



***Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and skills development for poverty reduction – do rural women benefit?***

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## ***Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and skills development for poverty reduction – do rural women benefit? <sup>1</sup>***

### **Abstract**

This paper discusses technical and vocational education and training (TVET) as well as skills development in rural areas, mainly pertaining to agriculture and related activities and explores existing gender differences. TVET has suffered from a focus on basic, and especially primary education, which led to the neglect of post-basic education and training and their non-inclusion in the UN Millennium Development Goals. Recently, there has been a renewed interest in training and skills development because of increased evidence that a minimalist approach to microfinance for poverty reduction and enterprise development did not lead to sustainable growth. The paper argues that many training interventions do not cater for the specific needs of women who are under-represented in formal training programmes and often directed towards typical female occupations. It reviews vocational and skills training in several IFAD supported programmes and explores how these target the poor and most vulnerable and to what extent gender differences in training provision, methodology, training content and transition to labour markets have been taken into account.

**Key words:** Technical and vocational education and training; skills development; agriculture and rural development; gender differences; transition to labour market; IFAD.

## 1. Introduction

Education, skills development and technical training are central to agricultural and rural employment. They prepare mostly young people for work in the formal and informal sector in rural areas and thus play an important role in poverty reduction. The better the training and the more refined the skills are in terms of human capital, the higher the income and returns and the better the rural livelihoods.

In many projects the targeting of "youth" is based on the common misconception that boys and girls are a homogeneous group. Too often, the gender neutral use of the word "youth" implies that programmes do not cater for the different needs of young women and reach mostly young men, who are more visible in public. Early marriage and child bearing further limit the possibilities of rural young women who are severely restricted in their mobility and restrained to the domestic sphere in many societies.

Public and private providers of education and training poorly serve rural youth especially in when comparing opportunities available to urban youth. The extent of 'urban bias' in the provision of publicly funded education and training services is large in most low-income developing countries (Bennell 2007). The deployment of teachers and other educational staff or trainers to rural areas is difficult in many countries. Several factors contribute to dampen the demand for education among poor parents including the poor quality of teaching, high direct and indirect schooling costs and the paucity of 'good jobs'. Education has also a lower level of priority compared to other short term pressing needs such as maximizing household income or providing food security. About 130 million young people in developing countries (15-24 years) are classified as 'illiterate' with women representing 59 per cent (UNESCO 2008). The high number of illiterate youth and those with low schooling are mostly living in rural areas and are badly prepared for productive work (Atchoarena&Gasperini 2003).

This paper explores different aspects of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) as well as skills training in rural areas. Emphasis is put on agriculture and related activities and existing gender differences. It demonstrates that not enough is being done on vocational and skills training in rural areas in particular for women, as shown by statistics on TVET in general. The non-involvement of women is also a result of their low levels of schooling or persisting illiteracy. Skills development for rural youth and rural poor is not only about agriculture and related skills in rural development, but also a preparation and investment for off-farm working and improving skills for migration.

Based on experiences from IFAD supported programmes, the paper argues that more quality investment is needed in vocational and skills training for rural youth and special attention should be paid to addressing the needs of women. Concerted efforts of donors, Governments and the private sector are needed to achieve better quality in training and fill the gap caused by years of neglect.

## 2. Methodology and data sources

IFAD is striving in its on-going work, in particular under the Innovation mainstreaming initiative (IMI)<sup>2</sup> to promote innovations that have a positive impact on rural poverty and to support the Fund's role as a facilitator, mediator, enabler and promoter of innovation. The IMI programme of the Technical Advisory Division on *Innovative forms of training and capacity-building* aims to improve the training components in IFAD supported projects. Training is one of the primary means to build the capacity of poor people to participate and benefit from mainstream economic development. IFAD's targeting policy places great emphasis on capacity-building and training which are fundamental to the success of other development interventions, from infrastructure to rural finance and gender equality. An important part of IFAD resources go to capacity-building and training activities, up to 30 per cent in some projects. These may include a variety of training activities: vocational and skills training, (functional) literacy training, training for specific capacities (e.g. gender training, management trains), technical advisory training, and extension services (farmer field schools).

This paper presents the results of a stocktaking exercise carried out to provide greater clarity about types of training in IFAD supported projects and increased knowledge about adult education methods that have proven successful in working with rural poor women and men. The paper draws on a literature review of technical and vocational training and skills development and a desk review of activities in IFAD supported projects related to training and capacity-building from a gender perspective.

## 3. Skills development and technical training for agricultural and rural employment

The focus of UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) is on basic and especially primary education (MDG 1).<sup>3</sup> This emphasis on the first cycle of education contributes to the neglect of post-basic education and training including technical and vocational education and training (Fluitman 2005). Bennell (1999) found that vocational education and training (VET) was largely absent in most government and donor poverty reduction strategies in developing countries. This marginalisation of VET is due to a lack of donor investment and inaction by many governments. While there is a need to adjust development efforts and build the human assets and capabilities of the poor, vocational education and training has been receiving less and not more attention.

Policies and approaches to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) have undergone major re-adjustment in the 1970s and 1980s (Colclough 1980; Psacharopoulos 1994), including the seminal 1980 World Bank Education Sector Policy Paper (World Bank 1980). As a result, resources were put into primary education and public provision of technical and vocational education and training was reduced. The seminal article on vocational training written by Foster in 1965 is again receiving attention. He described the "Vocational School Fallacy" in developing countries and stated that it 'it might be more fruitful to encourage small-scale vocational training schemes closely associated with the actual ongoing developments and quite divorced from the formal educational system' (Foster 1965, p. 154). Foster also suggested that 'the burdens of vocational training should be

shifted to those groups who are actually demanding skilled labour of various types’ (p. 158) thus advocating a people centred and needs driven approach to vocational training.

This seems to concur with the discussion in many donor agencies and academia linking skills development to poverty reduction. The debate whether to vocationalize or not is ongoing (Oketch 2007). Before engaging on the *pros* and *cons* of these approaches, it is necessary to explore the longstanding approaches to TVET or VET, which have been changing over time. The newer term technical and vocational skills development (TVSD) is often used to describe flexible skills, learning to learn, going beyond literacy and numeracy skills and including more than ‘life skills’ (King&Palmer 2006; McGrath 2005). TVSD comprises three main types of education or training: public school-based technical education, in the form of junior and senior secondary education but non-tertiary institutions; public vocational training centres and industrial training institutes; and training in the informal sector which often include traditional apprenticeship training or traditional forms of training offered at artisan workshops owned by master craftsmen/women (King 2007). These forms of training (carpentry, masonry, auto-mechanics welding, tailoring, dressmaking, cosmetics, hairdressing) are often provided on the basis of family ties. Many trainers or operators tend to exhibit creativity but often lack necessary technical knowledge related to their skills and the capital to expand their enterprises (Atchoarena and Delluc 2002; Oketch 2007).

Reliable data about TVSD or TVET are limited. In 2006, the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) commissioned a study to assess the extent of current data knowledge about global provision of TVET in thirty countries (Oketch 2007, UNESCO 2006). Only seven African countries (Botswana, Egypt, Ghana, Senegal, Seychelles, Tunisia, and Zimbabwe) were involved in the global study. Findings show that TVET education is portrayed as inferior to general education and serving the purpose of solving youth unemployment. The study also shows that girls face more difficulties accessing secondary education and TVET programmes compared to boys. Female participation is increasing when TVET is relegated to a less prestigious strand of education. TVET also includes both skills development such as initial vocational training prior to entering the labour market and continuing vocational training (“re-skilling” and “up-skilling”). However, the statistics do not include private provision of training. Public TVET provisions in programmes promoted by the Ministries of Labour of Agriculture are also rarely captured. The proportion of girls enrolled in TVET is very low. However, this figure should be regarded with caution because only a small percentage of girls reach the secondary level in many countries (Atchoarena and Delluc 2002).

In addition, young women and girls are often directed towards stereotyped training and occupations (Bennell 1999; Mayoux 2005). Women continue to be under-represented in formal business training programmes thus limiting their employment options, economic returns and longer term career development. Poor and vulnerable women are usually more interested in skills training that meets their immediate ‘practical gender needs’ as opposed to longer term, “strategic gender needs” that directly tackle the basic underlying causes of female subordination (see Moser 1989). Women are often concentrated in handicrafts, basic food processing and sale which are traditionally considered to be women’s domain. As a result, these sectors are saturated, often do not respect ILO standards of decent work, production does not meet quality standards and yields low returns. Women also show a propensity to pursue micro-enterprises and homestead farming activities (The World Bank, FAO, IFAD, 2008).

#### **4. Rates of return to agricultural skills training**

The role of human capital in a country's growth is the subject of prolonged debate, and a number of authors have tried to provide an empirical demonstration of the relation between education and agricultural productivity in developing countries.

All studies on Rates of Return to Education (RORE) in the development context follow the footsteps of the World Bank which was most influential in promoting the economics of education and human capital theory, seeing education primarily as an investment and favouring primary education with its particularly high rate of return in relation to its costs (Psacharopoulos 1994; Mundy 2002). Research by the World Bank staff and others shows the relative efficiency of various types of inputs to educational systems.<sup>4</sup> RORE methodologies shaped the World Bank's educational and vocational training policies, giving highest investment priority to primary education and reducing government subsidization of secondary and tertiary education (Heyneman 2003).

For returns of education on agriculture, the work by Lockheed, Jamison and Lau (1980) is often quoted as a landmark study that shows that farmers' education has a positive impact on their productivity. Agricultural productivity is 7.4 per cent higher on average for a farmer with four years of elementary education. This effect is stronger in an environment undergoing modernization than in a traditional environment.<sup>5</sup>

There is a link between poverty reduction and skills training and increased growth, productivity and innovation, in particular for the informal sector (Fluitman 2002). Skills development improves output, quality, diversity and occupational safety and improves health, thereby increasing incomes and livelihoods of the poor. It also helps to develop social capital and strengthens knowledge about informal sector associations, rural organizations and governance. According to human capital theory, the better educated the agricultural labour, the higher their productivity (Atchoarena et. al. 2003).

For example, individuals make individual choices concerning their education, but this choice has a strong economic impact through the resulting increase in total factor productivity and improved livelihoods. It is now widely asserted, though not so far evident in policy change, that women are not a marginal interest group, but the priority group for human capital development (e.g. World Bank 2000a, b). This is not based on gender equality arguments, but in terms of pro-poor growth and economic growth in general. Klasen (2002) estimated that if Sub-Saharan Africa had given the same priority to addressing gender inequality in education as was given in East Asia, real per-capita annual growth between 1960 and 1992 would have been between 0.4per cent and 0.6per cent faster.

#### **5. Evidence from literature and IFAD supported programmes**

Poor women are not participating in equal numbers in formal and informal TVET and continue to be disadvantaged, also because of their low level of schooling and literacy, in particular in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Arab States and in South and West Asia. There is greater awareness that training programmes need to specifically address inclusion and equity.

The difficulties that women face in accessing information, extension, advisory services, and education have been identified and to some extent addressed. I

In IFAD supported programmes, these issues have been addressed frequently as the following section shows. With such an important part of IFAD resources directed to training activities, it is obvious that the successful outcome and positive impact of project interventions can be attributed to capacity-building. However, shortcomings have also been addressed in evaluations and mid-term reviews.

**a) Targeting the poor and vulnerable**

IFAD is mandated to target the rural poor in the programmes it supports. Interventions are limited to rural poor adolescents and adults who represent a special challenge for adult education. They are often illiterate or have very low levels of schooling, dispose of limited free time for studies and often lack self-confidence to attend formal training.

The vocational training programmes in rural areas that appear most successful in terms of enhancing employability and contributing to the human development of their trainees are those where teaching activities are directly targeted at specific groups. Vocational and skills training need to be comprehensive in nature, thereby focusing on the needs and potential of the trainees, aim for social equity in access and be sustainable in terms of technical, financial and environmental feasibility (White & Kenyan 1980).

In IFAD supported programmes, efforts are made in targeting specific groups for training activities. An IFAD grant supported programme in Nepal, conducted jointly with ILO, for instance, aims at the integration of conflict-affected youth, including ex-combatants, into their communities and sets a target of 50 percent for women. It provides training and skills enhancement in sub-sectors where opportunities for future employment exist and takes into account employment opportunities abroad (IFAD 2007a).

In Uganda, IFAD and the Belgian Survival Fund Joint Programme have assisted the Uganda Women's Effort to Save Orphans (UWESO) in providing cluster-based training sessions for caregivers of orphans on topics such as business skills, improved agricultural practices, HIV/AIDS and health, children's rights and protection and nutrition (IFAD 2005 a). In Ghana, vulnerable groups including the blind, disabled and single mothers received training in income-generating skills under the Upper West Agricultural Development Project. The outcome showed that it is feasible to enhance social protection for the most vulnerable. Through the distribution of irrigated land to training participants, further opportunities were created to apply the imparted skills (IFAD 2005c). These experience show that traditionally bypassed groups need to be clearly targeted and measures put in place to support their participation and create an enabling environment.

The *Gash Sustainable Livelihoods Regeneration Project* (GSLRP) in Sudan provides training on food processing among other trades. It is a good example of how training should be targeted to those who are most likely to use it (IFAD 2008 b). More than 90 per cent of young women below 18 years indicated that they had no source of income before the training, but were not able to make full use of the training (Table 1). One reason was the restricted mobility of young women, even if married compared to older women. Women capable of

marketing goods such as handicrafts or processed food by themselves were either older women or widows and household heads. Constraints related to selling produce due to limited mobility were often cited as a reason for not using the training.

**Table 1:** Age group and use of training for income generation in food processing and handicrafts in GSLRP

<i>Age group</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Less than 18	39
18-45	43
> 45	29

*Source: IFAD (2008 b)*

**Table 2:** Marital status and use of training for income generation in food processing and handicrafts in GSLRP

<i>Marital status</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Married	34
Single	41
Widowed	52
Divorced	44
Married live alone	0

*Source: IFAD (2008 b)*

As a result of the training, income increased and family diet was diversified. It was noted that some men started to appreciate the training delivered. They became less resistant about women's mobility and allowed the participation of their wives' and daughters in the training.

Without scholarships, many good students in the target group would not be able to pursue training. In the *Rural Income Diversification Project* in Tuyen Quang Province in Viet Nam, for instance, it was suggested to allocate at least 30 per cent of scholarships to girls from ethnic minorities (IFAD 2006). However, there needs to be transparency in the allocation of scholarship to avoid the risk of elite capture. The participation in training activities can be considered an award or privilege. In Ethiopia, for instance, it was observed that the same individuals were receiving training in different subject areas. This was a clear indication that not enough efforts had been made to broaden the target group. Access to training may have been linked to the status within the community (IFAD 2005 c).

### ***b ) Training infrastructure***

The availability of schools and training centres are of concerns in many developing countries, in particular in rural areas. There is a lack of tool kits, modern machineries for demonstration and hands-on learning, local transport, dormitories and hostels, not to mention cafeterias and

child care for adult women. Even when mobile training units exist, there are difficulties in moving them to remote rural areas.

Without safe schools and training equipment, from desks to labs and tool kits, the success of any learning activity cannot be ensured. The *Rural Income Diversification Project* in Tuyen Quang Province in Viet Nam, for instance, procured all equipment for vocational training. While it could be used for medium and long-term training, it was difficult to transport it to remote communes. This caused setbacks to adopting innovative teaching methods. Vocational schools were constructed for residential short-term training courses. (IFAD 2006).

The *Community Development Project in the Rio Gavião Region (PRO GAVIÃO)* in Brazil, works with family farm schools. Girls who usually receive no more than 4 years of primary education, have particularly benefited from these schools and the number of girls enrolled almost tripled (IFAD 2003).

### **c) Training methodologies**

Any training and basic adult education activity faces the challenge of how to adjust training methods, curricula and training style to the needs of the target population. When the clients are poor, illiterate, female, have only minor schooling and speak a minority language, this becomes even more difficult. While there are some successful experiences on adult basic education with poor and illiterate women and men that focus on practical methods and empowerment or “conscientization” in the tradition of Paulo Freire, these are not widely known and discussed in the development and international education context (Freire 2000).

Training projects and programmes for the poor have generally replicated the policies and practices of training for the formal sector. Many forms of training involve passive or rote learning and no experimentation (Palmer 2007). They have been a largely ‘top down’ supply-driven process of skills transfer which has ignored the knowledge and skills of the poor. For the passive recipients training has often been a disempowering, even “infantilizing” process. They do not pay sufficient attention to local capacities and knowledge systems, or to cultural settings or gender differences. In adult education, social and situational orientation to learning is of particular importance. It centres on social learning under the premise that people learn from others in a social context through the interaction of learners with their environment. This is particularly relevant for women whose mobility is reduced due to traditional gender norms and their reproductive responsibilities. They can establish social network through the training and find reason to go beyond traditional boundaries of family and community.

For women in particular, overcoming economic vulnerability embraces a much wider set of abilities than just conventional technical and managerial competency. These include basic literacy and numeracy, social and gender awareness and life skills. It is generally accepted that enterprise development and income-generating projects require a more complex combination of capacities with heavier emphasis on social and management skills than narrowly defined technical competencies (Bennell 1999: 11).

A lack of effective participation of beneficiaries, particularly women in planning and decision-making about training limits the relevance of training and adjustment to their needs. The control over and allocation of household resources to training is determined by a similar set of factors as for formal education. First of all, it is the nature of the relationship between the woman and her spouse, the daughter and her father and mother and that is crucial for determining training demand and outcomes. To increase success of training, it would be important to take household dynamics and peer pressure into account. In addition, the timing of training activities in rural areas needs to respect the calendar of seasonal activities and the climate. In the *Southern Agricultural Development Project, Phase I* in Syria, for instance, it was noted that women based their choices for training on what they knew and liked, rather than an understanding of markets and profitability.

**Box 1: Syria: Profitability of Women’s Income Generating Activities**

IFAD has promoted both on-farm and off-farm income-generating activities for rural women in Syria. Only a small proportion of the women who received training were able to qualify for a loan. On the other hand, some who received both technical training and loans were less interested in income than in having a hobby. These women undertook off-farm activities, such as courses in plastic flower arranging, ceramics, sewing, knitting, weaving and other handicrafts. They were usually the younger women who felt that a nice hobby would enhance their marriage chances and help produce gifts for friends and family. Finally, there were women who received both training and loans, and who needed the income, but who simply did not have the entrepreneurial drive or business skills to make a success of their small businesses. Often women tended to choose what their friends had chosen; a tendency that resulted in a surplus of plastic flower arrangements on the local market, and little income. Participation in decisions was most meaningful and beneficial when it was based on adequate information about options.

*Source: IFAD (1999)*

**d) Adult education**

Several participatory adult training methods have been successfully replicated in IFAD supported projects. One of the most promising is an innovative learning approach known as ‘learning routes’ which had been promoted, by the Regional Programme for Rural Development Training (PROCASUR), a Latin American training organization specialized in rural development and supported by IFAD. ‘Learning routes’ or *rutas de aprendizaje*, bring together a multidisciplinary group of rural development workers and partners in a series of thematic visits to communities that have faced similar development challenges. Exchange visits among women’s groups reinforce the human and social capital of all involved and can be reinforced by the use of information and communication technology, especially community radio and cell phones to strengthen promising networks. A ‘learning route’ comprises three steps: the identification of local and regional experts in the specific areas; training of local specialists and the identification of study material, communication activities and evaluation; application of knowledge acquired and skills learned back home.

## **Box 2: Learning routes: sharing knowledge about market access in Ecuador and Peru**

In March 2007, a learning route on Rural Poor Territories and Successful Access to Dynamic Markets included visits to five small-scale businesses in poor rural communities in Ecuador and Peru. The 18 participants from eight countries included producers' representatives, development workers, market experts and members of the communities. The aim of the route was to try to determine which factors make or break a poor rural producer's business. To learn more about parameters of success for small businesses such as management capacities, capacity for innovation, leadership styles and market opportunities, that determine how will be, participants visited the businesses of five rural associations involved in cheese-processing (Quesinor); traditional indigenous medicinal plant growers (Jambi Kiwa), weavers and producers of artisanal handicrafts (CACH), women coffee growers (Café Femenino) and cocoa producers (ACOPAGRO). Based on their observations and interaction with members of the five associations, the participants developed several recommendations and understood that the end of the route was just the beginning for them and their organizations.

*Source: IFAD (2008), Stories from the field*

Farmer Field schools (FFS) are another successful example of skills training and agricultural extension services. FFS have spread around the globe and are being implemented in over 87 different countries reaching the estimate number of 10-20 million farmers by 2008 (Braun et al 2005). Farmer field schools consist of groups of people with a common interest, who get together on a regular basis to study the "how and why" of a particular topic. The farmer field school is particularly suited and specifically developed for field studies, where hands-on management skills and conceptual understanding (based on non-formal adult education principles) is required. The popularity of FFS programmes relies on the topic which needs to correspond to a need and training of trainers or organizers who facilitate farmer field schools (Van den Berg 2004). The key to success are the FFS trainer/facilitators, who must have skills in managing participatory, discovery-based learning as well as technical knowledge to guide the groups' learning and action process (Braun&Duveskog 2008). FFS are attracting mostly women farmers, but the trainers are still mostly men. Empowerment outcomes reported from FFS include changes in perspectives with boosted self-confidence and pride, as well social change and action being triggered following participation in FFS. Farmers have gained agency in terms of taking a greater control over their lives.

The FFS methodology has been adjusted to specific contexts. An *Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Project*, supported by the Egyptian Ministry of Agriculture and the Netherlands Embassy in Cairo, used the Farmer Field School (FFS) approach as the main tool for non-formal, participatory farmer education. It introduced separate FFS for women and trained more female trainer. The project changed from being IPM and agriculture oriented, towards focusing on information and awareness-raising activities. Working towards the new goal, the training activities also had to be adapted and included literacy training and a

campaign style approach for topics such as homeless children, child labour and bird flu, or even against the practice of female genital mutilation.<sup>6</sup>

The gender and development service of FAO has put considerable effort into adapting the approach in the area of health, particularly on HIV/AIDS and, also working with young orphans (FAO&WFP 2007). These Farmer Life Schools (FLS) and Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS) have built on the experience of farmer field schools and pilots started in a number of countries in East and southern Africa; now a programme runs in nine countries.<sup>7</sup> The goal of the Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools is to increase short and long term food security and well-being of children in households made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS. In JFFLS, the children, mainly between 12-17 years old, attend a one-year programme, which follows a season cycle.

### **Box 3: Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools**

In Mozambique, the JFFLS expanded from a pilot project in 2003 working with 100 children in four Community Based Organisations (CBOs), to in 2007, a full-fledged and diversified programme benefiting 840 children per year (and indirectly their families, caretakers and communities). An evaluation carried out in 2005 showed that the JFFLS (known locally as “Celeiro da Vida” – Granaries for Life) had an important impact on the empowerment of the beneficiaries and for increased and sustainable food production. The programme had also a multiplier effect on local communities and institutions. Local schools hosting JFFLS activities were expected to including JFFLS activities in the 20% of the school term devoted for the “local curriculum”. A major impact of the activities in Mozambique was improved diet. The production of vegetables in the JFFLS learning fields improved the food diet of the children who sometimes were not accustomed to eating vitamin rich vegetables. For instance, a community around a JFFLS in Mozambique reported improved nutrition because of the introduction of new vegetables for home consumption (lettuce and green peppers).

*Source: FAO/WFP, 2007*

### e) *Tertiary education*

The public provision of vocational training at the tertiary level has been reduced in the past 30 years in many developing countries and investment in primary education was considered to bring better returns (Heyneman 2003; King&Palmer 2006). Vocational training rarely reached the rural population and was urban based, even in the field of agriculture, thus attracting students often not really interested in agriculture or rural development. Today, these views are changing given the increasing requirement for qualified middle-level personnel and the increasing numbers completing secondary education or its equivalent. Many argue that the development of technical and vocational programmes at tertiary level should be given high priority, by both public and private providers (UNESCO/ILO 2002).

Currently new ways of linking the indigenous knowledge of farmers to the work of research institutes and passing this knowledge on through vocational training are being explored. IFAD has supported various efforts on pro-poor methodological, professional and institutional change and innovation, in particular related to agro-forestry and biodiversity conservation. This involves the CGIAR research centers but also a number of universities as partners of a North/South network on selected IFAD-financed field operations that aim at supporting the convergence of farmers' adaptive capacities and knowledge with formal scientific research towards the co-generation of innovations. The goal of this on-going effort is to enrich the university curricula and improve the teaching methodologies in support of pro-poor and by-poor innovation, hence improving the social relevance of academic institutions.<sup>8</sup>

### f) *The training content*

Traditionally male-dominated artisan training courses (plumbing, metalwork, carpentry etc.) have predominated in TVET in most countries. Training for women was offered in a narrow range of traditionally female-dominated activities. Training in social and business skills has also been fairly limited, particularly for women (Mayoux 2005).

Some training interventions are implemented without preplanning, set objectives and consideration of relevance of the content. In the *Gash Sustainable Livelihoods Regeneration Project* (GSLRP) in Sudan, for instance, women were trained in the preparation of improved fodders with the aim to acquire new skill. In retrospective, it was found that training should have been designed as part of piloting intervention with the aim of creating a market for the new product and at the same time transferring the technology (IFAD 2008 b). The IFAD supported *Rural Enterprise Project* in Ghana provided short and long-term training in Centers for apprentices and craftsmen. A relative limited number of clients were served and it was found that benefits did not compare well with total costs (IFAD 2000).

In Senegal, the current system of training was found inadequate to up-scale potential of the food or agricultural sector for revenue creation or for the development of skills, whether professional or those of daily life.<sup>9</sup> Although illiteracy among women is high, such short-term training rarely addresses issues of literacy or provides life skills. If the acquisition of basic skills such as reading, writing and the ability to count, does not seem indispensable to the mastery of food processing skills, access to this knowledge is nevertheless of prime importance for the development and diversification of such activities. Course materials for technical training in new procedures undertaken in local languages are written in French.

Mastery of basic literacy and numeracy skills is also indispensable for acquiring proficiency in other subjects, such as management and marketing, and a minimum level of competence in these skills is often a prerequisite for training in such topics.

**Box 4: Technology transfer activities in Ghana**

The *Rural Enterprise Project* operated in the Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo regions in Ghana rehabilitated rural roads, provided loans to previously unbanked entrepreneurs (half of them women), set up Rural Technology Service Centres and established Business Advisory Centres. Technology transfer activities were successfully implemented through short and long-term training at the centres for apprentices and for master craftsmen. The training for master craftsmen was one of the most effective of the Technology Centre activities. Technology Centres successfully undertook workshop operations including repair services, manufacturing services and dissemination of information. However, because of the high cost of capital equipment, the relative allocation of Centre resources amongst its various activities, and the relatively limited numbers of clients served, benefits generated do not compare well with total costs. Technology development was less successful than expected. The Business Centres were the most successful component and trained 4,000 clients. As a result 1,900 new enterprises were set up and employ 6,000 people. Another 3,500 existing businesses had received advice on business skills, and this allowed another 5,000 workers to be taken on. Women took up most of the additional jobs. It appears that Business Advisory Centres could have achieved even greater success and higher levels of impact were it not for insufficient funding, limited technical backstopping, low levels of management support and inadequate supervision from responsible institutions. Partly due to these factors, the Business Advisory Centres missed opportunities which were not anticipated at the time of project design such as working to facilitate skills training and support to the traditional master craftsmen through their trade associations.

*Source: IFAD 2000*

**g) Training providers and training material**

Trainers often have little or no understanding of the specific problems of the rural poor or what it means to operate in the informal sector. Master-craftsmen or enterprise owners frequently lack teaching skills (Mayoux 2005). In many cases insufficient numbers of women instructors are employed and there is no gender equity in outreach. In the *Local Livelihood Programme* (LLP) in Nepal, for example, only one-quarter of the national instructors and one of the 12 international experts were women (IFAD 2008 a).

Similar problems were faced in Ethiopia where the lack of skilled trainers was an obstacle to programme implementation. As part of the agricultural component, 4,000 home agents and 8,000 rural women were trained in vegetable production, small farming and nutritional requirements (IFAD 2005 c). Since funds were not disbursed on time, the training component was delayed and this reduced the scope of planned activities. The trainers available to implement the planned training content had little previous experience in agriculture and teaching. Vocational training in livestock management, crops production and

natural resources was not fully successful, since trainers were unable to respond to farmers' needs and gaps in knowledge.

In the *Rural Finance and Community Initiatives Project* in the Gambia, it was also difficult to train master trainers, since many were unable to follow the program due because they did not understand of the training material and the technical components of the project (IFAD 2005 e). It was also noted that the agricultural training component could have had a greater impact if it had been preceded by basic literacy and numeracy training.

Given deeply engrained social and cultural norms, it is particularly important to have an adequate numbers of female trainers/facilitators. As women, female trainers tend to better understand the multiple constraints that typically undermine women's efforts to improve their livelihoods and that of their families (Bennell 1999). An IFAD experience from Tanzania shows that dedicated individuals can make a big difference within a community.

**Box 5: South-south exchange on bamboo and rattan<sup>10</sup>**

The IFAD supported *Livelihood and Economic Development Programme* of the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR) aims to create sustainable rural livelihoods and enterprises by using bamboo and rattan resources. One of the capacity-building activities of this grant-financed programme was a south-south exchange between Asia and Africa. Pauline Samata, a single mother of four children from Tanzania discovered the vast potential of bamboo through the south-south exchange. In the Philippines, she learned how to use bamboo to build houses, while in China she was shown how to make furniture and such diverse objects as dustbins for offices, desks for schools, and scarves, using bamboo. She also realized that firewood could be replaced with bamboo charcoal. Back in Tanzania, she established the Mbeya Bamboo Women's Group and offered training courses free of charge. However, she sets one condition: that the ladies come to stay with her in the community for at least six months. As a disincentive to dropping out of the training programme, Samata pays the ladies 1,500 Tanzanian shillings (TZS) a day (US\$1.30). "So far I've trained 60 women on how to work with bamboo," says Samata with a smile. "I need to make more money to be able to train more women." Samata also trains children who are heading households and young girls who have not benefited from any type of education. "I do not like young girls to work as domestic helpers, I want to teach them a trade so that they can have a better life," says Samata.

*Source: IFAD, Listen to the voices of Tanzania*

Training institutions and providers play a key role in managing the training process. In many countries, a diverse training market has developed to respond to the demand for skills training and capacity-building. It comprises non-governmental organizations, research institutes, foundations, universities and private consultants. In most cases, little is being done for quality control and no standards are set. For training with women, training providers influence the perception of gender issues but are not always trained to do so.

At times, different training providers are involved without consultation. An evaluation of IFAD's programme in Mali (2007) found that training, including literacy training was often not effective and suffered from the involvement of too many specialist organizations, experts and other actors (IFAD 2007 b). This reduced the overall efficiency of the programme. The

intervention of many actors in providing training and doing evaluation which led to problems in coordination.

#### ***h) Costs***

Fees and indirect costs of TVET represent an obstacle for the poor and often a complete barrier for the poorest, especially for women. In Ghana, for instance, the majority of students come from relatively well off urban backgrounds, even at government-funded vocational training centres in remote rural locations (Bennell 1999). Where there is excess demand for post-school education and training, training intended for the poor and other disadvantaged groups is likely to be ‘captured’ by better qualified school leavers. In the *Rural Income Diversification Project in Tuyen Quang Province* in Viet Nam, most poor families could not afford to send children to vocational or technical training without scholarship. Only 66 out of 548 graduates received funding which was an important first step in advancing participation of poorest, yet not adequate to promote sustained training for children from most deprived families. While it was not clear whether these scholarships have improved prospects for income diversification and self-employment, graduates have in general found jobs with state enterprises or large, urban-based companies outside the province.

In many developing countries, artisans and craftsmen demand payment for accepting apprentices. In UWESO (Uganda), for instance, artisans taking on apprentices needed to cover the added costs and reap some economic benefit. In order to establish the required number of training places for all orphans participating in the scheme, the initial fee of UGSh 100,000 (\$ 56) had to be raised to UGSh 250,000 (\$143).

#### ***i) Employability and access to labour market***

To be successful, vocational and skills and training have to take into consideration the characteristics of national and local labour markets and employability which is commonly defined as a combination of assets<sup>11</sup> and competence.<sup>12</sup> Enhancing the employability of deprived youth and rural poor, in particular women, is a prerequisite for mitigating the risk of further poverty and marginalization.

A case study in Ghana found that there had been an increase in students taking technical and vocational subjects at senior secondary level, but it was still not clear how many actually enter the labour market successfully (Akyeampong 2002). The same case study documented the challenges of skills training provision in terms of the considerable recurrent costs of equipment and materials, professional training of technical teachers, and adequate levels of student enrolment.

Palmer (2007) emphasized the need to take a balanced approach to funding education and training across all the main sub-sectors, in order to create the skills-mix needed for sustainable growth. A supportive economic and labour market environment is a key factor and requires design of a more pro-poor informal economic strategy.

Measures to promote employability need to be linked to sound macroeconomic management and relevant national employment and youth policies. One measure is youth labour programmes or food for work programmes, including public works that provide food

and/or pay, frequently relying upon labour-intensive practices. Examples include government plantations in Nigeria and Ghana's afforestation and sanitation projects that rely on youth labour. The effectiveness of youth labour programmes, however, hinges on the availability of public funds and job opportunities in the country, indicating that these measures are possibly of short-term benefit (Fluitman 2002: 29).

Lee (2006) reviewed a pilot project on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) investing in human resources in Korea and demonstrated that once SMEs were given institutional or technical assistance, in addition to financial incentives, they were willing to make adequate investment in their workers and were able to improve their productivity in an effective and sustainable manner. SMEs responded to the financial incentive system for training only when some employers' associations or self-help organizations gave them organizational and technical assistance for training of their workers.

In the *Gash Sustainable Livelihoods Regeneration Project (GSLRP)* in Sudan, the lack of demand and lack of finance are main reasons for not using the training for income generation. This shows the need of training in entrepreneurship to understand the market, tailor products to the market and investment skills in addition to diversifying the skills for which training is availed (IFAD 2008 b).

#### **Box 6: Training orphans to become artisans in Uganda**

The Uganda Women's Effort to Save Orphans (UWESO) provided training to orphans to become successful, self-sustaining artisans. Students were placed for 6-12 months of on-the-job training with an experienced craftsman. They were supervised by branch staff and received access to credit to start an own business. Though most trainees were too young to set up an own enterprise immediately after graduation from the programme, many did enter gainful employment with a local artisan business. Several lessons were learned from this artisan scheme. First, slightly older children or adolescents responded better to training than their younger counterparts. Orphans aged 17-18 years showed greater propensity to gain employment after training, while younger graduates tended to struggle in the labour market and expect handouts from UWESO staff. Second, success in the selection of marketable skills is crucial, and needs to be supported by appropriate guidance and counselling. Master artisans and instructors themselves needed to be prepared for the broader aspects of working with vulnerable children, such as awareness and sensitivity to special requirements. Lack of technical, business and entrepreneurial skills significantly limited the willingness and ability of young graduates to apply for a loan and set up an own business, regardless of whether credit was made available.

*Source: IFAD 2005 a*

In Nepal, the IFAD supported *Local Livelihood Programme (LLP)* focused on capacity-building, but also on inputs and supplies (distribution of goats, poultry, vegetable seed, off farm production and processing material).<sup>13</sup> Students from poor households in remote upland areas unable to access job oriented education due to funding constraints were enrolled in the vocational training sub-component. This subcomponent intended to enhance income generation opportunities of young people from poorer and *dalit* households or of ethnic

background by providing vocational training at the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training. None of project recipients trained as village level livestock workers was able to find employment (IFAD 2008 a).

The provision of vocational training in tribal areas was addressed in the IFAD supported *Andhra Pradesh Tribal Development Project* in India, but educational gains have not been matched by employment opportunities. It was noted that tribal areas have an immediate need for craftsmen, tailors, irrigation engineers, plumbers and mechanics, nurses and teachers (IFAD 2005 b).

The ‘craft’ agro–food industry, based on traditional skills is sector largely dominated by women due to its easy access, its application of domestic or traditional skills, and the minimal capital outlay needed; the craft food industry plays a key role in the employment and income of women. For this sector to reach its full potential, more training programmes associating both literacy and vocational skills need to be created (IIEP 2006). Not only is the activity a source of income for women, especially those in urban areas, but it also facilitates their entry into a social network. The nature of activities of the sector leads to strong female presence in professional organizations which reinforces their ability to defend their own interests. By acquiring a certain social standing, this opens up further possibilities of their participating in public and political life.

#### **j) Sustainability**

Training programmes for the poor have often been initiated by donors. As separate projects and programmes with their own funding and management structures, they have rarely been effectively institutionalised on a sustainable basis. There is generally low support in follow-up to the training (Palmer 2007). If training was not based on the needs of students, outcome is further jeopardized. The case of the *Sustainable Livelihoods Regeneration Project* (GSLRP) in Sudan showed that the improved fodder intervention should have been implemented following a participatory demonstration approach to ensure that women trained would be able to use the skills. In addition it would have been better if the training was implemented within the context of the animal husbandry and primary health care to improve the capacity of women in raising livestock which is the main common enterprise among women in the project. None of the women interviewed have utilized the milk processing skills in income generation (IFAD 2008 b).

Follow-up activities are a key to sustainable learning outcomes. The lack of follow-up training session, the absence of reading material and other communication tools (local radio, campaigns etc) has a negative impact on the outcome of literacy classes and other training events. The non-availability of documents written in local languages does also not sustain acquired literacy and other skills, as experience in Mali has shown (IFAD 2007 b). A positive example was the Practical Action supported Farmer trainer in extension and aquaculture in Bangladesh where about 200,000 farmers were trained over two years. Take home literature in the form of pamphlets was provided to back up the training and was widely circulated. In the IFAD supported *Programme des Petites et Micro Entreprises Rurales* (PPPMER) in Ruanda, apprentices were placed for 6 months in enterprises and upon completion received training in business management and credit administration so that could set up their own small enterprises (Camillieri 2007).<sup>14</sup>

Adult education methods favor learning in groups. Both the formation of groups through training and the learning in groups are important. For women in particular, the learning group is an important means to gain self confidence and get empowered. If learning groups are sustained, they can play an important role for strengthening rural institutions and increasing women's role in leadership.

The issuance of diplomas or certification of vocational and technical training is rarely addressed at the policy level. These are provided for courses by private and public providers that are certified or recognized by chambers of commerce or other institutions. In Senegal, for instance, higher vocational education diploma courses or certificates such as BTS (*Brevet de Technicien Supérieur*) are rare and mainly geared to employment in industry or hotel and restaurant trades (IIEP 2006). Apart from these, short-term intensive courses exist for working adults as part of broader development projects. Generally, their target is to reinforce technical skills; only rarely do they concern marketing, hygiene or quality. Most of these training courses provide only attendance certificates, not any recognized qualification. Creating a certified training for youth and adults linking literacy skills, life skills and vocational competencies is extremely pertinent for this sector. Custom-made courses providing the requisite skills for specific trades will have to be developed and set up within a framework which has to be mutually agreed upon by both the government and professional organizations concerned. Some African Governments are currently attempting to formalize traditional apprenticeship skills development to a national qualifications framework (NQF) and certain international agencies (e.g., the ILO, the European Commission and Danida) (King, McGrath & Rose (2007)). It is questionable however if a NQF would benefit the poor and marginalized. Furthermore, informal systems of skill transmission in most of the manual trades are generally from father to son or mother to daughter.

## 6. Conclusions and recommendations for future research and policy action

The important field of TVET and TVSD is an essential element in reducing rural poverty but has been put aside for many years by policy makers, donors and the private sector. On one side this resulted in a general neglect which is evident in the lack of technical expertise and crafts people at all levels. On the other side, there is a multitude of training and capacity-building initiatives that provide only short term solutions and cannot circumvent the larger problem of low levels of education and persistent illiteracy. Many of these initiatives might be well-intended, but often do not produce the results desired. There is a non-respect of basic principles of adult education and a lack of coordination between private and public providers. Too often training does not address the needs of target groups nor anticipate how the training skills will be set to use. The lack of attention to employability leads to a situation where a lot of resources are being wasted.

In many development programmes and operations, training is one of the most expensive interventions and should be implemented in a manner that maximizes impact in terms of the priorities and objectives. Projects should set criteria, that give priority in selection to those participants who are capable to utilize the training productively. There is a need for better

targeting and selection of trainees and follow-up support in form of technical input, credit and mentoring.

The following recommendations should guide future research and policy action:

- Improve collection of basic information such as sex disaggregated data on TVET and other forms of training (such as farmer field schools) and address gender differences;
- Strengthen concerted efforts of donors, Governments and the private sector to achieve better quality in training and fill the gap of years of neglect, also with regards to certification of vocational training and skills training; Provide infrastructure support and facilities to improve the participation of rural poor and young women in training, including hostels, stipends, transport facilities, child care centres, tool kits;
- Support a people-centred pedagogy in the development of vocational and skills training should that maximises locally available techniques and thus remains closely linked with local production practices;
- Introduce special mechanisms in the delivery of training to increase participation and take-up by women, including mobile training units, extension schemes, and in-plant training; Monitor progress in increasing the participation and integration of women in training and employment and hold training institutions accountable for equitable intake of women;
- Expand significantly training provision for rural poor, young women and men and vulnerable groups in poor rural areas. This should be achieved through greater equitable integration into existing institutions, structures and facilities;
- Promote training in non-traditional fields for women through the establishment of specific training programmes and pilot support schemes; training programmes for women and rural poor should include personal development and life skills training modules and literacy training;
- Increase the pool of women trainers and provide certification for training;
- Design targeted interventions to address vulnerable groups though such as young ex-combatants; orphans, and people with disabilities, to increase their economic empowerment;
- Combine income skills training with provision of technical inputs, credit and supplies, careful selection students that are capable of using the supplies and providing continuous support and mentoring schemes;
- Introduce more work-based learning and linking trainees with mentors/masters to gain experience of a specific trade; integrate business, self-employment and entrepreneurial concepts into training activities, especially in follow-up phases, and search for trainers with relevant backgrounds and familiarity with both the formal and informal sector.

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<sup>2</sup> The IMI was set up in 2003, with funding provided by the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and IFAD's own resources, to strengthen the Fund's ability to be innovative and flexible.

<sup>3</sup> MDG Goal 2: Achieve Universal Primary Education; Target 1: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

<sup>4</sup> Inputs are books, teacher/pupil ratios, teacher training, student testing, vocational vs. comprehensive secondary education, etc.

<sup>5</sup> The study by Lockheed et al. (1980) has exercised key influence on the debate about education for all and achieving the MDGs. With regards to achieving international targets it has taken on an importance out of context. The authors made it clear, that the positive effect they found for primary schooling was only present in "modernising conditions". They underlined the importance of seeing education and training as part of a broader development strategy and expect education's developmental effects to be dramatic when they are part of a broader transformation (King et al 2007).

<sup>6</sup> <http://ileia.leisa.info/>

<sup>7</sup> Today JFFLS are implemented in Cameroon, Gaza and West Bank, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

<sup>8</sup> See Agrinovia ([www.agrinovia.org](http://www.agrinovia.org)).

<sup>9</sup> Study undertaken by *Groupe de Recherches et d'échanges technologiques (GRET)* at the request of the Senegalese Ministry of Education and the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP).

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/web/guest/country/voice/tags/tanzania/bamboo>

<sup>11</sup> Baseline assets (basic skills and essential personal attributes, reliability and integrity)/ intermediate assets (occupation-specific skills and key personal attributes motivation and initiative)/ high-level assets (skills that contribute to organizational performance, team-working and self-management).

<sup>12</sup> Competence: sum of an individual's knowledge, skills and attitudes; is more than linear, sequential acquisition of job-related skills, but capable of applying knowledge and transferable skills in different situations (ILO 2000: 16).

<sup>13</sup> IFAD grant to CEAPRED also supported by the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV)

<sup>14</sup> A total of 2217 apprentices were trained (47 per cent women) in PPPMER, mostly in carpentry and dress making.