**8TH REGIONAL POLICY DIALOGUE ON TVET**

**10TH ANNUAL EXPERT MEETING OF THE INITIATIVE ON EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS STRATEGIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA (ESSSA)**

“Building skills and facilitating employment in rural areas of Southeast Asia”

21-22 NOVEMBER 2018 IN VIENTIANE, LAO PDR

**PLENARY SESSION 1**

*Key labour market and skills challenges facing rural areas*

**OBJECTIVE**

This session will provide an overview of the key labour market and skills challenges facing rural areas. It will also highlight good practice experiences from selected countries and draw lessons for ASEAN. Participants will have the opportunity to share their country’s experience, to engage in knowledge exchange and facilitate mutual learning.

**RATIONALE**

ASEAN countries have experienced strong growth in recent decades, but they continue to experience disparities between urban and rural areas, as well as inequalities across different segments of society. In rural areas – home to around half the ASEAN population – people are more likely to live in poverty and be engaged in informal employment. These are factors that limit sustainable development and inclusive growth.

A key challenge is weak general education, with students in rural areas often under-performing on OECD PISA tests compared to their urban counterparts. Young people in rural areas tend to be less educated and less skilled and are more likely to be negatively affected by rapid technological developments within the labour market.

Accessing employment services and TVET is a greater challenge in rural areas. Rural areas within ASEAN often lack sufficient funding and resources for quality TVET. Employers and other stakeholders are barely involved in the development of curricula, resulting in a weak understanding of labour market needs and in teaching that does not address the skill demands of employers. Strong partnerships between multiple stakeholders, including employers, government officials and potential employees, are often lacking across ASEAN. Geography constitutes a constraint in this regard, with employers in specific economic sectors being widely dispersed, making engagement in work-based learning a challenge.

Tackling labour market and skills challenges by equipping the workforce with the necessary skills and training will lead to more promising opportunities in the labour market and will ultimately foster inclusive growth.
KEY QUESTIONS

1. What are the labour market and skills challenges specific to rural areas in ASEAN?
2. What lessons can ASEAN draw from other countries and regions that have faced and tackled similar challenges?
3. What will be the key success factors for ASEAN going forward?

SESSION INPUTS

Speakers:
- Mr. Jonathan Barr, Head of Employment and Skills Unit, Local Employment, Skills, and Social Innovation Division, Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions, and Cities, OECD
- Ms. Bernadine Caruana, Counsellor, Department of Education and Training, Australia
- Ms. Kumudhini Rosa, Project Director, Vocational Education in Laos (VELA), GIZ Lao PDR

Moderator:
- Mr. Ingo Imhoff, RECOVET Programme Director, GIZ

REFERENCES

OECD (forthcoming): The role of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in fostering inclusive growth in South East Asia.

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BREAKOUT SESSION 1
Improving access to TVET in rural areas

OBJECTIVE

This breakout session focuses on relevant approaches and solutions to improving access to TVET in rural areas. The topic will be examined from two perspectives – the policy level and the implementation level – in two parallel sessions. In the first breakout session (1A), participants will have the opportunity to discuss and learn more about suitable framework conditions for improved access to TVET in rural areas. In the second breakout session (1B), attendees are invited to present and discuss innovative learning approaches that can help to improve access to employment and skills.

Breakout session 1A: Suitable framework conditions for improving access to TVET in rural areas.

RATIONALE

One of the most urgent challenges facing TVET policymakers and stakeholders is improving TVET accessibility in rural areas, especially for people from disadvantaged groups. Most marginalised households in rural areas continue to be denied access to vocational education or career guidance because of inefficient or non-existent policies, poor infrastructure, as well as economic and social inequalities. Given the labour market’s growing need for skilled workers, the exclusion of disadvantaged target groups means that tremendous potential remains untapped.

The creation of suitable framework conditions is an important step towards facilitating access to TVET and supporting employment in rural areas. Framework conditions need to consider the shortcomings of socio-economic structures in rural areas, such as the general lack of high incomes and resources, high drop-out rates in secondary schools, the dependence of farming families on their children to work as farm labourers, or the distance potential students have to travel to reach TVET institutions. A suitable framework needs to integrate formal, non-formal and informal TVET into a coordinated system and provide financial as well as non-financial incentives to ensure equal access for all target groups.
KEY QUESTIONS

1. What are the main obstacles to accessing TVET in rural areas and how can these be addressed at the policy and regulatory level?

2. What are the central components of a suitable framework for improving access to TVET and employment in rural areas?

3. Which financial and non-financial incentives facilitate access to TVET in rural areas?

SESSION INPUTS

Speakers:

- Mr Somlith Virivong, Deputy-Director General, TVET Department, Ministry of Education and Sports, Lao PDR (tbc)
- Dr Yulius, MA, Deputy Assistant of Manpower, Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs, Indonesia

Moderator:

Dr Anil Verma, University of Toronto, Canada

REFERENCES


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Breakout session 1B: Improving access to employment and skills through innovative learning solutions.

RATIONALE
One of the most urgent challenges facing TVET policymakers and stakeholders is improving TVET accessibility in rural areas, especially for people from disadvantaged groups. Most marginalised households in rural areas continue to be denied access to vocational education or career guidance because of inefficient or non-existent policies, poor infrastructure, as well as economic and social inequalities. Given the labour market’s growing need for skilled workers, the exclusion of disadvantaged target groups means that tremendous potential remains untapped.

Innovative learning approaches have become increasingly important given the high cost of traditional TVET systems (qualified teachers, modern teaching materials as well as a suitable infrastructure), the underfunding of public TVET and the spread of populations in rural areas in many ASEAN countries. In the age of information technology, ICT-enabled learning (blended, distance, mobile and online learning) has the potential to cost-effectively reach people in remote areas and deliver trainings tailored to their needs and provide job-seekers with information about careers, employers and job openings. Overall, ICT approaches appear to have a promising potential on substantially improving the access to training and employment services to people in remote and rural areas. Yet it also brings along new challenges including establishing a suitable ICT infrastructure as well as setting up a reliable assessment and certification system.
KEY QUESTIONS

1. Which innovative learning approaches are available to overcome geographical and financial barriers to TVET and employment? What are their potential limitations?
2. What are efficient ways to disseminate and upscale innovative learning approaches, in particular ICT-based learning solutions?
3. Which policy recommendations could encourage the innovative and wide-spread use of ICT in TVET in rural areas?

SESSION INPUTS

Speakers:
- Mrs Khaliunaa Avirmed, Director General for TVET Policy Implementation and Coordination Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Mongolia
- Dr Sandra Rothboeck, Skills Advisor, Swisscontact

Moderator:
Dr Anthony Mann, Head of Unit, OECD Directorate for Education and Skills

REFERENCES


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BREAKOUT SESSION 2

Employment promotion

OBJECTIVE
This breakout session looks at the question of “how to get TVET students in rural areas into jobs” from two different employment promotion perspectives: matching demand and supply, and labour demand. Breakout session 2A showcases how employment services in rural areas can link job-seekers with rural labour markets, matching them with employers. Breakout session 2B takes a closer look at the role of self-employment in rural areas to explore what TVET can do to help students set up their own businesses in the absence of employers.

Breakout session 2A: Linking job-seekers with employers – Innovative job matching approaches in rural areas.

RATIONALE
Employment promotion is an overarching concept that, simply put, includes all activities aimed at getting people into work. It is common to distinguish between three main approaches to employment promotion: a) addressing labour demand by facilitating job creation; b) addressing labour supply by improving employability of students and workers; and c) matching demand and supply through information, guidance and career services. While the three approaches are equally important for employment promotion, this session specifically explores the issue of matching labour demand and supply.

Over the past decades, policy makers have realised that it is not sufficient to simply train young people and hope that they will find their way into the labour market. The transition from school to work is not an automatic one, even if graduates possess the right skills. Young people are often unaware of possible career paths and lack direct experiences with employers or entrepreneurship. Meanwhile, employers often lack the knowledge and resources to identify and hire suitable employees. The challenge of linking job-seekers with employers is particularly exacerbated in rural areas as labour market information and well-established employers tend to be absent. Policy-makers need to help matching labour demand and supply by providing the infrastructure and opportunities for employers and employees to get in contact with each other;
career guidance services, job placements and labour market information systems are common approaches to link job-seekers with employers.

**Key Questions**

1. How can local, national and regional knowledge networks be implemented to provide professional orientation and enhance employment services?
2. What examples exist of successful integrated approaches for the coordination of social dialogues?
3. How can best-practices for orientation, preparation and matching of rural job-seekers with employers be utilised by other ASEAN Member States?

**Session Inputs**

*Speakers:*

- Mr Fr Rex Carbilledo, SDB, Technical Director of Don Bosco TVET Centre, Mati, Davao Oriental, Philippines
- Mr Somean Kuoch, Deputy Head, National Employment Agency, Cambodia

*Moderator:*

Ms Sally Sinclair, CEO, National Employment Services Association, Australia

**References**


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Breakout session 2B: Employment promotion by supporting self-employment in rural areas – Approaches, potential and limitations

RATIONALE
Employment promotion is an overarching concept that, simply put, includes all activities aimed at getting people into work. It is common to distinguish between three main approaches to employment promotion: a) addressing labour demand by facilitating job creation; b) addressing labour supply by improving employability of students and workers; and c) matching demand and supply through career services. This session specifically explores the facilitation of job creation through self-employment (labour demand).

In the absence of economic opportunities and conventional employers in rural areas, self-employment is an important source of income. A key public policy objective aims to increase the income earned through self-employment, thereby moving rural households beyond self-subsistence (Fields, 2014). Studies show that self-employment is a promising way of raising rural household incomes in national economies that undergo structural transformation (IFAD, 2016; Sohns & Diez, 2016). In this context, people in rural areas have the opportunity to transition from subsistence to commercial farming, from low-value to high-value agriculture, and to start new businesses in off-farm occupations along the agriculture value chain. TVET enables people to take advantage of these opportunities by providing the necessary technical as well as entrepreneurial skills.
The transition to successful self-employment also requires support services, such as access to finance, MSME promotion initiatives and social protection that complement trainings (World Bank & IFAD, 2017). Policy-makers face the challenge of incorporating TVET and these support services into an integrated approach that spans the education, labour and economic policy domains to promote self-employment effectively.

**Key Questions**

1. What training programmes and skills can TVET institutions offer in support of self-employment? How are they implemented?
2. What measures should accompany technical and vocational training to support self-employment? How does TVET relate to these measures?
3. What role do TVET policy makers and TVET schools play in the development and implementation of integrated approaches?
4. What are the limitations of self-employment approaches?

**Session Inputs**

*Speakers:*

- Mr Sebastian Kade, Project Manager, Hanns Seidel Foundation

*Moderator:*

(Tbd)

**References**


BREAKOUT SESSION 3

Enhancing the relevance of TVET in rural areas

OBJECTIVE

This breakout session takes a closer look at the changing landscape of TVET in rural areas, addressing the call for relevant TVET closer to the needs of rural employers and employees. Session 3A focuses on agricultural technical and vocational education and training (ATVET) as a possible model to enhance the relevance of TVET in ASEAN’s rural areas. Session 3B takes a complementary look at examples from ASEAN of successful private sector participation in TVET in rural areas.

Breakout session 3A: ATVET – A suitable model for enhancing the relevance of TVET in rural areas in ASEAN?

RATIONALE

Despite being the main source of income and employment for most of the world’s rural population, agricultural occupations in their present state appear to be unattractive to young people, particularly in developing countries. However, relevant skills to increase productivity in agriculture-related sectors can play a crucial role in linking the rural population, especially disadvantaged groups, to profitable income-generating activities.

ATVET offers different solutions to enhance the relevance of skills in the rural sector. For instance, by improving their knowledge of agricultural practices, extension workers and farmers ensure that they are using the most advanced and most suitable practices for their context. Further, by acquiring better entrepreneurial skills and by increasing the efficiency and sustainability of agricultural value chains based on a productivity-oriented approach, farmers are enabled to move beyond subsistence farming.

In the context of agricultural workforce development, there is still a lack of agreement among government officials, development partners and private sector actors on the types of occupations that need to be developed in the ASEAN context. Therefore, for ATVET to be successful in rural areas, needs assessment frameworks and labour market analyses which incorporate knowledge of existing and future agricultural value chains are crucial. To address the specific needs of a wide
range of employers and potential employees, the scope of both the skills offered and the means of acquiring those skills should be designed with a demand-driven approach, supported by detailed labour market information, and with the close participation of private sector actors.

**KEY QUESTIONS**
1. How can the ATVET model enhance the relevance of TVET in rural areas?
2. What are flexible and effective approaches to incorporating informal and non-formal learning into TVET in rural areas?
3. How can employers be systematically engaged in curriculum development and delivery, notably work-based learning?

**SESSION INPUTS**

*Speakers:*

- Dr Emmanuel Santoyo Rio, Consultant and Lead researcher of sector skills study for the agriculture and food-processing sectors in Lao PDR

*Moderator:*

Mr Alexander Monden, Head of Component, VELA Project, GIZ Lao PDR

**REFERENCES**


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Breakout Session 3
Enhancing the relevance of TVET in rural areas

Objective
This breakout session takes a closer look at the changing landscape of TVET in rural areas, addressing the call for relevant TVET closer to the needs of rural employers and employees. Session 3A focuses on agricultural technical and vocational education and training (ATVET) as a possible model to enhance the relevance of TVET in ASEAN’s rural areas. Session 3B takes a complementary look at examples from ASEAN of successful private sector participation in TVET in rural areas.

Breakout session 3B: Private sector participation in TVET in rural areas, examples from ASEAN.

Rationale
In many ASEAN countries, the delivery of TVET in rural areas is uneven and skills are often not matched with labour market demand. This mismatch between learning outputs and the skills requested by businesses leads to low employability among TVET graduates. At present, the private sector is not involved in the development of TVET curricula in a systematic way, and only a small number of private sector actors – mostly larger enterprises – commit themselves to systematic practical training for their own future workforce.

A stronger connection between the content and orientation of skills training and the needs of the labour market would improve this situation. Yet, in such contexts, engaging meaningfully with the private sector can be a challenge. Frequently, rural markets are ‘thin’ – characterised by informal trading relationships between micro-small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) – and do not benefit from well-functioning market infrastructure and supporting business services. This is compounded by the often fragmented and disconnected provision of training courses and qualification options.

A market-oriented ecosystem approach, which seeks changes and ownership from industry and governments, can provide sustainable skills training. Examples include mobile and village-based training, apprenticeship upgrading, upgrading of regional training centres, hospitality training and overall strengthening of skills systems. In addition, this approach can be used to focus on
engaging the private sector to include disadvantaged groups and those with low levels of education, who are often excluded from existing TVET courses due to financial and logistical constraints.

**KEY QUESTIONS**

1. What role can the private sector play in enhancing TVET in rural areas?
2. What challenges face the private sector in participating more actively in TVET in rural areas?
3. How can private sector participation in TVET be improved in rural areas?

**SESSION INPUTS**

*Speakers:*

- Mr Thouy Phetsavanh, President, Champasak Hotel and Restaurant Association (CHRA) and Mr. Vila Chanthavong, National Technical Coordinator, Swisscontact, Lao PDR;

- Mr Htet Aung Myo, National Local Vocational Training Manager and Mr. Stephan Giebel, Head of Local Vocational Training (LVT), Swisscontact, Myanmar;

- Mr I Nyoman Adhi Wistawan, Cluster Human Resources Manager, Wyndham Hotel Group and Mr. Ruedi Nuetzi, Country Director, Swisscontact, Indonesia.

*Moderator:*

Mr Richard Rose, Country Director, Swisscontact, Lao PDR

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Plenary Session 2
Improving the alignment of TVET with economic development in rural and remote labour markets

Objective
This session will examine the typical structure of rural labour markets and identify relevant sectors and value chains that exist within ASEAN. It will explore how, in the absence of a vibrant economy, people in rural areas can attain a relevant set of skills to find employment and contribute to economic growth. Participants will also have the chance to discuss the potential (including challenges and best practices) for involving employers in rural areas in the design, delivery, assessment, management and financing of TVET, notably of Dual-Cooperative Training (DCT) programmes.

Rationale
The consensus among TVET experts and practitioners is clear: TVET must be demand-driven and graduates’ skills must be aligned with the skill demand of the labour market, in line with economic development. While economic development in rural and remote areas tends to lag behind national averages, rural labour markets in the region have undergone a transformation leading to new skill demands. The most prominent among these are: the shift to high-value agricultural production, greater off-farm employment, and rural adolescents seeking jobs in the industry and service sector in peri-urban and urban areas (IFAD, 2016). TVET must align with the skills needs that result from these trends so as to supply appropriately-skilled workers to the growing sectors in rural areas and to ensure that surplus labour from rural areas can make a successful transition to industries and sectors that face labour shortages. At the same time, TVET must continue to cater to remote areas that are cut-off from economic development.

The role of employers in aligning TVET with labour market needs is widely acknowledged. Dual training, apprenticeships, sector skills analyses and sectoral skill councils are recognised approaches to aligning TVET programmes with labour market needs. The structure of rural labour markets is however diverse and often characterised by substantial informal employment, including unpaid family work and self-employment (World Bank, 2014). Thus, aligning TVET to rural and remote labour markets must go beyond engaging only formal employers, and must include the self-employed and workers in alternative employment relations.
KEY QUESTIONS

1. What are the specific economic trends in rural areas across ASEAN countries and how can TVET be aligned with them?

2. In the absence of conventional employers, what approaches exist to align TVET with the training needs of workers in alternative employment relations (e.g. self-employed)?

3. What are relevant approaches to address the needs of people in remote areas who are cut-off from employment opportunities?

SESSION INPUTS

Speakers:

- Dr Anthony Mann, Head of Vocational Education and Training team, OECD
- Mr Julien Magnat, Skills and Employability Specialist, Decent Work Technical Team for ILO East and Southeast Asia and the Pacific
- Dr Xaybandith Rasphone, Board Director, Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Lao PDR

Moderator:

Ms. Bernadine Caruana, Counsellor, Department of Education and Training, Australia

REFERENCES