

# VET Toolbox II in Malawi Policy Brief

The VET Toolbox II project in Malawi aimed to support human capital needs in the country by addressing critical skills gaps in the agriculture sector. Led by the British Council and co-funded by the European Union and German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the project aligns with Malawi's Vision 2063 and the EU External Investment Plan.

Working alongside the Shire Valley Transformation Programme (SVTP), the initiative worked to transform smallholder farms into commercially viable enterprises through improved capacity building in irrigation system and farm machinery operations. The project focused on the Chikwawa and Nsanje Districts, where there is a significant gap between available workforce skills and modern commercial farming requirements, and prioritised three main objectives:

## Enhanced Public-Private Dialogue

Creating connection channels between SVTP management, TEVETA, vocational training institutions, cooperative farms and local authorities.

Aligning training offers with labour market needs through public-private collaboration.

## Targeted Skills Development

Implementing focused, short-term training courses for youth, covering essential technical skills needed at Smallholder-Owned Commercial Farm Enterprises (SOCFEs) in Irrigation Management and Farm Machinery Operations.

## VET Reform

Using project insights and lessons to improve Malawi's vocational education and training.

Developing policy recommendations and facilitating national dialogue to maintain programme relevance.

## Implementation process

Through comprehensive stakeholder mapping and further investment in stakeholder engagement, the project worked with potential employers including the SVTP SOCFEs in the Chikwawa and Nsanje Districts, three vocational training institutions (Stephanos, DAPP Mikolongwe and Magomero), the District Council and TEVETA to form the Technical Working Group; the public-private dialogue mechanism which led the development of training materials to fulfill gaps in technical areas for the cooperative farms in the SVTP zone. This forum is now under the leadership of the Chikwawa District Council.

The project developed specialised short-term courses focusing on practical skills: Farm Tractor Operations and Operating Irrigation Systems. These courses aimed at quickly developing the technical workforce needed for modern commercial farming, while supporting long-term agricultural sector sustainability in the country. 210 learners were trained across one of the two new curriculum areas, which included a work-based experience learning placement in partnership with the SOCFEs.



Image: Shire Valley Transformation Project Main Canal-Progress  
Source: Facebook - [Shire Valley Transformation Programme-SVTP](#)

A partnership project

## Roles and responsibilities

### Local Authorities and District Councils

Responsible for delivering local services and district development aligned to national priorities.

### Ministry of Local Government

Responsible for providing administrative oversight of all local authorities in Malawi.

### TEVETA

Responsible for promoting and regulating TVET in Malawi.

### Ministry of Labour

Responsible for developing and protecting the labour force and ensuring that skills developed align with industry needs in Malawi.

### National Planning Commission

Responsible for guiding the nation's development agenda by formulating, coordinating, and monitoring national development plans. It leverages socioeconomic data and interagency collaboration to align government initiatives and ensure effective resource allocation.

## Policy recommendations

These recommendations were formulated through experiences gained throughout project implementation, as well as from a lessons learnt and policy recommendations workshop held in January 2025, involving the project's key stakeholders.

This workshop provided an opportunity to feedback on the process as well as to reflect upon what had been learnt through the implementation of the VET Toolbox project. This feedback was then consolidated into the policy recommendations below.

### Public-Private Dialogue

#### What we recommend

Establish local and sustainable public-private dialogue mechanisms. These should formalise and streamline timely sector-specific TVET responses to investment opportunities and labour market dynamics.

#### Action

This policy recommendation is actionable by TEVETA, local authorities, district councils, Ministry of Local Government and Ministry of Labour.

#### Why this recommendation

Formalised public-private dialogue fora for skills development would promote inclusive, localised and responsive TVET development for emerging investment opportunities and skills needs. Currently, there is a disconnect between national-level public-private dialogue initiatives for skills development and the needs of local actors. This has created inefficiencies in the system that have led to delays in addressing local labour market needs.

The establishment of local fora would be consistent with the Decentralisation Policy (1998) and supported by the Local Government Act (2010), in empowering local councils to champion demand and opportunity-driven TVET that supports their development plans and meets their evolving local labour market needs.

## Training Delivery and WEL

### What we recommend

Create opportunities for increased private sector participation in skills development by enacting policies that incentivise employer involvement in training design, delivery and monitoring, as well as in work experience learning. Local authorities and district councils can further support these initiatives by using public-private dialogue mechanisms and enacting bylaws that require employer participation in both TVET design and delivery.

### Action

This policy recommendation is actionable by local authorities, district councils, TEVETA and Ministry of Labour.

### Why this recommendation

The limited engagement between the public and private sector across all areas of TVET undermines the alignment of training programmes with industry needs. Often, participation of employers in TVET development and delivery is optional, without a robust legal mandate. While the TEVET Act demands employer support through levies, additional measures are necessary to encourage private sector participation.

Enhanced engagement would ensure that TVET programmes are more responsive to the labour market and better meet industry requirements.

## Curriculum Development

### What we recommend

Promote the development of TVET Occupational Standards across national priority sectors. Efforts should be made to generate labour market information for priority sectors aligned with Malawi's development agenda, including for agriculture. This data should inform the development of occupational standards essential for addressing skills gaps along different production value chains, to boost the availability of a skilled workforce.

### Action

This policy recommendation is actionable by TEVETA and the National Planning Commission.

### Why this recommendation

Developed Occupational Standards informed by aggregated and consistent labour market information would increase the responsiveness of TVET providers to employers' skills needs. Currently, the development process for TVET curricula is lengthy and employers are disincentivised to invest and participate in the development of TVET programmes to meet their labour needs.



Image: Agriculture in Malawi  
Source: <https://www.lstmed.ac.uk/shire-vec>