



HELNETAS

medicorfoundation
Liechtenstein

HELNETAS

Weinbergstrasse 22a, P.O. Box 3130, CH 8021 Zürich
Maulbeerstrasse 10, P.O. Box 6724, CH 3001 Bern
Tel. +41 (0)44 368 65 00, Fax +41 (0)44 368 65 00
info@helvetas.org, www.helvetas.ch

OPPORTUNITY GROUP APPROACH

A
STEP-BY-STEP
MANUAL



A guide to address skills gap and unemployment

Helvetas a politically and denominationally neutral development organisation. In Switzerland, Helvetas is structured as an association of 100,000 members and donors and is supported by twelve regional volunteer groups.

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Authors:

Katharina Walker – Helvetas

Mimoza Mirashi – Helvetas

Contributors:

Vesa Ibrahim – Central Youth Action Council

Local Youth Action Councils of Kamenica, Viti, Dragas, Strpce and Novobrd

Luan Hoti, Zenebe Uraguchi and Daniela Zimmermann – Helvetas

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|-------------|--|
| CYAC | Central Youth Action Council |
| DCYS | Departments of Culture, Youth and Sport |
| LYAC | Local Youth Action Council |
| MCYS | Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports |
| RMA | Rapid Market Appraisal |
| SDC | Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation |
| S4RE | Skills for Rural Employment |
| VET | Vocational Education and Training |
| VSD | Vocational Skills Development |
| VTC | Vocational Training Centre |

1. Foreword

The Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE) project introduced the opportunity group approach for the first time in Kosovo in 2013. It proved to be a highly successful approach to reach, train and empower rural and marginalised youth – and prepare them for jobs or their own business.

The approach has evolved over time from a learning-oriented programme to a more employment and income focused programme. To reflect this and increase the appeal to youth and local stakeholders, S4RE redefined learning groups as opportunity groups. The approach encourages young people to come together in peer groups to share, learn and apply newly acquired technical, entrepreneurial and life skills. The content can be tailored to the background of young people and their local context; it considers locally available resources and opportunities.

Several local institutions have expressed interest in taking the approach forward and providing more sustainable support services to young job seekers. That is why we have developed the manual which can be implemented by any organisation or initiative. It aims to act as a guidance tool for persons who train young men and women and as an orientation tool for institutions who inform and advise job seekers. The team that produced this manual include Katharina Walker and Mimoza Mirashi, who are the lead authors, and engaged members of Central Youth Action Council (CYAC), Vesa Ibrahim, and Local Youth Action Councils (LYACs) from municipalities of Viti, Kamenica, Dragash, Strpce and Novobrd. They tested the manual during several months and shared their feedback during a three-day validation workshop.

We hope the manual provides clear and practical guidance to organisers and trainers of the opportunity group approach.

Luan Hoti

Project Manager Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE)

2. Acknowledgements

The manual's primary source is the LearnNet – The Learning Network Approach by Edda Grunwald, Marian Nell, and Janet Shapiro developed in 2004 and financed BMZ/GTZ (Edda Grunwald, 2004).

The authors are especially grateful to the following persons who shared their valuable experiences: Stefan Butcher, who shared his thoughts in an interview. Peter Porten, who promoted the opportunity group approach from the learning group methodology. Alain Cuvalier, who shared 15-years old but nevertheless pertinent documents. Zenebe Uraguchi and Daniela Zimmermann, who gave valuable inputs and feedback to several versions of the manual. Luan Hoti, who as the project manager continuously supported the further development and implementation of the approach and the manual. Mr. Xhevat Bajrami, Director of Department of Youth with Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport, and Mr. Ylber Aliu, Head of Department for Employment and Vocational Training Policies with Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare for their effort to promote the approach at national level and institutionalize the approach.

Lastly, a special thank you goes to the S4RE project partners, CYAC, LYACs and Youth Centres, who tested the manual and provided feedback during a validation workshop in October 2017.

3. Introduction

The opportunity group approach is a participatory process that guides through different steps of selfassessment and skills development towards job orientation and entrepreneurial initiatives. The approach is based on the LearnNet approach (Edda Grunwald, 2004), which simply builds on the understanding that the owners of the problem are also the owners of the solution. In this way youth are able to strengthen each other's potential, and jointly learn and apply new technical, entrepreneurial and life skills. Locally available training providers impart the training content based on the background of the group members, taking into account context and locally available market opportunities.

The manual is composed of three parts. First, the introductory section gives an overview on youth in the Republic of Kosovo, embeds the approach and explains why we developed this manual. Second follows the core of this manual, a description of the opportunity group approach, by explaining the different steps of the approach. The different steps are practically accompanied with boxes illustrating an opportunity group in the hairdressing trade in Dragash. Third, the key features of the approach are depicted.

3.1. Youth in Kosovo

Kosovo is a young country with the youngest population in Europe. More than half of Kosovo's population is less than 30 years old (55%), and 61% of the age 15 to 24 are unemployed. Migration from rural to urban areas, mainly Pristina, and towards better opportunities elsewhere have fuelled growth in the capital. Kosovo's economy has not been able to provide enough jobs for a rapidly increasing workforce. Up to 30,000 youths are entering the workforce every year. Demographics continue to suggest that this number will grow year-on-year.

The nongovernmental youth sector in Republic of Kosovo is organized by the Law on Empowerment and Participation of Youth. This law provides grounds for organization of youth at the local level through Local Youth Action Councils (LYAC). These local youth structures are umbrella youth institutions, which represent nongovernmental organizations focussing on youth such as HAND-IKOS, Red Cross, and Secondary School Student Councils. At central level, youth are organized through Central Youth Action Council (CYAC) which is the highest youth representation structure at national level.

Implementation of the Law on Youth respectively the establishment of LYACs at municipal level has proved to be challenging. This is because the Departments of Culture, Youth and Sport (DCYS) of most municipalities have a low and insufficient budget to provide such support. This is especially evident among new and small municipalities.

One of the main focus areas of CYAC is to provide assistance to LYAC of small municipalities. The support takes the form of sharing experience of strategy development, organising and providing training programmes, and arranging cooperation mechanisms with various local and international actors.

CYAC puts constant efforts to the establishment of youth structures in Serb majority municipalities, respectively in northern municipalities, considering this as a good opportunity to encourage young people to participate in decisionmaking processes in their municipalities. Furthermore, CYAC organises various local and national activities. This enables their overall integration and promotes joint activities.

Youth structures at municipalities are an active part of decisionmaking processes at local level, they actively participate in public debates and at municipal committees, attend municipal assembly sessions, and biannually draft a Youth Action Plan. Low participation of youth from rural areas remains challenging. Better coordination between youth institutions, municipality and Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (MCYS) and their support programme shall cover also such areas in order for rural youth to have their share at decisionmaking and their ideas to be part of decisions and strategies of Kosovo municipalities.

3.2. Vocational skills development

Vocational skills development (VSD) determines success in the labour markets. It is a strong predictor of stable and quality jobs among young people. Young people with enhanced skills are better prepared for a smooth transition from school to work.

We understand skills as one component of knowledge system that includes know how, attitudes and competencies. VSD goes beyond formal vocational education and training (VET); it includes nonformal and informal types of training. Young people need different types of skills to meet the different challenges in life: foundation skills (numeracy, literacy), technical skills, entrepreneurial skills and life skills. Given our understanding of nonformal education and skills development (see box 1), we classify the opportunity group approach as nonformal VSD.

Factors linked to unequal access to education and VSD, such as poverty, gender, ethnicities and disability, are often also associated with labour market discrimination. That is why labour market insertion services starting before and continuing after the training process are vital.



NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Non-formal education is any educational action that takes place outside of the formal education system. Non-formal education is an integral part of a lifelong learning concept that ensures that young people and adults acquire and maintain the skills, abilities and dispositions needed to adapt to a continuously changing environment. It can be acquired on the personal initiative of each individual through different learning activities taking place outside the formal educational system. An important part of nonformal education is carried out by nongovernmental organisations involved in community and youth work. [Council of Europe, Glossary on Youth]

3.3. Combining basic principles and specific approaches

In this manual, the focus is how using a specific approach/tool can help to realistically support young women and men engage in economic activity/employment. An approach that can be implemented by any organization or initiative taking into account context and resources available. However, to reach sustainable and scalable impact in youth employment, it is important to have key basic principles combined with the approach from the outset. These include:

- a** Having clarity in vision from the start on the overall goal of an initiative and how such an initiative seeks to achieve sustainable and scalable impacts;
- b** Understanding root causes and not just symptoms through proper analysis that takes also into account incentives/interest and capacities of permanent actors – from private to public and civil societies and communities;
- c** Designing solutions based on analysis and putting solutions into practice by taking a facilitative role without becoming part of the system;
- d** Knowing what works and what does not and why by developing M&E system that is rightsized and practical

3.4. Rationale of this manual

How did the approach emerge?

The Skills for Rural Employment (S4RE) project has been applying and adapting the opportunity group approach since 2013. The approach is based on previous experiences of the learning group approach in several countries. The visit of the two staff members Luan Hoti and Basri Pulaj to the SDC/Swisscontact project in Tanzania in April 2014 constituted a milestone in transferring the rationale and knowledge related to the approach and consequently adapting the learnings to the Kosovo context.

In the following, we will share key insights of Stefan Butscher, Regional Adviser Economy and Employment at the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). He helped developing the learning group approach and explains why he believes in the approach as an effective tool to address skills gap and unemployment.

How did the approach evolve?

Over time, the S4RE project changed from learning groups approach to opportunity group approach, evolving from the focus on learning to an approach where the income or employment opportunity is at the centre and taken further into a skills development programme. The implementation approach has also evolved over time, from implementing the approach only with project resources to working with partners who have incentives and capacities to fully take over the implementation. Actors involved in the approach include local facilitators, municipal authorities, employment offices, youth and women organizations, and businesses. The reliance on local resources significantly contributes to a positive impact in terms of ownership and proactive participation by the community. In 2017, the project together with CYAC and several LYACs elaborated this manual based on their experiences. It shall serve as a guidance and orientation tool for future training providers and institutions involved in VSD.



Interview with Stefan Butscher



Picture 1: Mr Butscher during a meeting with opportunity group members in Strpce municipality

1. What is your experiences with the learning group approach?

In Sri Lanka, we started applying the counselling cycle approach in 2000 for youth in the scope of the Development and Peace Sri Lanka (DPSL) project financed by the SDC. Sinhalese, Muslim and Tamil communities in the two districts lived separately in adjacent villages. The project facilitated interaction among youths of different backgrounds via group counselling and social gatherings. The approach combined lifeskills modules with occupational and entrepreneurial modules. The cycle included career guidance, market-oriented skills development, exposure visits to other ethnic localities and also joint community projects, individual counselling as well as psychosocial support. The involvement of parents was key for success because this increased the awareness, acceptance and dissemination of the counselling cycle.

I applied the approach in Tanzania in 2010, where the context was entirely different. We implemented the approach in the Skills Development for the Agriculture Sector financed by Swisscontact and SDC. The skills training included Farmer Field Schools and life skills such as selfconfidence building, teamwork, planning, health and hygiene issues. The counsellors were youth officers of the Ministry and NGOs. After completion of the cycle, graduates received a certificate by the Ministry. Access to finance was an important feature for implementing the business ideas. Youth created saving groups.

2. What do you like about the approach?

The approach encourages young people to come together in peer groups to share, learn and apply new technical, entrepreneurial and life skills, knowledge and attitude. The content can be tailored to the background of young people, local context and takes into account locally available resources and market opportunities.

3. What are the challenges?

It is important to refrain from grants, which is not easy. Depending on the context and objective, the approach is almost a social service. Lastly, it is challenging to institutionalise the approach and ensure sustainability.

4. What are your tips for the users of this manual?

- Generate an understanding of the approach. It has proved to be an effective approach in various contexts
- Learn from past experiences
- Facilitators must come from local area and invest into their capacity development
- Be firm in relationship building with local stakeholders
- Make it highly participatory and involve the parents
- Work with innovative and enthusiastic people

5. What is your key message to the future members of the opportunity groups in rural areas in Kosovo?

Believe in yourself. Whereas there are certain limits, there are always opportunities. You can learn from each other. The group is more than the sum of its participants



S4RE project in a nutshell

S4RE started in January 2013 to contribute to employment and income opportunities in rural areas of Kosovo by combining local economic development and skills development. It targets areas and beneficiaries that are not sufficiently serviced by the formal VET system. Issues of access to VET facilities, including distance, transport, social barriers and required level of education prior to VET enrolment have resulted in a large number of rural poor being excluded from employment opportunities. The rationale of S4RE recognises that for a sustainable change to employment and income opportunities in rural areas to be realised, an emphasis on improving private sector development is required in addition to VSD. Simply increasing the skills of the unemployed does not create new opportunities for employment.

The goal of S4RE is to contribute to income and employment generation in rural areas, focusing in particular on remote municipalities in the Sharr Mountains and the Southeast of Kosovo (Dragash, Shtrpce, Novo Brdo, Kamenica, Viti). Young women and men (and within this age group in particular young women), as well as ethnic minority groups, who are amongst the most disadvantaged groups in these regions are the main target group for S4RE interventions.

In phase one (2013-2015) the project responded to the problem of the unemployment and took up key functions like training and directly supported the target group, achieving quick results with 1,508 participants organised in 150 groups. Over 60% of graduates have engaged in economic activity either in agribusinesses such as fruit cultivation and beekeeping; or in non-agribusiness trades such as hairdressing, tailoring, central heating and IT. In phase two (2016-2018) the role of the project required a shift to ensure initiatives and their impacts continue beyond the project's lifespan. The project seeks to take forward key lessons from phase one and shift its implementation from projectdriven solutions towards:

- a** strengthening and institutionalising local ownership meaning partnering with local actors to ensure ownership and scale. Here, S4RE stimulates local actors to align skills and training programmes with local economic development strategies, equipping them with the tools to develop innovative and inclusive job creation strategies. And,
- b** capacity development and coaching of partners –this has required the project, jointly with partners, to identify and develop business models that allow the sustainable delivery of training programmes for youth and thereafter provide initial startup support in the form of capacity development or coaching and advice to consolidate the business models.

Funders of the S4RE project are Medicor Foundations and Helvetas.

4. Opportunity group approach



4.1. The opportunity group approach in a nutshell

The opportunity group approach is a participatory process that guides through different steps of self-assessment and skills development towards job orientation and entrepreneurial initiatives. The approach is based on the LearnNet approach (Edda Grunwald, 2004), which simply builds on the understanding that the owners of the problem are also the owners of the solution. In this way youth are able to strengthen each other's potential, and jointly learn and apply new technical, entrepreneurial and life skills. Locally available training providers impart the training content based on the background of the group members, taking into account context and locally available market opportunities.

4.1.1. The opportunity group

The basic organisational structure of the approach is the opportunity group, which determines its own learning process. If compared to other learning forms, the opportunity group takes care of most of the functions that are usually provided to the trainees. The opportunity group is responsible for the learning content, planning and organisation of the training process, the group identifies and contracts training providers and secures finance required.

4.1.2. The facilitator

The facilitator is an expert in all aspects related to the approach but is not necessarily a training provider. His/her tasks are to:

- mobilise the youth
- initiate and accompany the setting up of opportunity groups
- support the opportunity groups in identifying their business ideas in line with their resources and opportunities
- support mobilising resources and finances
- help identify suitable training providers
- accompany training providers during their first interaction with an opportunity group

BENEFITS OF THE APPROACH

- Opportunity Groups are selfgoverned to a large degree, they identify and build local economic opportunities and capitalize on them.
- Acceptance of youth without requiring prerequisites and without any discrimination
- Youth are equipped with indemand economic and labour market skills
- Youth can identify indemand business areas and create a viable business
- Local businesses and the private sector have access to improved workforce
- Local knowledge and expertise is used
- Empowerment of women
- Training is highly experiential and includes only concise relevant knowledge and skills



Example from Dragash: how it started (part I)

Young women living in rural areas of Kosovo, in particular Dragash region, face difficulties that adversely affect their participation in public life. Dragash is a municipality among the most under-developed regions, the economic situation is dominated by high rate of unemployment, population loss due to emigration, limited access to public services such as education, transportation and health facilities. The unemployment rate for women is usually higher than for men, with rates of above 40%. The number of women working in Dragash is very small, no women are at decision-making positions. To understand the cause and to drive a process of identifying potential solution, an awareness meeting is initiated by the facilitator. Most of the households derive some income from selfemployment activities, mainly in agriculture. Women here spend most of the time in housework, mostly due to low educational attainment and lack of skills.



SADIE LUTFIU - HEAD OF THE LOCAL YOUTH ACTION COUNCIL IN VITI

For many years she has been engaged as a volunteer in advocating for youth issues. In 2016 she has been elected as head of the Local Youth Action Council in Viti. She studies at Education Faculty, majoring in primary education. She is active in mobilizing and informing youth about the opportunities existing and arising in the local community. Sadie is well recognized and respected by youth, municipal authorities and the community. Her active engagement for the benefit of youth makes her a successful facilitator in the process of group creation, advising and orienting the groups to acquire the necessary skills.



4.2. Opportunity group process

In the following, we show the different steps of the opportunity group process. 

4.2.1. Organise, promote and conduct awareness meeting

The first step in the process is to plan, organise and implement awareness meetings with youth and the community. The aim of this meeting is to inform and sensitize, create ownership among the local actors and initiate ideas. These meetings are especially important to understand the needs of young people and the potential of the local market, and to understand the barriers to access the labour market for young jobseekers, in particular women and minorities (mindset and cultural forces).

The facilitator sets the date and venue (e.g. municipal office) of the awareness meeting and promotes in the media (e.g. local newspaper, social media). He/she informs the Employment Offices about the meeting and advises them to inform job seekers about it. The facilitator hosts the meeting, presents the approach, involves participants, and answers questions of the youth and the community.

Afterwards, the facilitator shares impressions from the meeting on social media.



Example from Dragash: involve local actors from the beginning (part II)

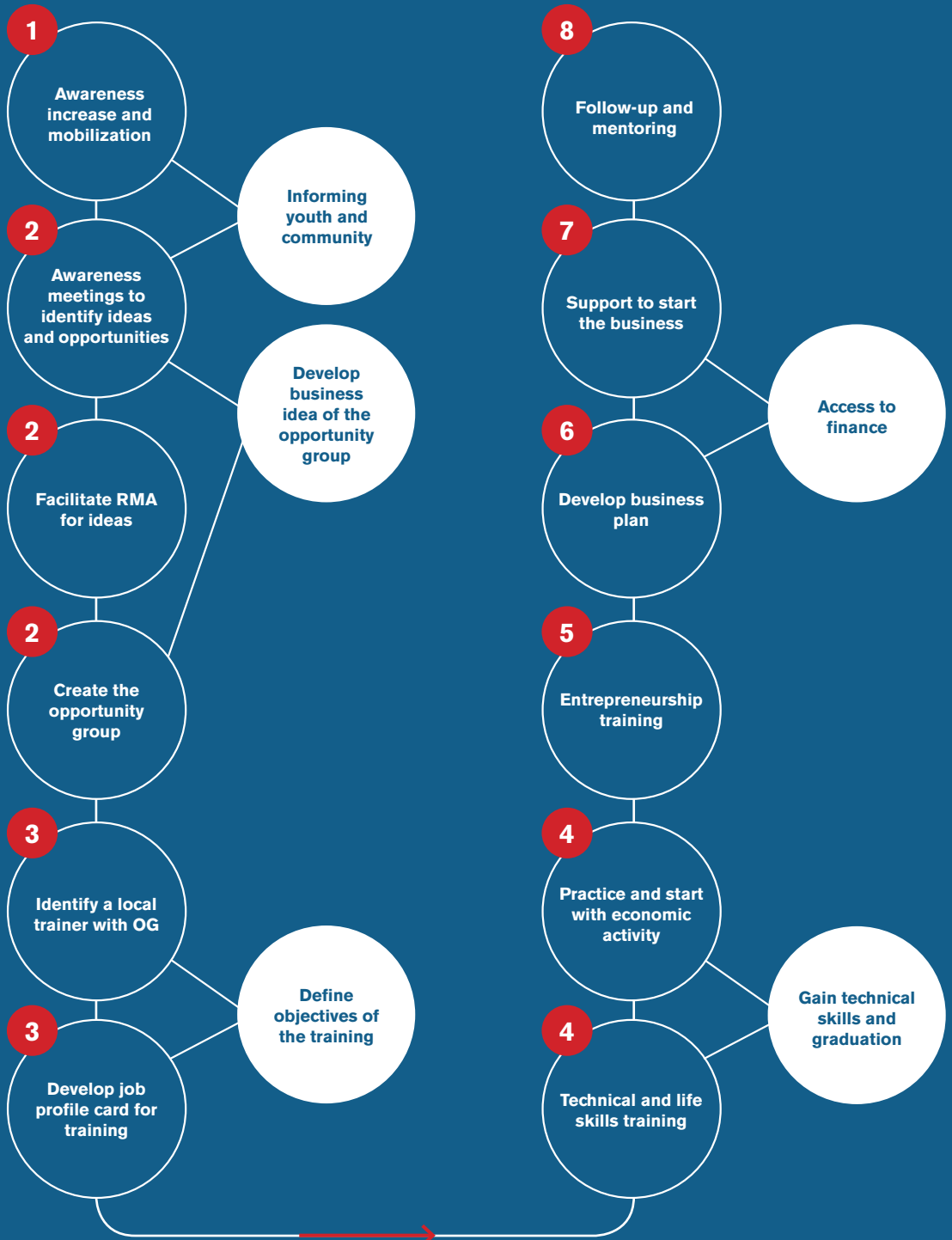
To ensure that the ideas for solutions are built on existing local knowledge, understanding and social networks, as many relevant local actors as possible are involved in the meeting such as municipal youth officer, municipal gender officer, women organization representatives, employment office etc. The local actors are involved also to ensure ownership of the process. During the meeting opportunities for local women are discussed and ideas are brainstormed, mainly based on the perception of local community potential. Then, participants group themselves with the help of a facilitator around the opportunities, sharing the common interest to learn a particular skillset that will enable income generation. During this meeting held in Dragash, women insisted that increased skills in hairdressing, tailoring and handicraft would ensure income generation for them, either working from home or by opening group businesses.

4.2.2. Define needs and objectives

Each member completes a pretracer survey to set the baseline for training needs. The project involves the public employment services to ensure youth have access to active labour measures. The facilitator supports the opportunity group to define its learning objectives (see section 4.2.7).



Diagram 1: Opportunity group process covering a cycle of three up to nine months



4.2.3. Identify ideas and opportunities

The Rapid Market Appraisal (RMA) is a tool used before the training commences to assess skill gaps and identify potential for employment and income generation. RMA directly involves youth in collecting market data to help them gain an understanding of existing market opportunities and challenges. It aims to

- Identify number of workers available in a specific occupation in a predetermined area
- Identify number of workers required in a specific occupation in a predetermined area
- Additional skills desired by employers
- Identify available training providers

The step-by-step approach of RMA suggests starting from the analysis of the occupation and secondary data on the economy, labour market and demography of the given location. In the second step, primary data is collected from a wide range of stakeholders by applying qualitative research methods: (a) semistructured interviews, (b) Focus Group Discussion, and (c) participant observation.

The RMA is an important step to make sure that the chosen trades show a potential for women and minorities.



Picture 2: Awareness meeting with youth



Example from Dragash: rapid market appraisal (part III)

The ideas gathered during the awareness meetings served to create opportunity groups. The market potential was not an issue, as these groups were one of the first opportunity groups to be created by the project. However, in the second year, in order to address the challenge of saturating the market, the project introduced RMA to assess the skills gap for the ideas emerging from the meetings. The opportunity group and facilitator interview key informants in a certain subsector like hairdressing, namely hairdressers, Employment Office and other local private and public sector informants.

RESOURCES:

Video on RMA by Employment Fund Nepal: <https://youtu.be/f3LPQcYLs08>

4.2.4. Identify and create groups of interested youth

The facilitator guides the process of group creation and supports the youth if needed. They determine the main areas of potential for learning and applying new technical, entrepreneurial and life skills and assess their expectations with regard to the training. To ensure effectiveness, opportunity groups consist of 10 to 20 members. The facilitator should actively foster a mix of the participants in terms of gender and ethnicity. The rationale of creating groups stands on following reasons:

Economic: keeping the cost per person down to minimum, sharing cost

Management: making decisions and organising the training and group representation, mobilizing resources

Social: mutual appreciation, trust and support, linking of interests, friendship

Didactic: enhancing and supporting individual and collective learning

It is important to keep in mind that supporting group formations shall not lead to creating dependency or establishing parallel structures. The approach is successful only if young people by themselves see the benefits of working in groups. Once the groups are organized based on rationale, chances of the continuity/sustainability of activities are high as it will enable the group to lobby better with local community and institutions, establish suitable linkages, and increase the marketing and bargaining power.

4.2.5. Identify and contract training providers

The opportunity group, supported by the facilitator, identifies locally available training providers. The idea is to make use of the resources available locally. They can be private or public. The Employment Offices often have a list of training providers available. The opportunity group evaluates potential training providers, negotiates their services and prices with them and finally contracts them. The members of the opportunity group share part of the costs among them. Another financial contribution comes from the municipality. The opportunity group applies the outcomebased financing approach: that means that the training provider only receives part of the fee before and the rest after the training provision.



Example from Dragash: contracting training providers (part IV)

After a positive result of the RMA, the opportunity group has now decided to gain skills. The training provider identification is a next step. RMA is of great help to find the trainers. However, the opportunity group and facilitator should use their knowledge and identify the trainer among members of the community. Women in Dragash have used the local expertise, a local woman who was a teacher and a hairdresser, running a small business in Dragash. She was willing to transfer her knowledge and expertise to the group, ready to travel and do the teaching where the women were residing. The same hairdresser was chosen by the second opportunity group of hairdressers. With the second group the project introduced the outcome based training contracts to ensure trainers deliver relevant and high quality of the training that would lead to 60% of the trainees engage in income generating activities.



Picture 3. Training provider discussing with opportunity group members training location and training objectives

RESOURCES:

List of training providers:

<http://helvetas-ks.org/s4re/ofruesit-e-trajimit/personat-burimor/>

Results-based financing in Technical and Vocational Training

A step-by-step implementation guide:

http://www.employmentfund.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Results-based-Financing_Implementation-Guide.pdf and <https://youtu.be/95mLE-kyJ0I>

4.2.6. Develop training programmes

The training provider jointly with the opportunity group develops training programmes which correspond to the need of the opportunity group. Depending on the occupation, curricula are available. If from previous training cycles, training programmes based on DACUM technique¹ are available, they can be used. The job analysis cards produced based on DACUM technique process are used to determine the competencies that should be addressed in a training curriculum for a specific occupation. If new training programmes have to be developed, the following job analysis process is followed:

Job analysis workshop:

- The facilitator organises job analysis sessions with the occupation expert group (four experts are the minimum).
- The facilitator guides the expert group through brainstorming/consensus-reaching discussions to describe their job in terms of main tasks and specific works.
- The facilitator guides the expert group to agree on the relevant attitudes, knowledge, skills and primary tools of their job.
- The result of the job analysis work session is a chart or profile showing the duties and tasks performed in the occupation, worker attitudes, general skills and knowledge, and the tools and equipment the worker uses.

Validation workshop:

- Other occupation experts review the job analysis card for completeness and accuracy.

Definition of learning outcomes:

- The process is completed with the development of learning outcomes for each specific task. These learning outcomes serve also to develop competency-based post training tests.

¹ Developing a Curriculum (DACUM) is a process that incorporates the use of a focus group in a facilitated storyboarding process to capture the major duties and related tasks included in an occupation, as well as, the necessary knowledge, skills, and traits. It is a cost-effective method providing a quick and thorough analysis of any job.

The training programme must cater to the youth' needs, especially those of women and minorities. This can imply that the training programme is hold in the mother tongue of the minorities or that the timing of the training programme is planned such that young mothers can participate, too.



Example from Dragash: developing training programmes (part V)

The hairdressing training was new to the area but a highly demanded training. Women increasingly were showing interest to get trained as it was an occupation that would ensure some income for them and their families. The project identified four regional experts in hairdressing and developed the training module during a oneday workshop. During this workshop the hairdressing job analysis were done and competencies a trainee should gain during a training were set. The training module using the DACUM technique then served to design tailored training to specific opportunity groups.

RESOURCES:

DACUM – developing a curriculum: <http://www.dacum.org/>

How to increase access of women to employment opportunities – an implementation guide:

https://assets.helvetas.org/downloads/how_to_increase_access_of_women_to_training_and_employment.pdf (HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Nepal)

SDC guidance sheet, Gender and Vocational Skills Development, Inclusive access to VSD (Sonja Hofstetter and Bettina Jenny)

SDC guidance sheet: Mainstreaming Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) in Market Systems Development (Maja Rüegg)

4.2.7. Set-up the training

The opportunity group makes a joint decision on the training location. If needed, the training location is adapted as per needs. The group decides on the leader of the group, the timing and sequences of the training. Very importantly, the opportunity group defines the training objectives (see Section 4.2.2).

4.2.8. Organise and conduct training provision

Technical skills: Locally available training providers impart the training content taking into account the background of the opportunity group members and local market opportunities.

Life skills: Life skills form an important part of the training programmes. They are not only very crucial for the personal development of young men and women, but also very much demanded by employers and decisive to enter wage and self-employment. Unfortunately, many young people, especially from vulnerable groups, lack confidence in their own skills and knowledge and this has an important impact on their chances of securing a job. Training providers, therefore, do not only address technical skills, but they also aim to develop and strengthen personal skills, including: presentation, communication, networking and language skills as well as social training on gender equality, social inclusion, and personal rights. Life skills can also be imparted by competent officers from municipal services, e.g. municipal gender officer, who have curricula at their disposal.



Picture 4: technical training

The duration of the training varies depending on the trades. In the agricultural sector, training follows the seasonal cycle and therefore can happen in two or more modules. The entire cycle can take up to 9 months.



Example from Dragash: holistic training (part VI)

The hairdressing opportunity group adapted premises offered by one of the group members as training venue. The trainer agreed to perform her job in that place. It was a location that was nearby the trainees in order to address the barriers of financial and social limitations. Apart from the technical skills training, three months training cycle, the trainees receive some life skills training based on the needs, which aims at strengthening their social and interpersonal skills. With the hairdressing group of women, the trainer has dedicated a lot to build self-esteem. The municipal gender officer also provided training on increasing awareness for women equal rights in the society with focus on property rights and domestic violence.

4.2.9. Assessment and certification

The facilitator organises tests at the end of the training cycle. The learning outcomes serve as the basis of the competency based post training test.

To ensure objectivity of the assessment, training providers of other opportunity groups (but in the same trade) act as assessors.

To ensure training quality the project collaborates with Vocational Training Centres (Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare) in selected trades to monitor the training and perform the competency test.



Picture 5: life skills training (CV writing)



Example from Dragash: assessment and certification (part VII)

To ensure quality of the trainings certification of the hairdressing at the end of the training, this was done in collaboration with vocational training centre (VTC). An experienced trainer appointed by VTC monitors the training regularly and at the end of the training conducts a competence test. Then, a certificate recognised nationally is issued. In occupations where VTCs have not developed training modules, competency test was carried out by trainers of other opportunity groups.



Picture 5. OG members after competency test, celebrating certification

4.2.10. Facilitate transition into economic activity

After completing the trainings, the group members will seek to apply their skills in practice and start (or further develop) an economic activity to support their income. Rural youth, however, usually have no or little access to financial capital to invest in economic activities. As discussed in section 4.2.5, to help youth groups obtain the necessary material/inputs for the income-generating activities, the facilitator organises cofinancing initiatives with local businesses, municipalities, training providers and the trainees themselves.



Example from Dragash: economic activity after the training (part VIII)

It is very important for the groups to start applying their learning and see the results of their engagement by starting the economic activity. Being rural, specifically youth and women, access to finances is very much limited. Therefore, they need initial support. The facilitator helps and guides the groups to make this process easier, mobilizing municipality, groups and other donors to support the groups. The groups are advised to start with savings when the training commences, needed to ensure cofinancing power of the group after training completion. In addition, the groups are taught on the importance of resource mobilization, financial and physical, including the contribution from family and relatives. Then, their business ideas are taken forward to access other financial resources from municipality and other donors who support youth in entrepreneurship.

4.2.11. Organise and supervise mentoring

To ensure trainings result in actual employment opportunities, the opportunity group approach follows an outcome based contract system with training providers. In practice this means that the trainer receives 40% of their fees when 60% (or more) of the members have entered into an economic activity after the training is completed (self-employment or employed). This arrangement ensures that trainers provide the necessary mentoring support following the trainings. During the mentoring special attention is given to the following issues:

- Support the group to further develop the professional/business goals
- Observe, assess and understand the economic performance of the group
- Provide technical and professional advices to the group based on the assessment
- Support the group to selfanalyse and reflect
- Give feedback to the youth
- Identify and implement other activities that contribute to achieving the group goal

Mentoring cycle:

- Technical support
- Informal and formal mentoring
- One-to-one mentoring and group mentoring
- An evaluation form will be completed by the mentor and mentee to evaluate the relationship and the process.



Example from Dragash: mentoring (part IX)

In order to ensure a sustainable employment, training providers will also act as job placement facilitators (one stop shop logic) and provide mentoring (in the sense of posttraining) support to youth. As the first couple of months in a job are decisive for stable employment, additional support shall reduce the risk of failure, especially for youth aiming at entrepreneurship. Mentoring includes technical support, informal and formal mentoring, one-to-one mentoring and group mentoring. The trainer supports the groups to overcome the challenges they may face when they start applying the skills. The trainer in Dragash continues to support the women group with advices on running the business, customer relationship, technical questions related to hairdressing. Most of the advices are given through a closed group created on the Facebook involving the group members.



Picture 6: Nuriye Hetemi - graduated and self-employed

5. Key features of the approach



The approach disposes of a few key features, which are decisive for success:

5.1. Universal access

The approach ensures that everyone has access to organised learning. This includes young people who have dropped out of the formal education system, unemployed, minorities who have limited access to the formal system, supply chains actors (e.g. farmers) and adults who want to acquire specific skills. It reaches people where they live. Skills development takes place onsite where the learners live, ensuring that access is not hindered by distance, financial or social restrictions. It does not require a special infrastructure.

5.2. Holistic approach

Participants not only acquire a diversified skill set in a short period of time, but also learn to use their own resources to become economically independent and socially empowered.

5.3. Acceptance by local authorities and community

Special attention is paid to secure local authorities' and community's acceptance from the beginning. Therefore, it is important to analyse and understand incentives and capacities of not only youth but also the skills development ecosystem that includes community members, local government authorities, municipalities, private sector enterprises, and civil society organisations (as mentioned in sections 3.3 and 4.2.3). They must support the process and have a costsharing function by providing resources such as land, tools and materials. The opportunity groups conclude costsharing agreements with the local authorities and community.

5.4. Linkages and networks

The cycle does not end with training provision, if participants want to find a job or become self-employed afterwards. For that purpose, it is essential for them to build up networks, which eases their placement in the labour market to become either wage or self-employed. Available experience indicates that the first couple of months in a job are decisive for stable employment. Support provided by mentors can reduce the risk of failure during this period. This is very important for special needs groups and in particular for those who opt for selfemployment. Mentoring furthermore allows to keep in touch with the graduates.



MENTORING

Guidance and support provided in various ways to a young person or novice (someone joining a new learning community or organisation) by an experienced person who acts as a role model, guide, tutor, coach or confidant (CEDEFOP, Glossary / Glossar / Glossaire, 2011).

Pool of mentors

The facilitator sets up a pool of mentors, from which mentors can be chosen. These are primarily training providers, but their assignment differs from training provision. While recruiting new mentors, it is worthwhile to include the following selection criteria:

- knowledge of subject, organisation and community
- teaching experience
- commitment and enthusiasm for the role
- good communication and listening skills
- a willingness to reflect and improve
- a commitment to equal opportunities/inclusivity

Issues around matching mentors to mentees in relation to age, willingness, expertise, gender and culture are also important considerations to raise (CEDEFOP, *The Mentor Handbook: A Practical Guide for VET Teacher Training*, 2013).

Throughout the cycle of the mentoring programme, the mentors get support by the facilitator in a form of collaborative quality assurance. Mentors get offered incentives and rewards for their extra time and effort. In line with the outcome based financing system, their part of their salary is linked to whether 60% of the mentees stay in employment 3-6 months later (non-agricultural sector) resp. 12 months later (agricultural sector).

5.5. Monitoring and results measurement

Monitoring is key to the success of the approach. The CYAC develops and adapts a measurement plan for data collection. The measurement plan specifies:

What: precise definition of the indicator

When: a timeline for data collection

How: the tools and sampling used to collect information on the indicator

By whom: a description of responsibilities for collecting data.

The facilitator then is responsible for data collection and analysis. It is important to collect and analyse them disaggregated by sex and ethnicity.

When collecting data on women's and minorities' empowerment, it is important to bear in mind the following considerations:

- Speak directly to women about their empowerment, but to men too.
- Openended or semistructured conversations work better than questionnaires when exploring women's empowerment (ILO, 2015).²

As described in section 4.2.2, pretracer questionnaires are filled in before the cycle starts and post-training questionnaires are filled in around six months after the training has terminated, depending on the occupation and the seasonality of the economic activity.

² For more tips, see ILO, *Value chain development for decent work: how to create employment and improve working conditions in targeted sectors*, 103

6. Key takeaways



Concluding, we hereby highlight the key takeaways of this manual:

- a** The approach has proven to work in different countries and continents as it can and must be adapted to local requirements.
- b** To lead to sustainable results, this approach must be combined with certain important principles like having a clear vision from the outset, to do a proper analysis of interests and capacities of actors of the system, to follow a facilitative role, and to develop and use a monitoring system for steering and learning.
- c** The approach itself is a cycle based of several steps.
- d** The approach disposes of key features which are decisive for success. They are universal access, holistic approach, local acceptance, linkages and networks, and monitoring.
- e** The role of the facilitator is crucial, to stimulate the participation of all potential actors and allow them to find a place in collaboration according to their capacities, resources and interest.
- f** The approach uses and values the opportunities and resources of individuals and communities.

At the end, we would like this manual to serve as a guide and as an invitation to you, at every level from communities, and interest groups within communities, to government departments, and including the private sector, to find out more about the approach and how you could use it in your community. Hopefully, this will help you to address the core challenges you face – alleviating poverty.

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8. Glossary

DACUM

Acronym for developing a curriculum. It is a one or twoday story-boarding process that provides a picture of what the worker does in terms of duties, tasks, knowledge, skills, traits and in some cases the tools the worker uses.

Learning outcome

Set of knowledge, skills and/or competences an individual has acquired and/or is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process, either formal, nonformal or informal.

Life skills

Psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. They are loosely grouped into three broad categories of skills: cognitive skills for analysing and using information, personal skills for developing personal agency and managing oneself, and interpersonal skills for communicating and interacting effectively with others.

Nonformal education

Any educational action that takes place outside of the formal education system.
