Afghanistan is currently making the transition from a traditional society to a modern society subject to the rule of law and based on a market economy. The country’s vocational education and training system is one area reflecting this transitional status. Afghanistan has begun to develop a formal system for vocational training and has 250 vocational schools around the country, where around 90,000 of the 1.7 million young Afghans of training age receive instruction from 2,700 teachers. Some 1,000,000 young people have no access to vocational training because training capacity is inadequate, or because their families do not recognise the value of vocational training. In addition, many young people have to contribute to the household income and are unable to attend a free vocational school. Around 90 per cent of Afghan companies operate in the informal sector, where small businesses are the largest and longest-established providers of vocational training in the country. About 600,000 young people are currently receiving traditional training in such companies, which have no links with the emerging formal state system of vocational training.

Objective

Working on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH is supporting the Afghan Deputy Ministry of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (DM TVET) in setting up an effective formal system of vocational schools, including basic equipment for 50 schools, development of training for new training occupations tailored to the needs of the private sector, and development of a system for initial and continuing training of vocational school teachers. In particular, it will be working on developing an examination system and supporting the DM TVET’s Vocational Training Department in developing and enhancing its administrative and management capacities. The objective is that as many young Afghans as possible should have the opportunity to improve their lives through tailored vocational training.

Results

One of the characteristics of Afghanistan is the functional on-the-job vocational training offered by its informal sector.
Around half of the 600,000 or so apprentices in such situations combine practical training with attendance at a general school. GIZ is currently developing an approach to get them into vocational schools. Vocational schools are to be equipped to give not only apprentices but also journeymen and company owners access to modern technology and the latest know-how. The project is also helping to develop a system from which the whole of the informal sector can also benefit.

With support from GIZ, six new commercial and technical training occupations have so far been developed and launched in 35 vocational schools. A total of 2,241 young people – seven per cent of them young women - are being trained in the new vocational schools. In 2014, every one of the 50 pilot schools involved in the programme will acquire an equipped workshop tailored to local conditions: 60 per cent of schools currently lack an adequate energy supply and 85 per cent operate from rented premises.

Teachers are the central actors in any vocational training system, but Afghanistan has no system for providing them with initial or continuing training. In 2011, with support from GIZ, the first TVET Teacher Training Academy (TTTA) was set up and began operating in Kabul. A further TTTA was opened in Mazar-e Sharif in 2012, also with support from GIZ. Around 1,100 students, of whom 30 per cent are women, are currently undergoing a five-semester course equipping them to teach in a vocational school.

The vocational training programme also offers five continuing training courses for serving teachers in vocational education and six in specialist areas. Between August 2011 and March 2014, the programme provided 267 further training courses for 9,106 participants, equipping talented and committed teachers to operate as multipliers. Women accounted for one participant in five. A new element in Afghanistan is that between January and March 2014, the first 18 Afghan trainers ran 23 workshops providing in-service training to 599 of their colleagues.

Students in vocational schools need to be familiar with business practice, but as this is not always the case within the school setting, GIZ is supporting the Ministry in introducing company placements. In 2013, 5,543 young people from the programme’s 50 pilot schools completed a four-week company placement; 21 per cent of these were women. A total of 553 Afghan companies opened their doors to students completing placements.

One further priority is to boost public interest in vocational training policy. In spring 2012, at GIZ’s suggestion, Afghanistan held its first national vocational training fair, at which 40 vocational schools presented their work to a wide-ranging public. A fringe programme offered debates and workshops, enabling around 6,000 attendees a chance to share experiences and knowledge. The fair attracted nationwide publicity on television and in the press. There was even greater interest in the second fair, held in October 2013, which attracted some 11,000 visitors.

One key aspect of development of the vocational education and training system is the involvement of provincial, district, and town and city representatives in the further development of the vocational training system. In March 2014, at GIZ’s suggestion, the Ministry organised its first conference on vocational training. Around 250 representatives from 29 provinces and 36 towns and cities took part.