



Skills against Unemployment

Disability-Inclusive TVET

Issue Brief – October 2020

Summary

- ▶ 64% of persons with disabilities are unemployed, which is a main driver of poverty. Gaps in skills contribute significantly to this high rate.
- ▶ Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) transmits relevant skills for economic empowerment.
- ▶ Despite their right to equal access to education and employment, students with disabilities often have no access to mainstream TVET.
- ▶ Governments and development actors need to plan, fund and support TVET that is accessible to and inclusive of persons with disabilities.

A) TVET in a Nutshell

To alleviate poverty, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) empowers individuals to take up decent work. It includes work-based learning and professional development relating to various occupational fields. In addition to apprenticeships and other approaches, TVET is a bridge between education and employment.¹

It is estimated that 80% of the jobs worldwide require technical and vocational skills.² Consequently, TVET has become a focus of international cooperation. For instance, official development assistance on TVET in Cambodia increased by 631% between 2002 and 2014.³

1 UNESCO (2015): Proposal for the Recommendation Concerning Technical and Vocational Education. 38 C/32. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000234137>.

2 Acedo, C. (2014): Skills for Inclusive and Sustainable Development. Prospects, vol. 44. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11125-014-9314-1>.

3 Palmer, R. (n.d.): Financing TVET in the East-Asia and Pacific Region. <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/494921508752195355/pdf/120597-WP-v2-P150980-PUBLIC-KWPF-Financing-TVET-in-EAP-Full-Final.pdf>.

B) Persons with Disabilities and TVET

785 million persons with disabilities worldwide are of working age. However, 64% of them are unemployed, compared with just 40% of their peers without disabilities.⁴ Additionally, employees with disabilities are more likely to be low-paid.⁵ This is linked to a mismatch in skills training, where students with disabilities are often taught skills deemed to be appropriate to them, rather than what students want or the labour market requires.⁶

Consequently, people with disabilities are far more likely to be unemployed, underemployed or economically inactive than persons without disabilities. These effects are more pronounced for women and girls with disabilities. This is a main driver of poverty.⁷

Added Value of TVET for All

Where women and men, girls and boys with disabilities participate in TVET at all, it is often in segregated settings and at a standard lower than required by employers.⁸ This runs counter to research, which consistently shows the added value of inclusive TVET, such as:

- ▶ **Improved Job Prospects:** For a person with a disability out of work, completing TVET increases the probability of employment from 9% to 29%. It also improves the chances of being continuously in work for three years after graduation.⁹
- ▶ **Effectiveness:** According to the OECD, well-designed formal TVET programmes are more effective than general and academic education for integrating marginalised groups into the labour market.¹⁰
- ▶ **Cost Efficiency:** Establishing and maintaining inclusive training centres for all learners is less costly than setting up segregated institutions.¹¹
- ▶ **Empowerment:** Inclusive TVET that takes the needs and ambitions of each person as a starting point improves self-confidence and autonomy of students with disabilities.¹²
- ▶ **Social Inclusion:** ILO finds that participating in TVET programmes alongside their peers strengthens community attachment of students with disabilities.¹³

4 UN DESA (2018): Disability and Development Report. p. 109, 152 <https://social.un.org/publications/UN-Flagship-Report-Disability-Final.pdf>.

5 ILO (2017): Making TVET and Skills Systems Inclusive. https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/disability-and-work/WCMS_605087/lang--en/index.htm.

6 Kett, M. (2012): Skills Development for Youth Living with Disability. UNESCO Background Paper. 2012/ED/EFA/MRT/PI/28. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000217882>.

7 ILO (2017). op. cit.

8 ibid.

9 Mavromaras, K. & Polidano, C. (2010): The Role of TVET in Labour Market Outcomes of People with Disabilities. <files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED508301.pdf>.

10 OECD (2018): The Role of TVET in Fostering Inclusive Growth at the Local Level. <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/5afe6416-en.pdf?expires=1599554697&id=id&accname=quest&checksum=69252F8A28900F2FFC175482F8962A47>.

11 Osidioe, A. (2019): Integrating the Belt and Road Initiative and TVET for Inclusive Growth and Development in Africa. Developing Country Studies, vol.9, no.12.

12 Baart, J. & Maarse, A. (2017): I am EmployAble. https://www.light-for-the-world.org/sites/lfdw_org/files/download_files/lfw_employable_web_0.pdf.

13 ILO (2017). op. cit.

References in the Policy Framework

In recognition of these positive effects, governments committed to inclusive TVET. SDG target 4.5 explicitly sets out to:

“ By 2030, [...] ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities.¹⁴ ”

This objective is backed up by the legally binding UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Its Article 24 articulates the right to an education in inclusive settings. This includes TVET on an equal basis with others and without discrimination.¹⁵

Article 32 further mandates developed countries to support disability inclusion, including on TVET, in their international cooperation.¹⁶

C) Our Work

Light for the World is a global disability and development organisation. Our mandate areas include inclusive education and economic empowerment. Our work on disability-inclusive TVET is situated at the intersection of these two mandates. To equip young people with disabilities with the skills needed to realise their ambitions, we engage in:

- ▶ **Capacity-Building:** We provide teachers with relevant skills for providing an inclusive education and learning environment. This includes disability awareness, additional training on sign languages and accessible learning materials.
- ▶ **Technical Support:** We supported the mainstream Young Africa Training Centre in Mozambique to offer inclusive TVET services. Among other activities, this included adaptations to curricula and to the built environment as well as career training. After the end of our project, the TVET Centre has proactively included disability-inclusion in its general proposals and activities.
- ▶ **Labour Market Transition:** We promote internships for TVET students and engage them in career fairs. In Uganda we have a network of Disability Inclusion Facilitators to support employers on workplace adaptations and to provide training on disability awareness and inclusive hiring practices.¹⁷
- ▶ **Community Support:** As community encouragement is crucial for success, especially for female students with disabilities, we work with family members in Cambodia to increase enrolment in TVET.
- ▶ **Addressing Biases:** We show that inclusive TVET works. Students with disabilities are among the top graduates from the Young Africa Training Centre in Mozambique. This raises the profile of other prospective students with disabilities.¹⁸

14 UN (2015): SDG 4: Quality Education. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/education/>.

15 UN (2006): Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Art 24. https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convention_accessible_pdf.pdf.

16 *ibid.* Art.32.

17 Make 12.4% Work (2020): About the Project. <https://wecanwork.ug/>.

18 Manala, I (2017): Taking Control of their own Future. <https://www.light-for-the-world.org/taking-control-their-own-future>.

- ▶ **Disability Mainstreaming:** Using our EmployAble resources, we equip government, civil society actors, international NGOs and UN entities with relevant knowledge. On basis of this, they can redesign existing TVET services in an inclusive fashion.¹⁹
- ▶ **Research:** We document best practices, particularly with regards to underrepresented groups. For instance, we partnered with organisations of persons with disabilities and TVET providers in Uganda to collect insights on skills development for youth with deafblindness.²⁰
- ▶ **Policy Change:** We work with relevant ministries in our partner countries to ensure disability-inclusive laws and policies, curricula and entry requirements. For instance, we advocated a national policy in inclusive TVET in Kenya.²¹

D) Recommended Action

Inclusive TVET is an effective and efficient approach to bridge the skills gap of persons with disabilities towards economic empowerment. Yet, it does not receive enough attention.

To facilitate equal access to the skills and qualifications required in the labour market, governments, development actors and TVET providers from civil society need to:

- ▶ Consistently act in line with the requirements of the CRPD and the SDGs when setting up, funding and evaluating TVET initiatives. No support to segregated TVET is acceptable.
- ▶ In consultation with organisations of persons with disabilities, draw up and regularly monitor a national policy on inclusive skills development.
- ▶ With a focus on the quality of service delivery, include disability-inclusion and accessibility from the start in TVET planning processes and ensure adequate budgets.
- ▶ Adapt teaching methods, curricula, learning materials, entry criteria, tests and evaluation methods to ensure accessibility for all potential and enrolled students.
- ▶ Ensure accessibility of the built environment for everyone, including classrooms, work stations, sanitation areas, school transport and dormitories.
- ▶ Provide needs- and merit-based subsidies and scholarships for people with disabilities with a specific focus on female beneficiaries.
- ▶ Coach TVET teachers on inclusive delivery and assessment methods, so that no student experiences discrimination on basis of gender or disability.

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19 Baart, J. & Maarse, A. (2017): op. cit.

20 Delfyna, A. (2019): Skills Development for Youth with Deafblindness. Disability-Inclusion Insight Series.
<https://lab.light-for-the-world.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/DII-5-Skills-Development-for-youth-with-deaf-blindness.pdf>.

21 ZeroProject (2016): Innovative Practices – EmployAble. <https://zeroproject.org/practice/kenya-rwanda-and-ethiopia-employable/>.

- ▶ Ensure disability inclusion in all support services, especially with regards to career centres and transition into internships or apprenticeships.
- ▶ Generate gender- and disability-disaggregated labour market data.

Further Reading

- ▶ ILO (2017): Making TVET and Skills Systems Inclusive of Persons with Disabilities. <http://rufinlit.org/sdgPhotos/Making%20TVET%20and%20skills%20systems%20Inclusive%20for%20persons%20with%20disabilities.pdf>.
- ▶ UNESCO-UNEVOC (2019): Virtual Conference on Inclusive TVET: Virtual Conference Report. https://unevoc.unesco.org/pub/vc_synthesis_25.pdf.
- ▶ Baart, J. & Maarse, A. (2017): I am EmployAble. https://www.light-for-the-world.org/sites/lfdw_org/files/download_files/lftw_employable_web_0.pdf.



About Light for the World

Light for the World is a global disability and development organisation, breaking down barriers to enrich society and unlock the potential in all of us. Our vision is an inclusive society for all where no one is left behind. We enable eye health services and empower people with disabilities in some of the poorest regions of the world.

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