

Face à l'ampleur des besoins dans ce secteur, elles n'ont toutefois encore qu'une portée limitée et leur développement doit être poursuivi pour répondre aux nombreux défis.

Les défis à relever

Face à la grande diversité qui caractérise le secteur informel, que ce soit par rapport à la multiplicité des acteurs, à ses caractéristiques complexes et variées ou à ses changements incessants, la formation professionnelle doit faire preuve d'une capacité d'adaptation exceptionnelle. Pour réussir à stimuler et à satisfaire la demande ainsi que pour contribuer de façon substantielle au développement des initiatives des acteurs du secteur informel et faciliter leur accès à l'emploi, l'offre de formation professionnelle doit ainsi répondre à diverses exigences, entre autres :

- **Coût** : Les formations doivent être peu onéreuses ; des mécanismes doivent être mis en place de façon à permettre un partage des coûts entre les différents acteurs concernés (apprentis, familles, entrepreneurs, associations professionnelles, collectivités locales, Etat ...)
- **Pertinence** : Les formations doivent être adaptées aux conditions locales tant quant à leur forme que quant au contenu ; les apprentis doivent être en mesure de suivre ces formations et doivent en tirer un profit immédiat
- **Participation** : Les acteurs concernés doivent être impliqués en permanence dans la préparation et l'organisation des formations ; les structures locales doivent jouer un rôle clef

Une analyse approfondie des besoins et de la demande doit être faite et actualisée fréquemment. Le défi majeur de la formation professionnelle face au secteur informel est aujourd'hui de réussir à développer une offre multiple, adaptée à des besoins locaux spécifiques et à une demande très diverse tout en permettant une diffusion à large échelle. ■

Vocational Education and Training Confronted with the Challenges of the Informal Sector

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During the last decades, the so-called informal sector has been expanding to the point where it occupies a vast majority of active people in developing countries, but also an increasing number of people in transition economies and even in industrialised countries. Furthermore, one estimates that nearly 80% of employment in Latin America or Africa depend on the informal sector.

The rise of the informal sector often occurs in reaction to crises, related to demographic trends, urban migrations, or to the political/economic situation.

The actors of the informal sector must develop complex strategies to survive. They are obliged to have several minor jobs or to involve all the family in lucrative activities. Under these conditions, they do not have the means of reaching the traditional offer of vocational training which is effected in the daytime and over long periods.

Vocational education and training (VET) has always been a key element of development programmes. Copied from western models and targeting the modern sector, these trainings were generally of great quality, provided by "centres of excellence". Expensive as it was, however, this type of training did not allow replication on a large scale. Because of high entry level requirements, only a very limited number of apprentices had access to this kind of training.

New approaches for VET

Since a few years, Swiss cooperation is actively contributing to the development of new approaches for VET. Let us mention some of these approaches:

- Short and flexible training
- Collaboration with micro-enterprises in order to develop job-oriented training
- Large flexibility as for the contents of training: in addition to technical aspects and skills, one also considers the commercial sides of self-employment or of running a micro-enterprise, and furthermore all aspects related to the context of life and all other questions relating to the concrete situation, such as, for example, in the modules for functional literacy
- Adaptation of training contents to distinct groups, in particular women, in order to take into account their specific needs and to improve their situation
- Distribution of VET vouchers: allows to stimulate the offer according to demand and to make sure that the actual recipients of support or subsidies are among the desired groups of population
- Combining VET with other services, such as, for example, consulting for micro-enterprises or micro-finance
- Offer mobile training, allowing to bring VET to isolated areas or within the reach of marginalized groups

These new approaches have positive, encouraging results. However, they are still of limited effect if one considers the remaining, huge demand for training in this sector.

Challenges to meet

Given the diversity characterizing the informal sector, VET must show an exceptional capacity of adaptation. In order to succeed in stimulating and satisfying the demand for training and thus facilitating the access to employment, the offer of vocational training must fulfill the following requirements:

- **Cost:** Training should be not very expensive. Mechanisms which allow a sharing of the costs between the

various actors (apprentices, families, entrepreneurs, trade associations, local communities, state ...) are to be resolved.

- **Relevance:** Training must be adapted to local conditions, both as regards its form and contents. The apprentices must be able to attend trainings, and they must benefit immediately.
- **Participation:** The actors concerned have to be permanently involved in the preparation and the organisation of training; local structures are of key importance
- **Needs and demand** must be evaluated frequently, and adaptations have to be made

Today's major challenge of VET in the informal sector is the development of a

multiple offer, adapted to specific local needs and a very diversified demand - and still, this offer must be applicable on a large scale. ■

"The millions in the workforce, economically very active are under statistical 'purdah'. They are invisible hence not recognised as part of the working population. It is unfortunate that the world of work is divisive: formal sector and informal sector, public sector and private sector, employed and self-employed."

Ela Bhatt, Founder of Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), India.



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In Africa, nearly 80% of employment depend on the informal sector.