# E-discussion on

# youth-specific approaches in the context of Vocational Skills Development (VSD) interventions

# 19 – 30 June 2017

# *Documentation Day by Day*

## I. Introduction paper and guiding questions

## 1. Introduction

The employment and income (e+i) network of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SCD) is hosting an e-discussion on youth-specific approaches in the context of VSD interventions. The backstopping team of KEK/INBAS facilitates this e-discussion.

The e-discussion aims to
- discuss, for the first time, on how to deal with the main target group of VSD intervention i.e. youth in order to build their personal, social and technical competences and prepare them for life and work
- exchange experiences and good practice examples related to youth-specific approaches in the context of VSD interventions.

The facilitators will provide a summary of the results and lessons learnt to be shared with the e+i network. Ideally, this would include the identification of most suitable approaches for specific problems young people are facing, such as exposure to violence, health concerns, etc.

## 2. Background

### 2.1 Youth unemployment and underemployment

Youth unemployment is a key problem in many countries all over the world and particularly in most of SDC's partner countries. UN's International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that the global youth unemployment rate is expected to remain at 13.1 per cent (= 71 Mio. young people) in 2017. Even if this rate is in developing countries (9,4%) substantially lower than in developed and emerging countries (14,3% resp. 13,7%) it is of greater concern that the number of young people in extreme or moderate poverty despite having a job are living foremost in emerging and developing countries[1]. Underemployment is thus, next to unemployment, an important challenge for young people in SDC partner countries.

### 2.2 Skills and competences

A lack of appropriate skills and competences is often identified as one of the root causes of youth unemployment/underemployment. The mismatch between the demand and supply of skills possessed by young people and the relationship to high youth unemployment rates are particularly important in the developing world[2]. This leads to a double dilemma in which young people are experiencing a difficult school-to-work transition, and businesses do not find suitable candidates for their positions[3]. In some cases young people are overqualified for their jobs but more relevant is the lack of skills, including entrepreneurship and life (or 'soft') skills. Obviously school curricula are not sufficiently promoting vocational, entrepreneurial and employability training. And a lack of understanding exists of how life skills, respectively personal, social and cultural competences, can be trained, how to include different learning environments in learning strategies and how to harness those skills many young people already have learned in formal, non-formal and informal learning processes and settings. "Informal learning ….. is non-purposive learning, which takes place in everyday life contexts in the family, at work, during leisure and in the community."

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[1] http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2016/08/global-youth-unemployment-rise/
[2] https://www.ifw-kiel.de/wirtschaftspolitik/zentrum-wirtschaftspolitik/kiel-policy-brief/kpb-2013/KPB_59.pdf
[3] http://peacechild.org/youth-unemployment-causes-and-solutions/

## 2.3 Challenges young people are facing

For young people, who are in the transition from childhood to adulthood, vocational training and access to employment and income is often not the only big challenge in their life. At the same time young people enjoy new and more opportunities (new technologies, digital media, educational pathways, access to information and mobility and more) but they also face higher risks and uncertainty[4]. In addition to the typical problems of adolescence many young people in particular from deprived backgrounds have to struggle with multiple and accumulated barriers to social inclusion. They are confronted with problems related to poverty, low educational levels, difficult family situation, housing, health problems, lack of access to social rights, leisure time facilities and civic engagement, exposure to violence and conflict, involvement in gangs and crime, drug problems etc. In view of these challenges VSD strategies have to adapt to the complex realities of young people and find appropriate approaches in order to satisfy their aspirations and needs.

## 2.4 The role of youth work

Against this background VSD interventions and strategies might liaise with the youth work sector and apply youth work and youth-specific approaches which are close to young people's expectations. According to commonly agreed definitions[5] youth work covers a broad scope of activities of social, cultural, educational or political nature by, with and for young people. It is managed by professional or voluntary youth workers and is organised in different ways, forms and settings. Youth work is based on non-formal and informal learning processes[6] in 'out-of-school' education as well as in specific leisure time activities. In this regard it equips young people with skills, competences and experiences for life, including the labour market. Youth work is marked by its participatory and voluntary principles. Youth work engages young people during a significant developmental period of their lives, and therefore it is ideally positioned to enhance their personal, social, educational, vocational and occupational development, well-being and social inclusion. In this respect youth work has a clearly defined position on the continuum of education and lifelong learning and spanning the areas of non-formal and informal learning.

## 3. The concept of Vocational Skills Development at SDC

The main target group for SDC interventions in VSD are young people, also from disadvantaged backgrounds, reiterated with the new SDC Education strategy that gives a priority focus on children and youth[7].

However, programs that limit their offer to the delivery of technical skills only fall short in most cases. Therefore, SDC follows a concept of vocational skills development that embraces the development of personal, social and technical competences alike. To reach out to young people and motivate them to subscribe to VSD programs, to assure their retention and successful completion of the programs as well as their smooth transition to the world of work

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[4] http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/eywc-website-final-report

[5] e.g. European Commission http://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/implementation/work_en or EU-Council of Europe youth partnership http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/youth-work

[6] See definition of non-formal and informal learning in: Glossary on youth provided by EU-Council of Europa youth partnership http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/glossary/-/glossary/All "Non-formal learning is a purposive, but voluntary learning that takes place in a diverse range of environments and situations for which teaching/training and learning is not necessarily their sole or main activity. … Non-formal learning and education, understood as learning outside institutional contexts (out-of-school) ….is often structured, based on learning objectives, learning time and specific learning support and it is intentional."

[7] https://www.eda.admin.ch/content/dam/deza/en/documents/themen/grund-und-berufsbildung/strategie-deza-bildung_EN.pdf

requires more holistic approaches that take their overall situation, their aspirations, fears, doubts and their potential and interests into consideration.

Therefore the application of holistic approaches and instruments towards building social, personal and technical competences of young people gains importance in SDC's work. Psychosocial approaches are for instance used in the context of a VSD project with youth prone to gang violence in Honduras or in job clubs supporting transition to work in the Balkans. Some of these approaches were developed in the field of youth work, including their non-formal or informal learning elements, and the collaboration with youth programs, youth projects or youth organisations becomes more and more relevant for VSD strategies in order to better reach out to target groups and meet their requirements.


## 4. Outlook to the forthcoming e-discussion

In this context, the KEK/INBAS backstopping team on behalf of the SDC VSD focal point takes stock of available experiences and good practice examples on working with youth, adopting a holistic understanding of their situation and needs, including youth work approaches in the context of VSD interventions. It facilitates the e-discussion in the framework of the e+i network (and potentially beyond).

The guiding key questions for this discussion are as follows:

- **Who are the groups of young people the SDC programs are dealing with**? What are typical common features of the current generation of young people? What are their main characteristics that have to be considered? What is the difference to the past, if there is any? What did change for young people recently? Are there new target groups and which? What are particular challenges and opportunities?

- **How do these young people learn and what is the role of new technologies** (mobile phones, social media) in learning processes? What are chances and risks of new media? Which role does informal and non-formal learning play for these young people besides formal learning?

- **Which approaches and instruments can be used and applied** by VSD programs, including from youth work, to better reach out to their target groups and motivate in particular disadvantaged young people to participate in skills development? How can they be applied in order to increase retention and successful completion of the courses? How can this be done in collaboration with youth work, youth organisations and youth projects?

- **How can young people better participate** in the design, implementation and evaluation of these strategies? How can this be done in collaboration with youth work, youth organisations and youth projects? How can relevant themes such as intercultural dialogue, democracy, citizenship- and human rights be included in VSD strategies? What are the experiences so far?

- **Which skills achieved through non-formal and informal learning** including in youth work projects can be relevant to support the transition school / training – employment? How personal and social competences are be built? How can skills and competences acquired in non-formal and informal settings be validated and recognised and which support measures are needed? How can the impact of non-formal and informal learning be made better visible?

- **How can VSD projects cooperate with other structures**? Which concepts and practices exist in terms of networking, partnerships, cooperation ties, between public and private actors, civil society, youth work providers, young people and others in order to implement holistic inclusion strategies for young people in vulnerable situations?.

- **What experiences are available of VSD interventions in the context of broader programs and strategies** that combine skills development and with other objectives, such as local (community) and/or business development, health promotion or violence prevention, housing or others? Which examples for integrated joint projects do exist?

## 5. Proposed course of discussion

Keeping the above-mentioned questions in mind the e-discussion will be facilitated in seven one day stages. The facilitators will feed these seven core topics consecutively into the discussion.

The language of the e-discussion will be English. However, participants can also post their inputs in French or Spanish, but no translation will be provided.

The timeframe of the e-discussion is as follows:

- As of 19 June till 30 June 2017: e-discussion in e+i VSD network; network members share experiences and good practice examples along the seven key questions

- July 2017: analysis of the results and clustering of good practice examples, elaboration of a summary report and recommendations

The online discussion will be facilitated by Hanjo Schild (INBAS Germany) and Katharina Walker (HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, Switzerland).

Authors of the introduction paper: Hanjo Schild (INBAS Germany), Wolfgang Schlegel (INBAS Germany) and Katharina Walker (HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation)

## II.    Information and guidelines for the e-discussion

**Please find below some technical information and guidelines on how to participate in the e-discussion:**

- **How do I participate?** All messages will be sent and received by e-mail directly in your e-mail account. To participate in the discussion, **please send just a `reply' on the last posting you received**. Please note that when you reply to a message everyone in the group will receive it. This is a great opportunity to share our ideas and experiences. If you would like to reply only to the author of a post, scroll down to the end of the original message and click "reply to sender". Only the sender will receive it and no one else.

- **In which language shall I write?** The discussion will be in English, but you are free to post messages in your preferred language (English, French or Spanish).

- **How do I write my input?** Your input should be short, precise and informative, meaning that your message should be readable on the screen without having to scroll down. You can add further information (e.g. project brief) to the e-mail but emphasis should be given to the posted statements in your e-mail. This makes it easier to ensure a lively discussion and exchange of experience.

- **What inputs do I send?** We would like you to share your knowledge, experiences and opinions related to the key questions and topic with the group. We are particularly interested in practical experiences from the field.

- **I have never participated in an e-discussion and others know much more…** Even if you are a freshman in the field please be encouraged to join the discussion so that all of us can benefit from new knowledge, fresh and innovative ideas and approaches.

- **Where do I get technical support?** You can also participate in the discussion using the e-discussion platform: http://dgroups.org. Since you are all members of the e+i network you have access to the dgroup platform using your passwords. In case you do not recall the password, don't worry, just click on `forgot password'. If you have any technical problems, please contact the facilitator team directly per e-mail (Katharina.walker@helvetas.org or hanjo.schild@inbas.com).

### III. Documentation: day by day invitation to e-discussion, individual contributions and summary of results

### DAY 0

#### A. *General input by facilitators* on 14 June 2017

*The theme for the next e-discussion of the SDC e+i network is "youth-specific approaches in the context of Vocational Skills Development (VSD) interventions". The e-discussion will take place in the second half of June (starting on 19th) and be grouped around seven guiding key questions. A thematic concept note is attached and available online.*

*Vocational skills development (VSD) programs for young people need to focus particularly on their personal, social and technical competences and prepare them for life and work. In this respect cooperation with other sectors, e.g. youth work has a pivotal role to play. The e-discussion aims at exchanging experiences and good practice examples related to youth work and other approaches in the context of VSD interventions.*

*We will jointly discuss seven dimensions of personal, social and technical competences of youth and vocational skills development programs:*
1. *Who are the groups of young people we are dealing with? Are there new target groups and which?*
2. *How do these young people learn and what is the role of new technologies in learning processes? Which role does informal and non-formal learning play?*
3. *Which approaches and instruments can be used and applied by VSD programs, including from youth work?*
4. *How can young people better participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of these strategies?*
5. *Which skills achieved through non-formal and informal learning can be relevant to support the transition school / training – employment?*
6. *How can VSD projects cooperate with other structures, which concepts and practices exist in terms of networking, partnerships, cooperation ties?*
7. *What experiences are available of VSD interventions in the context of broader programs and strategies?*

*The results of the discussion will lead to a summary paper sharing your experiences and highlighting the lessons learnt including the identification of most suitable approaches for specific problems young people are facing. To make it most useful we need you to contribute to a lively and broad exchange!*

*The e-discussion will take place between 19-30 June 2017. Katharina Walker ([Katharina.walker@helvetas.org](mailto:Katharina.walker@helvetas.org)) and Hanjo Schild ([hanjo.schild@inbas.com](mailto:hanjo.schild@inbas.com)) will facilitate the discussion.*

*The discussion will be mainly in English, but you are free to post messages in your preferred language (English, French or Spanish). La discussion sera principalement en anglais mais vous êtes libre de communiquer dans votre langue préférée, soit en français, en anglais ou en espagnol. Mientras que la discusión será principalmente en inglés, les invitamos a comunicar sus mensajes en su idioma preferido, sea español, inglés o francés.*

*We are looking forward to hosting a lively and engaged discussion.*

# DAY 1

### A. Input facilitators on June 19

*A warm welcome to the e-discussion on youth. As informed we will exchange from today, Monday, 19th until Tuesday, 27th June 2017, on youth-specific approaches in the context of Vocational Skills Development (VSD) interventions. The attached short input paper gives you some further food for thought.*

*The e-discussion will be grouped around seven guiding key questions, each tackled consecutively in seven one day stages. Each morning (CET) the facilitators will feed one of these core topics into the discussion. No discussion will be facilitated on weekend 24th-25th June.*

*Today (!), the discussion starts with the first topic: Who are the young people we / you are dealing with?*

*We are very curious to learn more about your experiences and thoughts, in particular from the perspective of your individual projects with regard to the following questions:*

*1. What are typical common features of the current generation of young people? What are their main characteristics that have to be considered?*

*2. Are there new target groups and which? What is the difference to the past, if there is any?*

*3. What did change for young people recently? What are particular challenges and opportunities?*

*To participate in the discussion, please click on "Reply" on the last e-mail you received. The language of the e-discussion will be English, contributions in French and Spanish are very welcome, too, but no translation will be provided. To get more technical advice, please consult the short guidelines attached.*

*If you have any technical problems, please contact us directly via katharina.walker@helvetas.org or Hanjo.schild@inbas.com .*

*We are looking very much forward to the discussion and your active participation in it!*

### B. Contributions to discussion

**Dr. Zowadul Karim Khan, Bangladesh** on June 19
Program Manager (Skills Development), Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

I like to share my own experience and reflections from working in the SDC's Skills domain in Bangladesh. Here we deal with the young people in the age range of 18 to 35. In some cases it is as low as 16 (in Bangladesh the youth is defined as 18-35 by age). We target young people, who are out of school (mostly completing junior or in some cases secondary schools) (at present primary education is compulsory in Bangladesh). In Bangladesh almost 30 - 40% of the young population is NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). Every year around 2 million young people enter the job market in Bangladesh and except a small portion; they possess no employable skills and are targeted for skilling.

Regarding inclusion, projects include poor, women and disadvantaged with different inclusion target, but a specific target is a must. For some projects inclusion target for poor is up to 90%. Women inclusion target is usually 30 to 50%. Poor people with marginalisation (women, disabled, indigenous and tribal population, displaced due to calamities, LGBT etc.), considered as disadvantaged, are also duly targeted. Another important inclusion target for us is the Indigenous and Tribal People (ITP). Around 2% people of Bangladesh are ITP, who often remain highly deprived and marginalized. In recent time the need for including the intellectually challenged persons in addition to the physically challenged persons is increasingly felt.

Unemployment and underemployment remain as the major challenges for the young people of Bangladesh. And an increasing added problem is the low wage even if employed. Most young people are employed at a low wage just close to the national minimum wage. There are instance when after skills training young people do not take up job due to low wage and mobility requirement. Bangladesh is presently facing the problem of low job creation. While the GDP growth is around 6.9%, the job creation rate is only 1.8% per year. Government is very eager to enhance the skills training for the young people, but the job creation aspect is often being overlooked.

**Roman Troxler, KEK-CDC Consultants** on June 19

If I may just start throwing in my two cents, I would like to share some experiences from the Swisscontact PROMOST program in the Great Lakes Region (http://www.swisscontact.org/en/country/great-lakes-region/projects/great-lake-region/promost.html) where I spent most of the last one and a have years. The SDC-financed program's initial focus was on "the rural population in Rwanda's Western Province, with a special focus on the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups". However, during implementation a slight shift happened, with the program's activities more and more focusing on „youth" in general.

There are different reasons for this:

- challenges and opportunities: There are more and more common challenges for rural and urban youth, especially if jobs in agriculture become scarce: How can I access a decent job to sustain myself (and my family), what skills are needed in the rapidly changing labour market, can I find a job in my village/suburb or shall I try my luck in the capital or abroad?

- systems-orientation: When you work with public Vocational Training Centres and the private sector and when your goal is to make the VET system more effective and sustainable, then you cannot just target the most disadvantaged, but you have to work with all youth in the area of intervention (you cannot improve a system from its margins, only from its centre). However, we have to be careful that disadvantaged youth's access to the system is ensured too.

- employment focus: When our goal is not just training, but increasing employment and incomes, this also has implications on the target group (focus not only on jobseekers, but on potential job-creators too). Therefore the program was complemented with a component to provide start-up support for young people with business ideas.

Concluding: My impression was that the program almost automatically responded to today's challenges and that its focus somehow shifted from only rural and disadvantaged populations towards targeting mainly youth (including disadvantaged of course). It would be great to hear

if my Rwandan/Congolese colleagues (who are still working on that program) felt the same - and if similar developments can be seen in other countries?

**Usha Bhandari (Namaste), Nepal** on June 19
PhD, Senior Program Officer - Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC Embassy of Switzerland in Nepal

Here are my experiences from Employment Fund (EF) phase 1, phase 2 and Enhanced Skills for Sustainable and Rewarding Employment (ENSSURE) and Safer Migration (skills component only) projects.

* The known fact is that out of 450'000 to 500'000 youth entering to labour market every year, 80% have not finished grade 10 and are unskilled. Official definition of youth is between the age group of 16 to 40 years.

* EF project provided training to youth between the age group of 16-35 years (for male) and 16-40 years (for female) who are economically poor and socially discriminated. It also provided training to the special groups such as widows, HIV / AIDS infected, ex-combatants and physically disabled.

* After the earthquake in 2015, the EF started training masons to support in reconstruction of Nepal, hence, the target group has been reviewed. The target group under this phase is:

o The young people age group 16-40 years (30% are women as this sector is heavily male dominated). Looking at the demand and the trust gained from the house owner, we aimed to provide training to the age group between 40-55 years too (maximum 25% of the total number was allowed).

* Since the employment and underemployment remains still the problem in Nepal, many youth leave country for better opportunities in Gulf and Malaysia. Safer Migration (SaMi) project address this issue by providing skills training to the potential migrants. The age group is 18-35 years.

* Out of the experiences from Employment fund project and also following the changed context of Nepal mainly on the economic gain and the role of private sector, the ENSSURE project provides training to the youth between the ages of 16 to 40 years. It also targets the already working youth as 95% of the workers in the companies are never trained. The project also target young women and men with entrepreneurial spirit and investment capacity as well as returnee migrant workers. ENSSURE provides skills training and business development support to them.

**Dr. Rudolf Batliner ETH Zürich - NADEL** on June 19

Question: Purpose or target group - what comes first? When the purpose changes, the target group will change as well and vice versa. Most of the time such shifts remain unperceived for quite some time.

1. Purpose: VET system development: You can't do that with the most disadvantaged alone. (Inclusive) systems have to be developed with ALL in mind. If not you produce a system that is there for the poor only - and that is highly exclusive and discriminatory. VET remains second or third choice.

2. Purpose: (Self-)Employment where there a no jobs: Think in cascades: Jobs first, employees second. Train job creators first. As soon as they start creating jobs, they

themselves will find job seekers to be trained. If you train the job creators well, they themselves might train the job-seekers.

3. Purpose: Poverty reduction through VSD: Makes sense where there are sufficient jobs available.

**Franz Kehl, KEK-CDC Consultants** on June 19

In my perception, there is not much difference to the past, since SDCs projects are, first of all, context specific and therefore very diverse. That is something I consider highly important.

What has certainly changed is that the young people are online and that they know better what is going on out there. I have seen quite some initiatives that build on such new realities and try to apply new ways of learning, trying to broaden access to training and trying to become more attractive in delivery modalities. There are examples from Africa, Eastern Europe/the Western Balkans, and South Asia. Who out there can tell more on it?

Something that must have changed, if we believe in international statistics, is the level of schooling and of competencies of school leavers in key basic education dimensions such as ability to write and read, maths, etc. Do we see a change in target groups for VSD in this regard? Can we build on better prepared school leavers? Is there other bridging efforts?

**Pius Frick, Moldova** on June 19

Here in Moldova, we work with the public VET system and therefore the main target group is not limited to vulnerable groups. However, as VET has a bad image and higher education is rather a question of funds available not so much of academic skills, the number of kids coming from socio-economic weak families is rather high.

In Moldova, the focus so far has been limited to the development of technical skills; the personal or social skills have been neglected. We have a problem with violence in the VET system (school and dormitories), which so far has hardly been addressed. Donors usually speak with the Ministry, or with school directors, but hardly ever with the young people. That is why such issues have not been on any agenda so far. Together with a NGO specialized on youth work and children's rights, we have started to look into the situation. First, we have done a qualitative study with VET students about their learning and living conditions (together with the faculty of sociology from the State University). Then we have set-up a national council of VET-students, where they can identify major issues - representatives from the ministry are regularly listening to their report. There, we have heard a lot of things we would never hear from directors/teachers/ministry staff. Some steps to improve the situation have been taken by the ministry, but a lot remains to be done. Finally, we work also on the school level. We support student councils in VET schools. And we offer trainings for the school staff on how to better communicate with adolescents and how to react on violence (by other staff or students).

Extracurricular activities would be a good opportunity to provide valuable inputs for personal and social skills. If some key VET school staff is included, such activities could have a very good effect also on the school. Sometimes it is easier to introduce new approaches outside the system.

New media: In Moldova, many VET schools did not make any use of the new technological possibilities for their educational task. Access is not that much a problem. Moldova has a pretty good internet connection. We have started to provide basic computer courses for teachers. We hope that by improving the digital skills, the teachers will start to make better use of the possibilities at their disposal. So far, the schools have a rather restrictive approach to new media. They do not see it as an opportunity.

Basic literacy and numeracy: this is an issue the school directors and teachers complain since years. "We cannot work with these kids. They do not bring the necessary basic competences." The public VET schools have a sort of fixed curriculum and schools find it difficult to close gaps (i.e. to take the liberty to first work on the basics before continuing with the curriculum). In order to get a clearer picture, we plan to organize a sort of entry level assessment across several schools next September/October. If anybody knows about a suitable assessment tool we would be glad to hear about it.

**Sonja Hofstetter, Swisscontact Cambodia** on June 19
Component Manager; Deputy Team Leader - Skills Development Program Cambodia
Swisscontact | Swiss Foundation for Technical Cooperation

I agree with the points raised by Roman and Rudolf regarding system development. Systems need to be developed to include people from all strata of society as well as geographical areas. An area-based approach (only specific districts/provinces/states) and focus on only poor and disadvantaged groups stands in conflict with a systemic approach. These differing objectives are many times not considered enough in the design of VSD projects, where we often try to do it all at once; i.e. develop the VET system while helping the poorest people and regions at the same time. Actually, these two objectives may even "thwart" each other.

VSD can be an effective tool for poverty alleviation if there are jobs available. We therefore need to consider the jobs before we consider the intervention: What job profiles are sought by the market? What skills are the employers looking for? Which occupations have a demand, which ones have a surplus?

This defines who we train/educate. A good example are the numerous sector-based VSD projects, e.g. in tourism and hospitality. When talking to the employers in the hospitality industry, it is clearly established that this is not a sector that can absorb large quantities of the poorest and most disadvantaged people, because good literacy, numeracy and life skills are required to work in that business. The hospitality employers require people with complete basic education, communications skills and a "constructive" attitude towards their jobs and clients.

As Roman and Rudolf already pointed out, there is a need to start thinking from the employment side of the market, and to then decide who can be integrated.

If we think about the target group of the poor and disadvantaged first, we need to be prepared to go that extra mile to integrate this very vulnerable group. This often takes considerable financial resources and technical support in order to achieve this. Especially in areas where there are not many jobs, and self-employment is the only viable option, we tend to assume that we can make entrepreneurs out of the poor and disadvantaged people – but entrepreneurship requires much more than 3 months (or so) worth of technical skills.

In those cases it probably makes more sense to support learners with better preconditions for entrepreneurship (which often happen to be the non-poor…), so they will be the creator of jobs for others in the long run.

Lastly, what has changed recently is that we need to divert from focusing on poor geographical areas to more urbanized centers, since people are more mobile than ever, and opportunities for employment are sought in cities, rather than in rural areas. It is also where the jobs are, so from supply and demand angle this makes sense.

Youth today are much more connected (phones, internet) as well, and it is difficult to convince them to stay on their land and work as farmers if they see what abundance and opportunities are available in cities or abroad. There, development cooperation needs to keep up with societal and demographic trends in order to be responsive and effective.

For the ones who read German: There is an interesting newspaper article published today on the labor market integration of asylum seekers through vocational training here in Switzerland, and it touches upon a few of the points mentioned in the discussion so far (inclusion of illiterate people, for example):
http://www.derbund.ch/bern/kanton/integration-der-asylbewerber-vom-zweiten-tag-an/story/10196076

**Simon Junker, Cambodia** on June 19

Following up on Franz' question in the case here of Cambodia I would doubt that this is the case on a general level. Here you find still huge numbers of school drop-outs much before the 9th grade. For them it means different things: They are often not literate, they have started to work in often precarious jobs and they cannot continue in the formal education system. Therefore Skills Development means here often short term courses, providing these groups with the necessary skills to find decent jobs or income.

On the other hand, the government has defined an industrial development plan, which aims at attracting industries with a higher value addition and higher productivity. This would ask for a TVET system, which trains young people at a fairly high level to provide them with the necessary skills and competencies. School leavers with good educational attainments aim at a university education and don't go to TVET, which has still a low reputation. At the same time, the official TVET schools are not able to train people up to a level, where they would be able to fill jobs in these new industries. This for two reasons; Firstly, the potential trainees have a loose basic education and thus a low starting level. And secondly, the TVET system itself is not really prepared to deliver training that responds to the need of these new industries.

Thus this might lead to a catch-22 situation. The ones, who could really profit from a sound and solid TVET education, are not really interested in and the ones, who might participate, will not reach up to a level, which gives them the opportunity to find a job in a developing industrial sector. Or asked in other words: Can TVET really contribute to industrial development of a country, or is it rather remaining at artisanal level with limited linkages to the growing sectors of economy?

**Jacinta Mercy, Kenya** on June 19

Skill Up is an international skills development program for young people in several African and Asian Countries. The Skill-up program wants to tap the potential of young and vibrant population in all the participating countries. In Kenya Watoto wa Lwanga Project launched Skill-up in 2015. The target groups are disadvantage youth between 15-25 years from Kibera Slum in Nairobi Kenya ( Kibera Slum in one of the largest slums in Africa) . The target is to reach 260 youth ( both male and female) per year with a special focus on young teenage mothers and girls at risk, and young girls taking up non- traditional women courses ( Engineering)

**Gaetane Bleher, Handicap International** on June 19
Référente Technique Insertion économique/ Inclusive Employment Technical Advisor

In Handicap International, we also define youth as people between 18 to 35 years old. In our VSD programs, we target vulnerable groups, specifically youth with disabilities, women, victims of mines and explosive remnants of war (Colombia, Senegal...), former children soldiers (Burundi...), displaced people and youth in refugee camps (Kenya, Thailand, Chad...), and also extreme poor youth through the graduation model (Bangladesh).

In some countries (Mali), women advocate to have access to our VSD programs after 40 years old, because they said they are more available to economically support their families when their children are old enough to take care about themselves. Before, they are overwhelmed with family responsibilities. Participation of young girls and women is often a challenge, as they might dropped out when they get married or are pregnant, but also because security or even harassment in public transportation can be an issue. We support economic inclusion of youth with disabilities through VSD in around 30 countries, in rural and urban areas, from informal apprenticeship to formal trainings. In all of these countries, people with disabilities face personal, attitudinal and institutional barriers to access to any services. For all these women, youth with disabilities and other excluded youth from education schemes, in our programs, we support them to identify personalized and concrete solutions to make sure they will participate and will be include in VSD programs.

Linking this email to what was said below, indeed in some countries, the education level is better than before for most of the youth. But for those who are excluded from the beginning, from basic education, it's still a challenge. We are now trying to link our inclusive education project (for children) to our inclusive vocation training project, to bridge the gap. Also, access to new technologies and internet facilities have changed how youth people can and do learn, but again, not all people have access to these technologies, and not all MOOC and e-learning facilities are accessible for people with hearing or visual impairment. That's why we work with partners involved in VSD programs to support them to have a program 100% accessible and inclusive.

**Hugo Sager** on June 19

The last statements from Simon and others suggest that we need to acknowledge that we will not find a standard situation that can be used for all countries; therefore in every country an assessment of the beneficiaries is needed that includes their basic skills and the knowledge and practical experience they bring along.

Just coming back from Indonesia, I also would like to point out, that the use of smartphones is not always a sign of being informed; the smartphone is primarily a communication tool for most, not an information tool.

I would also like to make a short comment of what Pius Frick stated: "as VET has a bad image and higher education is rather a question of funds available not so much of academic skills, the number of kids coming from socio-economic weak families is rather high". I really believe we have to stop seeing TVET as a second choice to academic education, therefore academic skills should also not be a criteria to judge beginners in TVET, rather practical skills, know-how and understanding to apply knowledge.

**Petya Evtimova, Bulgaria** on June 20
Team Leader, Project Management Unit - Swiss Support for the Introduction of the Dual-Track Principles in the Bulgarian Vocational Education System

I would like to share with you my experience with the SDC project on dual education in Bulgaria. It's a pilot project aiming at helping the country establish its own system for dual vocational education based on the best practices from Switzerland. The main implementing partners are state vocational schools with partner companies which offer VET for students aged 15 to 19. So here are my answers to the questions:

1. What are typical common features of the current generation of young people? What are their main characteristics that have to be considered?

The young people in VET schools in Bulgaria lack enough practical skills when they leave the school system and it makes it very hard for them to find jobs. Although the youth unemployment in BG is still less than the EU average the tendency is quite negative. Until 2015 the VET education in Bulgaria was only school-based with about less than 15 % of school time only spent in practical training. The lack of practical professional skills is often combined with lack of soft skills and also lack of work discipline. A similar issue has been mentioned for the projects in Moldova so apparently there is a need for projects that would also cover these issues. So the dual education project came at a very right moment in Bulgaria as companies on one hand do suffer from a lack of qualified professionals but also, on the other hand, the young people feel they have to be better professionally prepared if they want to find good jobs. One other feature I have to mention for the young people in the VET system in Bulgaria is that many of them come from poor or disadvantaged families. When we involved them in dual education and they have to work in companies for 3 day per week for some of them it seemed impossible to pay for their transport from home to the school/company so we introduced like incentives for choosing the dual form of training very small grants (approx. CHF 27 per month) which later on could be covered by the companies. These grants are used to cover mainly transport expenses for the students from the poor families.

2. Are there new target groups and which? What is the difference to the past, if there is any?

Bulgaria has a growing number of young people from the so called NEET group (not in education and not in employment). It actually has the greatest percentage of NEETs group in the EU. The number of drop-outs from the school system is also high - around 12 % and

again facing a negative tendency despite many measures undertaken by the government or by different projects. So NEETs and drop-outs could be considered as new target groups as their number increases in Europe. Projects for basic skills and basic general education could be considered appropriate (as Franz Kehl also suggested yesterday).

3. What did change for young people recently? What are particular challenges and opportunities?

Although the dual education project in Bulgaria only started 2 and a half years ago, the first results are very promising. The first 20 graduates took their VET school certificates in May 2017 and 90 % of them are already employed full time by the employers they have worked for while still at school. The project get more and more support from the companies - local and foreign, and the interest in parents and students grows rapidly as they all see it as a great opportunity for the young people. So from my perspective projects that teach young people to practical skills and thus giving them the opportunity for better career in life are really great.

**Moussa Haladou, Niger** on June 21
Chargé de Programme Education/ Formation professionnelle - Bureau de la coopération suisse au Niger

FOPROR (rural VET project) support by SDC, provide skills training to youth between the age group of 14-35 years. Most of them are literate and potential migrants to neighbor's countries like Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Libya and Ghana. 80% of working people are in agriculture, considered by young people as not job. The challenge is to provide adapted (according the needs of local economy) and attractive offers of training to young people. The population growth rate is 4%, with the effect 400'000 young people entering to labor market every year without skill training, so that the TVET system have to reach more numbers of young people without sacrificing the quality of training. Poor rural people focused their demand on short term courses like cellular repair.

**Bouchra Boutaleb, Morocco** on June 23
Chargée de programme - Développement Economique et Emploi / Département fédéral des affaires étrangères DFAE - Ambassade de Suisse / Division Coopération Internationale (DCI)

The definition of youth in Morocco for the UN system is between 18-30 years old and the Moroccan government (Haut Commissariat au Plan) consider youth until the age of 40 years old, because of their statute (adulthood transition not realized yet). Most of the programmes in international cooperation in Morocco are targeting youth between 18 to 24 years old.

## C.  Summary of results

*Facilitators on 20 June*

*What a lively discussion! Great! We've prepared a short summary of yesterday's discussion. Please find it attached and here*
*https://www.shareweb.ch/site/EI/Documents/Network%20Activities/eDiscussions/VSD/2017-06/eiNetwork-Summary%20Day%20one-E%20Discussion%20on%20Youth-2017-06(en).pdf.*

**Day 1: Who are the groups of young people we are dealing with? Are there new target groups and which? Which challenges and opportunities do exist?**

**Age group:** in *Bangladesh* young people are aged 18 to 35 years, in some cases as of 16, in *Nepal* the official definition of youth is between 16 to 40 years, in *Handicap International*, youth are defined as people between 18 to 35 years old.

**Target groups of projects:** in general, young people in transition school to work and, in terms of quantity, they represent an enormous potential as well as challenge. The specific target groups differ among projects: while some projects specifically target poor and disadvantaged young people, school drop-outs and people with risk of marginalization (e.g. teenage mothers, disabled, internally displaced persons, former children soldiers, youth in refugee camps, LGBT, Indigenous and Tribal People (ITP)), other projects include all young persons as they work with the public VET system. People with disabilities need support to identify personalized and concrete solutions.

**Challenges** such as low job creation, low wages of employed people, scarcity of jobs in agriculture, TVET system failing to deliver to the needs of the industries, migration as well as lack of basic literacy and numeracy as necessary basic competences were mentioned.

**Changes in recent times with regard to young people:** the education level is better than before for most of the youth, however, there are still many excluded from the beginning. Youth today are much more connected (phones, internet) and this impacts their learning. In some projects, the geographic focus has changed from poor geographical areas to more urbanized centers. Many VET schools do not use new technological possibilities, they have a rather restrictive approach to new media.

**Exchange on VET system development:** inclusive systems have to be developed with all in mind, not with the most disadvantaged alone. An area-based approach (only specific districts/provinces/states) and focus on only poor and disadvantaged groups stands in conflict with a systemic approach. VSD can be an effective tool for poverty alleviation if there are jobs available. Therefore, the jobs need to be considered before deciding on the intervention. Need to define who is trained/educated in the sector-based VSD projects because many sectors require good literacy, numeracy and life skills.

**Conceptual reflections on projects and their focus:** diverse inputs on conceptual issues in VET, such as need to start thinking from the employment side of the market, (self-) Employment where no jobs are, poverty reduction through VSD where sufficient jobs are available. Some initiatives build on new realities and try to apply new ways of learning. The development of technical skills, personal or social skills has been neglected, but extracurricular activities would provide valuable inputs for personal and social skills. For disadvantaged young people skills development means often short term courses, providing them with the necessary skills to find decent jobs or income and to go that extra mile to integrate this very vulnerable group.

# DAY 2

### A. Input facilitators on 20 June

*Many thanks for the active participation of quite many of you on the first day of our e-discussion on youth-specific approaches in the context of Vocational Skills Development (VSD) interventions.Today, the discussion focuses on our second topic:*

- *How do young people today learn?*
- *What is the role of new technologies (mobile phones, social media) in learning processes?*
- *What are chances and risks of new media?*
- *Which role does informal and non-formal learning play for these young people besides formal learning?*

*Some of you have already tackled these questions in one or another way yesterday, but we are very curious to learn more about your experiences and thoughts, in particular from the perspective of your individual projects.*

### B. Contributions to discussion

**Petya Evtimova, Bulgaria** on June 20
Team Leader, Project Management Unit - Swiss Support for the Introduction of the Dual-Track Principles in the Bulgarian Vocational Education System

Young people today do use internet and new technologies to learn but this is not valid for all of them. There are still areas in Europe that do not have good internet coverage (luckily this is not the case in Bulgaria). Using the new technologies really gives students the opportunity to learn more and more. However, in many cases it is difficult for them to distinguish the scientific information and focus on the most important items. So young people should be trained how to get oriented in the big ocean of information provided by the internet - these are definitely skills they miss. And yes, these skills could be acquired by informal or non-formal learning as well as the soft skills I have mentioned before. So projects covering these competences could also be useful to plan.

**Dr. Zowadul Karim Khan, Bangladesh** on June 20
Program Manager (Skills Development) - Embassy of Switzerland in Bangladesh, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

In Bangladesh the main means for skills development for a young person is to attend a short course. The usual duration is 200 to 360 hours (from 2 months to 6 months). These short courses are designed using Competency Based Training (CBT) approach ("Units of Competency" based). Apprenticeship is not spread much in Bangladesh. Neither it is incentivised (for the private industries) in the labour laws, nor the private industries are interested to pay or invest for it. In small and marginal industries /workshops /servicing shops etc. (in light engineering, motorcycle or auto repairing, carpentry, masonry, electric repairing etc.) informal apprenticeship is very common. Here young people work as an apprentice without pay (just with occasional tips) with the desire of learning the skill, and are often exploited by the employer (same person is most often the Master Craftsperson also) giving

no wage, no certification, no clear learning path and no opportunity of progression. Currently there are efforts to enhance the apprenticeship system through different projects.

Media, particularly social media is highly used by skills training participants. The projects, individual training providers and groups of learners there - all have individual facebook pages (an example https://www.facebook.com/sudokkho/ , another https://www.facebook.com/PKSF-SEIP-Skills-for-Employment-Investment-Program-247147825616287/, which is used for giving notices, information and exchange of opinions. Overall internet is also widely used, with projects and training providers having their own websites too. Monitoring is also done through online, through Training Management System (an example http://tts.seip-fd.gov.bd/tms/login ) or Training Tracking System.

The main risk in my opinion is the high dependence /expectation given by use of these media. At some points a young person may find that these media though are attractive initially, ultimately are not helpful in livelihood or income. Only a very few can use these in business successfully. Young people also lured to learning outsourcing, graphics design etc. in huge numbers, but actual opportunity in these areas are found as small. Frustrated by having no useful use of these media, there are risks that young people may use them harmfully.

Mobile phones are used extensively in Bangladesh. Every young man has a mobile, and it is used by the training providers for communicating with the learners and for tracking. But in Bangladesh one peculiarity is there that people are less habituated to use mobile sms.

**Urs Gröhbiel** on June 20

Let me concentrate on the technology-related points: In our research & development projects we are again and again impressed to see how young people use their mobiles to communicate with peers and access learning content: Mason apprentices in Zimbabwe sharing pictures of their work with colleagues and tutors (s. https://www.sdc-learningandnetworking-blog.admin.ch/2013/10/16/facebook-as-a-learning-tool/ ). Medical students in Nepal sharing their questions on Facebook and answering to mini-case studies instead of using the high-end learning platform. Children of midwives in S-Africa explain their mothers how they can use Facebook to collaborate with college peers in remote areas. Apprentices in Albania sharing the result of their group work on a tablet … Mobile technologies become a normal part of daily life, communication and also learning.

Just two of the manifold chances and risks: Access to excellent learning material is quite easily possible – but also access to destructive content in the internet. Communication with peer learners and tutors can be enriched and extended in many ways – but many young people develop, as victims and perpetrators, harmful behaviour in using these devices. One helpful approach in handling chances and risks: We need to be aware that young people need to be invited to reflect on their behaviour and to develop guidelines on how to use them together with trainers. We can't just give them the tools and then expect that they use them to learn effectively. We need to prepare and coach online learning carefully – the same way we would do this in class. You don't build a school and expect the youth to go there an learn. You invite them, talk about time schedules and curricula etc. etc.

I think that mobile devices have a great potential to combine formal learning with non-formal learning. We made interesting findings with health workers using their mobiles not only for a formal coaching program but also for informal exchange of ideas and socializing, this behaviour could be expected in similar forms with younger people.

Just a few thoughts on a very broad topic … I'm happy to dig deeper together with people who are also working in this area or considering to try out new media:)

**Kai Maembe, Tanzania** on June 21
Programme Officer, Employment and Income - Embassy of Switzerland, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Tanzania

To share some experiences from Tanzanian perspective, besides the normal education system, here most young people particularly those in the rural areas learn through what we may call "informal on the job training". How this is applied is through a mentor who is a work experienced technicians that has been in the field for a long time. By accompanying the mentor in his daily work and assisting him on the job, young people acquire the skills they need in that field of work. We have cases of short courses as well, which are mostly donor funded project as well as community development colleges, that also equip young people with skills they need to get income in their daily activities. TVETs play a role, but TVETs are usually centrally located, entrance requirements are higher than what most rural young people have, who are in many cases school drops out, with grade 7 as the maximum level of education attained.

In Tanzania majority of young people have mobile phones, with major use of it being communication and mobile banking (transfer of money). As for learning purposes, this is not as much applicable as the two prior mentioned purposes.

**Zayasaikhan Dugeree, Mongolia** on June 21
Senior National Programme Officer SDC Mongolia, Swiss Cooperation Office of The Embassy of Switzerland

I am joining Urs in his statements how impressive is usage of internet and mobile technologies among the youth. Without information about career and education opportunities, youth chooses professions and schools mostly based on advice of parents, relatives and friends. VSD project in Mongolia supports job orientation & career guidance services in TVET schools. In parallel to interventions supporting public employment services for career guidance, the project has developed a website for everyone who is interested in TVET. The website provides information about 42 occupations, TVET schools where they can enrol in these occupations, with brief information about the occupations, trainings content and average salary benchmarks. It has a search engine and links to other relevant information on labour markets, skills competitions, directory of all TVET schools etc. The most important tool is the app for both android/IOS systems. The project does monitor the usage and download data, so far it was impressive yet with ups and downs. After launch and before school year the hits go substantially up and decrease during school break time. Upon the request from the government, the website & app are being developed further by expanding the number of occupations.

Lesson learned: user-friendly language and design - if it is for youth, it should be simple and easy-to-understand language with attractive design. Apps are more useful than the websites, offline modus is an important element. The apps need a constant advertisement through all possible media - prints and again through Facebook. The owner of the website should be set from very beginning, since it requires resources for technical back-ups, technical and content maintenance. Private sector engagement is certainly sought for development, but it could be expanded up to the level of ownership.

**Moussa Haladou, Niger** on June 21
Chargé de Programme Education/ Formation professionnelle - Bureau de la coopération suisse au Niger

In Niger, apprenticeship represents 80% of the offer of the TVET system, but it is non-formal. FOPROR supports the craft federation to improve apprenticeship as an adapted dual system. Traditional apprenticeship courses take often 10 years, while the adapted dual system provides a good training to young people for 18 months. In agriculture, FOPROR supports agricultural workers' organizations for a training system based on 4 months in a school farm and 4 others months in a family in relation of the chief of family. The trainer is a local experienced farmer, supported by an external trainer. According to the results of those offers of training, the government of Niger is prepared to formalize them.

**Bouchra Boutaleb, Morocco** on June 23
Chargée de programme - Développement Economique et Emploi / Département fédéral des affaires étrangères DFAE - Ambassade de Suisse / Division Coopération Internationale (DCI)

In Morocco BuCo, you don't have for the moment VSD programs for youth implemented, but we are developing a proposal for the EUTF towards migrants for economic integration, including VSD.
In Education, a large program called "GENIE" from 2018-2013 aimed the introduction of new technologies in Education and VSD , but this programme has a limited impact because of several factors: teachers resistance, an overload curricula...
http://revue.sesamath.net/spip.php?article233

### C. Summary of results

*Facilitators* *on 21 June*

*Please find the summary of day 2 here*
*https://www.shareweb.ch/site/EI/Documents/Network%20Activities/eDiscussions/VSD/2017-06/eiNetwork-Summary%20Day%20two-E%20Discussion%20on%20Youth-2017-06(en).pdf*
*for consultation.*
*It also covers your contributions on the subject of learning and new technologies already shared on the first day of the e-discussion.*

**Day 2: How do young people today learn? What is the role of new technologies in learning processes? What are chances and risks of new media? Which role does informal and non-formal learning play besides formal learning?**

- **How do young people today learn?**

In *Bangladesh* main means for skills development are short courses. Apprenticeship is rare even if there are efforts to enhance the apprenticeship system. In small and marginal businesses 'informal' apprenticeship is very common (often exploited by employers, no wage, no certification, no clear learning path, no opportunity of progress).

- **What is the role of new technologies in learning processes?**

Youth today are much more connected (phones, internet, new technologies) and this affects their learning. Impressive to see how young people use mobiles to communicate with peers and access learning content. Mobile technologies become a normal part of daily life, in communication and also in learning. But, many VET schools do not use new technological possibilities; they have a rather restrictive approach to new media. And there are still regions that do not have good internet coverage. In *Bangladesh*, media, particularly social media and internet are highly used. Individual training providers, projects and learners have their own facebook pages and internet pages for giving notices, providing information and exchanging opinions. Monitoring is also done online, through Training Management or Training Tracking Systems. Mobile phones are used extensively by both, young people and training providers, but people don't use mobile sms so much.

- **What are chances and risks of new media?**

Main risk is to raise too high expectations when using new media. Though attractive initially, they ultimately are not helpful with regard to livelihood or income. Only a very few can use these tools in business successfully. Access to excellent learning material is quite easily possible, but also access to destructive content in the internet. Communication with peer learners and tutors can be enriched and extended in many ways, but many young people develop harmful behaviour in using these devices. One helpful approach in handling chances and risks is to invite young people to reflect on their behavior, to develop guidelines how to use them and to prepare and coach online learning carefully. Young people should definitely be trained and guided in the big ocean of information provided by the internet - these are skills they miss.

- **Which role does informal and non-formal learning play besides formal learning?**

Mobile devices have a great potential to combine formal learning with non-formal learning, e.g. using mobiles not only for formal coaching programs but also for informal exchange of ideas and socializing. Some initiatives build on new realities and try to apply new ways of learning. The development of technical skills, personal or social skills has been neglected in the past, but extracurricular activities would provide valuable inputs for personal and social skills. Technological skills, critical media use as well as soft skills could be acquired by informal or non-formal learning.

# DAY 3

## A. Input facilitators on 21 June

*Many thanks for your active participation and valuable contributions also on the second day of our e-discussion on youth-specific approaches in the context of Vocational Skills Development (VSD) interventions. Today, the discussion focuses on our third topic:*

- *Which approaches and instruments can be used and applied by VSD programs, including from youth work, to better reach out to their target groups and motivate in particular disadvantaged young people to participate in skills development?*

- *How can they be applied in order to increase retention and successful completion of the courses?*

- *How can this be done in collaboration with youth work, youth organisations and youth projects?*

*Some of you might have already tackled these questions in one or another way, but we are very curious to learn more about your experiences and thoughts, in particular from the perspective of your individual projects. We are looking very much forward to our continued discussion and your active participation in it!*

## B. Contributions to discussion

**Moussa Haladou, Niger** on June 21
Chargé de Programme Education/ Formation professionnelle - Bureau de la coopération suisse au Niger

* The locally elected officials have the lead to the select the projects in their area according their priority,
 * The offers of training must be developed with the community according the needs of the local economy.
 * It is possible to make more attractive some training offer for young people.

**Stefan Butscher, Kosovo** on June 21
Regional Adviser Economy and Employment Western Balkans - Embassy of Switzerland / Swiss Cooperation Office Kosovo

We have good examples and I leave it to the main actors to mention them such as Skill Franchise (Nepal), U-Learn (Swisscontact Tanzania and Uganda) and S4RE (Helvetas Kosovo to name a few I remember.

In many countries especially disadvantaged young people face the challenge that they are also one of or even the only breadwinner in the family. Hence at times they face difficulties to attend "9AM - 5PM courses". Travelling is also an issue. Many projects were successful in offering skills development close to the place they live (very often mobile) and were running them during evening, weekend and off-season time. And for young mothers kind of childcare services were organised. This among other factors surely helped to retain them

**Mimoza Mirashi, Kosovo** on June 22
Senior Skills/Training Facilitator and Communication - Skills for Rural Employment, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation

Youth (officially age 15-24) are one of the biggest treasure Kosovo has to offer, however with a weak economy and slow growth opportunities for youth are very limited. The biggest challenge is high unemployment - 60% for youth, roughly 52% of the working age population is aged 15-34. The private sector doesn't provide enough jobs for the rapidly increasing youth workforce and in the other side training and education system provide low quality of skills creating a mismatch between young people's skills and needs of employers.

The unemployment in rural areas of Kosovo is more evident, even higher for women and minorities. They face challenges of accessing formal vocational education and training system, due to distance, financial and social restrictions.

Skills for Rural Employment project has tackled these challenges by delivering non-formal trainings for youth (age 15-35) living in rural areas using opportunity group approach. In the first phase the project has provided direct support, whereas in the second phase we are partnering with local institutions, youth organizations to ensure ownership and scale. The opportunity group approach has proven to be a successful tool to equip young people with needed skills within a short period of time, in particular disadvantaged young women and minorities. The approach is built mainly on local resources, it is a solution-oriented approach. You can read more on our recent blog post here http://blog.helvetas.org/from-providing-direct-solutions-to-taking-up-a-facilitative-role-the-case-of-opportunity-group-methodology-in-kosovo/ !

From S4RE experience learning in a group was motivating and encouraging for youth. Technology and social media such as facebook is very popular among young people here, and it is used to get the information, with the opportunity groups is also used to exchange and to learn from each other.

**Bouchra Boutaleb, Morocco** on June 23
Chargée de programme - Développement Economique et Emploi / Département fédéral des affaires étrangères DFAE - Ambassade de Suisse / Division Coopération Internationale (DCI)

In Morocco, in addition to public vocational centers, companies in the private sector (especially in textile, automotive, offshoring sectors) are developing their own TVET centers to train their employee, granted partially by the government. In international cooperation, some initiatives, such as the AJI project (UNICEF/DELL/Ministry of youth) from 2010-2014 targeted 15-24 years old, through a Youth to Youth model. 41 youth trainers were trained by Dell to train youth in ICT in 40 youth centers and 13 000 youth were ICT trained and certified. An ICT caravane was implemented also to reach marginalized youth in rural area. After the end of the AJI project the ICT caravan still running and a Youth association held by the AJI trainers was created to deliver the ICT training in youth centers and NGO.
http://www.huffpostmaghreb.com/2017/03/16/dell-maroc-caravane-aji_n_15403348.html

**Sabina Handschin** on June 29

Discussion on the level and quality of basic education, the inclusion of vulnerable groups (and drop-outs) in VSD-programs and transition from school to VSD/work:

§ I've not been aware of the challenges regarding the quality of basic education-levels in Moldova and Bulgaria; high drop-outs and the fact that kids completing school do not have the required competencies after compulsory education also in these contexts is worrisome (Moldova-Input: "Basic literacy and numeracy s an issue the school directors and teachers complain since years: – 'We cannot work with these kids. They do not bring the necessary basic competences.'"); low quality basic education can gradually undermine achievements these countries have made and can have longer-term negative consequences in relation to further learning, training, employment and economic development; and I would assume also negatively impacting the quality and effectiveness of VSD-programs. The input from the colleague of Bulgaria on whether "NEETs and drop-outs could be considered as new target groups as their number increases in Europe. Projects for basic skills and basic general education could be considered appropriate" I regard therefore pertinent and worth to consider given the increasing needs and gaps at different educational levels as well as with regards to a systems' approach in education.

§ While I understand the concerns some mentioned that "VSD as a strategy to insert the drop-outs back into the system cannot fix up all the missing pieces" – I though think that particularly when targeting disadvantaged/vulnerable groups as part of an inclusion- and equity approach, VSD-programs may have a certain role to fix what had been missed at an earlier stage of a person's educational life. This might require to catch-up on basic education components (literacy/numeracy at the minimum) along receiving vocational training. Examples are for example in several SDC VSD-programs in West Africa where young people who had never been to school, dropped-out or do not have the required literacy-level attend literacy-classes as part of their vocational training.

§ The SDC's education strategy emphasizes the complementarity of basic education (BE) and VSD, both relevant and interdependent components required to make young people fit for life and work by equipping them with both relevant foundational and vocational skills. Different examples in the discussion have demonstrated the challenges if the two are not in equilibrium; this might require to explore more deeply concrete approaches of their interplay as described in the SDC education strategy as well as synergies between programs, strategies and actors in both themes, including better collaboration among ministries (ministry of basic/higher education, ministry of labour etc.). Some examples can be seen in SDC programs in West Africa with both basic education and VSD-programs that increasingly build synergies; but can also be explored in contexts where there is one or the other theme (as, if I am not mistaken, it has been the case in Bangladesh, Albania?). Particularly for vulnerable/disadvantaged groups, for contexts with both weak basic education and vocational education, but also in countries where education systems are more solid but school to VSD/work transition be challenging complementary interventions and the interplay between BE and VSD might be strengthened. Maybe topics for another e-discussion?

§ A final point on the level of basic education/schooling and of competences of school-leavers: while it is true that during the MDGs a positive push was noticed with regards to primary-school access (and therefore worldwide school-enrolment) these figures can be misleading in terms of access, quality and completion; they also vary depending on region as

well as wealth-quintile. While globally school-primary entry has improved, retention is still a concern – around 50-60% only finish primary school in least developed countries – and as a consequence even less finish lower-secondary school and thereby compulsory education (only ca. 33% in least developed countries). Quality of learning is worrisome in many parts of the world (as seen from examples in the discussion) and of particular concern in Sub-Saharan Africa and South/West Asia (ex. according to statistics ca. 60% in Sub-saharan Africa and around 40% in South and West Asia do not have the basic writing/reading level at the end of primary school). These tendencies might reinforce the need to look at education systems in their globality and seek flexible and creative ways to equip young people with the package they need.

## C. Summary of results

*Facilitators* on 22 June

*Here comes the summary [https://www.shareweb.ch/site/EI/Documents/Network%20Activities/eDiscussions/VSD/2017-06/eiNetwork-Summary%20Day%20three-E%20Discussion%20on%20Youth-2017-06(en).pdf](https://www.shareweb.ch/site/EI/Documents/Network%20Activities/eDiscussions/VSD/2017-06/eiNetwork-Summary%20Day%20three-E%20Discussion%20on%20Youth-2017-06(en).pdf) of day 3 for consultation. We take the opportunity to invite you to exchange on today's topic of young people's participation in designing, implementing and evaluating VSD strategies and the inclusion of topics such as intercultural dialogue, democracy, citizenship and human rights.*

**Day 3:**

**Which approaches and instruments can be used and applied by VSD programmes, including from youth work, to better reach out to their target groups and motivate in particular disadvantaged young people to participate in skills development? How can they be applied in order to increase retention and successful completion of the courses? How can this be done in collaboration with youth work, youth organisations and youth projects? How do young people today learn?**

There are good examples from *Nepal* (Skill Franchise), *Tanzania/Uganda* (U-Learn) and *Kosovo* (S4RE). How to increase retention and successful completion is a small detail but an important question. In many countries especially disadvantaged young people face the challenge that they are also one of or even the only breadwinner in the family, hence at times they face difficulties to attend "9AM – 5PM courses". Travelling is another issue. Many projects were successful in offering skills development close to the place they live (very often mobile) and were running them during evening, weekend and off-season time. And for young mothers kind of childcare services were organised. This among other factors surely helped to retain them.

In *Niger*, the locally elected officials have the lead to select the projects in their area according their priority. The offers of training must be developed with the community according the needs of the local economy. It is possible to make some training offer for young people more attractive.

## DAY 4

### A. Input facilitators on June 22

*Again many thanks for your interest in the e-discussion on youth and your participation also on the third day, even if contributions have been a bit less than before.*

*Today, our e-discussion on youth-specific approaches in the context of Vocational Skills Development (VSD) interventions focuses on the fourth topic:*

*\* How can young people better participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of VSD strategies? How can this be done in collaboration with youth work, youth organisations and youth projects?*
*\* How can relevant themes such as intercultural dialogue, democracy, citizenship and human rights be included in VSD strategies? What are the experiences so far? Are there any?*

*Some of you might have already tackled these questions in one or another way, but we are very curious to learn more about your experiences and thoughts, in particular from the perspective of your individual projects. We are also interested to know if you believe these issues should in general be subject of VSD interventions or not. We are looking very much forward to our continued discussion and your active participation in it!*

### B. Contributions to discussion

**Gaetane Bleher, Handicap International** on June 22

In Handicap International, participation of beneficiaries and partners from first assessment, design, implementation to final evaluation is one of our 12 project quality criteria, even if from a project to another one, this criteria is more and less taken in consideration . We currently have a good participatory project in Mali, Sikasso, in VSD and inclusive local development. In this project, Youth organizations, local authorities, community representatives including representatives of persons with disabilities and women, were involved for instance to identify oriented market green job opportunities and to identify and select apprentice masters.

Human rights considerations are included in all of our projects. In the same project in Mali, we used the "Making it Work" methodology. Making it Work is originally about making the convention for the right of persons with disabilities (UNCRDP), work. But as in this project, we targeted to have 50% of young women and 15% of youth with disabilities; the methodology was used to identify good practices to ensure inclusion of women and youth with disabilities (women and men) in vocational skills training and self-employment. Good practices were identified by a pool of experts (representatives of youth organization, women organization and disabled people organisations, + local employment and youth services). The three good practices identified have been used to advocate towards the national employment and vocational training agencies at regional level , by the same organisations, for equal access for women and youth with disabilities to vocational trainings and employment (CEDAW article 10 + 11, UNCRD article 27 +28, ILO article convention 159).

In Handicap International, be believed that considering human rights in our project and advocating with evidences, at decision makers level, is a key component to make things changed, to improve inclusion of the most vulnerable people.

**Zenebe Uraguchi, HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation** on June 22

In many instances, solutions proposed to tackle youth unemployment do not work or have a limited impact. This is largely because many development projects do things by themselves and therefore become part of the labour markets system – this including the one of the main dimensions of skills. How can the contributions of projects (to sustainability and scalability) be enhanced?

1) Sector selection and engaging young women and men as primarily stakeholders: young women and men are one of the right sources of providing information and validating if sectors are relevant to them (e.g. ability to address vulnerability and/or disadvantage); if sectors offer opportunities (e.g. economic and/or social value; prospects for attracting public and/or private sector investment); and if sectors take into account their capacities and the feasibility for them to be meaningful participants (e.g. conduciveness of political economy).

2) Understanding skills development as part of a broader knowledge system: this means going beyond formal training of young people. To meet the different challenges in life and the evolving labour markets, young people need different and relevant skills: foundation skills, technical skills, and transferable skills. In the design and implementation of relevant and successful VSD strategies, it is also important to focus, through the participation of young people as primary stakeholders, on non-formal and informal types of training.

3) Focusing on a 'holistic' approach to skills development: in other words, it is not just improved skills that young women and men need to have. VSD strategies should also reflect on other dimensions of labour markets system. Even if young people have appropriate skills, they aren't spotted by potential employers. There is often a lack of relevant and adequate information to find a stable, gainful job they really aspire. They also lack affordable and quality career counselling and coaching services. The problem also lies in the demand side: institutional barriers (e.g. weak investment climate) leading to weak private sector investment for jobs and higher competition for fewer job opportunities. VSD strategies and solutions proposed, therefore, should address skills development in an integrated way together with other dimensions of labour market system — that is, intermediation (e.g. job matching services) and job creation (e.g. through private sector development and investment). Active labour policies are also critical around these three dimensions of labour market development (skills-intermediation-demand). Policies shape, for example, wages, collective bargaining guidelines, unemployment benefits, job-search assistance and employment incentives.

4) Making monitoring and evaluation participatory: good VSD strategies will need to have components such as accountability or "proving" (upward to the donors and downward to young women and men); (ii) steering or "improving" (VSD strategies should remain on course and relevant to the interests and needs of young women and men); and (iii) learning (for the project and beyond the project). In short, an M&E system of VSD strategies need to be built by involving young women and men as primarily stakeholders as active participants – not just sources of information. The system also needs to be "right-sized" – not only in terms of cost (i.e. being economical), but also in setting up a system that is adequate and well-conceived

in meeting the goal of projects. You can find most of the above points with practical project experiences in our bimonthly blog posts: http://blog.helvetas.org/category/market-systems-development/

**Zayasaikhan Dugeree** on June 22

In Mongolia we are funding the Youth development Project, which is based on HRBA. Thanks to the project life-skills education is brought in to education sector - from the University of Education (teacher initial education) up to the schools, life-long learning system and TVET.
As I study from the available information on SDC projects in VSD, very often the part of soft-skills or life-skills is often missing. The life-skills education is about wide range of the skills and attitude, among which those skills required by employers: team work, responsibility, planning, critical thinking, control over negative emotions etc. Our target schools have now life-skills education halls and life-skills trainers, who organise extra-curricular activities in life-skills as well in addition to teaching the topic. Lessons learned - combination of hard and soft skills in VSD is more effective, yet requires more resources.

TVET youth in Mongolia is vulnerable in many ways - they are younger, less independent, prone to risky attitudes such as substance abuse and not able to express their emotions in proper ways. 60% come from poorer families, 30% are orphans or half-orphans. Due to that fact, the HRBA and life-skills education is extremely valuable in TVET. Teaching staff often are not gender-sensitive and their performance assessment do not reflect the respect level of human rights of students. This is the next target for CSOs and government for educational reform.

**Sonja Hofstetter** on June 22

In my understanding, the topics of intercultural dialogue, democracy, citizenship and human rights are cross-cutting themes that are underpinned by cultural values, and these concepts should be fostered throughout the curricula at different levels of the education system. In contexts where youth do not complete basic education, or basic education fails to address such themes, VSD could potentially be a channel to integrate learning on these issues to make the education more holistic and the graduates' skills sets more complete with skills that go beyond the technical part.

However, I am not sure to what extent this is happening, and whether VSD really is the right means to foster understanding and knowledge of intercultural understanding, democracy, citizenship, etc. I guess it depends a lot on the strategy for VSD we are applying. But with the current trend to focus more on labor market insertion training, i.e. short courses, we are already challenged with limited time available to provide skills sets that are sufficient for the labour market. Mainstreaming of Life Skills has become standard in many projects, but often these are crash courses of short duration and can be anything - everything is considered life skills from gender-sensitivity, health-related topics to interpersonal and leadership skills, etc. I would question whether tackling complex issues such as intercultural dialogue, democracy, citizenship and human rights in such a life skills training would be effective.

Overall, I think we need to exercise some caution: VSD is seen as a strategy to "catch" the drop-outs and insert them back into the system, and to provide them the knowledge they

missed. VSD cannot be that "patch" to fix up all the missing pieces, and to substitute for a holistic education of 9-12 years...especially when tackling topics that take a long time to be formed, instilled and most importantly experienced by children and youth.

In my experience, this is also where there is often a divide: In societies where inequality is very prevalent, where human rights are neglected and poverty prevails: is it enough to just talk about these concepts in a classroom? How can this really be addressed in order to make a change?

What experiences do others have with this? I would be very curious to learn about projects that successfully integrate these topics, and how they do it? And how do we measure outcomes related to this?

**Franz Kehl** on June 23

I find Sonja's posts very interesting and largely agree with it. One of the main reasons for the confusion we sometimes have with the level of intervention and the reasonably possible outreach and outcome of VSD interventions is similar to many other development interventions: development professionals and the development industry benefitting from public financing like to aim high. The idea of incremental change and doing something small but beautiful - or better: focused - that does not necessarily change a whole system, society or country within four to twelve years is difficult to accept for many, and even more difficult to sell. Therefore, development projects tend to have unrealistic objectives.

When it comes to the vocational skills and life skills discussion, I think we have to differentiate. After all, this is still SDCs strength! In really short courses, like 2-3 month trainings, we usually see life skills modules or any kind of specific input in this regard. In some cases we see also coaching approaches, even after-training support, and in other cases students live at the training compound for the duration of the training.

Some projects with specific target groups use this opportunity to heavily invest in this direction (e.g. trafficked women in Cambodia or youth gangs in Honduras, often also church based offers). If we deal with longer training durations, one to three or even four years, things obviously change, and we can work process oriented using the longer time horizon. We can also deal with issues that have not been developed in compulsory schooling, as Sonja mentioned in her post. The longer time horizon and group stability offers the opportunity to create relations that enable you to deal with challenges that need trust and process orientation.

**Bouchra Boutaleb, Morocco** on June 23
Chargée de programme - Développement Economique et Emploi / Département fédéral des affaires étrangères DFAE - Ambassade de Suisse / Division Coopération Internationale (DCI)

Some youth network ([www.remajec.org.ma](http://www.remajec.org.ma)) and Youth councils could be mobilized to contribute to the design, implementation and evaluation of VSD strategies, in a participative approach.

**Amparo Ergueta, Bolivia** on June 26
Oficial Nacional de Programa - Embajada de Suiza / Cooperación Suiza en Bolivia

During this year we had two moments of consultation to young people about VET. First, we developed a beneficiary assessment to evaluate the perception of the current project (2014-2017). Later on this year, in the context of the design of the new project, we developed a labor demand survey, and we apply a survey to young people in the last year of high school. Both studies showed interesting results.

In the first case, during the beneficiary assessment, a group of current and graduated students explained openly their opinions about the services received in the centres. Their opinions allowed us to know better if they felt satisfied with the services received. For example, they explained that the improvements of the services in the centres were, in general, "satisfactory", but they would like more investment in equipment of the courses. The students also expressed their perception about the financial information that was provided by the centres. Students perceived that the information was very positive to understand the microcredit services offered by local providers. In Bolivia we found that this kind of information is very valuable, because students have a different perspective of the services than teachers and directors. We found that this information was very useful during the process of the design of the new VET project.

In the second case, the labor market survey was designed mainly to collect the opinion of companies in small and medium cities of Bolivia. We included a small survey focused in young people in the last year of school, with the aim to know their opinions and expectations about the future. The results of the survey were extremely interesting, it helped us to know that students expectations about the labor opportunities were closer to the employers demand, and both of them were far from the offer of the centres. It means that students expected to study some courses that were on demand by companies. But in contrast, those courses were not part of the offer of the centres.

Another finding was that the students expected to earn a higher salary than the real salary in their home towns. Their salary expectations were closer to the average salary in large cities. This information allowed us to better understand why many young people expect to migrate to the cities. As the survey showed, we understood the importance to provide better VET services, but also the importance to improve labor conditions in the small and medium cities. Based on the evidence, I would suggest to include this kind of studies in the different moments of the project, during the design, the evaluation, and also during the implementation process. Young people were open to participate in the studies and happy to express opinions.

**Dr. Rudolf Batliner, NADEL** on June 26
Program Coordinator ETH Zürich / NADEL Center for Development and Cooperation

Dear Amparo, Congratulations! You bring up the point that in VET/VSD we have a group of people that we call „beneficiaries" but we hardly ever ask them how they are or would like to be „benefitted". I am not at all surprised that their expectations are closer to the demands of the world of work than to the offers of the world of training. It seems they know that training is not more than a means to reach the end - work, income and the livelihood they dream about.

Conclusion: It is good practice to widen the focus and include those who are the justification for what we are doing.

**Sabina Handschin** on June 29

Discussion on addressing issues such as human rights, citizenship, conflict etc. in vocational training:

§ As many mentioned, it all depends on the context –; I've worked in DRC and Burundi where violence were issues and youth a potential for peace or for reinforcing violence; in Burundi, for example, youth got mobilized/instrumentalized in a targeted way to trigger social tensions and social cleavages. In such contexts addressing topics related to values, human rights, social cohesion and conflict transformations would be key; be it as part of other sectors' programs or as part of VSD – basically every entry-point should be welcome to contribute to transform behavior towards positive attitudes. For example NRC's YEP-Programs (Youth Education Programs) in conflict-settings include besides vocational and literacy training also human-rights, conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

§ Addressing topics mentioned above should, however, be integral part in any basic education curricula in compulsory primary and lower-secondary education and are an essential part of quality education (as outlined in Unesco's definition of the 4 Pillars of quality learning). The education-SDG 4 refers to it specifically in target 4.7 given the transformative role of education and the role schools play in society to shape behavior and attitudes. Reason why SDC's education strategy highlights these aspects with regards to basic education, as outlined on p.29 of the English version of the strategy, both for primary/lower-secondary level and as part of life-long basic education learning (formal, alternative, informal education).

A good example for the latter is SDC's Education Program for pastoralist (PREPP) in 5 cross-border countries in the Sahel region which focuses on catching-up basic education for young nomads who missed schooling and has also vocational training components. Conflicts between nomads and sedentary farmers are frequent and therefore the program has integrated education on rights and responsibilities and conflict transformation; in addition all implementing partners had been trained on conflict sensitive program management and as a result of this they developed their own context-adapted training-manual. An independent evaluation showed the positive impact such integrated components have on conflict-dynamics which reduced in some areas; consequently the aspects targeting social cohesion and conflict transformation through education are being strengthened in a future phase.

### C. Summary of results

*Facilitators on 23 June*

*Many thanks for your continued interest in the e-discussion on youth. Yesterday was another active day with again very interesting contributions. You will find the summary on day 4 attached as well as on shareweb. https://www.shareweb.ch/site/EI/Pages/Content/featured-profile.aspx?item1=eiDiscussions%202017-06*
*We are looking very much forward to our continued discussion to day and your active participation in it! As you could see the questions have been launched this morning*

**Day 4:**

**How can young people better participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of these strategies? How can this be done in collaboration with youth work, youth organisations and youth projects?**

In *Kosovo* the 'opportunity group methodology', which encourages young people to come together in peer groups to share, learn and apply newly acquired technical, entrepreneurial and life skills, has proven to be a successful tool to equip young people with needed skills within a short period of time, in particular disadvantaged young women and minorities. In *Handicap International,* participation of beneficiaries and partners (from first assessment, design, implementation to final evaluation) is one of 12 project quality criteria. In *Mali*, by way of example, a participatory project involves youth organizations, local authorities, community representatives including representatives of persons with disabilities and women to identify, for instance, green market job opportunities. The "Making it Work" methodology was used to identify good practices for ensuring inclusion of women and youth with disabilities in vocational skills training and self-employment. A pool of experts (representatives of youth organization, women organization and disabled people organisations, + local employment and youth services) helped identifying good practices. The quality of VSD projects can be enhanced by considering participation of young people as primarily stakeholders in the sector selection and in the design and implementation of relevant VSD strategies, by focusing on a 'holistic' approach in skills development and on non-formal and informal types of training, by addressing skills development in an integrated way together with other dimensions of labour market system and by involving young people in monitoring & evaluation systems of VSD strategies.

**How can relevant themes such as intercultural dialogue, democracy, citizenship- and human rights be included in VSD strategies? What are the experiences so far?**

In *Handicap International* Human Rights considerations are included in all projects and advocating with evidences is a key component to improve inclusion of the most vulnerable people. In *Mongolia* the Youth Development Project is based on a Human Rights Based Approach. Thanks to the project life skills are brought to the education sector; schools have now life skills education halls and life skills trainers who organize extra-curricular activities. Lessons learned: combination of hard and soft skills in VSD is more effective, yet requires more resources.

Intercultural dialogue, democracy, citizenship and human rights are cross-cutting themes, and these concepts should be fostered throughout the curricula at different levels of the education system, including VSD in order to make the education more holistic and the graduates' skill sets more complete with skills that go beyond the technical part. However, is VSD the right means to foster these complex issues besides life skills training? With the current trend to focus more on labor market insertion via short course training, time is already limited. VSD as a strategy to insert the drop-outs back into the system cannot fix up all the missing pieces, and to substitute for a holistic education of 9-12 years. There is often a divide in societies where inequality is very prevalent, human rights are neglected and poverty prevails: is it enough to just talk about these concepts in a classroom? How can this really be addressed in order to make a change?

### A. Input facilitators on 23 June

*Yesterday was another active day with again very interesting contributions. Many thanks for your continued interest in the e-discussion on youth-specific approaches in the context of Vocational Skills Development (VSD) interventions.*

*Today is the fifth day and our focus is on the following topic:*

- *Which skills achieved through non-formal and informal learning including in youth work projects can be relevant to support the transition school / training - employment? How personal and social competences are be built? How can skills and competences acquired in non-formal and informal settings be validated and recognised and which support measures are needed? How can the impact of non-formal and informal learning be made better visible?*

*Some of you might have already tackled questions around non-formal and informal learning in one or another way, but we are very curious to learn more about your experiences and thoughts, in particular from the perspective of your individual projects. With regard to the understanding of non-formal and informal learning we allow us to refer to our intro paper (on shareweb) which provides some helpful definitions. We are looking very much forward to our continued discussion and your active participation in it!*

### B. Contributions to discussion

**Hugo Sager** on June 23

I am aware that your first question is aiming at general soft skills. But allow me to point out that you are discussing along the line of Vocational Skill Development. The discussions and contributions are very useful and benefiting, but at the end of the day employment counts. That means the skills learned have to be relevant with the requirements of the labour market; to be well mannered will not be sufficient.

In Switzerland there are about 230 different vocation that can be learned in apprenticeships. If we are very humble, each of these will count for 10 specific vocational skills that are looked for in the labour market. Again, I am aware that you talk about general soft skills, and as I mentioned, I am thankful for the inputs, these are very interesting and helpful. But, as a person that has started its work-life with learning a profession, I would like to remind that the main reason to do VSD is learning trade specific skills. Probably one of the next webinars could try to find out how the projects acquire the knowledge about trade specific skills needed in the labour market.

**Hanjo Schild** on 23 June

Please allow me as one of the facilitators of the group to come back to Hugo's point that the main reason to do VSD is learning trade specific skills....this is from my point of view only one side of the medal. I took a short look in the strategic aims of SDC (see flyer attached) which has defined six main strategic orientations in ist 'Education Strategy' adopted in 2017.

Under Point N°5 'Sustainability, social cohesion, migration and resilience' it is outlined that "sustainable and peaceful development is possible only when a society realizes the importance of education in influencing values and attitudes and as a key element in transforming social practices. The SDC encourages education that teaches people about peace, citizenship, human rights and resilience to diseases and natural disasters". Question to the network is: how can this be best done without neglecting Hugo's priority setting?

**Hugo Sager** on 23 June

Dear Hanjo, thanks for your response. I do agree with you that the SDC definition on education is broader. The way I do understand that definition is, that it is referring to the whole education system.
What you point out (N°5) should be in the focus of the compulsory education, if that could not be delivered there (early drop-out or not sufficiently addressed), bridging training to catch-up do make more sense than adding these topics in anyway short VSD training, with the objective to "bring participants in a job" (and that is, as I understand, what SDC would like to see as an indicator of VSD trainings). This is what point N°6 is looking at. But, yes Hanjo you are right, there is no black and white and no clear line can be drawn. And thank you for the question you formulated.

**Brigitte Colarte-Duerr** on June 23

I really enjoy reading all your valuable contributions and the field of tension described by Hugo is a real one. I might contribute with the strategic view from the VSD focal point on this: The 6 strategic orientations of the SDC Education Strategy on basic education and VSD can be used as building blocks and according to context and specific training formats, prioritizations will have to be made and maybe not all strategic orientations can be integrated to the same extent. Also, the weight given to one or the other strategic orientation maybe differ whether for basic education or VSD projects, from context to contexts and depending on specific project or programmatic goals. Also, the building of citizenship and human rights education, value-based education as well as education for conflict resolution and a culture of dialogue is therefore rather a focus of basic education (as you will see detailed in the long version of SDC's education strategy on page 29).
https://www.eda.admin.ch/content/dam/deza/en/documents/themen/grund-und-berufsbildung/strategie-deza-bildung_EN.pdf

Generally speaking, in trainings of long duration (as the one mentioned by our colleague Zaya from Mongolia) or in case of a special project/program focus, there might be more room for building such competences, whereas in shorter trainings, even if social and personal competences are still highly relevant (and – how employers surveys show – also demanded by the labour market), possibly greater emphasis will be on developing technical skills and focus on direct employability. Nevertheless, as we see for example in project in the Western Balkans (cf. contribution from Stefan Butcher), approaches from youth work, such as "job clubs" can be valuable means for reaching the goal of labour market integration. Are there other examples on this out there?

SDC's vocational skills development definition confirms the fact that the main aim of VSD is ensure that graduates are integrated in the world of work, while at the same time the importance of technical, social and personal competences is highlighted:

The broad concept SDC applies for VSD encompasses all organized learning processes for the development of technical, social and personal competencies and qualifications that contribute to the sustainable long-term integration of trained people in decent working conditions in the formal or informal economy, either on an employed or self-employed basis. VSD usually combines theory and practice and can take place in schools or technical institutes, workshops or at the workplace in enterprises. According to the concept of lifelong learning, VSD can take place at all education levels, from lower secondary to tertiary, and one can acquire VSD throughout an individual's economically active life. It includes formal and non-formal VSD

Last year – with the support of Frédérique Weyer and SDC National Program Officers – with did a survey on soft skills in VSD projects and found that in most projects, soft skills are being judged important. In the Latin American and Caribe region, the relevance of soft skills was raised during a SDC regional workshop in Bogota last year and good practices have been collected from the region. The report will be made available on our shareweb https://www.shareweb.ch/site/EI/Pages/VSD/vsd-home.aspx within shortly and some colleagues from the region might be able to contribute more on this topic. I am looking forward to your project experiences on the topic raised and thank you all for your insightful contributions.

**Hanjo Schild** on 23 June

Interesting debate, indeed. This week I attended the conference "Learning to live together" on the future of citizenship and human rights education in Europe, organised by the Council of Europe which discussed a comprehensive report on the subject. This report states that education for democratic citizenship and human rights education appear to be less present in vocationally-oriented education (where many disadvantaged and minority Groups are found) and in higher education(!) why participants and experts claimed that the ethos of democracy and human rights need to be more present in these sectors. Some even argued that in particular those coming from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds are of higher risk getting 'radicalised' and showing ant-democratic behaviour. For me the essential question is if VSD can and should deal with problems that are 'produced' elsewhere (the same is by the way true for youth work which more and more is expected to tackle social and political problems).

**Dr. Wolfgang Schlegel, INBAS** on 23 June

I would like to come back to Hugo's comments regarding the need to primarily focus on technical skills in VSD projects. In general terms I fully agree. But the question is: who should do what? I am just back from a mission to Laos where I am involved in an SDC program on skills development for the tourism and hospitality sector. We had many interviews with hotel or restaurant managers there, and particularly the managers of bigger establishments often told us that they did not expect us to deliver technical skills. They were more interested in young people with the right attitudes and basic English language skills whom they could then train internally according to their specific needs. What I want to say with this example is that if we are successful in getting the private sector involved in training delivery our role as VSD projects changes and the focus of what we do may shift towards delivery of personal and social skills in order to facilitate the delivery of technical skills by our partner companies.

**Hugo Sager** on June 23

Wolfgang, I do agree with you that attitude and basic English is seen as very important and the basis for internal training in the tourism sector (not only in Laos). But, if I think of welder (everywhere huge demand on the labour market), mechanics, tailors, electricians, etc. the demand of future employers for more trade specific knowledge and skills is growing in importance. I know that we both agree that it is necessary to assess the target sectors before we start designing training programs.

**Zowadul Karim Khan, Bangladesh** on June 24

In Bangladesh soft skills like, 1) how to write an application and a build CV, how to appear in an interview, basic English for employment purpose and 2) how to make a small business plan or plan an enterprise, how to approach financial service provider for getting a loan, the basic marketing techniques etc. for self-employment, are delivered in the skills training courses. Around 10% of total training time is dedicated for developing the mentioned soft skills.

Regarding how a young person acquiring skills and competence in non-formal and informal settings can get those validated and recognized, there is an Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) system built in the National Technical and Vocational Qualification Framework (NTVQF) of Bangladesh. However, this system is still in a developing stage as there are constraints like low institutional capacity and particularly, a lack of adequate number of available assessors.

### C. Summary of results

*Facilitators* on 26 June

*Many thanks for your continued interest in the e-discussion on youth. You can find the summary of day 5 attached as well as on shareweb.*
[https://www.shareweb.ch/site/EI/Pages/Content/featured-profile.aspx?item1=eiDiscussions%202017-06](https://www.shareweb.ch/site/EI/Pages/Content/featured-profile.aspx?item1=eiDiscussions%202017-06)

*We are looking very much forward to our continued discussion today and tomorrow, the final day of our exchange on youth. As you could see the questions for day 6 have been launched this morning.*

**Day 5:**

**Which skills achieved through non-formal and informal learning including in youth work projects can be relevant to support the transition school / training – employment? How are personal and social competences to be built? How can skills and competences acquired in non-formal and informal settings be validated and recognised and which support measures are needed? How can the impact of non-formal and informal learning be made better visible?**

With regard to VSD it was reminded that the skills learned have to be relevant for the requirements of the labour market and the main reason to do VSD is learning trade-specific skills with the objective to bring participants in a job. Even if the SDC definition on education in its strategic aim N°5 outlines that education should teach people also soft skills it should not be primarily subject of (in particular short) VSD training but of the compulsory education system. SDC's vocational skills development definition confirms the fact that the main aim of VSD is to ensure that graduates are integrated in the world of work, while at the same time the importance of technical, social and personal competences is highlighted. But, there is no black and white and no clear line can be drawn between 'hard' und 'soft' skills. According to a survey on soft skills in VSD projects most projects judged soft skills as being important. E.g. in Bangladesh around 10% of total training time is dedicated for developing the mentioned soft skills. The essential question is how far VSD can and should deal with problems that are 'produced' elsewhere (e.g. democratic deficits) and provide (soft) skills which are of lesser relevance for the labour market. At the end of day the question is: who should do what? If we are successful in getting the private sector involved in training delivery the role of VSD projects change and the focus may shift towards delivery of personal and social skills in order to facilitate the delivery of technical skills by partner companies. But it might depend also on the sectors and the demand of future employers, thus it is necessary to assess the target sectors before we start designing training programs.

The 6 strategic orientations of the SDC Education Strategy on basic education and VSD can be used as building blocks and according to context and specific training formats, prioritizations will have to be made and maybe not all strategic orientations can be integrated to the same extent. The weight given to one or the other strategic orientation may differ from context to contexts and depending on specific project or programmatic goals. The building of citizenship and human rights education, value-based education as well as education for conflict resolution and a culture of dialogue is rather a focus of basic education. However, in trainings of long duration or in case of a special project/program focus, there might be more room for building such competences, whereas in shorter trainings, even if social and personal competences are still highly relevant and also demanded by the labour market, possibly greater emphasis will be on developing technical skills and focus on direct employability. Nevertheless, approaches from youth work can be valuable means for reaching the goal of labour market integration. VSD usually combines theory and practice and includes formal and non-formal VSD.

Regarding how skills and competence acquired in non-formal and informal settings can get validated and recognized, in Bangladesh a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) system has been built in the National Technical and Vocational Qualification Framework (NTVQF).

### A. Input facilitators on 26 June

*The first week, five days of our e-discussion on youth-specific approaches in the context of Vocational Skills Development (VSD) interventions lies behind us and we are very happy about the lively and enriching debates. Now we are looking forward to the two remaining days. Today is the sixth day and our focus is on the following topic:*

*\* How can VSD projects cooperate with other structures? Which concepts and practices exist in terms of networking, partnerships, cooperation ties, between public and private actors, civil society, youth*
*work providers, young people and others in order to implement holistic inclusion strategies for young people in vulnerable situations?*

*Some of you might have already tackled questions around cooperation and networking in one or another way, but we are very curious to learn more about your experiences and thoughts, in particular from the perspective of your individual projects.*

### *Facilitators on 26 June*

*Already tired after one week discussion? Everything said within the five key questions we have raised? We don't think so.... please feel invited to contribute to today's questions on partnerships, cooperation and networks.*

*Are there lessons learned from the 2015 e-discussion on cooperation with the private sector? Is it as well of added value to cooperate with the third sector, with civil Society organisations, in neighbourhoods and communities? Which experiences do you have in this respect?*

### B. Contributions to discussion

**Regula Gattiker** on June 26

I am not a VET specialist, but currently, I am co-designing a new project Helvetas is going to implement in the coming months and years in Kyrgyzstan. Its ultimate goal is to "contribute to a more cohesive society in which young people have a fair voice and are resilient against extremist rhetoric" by empowering youth to find their personal and professional purpose in life and increasing peaceful, public discourse and exchange on religion and democracy. Thus, the project combines life skills training for youth with inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogues for youth and adults. In order to provide youth with a real platform to express themselves and be heard, we will also work with adults as advocates for the youth among the adults, and we will train them as youth coaches, in order to address the huge intergenerational gap, which has been identified by youth as one of the main problems causing the youth's sense of disorientation, which makes them feel attracted by extremist rhetoric.

Our life skills approach is based on ICE (intercultural education), as we are convinced that for successfully empowering youth - especially in a conflict context, where marginalized youth from different ethnic, social and economic backgrounds compete over very little employment opportunities – we need to work with them on identity and visions (so they think

about their own realistic views of what they want to be and do, in the conditions they are living), as much as on rights and duties, and what it means to be – and how to become - active and responsible citizens. This life skills training also covers professional orientation, and we will also apply the opportunity group methodology (mentioned earlier and successfully practiced by our Helvetas colleagues in Kosovo), in order to identify possible entry points for creating job opportunities for the youth. We are convinced that youth learn most through exchange with other youth, that they get inspired by each other, and of course, also by the trainers or some invited guests. We think that we need to prepare the ground for youth to build on their own initiatives and provide them with means to follow their vocation. Life must make sense for them, and thus, they need a strong self-confidence, a sense of belonging and some aims to struggle for. Of course, in terms of job creation, this is only one step and the intervention needs to be combined with a labour market analysis to determine what opportunities there are for youth to get employed.

Based on earlier working experiences in other organizations and settings, I would like to share my ideas, especially regarding the questions from Day 4&5, i.e. how youth can better participate in the design, implementing and evaluation of projects, and how topics like intercultural dialogue, democracy, citizenship and human rights can be included in VSD strategies.

First and foremost, any training for youth should be based on the HRBA, in the sense that a youth training gives every youth a platform to express her- or himself, to genuinely participate and also to some extent determine what is the content of the training and how it is delivered. Trainings must be adapted to every group so youth can make the best of it and create an atmosphere conducive for learning.

Thus, the more engaged youth are, the more effective and sustainable is their learning. Direct interaction is key for this, but especially after face to face interventions, social networks become important tools for keeping up the exchange between youth. Thus, it is important to make sure that all youth can get access to these networks in one or the other way.

When it comes to designing projects or further steps in a project, youth must not only be consulted, but integrated in the design and also in the implementation of the project. This can be done through different means, or including youth in the different steps through focus groups, or including youth (young adults with which the target groups identify) in the team, etc.

This much for now, just to share a few thoughts, from a Governance & Peace perspective…

**Roman Troxler, KEK-CDC Consultants** on June 26

Just one brief example on today's topic „cooperation with other structures":

In the Swisscontact PROMOST program in Rwanda we were looking for someone to support those VSD graduates with business ideas in the process of starting their own micro enterprises. Quickly we found out the Rwandan government had already created a structure of so-called Business Development Advisors (BDAs), freelancers present in each district who are paid for their services through a voucher scheme. Instead of creating our own structure, we thus selected some of those BDAs, offered them additional training and finally ‚certified' them as Swisscontact Entrepreneurship Advisors. These advisors are still paid through the voucher scheme of the Rwandan Government. However they can also benefit from an

additional prime for each ‚vulnerable' (as defined by the PROMOST program) graduate supported, including an outcome-based bonus, if these beneficiaries earn/generate a decent income after 6 months.

The idea was thus to build upon an existing system, but to add some incentives encouraging selected (i.e. 'the best') BDAs to particularly work with vulnerable youths.

**Franz Kehl** on June 26

I came across an interesting approach in Albania that works with communities of disadvantaged groups using the coaching cycle approach. The coaching cycle works with a small groups of people who want to develop their professional career. It is a moderated and well-structured process that builds on motivation and support within the group: http://www.swisscontact.org/en/country/albania/projects/projects-albania/project/-/show/coaching-for-employment-and-entrepreneurship.html

The project is a labour market integration measure rather than a hard-core skills development project, however making use of vocational skills development for that purpose.

The skills for jobs project in Albania focuses on 1:1 relationships between schools and employers instead of relying on intermediated structures that do not exist or that are not strong and willing to fill in their role. They do it quite successfully and create training places also for the underprivileged, as VET students are mostly from lower social strata of society.

For those who have access to e+i shareweb: https://www.shareweb.ch/site/EI/memberarea/Pages/project-profile.aspx?projectId=7&searchterm=Skills%204%20Jobs%20Albania&searchterm=Skills%204%20Jobs%20Albania  For others: http://www.swisscontact.org/en/country/albania/projects/projects-albania/project/-/show/skills-for-jobs.html  or https://www.facebook.com/S4J.Swisscontact/

When it comes to cooperation with the private sector in skills development, we have to accept that businesses have a business interest in training, short or long term. Many projects tend to neglect this simple fact and are surprised if companies are not willing to cooperate if the project motivation is rather social than economic and if the target group selection is not corresponding with their economic realities or needs. When it comes to cooperation with the private sector, please have a look at this site and at the paper prepared by Prof. Markus Maurer form the University of Teacher Education in Zurich: https://www.shareweb.ch/site/EI/Pages/Content/featured-profile.aspx?item1=Private%20Sector%20Participation

**Zayasaikhan Dugeree, Mongolia** on June 27

The core of publicly funded TVET in Mongolia is cooperation with industries. Currently the Government on Mongolia is working on State policies to support a social partnership. The topic of social partnership was introduced in 2010; however it existed rather on a paper, which couldn't be materialise for many reasons. Let me bring you more recent development from our experiences in Mongolia.

SDC contributes to the VSD project (CVT for GIZ), which is being implemented by GIZ (two phases over 2013-2019). The project has been initiated in 2011 as a small project funded by BMZ. After a joint planning in 2012 the project was expanded thematically and

geographically with SDC funds. In 2014 DFAT has pledged funds for the project interventions further in other province until 2018, which made the project into a multi-donor program.

Finally in 2015-2016 the German famous company "Festo Didactic" and the biggest local mining company, the "Turquoise Hills (Oyu Tolgoi)", the local subsidiary of Rio Tinto, have signed a development partnership agreement with GIZ and the Government of Mongolia. The objective of the partnership is to develop so called Capacity Development Centres in Mongolia. Attached please find brief information about the program and the contributions of partners under a joint goal.

My apologies for provoking our colleagues in SDC, but BMZ has gone faster in defining and developing the PPPs, pls refer to www.developpp.de . The platform offers support in developing PPPs and provides on-top funding for joint initiatives with private sector. I know about number of SDC projects in contribution modality with GIZ, so they can learn and use available opportunities.

**Dr. Zowadul Karim Khan, Bangladesh** on June 27

In Bangladesh Skills Development is a very wide spread (or saying critically very scattered and unfortunately often uncoordinated) activities. Around 22 ministries are involved in skills development, like the ministries of education, labor, industries, overseas employment, health, agriculture, youth development, women affairs and others. Besides there is involvement of the private sector, NGOs and financial service providers.

A VSD project needs to cooperate or to remain in coordination with many government and non-government actors, like government department, public and private training providers, private sector associations, Centers of Excellence (COE), Industry Skills Councils (ISC), development partners, social marketing companies, financial service providers, local government and others, for successful implementation. The mentioned coordination is also necessary to avoid the duplication and overlaps, which are major problems in VSD in Bangladesh.

To address inclusion, based on that the excluded groups are hard to be reached or made aware of the facilities they will have in VSD, projects use social marketing approach (cultural activities, community radio, rally etc.) for outreach.

To ensure coordination, particularly private public partnership, Bangladesh has an coordinating body called National Skills Development Council (NSDC) (largely supported by the development partners, including SDC), which lacks regulatory power. However, to have a stronger coordination with regulatory mechanism, particularly in the areas of standardization and certification, a National Skills Development Authority (NSDA) is under formation, supported by a SDC contributed project, SEIP. (Note: The Bangladesh Technical Education Board is presently providing certification for both VSD and technical education. But it is felt that a distinct certification body is necessary for VSD (if VSD is mixed with education, there can be dual certification))

To facilitate inclusion, a SDC contributed (lead donor- ADB) project, Skills and Employment Investment Program (SEIP) has established a National Human Resource Development Fund (NHRDF), which will be fully operational within 2017. Having contributions from the government, development partners and private industries, this fund will have, among other, special support packages for the poor, disadvantaged and women.

**Dr. Wolfgang Schlegel, INBAS** on 27 June

I would like to share an example from Honduras with you. There we currently support a program called CONVIVIR, which is implemented by the Social Investment Fund of Honduras (FHIS) with financial support from KfW. The program addresses young people in deprived urban areas of three municipalities of Honduras with the objective to prevent violence and crime which is a huge problem in the country. It is an urban development program that provides or improves the physical infrastructure in particular for youths in its target areas: parks, recreation and sport facilities, youth centres etc. by following the CPTED approach (CPTED is "crime prevention through environmental design"). Since program planning and implementation is strictly participatory the young people are involved from start of each single project realized under the program. In order to empower them for active participation the program followed a youth work approach by training local youth leaders and organizing events and leisure time activities to get access to them and stimulate their active involvement. Furthermore, skills development activities were carried out and young people were temporarily involved in construction works. The premises established or rehabilitated in the framework of the program are used to provide multifold services to local youth: health advice, career counselling, skills development courses, leisure time and sport activities etc.

### C. Summary of results

*Facilitators* *on 27 June*

*The summary of yesterday's question is now available here*
[https://www.shareweb.ch/site/EI/Documents/Network%20Activities/eDiscussions/VSD/2017-06/eiNetwork-Summary%20Day%20six-E%20Discussion%20on%20Youth-2017-06(en).pdf](https://www.shareweb.ch/site/EI/Documents/Network%20Activities/eDiscussions/VSD/2017-06/eiNetwork-Summary%20Day%20six-E%20Discussion%20on%20Youth-2017-06(en).pdf).

*All other summaries as well as the SDC education strategy are also available on the Shareweb* [https://www.shareweb.ch/site/EI/Pages/Content/featured-profile.aspx?item1=eiDiscussions%202017-06](https://www.shareweb.ch/site/EI/Pages/Content/featured-profile.aspx?item1=eiDiscussions%202017-06).

**Day 6:**

**How can VSD projects cooperate with other structures? Which concepts and practices exist in terms of networking, partnerships, cooperation ties, between public and private actors, civil society, youth work providers, young people and others in order to implement holistic inclusion strategies for young people in vulnerable situations?**

In *Rwanda* the PROMOST program was looking for someone to support VSD graduates with business ideas. The Rwandan government had already created a structure of so-called Business Development Advisors (BDAs). Instead of creating own structure, we offered them additional training and finally ‚certified' them as Swisscontact Entrepreneurship Advisors. The idea was to build upon an existing system, but to add some incentives.

In *Albania* the Coaching for Employment and Entrepreneurship project uses the 'coaching cycle approach' for people (disadvantaged groups) who want to develop their professional career. It is a moderated and well-structured process that builds on motivation and support. The project is a labour market integration measure rather than a hard-core skills development project. The skills for jobs project in *Albania* focuses on 1:1 relationships between schools and employers instead of relying on intermediated structures. They do it

quite successfully and create training places also for the underprivileged, as VET students are mostly from lower social strata of society. When it comes to cooperation with the private sector in skills development, we have to accept that businesses have a business interest in training, short or long term. Many projects tend to neglect this simple fact and are surprised if companies are not willing to cooperate if the project motivation is rather social than economic and if the target group selection is not corresponding with their economic realities or needs.

In *Bangladesh* a VSD project needs to cooperate or to remain in coordination with many government and non-government actors, like government department (22 ministries are involved in VSD), public and private training providers, private sector associations, Centers of Excellence (COE), Industry Skills Councils (ISC), development partners, social marketing companies, financial service providers, local government and others, for successful implementation. To ensure coordination, particularly private public partnership, there is a coordinating body called National Skills Development Council (NSDC) (largely supported by the development partners, including SDC), which lacks regulatory power. However, to have a stronger coordination with regulatory mechanism, particularly in the areas of standardization and certification, a National Skills Development Authority (NSDA) is under formation, supported by the SDC contributed project Skills and Employment Investment Program (SEIP). To facilitate inclusion, the SEIP has established a National Human Resource Development Fund (NHRDF), which will be fully operational within 2017. Having contributions from the government, development partners and private industries, this fund will have, among other, special support packages for the poor, disadvantaged and women. Excluded groups are also reached by using social marketing approach (cultural activities, community radio, rally etc.).

### A. Input facilitators on 27 June

*Today we are facing the seventh and last day of our e-discussion on youth-specific approaches in the context of Vocational Skills Development (VSD) interventions. As already communicated we are very happy about the lively, enriching debates and your valuable contributions. Now we are looking forward to the very last day. The topic of today is the following:*

- *What experiences are available of VSD interventions in the context of broader programs and strategies that combine skills development and with other objectives, such as local (community) and/or business development, health promotion or violence prevention, housing or others? Which examples for integrated joint projects do exist?*

*We invite you to provide some further insights and thoughts on these questions, some experiences and good practices. May we also invite you to contribute to the debate on youth with any other reflection that you feel has not been tackled by our questions, of more general nature or of any specific ones. We have received in the past days some indeed interesting contributions that covered questions of several days and arrived later; they are not lost, of course, we will carefully look at all contributions and take them into account when drafting the final report and conclusions to this debate.*

*Facilitators on 27 June*

*Today is our last day of the e-discussion. We invite you to share your thoughts on all questions raised in the last days, but we're particularly interested to enter a discussion on today's topic:*

*- What experiences are available of VSD interventions in the context of broader programs and strategies that combine skills development and with other objectives, such as local (community) and/or business development, health promotion or violence prevention, housing or others? Which examples for integrated joint projects do exist?*

*Are there experts from other fields like health, governance and peace, PSD in our network who would like to bring in their experiences?*

### B. Contributions to discussion

**Zayasaikhan Dugeree** on June 28

VET domain of SDC Mongolia supports the existing public TVET system from different angles. Under one common objective to improve employability of youth, our interventions include classical TVET approach, HRBA, life-skills education (topics include diverse set of skills such as critical thinking, GBV awareness, adolescent health etc etc) and support to youth businesses/start-ups. Example on start-ups promotion is here: https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/mongolia/en/home/news/news.html/content/countries/mongolia/en/meta/news/2017/YEP-story

It is quite cumbersome to pack everything in one project, however if it is well planned, managed and monitored for the common objective for the common target population - you can have a quite coherent portfolio/domain, which consists from different projects. SDC Mongolia is cautious about the coordination of "own" projects and coordination with other donors/partners, we did regularly organise "domain meetings" to monitor the "domain synergy plan" implementation. Currently we are redefining the portfolio in line with the new dispatch on Basic Education and Vocational Training.

Moreover, we support sector coordination through the multi-stakeholder coordination platform in TVET/employment, which is a non-governmental and non-profit organisation. The members and Board members are donors, project implementers and most importantly, the local industry representatives. Government representatives attend the regular Round table meetings of the NGO. We aim to have more local companies in a leadership of the platform. If anyone has experiences with such sector coordination platforms, I would appreciate any ideas and feedback to it (bilaterally would be more efficient).

In conclusion, I would like to thank to all colleagues from Bern and around the globe for valuable contributions. It was an exciting week full of insights and new ideas for me.

**Sidita Dibra, Albania** on June 28
Component Manager for VET & New Ways of Learning, Skills for Jobs - Swisscontact

I would like to share our experience so far at Skills for Jobs in Albania where we facilitate five VSD providers in training young professionals for the quite challenging labour market. Many occupations are changing, jobs are disappeared and new profiles and skills have emerged, mainly as a result of technology rapid development - the so called, fourth industrial revolution. Aiming also to provide a new face for VSD, perceived for many years as the least desired track attracting low academic achievers, we are integrating ICT as a new way of learning by introducing blended learning and shifting the role of teacher more into a facilitator. Using of open source virtual learning platforms is already a reality in 3 of partner institutions we work with. We use these platforms in support of individualised teaching and learning, as well as a system for knowledge sharing, including practical learning experiences shared by multimedia prepared by apprentices and their in-company trainers. Furthermore, we are starting a process of integrating digital skills development in existing curricula of non IT profiles such as Tourism and Hospitality.

Through this project we understand that integrating innovative solutions in skills development projects, besides the rather traditional solutions (installing elements of dual training), is quite beneficial and helps in giving a "fresh" look to the system as well.

## C. Summary of results

*Facilitators* on 28 June

*Please find the summary of yesterday's discussion in attachment. All summaries of the seven days as well as the SDC education strategy are also available on Shareweb* [https://www.shareweb.ch/site/EI/Pages/Content/featured-profile.aspx?item1=eiDiscussions%202017-06](https://www.shareweb.ch/site/EI/Pages/Content/featured-profile.aspx?item1=eiDiscussions%202017-06) *.*

*We want to thank for all your very enriching and valuable contributions and also the positive feedbacks that many have expressed with regard to the relevance of the topic as well as the individual daily questions.*

*The way how we organized this e-discussion was also new to us and our first impression is that it worked very well. Of course, we will carefully evaluate both, your replies and the course of discussion. Now we start drafting the overall summary and report of our discussion and draw some conclusions out of it. We will share the results with you in due time.*

*Those who still want to contribute to the one or the other question, or to the discussion in general, please feel invited to do so. We would be happy receiving more feedback the next days.*

**Day 7:**

**What experiences are available of VSD interventions in the context of broader programs and strategies that combine skills development and with other objectives, such as local (community) and/or business development, health promotion or violence prevention, housing or others? Which examples for integrated joint projects do exist?**

In *Honduras* the urban development program CONVIVIR addresses young people in deprived urban areas of three municipalities of Honduras with the objective to prevent violence and crime. The program improves the physical infrastructure in particular for youths in its target areas: parks, recreation and sport facilities, youth centres etc. by following the "crime prevention through environmental design" (CPTED) approach. Since program planning and implementation is strictly participatory the young people are involved from start of each single project realized under the program. In order to empower them for active participation the program followed a youth work approach by training local youth leaders and organizing events and leisure time activities to get access to them and stimulate their active involvement. Furthermore, skills development activities were carried out and young people were temporarily involved in construction works. The premises established or rehabilitated in the framework of the program are used to provide multifold services to local youth: health advice, career counselling, skills development courses, leisure time and sport activities etc.

VET domain of SDC *Mongolia* supports the existing public TVET system from different angles. To improve employability of youth, interventions include classical TVET approach, human rights-based approach (HRBA), life skills education and support to youth businesses/start-ups. It is quite cumbersome to pack everything in one project, however if it is well planned, managed and monitored and thus you can have a quite coherent portfolio/domain, which consists from different projects. In order to improve coordination of "own" projects with those of other donors/partners, SDC Mongolia regularly organised "domain meetings" to monitor the "domain synergy plan" implementation, now under redefinition in line with the new dispatch on Basic Education and Vocational Training.

In *Kyrgyzstan* a new Helvetas project (currently in its planning phase) will aim to empower youth to find their personal and professional purpose in life and increasing peaceful, public discourse and exchange on religion and democracy. The project shall combine life skills training (based on intercultural education) for youth with inclusive multi-stakeholder dialogues for youth and adults. In order to provide youth with a real platform to express themselves and be heard, the project will also work with adults as advocates for the youth among the adults, and will train them as youth coaches, in order to address the huge intergenerational gap, which has been identified by youth as one of the main problems causing the youth's sense of disorientation, which makes them feel attracted by extremist rhetoric.

**Annex: List of contributors (in alphabetic order)**

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