



**Youth and Sustainable Livelihoods:
Linking Vocational Training Programs to Market Opportunities
in Northern Uganda**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Report &
Market Assessment Toolkit for
Vocational Training Providers and Youth

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Executive Summary

Vocational training (VT) is at the crossroads of economic recovery, education, and rehabilitation and reintegration. It is uniquely positioned to meet the demands of youth and broader goals of economic reconstruction in post-conflict areas. VT can be a key component of development, a method for upgrading the work force and a factor in the holistic development of youth. Effective VT can provide skills for both agricultural and non-agriculture livelihoods, and sustainable employment and self-employment opportunities.

Youth consistently expect that participation in VT will increase their capacity to find employment or self-employment opportunities and achieve greater self-reliance. However, field research in northern Uganda conducted by a team from the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University, in partnership with the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, demonstrated that VT programs often have a variety of objectives ranging from training youth to a master level of skill competency to psychosocial rehabilitation and protection. In practice, VT programs differ in length and comprehensiveness of training, the complementary skill courses offered, funding sources and the populations they target. The disconnect between participant expectations and program objectives, compounded by differing levels of comprehensiveness, frequently leads to disappointment and frustration on the part of youth participants.

All along the spectrum of VT, programs will benefit from accurate information on market realities. Market analysis can be incorporated into each stage of VT programming to improve decisions and, ultimately, increase employment and self-employment opportunities for youth graduates. VT programs and participants have requested current information on market realities and concrete recommendations on how to better connect program graduates to sustainable livelihoods.

When developing the curriculum, programs face a complex set of considerations, including budget constraints, instructor availability, access to machinery and tools, beneficiary target numbers and donor mandates. These demands influence which vocations and complementary courses a program will teach. Youth, program managers and donors all agree that continuing to teach the same few skills across the region is leading to labor supply saturation in some industries. A common critique of VT is that it tends not to be innovative in its core skills offering and as a result fails to respond to dynamic markets. As a result, youth are often unable to find jobs and the prices for goods and services decrease. When asked about the lack of diversification, answers ranged from lack of material, machinery and trained instructors to a lack of donor coordination, innovative thinking and market analysis. The result is that the decision about which skill to pursue is generally driven by the supply of inputs rather than the actual demand for goods and services in the market.

For VT practitioners, accurate market information will inform curriculum development and determine course offerings, shape the complementary services offered during training and provide information on post-training linkages necessary to improve youth's prospects for a sustainable livelihood. For youth participants in VT programs, information about current and emerging market needs is essential to making more informed decisions and selecting an appropriate and marketable vocation.

The three-part ***Market Assessment Toolkit for Vocational Training Providers and Youth*** is a combination of resources, questionnaires and activities that assist VT programs and youth to gather information on market demand and translate it into programming that responds to dynamic business environment and youth needs. The toolkit offers a roadmap to VT providers, youth participants and other local and international actors. Increased access to information will guide service providers in a demand-driven approach, matching youth's interests, skills and available resources to market opportunities for employment and self-employment. Many of the tools have multiple purposes and all

rely on using a combination of desk research and interviews with key actors. The toolkit ultimately aims to help youth in VT programs to find employment / self-employment.

The first part, the **Market Assessment Toolkit for Vocational Training Providers**, provides an understanding of dynamic market conditions and the sources of potential employment growth within the community and surrounding areas. It also aims to create immediate apprenticeship and employment linkages between VT programs and local employers. The second part, the accompanying **Analysis Guide**, facilitates the translation of information gathered during the market analysis into more effective programming.

The third part, the **Market Interaction Toolkit for Youth**, helps youth become active participants in determining which vocation best matches their skills and needs. It guides youth through a self-assessment and encourages them to evaluate local market realities in order to make a skill and livelihood selection.

Youth need help understanding what vocation best matches their skills, aspirations and resources; instead they are often asked to make decisions or placed into a vocation without sufficient information about how training will translate into a post-training livelihood. While allowing youth to decide appears to be consistent with a rights-based approach, youth must also be given the resources and support needed to make an informed decision. Especially for youth with little exposure outside of camps, making a choice about which vocation to pursue without attention to market realities can lead many to select skills they see others doing, hear are profitable or think are easy to operate. The result is that many youth enter the most saturated markets and often cannot find work upon program completion.

There is also gender self-selection into certain skills leading most male learners to select skills such as carpentry and joinery, brick-laying and concrete practice or motor vehicle mechanics, and female learners to select tailoring or catering. This is often the result of gender stereotypes in the community and serves to further entrench differential access to social status and income across gender lines. Males often receive training in professions that earn higher wages in the market while females select skills leading to lower-paying employment. Program implementers and donors need to actively conduct career guidance and develop programs that avoid reinforcing gender bias by focusing on the capabilities of each trainee as an individual.

Structured, market-based guidance for youth when they enter into a VT program will help them to make informed decisions about which core skill to learn, and ensure they are aware of the complementary skills needed to enter their chosen industry. A solid understanding of the demand for goods and services will allow VT programs to guide youth in choosing a vocation.

The toolkits can be adapted for use in many areas, though they were first developed for the northern Uganda context. The tools build upon a report by the Women's Commission, *Listening to Youth: The Experiences of Youth in Northern Uganda* (http://www.womenscommission.org/pdf/ug_machel_short.pdf) and are based on a combination of desk research in New York and Washington DC, and field research in Uganda, in Kampala, Gulu and Kitgum districts, between October 2007 and May 2008. Interviews, focus groups and other discussions were conducted with more than 200 VT stakeholders, including youth, NGOs (international and local) and UN agencies, vocational training programs, places of employment, government officials, donor organizations, financial service providers, international VT experts and others.

The full report *Youth and Sustainable Livelihoods: Linking Vocational Training Programs to Market Opportunities in Northern Uganda* can be found at (www.womenscommission.org). The report documents the northern Uganda experience, presenting an analysis of VT programming and the actors involved in

northern Uganda and offering VT providers concrete recommendations for programming at each stage in the VT cycle, including best practices, case studies and lessons learned. The report identifies how vocational training programs can best meet youths' needs for education and sustainable livelihoods while also supporting a broader strategy of economic reconstruction and social restoration in northern Uganda.

Market Assessment Toolkit for Practitioners Summary



Step 1: Cross Reference Chart

The Cross Reference Chart is the first step in the Market Assessment. It matches the five overarching vocational training planning questions listed below with the corresponding Market Assessment tools. The cross reference chart helps practitioners choose which tools to use to achieve a particular programming goal.

Step 2: Market Assessment Toolkit and Summary Charts

The Market Assessment Toolkit is comprised of ten tools (questionnaires) aimed at providing a dynamic and holistic understanding of current and future market conditions. At the end of each tool is a Summary Chart to help practitioners review key points from information gathered.

Step 3: Decision Charts

The five Decision Charts found throughout the tools and at the end of the toolkit refer back to the questions in the Cross Reference Chart. The Decision Charts provide guidance and a structured framework to make concrete programming decisions based on information gathered from the toolkit.

Motivation

Increased access to market information guides VT providers in a demand-driven approach, matching youth's interests, resources and skills to existing opportunities for employment and self-employment. Market information should be incorporated into each stage of VT programming to improve programming design and, ultimately, increase employment and self-employment opportunities for youth graduates.

Instructions

Use of the Cross Referencing Chart, the Market Assessment Toolkit and Summary Charts, and the Decision charts will allow practitioners to gather accurate information about market realities, develop stronger curriculums and course offerings, determine which complementary services are most appropriate to offer, and provide information on the post-training linkages necessary to improve youth's

prospects for a sustainable livelihood.

The Cross Referencing Chart lays out five overarching VT program planning questions. These key questions are:

- In what vocations should the program train youth?
- What complimentary courses should the program offer youth?
- What businesses can the program link with to provide industrial training or career guidance?
- What national producer and business associations can the program link with to provide industrial training or career guidance?
- What financial service providers can the program link with to help VT graduates engage in employment or self-employment?

By using different components of the Market Assessment Toolkit and the associated Summary and Decision Charts, VT practitioners will be able to answer these questions and many others.

The Market Assessment Toolkit can be adapted to fit an organization’s needs, resources and existing knowledge. It is a multi-part, dynamic instrument and can be used at any point in the programming cycle to assess or re-assess market conditions. This Toolkit helps practitioners understand general economic trends and engage with actors in the following sectors:

Market Assessment Tool	Information Gathered
Market Observation	Overview of Local Economic Activity
Consumers	Consumer Preferences and Needs
Government	National and Regional Development Priorities
Local Business	Labor Market Demand, Qualifications and Constraints; Employment Linkages
National Producer and Business Associations	Labor Market Demand, Qualifications and Constraints; Market Information, Product Information and Linkages
Youth Focus Group	Youth Preferences and Demands
VT Providers	Share Best Practices, Coordinate and Share Data Collection
Microfinance Institutions	Market Information, Financing Options and Linkages
Donors	Future Priorities and Funding Trends
National and Multinational Companies	Present and Future Investment, Future Demand for Products, Services and Support

Information Gathering: The questions in each tool can be answered through a combination of research methods. Much of each tool can be completed with secondary research, including reading existing documents, looking at websites and talking with colleagues and others in the community. Key sources of information may include: local cluster and coordination meetings, the local UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) office, NGO forum, the radio, organizational and donor publications, the internet and program staff. It is recommended that information be collected and verified by a variety of sources in order to ensure accuracy. After the practitioner has completed a tool as much as possible through desk research, it is time to begin conducting interviews with key actors in the given sector.

Many of the tools have multiple purposes: they aim to help VT providers understand the current market and potential growth sectors, foster more communication and collaboration amongst VT stakeholders **and** create immediate employment linkages. For example, information gathered through interviews with

local businesses will inform the VT program on what skills are demanded, and provide an opportunity for VT provides to initiate linkages to apprenticeships and employment and promote the quality of their students.

Key Components of Each Tool: Each of the ten tools has its own cover page including the specific purpose, research question, timeframe, instructions and in some cases resources that will assist the practitioner to gather the relevant information. The purpose sketches out the main objective and key uses for the tool. The research question sums up the central question that each question in the tool seeks to answer. The research question can also be modified or adapted for program-specific needs. Most tools can be used continuously throughout the program cycle. Instructions specific to each tool are included to give additional guidance to the practitioner or facilitator.

Reflection Boxes: Key questions have been included at the end of many subsections of the tools to facilitate analysis of market realities immediately after collecting information. These questions have been put in highlighted boxes, titled Reflection Boxes, and should be considered while completing the tool and more fully when the tool has been completed. If information is gathered using an interview, the practitioner is not meant to read the content of the Reflection Boxes aloud. Rather, the boxes are meant to help the practitioner reflect on the information collected in real time and aid in the decision making process.

Summary Charts: At the conclusion of each tool individual Summary Charts help practitioners to process information from all interviews within that tool. The Summary Charts contain key themes and tool specific questions. Practitioners should complete each tool's Summary Chart once they have gathered enough evidence to make informed assessments and reflect on key themes.

After using all necessary tools, practitioners will make a decision with regard to one of the five Vocational Training Planning Questions, taking into account all the information gathered by the relevant tools. **The Decision Charts** ask practitioners to consider the program's particular capacities and constraints while providing a framework for making key specific programming decisions.

To make a decision about linking with an individual business, business association or financial service provider, practitioners need to gather information from the relevant actor and then complete the Decision Charts at the end of the related tool. When possible, even when considering a specific linkage, the practitioner should gather information from multiple potential partners and reflect on the strengths of each. To answer larger questions related to core skill selection and complimentary course offerings practitioners must utilize and cross-reference information from a number of tools and then complete the separate Decision Chart.

Market Assessment Toolkit for Youth

Summary



Market Interaction Toolkit for Youth

Summary Description: This toolkit contains three tools to educate and engage youth in the process of selecting a vocational track. Used properly, the toolkit can provide useful data and information and serve as a basis for vocational decision-making. It will also give programs important information about youth's backgrounds and experience when considering complementary courses. Toolkit begins with a *Youth Self Assessment* followed by a *Youth Market Assessment*. The final step for the youth is the *Skill Specific Interview* with a working craftsmen in the vocation of his/her choice. The

The Youth Self Assessment and Youth Market Assessment will encourage vocational training (VT) program participants to think about their own abilities and interests as well as the realities of the local economy prior to selecting the core vocational skill they will study as part of a VT program. Structured, market-based guidance for youth when they enter into a VT program will help them to make informed decisions about which core skill to learn, and ensure they are aware of the complementary skills needed to enter their chosen industry. A solid understanding of demand for goods and services will allow VT programs to guide youth in choosing a vocation. These tools will likely be used by the VT program participants *after* they have enrolled in the program. Thus, the participants will likely select their core vocational skill from among those offered in the particular VT program. After selecting a skill, the youth will use the Sector Specific Interview Guide to better understand the realities of the vocation they have chosen to study.

Each tool is followed by an analysis guide, which helps youth to reflect on what they learned and thought during assessment exercise. The analysis guides should be conducted one-on-one between assessment facilitators and program participants. Some youth will find the assessments difficult; careful guidance will help ensure that all youth who complete the toolkit increase their market knowledge and sense of their own skills and capabilities.

Step 1: Youth Self-Assessment Tool and Analysis Guide

This tool helps youth take an active role in determining which vocation they will pursue. It is designed for VT program participants. By using this tool, participants will think about and articulate information regarding their educational level, natural abilities, work history, background, health and plans for the short-term future. After completing this tool and talking with instructors, mentors and/or career counselors, participants should be able to select a vocation which fits with his/her interests, skills, abilities and needs.

Step 2: Youth Market Assessment Tool and Analysis Guide

The Youth Market Assessment tool allows youth to observe the market first hand and record information about local business and employment trends through a series of guided, small-group activities.

Step 3: Sector Specific Interview Tool and Analysis Guide

After using Tool 1 and Tool 2 to aid youth with skill selection, the **Sector Specific Interview** gives youth an opportunity to talk with people employed in their vocation of interest. Youth will talk directly with those active their proposed vocation to gain a better understanding of the requirements, expectations, challenges and benefits of the sector.