

**GENDER IN E-TVET: EXTENT OF WOMEN'S**  
**PARTICIPATION AND PROPOSED**  
**STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE**

**NOV. 08 – MAR. 09**

Submitted by:  
QPerspective

**An Abstract**

## **Introduction**

This study is an effort at understanding the predominant conditions and challenges that contribute to the position of Jordan as the country with the lowest participation rate of females in the workforce in the world. The study was commissioned by Saskatchewan Institute of Science and Technology (SIAST) as part of the ongoing efforts of the "Building and Extending Skills and Training" (BEST) project currently being implemented in collaboration with the Jordanian Ministry of Labor and supported by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

The study provides comprehensive qualitative analysis of the status of Jordanian women in the Employment and Technical and Vocational Educational and Training (E-TVET) sector, and provides both general recommendations for the stakeholders in the sector. It also recommends a strategic direction for gender considerations of the BEST project.

Though desktop research was employed in the development of this study, the consulting team invested significant time and effort in the field; with the support and participation of the CIDA – BEST project team and the Gender Advisor commissioned by CIDA and SIAST, the team visited male only, female only, and coeducational vocational training centers in the South, Middle, and North regions. Community colleges under the umbrella of Al Balqa' Applied University were also visited, and programs offered through the vocational stream of the public schooling system were considered.

The team also conducted focus group discussions and interviews with the VTC's female and male students, parents, and VTC managers and administrators. The team visited the Aqaba College University to develop a better understanding of the public colleges system (all former community colleges and public technical colleges that were later placed under the umbrella of Al Balqa' Applied university and upgraded to offer Bachelor's degrees and specialized and technical programs).

Prior to the field visits, questionnaires targeting male and female students, parents, and administrators and managers were distributed to the VTCs, and were validated through the focus groups and interviews with the stakeholders who filled them out.

Meetings with key informants that influence programming, planning, policy, and decision-making related to vocational and technical education and employment were also conducted and some key informants also filled in a questionnaire.

Employers were also provided with a relevant questionnaire, and the Vocational Training Corporation volunteered to identify the main employers of VTC students, and to acquire their response to the questionnaires.

This comprehensive process to acquiring and validating relevant information proved highly informative, and supported the study's approach to assessing the overall status of E-TVET in Jordan, and using that understanding to focus on gender and on the potential gender interventions that the BEST project could implement.

## Executive Summary

Women's participation in the labor market in Jordan is becoming a serious concern to Jordanian decision-makers across all levels. For the past few years, and despite the country's efforts to encourage further participation of women in the work force, little changed and women continue to be underrepresented in most of the official economic, educational, social, technical, cultural, political, and health sectors and sub sectors. Of alarming proportions is the low representation level of women in planning and decision-making.

Vocational training centers, managed by the Vocational Training Corporation are present in all medium and high-density population centers in Jordan, and it would be safe to assume that the majority of Jordanian citizens have access to a vocational training center.

A predominant perception of vocational and technical training is that it is the last resort for people lacking in ability, seriousness, or opportunity (students who don't perform well at school, university graduates who cannot find jobs, housewives facing economic hardship or who have more time at hand, and/ or inadequately qualified employees looking for career change, or self and career development). This perception largely reflects the reality on the ground considering that the Jordanian Formal Educational System mostly concentrates on developing and measuring memory and mathematical skills, and largely neglects vocational aptitude and skills.

Moreover, students are accepted at universities according to the results of a standardized test (Tawjihi) that does not produce any assessment of the separate skills and capabilities of students, and the majority of students at public universities and colleges are placed into their majors and specialties according to the general average of all exams under Tawjihi.

This highly flawed measure for placement of students is one of the major contributors to inadequate skill development and subsequent unemployment amongst a large number of university graduates, with women university graduates constituting the largest unemployed segment amongst women.

The largest employer of women in Jordan is the public sector, and graduates of universities and colleges are mostly employed through the Civil Service Bureau – a governmental bureaucracy that has a waiting line of applicants stretching in certain specializations up to 8 years.

The consulting team conducted field visits and held meetings with VTC and community colleges managers, students, and parents of enrolled male and female students. This process produced valuable information, most of which was validated through the questionnaires. Main observations include:

- Vocational and technical training at the VTCs continue to be last resorts for inadequately qualified Jordanian men and women; nonetheless, there is strong evidence to suggest that there is a growing awareness amongst middle, lower middle, and lower socio-economic classes of the career and long-term revenue potential of vocational and technical disciplines.
- There does exist some cultural barriers related to women's involvement in vocational and technical education and work, especially when related to non-conventional trades or new vocations. However, these barriers can be addressed with proper information dissemination and awareness.

- o The main, predominant, and widespread reasons behind women's low participation in vocational and technical training and education are quite different from the widely accepted cultural justification. As a matter of fact, the availability of safe, consistent, and free (or highly subsidized) transportation to women was sighted as the most important reason for the low participation rate of women. Many factors, some of which are cultural, contribute to the large weight of importance students, parents, administrators and managers, and many key informants placed on transportation. These include:
  - a. Inaccessibility to centers through public transportation: A large number of centers are located at significantly far distances from urban and semi-rural centers, and it is not unusual that female students often require to take more than one public transportation means to get to their center. Also, Jordanian communities are widely spread across the country, and public transportation does not adequately cover these areas, posing additional constraints on women.
  - b. Time constraints and mobility: The majority of women interviewed indicated that they have to be home at safe hours (mostly before dark), and unreliable public transportation (or inconsistent working hours) put them at risk of arriving home late. Furthermore, most women indicated that they suffer from restricted mobility, making them hesitant or unwilling to apply to jobs or training programs that require internal and external travel.
  - c. Transportation cost–wage ratio: Women trainees at vocational centers, as well as those working in vocational and technical jobs, receive some of the lowest wages in Jordan. The cost of transportation in itself highly compromises the economic feasibility of their work.

The limited scope and time provided for the study poses certain restrictions on validating some of the observations, and consequently some of the recommendations. Nonetheless, the recommendations for this report reach out to more than one category that directly affect the participation of women in vocational and technical training and employment. The general recommendations aim to:

- a- Provide insight on possible initiatives and actions that could lead to increased participation of women in technical and vocational training and employment on the immediate and medium run.
- b- Provide possible venues for increasing women's participation in non–conventional trades and technologies specifically.
- c- Propose means to guarantee that women remain employed after marriage and giving birth.
- d- Develop awareness on new trades that are non–conventional for women and that have significant revenue, growth, and sustainability potential.

With regards to the BEST project, the project will be working closely with policy and decision-makers at the national level, and will concentrate on four major components:

- Technical Assistance of Ministry of Labour and Experts Fund
- Instructional and Curriculum Capacity Building and Development
- Support for Employer Driven Funding Mechanism (TEF)
- Project Management

Based on the above, it is recommended that the BEST team concentrates on the following strategic goals:

- **GOAL1:** Assessing current policies, laws, and employment practices that contribute to or restrict women's participation in Technical and Vocational education, training, and employment (E-TVET).

**Recommended Activities:**

- Identifying a pool of gender-sensitive experts in labour laws and policies, social services and social psychology, macro and micro economics, health, recruitment and human resource management, business development, media, education and higher education.
- Contracting these experts to conduct single discipline and cross-disciplinary assessments of current laws, policies, and employment practices that promote or restrict women's participation in technical and E-TVET.
- Empowering the Gender Unit at the Ministry of Labour to participate in all above activities, and to provide resources and insight on policy challenges and best practices.
- **GOAL2:** Gender sensitizing and mainstreaming national E-TVET policies and employment practices.

**Recommended Activities:**

- Developing specialized national gender taskforces to review assessments and propose actions to address current laws, policies, and employment practices in a manner that promote women's participation in E-TVET, and producing achievable outcomes and measurable targets.
- Identifying and contracting implementing partners for the above actions.
- Identifying and recruiting champions amongst decision makers, legislators, major public and private sector employers and employment policy-makers to ensure success of above actions.
- Empowering the Gender Unit at the Ministry of Labour to facilitate communications of contracted experts with national decision-makers and legislators, women action groups, relevant civil society entities, private and public sector employers, and media agencies.

- Empowering the Gender Unit at the Ministry of Labour to develop and implement focused and mass awareness raising campaigns promoting the gender sensitization efforts, and consequently, the successful changes made to policies, laws, and employment practices.
  - Establishing a research component within the Gender Unit of Ministry of Labour to conduct follow up assessments and tracer studies on the above actions, and to create a database with baseline indicators for sustainable measurement of different successes and challenges.
- **GOAL3:** Gender sensitizing the TVET programming and educational curriculum

**Recommended Activities:**

- Creating specialized national gender taskforces comprising gender, education, technical and soft skills training, and E-TVET experts to conduct gender assessments of training and educational programs and curricula offered by the Ministry of Education and Al Balqa' Applied University system of community colleges.
- Identifying and contracting credible entities to gender sensitize targeted programs and curricula in non-conventional areas deemed promising for women's participation in E-TVET.
- Identifying and contracting credible entities to develop activities to orient training and education providers on new curricula and on results-based implementation of gender-sensitized programs.
- Identifying and recruiting champions amongst decision makers in the Ministry of Education, Al Balqa' Applied University, and other relevant knowledge providers to ensure success of above action.
- Empowering the Gender Unit at the Ministry of Labour to facilitate communications of contracted experts with the concerned educational and training bodies.
- Empowering the Gender Unit at the Ministry of Labour to develop and implement focused and mass awareness raising campaigns promoting the enrollment of women in the gender-sensitized programs.
- Supporting the establishment and/ or empowerment of Gender Units at the Ministry of Education and at Al Balqa' Applied University to conduct follow up assessments and tracer studies on the impact of the new curricula and programs on women's participation, to conduct tracer studies on graduates of the gender sensitized programs and curricula, and to create a database with baseline indicators for sustainable measurement of different successes and challenges.
- Collaborating with the World Bank project dedicated to reforming the Vocational Training Cooperation and Vocational Training Centers on gender-sensitizing their programs and curricula.

- **GOAL4:** Mainstreaming gender budgeting practices within national E-TVET institutions and initiatives.

**Recommended Activities:**

- Identifying gender budgeting expert entities and individuals with a track record of achievement in gender budgeting.
  - Identifying major public entities related to E-TVET with gender-blind financial planning and budgeting.
  - Recruiting those experts to develop gender budgeting assessments of major E-TVET entities, and to develop standardized guidelines for gender budgeting practices for those organizations.
  - Recruiting qualified experts to apply gender budgeting practices at designated E-TVET entities, and to build the capacity of those organizations to conduct gender budgets and gender audits in the future.
  - Empowering the Gender Unit at the Ministry of Labour to introduce gender budgeting and gender audits at the Ministry.
  - Empowering the Gender Unit at the Ministry to develop, alongside experts, relevant material on gender budgeting and gender audits targeting E-TVET stakeholders, and to promote these practices within the targeted entities. (Pilots with the private sector are recommended).
- **GOALS5:** Advocating for equitable representation of women in policy and decision making bodies related to E-TVET.

**Recommended Activities:**

- Conducting quantitative and qualitative assessments on the status of women's representation in the different councils, committees, management teams, boards, and other decision and policy-making structures at the national level.
- Developing a three-year action plan to promote women's equitable representation on these structures, stating clear measurable quantitative and qualitative targets.
- Identifying male and female champions within these structures as well as external champions with influence on them, and recruiting them to advocate for successful undertaking of required actions within the three year plan.
- Developing capacity building programs for existing and potential women participants on gender dimensions of E-TVET, consensus building, lobbying and advocacy, and other skills required for effective and gender – sensitive policy and decision making.

- Collaborating with the World Bank project dedicated to reforming the Vocational Training Cooperation and Vocational Training Centers on ensuring equitable participation of qualified women across all levels of policy and decision-making within the new system.