



Field Testing: Market Assessment Toolkit for Vocational Training Providers and Youth Linking Vocational Training Programs to Market Opportunities in Northern Uganda

Women's Refugee Commission
Field Mission to Northern Uganda, March 2009

Overview

In March 2009, the Women's Refugee Commission partnered with a team of graduate students from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)'s Youth Education Pack (YEP) to field test the [Market Assessment Toolkit for Vocational Training Providers and Youth](#).¹ This toolkit was developed in 2008 to assist vocational training programs in becoming more demand-driven, matching youths' interests, skills and available resources to market opportunities for employment and self-employment in northern Uganda. This toolkit represents a combination of questionnaires and activities to assist vocational training providers and youth in gathering information on local market demand and translating it into improved programming.

The aim of the March 2009 field testing was: (1) to understand challenges and opportunities in using the toolkit and develop additional guidance if needed; (2) to contribute to NRC's efforts to ensure their vocational training programs for youth are market-driven.

In spite of a few areas identified for improvement, the research team was able to determine that the toolkit does enable vocational training providers to gather useful information to identify employment and self-employment opportunities for youth participants, and can be used by individuals and organizations without the need for external support.



Step Up Vocational Training Center, Kitgum, Uganda

¹ In 2008, on behalf of the Women's Refugee Commission, a team of graduate students from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) conducted a study on vocational training and market demand in northern Uganda with a focus on programming for youth. The *Market Assessment Toolkit for Vocational Training Providers and Youth* was produced from the findings of this research effort. SIPA team members included Kelly Bidwell, Colleen Galbraith, Linda Haddad, Rachel Hermes, Sarah Kleiner, Zaki Raheem and Kenneth Scheffler.

Key Findings

Toolkit Strengths

- The toolkit provides a comprehensive framework which enables vocational training providers to analyze local market conditions to identify what goods, services and skills are in demand.
- The toolkit is a valuable and effective means by which to identify potential collaborations with the private sector, microfinance institutions (MFIs) and other stakeholders.
- The toolkit represents a flexible approach to information collection and is useful throughout all phases of a vocational training effort. Programmers should not overlook the potential utility of the toolkit in instances where a project is already in mid- to later stages of implementation.

Toolkit Potential Improvements

- While valuable for establishing linkages within the private sector, the toolkit has exhibited shortcomings in identifying new core skills for income generation.
- The current toolkit represents an in-depth approach to surveying a market which can be a time consuming endeavor. As such, it should be supplemented with the creation of an abridged version available for situations and actors constrained by time, resources or both.

Market Findings: Considerations for Vocational Training Providers in Northern Uganda

- Access to micro-credit services was expressed as a necessity by northern Ugandan youth to remain (self) employed after graduation. The toolkit is capable of identifying and connecting vocational training graduates to lending institutions and should be utilized by service providers during and after training efforts.
- To avoid saturating the local labor market, vocational training programs and staff should consider both diversifying the technical skills taught to students, as well as rotating skills curriculum every six to 24 months.
- Vocational training providers should promote female participation in traditionally male-dominated vocations.
- Vocational training providers should elevate agricultural training to a core skill within the curriculum and emphasize skill specialization.²

Snapshot of a Protracted Internal Displacement Crisis

For more than two decades the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government of Uganda's army, the Uganda People's Defense Force, fought a brutal war in northern Uganda. An estimated 1.5-1.7 million people fled their villages to avoid attack and abduction by the LRA. Since 1996, the Ugandan Government periodically forced those displaced to relocate to IDP camps they called "protected villages."

Since August 2006, peace talks between the Government of Uganda and the LRA have shown slow but encouraging signs that northern Uganda is transitioning from a humanitarian emergency to a period of post-conflict recovery. Despite ongoing complications to the peace process, the relative peace and security have enabled the slow return of IDPs back to their home communities and resettlement to transit camps or larger urban centers in the north.

A generation of youth has grown up in IDP camps amidst poverty, insecurity and without access to reliable services. Many have also experienced abduction, recruitment into armed forces or the loss of family members to violence. In addition to widespread exposure to violence, children and youth in the

² See Annex 1 for detailed findings on core income generating activities.

north have had limited access to primary education and almost no access to secondary school or higher education. While the Government of Uganda instituted a policy of Universal Primary Education in 1996, only 20 percent of northern Ugandans had completed primary school and only five percent had completed secondary school as of 2006. As youth look towards peace, recovery and return, the majority face the challenge of securing a livelihood with little or no formal education.

Why Vocational Training?

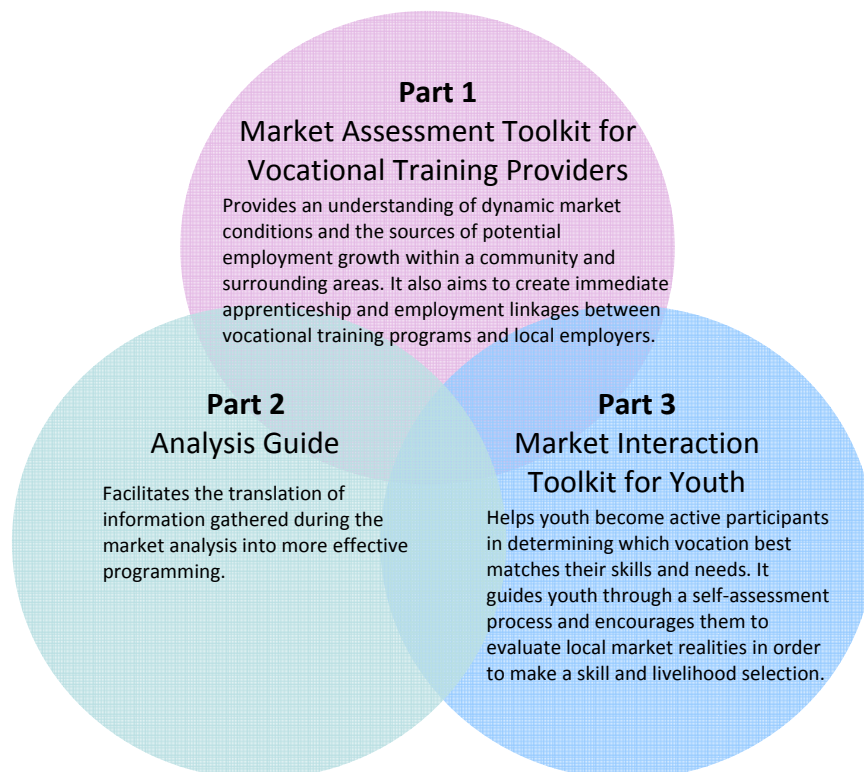
Studies conducted on youth in northern Uganda indicate that young peoples' main priorities are securing an education and earning income (Women's Refugee Commission, 2005; 2006; 2007; SWAY, 2007). Without the skills required to compete in the labor market, most youth remain unemployed. As a result, several educational interventions providing vocational training have been implemented in the region to cater to the needs of this population.

When administered properly, vocational training is well placed to take advantage of the growing opportunities in trade and respond to the labor needs of the private sector by providing the appropriate skills to enhance the quality of the potential labor force. In addition, vocational training can enable young people who have little, if any, schooling and are unable to move to higher institutions of learning to create their own income generating activities.

Unfortunately, most of the current programs in northern Uganda provide training in similar skills, such as tailoring, carpentry, building and concrete practice (construction work), which have lead to saturation in the labor market for these industries. Furthermore, the youth select these skills without guidance in making informed decisions about the market demands for goods and services. Consequently, many vocational training graduates encounter difficulties in earning livelihoods and end up unable to use the skills acquired during the vocational training.

How the Toolkit Can Help

The toolkit focuses on addressing one of the biggest challenges in vocational training – linking labor supply with labor demand – and is comprised of three, interdependent parts. These include the Market Assessment Toolkit for Vocational Training Providers, Analysis Guide and Market Interaction Toolkit for Youth.



Within the Market Assessment Toolkit for Vocational Training Providers are ten tools containing a series of questionnaires and summary charts to assist in synthesizing information collected for the Analysis Guide. These include:

1. Market Observation Tool
2. Consumer Tool
3. Government Tool
4. Local Business Tool
5. National Producer & Business Association Tool
6. Youth Focus Group Tool
7. Vocational Training Program Provider Tool
8. Microfinance Tool
9. Donors & International NGOs Tool
10. National and Multinational Company Tool

Each of these tools assist service providers in taking a more demand-driven approach which matches youth's interests, skills and available resources with market opportunities. These tools also specifically help inform curriculum development, course offerings and linkages to post-training employment opportunities which can improve youths' prospects for a sustainable livelihood.



Photo Source: CIA World Factbook, 2009

Pilot Testing

In March 2009, the Columbia University students, in collaboration with representatives from NRC's YEP, spent two weeks pilot testing the effectiveness of the toolkit in and around Gulu in northern Uganda. Due to time constraints, the research team tested only the Market Assessment Toolkit for Vocational Training Providers and associated Analysis Guide. Supplementary testing of the Market Interaction Toolkit for Youth is therefore necessary and intended for the next testing phase.

Strengths and Suggested Improvements for the Toolkit

The tested portions of the toolkit, Parts 1 and 2, have proven an effective framework to analyze local market conditions for youth (self) employment and identify potential mismatches between market demand and labor supplied by vocational training programs. Moreover, the toolkit was especially valuable in identifying potential collaborations with hotels, local businesses, and other stakeholders. For instance, the team contacted several hotels and restaurants that were interested in engaging students for post-graduate apprenticeships. Such partnerships will enhance the workmanship quality of vocational training graduates to prepare them to be more competitive within the local labor market.

Furthermore, the toolkit was able to identify partnerships with MFIs, which have expanded their operations beyond Kampala to address the need for small business financing in northern Uganda. During the research effort, YEP graduates discussed the difficulties in becoming employed or self-employed due to a lack of start-up capital. Interviews conducted with four MFIs in Gulu confirmed the willingness of these institutions to negotiate favorable lending terms to vocational training graduates.

However, in spite of its utility, areas for improving the toolkit were also identified. Throughout the field testing effort, the team encountered several challenges, most notably a lack of adequate time to test

the tools as created – particularly the Market Observation and Consumer Tools. Consequently, the team proposes developing two versions of the toolkit in order to better accommodate vocational training providers who have expressed interest in increased adaptability and flexibility within the toolkit’s framework. One version will maintain the current toolkit format, while the other will include shortened and simplified interview questions and summary charts in a note card format. The original toolkit may serve vocational training providers who are beginning a program and in need of a thorough market analysis. The abridged toolkit may assist existing programs to create or further develop partnerships with local businesses, business associations, donors and INGOs, MFIs and multinational companies. Either way, it is important to recognize the toolkit’s potential usefulness and adaptability throughout all phases of a vocational training effort.

During collaborations with NRC’s YEP, the research team also observed shortcomings on the part of the toolkit in identifying new core skills for income generation. Through the market assessment process, YEP did not consider any new income generating activities (IGAs) beyond those initially determined for their curriculum and training. While the YEP experience could represent an isolated incidence in which NRC fully identified all viable IGAs within their market prior to utilizing the toolkit, this shortcoming is worth noting for further follow-up.

Market Findings

Recommendations for strengthening vocational training programs generated by the research team include promoting female participation in traditionally male-dominated, higher paying vocations, such as welding and motor vehicle repair. The team also recommends elevating agricultural training to a core skill within the vocational training curricula. Taking into consideration that 90 percent of the population practiced agriculture before the conflict began, and given that food security is now a concern with people returning to their villages, agriculture remains an important economic activity for northern Uganda. With the importance placed on agricultural activities by government officials, donors and INGOs, the team concluded that basic agricultural skills should continue to be taught and even strengthened, including supplementary curriculum focused on specializations such as beekeeping, fish farming and poultry keeping.

To avoid saturation within the labor market, diversification in income generating skills offered is important. One way of achieving flexibility is by alternating the teaching of some IGA skills for certain academic years. In other words, programs should suspend the teaching of some skills for anywhere from six months to one or two academic years in order to allow the labor demand and supply for a particular sector to adjust.

Diversification of IGA skills can also be achieved within each skill, whether in bricklaying and concrete practice, carpentry and joinery or any other skill, by offering short modules to upgrade existing skills. For example, carpentry and joinery learners in the current academic year may focus on the basic skills plus corner and roof making while next year’s learners may study the basics and specialize in painting and design. It is also recommended that time spent teaching specific technical trainings be increase from three to five hours in the curriculum schedule in order to increase the market competitiveness of program graduates.

Conclusions

At one point during the research effort an NRC IGA Officer shared that “going through the process [of using the Market Assessment Toolkit] made me think of new possibilities.” In spite of a few areas identified for improvement, the toolkit does enable vocational training providers to gather useful information to identify employment and self-employment opportunities for youth participants, and can be used by individuals and organizations without the need for external support. It is important to point out, however, that while the *Market Assessment Toolkit for Vocational Training Providers and Youth* is a necessary step toward linking labor demand with supply and improving youths’ prospects for a sustainable livelihood, additional considerations such as identifying qualified teaching personnel, designing appropriate curricula, and ensuring appropriate course length to develop competence in the sector, are important for a successful vocational training program.

Looking Ahead

The *Market Assessment Toolkit for Vocational Training Providers and Youth* is part of a larger Women’s Refugee Commission’s initiative to increase the scope, scale and effectiveness of education and skills building programs for displaced young women and men. This multi-year, multi-country research and advocacy project includes desk and field research, pilot projects and the development of tools and guidance for practitioners, donors and policy-makers to address identified needs of young women and men. The Women’s Refugee Commission will continue to work with organizations testing and using the toolkit in northern Uganda and other conflict and post-conflict settings. We will gather lessons learned from groups’ experience in using the toolkit in order to assist other vocational training providers. Based on feedback, the toolkit may be revised, if necessary. If you are interested in further information, hard copies of the toolkit or potential collaboration with the Women’s Refugee Commission on future testing of the *Market Assessment Toolkit for Vocational Training Providers and Youth*, please contact Jenny Perlman Robinson, Senior Program Officer for Children and Youth, at jennyr@wrcommission.org.

Building Livelihoods:

A Field Manual for Practitioners in Humanitarian Settings

With refugees displaced for ever longer periods, the ways in which refugees—particularly women and adolescents—can earn a living and sustain themselves and their families must be addressed systematically and comprehensively while they are displaced. Livelihoods are vital for the social, emotional and economic well-being of displaced persons and are a key way to increase the safety of displaced women and adolescents.

The Women’s Refugee Commission researched and developed guidelines on appropriate livelihoods for displaced women and youth that recognize their skills, experience and capacity and which are targeted towards local markets, are comprehensive in approach, and promote self-reliance that is both dignified and sustainable.

For further information, access the following link to download [Building Livelihoods: A Field Manual for Practitioners in Humanitarian Settings](#).

Acknowledgments

This report was written by Elizabeth Grant, Displaced Youth Livelihoods Initiative Intern, edited by Jenny Perlman Robinson, Senior Program Officer for Children and Youth, and researched by Columbia University SIPA students Donna Chu, Bernardo Navazo Lopez, Anne Odele and Rafael Rodriguez-Leal Torres and NRC staff Eldrid Middtun, Lamin Manjang, Patrick Sikana, Mercie Onyut, Lawrence Odong, Jackie Laruny, Christopher Ocan, Rebecca Kwagala, and William Bongomin. The Women's Refugee Commission would like to express its sincere gratitude to the SIPA students, Jenny McGill, Economic and Political Development Workshop's Director at SIPA, Professor Helen Epstein, Faculty Adviser at SIPA, NRC staff, and many other organizations and individuals who generously gave their time to contribute to the study. This study would not have been possible without the generous support from Unbound Philanthropy.

For more information on the Women's Refugee Commission's work on youth, visit www.womensrefugeecommission.org/programs/protection/youth.

ANNEX 1: CORE INCOME GENERATING ACTIVITIES SKILLS ASSESSMENT CHART

IGA	Challenges	Opportunities	Risks	General Recommendations	Possible Constraints	Potential Partnerships Identified
Bricklaying & Concrete Practice (BCP); Carpentry & Joinery (CJ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for complementary skills • Need for start-up capital (tools or cash) • Partial saturation of the market 		<p>Assumption made: the construction sector will keep growing. If it stops, VT should consider stop teaching these skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiate from other VT providers • Include modules to complement the basic skill (roof making and corner making, painting, design skills, decoration, etc.) • Look for post-course training, apprenticeship and industrial training • Help students access micro-credit 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction for Bomah Hotel (willing to take interns right away)
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional negative attitudes about agriculture and residing in rural areas • Resolution of land disputes • Difficulties in producing beyond subsistence levels • Need for cooperatives or other institutions that help farmers market their products 	<p>USAID Spring is offering a program to assist farmers to obtain land in exchange for committing to work the land and pay the purchase price with the profits they will obtain from the crop production</p>		<p>For those students being trained in other core skill (ie, CJ, BCP, Tailoring, etc.), basic agricultural skills should continue to be taught as a mandatory, complementary skill.</p> <p>Service providers should pilot test a new group of students who would specialize in agriculture. The learning would be comprised of as many short-term modules as possible as a way to provide youth with a variety of complementary skills. The research team identified the following skills as interesting and free, given that the right partnerships are created:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Beekeeping - Fish farming - Fabrication and use of ox ploughs - Fabrication of other farming implements - Poultry keeping 	<p>Is collective farming embedded in the USAID Spring program? If so, is collective farming a viable option for long term agricultural production?</p>	<p>Gulu District Farmers Association, the Gulu Beekeepers Association, the Gulu Amuru Apicultural Development Association and the West Acholi Cooperative Union. The latter was willing to help with job placement.</p>

IGA	Challenges	Opportunities	Risks	General Recommendations	Possible Constraints	Potential Partnerships Identified
Cooking and Catering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality important Need for start-up capital 		Assumption made: the cooking and catering sector will keep growing. If it stops, VT should consider stop teaching these skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for post-course training, apprenticeship and industrial training Include more focus on hotel management, customer care, English, bookkeeping, accounting and enhanced numeracy and literacy skills Help students access micro-credit 		Bomah Hotel, Acholi Inn, Pearl Afrique and Hotel Roma
Bicycle repair		Sustainable business (even if construction declines)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include this skill especially in urban areas 		BB Alla & Family (Aguede Road)
Shoe making / Leather work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality important Youth's negative perception of this skill Market flooded with foreign made products 	There exists a potential untapped market with local and regional demand for traditional shoes/ leather work	Youth might not choose it as primary activity due to cultural stereotypes (viewed as IGA for disabled)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not add it as a course offering outright Observe NRC's test of shoe making in Kocha-Goma (started in April, 2009) as it will provide useful information for future inclusion in the syllabus 		
Hairdressing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need help with renting space and buying supplies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service in demand 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for apprenticeships and opportunities to help learners enter this sector Link up with MFIs for micro-credit to begin operations 		

IGA	Challenges	Opportunities	Risks	General Recommendations	Possible Constraints	Potential Partnerships Identified
Welding and Metal Fabrication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer duration of training (2 years) and higher level of literacy required • High cost of training equipment and start-up toolkit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great demand due to construction in Gulu and at return sites 	<p>Assumption made: the construction sector will keep growing. Demand in villages may not be as great if local population cannot afford it.</p>			
Motor Vehicle Mechanics/ Repair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longer duration of training (2 years) and higher level of literacy required • High cost of training equipment and start-up toolkit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great demand for service due to poor condition of roads and presence of government and NGO vehicles 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gulu Youth Development Association (GYDA) graduates recommend automobile driving as complementary course. 		