

The future is equal

SUCCESS FACTORS FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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Registered offices

Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 32 + 36

53113 Bonn, Germany

T +49 228 44 60-0

F +49 228 44 60-17 66

I www.giz.de

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Author

Eva Dietz, Anna Emil and Svenja Müller

Responsible / Editor

Svenja Müller, Ute Jaskolski-Thiart

Design / layout

FLMH | Labor für Politik und Kommunikation

Illustration

Steffi Stagge

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Abstract

Gender equality is absolutely vital for human rights-based, inclusive, and economically and environmentally sustainable societal development. And yet, the world over, people's gender continues to be a source of discrimination that prevents them from participating equally in public and political life. This also applies to participation in vocational education and training (VET). In many countries, women especially are not able to make self-determined decisions about their vocational training. Worldwide, gender stereotypes and poverty are stopping people from learning the occupation of their choice. Without occupational skills, women in particular remain financially dependent and are excluded from economic and societal spaces.

German development cooperation advocates equal opportunities, also for the most marginalised. But, 'How can we achieve gender equality in vocational education and training?'

This study investigates this question by analysing a large number of VET projects implemented under German and international development cooperation. It also provides an overview of the German and international frameworks for gender equality and sets out analytical factors that either prevent or foster equality. The key outcome of this study consists of 15 success factors for gender equality in vocational education and training, 11 of which are graphically showcased through project examples. Amongst other things, the study puts forward proposals to heighten

awareness of the rights of all people, disseminate knowledge of gender-specific obstacles, and make vocational schools and traineeships safe, attractive and equitable places for young women and men. With its many recommendations for practical action, the study fuels support for equality. It addresses VET specialists, especially implementors and decision-makers engaged in development cooperation. The study comes to the conclusion that gender equality must become an even stronger quality attribute and eligibility criterion in development cooperation.



1. Introduction

A society can only fully develop its potential if men and women have equal access to education and good jobs. However, gender equality has not yet been achieved worldwide. Women and girls in particular face discrimination in the form of numerous legal obstacles and social prejudices. They have fewer opportunities than their male siblings, school friends and colleagues to decide freely what training they want to take and what profession they want to work in.¹ Worldwide, fewer women than men undertake vocational education and training. Many women are not able or not permitted to engage in paid work.² Gender stereotypes lead to labour market segmentation; i.e. women work in more poorly paid jobs that are less valued by society. Women are often also paid less than men for doing the same work.

Women and girls must be strengthened so that societies can overcome persistent legal, economic and social inequalities. Education for women and girls is good for their own personal development, but also benefits their families and society as a whole. Skilled women workers boost the economy. Education also gives women more self-determination, for example with respect to family planning.⁴

Vocational training for girls and women is a pivotal success factor for sustainable development – everywhere in the world.

But how can the objective of gender equality in VET be achieved in the context of German and international development cooperation? If development cooperation is to achieve greater gender equality in VET, it needs to:

- be aware of the gender-specific factors that prevent or promote equality;
- identify levers that need adjusting in order to advance processes of transformation and improve processes that equalise opportunities;
- present strategies that provide for greater gender equality in vocational education and training.

This study identifies, analyses and describes best practices. It addresses VET specialists, especially imple-

mentors and decision-makers engaged in development cooperation.

The study is structured as follows:

↳ Chapter Two describes the methodological approach.

↳ Chapter Three sets out the German and international frameworks for gender equality while

↳ Chapter Four describes the analytical factors the survey used to identify success factors and adjustment levers for gender equality.

↳ Chapter Five is the centrepiece of the study and describes selected project examples, each with a focus on a specific success factor.

↳ Chapter Six summarises the recommendations for development cooperation and offers a tool that actors can use to ask the right questions about gender equality in vocational education and training.

↳ Chapter Seven looks ahead to future challenges in this thematic area.

↳ The bibliography lists the sources used and suggests further reading.

¹ ILO 2016: *Women at Work Trends*.

² In 2018, just 45.3 per cent of women, but 71.4 per cent of men had a paid job. (ILO 2019: *A quantum leap for gender equality: For a Better future of Work For All*)

³ The gender pay gap worldwide in 2018 was 18.8 per cent; in low-income countries it even stood at 20.9 per cent. (ibid. p. 40)

⁴ Educating women and girls has been proven to lower child mortality and reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies. Girls marry significantly later and have children later. (UNICEF 2020: International Day of the Girl Child 2020: Eleven important facts about girls. (German))



2. Methodological approach and key questions

Around 250 VET projects were researched for this analysis to ascertain which gender aspects they included. The focus was on projects that:

- clearly pursue the gender perspective in vocational education;
- have at least one GG1 marker; i.e. gender equality is an important secondary objective (GG stands for 'Geschlechter-Gerechtigkeit' meaning gender equality);
- have been underway for at least a year;
- and/or address specific gender-relevant aspects and produce readily accessible information to prove it.

The study examined projects being realised by the federally-owned implementing organisations Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and KfW Development Bank (KfW) as well as measures implemented by non-governmental actors, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and faith-based agencies, and international and regional networks.

The analysis and its conclusions were based on the following key questions:

- How can development cooperation better identify obstacles and potential for gender equality in VET?
- Where are the major challenges and greatest potentials in this sector?
- What success factors help overcome the obstacles and leverage potential?
- What recommendations can be drawn from this?

Selected project examples were examined in greater detail as part of this study.

The central categories of analysis were:

- [The three-fold approach of the Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation \(BMZ\)](#): gender mainstreaming – women's empowerment – policy dialogue;
- The five elements [of the GIZ Gender Strategy 2019](#): political will and accountability, corporate culture, gender competence, process adjustment, gender equality within the company;
- Internal and external anchorage of methodology for mainstreaming gender equality.

These key questions and categories were used to map out the analytical framework for evaluating selected examples. Evaluation itself consisted of examining many different project documents. This information was consolidated in selected projects through interviews with project managers, gender focal points, desk officers and/or other staff. The structured interviews used the criteria set out in the analytical framework. Evaluation of the documents and interviews subsequently provided the basis for drawing up the success factors presented in [Chapter Five](#). These success factors then led to concrete recommendations for the project and policy level.

3. German and international frameworks for gender equality in development cooperation

3.1

Gender equality – human right and women's right

Some 189 states have ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).⁵ On the one hand, CEDAW states that women citizens have rights which they are entitled to assert and, on the other, that every signatory state is duty bound to implement these rights through suitable policies. Gender equality is thus a basic right and it is the duty of government agencies to remove any obstacles that stand in the way of this right. This basic right enables all people to participate actively and equally in society, to be represented politically and live a self-determined life in dignity.

This is a task for society as a whole and one that requires us to identify and harness levers for positive change.

Moreover, in 2010, UN Women and the UN Global Compact issued the [Women's Empowerment Principles \(WEPs\)](#) whose underlying concept posits that the private sector is co-responsible for realising equal opportunities and gender equality. The WEPs offer companies strategic guidance to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment at the workplace.

The [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development is currently the overarching international framework for development cooperation. Goal 5 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aims to achieve gender equality and to empower all women and girls. Furthermore, SDG 5 also addresses discrimination and violence against women and girls, unpaid work in the home and as carers, sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as access to productive resources. SDG 4 strengthens the importance of gender equality throughout the entire education system (Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all).

3.2

Gender equality – a development objective

Following the resolutions of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action and the UN Fourth World Conference on Women⁶, gender equality is now an independent development objective in the context of international cooperation. In all areas of development, business, politics, education, culture and health it has become an indispensable strategic element for bettering the living conditions of women and men.

Globally, poverty can only be reduced through equal participation, inclusion and the active involvement of all genders.⁷

⁵ BMFSFJ 2020: UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW): Government reporting procedures and documents

⁶ See: UN WOMEN: Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

⁷ UN Women (2018): Gender equality and poverty are intrinsically linked.

Two of this goal's targets refer explicitly to gender equality:

'Target 4.3: By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university. [...]

Target 4.5: By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.'⁸

Moreover, SDG 8 demands decent work for all women and men by 2030, including young people and people with disabilities, as well as equal pay for work of equal value. The proportion of young people around the globe who are unemployed or do not have any schooling or vocational training is to be reduced significantly by 2020. Also embedded in this SDG are the protection of labour rights and safe and secure working environments for all workers.

3.3

German development cooperation and its gender approach

In line with the 2030 Agenda, achieving gender equality is also a strategically important goal in German development cooperation. The action framework here is **BMZ's cross-sectoral Strategy Paper on Gender Equality in German Development Policy (2014)**.⁹

This paper consists of a three-fold approach for promoting equality:

- **Gender mainstreaming:** integration of gender-relevant measures at all levels, harnessing all potential, risk reduction
- **Women's empowerment:** targeted promotion and enablement along with
- **Policy dialogue:** integrating this topic and its objectives into political, sectoral and multilateral coordination and negotiation processes.

The strategy paper is binding for Germany's official development cooperation activities and provides orientation for civil society actors. In 2016, the strategy was supplemented by a **second Development Policy Action Plan on Gender Equality** (Gender Action Plan, GAP II)¹⁰ to cover the period from 2016 through to 2020. GAP II is a blueprint for implementing the strategy and the three-fold approach in political steering and development-policy programmes and projects. Its strategic objectives include measurably increasing the percentage of women and girls in vocational education and training by 2020, making education gender-responsive, working to reduce discriminatory gender stereotypes and strengthening women's equal participation in economic and working life through policy dialogue. Annual 'roadmaps' provide an overview of the priorities and activities, including concrete results that are to be achieved.

The BMZ Strategy Paper on Gender Equality in German Development Policy is inclusive of all genders: men, women and diverse (LGBTIQ).¹¹ It understands gender as a social construct. Its focus is on the dynamics of gender relations and the resulting inequalities.

⁸ German Commission for UNESCO: Education 2030

⁹ BMZ 2014: Cross-sectoral strategy paper: Gender Equality in German Development Policy

¹⁰ BMZ 2020: Development Policy Action Plan on Gender Equality 2016-2020

¹¹ LGBTIQ: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersexual and queer and/or questioning people

Gender is also presented as an international category of scientific analysis that describes power relations as well as the type and form of discrimination. This brings to the fore target group contexts and conditions (needs, interests), along with actors' responsibilities (frameworks, roles) and requisite approaches (strategic measures). The extent to which gender-specific impacts are planned in a given project is indicated using a system of markers agreed on by BMZ and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): the GG (gender equality) marker.

This system shows at a glance whether gender equality:

- is the principal objective of the project or programme (GG2): all indicators at module objective level are gender relevant;
- is a significant secondary objective (GG1): at least one module objective indicator is gender relevant;
- or is not an explicit objective (GG0), although gender mainstreaming is required nonetheless.

A fundamental concept running through all development cooperation measures is gender sensitivity. With respect to vocational education and training, this can involve the following aspects:

What does 'gender-sensitive' (vocational) education mean?

Gender-sensitive education, basic training and upskilling comprises:



Being aware of the importance of role models, i.e. promoting women teachers and training instructors, especially in occupations that are generally male dominated.



Having materials that cover the entire gender spectrum – in illustrations, photos, text exercises and examples. It is important to avoid stereotypes here. This applies to teaching materials (text books, work sheets, digital media) and to advertising campaigns and information materials. Examples: women construction workers and automotive mechatronic technicians, as well as men pre-school teachers and hairdressers.



Language that always accommodates male and female forms and is ideally gender neutral so as to cover the entire gender spectrum. This concerns written texts but also the spoken language.



Gender-sensitive teaching: Teachers must take care to use gender-sensitive language in class and to not discriminate against girls and women due to their gender.



BMZ prioritises a transformative gender approach:

This means empowering women, with a view to making them aware of their rights and options for action while eliminating barriers blocking the path to gender equality. In this way, BMZ aims to change discriminatory structures and practices. This includes people who are excluded on account of their identity, their sexual orientation or the way they define their own gender. Women are the focus of this concept as they continue to suffer strong discrimination. But gender also stands for relational and power structures and these involve men. Consequently, men also have an important role to play in change processes – be it at target group or community level, at partner level in the project team or at the political level. Men are to be included so they can be sensitised and mobilised as change agents. This is crucial for overcoming role stereotypes that discriminate against women, for

ensuring the viability of changing societal norms and also for moving away from restrictive definitions of roles.¹²

German development cooperation has a range of instruments it can use to realise its gender equality strategy in practice, including gender analyses, gender-sensitive planning and results measurement as well as an extensive knowledge management system.¹³ The **corporate gender strategy (2019)**¹⁴ points the way forward for GIZ projects and programmes. Civil society organisations (CSOs) have their own strategies which they discuss, evaluate and develop in umbrella organisations. (e.g. the umbrella organisation of development and humanitarian NGOs in Germany, VENRO).

¹² Traditional gender stereotypes or 'toxic masculinity' are foremost here. For more information, see the GIZ blog: <https://gender-works.giz.de/tag/masculinity/>

¹³ See websites of BMZ, GIZ, knowledge portals like GIZ's 'Gender' microsite or international sites such as UN Women, UNDP, World Bank etc.

¹⁴ GIZ 2019: Gender Reloaded: Vision needs Attitude – Attitude needs Action.

4. Analytical factors for gender equality in vocational education and training

This chapter looks at analytical factors that can lead to gender discrimination or favouritism. Most of these factors need to be taken into account at all three levels of a system being advised: at the macro level or system, the meso level or institutions, and the micro level, i.e. individuals. Microlevel factors are concerned with people's individual circumstances but these cannot be assessed in isolation, as they are shaped by the structural conditions in place.

4.1

Systems

Gender norms

Boys and girls grow up under the influence of gender norms that decisively shape the way they see themselves and the specific roles attributed to their respective gender. Religion, community, social norms and culture are all decisive factors here. Gender norms determine what activities are considered appropriate for women and men and what 'natural abilities' are attributed to them. These can vary enormously from one context to another. Although gender norms change over time, traditional gender stereotypes continue to influence educational opportunities and women's and men's choice of occupation worldwide.

In cultural and/or social contexts in which women are assigned a lower status and are not highly valued, it is often difficult to convince them and their families that they also have the capabilities required to undertake vocational education and training. The prevalence of patriarchal thinking patterns means that many parents

prefer their sons to undertake further training, rather than their daughters. Sons are regarded as having more skills and better opportunities on the job market.

If financial reasons dictate that only one member of a family can undertake training, sons generally take precedence.¹⁵

It is precisely for this reason that girls and women benefit from *life skills*¹⁶ measures that promote decision-making abilities, build their self-confidence and support entrepreneurial thinking.¹⁷

¹⁵ UNICEF: „Girls' Education”.

¹⁶ Life Skills: In 1994, the World Health Organization (WHO) coined the term 'life skills'. WHO uses this term to describe a series of psychosocial skills that enable a person to cope successfully with life's everyday challenges and problems.

¹⁷ A project example: <http://fawe.org/our-programmes/interventions/technical-and-vocational-education-and-training-tvet/>

Law

Although human rights conventions proclaim that women and men are equal before the law and should be treated equally, many countries still have laws that discriminate against girls and women, in particular, with respect to:

- Family law, with massive economic impacts e.g. due to discriminatory provisions in inheritance law.
- Rights concerning access to land and control over it.
- Labour law: In some countries, women's choice of occupation is restricted. Women are often poorly protected by labour law, e.g. should they become pregnant. Maternity leave and parental allowances are only available in a few countries.
- Realising the right to education: According to the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right to education is a human right and is also enshrined in its Convention on the Rights of the Child. Nonetheless, in many countries, girls and women are still denied access to basic and further education.

These legal hurdles have an enormous impact on women's participation in (vocational) education and employment.¹⁹

Political representation

Women are not sufficiently represented at a political level and are not systematically involved in political processes. The upshot is that girls and women are not equally represented.²⁰ This impacts in turn on the design of policies, legal frameworks and state institutions which are frequently blind to the needs of girls and women. The important thing here in terms of vocational education and training is the extent to which sector policies, strategies and action plans that concern the VET system actually cater for the needs of girls and women and mirror equality.

Accessing and remaining in the education system

Education is still not accessible for all. In total, 132 million girls were still not enrolled in school in 2020. Of these 132 million, 43.3 million were of primary school age, 30 million were of lower secondary school age and 67.4 million were of upper secondary school age. Dropout rates among girls are higher than they are among boys.²²

Most national studies show that more men than women are engaged in basic vocational training or upskilling. In the technical VET sectors, only 31 out of 133 countries attain gender parity (ILO 2020).²³

Therefore, a key analytical category when assessing the gender sensitivity of vocational education and training is what (vocational) education infrastructure is available to local people in what spaces (urban, rural) and on what terms. Poverty is still one of the main factors that prevent girls and women making use of education infrastructure.²⁴ Because women's income is lower, training bursaries, or at least free training are key prerequisites, if they are to be able to take part in vocational education.

¹⁸ EU 2020: Discriminatory Laws Undermining Women's Rights. This is not just the case in developing countries and emerging markets however.

¹⁹ IMF Staff Discussion Note 2015: More Equal Laws Boost Female Labour Force Participation.

²⁰ UN WOMEN: Facts and figures: Leadership and political participation.

²¹ UNICEF 2020: 'Girls' Education'.

²² UNESCO 2019: [Data to Celebrate 50 Years of Progress on Girls' Education](#) | UNESCO UIS.

²³ ILO 2020: Policy brief: The gender divide in skills development: Progress, challenges and policy options for empowering women,

²⁴ The World Bank: 'Girls' Education'.



Gender equality on the job market

Around the world, only 45.3% women and 71.4% of men were in gainful employment in 2018.²⁵ In many countries, the job market exhibits a pronounced horizontal gender segregation. Men often work in industry and in better paid craft occupations while women are mostly found in less technical occupations and the service sector, where they essentially perform in ancillary activities. Women are overrepresented in low-paid, low-status jobs.²⁶ The digital sector together with the emergent, sustainability-driven green economy offer a real opportunity. These sectors constitute an area of activity that can generate numerous opportunities for girls and women to find good quality employment; for example, in green water management, in the climate-friendly use and further processing of resources and in programming.²⁷

Distribution of paid and unpaid work

Worldwide, more women work in the private domain than in the public sphere. They are generally responsible for childcare, the household and for looking after members of the family. The work they do is essential for society. Referred to as care or household work or also 'reproductive' work, these tasks are unpaid and not valued as highly by society as 'productive' work.²⁸

According to UN Women, women perform at least two-and-a-half times more unpaid reproductive work than men.²⁹

This inequality in the distribution of time and resources impacts massively on women's and girls' opportunities for basic and further training and consequently on their chances of (better) paid employment. It leaves women less able to build up assets than men. Worldwide, men therefore own 50 per cent more assets than women.³⁰

²⁵ ILO 2019: A quantum leap for gender equality: For a Better future of Work For All.

²⁶ ILO 2020: The gender divide in skills development.

²⁷ ILO 2017: Green Initiative Policy Brief: Green Works.

²⁸ In reality, women's 'reproductive' work includes a great deal of productive, but unpaid jobs, e.g. producing and processing food, kitchen gardening and small livestock production, hand-making family clothing, child rearing and family healthcare, amongst other things.

²⁹ UN WOMEN: Women in the changing world of work- Facts you should know.

³⁰ Oxfam (2020): Time to care. Methodology Note.

Access to financial services

A major obstacle for women transitioning from vocational training can be the lack of access to financial services and loans, e.g. in order to become self-employed.

Some 90 per cent of all women worldwide do not have access to formal loans. Women are also less likely to open a bank account with a formal financial institution than men.³¹ In some countries, women need the signature of a male member of their family before they can open an account. New developments, like ‘mobile money’ accounts, would however appear to be making it easier for women to access financial services.³² For markets with a large informal business sector and not much industry, but also in vulnerable contexts, this is particularly important. In these situations, self-employment is often the only way to generate an income.³³

4.2

VET institutions

The reality of VET

VET institutions are often oriented to men and fail to address women’s needs. One of the reasons for this is that they are mostly headed, managed and staffed by men. This starts with the choice of location³⁴, includes the lack of adequate sanitary facilities for women and culminates in information and teaching materials that are rarely gender-sensitive, especially in technical occupations.

Long distances between home and the training institution are a major obstacle for women hoping to participate in VET. This is particularly true of impoverished people in rural areas. Girls and women are especially limited in terms of mobility, because long distances equate with danger and because they are not able to leave their homes for longer periods of time due to

their care and household work obligations. In some cases, offers of mobile training with flexible schedules are the only possibility this target group has for accessing vocational (further) education and training.

Gender equality by employers

Employers often mirror the gender stereotypes that are prevalent in society, thus replicating any prejudices against women or against men. This is why women and men consider seeking employment in an occupation that is traditionally executed by the other sex to be fraught with obstacles. The following example of a construction sector project in Bhutan serves to illustrate this in that, on average, it takes women graduates twice as long as their male competitors to find a job.³⁵ Moreover, considerably fewer women make it to a management position where they have a say on recruitment decisions.

The dearth of attractive career prospects is discouraging for women and prevents them from developing their full potential.³⁶ Worldwide, the gender pay gap stands at 20 per cent.³⁷

³¹ The New Humanitarian: Financial Inclusion.

³² The World Bank 2017: The Global Findex Database 2017: Measuring Financial Inclusion and the Fintech Revolution. Washington.

³³ CICAN 2017: Integrating Gender Equality in TVET.

³⁴ In many cities, there are districts where women cannot go or where it would be unsafe for them to do so. These factors need to be taken into consideration when selecting a site for a VET facility. Where a school is already located in a part of town that poses a problem for women, safe routes of access must be guaranteed.

³⁵ The project is being implemented by Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation. Interview Helvetas Bhutan

³⁶ ILO 2018: World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends for Women 2018 – Global Snapshot.

³⁷ ILO 2019: Understanding the gender pay gap.

Digitalisation and new technologies

From a gender perspective, the introduction of new digital technologies offers many opportunities for vocational education and training for girls and women. The internet disseminates information across long distances and makes it possible to access the information individually. Supraregional networks can be established. In particular, mothers or girls who are closely involved in care work in the home, or whose mobility is limited for other reasons, can use the digital medium to gain access to education and information about their rights. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), 58 per cent of men but only 48 per cent of women worldwide use the internet.³⁸ Depending on the context, disparities in access can be even more pronounced. Women are also less likely to access the mobile internet via a smartphone or online service provider.³⁹ For this reason, we also speak of a *digital divide* with relation to gender. Women are often less able to afford the costs of data and electronic devices, and more women than men lack the digital literacy needed to operate them. People who are unable to read and write have the biggest problems when it comes to digital participation. Today many girls and women still believe they are less capable of engaging with information and communication technologies and related sectors. On top of this, digital content and algorithms are usually designed by men and therefore rarely geared to women.

*A lot of women are missing out on the employment opportunities being created through digitalisation. Worldwide, merely 24 per cent of all digital sector jobs are held by women.*⁴⁰

Girls and women thus have few role models in these sectors and face high access barriers. Yet, if women have more access to digital technologies, they can improve their economic situation; for example, by advertising and selling textiles or artisanal products they make themselves online in addition to their traditional sales outlets, by networking in professional forums, raising funds online or learning occupations and skills, such as programming, that will thus guarantee an income in future. It also makes it easier for them to access financial services and legal or medical information. Access to, and a good command of digital technologies thus constitutes a key lever for promoting self-determination and gender equality.

4.3 Individuals

Data basis and multiple discrimination

Plans for realising gender equality need to be grounded in sound data. This calls for gender-disaggregated data on various aspects that are relevant for monitoring gender equality, e.g. data on education and training participation, employment quotas of men and women, and their income ratios. It is also important to remember that 'gender' is not the only category for measuring discrimination.⁴¹ For instance, there are forms of multiple discrimination whose inclusion in an analysis can be crucial for identifying obstacles. Possible categories include class, ethnicity, social status and physical and/or mental disabilities. These all make for additional barriers that need to be included if strategies and policies for overcoming them are to be more effectively drafted.

³⁸ ITU 2019: Bridging the gender divide.

³⁹ OECD 2018: Bridging the gender divide.

⁴⁰ BMZ 2018: Women in Tech. Inspiration no fairytales.

⁴¹ This interweaving of discrimination processes is called intersectionality. This term was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in her 1989 essay 'Demarginalising the Intersection of Race and Sex'. Crenshaw used this term to showcase the specific discrimination of black women in the United States.

Early marriage and reproductive rights

One reason why many women are prevented from participating in working life is that they are made to marry early, i.e. before they turn 18.⁴² This factor contributes to women not being able to assert their right to self-determination. They switch from one guardian to another – from father to husband – thus perpetuating their financial dependence. Furthermore, early marriage means that young women often become pregnant at a very early age, sometimes against their will, causing them to end their education or training. These women are vulnerable and often difficult to reach. Basic vocational training or upskilling for this target group can however be particularly important and foster their self-determination.

Gender-based violence against girls and women

Gender-based and/or sexualised violence can be a major blight on women and girls and prevent them from taking part in basic vocational training and upskilling and/or from working. For example, they might encounter violence on the way to and from their place of training or work; alternatively, domestic violence may ensue in their struggle for emancipation and vocational self-determination. The fear of violence alone can be reason enough for women to avoid or fail to complete training courses, especially heavily male-dominated ones, or to ultimately decide against looking for a job. The fear of possible or actual violence against their daughters and against women in general is a concern for many families and cements their opposition to vocational training and/or employment, particularly in predominantly male occupations.

⁴² 21 per cent of women in the 20-24 age group were married as children (UNICEF 2018: Child Marriage: Latest trends and futures prospects)

5. Success factors for gender equality in VET projects in German development co-operation

Based on the analysis of literature and the interviews conducted with staff working on VET development projects around the world, the study singled out success factors that foster the achievement of gender equality in vocational education and training. The first four success factors are regarded as pivotal for overcoming discriminatory conditions (→ see 5.1) They are presented on their own, without any concrete project examples, and highlight awareness-raising, gender sensitivity and gender-responsive infrastructure in the VET sector, as well as risks of gender-based violence.

Eleven success factors then follow, each of which is illustrated using an example of a VET project (→ see 5.2). Four of these eleven factors relate to efforts to strengthen capacity for gender equality, two success factors direct attention to specific vulnerable groups and multiple discrimination, and the remaining five factors look at transformative effects in gender equality. Factors that successfully strengthen capacity for gender equality focus on internal processes and the capacity of the implementing organisations as well as on the design of projects on the ground. In principle, none of the success factors can be considered in isolation. A diverse range of activities is required to achieve gender equality in vocational education and training. Moreover, society's understanding of gender roles can only be transformed if various levels are addressed at the same time. Consequently, projects that have a multi-level approach and that generate synergies with a variety of partners prove particularly successful. This means that these projects combine target-group-specific work with institutional capacity building and strategic advisory services at the macro level.





Overcome discriminatory conditions

1. Raise awareness of human and women's rights and overcome discriminatory gender stereotypes
2. Promote gender-sensitive training materials and women teachers
3. Support gender-responsive infrastructure
4. Minimise violence-related risks for women



Strengthen capacity for gender equality

5. Generate knowledge of country- and sector-specific contexts
6. Use gender equality as a quality attribute and eligibility criterion for support
7. Take the lead with capacity development in the team and with partners
8. Forge partnerships and create synergies



Focus on vulnerability

9. Understand and take account of multiple discrimination
10. Offer flexible and holistic services



Bring about transformation

11. Make transforming gender stereotypes a project objective
12. Communicate progress in gender equality inwardly and outwardly
13. Assign women role models at various levels
14. Create innovative space for gender equality and adopt new technologies
15. Leverage the pull of reputable companies for training girls and women

5.1

Success factors for overcoming discriminatory conditions

5.1.1 Raise awareness of human and women's rights and overcome discriminatory gender stereotypes

Integrating gender equality in project work also means advocating human and women's rights. In many contexts, the target groups and partners are not aware of these rights. This also applies to civil rights and/or to actual equal opportunities policies in partner countries. People can only assert their rights, such as the right to education, if they know they have these rights. For women, VET is a gateway to self-determination, skilled employment and an income. This prompts discussions in society and the family about deeply enshrined gender roles and the traditional division of labour between men and women. It thus holds considerable potential for conflict and requires courage. Gender equality can only be promoted with broad support. Discriminatory stereotypes have to be laid bare, discussed and thematised at various levels: in the family, in vocational schools and the place of training, in the community, on the job market and at policymaking level.

Recommendation: Engage with human and women's rights and national equality policies. Sensitise and inform partners and target groups. Raise awareness at several levels and foster dialogue between families, communities, the private sector and institutional actors (e.g. vocational schools).

5.1.2 Promote gender-sensitive training materials and women teachers

Images, language and examples are highly influential, as are the people who communicate content, i.e. teachers and training instructors. They shape their students' and trainees' perceptions and act as role models. There are too few female role models among teaching and training personnel and in training materials, especially in technical occupations. Women are essentially side-lined.

Recommendation: Promote gender-sensitive concepts, curricula, materials and working practices. Train more women teachers and give them the support they need to continue working in training institutions. Make coaching in gender-responsive pedagogy compulsory for (male) teachers.

5.1.3 Support gender-responsive infrastructure

Gender-responsive infrastructure, such as sanitary facilities or common rooms, are essential for mobilising and enabling girls and women to take part in training measures. Toilets and washrooms for girls and women are necessary in order to preclude any stigmatisation due to menstruation, for example, but schools, training facilities and companies often do not have such facilities. Taking account of women's needs when equipping places of learning and work is a lever for getting women to take up training and employment, and to stay the course, making it a concrete contribution to gender equality. This also includes offers of childcare during training hours, which gives women not only the space they need but also the time they need to access training.

Recommendation: Sensitise partners, such as education ministries and the directors of vocational training schools and employers, to the needs of women and girls and advise them on the planning and rollout of gender-responsive infrastructure in vocational schools and in-company training centres. Encourage partners to earmark sufficient budgetary resources for gender-responsive infrastructure in training centres and companies.

5.1.4 Minimise violence-related risks for women

One of the most important obstacles to development for women and girls worldwide is gender-based violence. Sexual harassment, sexualised violence, threats and assaults injure, threaten and traumatise women. Violence also restricts women's freedom of movement. Consequently, it can also be a key factor preventing them from pursuing vocational training or upskilling. Raising awareness and applying a specific gender lens to risks constitute an initial step towards improvement. The next step requires specific risk mitigation measures in order to reduce the level of violence.

Recommendation: Implement targeted measures to actively counter gender-based violence, e.g. raise awareness and thematise gender-based violence, especially amongst decision-makers and young men. Enable girls and women to get to work or training safely, e.g. organise safe transport and overnight accommodation and set aside rooms at vocational schools and training centres. Engage in violence prevention, e.g. implement measures that will strengthen women's and girls' ability to defend themselves and set up possible complaints mechanisms or appoint people they can turn to for help within vocational training facilities.

5.2

Description of success factors in actual project contexts



This section presents project examples that illustrate eleven success factors.

The following structure is used:

- Brief introduction to the success factor
- Brief description of the project example
- Presentation of the challenges for gender equality
- Identification of a 'key to success'.



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5.2.1

Generate knowledge of country- and sector-specific contexts

In general: Gender equality in vocational education and training is different for each sector (agriculture, health, technology etc.) and country. It is shaped by contexts, such as the formal and informal economic sectors, urban-rural divides, cultural and religious practices and economic conditions. Furthermore, it is in constant flux. For this reason, up-to-date and specific knowledge of the context is an imperative basis for any successful intervention.



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Project example: Ethiopia, Capacity Development for Health Care Professionals and Biomedical Technicians (March 2018 to December 2021), GIZ

This BMZ-funded TC project is assisting its partners in rural regions and in the capital city of Addis Ababa to develop the capacity of healthcare professionals for medical and technical training.

The objective is to improve conditions for the practice-oriented training of selected professionals in the healthcare sector.

The target group consists of vocational school-teachers, medical technicians and engineers in the healthcare system as well as nursing staff at a teaching hospital and in healthcare centres in rural areas. The project aims to raise the quality of training in workshops and healthcare facilities by improving the skills of technicians and training instructors.

Challenges for gender equality: Women are able to train at vocational schools in urban areas, but this training is not yet gender-sensitive. Furthermore, the proportion of women who actually make the transition to working life is reduced dramatically. The use, maintenance and repair of technical equipment are, for example, clearly defined as men's work. The majority of teachers in vocational schools and the doctors in hospitals are men. This situation is attributable to everyday structures and behaviours at the respective locations that discriminate against women, along with deep-seated, patriarchal gender roles. At the workplace, women are often exposed to gender-based bullying or violence.



This project's **key success factor** was to conduct a practice-based gender analysis. The comprehensive empirical part of this analysis generated specific sectoral and regional data on potential, but also on challenges and risks. The analysis identified factors that could be changed, thus giving the project a point to start from.

Thanks to this analysis, it was possible to:

- (a) engage with the partner in a culturally sensitive dialogue on the barriers identified;
- (b) adapt the project, also channelling more resources into activities designed to prevent the continuance of structural discrimination and into policy dialogue;
- (c) set up a gender taskforce in the project, also with male colleagues, to serve as a role model and motivator for the target groups and partners;
- (d) develop measures at target group and partner level (e.g. information spaces; proposals for gender-sensitive infrastructure as well as women's empowerment within the scope of ongoing training).



5.2.2

Use gender equality as a quality attribute and eligibility criterion for support

In general: Promoting pro-active gender approaches means making them sustainable and specific to the given context. It assumes that the obstacles and potential for equal access are known and that targeted gender equality measures are understood as being beneficial for all. Gender equality is a quality attribute of German development cooperation and should be prioritised, also in communications with the partners.

Project example: Skills Initiative for Africa (SIFA) (2016–2022), KfW

SIFA is a BMZ-backed programme with the African Union Development Agency (AUDA). The attendant Financial Cooperation (FC) measure is financed by KfW. Under the auspices of the African Union, it has been supporting free basic and further training in eight pilot countries since 2015.

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The objective is to improve conditions for disseminating innovative employment-oriented technical vocational education and training. The project is partnered by a wide range of consortiums of public and private agencies which present their idea for an innovative employment-oriented skills development project via a transparent competitive application process.

The initiative's target group consists of young people, but focuses in particular on the poor, women and disadvantaged population groups. By giving them access to formally recognised occupational training, the project enables them to improve their prospects on the job market. KfW ensures that gender equality is a key criterion when measures are selected for promotion.

Challenges for gender equality: Barriers to occupations requiring training, especially in technical sectors, remain high. Campaigns marketing training courses often fail to address women actively. A lot of employers remain unaware of the positive impacts that a good gender balance has on a company's performance capacity.



The key success factor enabling women and men to benefit equally from basic and further training was to specify 'gender sensitivity' as an eligibility criterion and quality attribute. In their project applications, partner institutions thus have to set out measures for gender-responsive implementation. A quota of 30 per cent of places to be filled by women is regarded as the minimum standard.

Women's empowerment and their access to vocational education and training does not come about all on its own. This is why support for gender equality and a mandatory women's quota have proven to be necessary eligibility criteria. Furthermore, SIFA builds the equality capacities of partner organisations. This is because, even if all qualified partners are willing to promote women, they sometimes lack the expertise they need for the targeted implementation of gender equality measures. In this context, AUDA-NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) and applicants engage in an exchange on the rollout of gender equality measures in order to jointly identify and eliminate existing obstacles. The complementary technical cooperation (TC) project, which is being implemented by GIZ, fosters knowledge exchanges between African Union members states regarding their experience with the development and implementation of innovative and inclusive VET projects.



5.2.3

Take the lead with capacity development in the team and with partners

In general: Project management and the clear allocation of responsibilities within the team are decisive for the consistent implementation of gender equality in VET projects in development cooperation. This area of work needs to be appreciated and supported and not regarded as an irksome cross-sectoral topic. Only if people feel they have the capacity and mandate to operate in the field of gender will they pursue this topic creatively and actively.



© BHT Mechatronics 2 at LILAMA 2

Project example: Viet Nam, Reform of Technical and Vocational Training II (2020 – 2023), GIZ

The project supports the adaptation of the regulatory framework of vocational education and it promotes the networking of governmental actors, vocational training institutes and the business community in order to make the educational offers needs-oriented. Furthermore, the project enables TVET institutions to work with private businesses to provide basic and further training in line with international standards.

The project's objective is to better align technical and vocational education and training with the changing world of work. Companies in Viet Nam bemoan the lack of skilled workers because only about 23% of the workforce have a vocational training qualification. To date, training has not been sufficiently geared to the demands of an increasingly digital and green economy.

This TC project's target group consists of women and men who are seeking a traineeship or who are already undergoing training.

Vietnam

Challenges for gender equality: Women have difficulty accessing TVET courses. Inflexible societal gender stereotypes make it hard for them to apply for technical courses and to be taken seriously. To date, trainers and teachers have done little to make their lessons and practical instruction gender-sensitive. School managers often lack the understanding and skills needed for women's empowerment.



The key success factor is the clear and visible commitment to gender equality on the part of the project's managers and partners. The project attaches great importance to this topic. All of the data it collects is gender disaggregated in order to obtain relevant information for project steering. The project has established a gender focal point position in the team. This person has a clear mandate and budget for the project's gender-specific inputs. Additional support comes from a gender expert at country level. These support structures also make it possible to provide further training for other team members and project partners on this topic.

Since the Vietnamese partners, and the TVET institutions especially, were not sufficiently aware of gender issues, the project provided training on gender-sensitive communication and public relation work and organised events on the topic of 'sexualised violence in the education context'. Having been advised on the topic of gender equality, the Labour Ministry's TVET agency now attaches greater importance to this issue, as evidenced in the establishment of a women's committee. By providing subsidies, the project created an incentive for TVET institutions to pro-actively implement their own gender approaches, such as Girls' Days and bursaries for women. As a result, it has been possible to double the number of women in the technical courses supported.



5.2.4

Forge partnerships and create synergies

In general: Implementing gender equality requires many advocates and strong alliances. Strategic partnerships enable synergies to be created, thus allowing the promotion of gender equality at various levels.



© IECD Egypt

Project example: Egypt, Training Young Male and Female Egyptians for Careers in Electricity (since 2013), Institut Européen de Coopération et de Développement (IECD)

The project is part of the multi-country Seeds of Hope programme implemented by the Institut Européen de Coopération et de Développement (IECD).

Its objective is to train young Egyptian men and women to work in the electricity sector and to help them transition to employment. The contents of the three-year training course in electrical maintenance are undergoing a radical review which will lead to stronger alignment with practical demands on the job market. Regular work placements in reputable companies help provide initial experience with the world of work.

The target group are young people in Egypt.

Egypt

Challenges for gender equality: Almost the same number of women and men are training to become electronic technicians. However, the transition from training to workplace does pose a challenge in that young women tend to withdraw from the job market after completing their school education or seek employment in women-dominated occupations. Applications from young women are rejected more frequently. They also receive less support from their social environment, as their families also have their doubts about their daughters' career prospects.



One of the project's **key success factors** for better realising gender equality was to network with other actors that are already successfully promoting women's employment in male-dominated occupations. Cooperation also enabled the IECD project team to fill its own knowledge and skills gaps. For example: GIZ's TC programme Economic Integration of Women in the MENA Region (EconoWin) aims to improve networking between women employers and women graduates through digital events.

The Round Table "Towards a Better Environment for Female Technicians" was established jointly with PLAN INTERNATIONAL. And a partnership with UN Women Egypt has facilitated studies on the challenges facing women in technical occupations.

The project also works with highly reputable employers (e.g. Hilton Hotel) that offer female trainees work placements and are willing to act as role models for other companies and students. In future, the project plans to step up cooperation with the women's families in a bid to break down stereotypes and prejudices here too, making it easier for women to embark on a career.



5.2.5

Understand and take account of multiple discrimination

In general: Discrimination often does not just concern one aspect but several. Besides a person's gender, this could be a disability, ethnicity, extreme poverty, rural origins, age or migration background. In complex scenarios involving multiple discrimination it is particularly necessary to mobilise many levels and resources to overcome the challenges faced by the target groups in the VET context. Well-equipped public and private structures in this thematic field are a major advantage, e.g. a gender action plan, an inclusion strategy, a country strategy for victims of violence, a gender strategy for the partner, NGOs or advocacy groups with pertinent expertise. Making effective use of the structures available, e.g. to achieve objectives, contributes to the successful implementation of gender equality.

© GIZ / Medica Gjakova

Project example: Kosovo, Youth, Employment and Skills (2017–2020), GIZ

Youth unemployment in Kosovo is very high (over 50 per cent). At the same time, many vacancies in the private sector cannot be filled owing to a shortage of skilled workers. The project enhances the employability of young people by improving the quality of Vocational Education and Training (VET) and also strengthening the mechanisms to match labour market supply and demand.

The objective of the BMZ-financed TC project is to improve the target group's employability. It places a particular focus on the specific needs of returnees as well as all ethnic groups and minorities

The target group are young Kosovars aged between 15 and 35.

Kosovo

Challenges for gender equality: Women in Kosovo account for a very small percentage of the workforce (13 per cent in 2019⁴³). Those facing multiple discrimination have it hardest to find work, such as members of ethnic minorities, survivors of (sexualised) wartime violence and women with disabilities. They face greater obstacles on their path to high quality training and subsequent employment. To a certain extent, this has to do with the patriarchal mindset in Kosovo.

This project's **key success factor** for addressing multiple discrimination was to harness national and local mechanisms for gender equality (including the Agency for Gender Equality; gender equality officers in the municipal administrations) and to involve advocacy groups for vulnerable people, such as people with disabilities and women affected by sexualised violence.

In this way, the project was able to build on existing mandated and funded infrastructure and harness related expertise to create needs-oriented counselling and training offers for vulnerable target groups. Relations that had already been forged with the local organisation Medica Gjakova prior to the project meant that activities focused on a particularly vulnerable target group: women survivors of sexualised violence perpetrated during the war. Supported by a context-sensitive, psychosocial approach, they were integrated into short-term training measures where they were purposefully not depicted as 'victims' in order to avoid any renewed traumatisation. Together with their daughters and with women who had not suffered any violence, they received vocational training and help with starting up their own businesses, including mentoring. The approach was closely supported in psychosocial terms and adapted to the participants' education status. This enables them to reintegrate into a safe life and to ward off any stigmatisation. Externals were not able to say which women belonged to which group.

⁴³ ASK: Labor Force Survey, Q2 2019.



5.2.6

Offer flexible and holistic services

In general: In contexts involving multiple discrimination and fragility, it is very important to make offers for trainees flexible and to provide close support. An offer of back-up support can help trainees to better manage day-to-day challenges. It can also direct support to their immediate social environment, thus enabling them to complete training and find employment. This lowers the dropout rate, especially for (young) mothers.

Project example: Kenya, Skill Up! (2015–2023), Welthungerhilfe (German non-governmental aid agency)

The supraregional programme, which is being implemented by Welthungerhilfe, supports partner organisations in Afghanistan, India, Kenya, Malawi, Nepal, Sierra Leone, Tajikistan and Uganda in the field of vocational education and training. The component in Kenya is being implemented with the partner organisation Watoto Wa Lwanga, amongst others, in the largest slum in Nairobi (Kibera).

© Welthungerhilfe / Jidovanu



The project

objective is to offer young people from precarious circumstances, and girls and women in particular, prospects of employment and thus of a stable income which will help ensure sustainable food security.



In

terms of target group, a particular focus is on young mothers without any training and on people with disabilities.



Challenges for gender equality: Young mothers in Kibera are generally single mothers, with a very low income, little support from their families and often only rudimentary education.

Job prospects for young people in the 15 – 35 age group in Kibera are very poor. Most of them do not have access to (non-formal) vocational basic and further training or do not have any time for it, because they work in the informal sector and/or perform care work. The majority of young people work in the informal sector so that they can contribute to their household's income.



The key success factor for gender equality in this context takes the form of modular and flexible training courses backed up with extensive support, especially for young mothers; i.e. in the form of childcare, social workers who can provide careers advice and psychosocial counselling, and a mentoring programme to closely support former programme participants.

Trainees thus always have a person they can contact to help them out with any urgent issues they may face in their day-to-day lives. This is important to ensure that external circumstances (e.g. violence on the way to training, not enough food for children) do not prevent them from finishing their training. The programme has now also piloted a component for young fathers to support them with their extensive responsibilities for training, income generation and family life. The project shows that men also need support in order to meet their obligations. It strengthens them in their role as fathers, which often remains unseen.



5.2.7

Make transforming gender stereotypes a project objective

In general: To achieve gender equality in access to training, upskilling and the transition to gainful employment, discriminatory societal norms and gender stereotypes need to be challenged and changed for the benefit of girls and women. Transformation is the successive elimination of structural obstacles and inequalities. It is complex and requires a suitable approach, namely a transformative gender approach.



© GIZ / AgricToday

Project example: Skills Initiative for Africa (SIFA)
TC project: Vocational training project for women in Africa (January 2017 – October 2022), GIZ

In the pilot countries Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi and Togo, inclusive, labour-market-oriented and income-enhancing training offers are being used to improve employment prospects, especially those of women, in the fields of agriculture and food security.

The principal objective is gender equality (GG2) and is to be achieved by training women in the agriculture and food sectors.

The project target group consists of rural population groups in Africa that are generally impacted by poverty and hunger, especially women aged 16 to 35 from the selected pilot countries who are and/or could be employed or self-employed in the agriculture and food sectors but have been marginalised due to their inadequate vocational training or complete lack of access to employment-oriented training offers.

Challenges for gender equality: Although women make up nearly 50 per cent of sub-Saharan Africa's agricultural labour force which produces around 80 per cent of all food⁴⁴, most of them work in the precarious subsistence sector. The male-dominated vocational training system with its strongly biased structures offers them virtually no opportunities for training that would lead to improved income prospects.



The key success factor here is a transformative gender approach that identifies barriers to gender equality and develops practical solutions for eliminating them. To this end, the project targeted four levels:

- (a) the personal, individual level (knowledge acquisition and building of self-confidence);
- (b) the relationship level (question: „who decides what?“);
- (c) the cultural level (change in awareness regarding gender stereotypes);
- (d) the system level (informing people about their rights and engaging in policy dialogue).

This approach also involves orienting training offers to the needs of learners, flexible, modular work, a combination of formal and non-formal education, and the development of gender-sensitive curricula. Context adaptation and creativity foster motivation and ownership. They also generate social acceptance. Actively involving men in change processes is another key element. Men too have to rethink gender roles and the redistribution of household and care work. Other projects (see also: Gender Makes Business Sense) and partner institutions in the pilot countries are already integrating the transformative approach into their measures.


⁴⁴ GIZ/ATVET Factsheet, 2017: African Union: Transforming Agriculture through Skills Development.



5.2.8

Communicate progress in gender equality inwardly and outwardly

In general: Progress made in gender equality must be visible. For too long, women have been the ‘invisible sex’, with public spaces mainly occupied by men. Advances in gender equality and changes in the perception of roles should be reflected and showcased in texts, images and film. This can give gender equality an additional boost and motivate others to work for gender equality as well.



Project example: Ghana, #eSkills4Girls
(October 2019 – September 2022), GIZ

#eSkills4Girls is a global project that builds the digital skills of women and girls. Launched under the German G20 Presidency, the project aims to close the digital gender gap, especially in low-income and developing countries. In Ghana, #eSkills4Girls is being implemented under the vocational training component of the GIZ Sustainable Economic Development project.

Its objective is to support VET in digital technologies and to promote women's education and employment prospects in an increasingly digitalised world.

The target Group are young girls aged 13 to 30.

Challenges for gender equality: Even today, fewer Ghanaian women than men have access to the internet⁴⁵ and to digital skills. This considerably restricts women's economic and social participation and leaves them with fewer job opportunities. Women are underrepresented in the IT sector and in STEM⁴⁶ subjects. Traditional gender roles play an important part here. As a rule, young girls are expected to take care of the family. They are brought up to be housewives and not career women. Furthermore, women are encouraged to seek service sector jobs as they are considered suitable female occupations.

The key success factor with regard to gender equality lies in role model visibility. In awareness-raising campaigns with the local community, men and women were recruited as campaign supporters and central actors to help in changing the prevailing mindset. The project filmed around 50 videos to share and document progress with gender equality. This directed greater attention towards this topic and motivated community members to engage more with this issue and to work for gender equality. In all this, it was important to not only showcase strong women but also the men who support such women.

The project assists girls and women to build their careers in the IT sector. In this context, three skills-based curricula were developed:⁴⁷ databases, software development and networks. Six vocational schools are being supported to better align ICT training with job-market demands. In cooperation with the organisation Developers en Vogue and other private institutions, ICT and other training courses for entrepreneurs have been prepared and implemented, with a view to building women's digital skills in the informal sector and to assisting them with the development of their business.

⁴⁵ The gender gap for meaningful connectivity, that is, fast connection, sufficient data, a suitable device and regular access to the internet, stands at 14 per cent in Ghana. (Africa.com 2020: [Women In Ghana Closing The Gender Gap In Internet Access – But Still Miss Out On Benefits Of Digital Technology](#))

⁴⁶ STEM is a collective term for fields of learning and study or professional work in the field of science, technology, engineering, maths


⁴⁷ Competency Based Training (CBT).



5.2.9

Assign women role models at various levels

In general: One of the most successful strategies for realising gender equality is the use of role models.⁴⁸ In male-dominated occupations especially, women often have no idea what a working day looks like or what the pay structure is. It therefore makes sense to inform girls and boys in school and also during extracurricular activities about opportunities for vocational training and to invite women and men to present the various occupations to them. Offers of mentoring by women for women can make all the difference. It can instil confidence in women and open up new prospects. At the same time, it is important that the implementing organisation itself is a credible role model for gender equality – both inwardly and outwardly.



© Power Training Institute / Jigme Wangchuck

Project example: Bhutan, Occupational Skill Development for the Construction Sector, Phase II (2018–2022), Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation

The project is being implemented in the construction sector. Generally speaking, technical and vocational education and training does not command much social prestige in Bhutan. For this reason, the project is working to promote a positive image of TVET.

Challenges for gender equality: Gender-disaggregated data collected at the start of the project showed that women accounted for only 35 per cent of the trainees learning construction sector trades at vocational schools. The schools had a suitable infrastructure for both genders. Some of the construction companies that joined the new dual training model as cooperation partners did not, however, have any infrastructure suitable for women (e.g. sanitary facilities). Moreover, the companies generally tended to prefer male applicants.

The project objective is to promote dual, high quality and practice-oriented VET for decent employment.

The target group are young women and men in Bhutan.

Bhutan

Key Success Factor:

One of the **key success factors** was the choice of training partner: namely a major construction company from Bhutan that actively promotes equal opportunities for women in the building sector. This company assigned a woman civil engineer to a prestigious construction project and highlighted her role and contribution through its marketing activities, generating wide-scale visibility. This crafted a strong role model for women in the construction sector, which continues to inspire a lot of women. The women technical instructors in the vocational schools are also a vital source of inspiration and act as mentors for women trainees in male-dominated occupations. Strengthening these women's capacities is a promising strategy that is to be leveraged to transform gender roles.

The project used the positive experience with a female civil engineer as a role model for other companies in the construction sector. This allowed it to convince other companies that employing women is rewarding. The implementing organisation Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation itself practises and demonstrates a culture of equality. Amongst other measures, it is committed to a women's quota of 33 per cent at management level.


⁴⁸ A study by the World Bank and UNIDO shows that one of the main factors that influence the choice of work by women and girls in Ethiopia is whether they know someone who already works in this sector. This clearly shows how important concrete images and concepts inform the choice of occupation: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/27481?locale-attribute=es>.



5.2.10

Create innovative space for gender equality and adopt new technologies

In general: New technologies can foster gender equality in many different and vital ways. In 'New Work', technical, creative and management skills will be more important. This is where women stand to benefit if they get the chance. At the same time, digital technologies open up new places for encounters and thus opportunities for gender equality.



© GIZ / Re:Code

Project example: Iraq, Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) – Perspectives for modern youth in Iraq (December 2017– June 2022), GIZ

The BMZ-funded TC project is supporting the generation of a tech ecosystem in Iraq and the creation of a sustainable infrastructure for innovative digital products and startups. Two thirds of the population of Iraq is under 25 years of age and most of them have very meagre income prospects.

The objective is to strengthen ICT-relevant qualifications of young people in Iraq and thus improve their employability.

The project target group consists of young jobseekers in the 15 to 30 age group, as well as disadvantaged groups, such as women, refugees and people with disabilities. The measures are inclusive.

Challenges for gender equality: The obstacles to equal participation by women include:

- (a) The fact that ICT is an essentially male-dominated sector;
- (b) Sociocultural factors, e.g. low level of social acceptance for meeting people privately outside the family's control;
- (c) The country's precarious security situation.



The key success factor is a digital hub which is both a working space and social meeting place. Women and men learn and work here together, on an equal footing and publicly visible. Digital hubs are considered 'safe spaces'. They are socially accepted, because the community and families of the participants are involved and collective social controls are in place.

Community networks and hubs are the supporting pillars of an emancipatory, transformative process that is both innovative and culturally grounded. Contacts with 'strangers' (e.g. investors) which traditionally would not be possible for women in a private sphere, are able to take place in this 'public area of trust'. Women account for up to 40 per cent of the participants and have already written their own success stories in the ICT sector.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ GIZ akzente magazine 2020: [Iraq's digital innovators](#)



5.2.11

Leverage the pull of reputable companies for training girls and women

In general: Businesses are key cooperation partners for VET projects, both with regard to the practice-oriented implementation of learning content and to guaranteeing the transition from training to good quality employment. For many reputable companies today, gender diversity⁵⁰ is the default standard. Potentially, this makes them important partners for realising gender equality and empowering women.



© Don Bosco Mondo / Susanna Franke

Project example: South Africa, Training in automotive mechatronics (since 2017), Don Bosco Mondo

Don Bosco Mondo cooperates with dedicated German and local companies of various sizes. The project's training combines teaching theory and acquiring practical technical skills with soft skills (e.g. fairness, respect, reliability, communication and team skills) and life skills (e.g. problem solving and decision-making, resilience, critical thinking, self-confidence). Don Bosco facilities primarily impart these skills through sport, games and team work.

The objective is to train young South African women and men living in precarious conditions in Cape Town to provide mechatronic vehicle services.

The target group consists of young people from Cape Town's violent and impoverished townships.

South Africa

Challenges for gender equality: Women are underrepresented in mechatronics and encounter more difficulties on the job market than men, regardless of whether they are employees or self-employed. Even women with excellent qualifications often fail to find work or get commissions in conservative contexts.



The key success factor here was to train with a highly respected German company and its network. The matter-of-factness with which the German firm demands gender diversity in its training courses created a women-friendly climate in a traditionally male-dominated occupation. Moreover, the firm's reputation and the high quality of the training it provides enabled women trainees to transition easily from training to a job, even outside the firm that trained them.

A sports project in the training workshop run by the Salesians of Don Bosco in Cape Town had already actively promoted and raised the visibility of young women in more male-associated areas prior to the training project. The training centres were therefore already more accepting of women in typically male occupations.

⁵⁰ General diversity concepts in businesses relate to the composition of staff in terms of gender, age and origin/nationality; gender diversity refers solely to the gender-specific mix of staff.

6. Recommendations for VET in development cooperation

This chapter sets out recommendations for VET in German development cooperation, targeting both the policy level and the design of development projects and programmes. The recommendations for action were derived from the success factor analysis described in → Chapter 5. In addition, this chapter puts forward concrete proposals for implementing these success factors. Section 6.2 also presents a tool that can help actors to ask the ‘right’ questions.

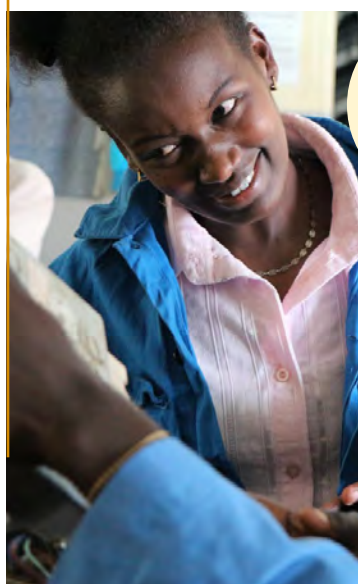
6.1

Summary of recommendations for policy design and implementation in projects and programmes

6.1.1

Raise awareness of human and women's rights

- Make women's access to VET a political priority
- Raise awareness at several levels and foster dialogue between families, communities, the private sector and institutional actors (e.g. vocational schools)
- Make it clear to staff that gender equality is a major concern in VET projects
- Develop gender skills



What does that mean exactly?

- Offer advice on national gender action plans
- Involve women in VET strategy development
- Sensitise and educate target groups on the right to education and equality
- Conduct awareness-raising campaigns on gender stereotypes for companies
- Address gender norms that influence choice of occupation and use role models to transform them
- Upskill the staff of partner and implementing organisations in the use of gender-sensitive instruments and approaches
- Agree on gender quotas for vocational schools

6.1.2

Promote gender-sensitive training materials and women teachers

- Provide (financial) support for gender-sensitive concepts, curricula, materials and work placements
- Train teachers and trainers to be gender-responsive
- Train more women teachers, also in technical skills, and give them support so they remain in the educational system
- Cooperate closely with businesses to enable a gender-sensitive career start



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What does that mean exactly?

- Train teachers and trainers in gender concepts and gender-responsive pedagogy; provide targeted support for women trainers so as to create role models
- Involve businesses and schools in the development of gender-sensitive and inclusive curricula
- Promote gender-sensitive teaching using corresponding materials, e.g. that depict women and men; use modern, light materials and tools; when procuring security gear and designing workshops, cater for smaller sizes too
- Gear work placements to the needs of girls and women (e.g. organise women to supervise interns and ensure rooms are safe etc.)

6.1.3

Support gender-responsive infrastructure

- Provide more financial support for public education structures to drive forward improvements in gender-responsive infrastructure
- Plan a budget to equip training centres and partner companies with gender-responsive infrastructure

What does that mean exactly?

- Promote gender-responsive infrastructure in training centres; e.g. separate sanitary facilities, dormitories, common rooms, suitable transport
- Conduct regular quality controls to check how well gender-responsive infrastructure works at the training centres and in VET schools

6.1.4

Generate knowledge of country and sector-specific contexts

- Support context, market and sectoral tracer studies and earmark specific funding for this purpose
- Conduct a precise gender analysis before starting the project to identify opportunities and risks and find solutions (objectives, results, indicators)
- Heighten the visibility of LGBTIQ groups and the challenges they face (in spite of and because of cultural taboos)
- Generate knowledge on common forms of multiple discrimination

What does that mean exactly?

- Promote/conduct studies on vocational education and training and on economic sectors using gender-disaggregated data and adopt a gender perspective (e.g. where is there gender-based structural discrimination; what gender stereotypes exist)
- Collect data on pay structures in occupations dominated by men and women respectively
- Engage in gender-sensitive monitoring, e.g. statistics on number of women graduates who remain in the system and their qualifications and, if applicable, record possible (additional) grounds for discrimination (ethnicity, religion, disability etc.)



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6.1.5

Use gender equality as a quality attribute and eligibility criterion

- Create incentives for GG1 projects, so that they can develop a high quality gender approach that makes projects transformative
- Enhance the quality of GG1 projects in terms of their gender approach and indicators
- Promote exchanges of knowledge between projects, with a view to realising gender equality

What does that mean exactly?

- Analyse and monitor GG1 and GG2 projects
- Keep a closer eye on the outputs and recommendations of context and gender analyses to ensure that central aspects are sustainably integrated in projects
- Disseminate and use the quality criteria for GG1 projects
- Make more HR and financial resources available for gender, also for relevant upskilling for staff and partner organisations
- Promote and use knowledge exchange platforms (across projects and transnationally)

6.1.6

Promote role models at several levels, take the lead at management level

- Demand gender skills at relevant management levels; project managers should take the lead with regard to the topic of gender equality
- Give gender focal points and gender experts more responsibilities and resources; acknowledge and voice recognition of their work on gender equality
- Involve men and women role models and position them prominently to offset stereotypes



What does that mean exactly?

- Ensure gender diversity in teaching staff and management (50 per cent women if possible)
- Specifically promote women trainers and teachers, especially in traditionally male-dominated occupations and future-oriented sectors (digital economy, resource-savings sectors)
- Promote mentoring programmes by women for women and provide (financial) support for startups
- With an eye to realising gender equality in VET, feature role models in marketing materials
- Make teaching and information materials gender-sensitive, e.g. include images of women plumbers and men preschool teachers
- Seek out champions of successful gender equality in the private sector and get them on board

6.1.7

Leverage donor and partner structures, forge partnerships and use innovative spaces

- Learn from and work with actors that have already gained experience in the rollout of gender equality in the partner country
- Strengthen policy and economic dialogue on gender equality in VET
- Promote cooperation between vocational schools with good experience in gender equality
- Seek out physical spaces for overcoming gender stereotypes and create them together with the local community; promote ownership of these spaces



What does that mean exactly?

- Learn about support options, e.g. via corporate social responsibility (CSR), i.e. voluntary contributions by companies that go beyond statutory regulations
- Expand country-specific networking formats, e.g. via donor round tables or actor forums, so as to identify knowledge gaps and commonalities and tap into synergies early on
- Involve disadvantaged groups and their representatives so as to understand multiple discrimination and develop joint or mutually complementary approaches

6.1.8

Organise and budget for back-up support measures, reduce risks for women

- Identify the challenges of marginalisation and multiple discrimination and respond with pertinent approaches
- Help make VET services physically accessible to women suffering from multiple discrimination
- Earmark more financial resources for gender equality in projects, enabling more training, coaching and exchanges with partners
- Implement back-up support measures on gender-based violence against women and girls, especially in fragile contexts



What does that mean exactly?

- Promote bursaries for girls and women (in coordination with health and social welfare benefits) to give them access to VET and enable them to remain in the VET system
- Create mobile services that enable women and girls to stay with their families during training
- Set up offers of childcare; if necessary, cooperate with municipal structures
- Promote safe and affordable transport options
- Always and everywhere, factor in violence against women, also as a reaction by the family/community to emancipation processes, e.g. use community campaigns, mentoring programmes, complaints mechanisms
- Plan and implement measures in close cooperation with the social environment in which the girls and women live (family and community) in order to increase acceptance
- Offer psychosocial services to reduce the number of dropouts
- Promote (woman-to-woman) mentoring programmes for job market entrants

6.1.9

Design low-threshold and integrated VET offers for fragile contexts

- Integrate particularly vulnerable groups into project planning and plan resources
- Attach greater priority to catch-up education as a criterion for VET, especially for girls and women, but also for school dropouts, single parents and people with special needs
- Foster the interlinkage of life skills, technical skills and longer-term back-up support

What does that mean exactly?

- Develop strategies for improving the situation of informal-sector employees
- Take account of the double workload shouldered by girls and women due to their caring and household duties, e.g. offer flexible training times and/or childcare
- Offer job preparation training to empower women
- Promote subnational approaches with civil society ownership, like skills training for people in rural regions to ready them for formal job markets or self-employment

6.1.10

Set transformation as a project objective

- Step up promotion of transformative approaches, even if initially this only results in small steps towards more gender equality. This means analysing, taking account of and, if necessary, changing norms and values, along with the causes of gender disparity.
- Be courageous, creative and innovative when designing transformative processes and share experience
- Involve all genders and promote reflection on stereotypes
- Make women and their success visible

What does that mean exactly?

- Support projects with inclusive approaches and transformative gender perspectives, i.e. design and implement more GG2 projects and check whether GG0 projects have the potential for GG1
- Create incentives, e.g. set up funds for gender-transformative projects
- Expand support for women and girls especially in STEM subjects and in the field of new and digital technologies so as to break down traditional gender stereotypes
- Offer women vocational guidance and advice on careers that are traditionally the preserve of men and vice versa; support gender-sensitive career guidance and job placements, offer bursary programmes or education vouchers
- Organise national Girls'/Boys' Day events at which girls and boys can learn about new jobs.
- Create physical spaces to overcome discriminatory gender stereotypes; promote ownership through community participation



6.1.11

Make progress in gender equality visible

- Highlight success in achieving gender equality more strongly and make it visible – inwardly and outwardly. This creates role models, changes common stereotypes and serves to motivate
- Embed accountability for progress in national and sectoral public policies



What does that mean exactly?

- Follow up gender strategies more, both in terms of implementation and monitoring
- Support best practices and offer prizes in this sector
- Promote the collection of gender-disaggregated data for VET and the job market
- Conduct VET awareness-raising campaigns amongst vulnerable target groups and in rural areas

6.2

Ask the right questions

**Know about gender**

Gender analysis, best practices, knowledge platforms, gender focal points, advocacy groups

Do we know enough about the topic of gender equality? What are the challenges in our context? Do we know where we can find information?

**Plan gender**

Leverage potential, harness scope for action, avoid risks, set objectives, specify and monitor indicators

Have we taken the recommendations for action into account? Have we taken account of the quality criteria for gender indicators? Do we know our target group well and are we informed about multiple discrimination? Is our approach gender transformative? How much can we plan for in terms of resources? Where can we go for more advice?

**Implement gender**

Document and evaluate sensitisation and capacity development with partners

Can we adapt goals to better fit gender equality? How well do our partners accept gender equality; is there any ownership for this issue? Which gender equality advocates can we get on board? Can we demonstrate initiative? What scope do we have? Are we implementing our gender strategy consistently?

**Document gender**

Progress reports, articles, videos, success stories, images, interviews, knowledge repositories

What progress are we making in gender equality? Is our work on gender equality actually visible? Are our approaches effective? Who knows about our success? Who might be inspired by it?

**Learn about gender**

Networks, communities of practice, expert portals, online courses, events, gender focal points

Where do we still have knowledge gaps? Who can we talk to about gender equality and who can we learn from? Who can we help thanks to our experience?

**Be a gender role model**

Work atmosphere, team skills, own sensitivity

Are we and our team gender-sensitive? Do we take the issue of gender equality seriously on a day-to-day basis and are we a good example/role model?

7. A look at future challenges

Achieving gender equality in VET remains a major challenge for the future. For girls and women to have better opportunities, support is needed across the board, from basic education to life-long learning. Gender roles must be transformed in order to overcome obstacles and change discriminatory practices and norms. Awareness and support of equality processes on the part of politics, business and government institutions are a major lever here. Unpaid but vital care work needs to be better distributed across all genders and must be recognised to a greater degree. Multiple discrimination must move to centre stage in order to honour the principle ‘Leave no one behind’, and to support those who are most disadvantaged. With regard to vocational education and training in development cooperation, five challenges are identified below that will continue to be relevant to gender equality in VET and employment.

7.1

Digital transformation

Digital transformation is a challenge for women, but one that offers them some major opportunities. Worldwide, 58 per cent of men but only 48 per cent of women use the internet.⁵¹ According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the digital divide between men and women has widened further since 2013, climbing from 11 per cent in 2013 to 17 per cent in 2019. In the world’s least developed countries, the internet user gender gap is even wider, at 43 per cent.⁵² Women thus have less access to information and education and participate less in the digital world. An OECD study also makes it clear that skills, such as self-organisation, management and communication, as well as advanced numeracy, which are of great importance in digital sectors, are often mastered more by men than women.⁵³

Women thus need specific offers of training, e.g. via municipal or mobile tech centres or in digital hubs, if they are to benefit from the opportunities afforded by digital change. In this context, it is important that efforts also reach particularly vulnerable women, such as those living in rural regions.



Jobs in the digital economy are also often better paid than occupations that are traditionally performed by women. Women’s participation in basic and further training in the digital economy should therefore be promoted. Mechanisms enabling the recognition of skills already acquired in the informal sector should be reformed or established. Mentor programmes and (financial) support for startups can help more women to find good jobs in the digital sector.

⁵¹ ITU 2019: Measuring Digital Development. Facts and Figures 2019. p. 4

⁵² ITU 2019: Measuring Digital Development. Facts and Figures 2019. p. 3

⁵³ OECD 2018: Bridging the digital gender divide. p. 78

7.2

Fragility and displacement

Fragile contexts and displacement further exacerbate the structural disadvantages faced by girls and women and by people with a non-binary gender identity. Around the globe, more than 82.4 million people have been displaced, around half of them women and girls.⁵⁴ These numbers will increase further in the years ahead. 48 per cent of all refugee children of school age are not at school, merely 31 per cent attend a secondary school and 3 per cent of all refugees are undertaking vocational training or tertiary level education.⁵⁵ Poverty, high unemployment and a lack of public support services are forcing women to take on precarious jobs in order to secure their survival and that of their families. In these scenarios, girls and women are exposed to even higher risks of gender-based violence, commercial sexual exploitation, child labour and early marriage. One out of every five women refugees or IDPs reports experience of sexual violence.⁵⁶ This includes sexual harassment in refugee camps, at the workplace in the host community, but also partnership-based violence in the domestic setting. People who are fleeing and living in fragile contexts thus require special psychosocial support and protection. UNHCR (2018) states that for the large majority of refugees (around 15 million) the condition of being 'displaced' lasts for up to 10 years, and for around five million refugees even longer.⁵⁷ These people need to be given prospects in their host countries. VET and employment promotion can open up prospects of this sort in the host country but also potentially enable them to return to their country of origin. More financial support is required, along with modular, flexible offers of training and backup support customised to the specific target group.

7.3

A growing informal sector

The global population is growing and with it the volume of informal and precarious employment relations. Many girls are exploited as domestic workers, on farms or in factories, many are abused through prostitution or human trafficking while millions of boys are marginalised in child and forced labour.

According to ILO, more than 60 per cent of the global population earned their income in the informal sector in 2018.⁵⁸

The informal economy will continue to grow in the course of digital transformation, globalisation and global migration movements. Against this backdrop, vocational skills and support for self-employment can help people secure their livelihoods and improve their living conditions. This calls for a greater focus on the informal sector, the creation and/or strengthening of transitions into the formal economy and the formal (vocational) education and training system and recognition of informally acquired skills. Attention here should be directed specifically to the most vulnerable, which includes girls and women and people without a binary gender identity.

⁵⁴ 26,4 Mio. refugees, 48 million IDPs, 4.1 million asylum seekers. 35 million children and young people under the age of 18 are displaced, UNHCR, status end 2020.

⁵⁵ cf. UNHCR(2020): Coming Together for Refugee Education.

⁵⁶ Vu A, Adam A, Wirtz A, et al. (2014) The Prevalence of Sexual Violence among Female Refugees in Complex Humanitarian Emergencies: a Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. PLoS currents, 6, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4012695/>

⁵⁷ See: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/dev4peace/2019-update-how-long-do-refugees-stay-exile-find-out-beware-averages>

⁵⁸ ILO 2018: Women and men in the informal economy: A statistical picture.



7.4

From binary to diversity

A binary gender concept was used for all of the projects investigated (man/woman), as LGBTIQ is a taboo topic in the partner institutions. For this reason, it was not possible to formulate a pertinent success factor. The LGBTIQ group is virtually invisible in many societies and is greatly discriminated against⁵⁹, as it is seen in part as a threat to social and cultural norms. This makes it particularly important to avoid any unintended, adverse impacts on this group (do no harm). Discrimination against LGBTIQ manifests as rejection by the family, violence and restricted access to education and healthcare services. With regard to LGBTIQ people and their rights, there is a vital need for action in terms of raising their level of participation, heightening their visibility and overcoming stereotypes. In most contexts, no thought is given to the challenges they face on a daily basis in VET establishments and during the transition to the job market. There is thus a need for new project approaches that focus on supporting those concerned and on raising awareness in their environment, including amongst teaching staff and through teaching materials at VET institutions and at the workplace. LGBTIQ people and networks and organisations that already deal with LGBTIQ topics should be involved in project measures at an early stage and dialogue sought with state actors and the population.

⁵⁹ In rare cases, small local NGOs have thematised the topic of LSBTIQ for vocational education and training, e.g. in India. They are however in a tiny negligible minority. (Deutsche Welle: India's first transgender school opens, but discrimination remains)

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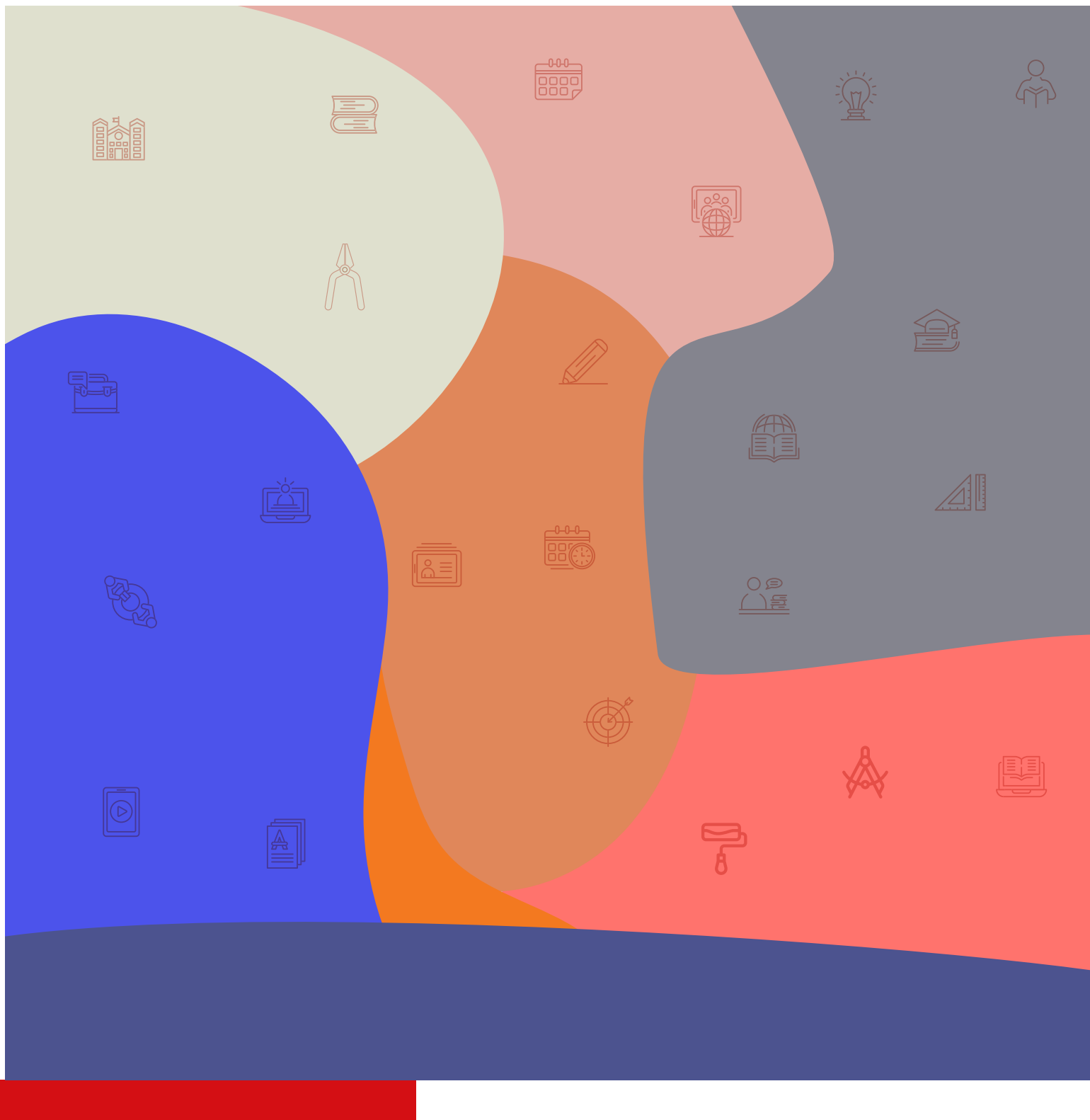
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Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Registered offices
Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 32 + 36
53113 Bonn, Germany
T +49 228 44 60-0
F +49 228 44 60-17 66

Dag-Hammarskjöld-Weg 1 - 5
65760 Eschborn, Germany
T +49 61 96 79-0
F +49 61 96 79-11 15

E info@giz.de
I www.giz.de

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