

Building a more inclusive, demand-driven TVET sector in Malawi

As part of the EU-funded VET Toolbox project, the British Council delivered two short-term interventions and facilitated a mentoring partnership in Malawi, all in collaboration with the country's Ministry of Labour. We are also delivering a two-year opportunity-driven initiative to turn European Union investments into drivers for inclusive economic growth, social development and decent job creation in Malawi's agriculture sector.

Intervention one: making TVET more inclusive

Aim: to equip TVET instructors in Malawi with the skills to meet the needs of learners with disabilities

Partners: British Council, the National Youth Council of Malawi, the Ministry of Labour in Malawi, the TEVET Authority in Malawi and the Federation of Disability Organisations in Malawi

Results:

- A new professional training programme on inclusive approaches in TVET
- A cohort of TVET instructors trained in inclusive pedagogy

While inclusive education is a key goal for countries around the world, effectively structured learning systems to cater for students of all disabilities can be a significant challenge. People with disabilities have varying needs when it comes to entering and completing training courses, depending on the type of their disability and educational background.

In Malawi's TVET sector, this challenge is compounded by limited funding and resources at the institution level and a lack of teacher training approaches and tools that meet the needs of people with disabilities at the system level.

To fill this gap, and support Malawi on its journey towards more inclusive TVET, the British Council delivered a VET Toolbox initiative in 2021 to develop a new professional training programme for training providers focusing on inclusive pedagogy.

A collaborative approach

To ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the future training programme, the British Council brought together stakeholders from all three levels of the TVET sector – National Technical Colleges, Community Technical Colleges and Community Skills Development Centres – and government stakeholders to provide valuable input.

An initial scoping workshop gave these stakeholders the opportunity to discuss the challenges they face with making TVET more inclusive, to identify existing training needs, and to help shape the focus of the new training programme.

Developing targeted training

From these discussions, a clear objective was defined for the new training programme and resources: to raise awareness of TVET instructors of the complexity of disabilities and to equip them with approaches to cater for those with special needs in the classroom.

During development, a phased pilot across three regions (Lilongwe, Blantyre and Mzuzu) helped to test the effectiveness of the new programme and provided valuable learning and feedback. By integrating participants from the first phase of the pilot as trainers in subsequent phases, it also laid the groundwork for the future delivery of the programme by building a cohort of teachers already trained in inclusive pedagogy.

Changed mindsets and new approaches

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Those who have participated in the training have gained new ways to approach inclusive education, and have enhanced their ability to adapt the learning process to cater for different needs. Staff from the National Youth Council of Malawi have already observed how the training has helped to raise the awareness of the complexity of disabilities among participants, and has helped to change mindsets in relation to how they work with people with disabilities.

By gaining new approaches and innovative techniques, trainers are also bringing extra value to their training centres, by sharing their learning with peers and using the training material to adapt their teaching approaches. Trainers and managers are now discussing ways to make their institutions more inclusive and how to attract more people with disabilities.

The collaborative spirit of the training has been maintained through a WhatsApp group for trained instructors, enabling participants to continue to exchange experiences and monitor progress across different institutions.

This project is an important step towards more inclusive TVET provision in Malawi, by providing an opportunity to challenge attitudes towards students with disabilities and to encourage collaboration between national and local organisations. Local stakeholders now have the opportunity to build on this work to remove even more barriers for learners with disabilities.

Intervention two: boosting productivity in Malawi's informal sector through targeted training

Aim: to build the capacity of artisans in the informal sector

Partners: British Council, the Ministry of Labour in Malawi, the TEVET Authority in Malawi, the Employers' Consultative Association of Malawi and various artisan associations in Malawi

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Result: a toolkit for curricula redesign workshop model that could be applied across various informal economy sectors and countries to improve training for established artisans

While Malawi's informal sector accounts for a large proportion of the country's employment, there are varying levels of skills among artisans, and enterprises often lack the skills to maximise their profit and grow their business.

A second VET Toolbox initiative, starting in 2022, has seen the British Council work to address identified skills gaps among artisans and improve their productivity by supporting the process of curricula redesign to update and improve training for the informal workforce.

To better understand the current skill levels among established artisans in Malawi's informal sector, an initial training needs analysis was carried out, involving wide-scale consultation with government officials, employers and training providers.

This led to the development of a new toolkit to support curriculum writers and informal sector specialists to develop short, modular, competency-based learning materials targeting artisans and enterprises, with a focus on the construction and renewable-energy industry.

A range of TVET stakeholders received training on the new toolkit in Lilongwe, and thanks to the adaptability of the model, there is now the possibility to scale and apply it to other sectors and regions in Malawi.

Mentoring partnership: strengthening the quality and relevance of TVET through stronger private sector engagement

Aim: to improve the relevance of TVET by strengthening employer engagement

Partners: Edinburgh College in the UK, and Lilongwe Technical College, Soche Technical College, Mzuzu Technical College and Mangochi Community Technical College in Malawi

In 2021, a mentoring partnership between Edinburgh College and four TVET colleges in Malawi, supported by the British Council, worked to make TVET more relevant to private sector needs.

Through this partnership, Edinburgh College built the capacity of training providers in Malawi to deliver work-placement and employer engagement activities. They also provided support and strategies on co-curricular design and how to embed employability skills throughout the curriculum.

On the impact of VET Toolbox work in Malawi, Aubrey Matemba, Director of Technical and Vocational Training in the Ministry of Labour, said: *'as a Ministry, we appreciate the support of VET Toolbox, the British Council and all partners involved. The Government of Malawi, through Vision Malawi 2063 (a blueprint for Government Agenda), has prioritised Human Capital Development as an essential enabler for realising Malawi's development goals. Moving forward, the Ministry will attempt to build on the achievements of VET Toolbox by spreading lessons learned to all institutions in the sector. Through these initiatives, we will continue to build a strong TEVET sector which provides a competitive and skilled workforce for the nation.'*

About VET Toolbox

VET Toolbox is a partnership of leading European development agencies — British Council (UK), Enabel (Belgium), Expertise France (France), GIZ (Germany), LuxDev (Luxembourg) and AFD (France). It is co-funded by the European Union and the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The consortium is led by Enabel.

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