

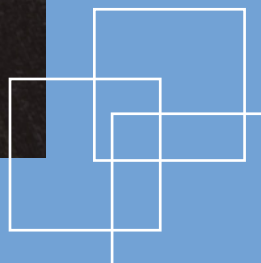
State of **SKILLS**



International
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Organization



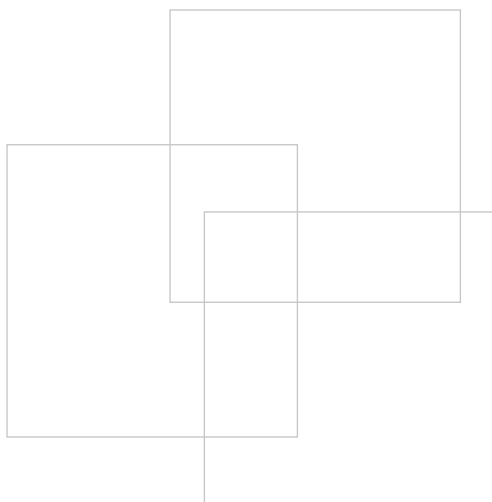
1919-2019



Uganda

State of

SKILLS



Uganda

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The socio-economic context

Uganda has one of the youngest and most rapidly growing populations in the world, but with weak educational outcomes. Despite three decades of political stability and rapid economic growth, the economy remains agriculture-based and informal, and creates few good quality jobs. Moreover, environmental degradation is threatening poverty reduction. Developing business technical vocational education and training (BTvet) and basic skills such as numeracy and literacy is key to tackling these challenges.

Uganda has one of the youngest and most rapidly growing populations in the world.

Fertility is particularly high, at 5.9 children per woman in 2010–15. The median age (15.8 years) is the second lowest in the world, and the population is growing by 3.2 per cent annually. Uganda had 44 million inhabitants in 2018, up from 24 million in 2000, and could have 64 million by 2030 (UN DESA, 2017). The country also hosts the largest refugee population in Africa. The number of refugees from neighbouring countries in conflict, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, tripled between July 2016 and November 2018, to 1.4 million (World Bank, 2018a).

The economy has been growing rapidly but, pending the start of oil extraction, remains dependent on agriculture.

GDP increased by 3.1 between 2000 and 2018, and grew by 5.9 per cent in 2018 (IMF, 2018). However, the sectoral composition of the economy was stable. Agriculture contributed one-quarter of GDP, industry one-fifth, and services about half. Construction, wholesale and retail trade, and information and communication technology have driven recent growth. Foreign trade has expanded, but Uganda exports mostly agricultural and mining products. While oil and gas extraction could provide substantial revenue over the next decades, this entails risks for the diversification of the economy (World Bank, 2015b).

Despite a remarkable record of poverty reduction, most Ugandans experience dire living conditions.

The proportion of Ugandans living in extreme poverty (under US\$1.90 a day)¹ dropped from 64 per cent in 2002 to 36 per cent in 2012. However, income inequalities are wide. In 2016, the richest one-fifth of the population received 50 per cent of total income, while the poorest one-fifth received only 6 per cent. Malnutrition is widespread – 29 per cent of under-five children were stunted in 2017, a sign of chronic malnutrition. Basic amenities are lacking. Only 18 per cent of the rural population had access to electricity in 2017, compared with 58 per cent of the urban population (World Bank, 2019).

Environmental degradation is a threat to Uganda's development.

Uganda has particularly low levels of greenhouse gas emissions, but its population is exposed to climate change, as rising temperatures and modified rainfall patterns are affecting water availability and rainfed agricultural production. The combination of rapid demographic and economic growth is exerting pressure on natural resources in fragile ecosystems, which are being depleted at an alarming rate (World Bank, 2015b).²

¹ 2011 international dollars in purchasing parity terms.

² Population density reached 222 inhabitants per km² in 2018, and is projected to reach 320 in 2030, the third highest value on the African continent after Burundi and Rwanda (UN DESA, 2017).

Scarcity of employment and work opportunities is a key feature of Uganda's labour market.

Half of all Ugandans were of working age in 2016. Of those, only 53 per cent were active in the labour force, and 48 per cent were employed. Labour force participation rates were particularly low among women (40 per cent, compared with 56 per cent of men), and in rural areas (48 per cent, compared with 67 per cent in urban areas).

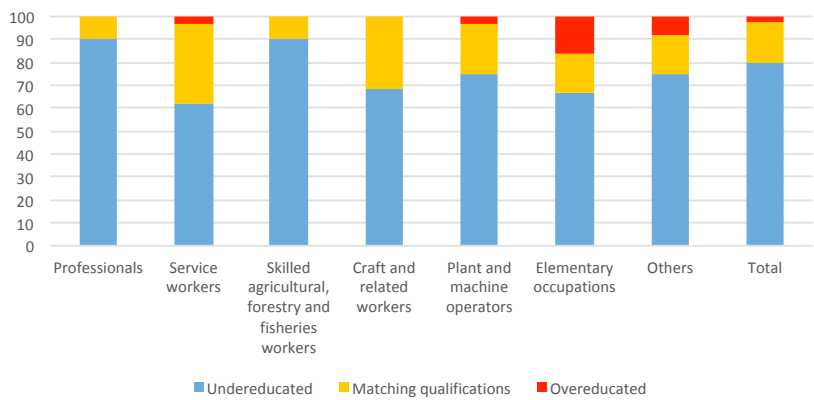
Vulnerable employment in agriculture or informal services is the only option for most Ugandan workers.

In 2018, own-account workers and contributing family workers comprised nearly two-thirds of total employment (nearly three-quarters of female employment), and paid employees nearly one-third. Informal employment represented 85 per cent of non-agricultural employment, and up to 90 per cent in rural areas and among youth (aged 18–30). Some 28 per cent of children aged 5–17 were working (UBOS, 2018). High-skill occupations were scarce, below one-tenth of total employment, at just under 20 per cent in urban areas, and only 8 per cent in rural areas (UBOS, 2018).

Uganda’s basic education system does not form a strong foundation for BTVET, nor does it equip all young people with the basic skills they will need to enter the labour market.

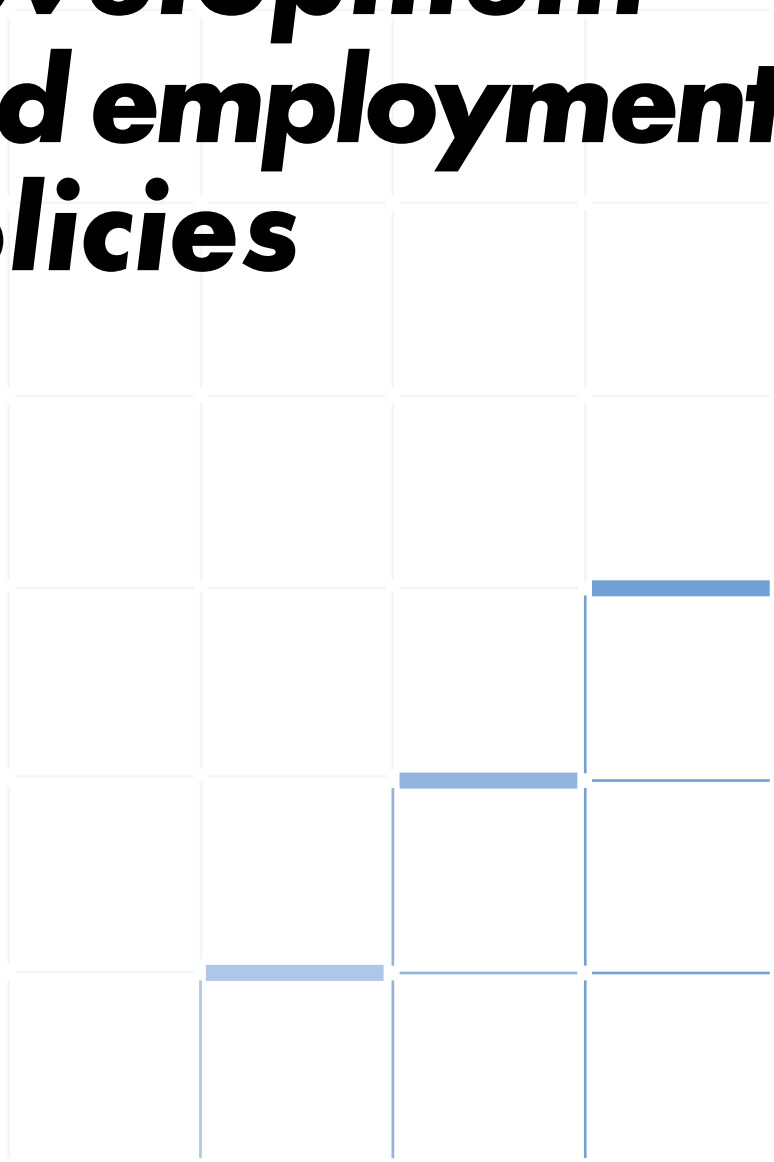
The gross enrolment ratio at primary level has been close to 100 per cent in recent years. However, learning outcomes are low. In 2016, only 29 per cent of children in Grades 5 and 6 were able to write at Grade 4 level (Uwezo, 2018). Moreover, high enrolment at primary level does not translate into high enrolment at post-primary level. The gross enrolment ratio at secondary level was only 28 per cent in 2017, ranging from less than 10 per cent in the most disadvantaged districts of the Northern region, to more than 60 per cent in urban districts of the Central region (World Bank, 2018b). As a result, in 2016, only 24 and 12 per cent of the population had attained secondary education and post-secondary education, respectively. In rural areas, three-quarters of the labour force had only attained primary education, or had received no formal schooling. As a result, most young workers are undereducated (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Undereducation and overeducation among young workers (aged 15–29) in Uganda, 2015



Source: UBOS, 2016.

Development and employment policies



Uganda's development policies are framed by the Vision 2040 document and implemented through successive national development plans.

Through Vision 2040, Uganda aims to become an upper middle-income country, with drastic improvement in 33 human development indicators by 2040. The document identifies the failure of the education and training system to produce an adequate supply of skilled workers as a major impediment to development, and therefore pledges to review education curricula, reform the policy, legal, institutional and regulatory framework for BTVET, and provide more support for human resource development in firms via a skills development fund (Government of Uganda, 2013).

To this end, the second National Development Plan 2015/16–2019/20 (NDP II) identifies key growth opportunities in agriculture, tourism and extractive industries, as well as two fundamentals: infrastructure and human capital development. It emphasizes the pivotal role of skills for Uganda's socio-economic transformation, and acknowledges the system's most pressing challenges, such as the lack of basic skills among trainees and labour market entrants, the limited labour market- relevance of training, insufficient linkages between training providers and firms, and weak governance. Under its three main objectives of increasing equitable access to training, improving quality and relevance of training, and enhancing effectiveness and efficiency in training delivery, the NDP II envisages 22 interventions that build on and include the ambitious BTVET Strategic Plan 2012/13 to 2021/22.

“All Ugandans enjoy rights and opportunities and access to education, health services, clean and safe water, work, decent shelter, adequate clothing, food security and pension and retirement benefits.”





- Constitution of the Republic of Uganda

Article 14

The skills system in Uganda

TVET policies and reforms

Uganda adopted an ambitious BTVET Strategic Plan 2012/13 to 2021/22, entitled ‘Skilling Uganda’ (Government of Uganda, 2012). Based on a comprehensive analysis, the plan proposes a ‘paradigm shift’ for TVET ‘from an education sub-sector into a comprehensive system of skills development for employment, enhanced productivity and growth.’ The shift involves providing labour market- relevant skills and competencies to all Ugandans, in flexible, workplace-oriented environments managed as public/private partnerships, replacing the current government school system that delivers certificates to low-achieving school leavers.

The latest TVET strategy was drafted in 2008, and focuses on.

- I. Raise the economic relevance of BTJET.
- II. Increase the quality of skills provision.
- III. Provide equitable access to skills development.
- IV. Achieve greater organizational and management effectiveness in BTJET.
- V. Increase internal efficiency and resources available for BTJET.



Each specific objective is associated with a set of strategies (21 in total) and qualitative or quantitative targets, to be achieved by 2020. It focuses on priority sectors such as agriculture or energy, and informal small and micro-enterprises. Key strategies include a massive expansion of the BTVET supply through both public and private institutions, while improving quality, for instance through the recruitment, deployment and training of BTVET teachers, or the introduction of accreditation procedures for BTVET providers. Governance and finance reforms include the creation of a Skills Development Authority at central level, the devolution of management at the level of each public BTVET institution, the introduction of a training levy, and the establishment of a Skills Development Fund. Finally, the plan places an emphasis on improved access to BTVET for girls, people living with disabilities, and disadvantaged groups.

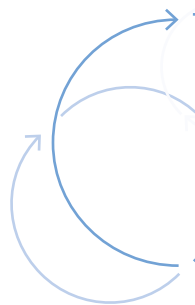
The plan was estimated to cost about US\$870 million over nine fiscal years (2012/13 to 2021/22). Investment in the rehabilitation of existing BTVET institutions, and the creation of new institutions, would represent 45 per cent of the total cost, compared with 55 per cent for recurrent costs. For the first 4 years, public expenditure on education covered only 40 per cent of the plan, leaving a funding gap of 60 per cent.

Governance

Until the Skills Development Authority is created, the governance of Uganda's BTVET system will remain fragmented. Management and regulation are conducted by several ministries and regulatory bodies which are not coordinated, and whose responsibilities tend to overlap. The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), through its Directorate of BTVET, manages public institutions at secondary level. These include technical schools, community polytechnics and farm schools/agricultural institutes at lower secondary level, and technical institutes and vocational training institutes at upper secondary level. Colleges that deliver training at post-secondary level are managed by their respective line ministries. For instance, the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries manages agricultural colleges, and the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism manages a tourism college. Private training providers are represented by the Uganda Association of Private Vocational Institutes (UGAPRIVI) (World Bank, 2015a).

Social dialogue

Uganda has begun to strengthen institutional mechanisms for social dialogue between the Government, employers' organizations and trade unions on BTVET issues. The Industrial Training Council (ITC), which was formally established in 1972, was revived by the BTVET Act in 2008 to supervise the Department of Industrial Training and advise the Ministry of Education. It brings together representatives of ministries, manufacturers from the formal and informal sectors, and private training providers and employees. The ITC is tasked with advocating for BTVET reforms, participating in their implementation, improving the image of BTVET, and matching skills provision with labour market needs (Government of Uganda, 2019). However, existing mechanisms do not extend to all branches and levels. Involvement of the private sector is particularly limited in planning, implementation and monitoring for the public BTVET sector, which is managed at both district and central levels. However, the Government has increasingly recognized the role played by private training providers. The UGAPRIVI has participated in all recent BTVET fora, and a public-private partnership for BTVET provision has been launched by the UGAPRIVI and the Government.



Financing

BTJET continues to be under-funded. In 2014, the last year for which data are available, vocational programmes at secondary and post-secondary, non-tertiary levels were allocated 6.9 per cent of the education budget, corresponding to 0.75 per cent of the total government budget, or just 0.15 per cent of GDP. These figures were down by one-fifth to one-third compared with 2011 and 2012, just before the strategy was adopted (UIS, 2019). Although technical and vocational education and training is capital-intensive, and has higher unit costs than general education in most countries, public expenditure per student in Uganda's BTJET is lower than in the other education sub-sectors, and has been falling (World Bank, 2015a).

The Skilling Uganda strategy includes the creation of a Skills Development Fund, which would pool various sources of funding, including an industrial training levy, and allocate the funds in accordance with priorities jointly determined by the Government and the private sector. The fund, which could increase the financial sustainability of the BTJET system, is being piloted by the MoES in several districts, with support from the World Bank and bilateral donors (including Belgian development agency Enabel, Irish Aid and the European Union). It already supports partnerships between training providers and the private sector in the Albertine-Rwenzori region (where oil and gas reserves are located), training for youth and women from refugee and host communities in Northern Uganda, and short training courses for youth and women in income-generating activities in Karamoja district (SDE, 2019).



Skills anticipation

Uganda lacks a fully fledged system for skills anticipation envisaged by the Skilling Uganda strategy. The country does not have a technical and vocational education and training management information system (TVET-MIS), nor a labour market information system (LMIS), which would include a tool for analysing current skills gaps and mismatches, and forecasting future skills needs. The Skilling Uganda strategy envisages the creation of an LMIS and TVET-MIS, but these are not yet operational. Data collection has improved in recent years, with a Labour Force Survey conducted in 2011/12 and 2016/17 by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS, 2018).

Development partners have supported studies of skills needs in specific sectors, including oil and gas extraction, agro-processing, construction, transport, hospitality and information and communication technology, to support the establishment of Sector Skills Councils and the development of a national workforce strategy. For example, the transport and logistics sector offers 34 different occupations, in which about 208,000 persons were employed in 2013, a figure projected to reach 522,000 in 2030. Road transport will create the most jobs, followed by warehousing – around 113,300 additional truck drivers, 43,200 light goods vehicle drivers and 41,100 warehouse operatives will be needed. Demand for medium- and high-skill occupations ranging from vehicle maintenance to operations management should increase as the sector becomes more regulated and competitive. The current training supply will need to expand dramatically to cover these skills needs. At present, Uganda has no training capacity for truck driver instructors, truck inspectors or weighbridge operators. Only 20 truck drivers and 800 light goods vehicle drivers are trained each year in accredited programmes, leaving quantitative skills gaps of 99.7 per cent and 72 per cent, respectively, by 2030, if the skills supply does not expand (World Bank, 2018c).

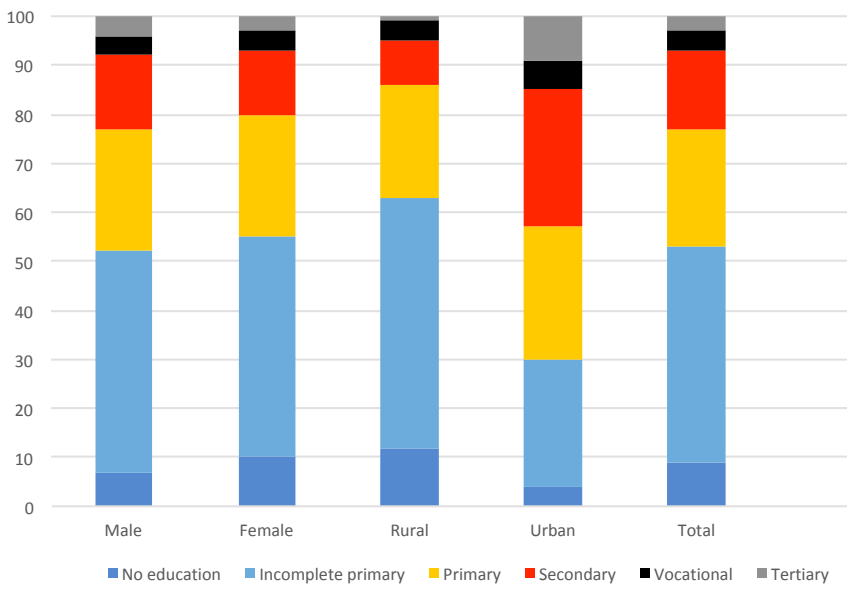


(© ILO)

Skills development

Administrative data on enrolment in BTVET are not available for recent years. In 2007, about 41,200 students in vocational programmes represented 4.0 per cent of all secondary students. In 2008, there were 39,600 students in vocational programmes at upper secondary level (47 per cent girls), compared with 149,500 in general programmes (UIS, 2019). In 2015, 4.4 per cent of young people (aged 15–29) had completed ‘vocational education’, with limited gaps between genders and between rural and urban areas (see figure 2).

Figure 2. Level of education completed by young people (aged 15–29) in Uganda, 2015



Source: UBOS, 2016.

Improving delivery and assessment of training

Centre-based BTVET does not operate on the scale needed to train the 500,000 to 800,000 youth who enter the labour market each year. The BTVET sub-sector comprises about 131 public training providers and 670 registered private training providers. Public training providers offer higher skills, especially at post-secondary level, such as technician training. Private training providers include non-governmental organizations (NGO), faith-based organizations and for-profit firms. They tend to focus on a narrow range of skills that do not require costly equipment, but differ greatly in terms of capacity, training type and quality. Their numbers and enrolment are difficult to ascertain, as many of them are unregistered. Centralized in Kampala, registration is costly and its input-based criteria (buildings, equipment, teacher qualifications) are difficult to meet for small-scale providers who operate informally (World Bank, 2015a).

Lack of resources constrains BTVET quality and labour-market relevance. Public and private BTVET institutions often have to operate with outdated equipment, and the fragility of informal firms reduces their capacity to accept apprentices. Many teachers in formal institutions have received insufficient training, whether technical and vocational or pedagogical, and have limited workplace experience. Education levels are low among master craftsmen in the informal sector. Relevance is a key concern for formal BTVET institutions, especially in the public sector, due to the absence of social dialogue in governance structures, an inadequate system of skills anticipation, and limited opportunities for work-based learning. Both public and private BTVET institutions tend to follow outdated curricula, which focus on theory at the expense of practice, and fail to complement technical and vocational skills with soft skills. BTVET remains centre-based, since there are no formal apprenticeships in Uganda. Informal apprenticeships, which focus on existing products and technologies, are of direct relevance to the current needs of Uganda's economy. However, the system needs to be upgraded to better cater for the country's future skills needs (Government of Uganda, 2012).



Skills recognition and quality assurance

The Uganda Vocational Qualifications Framework (UVQF) was established by the 2008 BTVET Act to facilitate the development of occupational standards and the assessment and certification of skills acquired by trainees. The framework has four levels, from Level 1, corresponding to junior certificates at lower secondary education level, to Level 4, corresponding to post-secondary diplomas (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2014). Skilling Uganda includes provisions to ‘expand the coverage of the UVQF and accelerate its development: clarify the UVQF conceptual framework and strengthen management capacities; implement UVQF-based BTVET throughout the BTVET system’ (Government of Uganda, 2012). However, as yet the UVQF does not appear to be operational (World Bank, 2015a).³

³ The description of the UVQF is missing from the Uganda BTVET portal, which is supposed to provide comprehensive information on training providers and quality assurance (Government of Uganda, 2019).

Pending the creation of a Skills Development Authority, like governance, responsibility for quality assurance is divided among several institutions. The Directorate of Industrial Training (DIT), which is the secretariat of the Industrial Training Board, has primary responsibility for public and accredited private training providers, along with the Uganda Business and Technical Examinations Boards. However, line ministries that run training centres have their own quality assurance institutions, among them the examination boards of the Ministry of Health. BTVET programmes at post-secondary level are certified by specific universities. Meanwhile, private sector firms have their own assessment and certification processes, sometimes with international certification agencies. In recent years, training provision under the Directorate of BTVET and the UGAPRIVI was meant to be separated from quality assurance under the Directorate of Industrial Training, and the DIT was tasked with developing a comprehensive qualifications and assessment system. However, this does not appear to have materialized, due to lack of funding and capacity to work with employers' organizations across activity sectors (Government of Uganda, 2019; World Bank, 2015a).



Social inclusion

Accessing skills development

Access to BTVET and skills development is limited by the small size of the sector, with few training providers and insufficient capacity of firms – most of which are small and informal – to train their employees. Disadvantaged and vulnerable groups face specific difficulties. Youth who never enrolled in, or did not complete primary school cannot enter formal BTVET. Several public BTVET providers have recently introduced non-formal training, consisting of short courses that target informal sector workers, but these operate on a small scale, with limited resources, and do not have wide appeal (World Bank, 2015a). The concentration of the training supply in urban areas, particularly in Kampala, excludes persons living in remote rural areas, among them disadvantaged districts in Northern Uganda, which host large refugee populations. Skilling Uganda and the NDP II have therefore both declared investments in infrastructure, with a focus on women, people with disabilities, and rural populations; this latter is a key area for investment. Several donor-funded training programmes target these populations.⁴

⁴ The Government of the Netherlands and five multilateral agencies are implementing a five-year programme (2019–2023) to address the education, labour and social protection needs of refugees, under which the ILO will conduct a skills profile in five districts. Under the piloting stage of the Skills Development Fund, German development agency GIZ and Belgian development agency Enabel are also conducting labour market assessments (SDF, 2019).

Supporting transition to the labour market

Young people face particularly difficult transitions to the labour market in Uganda, due to the low quality and relevance of skills delivered by the education and training system, and the scarcity of employment opportunities. According to the ILO's School-to-Work Transition Survey, 64 per cent of youth aged 15–29 were working in 2015, but mostly in vulnerable employment, as own-account or contributing family workers. Only 27 per cent were considered to have successfully completed their labour market transition, a process that took an average of three years (UBOS, 2016). Young women face additional constraints, including early marriage and pregnancy, which may make them economically dependent on men. An experimental programme run by the NGO BRAC showed that combining vocational training with information on sex, reproduction and marriage was effective in increasing the proportion of young women engaging in income-generating activities, while reducing early marriage and teen pregnancy (Bandiera et al., 2018).

Lifelong learning

Continuous training is important in Uganda, but depends on formality and company size. In the formal sector, medium and large firms often provide initial and continuous training to their employees, especially for artisans and craftsmen. Fewer small and micro-enterprises provide training, due to its costs and the risk of losing trained workers. In the informal sector – which represents the bulk of non-agricultural employment – employers and workers often lack the necessary equipment to conduct training (such as a proper workplace and access to electricity), and many do not see the need for training. Traditional apprenticeships therefore remain an important source of technical and business skills for informal sector workers (World Bank, 2015a).



Key challenges

The Government of Uganda has recognized that skills are central to the achievement of its ambitious development Vision 2040, and has designed a comprehensive Skilling Uganda strategy.

However, implementation has been slow due to budgetary constraints, the informal nature of Uganda's economy, and limited government capacity. Meanwhile, there is an urgent need to skill the 500,000 to 800,000 young people who join the labour market each year. Many of the challenges identified in the situation analysis conducted for Skilling Uganda (Government of Uganda, 2012) remain:

1 **Fragmented governance.**

Public-sector training provision and quality assurance are conducted by several ministries (including the MoES), without coordination and with limited interactions with private sector organizations.

2 **Limited social dialogue.**

There are few institutional mechanisms to ensure that the training supply is adapted to the needs of the labour market, such as Sector Skills Councils.

3 **Insufficient financing.**

BTJET receives a minor share of a limited education budget, and the Skills Development Fund is still at the pilot stage, at a time when the sector needs to expand dramatically and improve its quality.

4 **Weak information basis.**

Uganda lacks a functional labour market information system, and a technical and vocational education and training management information system, or the capacity to conduct skills forecasting on a regular basis, although sectoral studies have been conducted with development partners.

5 **Insufficient capacity of BTJET centres providing poor-quality training.**

The capacity of BTJET at secondary and post-secondary levels is difficult to estimate, even for public and registered private centres, yet available figures suggest it is insufficient. Most training centres have inadequate physical, financial and human resources. Public centres lack managerial autonomy, while many private centres are unregistered and unaccredited.

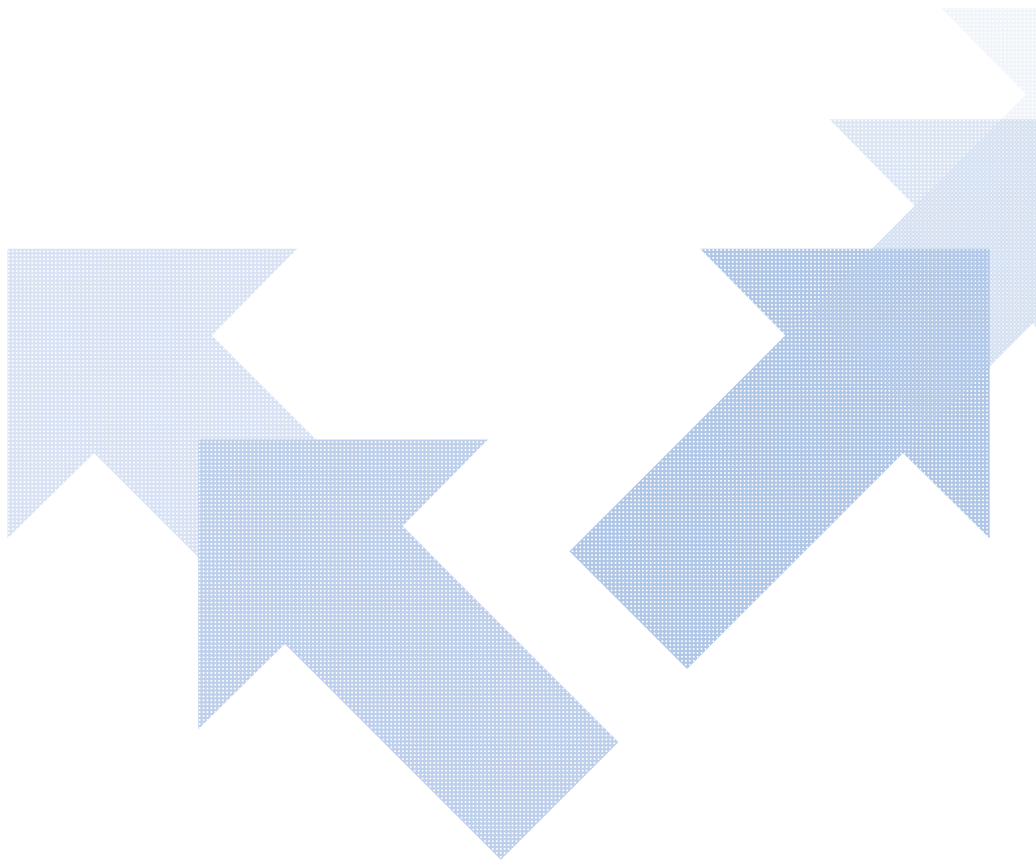
6 Lack of skills recognition and quality assurance.

A vocational qualifications framework was adopted, but has not been implemented. Quality assurance is conducted by a multiplicity of public and private institutions. The system does not guarantee recognition of skills acquired through BTVET or informal training, nor pathways between training and employment.

7 Skills gaps and mismatches.

Access to BTVET is difficult for the very large numbers of youth who did not complete primary or secondary education, and/or live in rural areas. Even those who graduated from BTVET or general education face a difficult transition to the labour market, due to a lack of jobs. Firms find that young workers lack adequate skills, yet most informal firms lack the capacity to train their employees.

The way forward



Uganda's key challenge is not policy design, but implementation. Development partners, who are already supporting implementation of the Skilling Uganda strategy, could further maximize their impact through improved coordination.

The Skilling Uganda strategy provides a comprehensive framework for interventions aimed at systemic improvement. In addition, smaller-scale interventions, such as training programmes targeting disadvantaged populations, can also make a difference. Most promising solutions would include:

1

Continued support to governance reforms.

Coordination of public institutions involved in training delivery and in quality assurance, involvement of the private sector, representation of the informal sector in social dialogue.

2

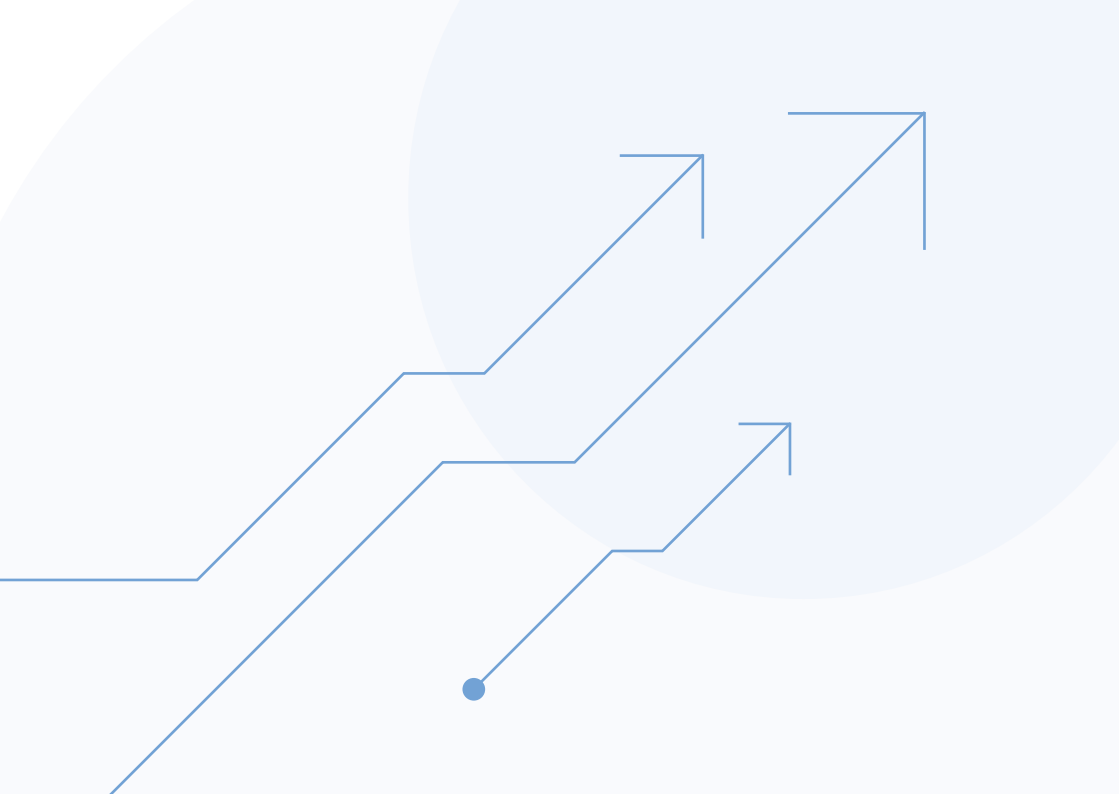
Continued support to the establishment of the Skills Development Fund and the introduction of a training levy.

3 Support to data collection and analysis, with the establishment of an LMIS and TVET-MIS, and production of further sectoral skills analysis.

4 Support to the upgrade or creation of pilot/excellence centres addressing the needs of sectors with the highest potential for economic growth and job creation identified by the NDP II (such as agro-processing, oil and gas extraction, transport, tourism).

For example, the ILO has supported development of the Uganda National Apprenticeship Framework, which was piloted with 100 apprentices in the hotel sector in 2019, in cooperation with the Uganda Hotel Owners Association and the Uganda Hotel and Tourism Training Institute.

5 Work on the Uganda Vocational Qualifications Framework, and on recognition of prior learning for informal sector workers.



6 Interventions to raise the coverage and quality of basic, general education, which at present does not provide a firm foundation for BTVET.

Promotion of lifelong learning for young people already in the labour market; training programmes targeting disadvantaged groups and refugees, and supporting the transition to a greener economy. For example, the ILO's Youth Entrepreneurship Facility delivered the Start and Improve Your Business Training Programmes between 2014 and 2016. An Employment Diagnostic Analysis was recently conducted in a partnership between the ILO, the Swedish International Development Agency and the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.

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