims to empower young people. Other GMR Advisory Board members highlighted the need for a stronger treatment of gender.

ASPBAE also cautioned on the widely accepted approach of 'matching skills with jobs' in skills and TVET programmes. A seemingly 'benign' exercise may actually be promotive of other, more severe forms of disadvantage and marginalization. The case of migrant workers is a strong example. There is no

dearth of 'skills-building' opportunities in many migrant sending countries in Asia such as the Philippines, for example. These aim to train migrant workers to take on occupations that workers in receiving countries are unwilling to pursue, typically the 3D jobs: dangerous, demeaning, dirty. Many are led into situations of greater vulnerability and discrimination. Skills for work should therefore be analyzed within the broader political economic context. The skills workers need to help them protect their rights and secure just working conditions are critical elements in the 'skills agenda' of EFA and TVET.

ASPBAE also suggested a review of an observation in the GMR outline that NGOs did not have a strong presence in the 'skills arena', working largely small scale. ASPBAE argued that there is in fact a very strong presence of civil society organizations and NGOs working in skills and capacity building programmes for livelihood development and work, especially for marginal communities. There are several such NGOs which operate on a large scale such as the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh or SEWA in India – along with several others all over the Asia Pacific.

The GMR 2012 will be launched in September 2012. The GMR team will partner with youth organizations in the run-up to the launch of the Report. There is a greater interest to align launch events with inter-governmental meetings, especially in the different regions, and to also work more with civil society organizations and youth groups.

The Advisory Board also approved the proposal for two future Reports between 2013 and 2015. It strongly pushed for an issue on Teachers and Teaching for the GMR 2013/14 to be released in late 2013. It also endorsed an issue on Education, Development, and Financing for 2014/15.

ASPBAE Secretary-General, Maria Khan, participated in the GMR Advisory Board meeting. This write-up is based on her inputs and observations of the meeting.



ASPBAE stressed that the skills workers need to help them protect their rights and secure just working conditions are critical elements in the Education for All and TVET 'skills agenda'

TVET in the Asia Pacific calls for focused policy, increased investment and targeted programmes

The need for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) for the youth has never been as urgent as it is now. Youth unemployment rose globally from 11.9% to 13% between 2007 and 2009, an increase of 7.8 million unemployed youth. In 2009, 81 million young people were unemployed - the most ever recorded. TVET is seen as a means for an entry into the labor market. Unfortunately, TVET and life skills for youth and adults (Education for All goal 3) remains neglected. Moreover, there is a lack of consolidation on TVET and life skills in the Asia Pacific in terms of policy, scope, and parameters.

In light of the UN International Year of Youth (2011-2012) and the upcoming Global Monitoring Report 2012 on life skills, and considering the urgency and relevance of the issue, ASPBAE prepared a background paper in the context of Asia Pacific developing countries. The objective of the paper was to deepen the understanding of life skills and TVET in the Asia Pacific region to develop a policy change agenda on TVET and life skills, and to undertake joint advocacy to ensure quality TVET and life skills in the region within a pro-poor, gender-just, empowering, and sustainable development framework. The paper deals with trends in TVET and life skills in the region and explores this in the context of the global financial crisis and poverty eradication. The paper also identifies challenges and necessary steps to ensure quality TVET. A snapshot of the content of the paper follows.

Most countries in the region follow the international definition of TVET. Hence, the state of the local economy, synergies with the local education structure and with indigenous knowledge, and the needs and aspirations of local communities are sometimes overlooked in the formulation of TVET and life skills policies and programmes. Meanwhile, there is a need to set a common understanding of life skills, TVET, and lifelong learning. TVET concerns vocational and technical skills, while life skills go beyond that to include social and reflective skills. But there are cases in developing countries where lifelong learning is limited to institutional processes and life skills is reduced to technical and vocational skills only. This limits the possibility of creating effective programmes with wider impact.

There is clear *underinvestment in the Asia Pacific in adult education*, which includes TVET and life skills. Very small portions of total education budgets are allocated to adult education - 2% in Cambodia; 1.13% for literacy and non-formal education in Nepal; .74% for literacy in Pakistan; and 2.83% for adult and non-formal education in Vietnam.

Low budgets and low spending on adult education makes TVET less accessible, especially to the poor. Some countries tried to lower the fees for TVET but this led to a deteriorating quality of the training and larger class sizes, straining the school infrastructure. It is therefore

evident that governments must increase public spending for adult education to ensure that it is accessible to all and is of high quality.

The rural poor, women, and underprivileged groups face *unequal opportunities* in accessing TVET and life skills programmes. At times, programmes are only offered in central districts or urban areas, as in Nepal. Women are less likely to receive training in countries such as Cambodia and the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

A *mismatch between labour supply and demand* leads to unemployment. There is also a mismatch between the skills, attitude, discipline, and knowledge acquired in the education system and the actual virtues required in the workplace. This results in a shortage of experienced skilled workers. In the Philippines, there are far more people graduating with an education than there are jobs for them in the market. Vanuatu produces only 700 jobs annually while the education system produces 3,500 entrants to the labour market. In Papua New Guinea, 50,000 leave school every year to compete for 1,000 jobs in the industry.

The *absence of quantifiable targets* is also a problem. A lack of baseline data on learners, targeted competency levels of programmes, and tracer studies on the economic potential of TVET graduates makes it even more difficult to measure the impact of TVET.

Non-government organizations (NGOs) and the private sector play a key role in addressing gaps in government support to TVET. There are government partnerships with private institutions for education in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines.



ASPBAE recommends that TVET policies should prioritize marginalized groups, and emphasize green skills and sustainable development

TOWARDS BETTER TVET AND LIFE SKILLS

Policies around TVET and life skills should - prioritize marginalized groups, emphasize green skills and sustainable development, coordinate setting competencies among key stakeholders, and provide labour market information systems.

TVET *programmes* should be designed and implemented in consultation with the target population and should be in sync with indigenous knowledge. Civil society should also be consulted on their experiences on how TVET can be more accessible to marginalized groups.

The right to education of every citizen should be priority for all TVET and life skills *providers*. There should be coordination mechanisms among TVET providers, donors, government, civil society, and the private sector to ensure that all efforts complement each other and that TVET and life skills are an effective tool for poverty eradication.

ASPBAE's research partners for this study were - Kabataan Kontra Kahirapan (Youth Against Poverty - Philippines); Civil Society Network for Education Reforms (E-Net Philippines); and Didi Bahini (Nepal)

DVV JOURNAL ON LIFE SKILLS

DVV international produces a bi-annual journal called Adult Education and Development (AED). A supplement to issue 77 of AED, 'Non-Formal Skills Training: Adult Education for Decent Jobs and Better Lives', has been produced focusing on Education for All (EFA) Goal 3 in preparation for the EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR) 2012 to be themed on 'Skills Development'.

This special issue is on skills and focuses on programmes and experiences geared to helping adults acquire the skills they need to improve the overall quality of their lives. It is intended to raise awareness on the fact that initiatives developed to address the EFA Goal 3 the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes' must include more than just

the type of training offered as 'basic and continuing vocational training', i.e. training geared to preparing people for jobs in the labour market. It highlights the need to broaden the perspective of non-formal skills training beyond just vocational skills into the broad arena of all life and livelihood skills.

dvv international strongly believes that to live a life in dignity, people need to acquire an extensive store of skills, knowledge, and competences in a holistic and integral approach that reflects life itself as a complex and cumulative process involving interrelated and interdependent factors. The kind of learning that is necessary for personal development and managing daily life cannot and must not be a compartmentalized or fragmented activity. This should premise policy and programme responses on life skills.



The special edition of dvv international's journal on life skills focuses on programmes geared to helping adults acquire the skills they need to improve the quality of their lives

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SAVING AND INVESTING FOR A DREAM

A story from Unlad Kabayan, Philippines

As a child growing up in the island of Mindanao in southern Philippines, Elsa Belarmino experienced all the hardships of a rural farming life. After her father died while she was still in primary school, her mother worked hard to make ends meet by selling rice cakes and other food items to support her family and her children's education.

Elsa dreamt of owning a rice mill in her municipality of Matin-ao in Surigao city. Most of the rice mills were owned by the Chinese and was seen as a symbol of power. The rich Chinese also owned big stores in the market and sent their children to plush schools. However, Surigao was a popular route for typhoons that destroyed fields, crops, and houses every year. But Elsa wasn't going to give up her dream of owning her own rice mill.

Elsa graduated with a degree in Food and Nutrition in 1981. In 1984, she went to Manila to take exams for a license to become a food and nutrition practitioner.



A worker in Elsa's rice mill

She failed the exam and found a job in a Chinese restaurant instead. She got married and had children.

Elsa never forgot her rice mill and



Elsa Belarmino in her rice mill in Surigao city, Philippines

started to apply for jobs in Taiwan so that she could earn enough money to fulfil her dream. Her aim was to work in Taiwan, save money, learn business from the Chinese, and come home to her own business in Matin-ao. Elsa soon found employment as domestic help in Taipei. She learnt about business, savings, and use of technology from her employers. One of her employers were rice traders and they passed on their knowledge and advice on the same future Elsa always dreamt about having for herself.

Elsa became involved with a local Catholic church in Taiwan that had a programme to help Filipino migrant workers called 'Hope Workers Center'. They also had an orientation program for savings and investments under the Migrant Savings for Alternative Investments (MSAI) – a scheme originated by Unlad Kabayan to help migrant workers abroad secure savings for themselves for when they return to the Philippines. Elsa started to seriously save money for future investments. She joined other Filipinas in a Savings and Investments Group (SIG) and became its treasurer. She attended seminars on entrepreneurship. During this time, Elsa continued to support her family back in the Philippines.

She then began focussing on acquiring her own rice mill in Matin-ao. She remembered a rice mill had gone bankrupt in her hometown which was

now up for public bidding. Elsa went to a Land Bank branch office in Taipei and inquired about the procedure for bidding in the Matin-ao rice mill. It turned out there was an interim mill operator who was quite influential and well-entrenched in the local community who was running the mill and who simply assumed there was no competitor.

Meanwhile, Elsa did two things. She began to consolidate investment resources of 900,000 pesos (USD 20,500) from members of the Savings and Investment Group in Taipei. And she sought the help of Unlad Kabayan to make a feasibility study of the rice mill and to also provide a loan for her capitalization.

In December 2002, Elsa bid for the rice mill and won! She got the rice mill of her dreams and returned to the Philippines in March 2003. Now, not only is the rice mill profitable, Elsa has brought the community together as well.

She has made the business less vulnerable by diversifying her business to include the trading of palay (unhusked rice), renting out farm machineries to farmers who supply the mill with palay, providing credit to farmers, and providing a supply store that offers farm inputs. Elsa has also attached a small store to the mill where farmers can, on credit, avail of household consumer supplies essential to them.

Matin-ao Rice Mill is now an established name in the Lake Mainit area.

Unlad Kabayan is an NGO in the Philippines that binds the entrepreneurial skills and resources of local and migrant communities for community development. It pioneered the innovative approach of bringing together the resources of migrant workers to benefit the development of local economies. It builds jobs and livelihoods in the Philippines, helping communities collectively harness their resources so that Filipinos can migrate out of choice, not out of necessity.

FRIEND FIJI – The Tamarind Chutney Story

Friend's Fiji Style Tamarind Chutney is a huge hit in Fiji! It is a popular traditional dip used not only by the Fijian Indian community but by everyone else too. It is the favourite choice of those looking to add a tangy, spicy, and mouth watering punch to their food.

The Foundation for Rural Integrated Enterprises & Development (FRIEND), a local NGO that works with rural and marginalized communities on social and economic development, supports such initiatives through its income generation programme called Developing Enterprises for Sustainable Income (DESI).

The idea for producing tamarind chutney as a poverty alleviation initiative was taken up by an ardent social worker, the late Sister Satya Bali of Ba in 2002. Sister Bali was the founder of Ba Senior Citizens Centre, a centre established as a meeting point for the elderly in the community where they could come together and engage in livelihood activities.

The centre faced a funding crisis and, after consultations with FRIEND, an outhouse at Sister Bali's residence was converted into a production centre. Work then began on producing the chutney, engaging the elderly in cleaning and sorting raw materials. This meant income for the centre, for those who supplied raw materials, and for those who helped in the preparation work. FRIEND also set up its office there in 2002 using available local resources and skills for income generation.

Almost two years after the launch of the product in the market in 2005, Friend's Fiji Style Tamarind Chutney received recognition from the Fiji Development Bank as a small business initiative.

Saras Wati, a well-respected and ardent cook in the community kitchen, has benefitted greatly from this initiative. "As a mother, I have to look after my home. I make sure that there is food on the table at mealtimes. What I earn through my chutney-making, I save part of it for my future, for a day maybe when I cannot



FRIEND Fiji produces tamarind chutney as a poverty alleviation initiative. Its gourmet products are made from local recipes that use local resources and traditional skills.

work. Some of what I make goes towards home needs."

As part of its poverty alleviation initiative, FRIEND provides, or helps create, an outlet for small rural producers. Friend's Fiji Style Foods are gourmet products made from local recipes that use local resources and traditional skills. Its products are made under strict quality control procedures in its community kitchen in Lautoka in western Fiji. Products are developed and made by people from its target communities under the DESI programme.

The DESI program is committed towards creating improved skills and economic opportunities at the individual and community level. Before embarking on livelihood projects, FRIEND undertakes an assessment of the market, available resources, skills, and the environment to ensure that the projects, once in place, continue to benefit communities over an extended period of time.

For FRIEND's food and livelihoods programme, individuals produce gourmet food from local recipes and craft household items using local resources identified by FRIEND's governance programme. The purpose is to provide people and communities with opportunities to gain skills to earn an income using available resources. As for the food programme, community members are encouraged to bring in product samples. Once approved, the suppliers undergo training in self esteem, team work, quality control, budgeting, principles of marketing, and

managing a small business.

A major challenge is consistency and quality of supply. Many producers make items only when they need money and travel for family obligations. Continuous training and back up production plans are key to ensuring the market is not lost once a product has been introduced. Regular training in quality management and financial literacy supports individuals and groups to understand the process better and manage money for goals and targets set by them for their own personal and family development.



Saras Wati is an ardent cook in FRIEND Fiji's community kitchen. She supports her family from the income she gets for making the popular tamarind chutney.

FRIEND provides assistance with the production, packaging, sales and marketing of the products under the Friend's Fiji Style brand.

FRIEND was founded in 2001 in Fiji to work with marginalized communities in underserved areas of the country. FRIEND works to enhance skills and economic opportunities at the individual and community level and is actively engaged in several livelihoods programmes. Its mission is to link opportunities to resources to enable rural and marginalized communities in Fiji to take ownership of their own social and economic development.

TVET – MEETING ECONOMIC GOALS AND SOCIAL NEEDS OF CENTRAL ASIA

Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan are former Soviet Union republics landlocked in the heart of Central Asia. These countries plummeted into deep political and economic crises as the Soviet Union collapsed in 1990. What followed for Tajikistan was a raging civil war that lasted till 1997. The 2010 UN Human Development Report rates Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan ‘medium human development countries’ and recent World Bank data suggests that they together contribute more than half of the total annual labor migrants to Russia.

Education systems in the 3 countries experienced a sharp decline in the early 90s with the fall of the Soviet Union but slowly starting recovering in the next decade from 2000-2010. They largely chose different ways of developing their education systems and meeting market demands. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan invested in expanding higher education opportunities using private and international resources while Uzbekistan preferred to focus on developing a fully state-driven professional training system. The main bottlenecks in the current education systems of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are limited technical and vocational education and training (TVET) opportunities. Uzbekistan, while it set up universal and mandatory TVET and upper secondary education, has not followed it up by providing access to higher education.

Non-formal education and training plays a crucial role in a world where businesses are working hard to keep up with emerging demands for new skills, competences and, in a broader sense, lifelong learning. Therefore developing non-formal education, and in particular adult education, must be given priority in state education policies. dvv international has played a significant role highlighting and advocating for such systems in Central Asia over the last decade.

dvv international began its engagement with Central Asia at the end of 2002. The aim of dvv international in the region is to contribute to poverty alleviation and local

capacity-building through Adult Learning and Education (ALE).

Uzbekistan has invested in developing professional colleges that are widespread in every district. dvv international capitalized on this and created adult education centers in these colleges that have strong infrastructure good enough for them to become regional educational and cultural centers. They have up-to-date training facilities, a comprehensive curricula, and qualified TVET teacher staff.

Through the EU TACIS Institutional Building Grant, dvv international implemented a two-year project where professional colleges with skills in labor market surveys and curriculum development established cluster partnerships with other colleges and served as a hub for transfer of knowledge. Simultaneously, institutional-building trainings were held in older colleges for them to upgrade the skills of their staff and enhance the quality of their services. In all, 21 professional colleges in 10 regions became a part of this knowledge-building network.

In Tajikistan, the dvv international-supported PATENT project aimed to tackle unemployment and poverty by ensuring access to vocational training for adults. The project offered 100 short-term courses and professional skills to over 2000 unemployed people, of which about half were women. Pilot school directors and ministry officials received training on management, marketing, business planning, and organizational development. Teachers were trained in labor market analysis, curriculum development, interactive teaching methods, and the basics of technology-based book keeping and accounting. The PATENT project enhanced partnerships between TVET providers, businesses, local governments, and communities. Advisory boards



A skill development programme in Kyrgyzstan

were established in several localities in Tajikistan to promote TVET, increase employment of course graduates, and offer access to local businesses, and to banking and government resources.

The ‘Non-formal Skills Training in Rural Areas of Kyrgyzstan’ project, or the EU IBPP project, aimed to develop skills leading to employment and income generation for poor and unemployed people in rural areas. It was implemented by dvv international in partnership with the Kyrgyz Adult Education Association (KAEA) and covered 36 villages in 7 regions of the country. The project focused on labor market analysis, training of trainers, and creating partnerships and networks. Over 550 villagers participated in the training where they acquired skills related to veterinary training, milk processing, sewing, and traditional Kyrgyz home decoration. This project was an example of flexible and targeted rural TVET based on a community needs assessment.

In the Central Asian context, it is important for partners and concerned bodies to work closely together for a strong TVET policy and for its effective planning, administration, and implementation. TVET is a vehicle that can effectively respond to the short, medium, and long-term economic goals and social needs of Central Asia. It can play a key role in alleviating poverty, achieving the Education for All goals, and promoting the quality of life.

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