

Sri Lanka

Demand Driven Approach to TVET



WUSC

World University Service of Canada

Sri Lanka

1. A Demand-driven Approach

World's University Service of Canada's (WUSC) approach to the development and delivery of TVET in Sri Lanka has been market-sensitive. Beginning in 1989, with funding from the Government of Canada and other development partners, WUSC operated the Project for Rehabilitation through Education and Training (PRET), a series of five projects, PRET 1 2, 3, and 4, and The Project for Rehabilitation through Education and Training: Opportunities for Training in Needed Skills, PRET OPTIONS (2009-2014). The projects featured industry needs assessment, consultation with local employers, and alignment with the Government of Sri Lanka's priorities for industry development, and youth empowerment. Projects focused on the North, East, and South of the country and were for marginalized young women and men prioritizing those affected by conflict from all ethnic communities. PRET incorporated principles of Gender Equality, developed both technical and soft skills, and aimed at ensuring youth employment following program completion.

Advancing Specialized Skills for Economic Transformation (ASSET) marked a significant evolution in the approach adopted by WUSC in the PRET Projects. Training was demand-driven. The trainees sponsored by ASSET filled job vacancies identified by local employers, primarily Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) working in key economic sectors, Automotive and Light Manufacturing, Construction, Hospitality & Tourism (H&T), and Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

These employers linked with thirty-four (34) Business Stakeholder Forums (BSFs) established and/or developed by the project. The forums included training providers, local and regional government, private sector employers and civil society organizations. BSFs reviewed job vacancies identified by employers and arranged for these vacancies to be filled by skilled workers who successfully completed training programs.

The operation of each program was preceded by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the employer, or, the BSF acting on the employer's behalf. MOUs committed the training institutions to providing the training needed to develop the skill and knowledge required to fill the vacant jobs, and committed employers to hiring successful program graduates to fill job vacancies. (MoUs) between employers, BSFs, and training providers specified and formalized their relationship, and indicated their respective roles and responsibilities in training and job placement.

Employers responded positively to the the demand-driven approach. Over four hundred (400) employers identified and filled four thousand (4,000) job vacancies with one thousand four hundred and fifteen (1,415) young women and two thousand five hundred and eighty-five (2,585) young men who completed the training programs, operated in response to employer demand. Sixty-five (65) training providers, private and public, delivered demand-driven training.

2. Integration of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

ASSET aimed to increase income potential through enhanced skills and national recognition of the value of the trades and technologies sector and respect for the technical skills of trades' people. ASSET had three primary outcomes aimed at stakeholder development and management, high quality employment based training, and social marketing and communications.

ASSET developed and operationalized a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Strategy. "The GESI strategy is firstly to provide a brief and general introduction to gender and social inclusion for ASSET staff and partners; secondly, to provide practical guidance on how to include GESI in ASSET; and thirdly, to ensure compliance with the project donor, GAC's GBA+ requirements and feedback. The GESI Strategy was developed based on data collection and analysis in both the project site and sectors of the project." (ASSET, GESI Strategy, 2016)

Stakeholder Development and Management focused on the private sector and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Enterprises were supported to form and operate Business Stakeholder Forums (BSFs). WUSC worked with BSF partners to advocate and raise awareness for equitable women's membership (women) and inclusion of differently-abled persons. Where possible and appropriate, ASSET supported and/or helped establish women's chapters of BSFs, e.g. the Northern Chamber of ICT. BSF membership included female students (in a special category of membership, student membership). Women's participation in BSFs was limited in all regions. Although several women chapters were developed, women's participation on BSFs was marginal.

Partnership between employers and training providers were formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). MOUs committed the training institutions to providing the training needed to develop the skill and knowledge required to fill the vacant jobs, and committed employers to hiring successful program graduates to fill job vacancies. The MoU between employers, BSFs, and Training Providers included provision for the promotion of GESI and for non-discrimination in hiring and in student selection.

Stakeholder development also focused on developing equitable and inclusive employment in micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs). The Project developed and distributed six hundred (600) Diversity and Inclusion Human Resource Toolkits to support equitable HR practice by micro-enterprise, and small and medium sized enterprises. The toolkits addressed nine key areas such as employment legislation and HR policies and diversity and inclusion at work.

The Diversity and Inclusion Human Resource Toolkits also provided guidelines for the recruitment and retention of women, marginalized youth, and differently-abled persons. Orientations to the tool kits were provided in all five regions, North, North West, East, South, and West (Colombo) and over two-hundred and fifty (250) business partners (52 F and 199 M) from the districts participated. The interest by the business community is an indicator of the progress in developing awareness of the value of diversity and inclusiveness in the workplace.

Gender equality and social inclusion was integrated in **Quality Training**. Women were recruited for training programs and for credentialing through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Of the five thousand seven hundred and six (5,706) persons enrolled in training and credentialing activity, two thousand seven hundred and eight (2,708), or, forty-eight percent (48%) were women. Two hundred and thirty-one (231) of the participants in training/credentialing were differently-abled, ex-combatants or resettled persons.

Perception surveys commissioned for ASSET demonstrated more willingness by women to work in ICT or H&T. (Verite Research, Youth Employment and Vocational Training Survey, July, 2016). The Gender Strategy noted the potential for women working in ICT, and limited women's interest and involvement in H&T, Automotive Services and Construction. However significant women's participation was achieved not only in ICT but also in H&T training. The majority of vacancies identified were in these two sectors. In ICT thirteen hundred and nineteen (1,319) persons were trained, one thousand and eleven (1,011) were women, and three hundred and eight (308) were men. In addition, over nine hundred (900) women received RPL Certification in ICT. For jobs in H&T, nineteen hundred and seventy (1,970) were trained. Of these, five hundred and fifty-nine (559) were women, and one thousand four hundred and eleven (1,411) were men. Overall, ASSET surpassed the 40% target for women's participation in training and certification.

Gender Quality and Social Inclusion was integrated in the Soft Skills Units developed by ASSET for all technical programs. A Gender Equality and Social Inclusion section was developed and delivered as part of the Soft Skills Units Package. The Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) is integrating these units into the approved curriculum for all TVET programs.

A key concern of ASSET's **Social Marketing and Communications** was awareness-raising and engagement of young women for careers in trades and technologies. ASSET Social Marketing and Communications targeted young women and their parents in the North, North West, East and South of Sri Lanka.

An extensive survey on perception of careers in trades and technologies informed the development of the social marketing campaign. Over five thousand 5,000 persons served as respondents. Forty-nine percent (49%) of the youth respondents in the survey were female, and fifty-one percent (51%) were male. Fifty-six percent (56%) of the parents who responded were female. (Verite Research, Youth Employment and Vocational Training Survey, July, 2016)

Campaign messages were targeted to address the concerns and interests of young women and men and their parents. Messages were pre-tested in focus groups with young women and men and key influencers, parents and teachers. Young women were profiled in the stories aired on television and broadcast on radio and featured in the print media. The campaign target was to reach eight million (8,000,000) people, but media reach indicated twelve million two-hundred thousand (12,200,000) people were reached by the campaign. Sex disaggregated numbers of those reached by the campaign are not made available by media reach.

Community mobilization, conducted prior to the media campaign, involved young women and parents in discussion about careers in trades and technologies convened their home communities. Over one hundred and fifty thousand (150,000) participated in community mobilization programs. Mobilization resulted in high interest being demonstrated by young women in ICT programs and increasing interest by women in careers in H&T.

A follow-up survey was conducted following the campaign with three hundred and seven (307) young women and three hundred and forty-five (345) young men. Four hundred and twenty-seven (427) female parents and two hundred and fifty-three (253) male parents also took part in the follow up survey. The survey demonstrated recognition of campaign advertisements. Gender bias findings were addressed the survey report.

In terms of statements that are biased against females pursuing VT and careers in the Technical Training (TT) sector, responses in the 2018 survey deviate from the 2016 survey. Only 45% agreed with the statement “Girls should focus on getting jobs in government sector” in the 2018 survey compared to 64% in the 2016 survey. Similarly, a higher proportion of respondents overall (23%) disagreed with the statement “Training and Qualification for Hotel Sector is good for both girls and boys” compared to the 2016 survey (3%). This deviation can also be observed in the responses to the statement “Jobs in Trade and Technologies sector require people to work in other districts and sometimes in other countries, hence girls cannot pursue a career in these sectors” – 42% agreed with the statement in the 2018 survey compared to 55% in the 2016 survey. The lowest deviation between the two surveys can be observed in relation to the statement “Automobile and Construction sector training is only good for boys” - 50% agreed with the statement in the present survey compared to 55% in the 2016 survey. (Verite Research, Assessment of ASSET Social Marketing Campaign on Vocational Training and Careers in Trades and Technology, December 2018)

While demonstrating some progress in change in perception of young women toward involvement in careers in trades and technology, the findings are not conclusive that significant change occurred. It may take a longer period of message dissemination combined with extensive community mobilization to bring significant change.

3. Private Sector Engagement

Since the inception, in 1989, of its work in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Sri Lanka, WUSC has engaged the private sector in training needs assessments through labour market surveys, On-the-Job Training (OJT) placement, and job placement of TVET graduates. WUSC has regularly consulted with private sector associations (e.g. Chambers of Commerce and Industry) to determine needs and interests in training provision. WUSC has developed the capacity of both private and public sector training providers to offer quality programs and services.

ASSET’s engagement with the private sector was systematic, intensive and formalized. The engagement was systematic in that it involved the formation and facilitation of Business Stakeholder Forums (BSFs) in each of the four regions, North, North West, South, and East, and each of the eleven districts in which the project operated. The engagement was intensive in its involvement of over 400 businesses in **workforce development** that identified and filled

job vacancies with skilled workers who successfully completed certified training. Both the registration of BSFs, and the Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) signed between employers, BSFs, and training providers formalized the engagement of the private sector.

ASSET engaged with enterprises involved in key sectors of the economy, identified in Sri Lanka's economic development strategy (Vision 2025). Automotive and Light Manufacturing, Construction, Hospitality and Tourism (H&T), and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) were also those sectors prioritized for development through the Sector Skills Development Program (SSDP), Sri Lanka's flagship project for the TVET Sector, operated by the Government of Sri Lanka with support from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank (WB).

ASSET's engagement with the private sector began at the local level with identification of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), operating in the Automotive and Light Manufacturing, Construction, H&T and ICT sectors. At the local/district levels ASSET brought the MSMEs together to form Business Stakeholder Forums (BSFs). The project provided organizational development training and support for BSF development at the district level. It helped BSFs engage with local employers to determine job vacancies, and the BSFs linked with local training providers, private and public, to provide the training needed for the jobs.

Workforce development works by preparing workers with the skills necessary for a specific type of job. Workforce development was the Business Stakeholder Forum (BSF) reason for being. Workforce development is challenging and many micro small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) lack the interest and/or, capacity to undertake the activity.

ASSET's workforce development entailed identifying key objectives of the enterprise, the size and composition of the workforce needed to meet the objectives, current workforce composition and the skilled worker gap. Each enterprise identified the positions and skills of the workers they required to fill their gap. Working with training providers, they decided which training programs would address their workforce needs.

Workforce development efforts resulted in four hundred (400) employers filling four thousand (4,000) job vacancies. The ASSET Project enabled cooperative workforce development between businesses and businesses and training providers.

The private sector businesses also engaged with communities to raise community awareness and interest in careers and training in trades and technologies, and in the available local employment for young women and men. The MSMEs also reviewed curricula and noted additional areas of knowledge and skill development needed to successfully train people for existing jobs and assisted training providers in making the curriculum adjustments they required.

At the regional levels, North, North West, South and East, ASSET clustered districts representatives with regional business and government actors to form Regional BSFs for Automotive and Light Manufacturing Construction, H&T and ICT. These Regional BSFs advocated with provincial governments for the interests of their members and districts. The

Regional BSFs developed strategies and operational plans to advance the development of their respective sectors. Regional BSFs worked with training providers to ensure training was provided to fill job vacancies. In some regions, ASSET worked with existing associations, e.g. the Hambantota Chamber of Commerce, and helped them organize sector specific BSFs under their jurisdiction.

Business Stakeholder Forums (BSFs) were registered under the Companies Act. In each region, the Secretary of Companies facilitated joint understanding and development of articles of association and the memorandum of association: each of these documents reflected equitable processes and protocols.

At the National level, Partnerships were built with national private sector chambers and associations. National partnerships were instrumental in building local and regional capacity for organizational development and planning, technological advancement, networking, and human resource development. For ICT development, ASSET linked local and regional partners with national bodies, the Sri Lanka Association of Software and Service Companies (SLASSCOM), the Federation of Information Technology Industry Sri Lanka (FITIS), and the Information and Communication Technology Agency of Sri Lanka (ICTA).

For the H&T industry, linkages were forged with the Hospitality and Tourism Sector Council, The Hotels Association of Sri Lanka (THASL), the Association of Small and Medium Enterprises in Tourism (ASMET) and the Sri Lanka Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management (SLITHM).

For Construction, linkages were formed with the the Chamber of Construction Industries, and the National Construction Association of Sri Lanka. Automotive service and light manufacturing regional and district BSFs were connected with the National Chamber of Commerce of Sri Lanka.

Engagement of the private sector was both an end and a means. Private Sector partnerships can advance public enterprise and contribute to meaningful development. Engagement of the private sector was a means of advancing workforce development by determining what private sector jobs were available for young women and men and what training was needed to fill them. ASSETs model for private sector engagement, the Business Stakeholder Forum (BSF), proved highly effective. The BSFs mobilized over 400 local employers who identified over 4,000 jobs and selected skilled workers, (women and men), from training programs to fill them.

4. Developing Responsive Training Institutions

The Project for Rehabilitation through Education and Training (PRET 1,2,3,4 and PRET Options) operated from 1989 to 2014. During the five phases of PRET, WUSC worked to advance technical education development and delivery by: training instructors and assessors; building and equipping training facilities, and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Centres; assisting training institutions to advance Quality Assurance Systems (QAS); translating curricula into Tamil, and developing soft skills throughout the course of the technical training programs. PRET Options (2009-2014) developed Vocational Training Providers (VTPs) capacity to meet accreditation requirements. “VTPs also indicate that obtaining NVQ accreditation has

been one of the most vital impacts that PRET Options has had on these organizations. 85.7% of the VTPs said that they would continue working with the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) even when the project ends.” (WUSC, PRET OPTIONS Final Report. May 2014). This is a sentiment that partners continued to share with WUSC staff during the implementation of the ASSET Project.

ASSET accelerated the effort to develop responsive training institutions. To facilitate communication and planning with private sector businesses, training institutions joined Business Stakeholder Forums (BSFs) and engaged with private sector businesses in determining training requirements to address job vacancies. Vocational training institutions adapted, with employers’ assistance, approved national curricula to train young women and men to meet specific job requirements, and developed instructional materials and resources to implement curriculum adaptations.

Training institutions responded to employers’ demands for employees with soft skills (communication, problem-solving and work ethics), by incorporating soft skills in their training programs. ASSET supported this effort by developing a soft skills curriculum that is currently being incorporated in all technical programs certified by the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC).

Employers, particularly those in the H&T and ICT sectors, required skilled workers with Sinhala, Tamil and English language skills. Training institutions were supported to offer language training in response to business demands. New technologies (computer-based training, blended with in-person instruction) were introduced for English Language training.

ASSET continued to develop capacity of instructors. ASSET conducted instructor training sessions for National Vocational Qualification /Competency Based Training Implementation, sessions on Training Methodology and sessions on Training for Instructional Resources Development. In addition, ASSET conducted a Subject Specific Intensive Training (SSIT) skills upgrading program for H&T sector instructors.

ASSET also supported training institutions to meet accreditation requirements. Training centres need up-to-date equipment and technology to meet accreditation requirements to offer government certified programs. ASSET supported thirty-one (31) training centres to meet accreditation requirements and provided assistance to nineteen (19) training centres to purchase up-to date equipment, where equipment purchase was required and feasible. Where not feasible to purchase new equipment, training centres were assisted to work with industry to identify and use well-equipped industry facilities as venues to train and develop skills. Industry practitioners also supported in- class training by serving as resource person, prior to OJT.

ICT enterprises often seek skilled workers trained with industry certified curricula. Training institutions responded to this demand by offering training in CISCO and Microsoft certified training. Although ICT training sponsored by ASSET was delivered primarily by private sector training institutions, twenty-three (23) vocational training centres, operated by the Vocational Training Authority (VTA), now deliver CISCO certified ICT programs.

Limited opportunities were available in the North for H&T training. ASSET worked with Hospitality and Tourism Business Stakeholder Forums (BSFs) in the North to identify the needs for this training and to encourage the Sri Lanka institute for Tourism and Hospitality Management (SLITHM) to open training centres in the North. In the course of the ASSET Project, SLITHM opened its first two training centres in the North of the country. The Business Stakeholder Forum (BSF) in Mannar lobbied and convinced a private Hospitality training operation to open a private Hospitality Training campus in the community. A local Hospitality Training centre in Jaffna received support from the project to respond to the training needs identified by the District-level BSF.

ASSET's contribution to developing effective training institutions was initially to link them with local employers, and to develop their capacity to engage with employers for planning and delivery of technical training to meet workforce needs. ASSET enabled training institutions to adapt curricula to meet employer demands, and to include soft skills and language skills in the training programs. Instructional capacity was developed and more institutions were supported to meet accreditation requirements. Institutions responded to local employer demand for ICT industry certified training (CISCO and Microsoft). Training supply was increased to meet demand by the H&T industry in the North. In the east, the Provincial Council was keenly supportive of the work WUSC was doing in the H&T sector and they provided eight (8,000,000) rupees to provide as support to help low income students complete their period of study.

5. Social Marketing Impacts Perceptions of Careers in Trades and Technology

Since 1989, WUSC has used community mobilization as a major vehicle for building community support and involvement in training for trades and technology in Sri Lanka. ASSET's use of social marketing as an approach to advance careers in trades and technology marks a significant change in the effort to advance training and the scale of social marketing efforts at the community and national levels. The application to careers, is also an innovative use of the social marketing concept.

The International Social Marketing Association defines social marketing in this way- "Social Marketing seeks to develop and integrate marketing concepts with other approaches to influence behaviors that benefit individuals and communities for the greater social good. Social Marketing practice is guided by ethical principles. It seeks to integrate research, best practice, theory, audience and partnership insight, to inform the delivery of competition sensitive and segmented social change programs that are effective, efficient, equitable and sustainable."

ASSET applied the social marketing concept to build awareness, and involvement in careers in trades and technology, especially among young women and marginalized youth. The impact sought was greater participation in training for jobs in the Light Manufacturing and Automotive Services, Construction, ICT and the H&T sectors. ASSET social marketing combined marketing principles with community mobilization and business partnerships to bring about change.

Research and audience and partnership insight were used to help determine perceptions regarding careers in trades and technologies. Audience research determined young women and their parents' had interest in careers in ICT, less interest in H&T careers, and limited interest in work in Automotive Services and Construction.

Audience research was conducted in each of the eleven (11) districts targeted by the project and the information collected from the research (perceptions study) enabled messages to be targeted to diverse interests in the eleven districts. The research also informed the kind of media to be used to disseminate messages to each audience (social media and television for youth, and radio and print media for parents).

Community mobilization conducted prior to the media campaign involved 150,000 community residents and built support for careers in trades and technology and informed the development of the media campaign. BSF interaction with local communities was also instrumental in building awareness and interest in jobs that were available locally in the targeted sectors.

The media campaign was initially targeted to reach eight million (8,000,000) people. Media reach demonstrated that twelve million, two hundred thousand (12,200,000) were reached by the campaign. The campaign "Skill Up Sri Lanka" won the Best Social Marketing Campaign Award for the Asia Pacific Region (The Festival of Media Asia Pacific Awards). A key feature cited in the award was the effective use of story telling. To connect with people's feelings, positive stories of young people engaged in trades and technology careers were featured in all media. Audience research conducted prior to the campaign indicated young people had no role models employed in trades or technologies.

As a result of the audience research findings, efforts were made to maximize women involvement in ICT. In the ICT sector, thirteen hundred and nineteen (1,319) enrolled in courses. Of these, one thousand and eleven (1,011) were women, and, three hundred and eight (308) were men. In addition, over 1,000 women received RPL certification in ICT. In all, two thousand and eleven (2,011) women participated in ICT training and credentialing.

The highest overall enrolments and job placements were in the H&T sector. Nineteen hundred and seventy (1,970) enrolled. Five hundred and fifty-nine (559) were women and fourteen hundred and eleven (1,411) were men. For Construction, five hundred and eighty-eight (588) were trained. Of these, one hundred and seven (107) were women and four hundred and eighty-one (481) were men. ASSET trained six hundred and fifty 650 youth for identified jobs in the automotive service and light manufacturing. Sixteen (16) were young women and six hundred and thirty four (634) were young men.

The perception study conducted following the campaign shows some positive changes in perception (see Section 2. Integration of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion above). However as noted above... The lowest deviation between the two surveys can be observed in relation to the statement "Automobile and Construction sector training is only good for boys" - 50% agreed with the statement in the present survey compared to 55% in the 2016 survey. (Verite Research, Assessment of ASSET Social Marketing Campaign on Vocational Training and Careers in Trades and Technology, December 2018). And, as noted, the lowest women's enrolments through ASSET were in these two sectors.

Social Marketing helped ASSET to target its programs for women to the ICT, and H&T sectors. The impact was 48% women's participation in training and credentialing, higher than the 40% target. The Government of Sri Lanka and Development Partners took a strong interest in the social marketing campaign. Elements of the campaign (Media advertisement dissemination) are continuing with the support of the USAID-funded You Lead Project. The Prime Minister's Office plans to continue social marketing campaigns for careers in trades and technology. A longer period of message dissemination in tandem with sustained community and partner mobilization is needed to achieve greater and more sustained impact.