Swisscontact promotes sustainable economic and social development in selected countries in Asia, Latin America, Africa and Eastern Europe through advisory services, training and continuing education. The primary organization of the Swiss private sector for development cooperation, Swisscontact cooperates closely with local partners, and follows the guiding principle of, “helping others to help themselves”.

Swisscontact draws on its over 50 years of experience in supporting Vocational Education and Training (VET) in developing and transition countries. Until the 1980s, Swisscontact projects provided comprehensive support to selected local VET providers. In the early 1990s, projects became more focused, addressing existing bottlenecks in VET systems by training instructors, school managers and curriculum development specialists. Since the late 1990s, Swisscontact has widened its focus further to implement projects that support the reform or expansion of entire VET systems.

This paper focuses on Vocational Education and Training (VET) as a part of Skills Development. Skills Development encompasses any activity to convey a specific or several capabilities needed for an economic activity. Skills Development can take place on the work place in schools, training centres etc and executed by anybody with a superior skill level. VET indicates a systematized form of Skills Development (there are VET-systems but no Skills Development systems). Nevertheless VET may include short un-certified courses as well as complete professional education programs with a formal certification.

The critical importance of investing in Vocational Education and Training (VET) to promote social, economic and ecological development worldwide is nearly undisputed. A skilled workforce is the primary asset of many countries and, for the individual, access to marketable skills is often a necessity for survival and, eventually, economic growth. Private enterprises – whether small or large, multinational or local – can only prosper if employees with the necessary skills and abilities are readily available. Conscious of VET’s central importance in economic development, Swisscontact has engaged in projects to improve the quality and scope of Vocational Education and Training in developing countries since its foundation in 1959.

1 Overview
Vocational Education and Training, in conjunction with other measures, is necessary to achieve sustainable, pro-poor growth in the private sector. Acquiring marketable skills improves the chances for individuals living in poverty to get a job, an income and a decent livelihood. There is a wide range of VET-delivery modalities, depending on the specific social, political, cultural and economic environment; the current state of the private sector and the labour market; the target group; and the aim of a particular VET project or program. Swisscontact has accumulated in-depth experience in developing VET in a variety of contexts ranging from training for unemployed youth with limited basic education to the specialized training of technicians in a variety of industrial fields. The core of Swisscontact’s interventions in this area has always been to develop the vocational part of the training with the direct involvement of private enterprises.

2 Importance of Action
2.1 Background
In most developing and transition countries, VET does not meet the needs of the private sector and is only accessible to a small part of the population. This is caused by various factors such as a weak linkage to the private sector (evident from outdated curricula), lack of proper trainers and facilities, limited funds (in particular at public training centres and schools), the social stigma of VET as a “second-class” education, inappropriate entry barriers etc.

Consequently, any improvement of VET delivery has to tackle the dimensions of access (outreach), relevance (quality) and sustainability (financing and organization).
2.2 Contribution to Pro-Poor Growth

VET aims at improving the livelihood\(^1\) of individuals by providing them with the necessary knowledge and skills to succeed at achieving:

- Employment,
- Self-employment, and/or
- Higher income due to improved work performance

This goal of VET can be reached only if there is at least modest economic growth. To support the growth of the private sector, Swisscontact may complement VET with activities to promote Enterprise Development.

The existence of a well-functioning VET system is a prerequisite for sustainable economic growth. The system must be closely linked to the needs of the labour market and the private sector, providing a variety of high quality training courses which are diverse, flexible, and can be easily accessed by the target group.

Whereas VET projects primarily support the supply side of the labour market, Swisscontact’s cooperation with the private sector in VET-or Enterprise Development also helps stimulate demand for skilled manpower.

2.3 Target Group

For each VET intervention it is important to clearly define the target group: young people preparing to enter the workforce, people already working in the private sector (“lifelong learning”), groups with particular challenges (e.g., people with special needs, repatriates, school dropouts etc.) or whole sectors such as particular crafts, large industries etc. The current and desired access to VET for each target group must be defined.

Any effective project or program will address the highest possible number of individuals in the target group (outreach). To this end, Swisscontact aims at creating lasting systemic changes (see section 3 below).

2.4 Relevance

The relevance of a VET program can be defined as how closely the training outcomes match up with the demands of the labour market. This calls for the early and ongoing involvement of active professionals from the private sector in both the design and quality control of VET programs and, if possible, their direct involvement in the teaching process. As such, Swisscontact places a high priority on the close cooperation of VET institutions with private enterprises in all its projects.

\(^1\) “Livelihood”, in this case, means the social, economic, psychological, and physical requirements for subsistence.
**The Dual Training Scheme**

One of the most effective training schemes is the “dual system” in which an apprentice receives practical training in an enterprise and the theoretical background in a school. Dual, in this case, refers to the two places of learning. Such a scheme is common in Germany, Switzerland and Austria. The success of such a scheme requires a common understanding of the training requirements which will result in a nationally-recognized certificate, a contract between the enterprise and apprentice, cooperation between the school and enterprise and supervision by an assigned authority. This scheme is particularly suitable in countries where apprenticeship in enterprises has a tradition, such as countries in West Africa like Mali, Burkina Faso and Benin where Swisscontact has successfully introduced such modalities in selected trades.

3 **Methodology**

3.1 **Systemic Approach**

Swisscontact applies a systemic approach in VET development, addressing the root causes of inefficiencies by taking a holistic view of the VET-system or sub-system and its context.

![VET/LLL Delivery System Diagram](image)

Successful VET systems are characterized by:
- Strong engagement of the public sector
- Access for a large part of the population
- Sustainability
- Comprehensive norms and standards
- Cooperation between institutions

**Definitions**

**System** = The totality of VET-delivery with common norms and tasks. The picture to the left shows a system with its core processes (in red), surrounded by the support functions and regulatory environment.

**Sub-system** = A specific level of VET (e.g. the “secondary II” level), VET deliveries for specific trades, VET deliveries in a specific region, VET delivery by one actor (e.g., Ministry of Education) or non-formal VET-delivery for a specific target group such as unemployed youths.

A systemic approach requires the following activities in VET interventions:
1. Definition of a (sub-)system, analysis of key constraints and key actors
2. Elaboration of impact chains
3. Cooperation with private sector/employers to ensure relevance (focus on usable competences)
4. Involvement of all stakeholders relevant for the (sub-)system
5. Addressing of key constraints in areas of accessibility, relevance and sustainability
6. Pursuit of sufficient quality of VET delivery
7. Use of proven methodologies and instruments
8. Integration of existing training schemes such as traditional apprenticeships
9. Implementation of models which can be replicated and scaled up
10. Impact monitoring and assessment

---

2 The task of the public sector depends on the distribution of roles between the government and the private sector.
3.2 **Methodology, Description of Proposed Activities and Expected Results**

Depending on the findings from the initial system analysis, the following parts of a VET system may need to be addressed with appropriate interventions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System Elements</th>
<th>Interventions (Examples)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>System and Organizational Development</td>
<td>Support systems and institutional reform processes by, for example, introducing occupational standards and certification systems, strengthening regulatory and VET development bodies, institutionalising stakeholder cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reform of Systems and Institutions</td>
<td>Promote stakeholder cooperation and institutionalise coordination between the private sector, local and central governments, VET providers and civil society for policy formulation, steering, programme development, training delivery and skills assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder Cooperation</td>
<td>Strengthen private sector organisations such as business membership associations, industry associations, chambers of commerce and umbrella organizations to serve as partners in VET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET Partners</td>
<td>Support the organizational development of VET and support service providers, including building capacity of management and introducing training management tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization Development</td>
<td>Establish co-financing mechanisms between the government and private sector, develop levy system, support organisational development of VET funds, make training delivery more economically efficient, establish voucher systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Delivery</td>
<td>Develop ToT programs and institutions for teachers and instructors, impart instructional skills through the Skills Card System, organise trainings of teachers and instructors in occupational skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training of Trainers (ToT)</td>
<td>Develop a curriculum (DACUM) with employers by designing courses with various entry points; developing content, media, language and duration according to capacities and needs of target groups; and establishing introductory courses (e.g. alphabetisation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Development</td>
<td>Upgrade infrastructure (in particular, training equipment), support the development of instructional material and teaching aids, establish training facilities near to the target group through new schools and mobile training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financing</td>
<td>Assist job seekers through internships, student counselling, job portals and access to financial services for self-employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure and Resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Placement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 **Measurement of Results and Impact**

The progress and results of a project are measured, monitored and evaluated on various levels:

**Output:**

Numbers of trainings conducted, pilot training programs, consultancy inputs provided by the project, reorganized training facilities etc.

**Outcomes:**

System changes with regard to access, relevance, sustainability and outreach. Typical indicators include:

- **Access and outreach:** Number and profile of new trainees (depending on the target group, the profile may describe educational background, gender, geographical origin, family income etc.), the number of trainees benefiting from the system changes (may reach beyond the immediate project environment), achievements in different regions of the country.

- **Relevance:** As a first step, the rate of students passing the final test is a good indicator of whether the curriculum and final exams are validated by the private sector and whether the quality of teaching is adequate. Where possible (in mature projects and with access to appropriate data), the best indicator is the absorption rate by the labour market through employment, including assessment by employers and through self-employment for which tracer studies are an appropriate instrument.

- **Sustainability:** Laws and regulations, skill-testing standards, supervisory and assessment structures, teacher-training systems, financing mechanisms.

These indicators are evaluated over a reasonable period of time to assess long-term effects and the sustainability of the changes.

**Impact:**

Swisscontact bases its impact monitoring on two complementary tools:

The impact logic or analytical framework provides a way to evaluate the impact of a project or program. In VET projects, frequently-used indicators include: increased income of trained people, increased productivity and quality of products and services in enterprises, and the establishment of new enterprises. Attributing impact to the project with any statistical certainty is difficult since other influences such as the general economic situation or sector-specific developments will have a significant influence on these indicators. Swisscontact complements the analysis with personal stories, interviews and observations by the project staff.

3.4 **Implementing Partners, Roles & Responsibilities**

Swisscontact understands its role as a facilitator, supporting the activities of local stakeholders and coordinating carefully with them. A project’s activities, defined collaboratively with the primary stakeholders and based on careful system analysis, may include:

- Expert advisory services for stakeholders
- Providing information
- Linking the stakeholders
- Supporting more efficient processes (e.g. development of a National Qualification Framework)
- Capacity building of personnel on various levels
- Co-financing pilot schemes for a limited period of time
- Co-financing infrastructure

---

3 Another method is to work with control groups not benefitting from the changes induced by the project. However this method has its limitations when working on system level. Moreover, it needs considerable resources and a repetition of the same methodology over a longer time.
In particular, co-financing schemes are subject to a clear exit strategy including the eventual mainstreaming of pilot activities by the local stakeholders.

The role of the different actors and the input of the project are defined in the project document/plan. In VET projects, the most important stakeholders are the government (national and/or local) and the private sector – the latter mainly acting through industry associations. The roles and competencies of different bodies and institutions within the government have to be explored in detail. Educational and training institutions (teacher training centres, vocational training centres) often do not have decision-making authority nor do they have the resources to make major strategic changes. In order to ensure sustainability, the authorities deciding on the regulatory framework and finances are crucial partners.

4 Sustainability

Sustainability is one dimension on the outcomes level and can be monitored on an ongoing basis through the indicators listed in section 3.1. Shaping the regulatory environment, strengthening the supporting institutions and securing access to capital are all activities that are improve the prospects for sustainability. Whenever possible, Swisscontact ensures sustainability through capacity building in the private sector. Associations should be provided the skills to lobby government for their needs and companies should be encouraged to actively contribute to keeping VET relevant to the labour market.

After a project has been completed, Swisscontact strives to support key institutions with targeted follow-up activities. In most cases, however, measuring the sustainability of changes, e.g. through evaluations, is not possible due to financial reasons.

5 Project References (Status July 2010, not exhaustive)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Interventions</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kosovo: Vocational Education Support Program (VES, phase II 2007-2009)</td>
<td>To support governmental efforts in VET reform by: Upgrading training for selected trades in selected schools, Introducing innovative teaching methods (e-learning, practice companies), Piloting decentralized management and financing, and Creating new links between schools and the private sector.</td>
<td>Partnerships with training providers, Policy dialogue with national and local stakeholders, Co-financing investments, Capacity building of school managers, Training of trainers, International networking, Coordination with other projects.</td>
<td>Creation of replicable training models in several schools, Establishment of stronger links established with the private sector, Creation of, pilots of decentralized financing and supervision of schools created, Establishment of national government e-learning strategy, 3,500 students per year benefit from revised programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albania: Vocational Education and Training Support Program (AlbVET, phase II 2007 - 2010)</td>
<td>To support the Government of Albania in their VET reform process by: Revising programs in two occupational areas, Developing providers of formal programs into units offering a wide range of</td>
<td>Partnerships with training providers, Policy dialogue with national and local stakeholders, Co-financing investments, Capacity building of school managers</td>
<td>30,000 participants were trained in short courses with proven impact on their employment (ISDO project), Creation of replicable and scalable short training programs in cooperation with the private sector, provided in addition to formal programs and run under a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador: Training Unemployed Youth (phase III, 2009-2012)</td>
<td>To establish local roundtables to identify training needs according to job market and to cooperate with the national training agency in the creation of training programs. To support private Vocational Training Centres by matching their trainings with labour market demands.</td>
<td>Development of roundtables, including technical assistance and monitoring Creating partnerships with training providers Training of trainers and Skill Development</td>
<td>12 fully-functional roundtables established, covering the whole country. 6,000 participants trained in short courses with proven employment and self-employment impact. Over 700 trainers trained (methodology, Skill Development) 40 occupational profiles and 20 curriculums developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua Modernization of Vocational Training Centers (2005-2009)</td>
<td>To help five private training centres modernize their training programs, improve infrastructure and equipment and improve economic situation</td>
<td>Providing technical assistance to training centres</td>
<td>30 trainers trained (methodology, SD). 15 workshops and laboratories installed and equipped 14 units (departments) modernized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam: Strengthening the Vocational Training Centers (SVTC; 1994-2008)</td>
<td>To work with 37 Vocational Training Centres in matching their trainings with the demands of the labour market</td>
<td>Capacity building of school management, peer trainers, and consultants Co-financing investments through competitive bidding process</td>
<td>16,000 teachers and staff gained new technical and management skills Pool of local experts established in school management, training pedagogy, gender issues and training of life skills 500 representatives of stakeholder organizations trained in the inclusion of vulnerable people 180 instructors trained to teach Entrepreneurship More than 100,000 trainees have already benefited from the project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia: The Aceh Polytechnic Project (TAPP, phase I 2007-2010)</td>
<td>To building a new polytechnic school (post-secondary level) in Aceh with four streams based on labour market needs</td>
<td>Providing technical assistance in developing management, infrastructure, teachers and programs</td>
<td>School with a yearly intake of 250 students in four fields of study (“streams”) has been established and is fully functioning. Curriculums developed in cooperation with businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Vocational Education Program</td>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>Achievements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mali</strong>&lt;br&gt;Vocational Training for Youths (Phase II, 2008-2011)</td>
<td>To advise local private and governmental partners on how to set up and consolidate a national vocational education system. To strengthen vocational training at the regional level.</td>
<td>Providing linkages between strategic and operational actors in the VET sector in Mali. Setting up partnerships with professional social organizations and public institutions on a national and local level with the aim of strengthening the capacities of those participating in the training scheme.</td>
<td>Functioning national vocational education system established. Professional trainings in the craft sector in Mali are 100% financed by the national Professional Training and Apprenticeship Support Fund. Professional social organisations, alongside central government agencies are able to certify and organise professional trainings throughout the country. More than 2,000 apprentices are certified each year in nine professions and 17 localities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benin</strong>: Vocational Education for Youths (phase III 2009-2012)</td>
<td>To introduce a dual apprenticeship scheme in specific trades with small enterprises and schools. To contribute to the development of skills training for youths and women. To help integrate young people trained by the dual apprenticeship system into the job market.</td>
<td>Developing training programs in enterprises and schools. Building capacity of entrepreneurs and teachers. Strengthening trade associations. Assisting in the development of quality assurance and financing mechanisms.</td>
<td>12 formally recognized training programs developed for apprenticeship training, available in over 50 public and private vocational training centres. Training programs tailored to meet labour market demands. Many trainers trained. Development of specific training programs for women. More than 5,000 people receive training to improve their existing enterprises. More than 3,000 youths participate in dual apprenticeship programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Niger</strong>&lt;br&gt;Training and employment of young people in Niger (phase II, 2009-2012)</td>
<td>To create short training programs for unemployed youths.</td>
<td>Making improvements to three key service areas which are poorly developed in Niger. Providing ongoing professional training. Providing access to capital. Providing career counselling to young people.</td>
<td>More than 1,000 young people have been trained in nine cities in professions that are in demand by the local job market. 60 job descriptions have been written. 1,000 radio programs on topics related to small enterprises have been created. Vocational and career counselling centre established.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Case Studies of Individuals

**Claudia Platero, graduate from a training course in El Salvador**

Claudia Platero was born in the town of Armenia. She has four brothers and her mother had always helped support the family by selling vegetables in the local market. When the central market in Armenia was constructed, she rented two market stalls.

Claudia and her brothers had helped their mother to sell vegetables since they were children, but there were times when the family could not sell enough to meet their basic economic needs.

Married to a mason and with two sons, Claudia continued to sell vegetables in the market with a daily sales volume of US$10 to US$15 (EUR 7 to EUR 11). This income, along with the sporadic income that her husband earned as a contractor independent worker, was sufficient to cover most of the basic needs of the family.

Nonetheless, Claudia joined a training course in baking which was organized by the VET roundtable in Armenia. Upon completion of the training, she applied to install an oven into one of her mother’s market stalls and, with the help of her husband, they renovated the stall to be able to produce and sell “pan dulce” sweet bread.

Claudia’s bread-baking business now provides employment for her brother as well as eight people who distribute the bread throughout Armenia and its surroundings. This generates average daily revenue of US$75 to US$125.

Claudia’s business grew quickly as she reached out to people in the area, many of whom knew her since childhood. She successfully trained her brother, who was unemployed, to help her in the production of bread. Her future plans include producing custom-order cakes and hiring additional personnel to expand the distribution of her sweet breads.

---

**Ba The, graduate from a training course in Vietnam**

Several years ago, Ba The had left his home village in the Nghe An province – one of the poorest areas in Vietnam – to head south to Bien Hoa in search of work. Ba’s move was involuntary, but necessary. His family had a huge debt of 24 million dong (roughly EUR 900) that he, as the oldest son in the family, was obligated to pay back. Ba’s determination, plus his vocational training certificate in construction, helped him to find work and start a new life. Later, his brother and sister joined him. The three of them did odd jobs and spent money only on what was absolutely necessary to save money. Their lives seemed to improve and they began to pay back the debt.

However, Ba was unhappy working these odd jobs. He wanted to be an entrepreneur with a business of his own. He decided to go into hairdressing, something he’d loved since childhood. Thus, Ba came to VTC Nguyen My which – according to his friends – was famous for training future stylists and cosmetologists. Ba did not have three million dong to pay for the training course, but he approached the director and was allowed to pay the fee in small instalments. Having arranged a flexible schedule, Ba would rush to the VTC for training after his usual eight hours of work. Ba soon began styling hair in his home with customers coming from the neighbourhood. Thanks to the practice, his skills improved considerably. Ba’s younger brother Tam soon enrolled at VTC Nguyen My as well and the two brothers began to plan their return to their village to set up their own business.
One year passed and Ba and Tam are now the proud owners of “LiNa Beauty Salon” in his hometown. Lam, the youngest sister, also works in the salon as an assistant. Ba and his brothers had taken out a loan of 40 million dong (roughly EUR 1,500) to open the salon, a big challenge for them. However, they kept close ties to their instructors at Nguyen My and received invaluable professional advice at critical moments. The shop currently serves about 40 customers each day and the loan has been paid back.

Ba strongly believes that the professional skills and attentive attitude towards customers that the brothers learned at VTC Nguyen My are key to their success. The salon has five apprentices and one of the students who completed training at LiNa Beauty Salon has opened a salon in the neighbouring province. In this way, Ba is passing on the knowledge and skills gained at the VTC Nguyen My.

Ba’s dreams are already expanding and he thinks about to open a beauty training centre. He understands that this will be a huge challenge. However, Ba’s life experience has proved to him that “many winds will make a typhoon.” And he knows that he can count on the support of his two siblings and the beloved teachers who continue to serve as his mentors and advisers.

Supporting Documents and Links
- Power Point Presentation about Swisscontact Activities in Vocational Education and Training (VET)
- “Good Practice for Improving Skill Development in Partner Countries”, Swisscontact, March 2007
- “Skill Cards”, CD-ROM on teachers’ skills, TITI Nepal, 2002

Case Studies
- Case Study “Mesas de Gestión, El Salvador” (Spanish), 5 March, 2009