Mainstreaming gender equality in technical and vocational education and training
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Objectives

The objectives of this tool are to:

• define technical and vocational education and training (TVET);
• contextualize TVET within the Sustainable Development Goal agenda;
• consider gender mainstreaming in TVET;
• inform trainees how to conduct preliminary gender analysis of TVET in their context.

Key information

Setting the scene

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) connects the worlds of education and work. It is an important part of lifelong learning. TVET helps young people and adults to develop the skills they need for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship. In doing this it helps to address economic, social, and environmental demands; helps promote equitable, inclusive and sustainable economic growth; and supports transitions to green and digital economies. TVET is fully integrated into the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) agenda (see Box 1).

Unfortunately, gender bias remains common in TVET provision, influencing the courses and occupations that are open to men and women. This helps to perpetuate gender inequality in work and society.

Box 1
TVET and the SDGs

The SDG agenda envisages a world in which every woman and girl enjoys full gender equality and all legal, social and economic barriers to their empowerment have been removed. Gender equality cuts across all the goals and their targets. TVET is included under three targets of SDG 4 and contributes directly to targets under other SDGs, such as Goal 8 on growth and employment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targets</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable</td>
<td>4.3.1 Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal</td>
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<tr>
<td>and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including</td>
<td>education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex</td>
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<tr>
<td>university</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults</td>
<td>4.4.1 Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications</td>
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<td>who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills,</td>
<td>technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill</td>
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<td>for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure</td>
<td>4.5.1 Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for</td>
<td>quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and</td>
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<tr>
<td>the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous</td>
<td>conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peoples and children in vulnerable situations</td>
<td>that can be disaggregated</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Education 2030 Framework for Action – Indicative strategies on TVET (paragraph 50)**

- Gather and use evidence about changing skills demand to guide skills development, reduce disparity and respond to changing labour market and societal needs and contexts, as well as to the needs of the ‘informal economy’ and rural development.
- Engage social partners in designing and delivering education and training programmes that are evidence-based and holistic. Ensure that TVET curricula and training programmes are of high quality and include both work-related skills and non-cognitive/transferable skills, including entrepreneurial, basic and ICT skills, and that TVET institutions’ leaders and teaching staff, including trainers and companies, are qualified/certified.
- Promote the development of different forms of work-based and classroom-based training and learning where appropriate.
- Ensure transparent and efficient TVET quality assurance systems and develop qualifications frameworks.
- Promote collaboration on enhancing transparency and cross-border recognition of TVET qualifications to raise the quality of TVET programmes and enable workers’ and learners’ mobility, and to ensure that TVET programmes keep pace with the changing labour market demands.
- Promote flexible learning pathways in both formal and non-formal settings; enable learners to accumulate and transfer credits for levels of achievement; recognize, validate and accredit prior learning; and establish appropriate bridging programmes and career guidance and counselling services.
Gender equity and equality in TVET

“Despite technological progress and economic growth, inequalities and poverty persist in many parts of the world. On average, for countries in which data is available, the wealthiest 10 per cent earn 30-40 per cent of the country’s total income. By contrast, the poorest 10 per cent earn around 2 per cent of the total income (ILO, 2015). Too many people, in particular women, lack opportunities for skills development and decent work. Overall, women continue to suffer from higher rates of unemployment, are less likely to participate in the labour force and face higher risks of vulnerable employment, e.g. being self-employed or a contributing family worker. In 2014, the global unemployment rate for women stood at 6.4% (versus 5.7% for men) and the global labour force participation rate of women stood at 68.7% (versus 81.7% for men; ILO, 2015).

As a result of wider gender inequalities and stereotypes, TVET programmes are often gender-biased, affecting the access to and participation of women in specific occupational areas. For instance, at the upper secondary level (ISCED 3) where the data is most complete and vocational programmes in formal education are well defined, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics estimates the percentage of female students worldwide in “general” programmes to be 48%, and in vocational programmes to be 44%. In turn, this participation issue contributes to the perpetuation of gender inequalities at work and in society at large, including for countries that have achieved parity of access.”

UNESCO’s TVET strategy 2016–2021

In 2016 UNESCO launched a new TVET strategy for the period 2016–2021. The strategy seeks to support Member States to make TVET systems more relevant and enable them to equip young people and adults with skills for decent work, entrepreneurship, innovation and active citizenship. The strategy will contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. There are three priority areas (see Figure 1):

- foster youth employment and entrepreneurship;
- promote equity and gender equality;
- facilitate transition to green economies and sustainable societies.

Gender in UNESCO’s TVET Strategy

UNESCO’s TVET strategy gives priority to promoting gender equity and gender equality:

“Promote gender equality in and through TVET, UNESCO will seek to fill knowledge gaps in understanding the issue in various economic and cultural contexts, promoting policy learning and providing policy support and capacity-building services. Particular focus will be placed on developing strategies to promote women’s access to occupational areas that offer better employment prospects; identifying relevant international promising practices, including improving the monitoring and evaluation of gender equality in TVET, and facilitating policy dialogue, capacity-building and advocacy which targets key partners, including labour market stakeholders. In addition to promoting targeted measures, UNESCO will support Member States in mainstreaming gender equality when reviewing and developing TVET policies, strategies and activities, so that gender equality considerations positively influence policy priorities and spending patterns.”

(Source: UNESCO 2016).

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3 Ibid. p.10.
Box 2
Good practice: gender equality and TVET in Vanuatu

“A 2014 report cited Vanuatu’s TVET Centres as good practice models for women’s economic empowerment. The report notes that the centres effectively addressed gender in design and implementation through creative and gender-responsive approaches. These included:

- promotion of women’s involvement in non-traditional vocations, such as tiling and grouting;
- actively seeking to attract women applicants, including by engaging the Vanuatu Women’s Development Scheme (VANWODS) to help recruit women;
- using modular and flexible delivery strategies that allow multiple entry and exit points, enabling women to balance training with employment and domestic responsibilities, and work towards a certified qualification in a timeframe responsive to the demands on their time;
- promotion of women’s representation in training for occupations with a high gender imbalance;
- training all program staff in gender and actively seeking to promote women into managerial positions to challenge cultural stereotyping;
- investing time in developing male gender champions, within both the project staff and local civil and government counterparts, to facilitate social norm change in a highly patriarchal context;
- offering trainees gender-responsive employment counselling and mentorship;
- paying for child care services in some instances, to enable women to attend savings training; and
- placing strong emphasis on accessible and popular program communications, including dissemination of DVDs, posters and illustrated short reports that project strong, positive images of women in non-traditional vocational and leadership roles.

The evaluation also notes that the program has captured these contributions to women’s economic empowerment through a strong monitoring and evaluation system.”

Source: Ausaid. 2016. p.11.4

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The International Labour Organization (ILO), working in partnership with the Government of Bangladesh and the European Union, identified a ten-step process to mainstream gender in TVET as part of its work to operationalize the National Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality within TVET institutions: ⁵

**Step 1:** Begin with a gender-based situational mapping of the institution.

**Step 2:** Analyse data, undertake causal analysis and identify gender gaps.

**Step 3:** Chart out an initial tentative gender action plan.

**Step 4:** Conduct a gender analysis of the training programme cycle.

**Step 5:** Set up social campaigning guidelines and promotional measures for attracting female students.

**Step 6:** Establish and strengthen gender-responsive strategic partnerships.

**Step 7:** Strengthen staff capacity on gender issues and establish a gender mainstreaming unit or network.

**Step 8:** Carry out a gender budgeting exercise.

**Step 9:** Set up research and documentation units.

**Step 10:** Plan for a participatory gender audit (PGA) or finalize the gender action plan.

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**Self-study and/or group activity**

- Work on your own or in groups.
- Obtain and read a copy of your national TVET policy.
- Think about or discuss the following questions:
  - Does it seek to promote TVET for women and girls? If so, how?
  - Are there any evaluations available of this policy and of any associated programmes (e.g. annual joint sector review reports)?
  - Do these evaluations include data on transitions from training to the world of work? Do they show up any disparities between males and females?
  - Based on the knowledge you have gained in this tool, what gaps do you think exist in the policy?
- Make recommendations for how these gaps could be addressed.
Further reading


References


