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Networked Public-Private Partnership:

Sustaining Integral Technical Education to Underprivileged Youth

March 2022

Networked Public-Private Partnership

BACKGROUND

The national labour survey reveals Cambodia's human resource as largely 'low-skilled'; only roughly 28% completed secondary education and 1% attended vocational training (ADB, 2018). Increasing access to technical training for new labor market entrants, upgrading skills and competencies of the existing workforce and improving quality and relevance of the national TVET system is thus a cornerstone in the Cambodia National TVET Policy 2017-2025.

Public-private partnerships (PPP) could be connectors to mobilize resources from stakeholders to support TVET (ADB, 2018), in the form of industry involvement in competency standards and curriculum development through to infrastructure funding for TVET provision.

THE PRACTICE

Networked Public-Private Partnership

Don Bosco Foundation of Cambodia, a non-profit organization and TVET provider, began its humanitarian work providing free access to education in refugee campsites. In May 24, 1991, Don Bosco Technical School (DBTS) in Phnom Penh was established to provide integral education and employable skills through the project of Technical School and Vocational Training as a means to alleviate poverty among underprivileged youth and their families.

Overview

Implementing Institution(s):	Don Bosco Technical School
Localities where practice has been implemented	Phnom Penh, Sihanoukville, Kep, Battambang, Poipet - Cambodia
Timeline/ Years:	2010- present (formal MoLVT PPP in Phnom Penh 2015-19; in Battambang 2019- present; other SIPT partners for all schools until the present)
Target Group:	Underprivileged youth (grade 10 leavers; 17 years old above)
Total cost incurred/resources required:	898,082,600 (riel) for 3 years; est. USD 224,520.65

DBTS's operation had been mainly supported by foreign donors and funders; with 70% funding from international donors and 30% from internal income generated locally. However, with Cambodia's upgrading from lower-income to lower-middle bracket (World Bank, 2016), donations have been decreasing, thus challenging Don Bosco Technical Schools to pivot from foreign-subsidized to self-sustainable.

The practice of 'Networked Public Private Partnership' is to sustain its operation of Don Bosco Technical School at Phnom Penh, Sihanoukville, Kep, Battambang and Poipet in challenging situations. DBTS's networked public-private partnership seeks cooperation with public and private key TVET stakeholders,

aggregating various resources to deliver holistic skills development.

Aims

The aims of the Networked Public-Private Partnership are:

- To achieve value for money in the provision of TVET courses without having to build more unsustainable public infrastructures because of lack of human resources
- To harness the innovation and efficiency of private TVET course providers and to provide incentives for them
- To ensure the long-term delivery of access to TVET courses to the young via a sustainable relationship even when stake-holders change over time

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRACTICE

Country-wide Networking

Within Cambodia, Don Bosco Technical Schools (DBTS) explored both the private and public sector for those with common goals it shares and use these goals as a platform for partnership. The Networked Public-Private Partnership involves stakeholders from government, private sectors or industries and other education institutions in the joint collaboration and planning of training projects, for co-funding, implementation of program and monitoring and evaluation of training program.

Private Sector Partnership

Since 2010, DBTS institutionalized a lasting source of partnership via the Supervised In-Plant Training (SIPT) between schools and industry. So far Don Bosco has signed SIPT contracts with around 78 industry partners. Private sector partnerships were sought to support the institutions' tools and facilities supply and upgrading, especially in mechanical-welding, automotive, electronic and electrical departments. A student sponsorship program was set up giving opportunities to industries to provide grants and student-specific needs in teaching and learning for an agreed duration as part of their corporate social responsibility (CSR).

Public Sector Partnership

Don Bosco Technical School collaborates with the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MOLVT) based on a Memorandum of Understanding and Agreement since 1991 and renewed in 2019, offering Certificate 1 level courses for Mechanical, Electrical and Welding annually for a 9 month duration following the Cambodian Qualification Framework (CQF). Additionally, following approval by MOLVT, Don Bosco Technical Schools offer the Associate Degree to poor students who passed Grade 12, in a four semester school-based training. Courses offered are in mechanical-welding, automotive, electricity, electronic, computer, Information technology, media communication, hospitality and culinary, secretarial, printing, and agro-mechanical. All these courses are in progress and following the Cambodian Qualification Framework (CQF). The curriculum, syllabus and conditions of the C1 project was co-planned between the MOLVT and Don Bosco, comprising three semesters of school-based training, with theory component of 40% and

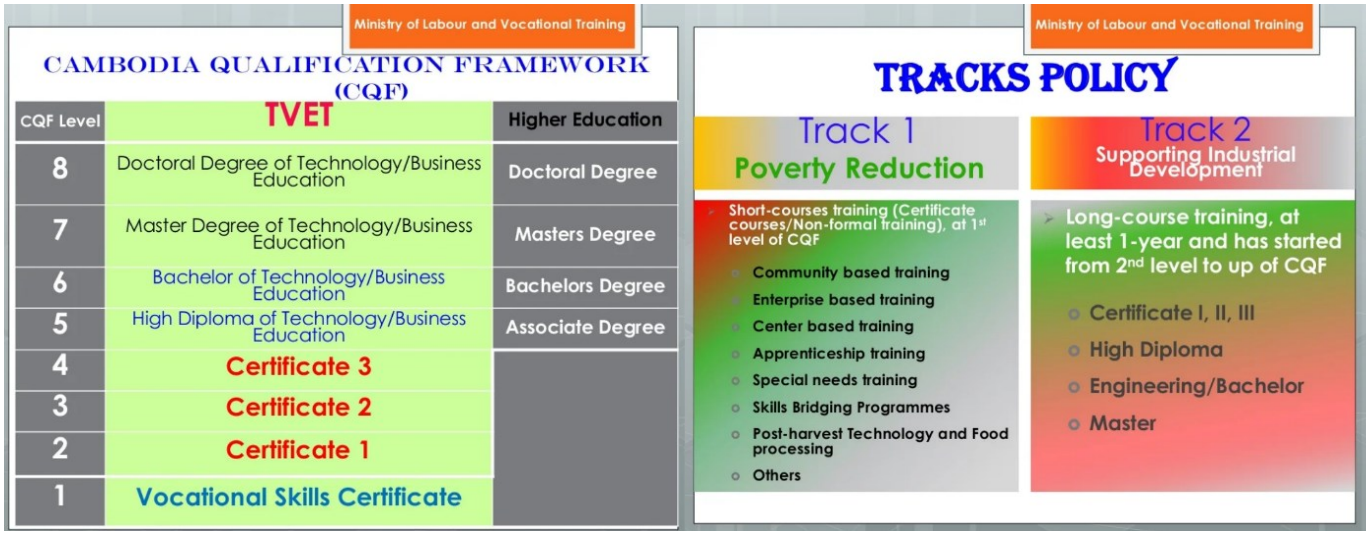

Figure 1: Certificate Level in Cambodia Qualification framework (CQF)
Source: Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training

As part of the monitoring of teacher standard, capacity building of TVET personnel in Don Bosco Technical Schools is given emphasis to develop human resources and expertise where teacher training and teacher exchange are coordinated with various government technical providers like National Teachers Training Institute (NTTI), National Polytechnic Institute of Cambodia (NPIC), and National Vocational Institute of Battambang (NVIB).

Region-wide Networking

Don Bosco Technical Schools networks regionally across ASEAN ever since Cambodia became a full-fledged member of ASEAN in April 1999, and continues to include 'regional reintegration and international cooperation' as the core of Cambodia's foreign policy as reinforced by Prime Minister Hun Sen on the 20th anniversary of Cambodia's membership (Khmer Times, April 30, 2019). With the formation of DON BOSCO TECH ASEAN in 2018, Don Bosco Technical Vocational Education schools from Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam are represented by a country representative to jointly aim to increase the impact of Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) on poverty reduction and qualification of marginalized youth across the ASEAN region.

IMPACT

Through the Networked Public-Private Partnerships, Don Bosco Technical Schools were able to expand the list of partner companies involved in the 3 month Supervised In-Plant Training (SIPT). This helped to provide relevant skills training, job track its graduates and improve the percentage of right skill employment. The period of assistance and close supervision to

graduating students as they move from school-based training to employment has resulted in close to 100% employment rate of all graduates for these past years. More than 74% of graduates (2014-2020) surveyed were able to earn an above average monthly income that is above the minimum wage rate of US$192 for regular workers in Cambodia (as of January 1, 2021).

Don Bosco's integral value-based 'preventive' educational system has empowered poor and vulnerable youths through skills trainings, leadership, sports cultural activities and a value-based integral education; rendering them profitable for the country's socio-economy as future good citizens and workers. The Increased opportunities for skills acquisition to groups of disadvantaged groups are not usually covered by enterprise schemes.

Economically, the Networked Public-Private Partnership creates a financial win-win situation both for the government who could access funds from outside sources and for the TVET provider institutions to be more sustainable. A tri-sector partnership allows both government, industry private entities and non-governmental organizations to learn from each other in terms of working together in the process of planning, execution, monitoring, and evaluation.

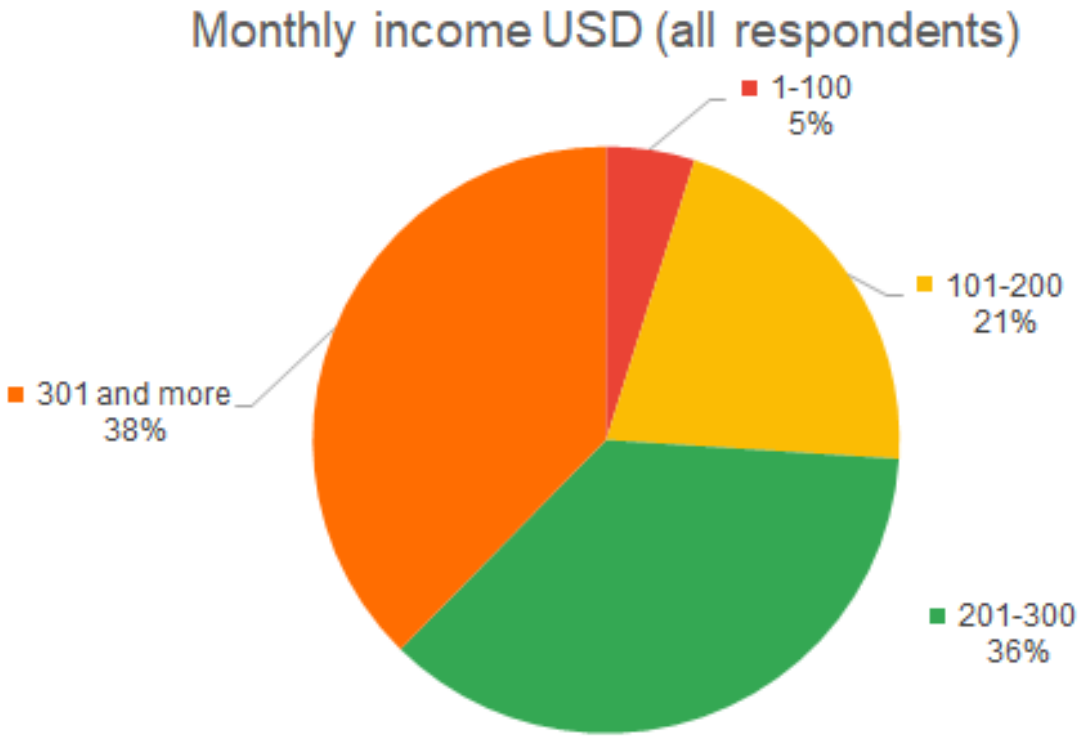

Figure 2: Average Monthly Income (USD) for graduates between 2014-2020

LESSON LEARNT

The PPP of Don Bosco Phnom Penh and Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training was deployed for four school years from 2016 to 2020. The C1 program was discontinued at the outset of the Covid pandemic because of the uncertainty of face to face training; where at least 8 months hands on and around 3 months of Supervised In-Plant training was required as a condition for continuous intensive skills training.

In future, the continuation of post-pandemic skills training would require new networked partnerships to help develop new trainer competencies, digital TVET learning content, teaching and learning technologies and instructional design together with distance and blended technology solutions and alternative methodologies to deliver TVET hands-on courses effectively.

A new opportunity was adopted at Don Bosco Agri-Tech School in Battambang City in 2019 with a nearby government TVET institution (National Vocation Institute of Battambang). During the pandemic, the government TVET institution had instructors but no student recruitment. A "handshake" agreement was established where Don Bosco will provide students to NVIB every year to be trained in a four month C1 course in a practical Electrical Technology course accredited by the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training.

This is a win-win partnership for the country, the youths, the public and private sector. This informal and practical TVET partnered course help to train youths with additional skills for employment, with students from Don Bosco Agri-Tech studying at National Vocation Institute of Battambang (NVIB) in the mornings and continue other skills training in the afternoon. This PPP experience enables the government TVET institution to launch and complete a TVET program and for the private partner - Don Bosco Agro-Tech, to upskill their students with an accredited certificate. Additionally, this ensures that the free-to-public TVET courses and government resources are not wasted while posing a cost-saving opportunity for the private partner.

REPLICABILITY

The Networked Public-Private Partnership practiced at DBTS models a spirit of networking that springs from a TVET common ground; for youths to find better employment opportunities and be able to raise their standard of living and to alleviate poverty. Networked Public-Private Partnerships potentially help institutions remain sustainable by innovating customized solutions to challenging situations through pooling of human resources, infrastructure, funding, expertise and so on.

In a partnership, sectors should work towards the same goals in TVET to promote more cooperation rather than competition. More open discussions and joint projects

should be encouraged so NGOs, public and private could forge better partnerships with specific equity mandates and each should be given a chance to participate with clear roles and mechanisms for effective cooperation and communication.

In this Networked Public-Private Partnership, the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are highlighted as serving a complementary role to the government in delivering core social services in TVET, skills development, jobs creation and importantly the providence of an integral and inclusive education that develops good character citizens.

Life and work skills that are applicable and transferable in any vocational and social environments are vital skills to help youths secure satisfying long-term employment. These could include values and ethics formation, self-development programs which include leadership training, group dynamics and team work, peer tutoring, sports activities, cultural and social outreach activities, are replicable curricula elements in TVET. It is important to train youths for work but more importantly in life.

CONCLUSION

The Networked public-private partnership practiced at Don Bosco Technical Schools Cambodia as a non-governmental organization (NGO), is a case of strategic endeavour to negotiate for optimal resources to the beneficiaries who are the underprivileged youths in Cambodia, especially in cases where there is non-exemption of fees from marginalized and poor households which undermines equal access for poor students and unemployed workers (GIZ, 2019).

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FURTHER INFORMATION

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