



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Youth and Sustainable Livelihoods: Linking Vocational Training Programs to Market Opportunities in Northern Uganda

Vocational training (VT) is at the intersection of economic recovery, education and rehabilitation and reintegration. It is uniquely positioned to meet the demands of youth and broader goals of economic reconstruction in post-conflict situations. VT can be a key component of development, a method for upgrading the work force and a factor in the holistic development of youth. Effective VT can provide skills for agricultural and nonagricultural livelihoods, as well as sustainable employment and self-employment opportunities.

Youth consistently expect that participation in VT will increase their capacity to find employment or self-employment opportunities and achieve greater self-reliance. However, field research in northern Uganda conducted by a team from the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University, in partnership with the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, found that VT programs have a variety of objectives, ranging from training youth to a master level of skill competency to psychosocial rehabilitation and protection. Programs differ in length and comprehensiveness of training, the complementary skill courses offered, funding sources and the populations they target. The disconnect between participants' expectations and program objectives and results frequently leads to disappointment and frustration on the part of youth participants.

Key Findings

- ▶ Market analysis should be incorporated into each stage of VT programming to improve decisions and, ultimately, increase employment and self-employment opportunities for youth graduates.
- ▶ VT programs and participants have requested current information on market realities and concrete recommendations on how to better connect program graduates to sustainable livelihoods.

Youth, program managers and donors agree that continuing to teach the same few skills across the region is leading to labor supply saturation in some industries, causing the prices for goods and services to decrease. VT tends not to be innovative in its core skills offering and fails to respond to dynamic markets, and as a result, youth are often unable to find jobs.

For VT practitioners, accurate market information will inform curriculum development and determine course offerings, shape the complementary services offered and provide information on post-training linkages necessary to improve youths' prospects for a sustainable livelihood. For youth participants in VT programs, information about current and emerging market needs is essential to making more informed decisions and selecting an appropriate and marketable vocation.

The full report, *Youth and Sustainable Livelihoods: Linking Vocational Training Programs to Market Opportunities in Northern Uganda*, documents the northern Uganda experience, presenting an analysis of VT programming and the actors involved in northern Uganda and offering VT providers concrete recommendations for programming at each stage in the VT cycle, including best practices, case studies and lessons learned. The report identifies how VT programs can best meet youths' needs for education and sustainable livelihoods while also supporting a broader strategy of economic reconstruction and social restoration in northern Uganda.

The *Market Assessment Toolkit for Vocational Training Providers and Youth*, which will be published in September 2008, is a combination of resources, questionnaires and activities that assist VT programs and youth to gather information on market demand and translate it into programming that responds to dynamic business environments and youth needs. The toolkit offers a roadmap to VT providers, youth participants and other local and international actors. Increased access to information will guide service providers to a more demand-driven approach, matching youths' interests, skills and available resources to market opportunities for employment and self-employment. The toolkit aims to help youth in VT programs find employment/self-employment.

The first part, the **Market Assessment Toolkit for Vocational Training Providers**, allows programs to capture information on market conditions and the sources of potential employment growth within the community and surrounding areas. The second part, the **Analysis Guide**, facilitates the translation of information gathered during the market analysis into more effective programming.

The third part, the **Market Interaction Toolkit for Youth**, helps youth become active participants in determining which vocation best matches their skills and needs. It guides youth through a self-assessment and encourages them to evaluate local market realities in order to select a skill or livelihood. The toolkits, although developed for the northern Uganda context, can be adapted for use in many areas.

The full report *Youth and Sustainable Livelihoods: Linking Vocational Training Programs to Market Opportunities in Northern Uganda* can be found at www.womenscommission.org/pdf/ug_ysl_rep.pdf.

The *Market Assessment Toolkit for Vocational Training Providers and Youth* will be found at www.womenscommission.org/pdf/ug_ysl_toolkit.pdf—check back in September 2008.

**For a copy of the full report and the toolkit
that accompanies this report, go to
www.womenscommission.org or contact:**

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