

A LEARNING SERIES

WORKING TOWARDS AGILE AND RESPONSIVE SKILLS AND (SELF) EMPLOYMENT ECOSYSTEMS IN AFRICA

A Systems Approach to Addressing Youth Unemployment

LEARNING BRIEF 3

GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE





A Compilation of Learning Briefs
Spotlighting Innovation, Impact,
Tips & Strategies

LEARNING BRIEF 3

**GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE
CHANGE**



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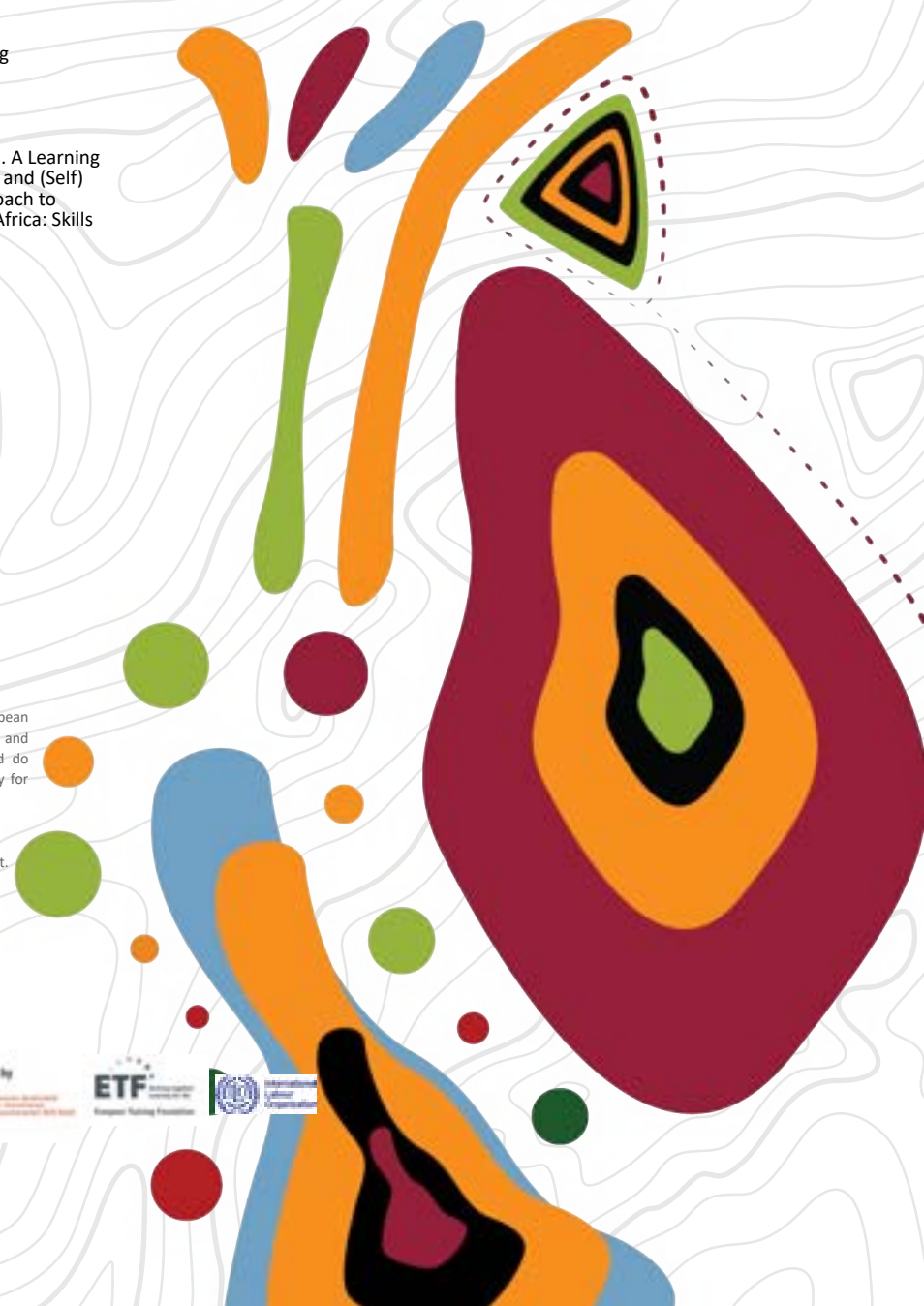
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ACRONYMS



ASPYEE	African Skills Portal for Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship
ATVET4W	The Agriculture Technical and Vocational Education and Training for Women
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
AUDA-NEPAD	African Union Development Agency New Partnership for Africa's Development
BMZ	The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CFPC	The centre de Formation Professionnelle en Construction
DAPP	Development Aid from People to People
ETF	Education and Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GmBS	Gender Makes Business Sense
ILO	International Labour Organisation
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SIFA	Skills Initiative for Africa
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
YES	Youth Empowerment System

SETTING THE SCENE: GENDER- TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE IN AFRICA

It is vital to spotlight the importance of work-based learning and vocational education and training to increase the participation of women in occupations where they are currently underrepresented, to foster entrepreneurial skills and to raise awareness on skills development opportunities to empower girls and women.

Within the crisis of high youth unemployment across the continent, women face additional challenges. Whether trying to get access to education and training or working in various contexts in the informal sector (most frequently in subsistence agriculture in low-income countries), women and girls typically combine these activities with a disproportionate share of other responsibilities. These include chores such as cooking and cleaning, childcare and care of others in the household.

In addition, women and girls have several socio-cultural and systemic obstacles to navigate. In many African countries, decision-making may still be vested in the men in the family, and young women have to give in to certain expectations about their roles (such as early marriage). For those women with an entrepreneurial bent, systemic challenges due to their gender may include difficulties in getting loans or legalities around ownership of resources. While many countries have enabling policies regarding female empowerment, there is frequently a gap between policy and implementation. Finally, there are contextual factors, such as physical safety issues (for example, when using public transport).

For these and many other reasons, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) defines the gender-transformative approach as

“actively questioning and critically analysing established norms and gender stereotypes and focusing on dismantling existing structural inequalities” to “transform unequal gender relations to promote shared power, control of resources, decision-making, and support for women’s empowerment”

(cited in the ATVET4Women Design Research Workshop Report, GFA 2019).



ABOUT THIS LEARNING BRIEF

This is Part 3 of the Learning Series **WORKING TOWARDS AGILE, RESPONSIVE SKILLS & (SELF) EMPLOYMENT ECOSYSTEMS IN AFRICA**. The Learning Series is a compilation of four Learning Briefs based on four focus areas identified as critical fields for effective skills development to address youth unemployment.



DISABILITY INCLUSION



ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE INFORMAL SECTOR



GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE




DEMAND-LED SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Gender-Transformative Change takes its place in the series as a critical economic lever in effective skills development policies and practices for economic growth. Young women make up a significant percentage of unemployed youth; and girls and women play a central role in family stability and progress in education and opportunity for the next generation. Ensuring that women can become employed or generate income in sustainable ways that increase their confidence and independence can only benefit all of society.

The initiatives discussed in this Learning Brief recognise the need for an integrated approach to women empowerment through skills development. Technical skills are essential, and the conditions under which these skills are exercised are equally so.





This Learning Brief will explore and discuss efforts of gender-transformative initiatives implemented across Africa, specifically **Gender makes Business Sense (GmBS)**, **The Youth Empowerment System (YES)** in Burkina Faso, **The Development Aid from People to People (DAPP)** in Malawi and a **panel discussion** from a webinar hosted by **GAN Global** on gender-transformative approaches in the world of work.

The Gender Makes Business Sense (GmBS) programme uses partnerships to ensure female trainees' access to finance and markets. The Youth Empowerment System (YES) programme has made its traditionally more male-oriented TVET offerings in sectors such as construction more attractive to girls and women. The Development Aid from People to People (DAPP) programme provides on-site and accessible training with equipment to its beneficiaries, and the panel discussion covers gender-transformative skills development from several angles, focusing on digital empowerment.

AN ECOSYSTEM APPROACH TO SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

This Learning Brief is framed by recognising that skills development programmes, initiatives and training organisations exist within an ecosystem that can enable or hinder the achievement of their goals. Since there are linkages and connections across the ecosystem, there is a need to create alignment and synergies, work in collaboration and create partnerships.

Understanding this helps skills development agencies navigate and influence their ecosystems for impact. What are the enablers that can unblock the system? How can these be leveraged to replicate and scale good practices? Who are the primary stakeholders that need to be engaged? How can practical contextual barriers to youth employment be reduced?

The six ecosystem components illustrated below are suggested as a starting point for growing this understanding and will be explored in relation to each good practice in this Learning Brief.



LEARNING BRIEFS AS A METHODOLOGY

Learning Briefs distil the lessons learnt and evidence gathered by practitioners working on the ground. The sharing of evidence-based knowledge, authentic experiences, case studies, success stories, and practical strategies across the continent promotes better planning and implementation of developmental interventions.

Each Learning Brief speaks to one of the focus areas listed above, presenting insights concerning various ecosystem components and practical solutions to problems encountered. Each part of the series is a chance to learn about common and unique challenges and new tools and solutions already being applied by practitioners in distinct public and private sectors across Africa.

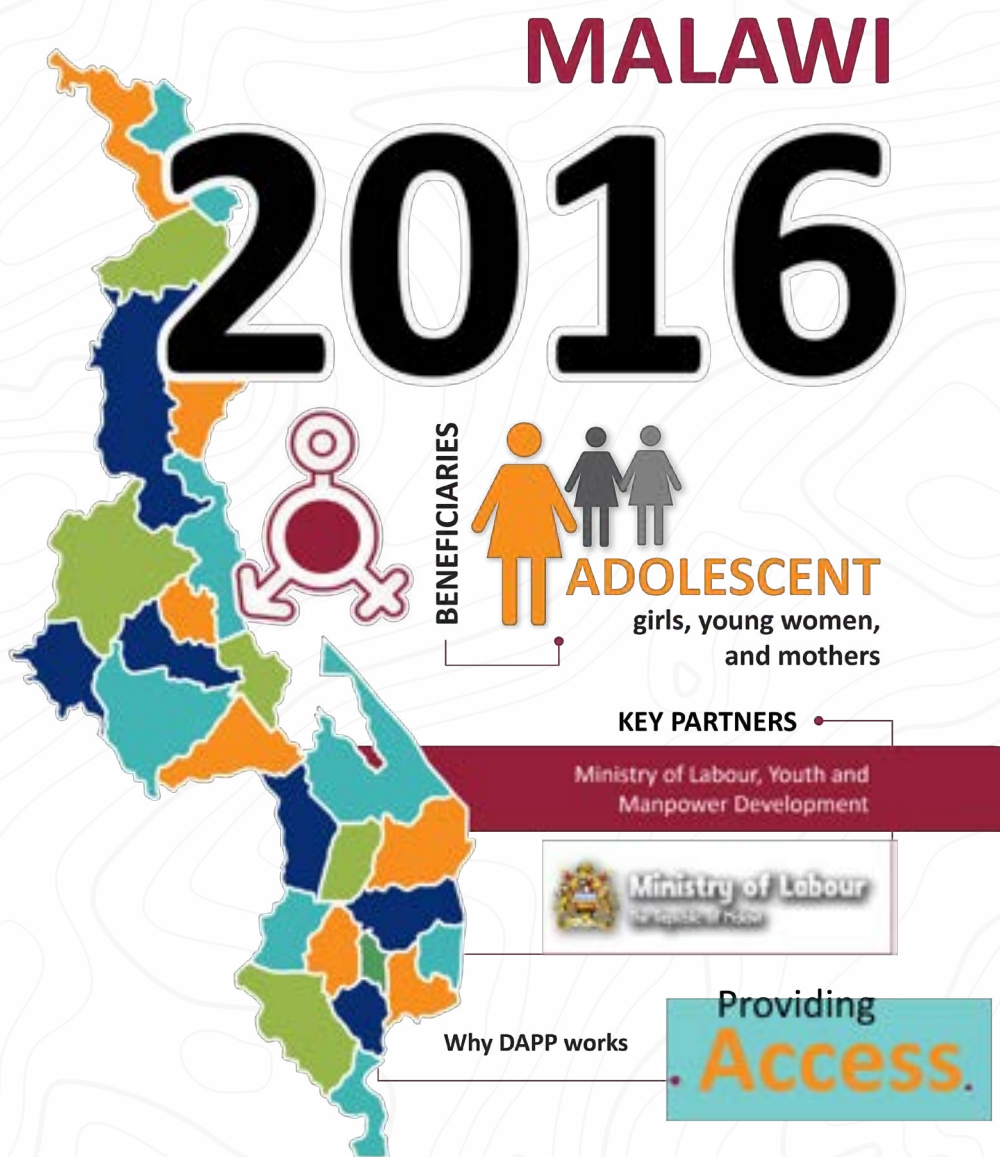




DEVELOPMENT AID FROM PEOPLE TO PEOPLE (DAPP): VOCATIONAL TRAINING ON THE GO FOR YOUNG WOMEN

Introduction

This initiative targets one of the most challenging barriers to effective skills development: access. Many youths in remote rural areas don't have access to TVET institutions, other training centres or the means to travel and stay outside their areas for study purposes. This is especially true of girls, who may be more closely tied to home duties. In addition, they may not even know the opportunities that might exist for them as they lack access to information. By taking the training and required equipment into the community through its mobile facility, DAPP has broken through this barrier.






Development Aid from People to People (DAPP) is a local non-government organisation (NGO) and a founding member of the Federation Humana People for People network, which comprises 30 organisations globally. Priority areas are selected and implemented based on a needs assessment and available capacities. Working on four focus areas: agriculture, education, community development, and health, DAPP draws on its Humana Network to provide local support for amplified impact.

DAPP has taken the vocational concept further through its Mobile Vocational Workshop, whereby a truck modified to become a mobile classroom, workshop, office, accommodation space and storeroom is used to reach its beneficiaries. Instructors are deployed to the villages in remote areas where they conduct training sessions in the truck equipped with various training resources.

Together with local structures, they agree on selection criteria and marketable courses. Youths are then enrolled according to these agreements.

DAPPS Impact

270  adolescent girls and teen mothers  trained in tailoring courses  self-employed.

90  sewing machines and other start-up tools and materials  distributed to the trainees

90  small-scale businesses  trainees established and earning income  with others buying their own machines.



The Challenge

Malawi ranks as one of the poorest countries globally. In addition to the economic challenges that the country faces, gender inequality continues to be a systemic issue. Approximately 42% of girls are married before age 18, with many experiencing the disparities in pathways towards women's economic empowerment first-hand. Young people with potential live in poverty and remote areas, lacking opportunities to access training information and work. Many drop out of school. This sets up a cycle of exclusion from skills development and income-generating opportunities. By engaging women and girls in consistent skills development, the initiative aims to accelerate development dividends across the initiative's fields of expertise.

DAPP's Solution

The mobile vocational training unit seeks to contribute to rural women's economic empowerment by developing the technical, entrepreneurial, and vocational skills that enable them to venture into profitable and sustainable income-generating activities. The **DAPP** mobile training approach was designed to include hard-to-reach youth in economic activities. Mobile training targets vulnerable rural youth without formal education, adolescent girls, teen mothers, child-headed families, and orphans.

The mobile training workshop offers training in the most underserved districts in the southern region of Malawi.



Every four months, the mobile unit moves to a new village. By design, the workshop is not only a centre for vocational skills training but also a mini youth and community centre connected to a solar-powered system, beamer, five laptops, internet dongles, computers, and a TV.

Women and girls are invited to meet at the centre after training and benefit from the facility, enjoy educational films with the community, discuss matters that affect them and get inspiration.

How DAPP works

The training process runs for four months, delivered through the mobile vocational training unit in the village's centre. Presented in English and local languages, the training includes practical activities, entrepreneurship lessons, business management and setup, teamwork, financial literacy, and industrial

attachments with local artisans. Following the training, beneficiaries are expected to form a team of three individuals to set up a joint business, supporting each other until they expand and can operate independently.



DAPP's Ecosystem: Good Practices

The project's success depends on various **ecosystem** factors, including **funding**, **stakeholder involvement**, collaborative **Creating partnerships**, and **Providing access to resources**. Access is the critical element in **DAPP's** approach.

Providing Access

Mobile vocational training reaches the most vulnerable and marginalised young women, and mothers through providing tailor-made vocational skills training curricula with local industrial attachments in hard-to-reach areas. The unit goes straight into the village and community, removing barriers to access such as transport. In many cases, villagers would not have access to information about such training outside their boundaries. Quality training is made free, so women and girls who often do not have access to income can receive skills

that can change their lives. Access to work is also ensured through the attachments provided to training participants. Given an unreliable electricity supply in rural Malawi, DAPP has installed solar panels on the mobile unit to allow training to occur without interruption. Laptops, the internet and even TV in remote areas are inaccessible. While the unit is present, trainees and other community members can enjoy access to these devices and the benefits they bring.

Stories of Success





Grace Wiliamu

Like most young women in rural areas, Grace Wiliamu did not go very far with her formal education. She became pregnant when she was in her 7th year of primary education. It meant that she stopped going to school to prepare for the birth of her child. She joined a group of girls at DAPP Malawi through the government's Department of Social Welfare as identified to kick start the training in the mobile workshop designed to empower the young women with skills in tailoring, among others.

As girls, we meet many problems as a result; we are forced to depend on men for survival. Cultures also impede girls' participation in development activities. For example, elders will tell us that we should not meet in groups for fear of meeting bad people. This training made me self-sustaining by breaking the culture of women's dependence on men.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

-  [Development Aid from People to People Malawi Website](#)
-  [Youtube Video: About the Mobile Vocational Truck](#)



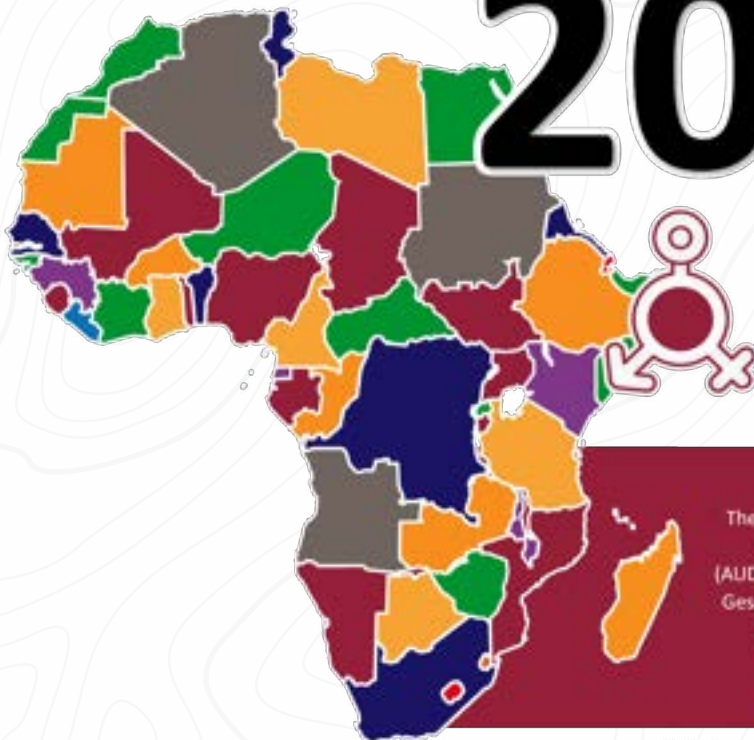
A CASE STUDY: GENDER MAKES BUSINESS SENSE (GMBS) - AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP THAT WORKS

Introduction

At the heart of the **Gender makes Business Sense (GmBS)** initiative is the focus on women empowerment, embracing behavioural change as well as a comprehensive range of practical skills and support for female entrepreneurs. In its broad scope and systemic approach, this programme addresses all elements of the skills development ecosystem. This is a mature initiative that has built on previous iterations, and has added innovation and scale through its transition to an e-learning programme.

THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

2022



BENEFICIARIES



AFRICAN

Entrepreneurs and aspiring Entrepreneurs

KEY PARTNERS

African Union Commission (AUC); The European Union (EU); African Union Development Agency New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD) Skills Initiative for Africa (SIFA) Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) KfW Development Bank, International Labour Organisation (ILO) GFA Consulting Group, Abing, Education and Training Foundation (ETF)



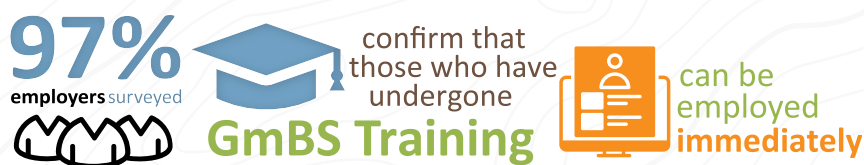
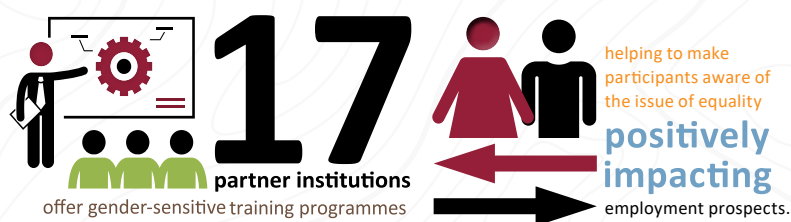
Why Gender makes Business Sense works?

Providing Access.

Gender makes Business Sense (GmBS) is based on human-centred design and anchored in a holistic process that explores business development skills and mindset, culture, and belief systems regarding gender. The GmBS e-learning course is an interactive capacity development journey for entrepreneurs that enhances their understanding of business plus an integrated gender dimension to thrive with a new mindset.

The course is based on the GmBS face-to-face training programme, which has been evaluated and rolled out in six African countries, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, and Togo. The GmBS face-to-face training was about Gender-Transformative Change, tackling power relations at the root causes systematically, by demanding behavioural change at various levels and stages, not only from agripreneurs but also from policy actors in national ministries and GmBS facilitators in the field.

GmBS' Face-2-Face Programme Impact



The Challenge

Women's economic empowerment is essential for inclusive growth in Africa. Yet, women are disproportionately represented in decision-making, business, and high-income value chain segments. Additionally, ALL entrepreneurs face challenges, including access to capital and markets. Often, female entrepreneurs face additional constraints because they are women. Social norms and access to networks, among other things, can prevent them from growing their business. For this reason, it is crucial to address gender constraints in entrepreneurship.

Gender makes Business Sense's Digital Solution

The GmBS e-learning course equips African entrepreneurs with practical business management skills, financial know-how and an understanding of the socio-economic impact of gender dynamics in their business. Participants, both women and men, will benefit from the business development and empowerment aspects of the GmBS e-learning course and will:

- 💡 Learn how to make more strategic business decisions that are cost-effective and collaborative.
- 💡 Appreciate the socio-economic impact of gender dynamics in their business and communities.
- 💡 Apply the Business Model Canvas to visualise the critical building blocks of their business.
- 💡 Develop a sustainable business growth plan that takes gender-transformative approaches into account.
- 💡 Learn how gender-transformative change can be beneficial for their business.

Entrepreneurs who take this course start making more inclusive, collaborative, cost-efficient, strategic, and gender-transformative business decisions.

How the GmBS E-Learning Course Works

The **GmBS** e-learning course is a 5-module asynchronous e-learning course that combines user-friendly and engaging content with the digital format allowing a transformational learning experience using various interactive multimedia.



For more information about the training course outline visit: <https://aspyee.org/gmbs>

GmBS's Ecosystem: Good Practices

The success of any project is dependent upon and influenced by various ecosystem components, including access to resources and support, beneficiaries, stakeholders, and collaborative partnerships. Within the scope of GmBS, Providing Access to users is crucial to ensure the initiative's success.

Providing Access

In 2021, **GmBS** embarked on digitalising its face-to-face training into an e-learning course. On the ground, the gender-transformative training programme was implemented by the Agriculture Technical and Vocational Education and Training for Women (ATVET4W) in Africa project in Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, and Togo. When vital capacity-building programmes developed for face-face learning were affected by the onset of COVID-19, **GmBS** decided to go digital and expand to include entrepreneurs from sectors outside of agriculture. The asynchronous 5-module e-learning course is accessible via various online platforms, including AUDA-NEPAD's [Aspyee](#) and [Atingi](#). Considering the programme's richness, creating a flexible e-learning course for different contexts with different means and budgets was vital. The goal was to reach the learning objectives while keeping the content user-friendly and engaging. To achieve this, the GmBS team did more than transfer the learning content into a digital format; with the help of instructional design experts, they carefully reimagined the content for a self-paced and transformational learning experience for users.



Stories of Success



Gender Makes Business Sense — Success Stories from Togo

A practical capacity development journey for entrepreneurs in Togo

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nUQCb5mT6Ps>

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

-  Women's Empowerment in Entrepreneurship YouTube video
-  Gamifying Gender Transformative Change YouTube video
-  Using the Business Model Canvas YouTube video
-  GmBS e-learning Course signup



YOUTH EMPOWERMENT SYSTEMS (YES): VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING FOR VULNERABLE YOUTH IN MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES

Introduction

The YES initiative identifies and addresses a critical gap in Burkina Faso's skills development ecosystem. Burkina Faso's TVET system is weak and inefficient, and does not provide enough effective, practical, and technical training programmes that lead to the employment of successful entrepreneurship. YES has developed trade courses for the construction industry, which fosters employability. The most striking feature of this initiative is its sensitivity to its beneficiaries, the youth, particularly women, who would not enter and continue in standard TVET or other training programmes due to their extreme lack of resources. YES addresses basic daily living needs and provides for their study needs.

BURKINA FASO

2009

Why Youth Empowerment Systems (YES) works?
Providing **Access & Resource Management.**

BENEFICIARIES
YOUTH aged 18-35yrs
Persons With Disabilities

KEY PARTNERS
Burkina Faso Ministry of Youth; The General Directorate of Vocational Training; The National Secretariat of Certifications; International Teams Canada; The European Union; The town halls of the municipalities and Local businesses in the operational areas

unesco | European Union | International Teams Canada

Youth Empowerment Systems (YES)'s Vocational Training and Recognition of Prior Learning programme is a training tool that addresses the root causes of instability, forced displacement and irregular migration through improved economic opportunities and access to equal opportunities for the youth and young adults, particularly for women. The combination of technical and life skills training allows the programme to contribute to national security and development.

Youth Empowerment Systems (YES)'s Impact

650
Learners trained
since 2009



98%
employability



42



are running
businesses in
the trades they
trained in.

The Challenge

In Burkina Faso, national policies are struggling to meet the demands of the youth regarding access to productive and sustainable dignified employment. Young people, especially the rural and non-literate, suffer from administrative isolation, leading to a lack of access to vocational and career alternatives. Young women in the local context are often victims of cultural selection. They are denied access to school because families choose to educate the male child, making many underage girls' victims of forced marriages, domestic violence, exploitation, and human trafficking.

In Burkina Faso, a third of school-age children and youth – approximately one million girls and boys – do not have access to education. Only 39.35% of the adult population is literate.

Many of these youth become idle, making them more susceptible to exploitation.

In Burkina Faso, there is low and inequitable access to education, misaligned, irrelevant, or obsolete curricula and poor learning outcomes, inadequate education financing by the government and private sector, weak education system capacity, and a flimsy link with the world of work. Most of the youth and young adults in vulnerable, rural communities cannot read or write in English, as education is delivered in the medium of communication in Burkina Faso, French.


The education system and curriculum expose huge disparities and system dysfunctions and inefficiencies in education sub-sectors such as pre-primary, technical, vocational, and informal education, which are severely underdeveloped. Furthermore, education and training programmes suffer from low-quality teaching, inequalities, and exclusion at all levels. Despite a failure to create job opportunities coupled with the high demand for labour in the primary and secondary sectors of the Burkina Faso economy, the school curriculum remains skewed towards the tertiary sector, which is concerned with services and administrative management, ignoring the immeasurable potential for the primary, and

secondary sectors of the economy that focus on the extraction and production of raw materials and manufacturing and processing.

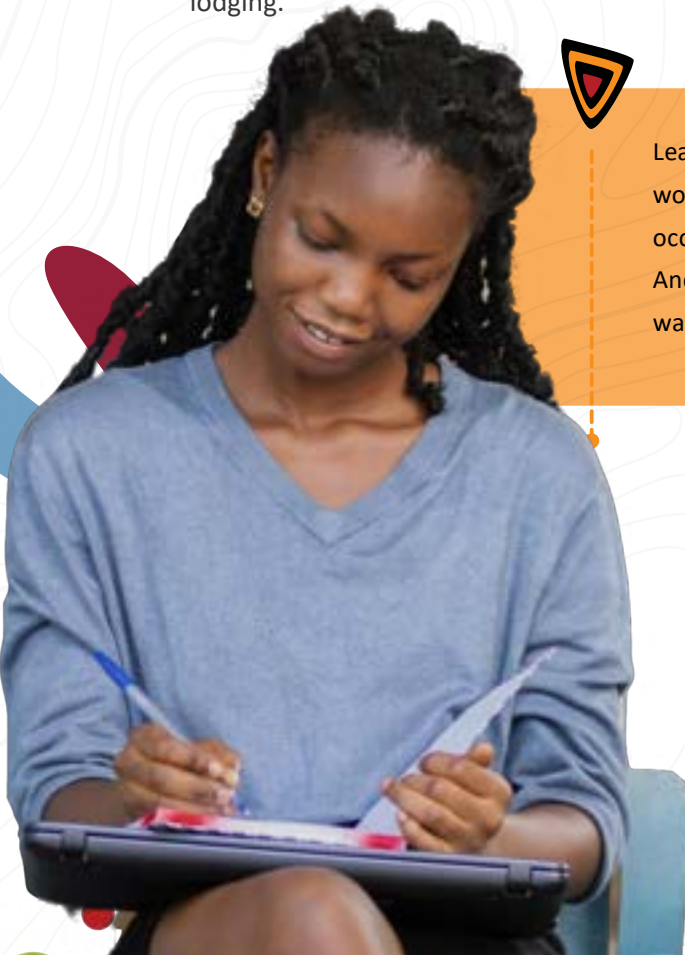
There is a disproportionate distribution of educational investment between primary and higher education in Burkina Faso. Substantial investments are directed towards higher education, yet more than 90% of children started in Grade 1 do not attend university. If priorities are not shifted towards allocating effort and resources toward root causes of socio-economic challenges like primary education, youth will continue to find alternatives to education; They will continue to become idle and left vulnerable and susceptible to rebel radicalisation, human trafficking, and illegal migration.

Youth Empowerment Systems (YES)'s Solution:

YES identified Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as the best alternative to formal schooling. TVET, however, for individuals, can be financially burdensome to access as the acquisition of training tools, equipment, and materials are expensive for the youth that need TVET the most. To mitigate the challenge of poor access to education, YES, through The Centre de Formation Professionnelle en Construction (CFPC), offers affordable, inclusive education through its training activities and professional training centres.

 The YES Construction Vocational Training Centre promotes decent, freely chosen, fully productive, and sustainable work, for peace, social cohesion, and community resilience.

YES provides free, high-level training for the job market. Programmes are geared towards restoring the learner's dignity before preparing them for the job market. During training, learners are provided with personal safety equipment, a toolbox, health coverage, food, clothing, and lodging.



Learners spend 80% of the training time in equipped workshops and 20% learning French, financial management, occupational health, and safety, and Computer-Aided Design And Manufacturing. Women receive a 'dignity kit' consisting of wash towels, soap, a bucket, and sanitary wear.

Each cohort works on a building project for the centre. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) tests are conducted for learners who have skills in building trades but do not have the certification that allows them access to decent and sustainable jobs. The duration of the tests varies according to the field and is available according to the productions envisaged by the centre.

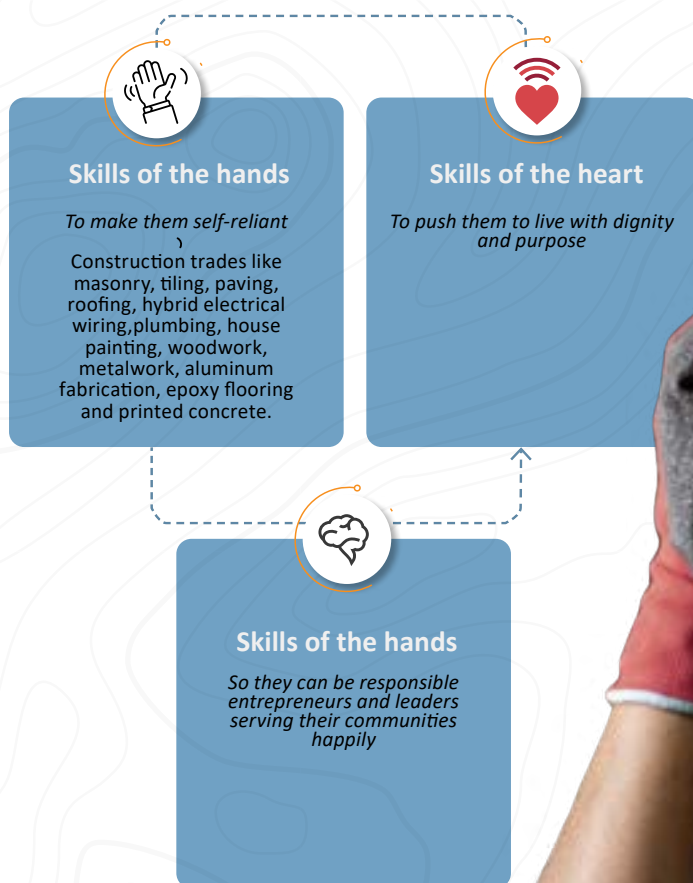


At the end of the training, each learner receives a Diploma from the Burkina Faso government, a skills passport that facilitates their mobility, and an installation kit that allows them to become self-employed.

YES also encourages their attendance at an annual job fair.

In 2020 **YES** welcomed their first batch of girls and women into their short-term electrical wiring programme, targeting school dropouts from impoverished backgrounds and women facing social and economic problems with no opportunity to make a living, even babysitting their children so the mothers could learn quietly. Many of them did well and are now fully employed with decent jobs.

How Youth Empowerment Systems (YES)'s Works





Youth Empowerment Systems (YES)'s : Good Practices

Resources Management

YES has found a creative way to make TVET education affordable and more sustainable. Based on the 80% practical and 20% in-class approach, each cohort works on a building project for the centre. It is mandatory for trainees in woodworking, welding, and masonry to present their projects at the end of training. At YES, trainees must complete a furnished building with windows, chairs, tables, and shelves after two years.

Identified as the best training centre in the Plateau Central Region, the centre sits on a 4-hectare piece of land with a fully equipped woodwork, welding, and masonry workshop, all built by students, a truck that acts as a mobile training unit, a concrete mixer, compactor, and heavy-duty welders. Their first cohort of learners designed and built classrooms; others built houses for the teachers and staff. They have found this is the wisest way to use materials; instead of wasting cement and sand, they sustainably use them so the learners can practise.

"We inform partners that they need materials for the students to do welding. We invest materials into the building, and the students learn on-site and on the job. It is a win-win process."

- Victorien Karflo, Founder of YES

Providing Access

Some villages in Burkina Faso lack adequate infrastructure or even school classrooms. Many learners study under trees or in a room made of grass.

In some cases, classrooms came into disrepair. The YES team goes into villages and observes what is required or needs to be repaired. Their truck is fully equipped with all the tools and equipment necessary to build and repair schools or clinics. When they made a youth centre, instead of bringing in professional masons, they went in with a trainer. But before that, they conduct a recruitment drive through radio campaigns via community radio stations informing the community they are coming to train youth and women in construction, tiling, roofing, electricity, painting and solar. Ten students per trade are selected. Learners are trained in the morning and apply what they learn in the afternoon. Each training cycle can run for up to 3 months when the building is ready to be used. If the building needs to be furnished, welders are trained. Each trainee receives a certificate from the centre, and after being evaluated by the Ministry of Youth and Vocational Training, they receive a qualification with a certification.

Stories of Success



Kologo Alice | Assistant Electrician



I stopped schooling in 2015 because I did not do well, and my parents could not afford to pay the fees; as a mother, it is not easy to resume school or attend a training centre for an entire year. Sometimes I get depressed at the thought of not having a diploma that can give me a job. I was home every day, and it was not a good feeling. One day I was listening to the radio and heard about the centre and the electrical wiring programme. I quickly applied for that short-term Programme I was interested in, and luckily, I was enrolled. I got trained, and I loved what I learnt. I dreamed of learning how to go up on poles to do the wiring. After the training, I recruited my classmates to work as assistant electricians at the new airport. Thanks to the centre, I now make a living, and I am able to take care of my family and my parents. I want to encourage girls in the construction trades because it can help them in the future.



Zonga Wendalassida | Masonry

My father has seven wives and 33 children. Some of us went to school, but in grade 3, I stopped school because my father refused to pay the fees. My father has preferences for boys' education. I realised I would not go to school anymore because my mother is so poor and cannot pay for me to return to school. My next option is to wait for a man to marry me. It felt like the only option. Getting married without having a decent job to take care of myself and my children, I was sure that I would be a victim of domestic violence. When I heard about the centre, I chose to join Masonry. Being here at the centre is a real blessing, and I am thankful the centre has impacted my life, and I am happy to go there every morning. We got uniforms for free; we do not pay to study here, we are fed every day free of charge, we are clothed, and we have safety equipment. I am thankful to the leaders of the centre

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

-  [Together We Make A Big Difference YouTube Video](#)
-  [Youth Empowerment Systems Website](#)



IN CONVERSATION - DRIVING GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES FOR AFRICA: PATHWAYS TO THE INFORMAL SECTOR

Introduction

The [African Union](#) and [AUDA NEPAD](#), through SIFA and [GAN Global](#), hosted a webinar on driving gender-transformative approaches for Africa: Strategies to empower women in the world of work through vocational education training on 28 July 2022 at 11:00 (CAT). The webinar highlighted how the [AU Commission](#), [AUDA-NEPAD](#), through SIFA and [GAN Global](#) members, with the support of funders and partners, are continually pursuing opportunities to increase and sustain African women working in STEM.

*Watch the webinar [here](#)

SIFA-led Gender Transformative programmes - Lessons from the Agricultural Technical and Vocational Education and Training for Women (ATVET4W) Programme



Ms Sara Jabril | Technical Advisor Skills Initiative for Africa-ATVET4W

“Let us link gender transformative approaches and women’s empowerment because, through gender transformative activities and projects, we aim for women’s and girls’ empowerment. As a project, when we started to conceptualise different activities in the partner countries, we found this framework especially useful - the Reach-Benefit-Empower framework or principle, to distinguish what we mean when we talk about empowerment.”

Reaching Women Does not Always Result In Empowerment



The distinction between Reach, Benefit and Empower points out that simply reaching women, for example, by including them in meetings or training, does not necessarily ensure that they will also benefit from increased income.



For example, a woman attends training and receives a certificate; how do we assess whether there is a benefit? As a result of having gained additional skills and certification, she can now negotiate for a higher wage. And then that crucial last connection to empowerment - as even if there is a benefit, it does not always mean that there's also empowerment or positive empowerment outcomes.



The ideal situation is that the woman increases her income, and there is an expansion of choices, such that she has the agency to decide what she wants to do with that additional income or what she wants to invest in. The question is, does she have access to land and other opportunities? This is a valuable basis for distinguishing what we aim for when discussing empowerment, specifically in skills development.



The Four Domains of Empowerment



Strategies for Improved VET Transitions for Women

We work with rural women with limited educational experience in six countries, mainly young women already in or desiring to enter more formal TVET offers in agriculture. Very crucial for gender-transformative change, we ensure that men and community leaders with decision-making power and agripreneurs and role models are active participants. To conceptualise empowerment, we found it helpful to think about it in four different domains or questions, starting with the individual one, which is about self-belief and agency. It is essential to increase self-confidence and help women feel like they can go out there and achieve more. Then on the relational level, which is all about power dynamics and decision-making, and is often connected to the household level and the different dynamics. Then systems and structures are critical as well. When we talk about the policy level - how can we empower, safeguard, and support the position of women through different policies and laws? And the fourth domain, the socio-cultural domain, which is all about challenging norms and stereotypes, which can take a long time to influence”

PANEL DISCUSSION: SHOWCASING CASE STUDIES



The Case for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

Laura Schmid- Skills and Employability Representative (Gender focus), International Labour Organisation (ILO)

“Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is sometimes the stepchild in the education system because higher education and primary education do get a lot of the focus and resources. There are also excellent reasons for this. However, being German and having seen how a Technical Education and Training System, if it is well done, can produce young people with excellent chances to enter the labour market, it makes obvious sense to look into and invest in technical educational education and training in Africa.”

The AU has produced but not yet published an Africa-wide review of technical educational Education and Training. It is an analysis of different policies and a collection of best practice examples where countries have managed to reform and restructure their TVET system. The ILO is in the process of a standard setting looking at quality apprenticeship. Many tools have been produced to measure quality apprenticeship- there is a volume and a guide for practitioners. There are also some practical manuals on increasing the quality or inclusion of apprenticeships.

Demand-Led Skills Development with a Gender Lens

Very often, there is a divide between what the labour market needs and what the technical and vocational training providers offer, ranging from curricula to machinery to training advice that is not related to the industry and cannot train the youth according to the industry needs. There is a growing approach to bring the industry and the TVET providers closer, looking at different sectoral skills and skills participation forms. There is also intra-company training - a technique where, for instance, big companies, which very often have their training centres train trainees from smaller medium-sized companies in the local labour market in their training centres because those training



companies very often do not have the means to prepare the youth for the labour market.

TVET is still not gender-equal. This has multiple reasons - some social and stereotypical - that it is blue collar labour and is not suitable for women like being a plumber, electrician, or technician. Suppose females join the TVET system or education system. In that case, you will very often find them either in the caretaking professions, beauty hairdressing or textile sewing machine operation, so, in our time, it makes sense to think about how we can push this forward- what can you do as development partners and governments to support young girls and women to enter different fields with better prospects for the labour market.

The Work of the ILO

On the one hand, we have worked with awareness-raising campaigns targeting parents, having open days at the TVET Centres. We have just done a solar and photovoltaic electrician training programme in Somalia. We have also looked at women's constraints regarding safe and secure transportation to the facilities, adequate changing rooms, and adequate treatment. We have worked extensively on supervisory skills training inside factories and collaborating with those so-called master trainers. Many in supervisory roles are still men and are confronted with many young female trainees, so we have done gender-sensitive training. We have also done some classical programmes, such as in Egypt, where we work with scholarships for rural women to access TVET and to go to technical universities to look into more stem-based careers."



Reaching Rural Communities and Empowering Women Through Access to Technology

Winnie Karanu, Philanthropy Lead for Sub-Saharan Africa, Microsoft

Ensuring Digital Inclusion for Women and Girls

When it comes to skills development, TVET can be a tool to bridge the continent's unemployment gap and solve Africa's unemployment crisis.



At the level of the African Union, there is already a continental TVET strategy, and it has a strong focus on youth employment. It considers concrete recommendations to address policy challenges and gaps that constrain the implementation of programmes for skills development on the continent. The main objective of this strategy is to promote skills acquisition to training, responding to the demand of the social and economic value it plays in fostering employability, sustainable livelihoods, and responsible citizenship.

That is why it is about more than just giving skills; it also ensures that the trainees have a safe place in society. Another priority is to position TVET within the education system as a tool to empower African people, especially the youth. It is key to Brand TVET in a way that ensures that parents know that it is a valid road for students to take. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many people were displaced in the economy. So, there was a need to think about how some jobs are being created while others are disappearing and the role of Microsoft Team to help people get back to work and

partnering to help job seekers gain their skills for in-demand roles in a module economy. We care about this as Microsoft - empowering every person and organisation on the planet to achieve more is core to everything we do.

How do we ensure everyone has the skills, knowledge, and opportunity to succeed in this digital economy? At Microsoft, we believe that when your technology changes the world, you bear the responsibility to help address the world you have helped create and accept greater responsibility for the future.

The Work of Microsoft

When you think about the adoption of technology and digital transformation, there have been many changes in how we work, interact with each other, and think about work.

We have been looking at it from 3 primary areas: There's a global economic crisis, an aspect of returning to a different economy, and an intensified skilling challenge.

Microsoft launched the global skilling initiative as a response to the Skills Gap and set a goal of a million job seekers being trained. Many people needed to be upskilled and reskilled to be able to participate in the economy. To scale this, we created partnerships with the private and public sectors and non-profits. We also look at the kind of jobs we connect people to and ensure they have access to role-based training and not just broad-based training.

We have a couple of programmes focused primarily on women, for example, the women's textiles initiative, a partnership between Microsoft and a tech non-profit. Soon our Islamic Development Bank is joining us to be able to drive this programme where we want to train five million girls and women from the age of two years old on excellent digital skills so that we can connect them to available jobs. We will do so through fellowships, boot camps, master classes and open days. We are trying to involve the industry as much as possible.

We also have a programme called Microsoft Leap. We look into sourcing for non-traditional, highly diverse candidates; this could be women who left work to take care of their responsibilities at home. We take them through an intensive program for up to six months, where they are trained to become senior Software Engineers. Through our many programmes, we have seen women's lives being changed."





How Improving Connectivity is Enhancing Women's Empowerment Efforts in Africa

Mamello Selamolela, Managing Executive for Group Strategy and Innovation, Vodacom

"When we think about digital skills and inclusion, as Vodacom, we start with our purpose - 'we connect for a better future.' A key pillar in connecting for a better future is inclusion for all. At the societal level, specific prerequisites need to be in place for technology to create a better future for citizens on the continent and women in particular.



The first of these is affordable access to technology. If people cannot access the technology and they cannot access basic connectivity, then they are unable to participate in the benefits and opportunities presented by technology.

A starting point is the fundamentals around connectivity. We are collaborating with partners across the continent in all the markets where we operate to ensure that we are doubling down on investment in rural coverage. We know that women in rural areas are disadvantaged if they do not have or enjoy technology's benefits.

Investing in rural coverage

So, we are investing with partners in rural coverage, increasing the availability of affordable devices, and making access to the internet more affordable. This creates the foundation for ensuring that people across the continent and women can access technology's benefits.



Over the next three years, we aim to connect a million more women across the continent and in the Middle East to affordable technology.

People will then be able to use our financial services solutions targeted at micro, small and medium enterprises, which levels the playing field for female entrepreneurs to access opportunities. Access digital financial solutions, the types of education and awareness that help them improve their businesses, grow their businesses, and increase employment and wealth.

Female Farmers Programme

Another example is our Female Farmers program. We know that agriculture employs a massive portion of the population in some African countries, and women disproportionately conduct subsistence farming. So, our investment in female farmers tends to have an amplified impact on society. When we go in and provide digital skills training to female farmers to be able to use the basics of technology - from word processing to financial skills, we're able to take them from that basic level of awareness and

training and plug them into our connected farmer platform that gives them access to markets, better-priced inputs and outputs so that they can have more control over the commercial aspects of their business.

Making Education More Accessible with TVETs

We also partnered with the education sector, and one of our initiatives was partnering with universities and TVET colleges to make education more accessible during the lockdown and that, of course, was entirely dependent on technology. An unexpected benefit is that female students are now more able to access content from the safety of their own homes, improving their educational outcomes without compromising their physical safety. Where previously they would have had to be on campus to access this content, they can now do that more flexibly."



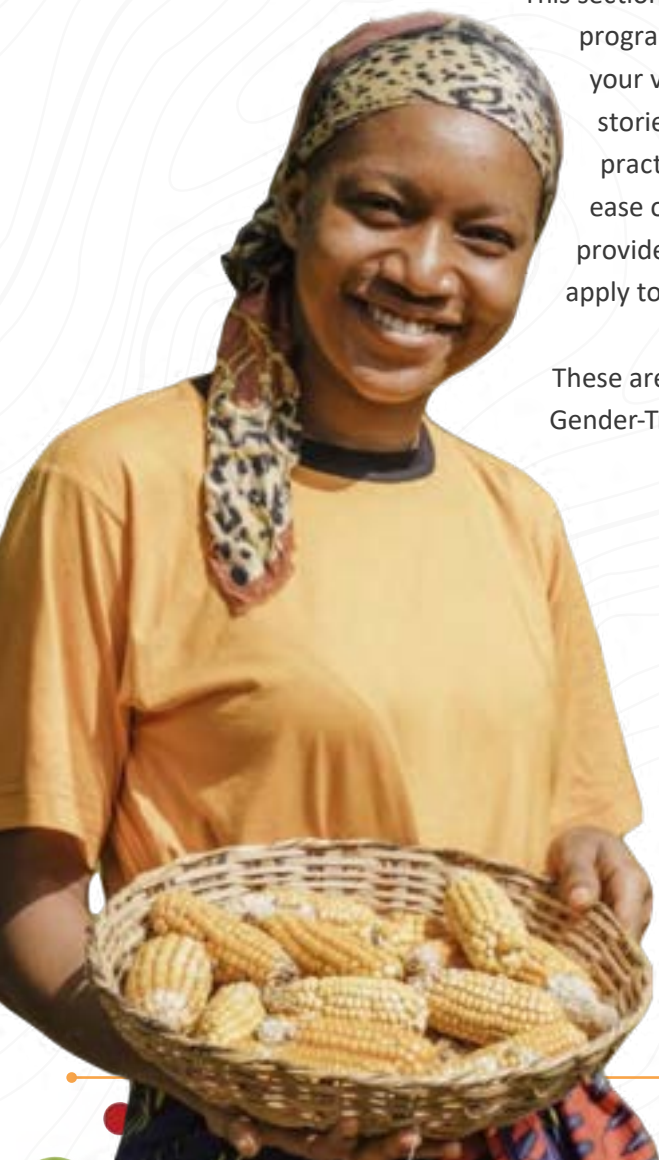
LESSONS LEARNT, TIPS & STRATEGIES

This Learning Brief has been written for practitioners and policymakers interested in good African practices, successes, and lessons learnt regarding **Gender-Transformative Change** in the context of “Working towards agile, responsive skills and (self) employment ecosystems in Africa.”

Your perspective might be that of a policy maker, a training provider, a researcher, a funder, an implementer, an evaluator, or a beneficiary in the key thematic and intervention areas identified in the **Continental Education (CESA)** and **Continental TVET Strategies**.

This section draws lessons from the experiences of initiatives and programmes highlighted in this Learning Brief for application in your varying contexts. With an appreciation of the challenges, stories of success, research and observations shared by practitioners across the continent, lessons are generalised for ease of replication. Building on these lessons, the section further provides a set of tips and strategies that you are encouraged to apply to your context where possible.

These are selected and generalised from the initiatives for Gender-Transformative Change described in this brief.



LESSONS LEARNT

Research

Review and adaptation of programmes is enriching and should be based on monitoring and evaluation of the rollout of different versions of the programme in different countries and contexts. Use feedback from these experiences to adapt the training programme and share innovations in subsequent versions.

The curriculum needs to include **practical ways of addressing systemic blockages** faced by women.

Beneficiary Group


Peer support is effective in business development. The TRIO system of setting up three youths as business partners can work well. Partners encourage each other, encounter problems, find solutions together, and share responsibilities, including marketing and developing a saving culture, as the business is not individualised.

Promote an **entrepreneurial mindset.** Entrepreneurship is a critical component in the mindset change of trainees. They are motivated to become their own bosses and do away with the old ideology that they must attain skills to be employed: instead, they focus on gaining a skill to engage others. It is crucial to develop the idea that youth can be their own change agents and that seeking employment at companies should not be the only reason to get into vocational skills training.

Student recruitment and retention in the programme for severely impoverished and disadvantaged groups can only be ensured by offering a full range of support. This includes access to the practical training from within their communities, provision of training equipment, and assistance with basic living needs.

The various **skills learnt need to be integrated** into a project with a concrete outcome.





Formal recognition through certification is important for trainees for industry acceptance.

Access Required

Access to training is vital. Regardless of their educational background, all youth have the potential to attain a skill, but they need access to that opportunity. Mobile training is a solution as it reaches everyone.

Post-training support is essential. Many youths trained in the formal or informal sector remain idle without participating in economic activities in line with what they learnt. Start-up tool kits help trainees create and find work.

Access to an e-learning programme needs to be enabled by as many different platforms as possible. **Content** also needs to be accessible, by making sure that the material is relayed in easy to understand language and helpful instructional design.

Partners

Duplication of effort can be avoided by including **partner institutions** in ongoing dialogues around lessons learnt, in order to develop useful gender guidelines that grow awareness in both training and employment contexts.



TIPS & STRATEGIES

- 💡 Awareness-raising strategies need to be part of Gender-Transformative Change in skills development. This includes making some of the barriers faced by girls and women explicit, as well as addressing gender stereotypes around the kinds of work women can or should do. It could also include raising the profile of TVET as a desirable route towards employment.
- 💡 To reach marginalised target groups, training needs to be embedded on site and in the community - whether this is through mobile facilities or ensuring connectivity for any online training. This not only enables access, but can also create buy-in from the community.
- 💡 The benefits of the project need to be made visible and communicated - to beneficiaries, to partners, to employers and to any other stakeholders. Visibility might be shown through concrete outcomes, such as trainee products or achievements which can be showcased; or through the sharing of quantitative impact data to interested stakeholders.
- 💡 Post-training follow up and support has been shown to increase the chances of trainees remaining in employment or sustaining their income-generating activities. This can take various forms, but a supported network of alumni who can offer advice and guidance, and even potential collaboration, works well.
- 💡 Monitoring and evaluation of programmes, including the gathering of feedback from all partners, is essential so that review and adaptation can lead to improvements and scaling up of programmes.
- 💡 Gender-responsive skills development needs to engage with systemic barriers to female employment or income generating activities, and offer guidelines on how to address these.





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The Learning Brief also draws from expertise and knowledge sharing through **case studies, webinars, and research papers.**

- Case Study: Gender makes Business Sense, Agricultural Technical Vocation Education Training for Women (ATVET4W)
- Webinar Panellists: Driving Gender-Transformative Approaches for Africa: Strategies to Empower Women and Girls in the World of Work through TVET
 - Ms Sara Jabril, Technical Advisor Skills Initiative for Africa- Agricultural Technical Vocation Education Training for Women (ATVET4W)
 - Laura Schmid- Skills and Employability Representative (Gender focus), International Labour Organisation (ILO)
 - Winnie Karanu, Philanthropy Lead for Sub-Saharan Africa, Microsoft
 - Mamello Selamolela, Managing Executive for Group Strategy and Innovation, Vodacom

