

This brief provides an update to [Sida's 2018 Information Brief on Skills Development](#). The update includes definitions of skills development and Technical Vocation and Training (TVET), the linkages to national education systems, who are the beneficiaries and how skills and TVET support the green transition and economic development with examples from Sida's contributions.

DEFINITIONS OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND TVET

Skills development and TVET refers to all learning and training aimed at increasing productive capabilities. Skills development can contribute to structural transformation and economic growth by enhancing employability, labor productivity and helping countries to become more competitive.¹ No substitute for improved skills has been identified that offers similar possibilities of facilitating the inclusive economic growth needed to address the full range of the 17 SDGs.²

- In 2023, 13 per cent of the world's youth (64,9 million) were unemployed. However, **20.4 per cent were not in employment, education, or training (NEET)**, highlighting broader labour market exclusion among young people and missed opportunities in human capital development.
- One-third of young people live in countries "off track" in **reducing NEET rates**, particularly low-income countries and regions with high NEET rates, like Arab States, North Africa, and sub-Saharan Africa.
- **Women are disproportionately affected**, with 28% of young women in NEET status, more than double the rate of young men at 13%.³

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, TVET AND THE NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEMS

The picture to the right illustrates three main types of skills:

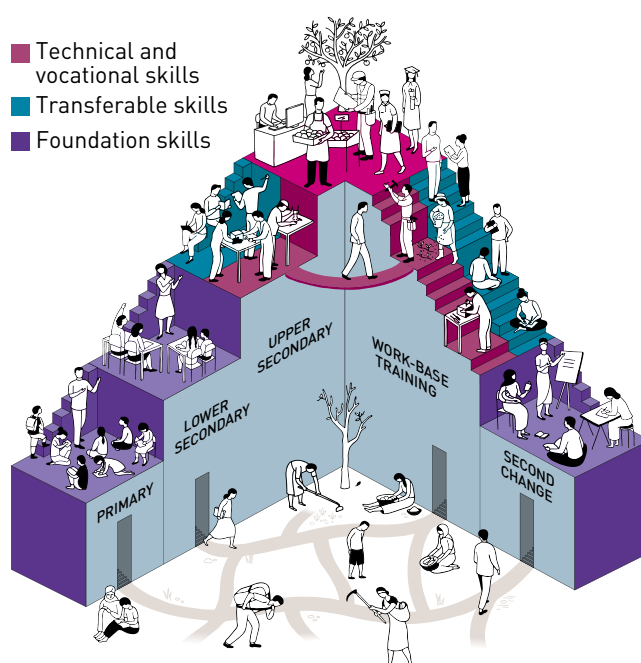
1. Basic Foundational Skills
2. Transferable Skills
3. TVET

On the left-hand side is the formal education system (primary, lower and upper-secondary) and its extension into technical and vocational education.

On the right-hand side, the alternative training opportunities for individuals who missed out on formal schooling. These include second-chance programs, work-based training, apprenticeships, and farm-based learning.

At the bottom of the picture are individuals with no formal skills, often engaged in low-wage, subsistence-level work and trapped in poverty. The second and third levels represent those who have acquired basic foundational skills, preparing them for further vocational training. At the top are individuals whose accumulated skills allow them to pursue higher education.

Although skills development, TVET, and adult education are often managed by separate units within Ministries of Education, they typically operate with limited resources and capacity. Additionally, many TVET institutions function outside the formal education system, yet still contribute to national education goals.



¹ [Skills Development](#)

² OECD (2015), Universal Basic Skills: What Countries Stand to Gain, OECD Publishing

³ ILO, 2024 [Global employment trends for youth 2024, executive summary](#), p. 1-2

WHO BENEFIT FROM SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND TVET?

Fulfilling secondary education gives youth the best prerequisite to develop skills that would put them in a stronger position to get good jobs. Many countries have successfully expanded access to primary education but struggle with ensuring students successfully transition to and succeed in secondary education that would enable them to consolidate and build on basic skills. Promoting the kind of skills that employers demand in new recruits from school will be more successful if students have exposure to work through apprenticeships and other innovative approaches to learning. However, unless more disadvantaged youth complete lower secondary school, they are unlikely to benefit from TVET.⁴

(1). Disadvantaged youth are often below the radar of youth employment policies and programmes, or approaches aimed at creating jobs in the private sector. Many have not been able to progress to lower secondary school and urgently need support to develop foundation skills. To give them a better chance of obtaining good jobs, **they must be able to build on these foundations by acquiring the transferable skills and technical and vocational skills that are required in today's ever-changing labour market.**

(2.) Many rural youth, particularly women, need to improve their literacy and numeracy skills as a first step to ensuring that they can benefit from other agricultural and non-farm skills development programmes. Flexible opportunities should be offered to students who are at risk of dropping out of secondary education. Distance education centres can be set up to cater for the learning needs of disadvantaged youth. Appropriate recognition should be given to skills gained through such alternative learning pathways.

(3). A second-chance opportunities focus on children who have just missed the opportunity for schooling. It is vital for these to be extended to 15- to 24-year-olds, who also need the chance to catch up. Out-of-school youth need a re-entry into primary and secondary education to catch up in basic literacy and numeracy, including life skill subjects and sometimes includes vocational education and microenterprise activities.

EXAMPLE FROM AFGHANISTAN

Within the complexities of Afghanistan's current socio-political situation, the disparity in access to education and employment opportunities for youth living in vulnerable situations, and among these especially adolescent girls and young women, persists. The suspension of education beyond Grade 6 for girls has resulted in a staggering 89 per cent decrease in female students in TVET institutions, signaling a severe underutilization of human potential.⁵



Picture of Shakila studying in Afghanistan.
Photo by Arzhang Yusefi

The UNESCO Skills based literacy project – dairy production/farming in Nangarhar province has provided illiterate women a combination of both literacy and practical skills to support women earn an income through making dairy products. A participant described it as she soon started to recognize words, then sentences. Numbers became clearer, and before long, she was learning how to add, subtract, and multiply. Simultaneously, she improved her livestock skills. Dairy production wasn't new to her. However, the training helped her to discover ways to transform her knowledge and livestock into a steady source of income. With her new skills, she transformed what was once a household task into a sustainable business and source of income, valued by her family. She now sends messages to inform her community about fresh cheese, labels her dairy products, and tracks her earnings efficiently.⁶

EXAMPLES FROM TANZANIA (KTO)

Karibu Tanzania Organization (KTO) is a key actor in TVET and adult education in Tanzania. KTO works with a holistic approach and connects the 54 Folk Development Colleges (FDCs) in Tanzania and cooperate with Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) and other relevant ministries with capacity and institutional strengthening of FDCs to enhance their tasks in adult and folk education, vocational training and community development.

Courses at the FDCs are agreed in memorandum of understanding with MoEST and cost sharing and funding strategies are regularly up for discussion. One of the courses KTO supports is Elimu Haina Mwisho (EHM), Skills Development Programme for Young Women. It is a two year course, with a blended modality of non-formal secondary education, vocational training and entrepreneurship. Currently, the new

⁴ Youth and skills: putting education to work, EFA global monitoring report, 2012 p 252; 284

⁵ UNESCO, Gender-and crisis-sensitive education situational analysis report (2024)

⁶ UNESCO, Shakila's story,

vocational secondary curriculum is implemented in EHM and the vocational education is aligned with the National Vocational Award (NWA) system. This will significantly improve opportunities for students from FDCs to continue their educational paths in academic or vocational education if desired or transition into employment or self-employment.

Between 2019 and 2024, a total of 9785 students have been enrolled in FDCs. KTO estimates that from the cohorts who completed the course in 2022 and 2023 approximately 44% are self-employed, 11% are employed and 13% have continued their studies.

All KTO's programs target girls and young women who have dropped out from school due to early pregnancies, child marriages and other reasons. 37 FDCs offer childcare at established childcare centers. The EHM as well as two other programs, that KTO has developed at the FDCs aim at giving the most vulnerable young women, often young mothers, a second chance to complete their education to increase their opportunities to earn a living.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN THE GREEN TRANSITION?

Taking a life-long learning approach starting from pre-primary to adult education, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) aims to equip all learners with critical competencies covering not only knowledge, but also social and emotional awareness and actions, including critical thinking and collaboration. With such knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes, learners gain insight into the complexity of the climate crisis, interconnectedness of global sustainability challenges, as well as how to contribute to problem-solving in daily situations.

Drawing upon ESD's holistic approach to learning, the **Greening Education Partnership (GEP)** aims to inspire action from countries to empower learners with the skills required for inclusive and sustainable economic development within the context of the transition toward digital and green economies.⁷ To ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all according to SDG 4, TVET systems need to equip all youth and adults with the skills required for employment, decent work, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning. As countries reform their TVET policies and programs, there is an opportunity to lay the foundation for a green economic transition that respects ecological boundaries.⁸

Greening Education Partnership and ESD for 2030



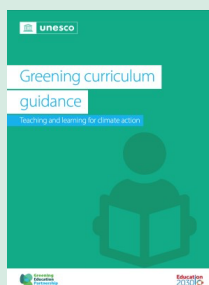
- The Greening Education Partnership (GEP): rooted in **Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)**, focusing on education's role in tackling **climate change**
- Equips learners with the **knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes** to take **transformative action** to shape green, low emission and climate-resilient societies



⁷ [Transforming education to transform the world | United Nations](#)

⁸ UNESCO 2022, Transforming Technical and Vocational Education and Training for successful and just transitions UNESCO strategy 2022-2029

Green curriculum guidance



- ✓ Integrate climate change into the **curriculum**.
- ✓ **Holistic approach** – social, economic, and environmental issues.
- ✓ From 5 years to 18+, including lifelong learning
- ✓ Covers **cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioural domains**



Goal: By 2030, 90% of countries have "greened" their curriculum



UNESCO support member states to develop education for sustainable development and greening TVET, i.e. in creating national, regional and sectoral stakeholder platforms to facilitate private sector participation and communication between the world of education and the world of work. Given the weaknesses identified in the foundational skills of TVET learners, these skills need to be prioritized for remediation and continued growth. The focus on technical skills should match labour market needs, which in many contexts include digital, green, and entrepreneurship skills.

EXAMPLES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND GREEN TRANSITION IN SEVERAL COUNTRIES IN AFRICA

Sida supports the “Skills for Critical Raw Materials Supply Chains” through the Learning and Knowledge Development Facility (LKDF). This initiative focuses on critical intersection of economic development, environmental sustainability, and technological advancement by investing in skilled labour for renewable energy technologies, electric vehicles, and advanced electronics.

Using a Market Systems Development (MSD) approach, LKDF 2.0 provides systemic change in Public Private Development Partnerships (PPDPs) by offering demand-oriented vocational training. It supports governments, private sectors, training institutions, students, employees, and investors to build stronger local economies, create jobs, and improve working conditions. So far, 40 partners have been trained in project design skills, including those in Liberia, Sierra Leone, the SADC region, Zambia, DRC Congo, Ethiopia, Uganda, Guinea, Tunisia, and Egypt.

LKDF 2.0, implemented by UNIDO, aims to equip companies and individuals in critical raw material supply chains with the skills needed for responsible practices, environmental respect, human rights, and personal and professional growth. This investment in skills development, paired with Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) technologies, is key to transitioning to a low-carbon economy and fostering innovation.