



# STEP Report Series

## - No. 2 -

**LEARNING FORUM - CHALLENGES, SOLUTIONS, AND LESSONS  
LEARNED IN DELIVERY OF NON-FORMAL SKILLS TRAINING IN MALAWI**





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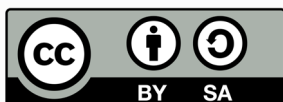
## LEARNING FORUM - CHALLENGES, SOLUTIONS, AND LESSONS LEARNED IN DELIVERY OF NON-FORMAL SKILLS TRAINING IN MALAWI

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## Learning Forum - Challenges, Solutions, and Lessons Learned in Delivery of Non-Formal Skills Training In Malawi.

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# Table of Contents

<b>Acronyms.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1 Panellists.....	7
1.2 Background: Non-formal training in Malawi .....	7
<b>Training Centre Management .....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1 What strategies can training centres delivering non-formal training use to achieve financial sustainability? .....	9
2.2 How can training centres identify, hire, train and retain staff? .....	10
2.3 How can training centres running non-formal training effectively identify trainees?.....	10
<b>Trainees .....</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1 How can access and equity be ensured in the application process? .....	12
3.2 How can the safety and well-being of trainees be ensured during the training process? .....	12
<b>Skills and Entrepreneurship Training.....</b>	<b>14</b>
4.1 What are the different training approaches used to successfully deliver skills training to vulnerable populations? .....	14
4.2 How can training centres identify the appropriate skills to train in their geographical area? .....	14
4.3 How can training centres incorporate entrepreneurship skills into their overall training programmes? .....	15
4.4 How can training centres improve the assessment and certification process of trainees?.....	15
<b>Monitoring of Alumni and Evaluation of Training Programmes.....</b>	<b>17</b>
5.1 How can centres monitor trainees who have completed training courses?.....	17
5.2 What can training centres learn from the monitoring of trainees and graduates process? .....	17
5.3 What key factors are indicators of success for the trainees who have started businesses or gained employment? .....	18
<b>Purchase and Distribution of Business Start-Up Kits .....</b>	<b>19</b>
6.1 What are the challenges, solutions, and lessons learned in purchasing and distributing business start-up kits? .....	19
6.2 How can training centres identify what is needed in business start-up kit? .....	19
<b>Transition to Work .....</b>	<b>20</b>
7.1 How can training centres best support graduates to be successful after graduation? .....	20
7.2 How can training centres help graduates transition to decent work? .....	21
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Annex 1: Learning Forum Participants .....</b>	<b>24</b>

## Acronyms

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<b>DIPD</b>	Development and Integration of Persons with Disabilities
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>MSCE</b>	Malawi School Certificate of Education
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organisations
<b>SPVET</b>	Solar Photovoltaic Electrical Technician Programme
<b>STEP</b>	Strengthening Technical Education Programme
<b>TEVET</b>	Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training
<b>TEVETA</b>	Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training Authority
<b>UNESCO</b>	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

# Introduction

In October 2019 a 2-day Learning Forum for non-formal Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training (TEVET) service providers was held in Lilongwe. The Learning Forum was organised and facilitated by the European Union (EU) funded Strengthening Technical Education Programme (STEP). 14 TEVET training centres attended the Learning Forum to collaborate and share their experience of working in non-formal TEVET sector in Malawi. The objectives of the Learning Forum were:

1. to facilitate learning among TEVET service providers to improve training centre operations and results
2. to capture and document best practices and results of STEP supported bursary and grant programmes

This paper will outline the key findings from the Learning Forum; the challenges, solutions, and lessons learnt.

## 1.1 Panellists

Thanks to all the panellists for sharing their experiences and insights. The panellists were from the following centres: African Vision Malawi, Don Bosco Youth Training Centre, Miracle Technical Institute, Prison Fellowship, Development and Integration of Persons with Disabilities (DIPD), There is Hope, Kurya Ndiko Uko, Prison Fellowship, Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund, Student Driven Solutions, Zayed Solar Academy, SOS Children's Village, Habitat for Humanity, Samaritan Trust, and the Danish Trade Union Council for International Development Cooperation (LO/FTF Council).

## 1.2 Background: Non-formal training in Malawi

Malawi is facing an enormous challenge of youth unemployment. An estimated 300,000-500,000 youth are entering the labour market every year and the rate of job creation is far from matching these numbers. Skills training cannot alone create all these jobs but it can contribute. There is a high demand for all types of skills training in Malawi amongst people from different backgrounds, skills and education levels, and abilities. Non-formal training can help to bridge the gaps in skills training provision. There is especially a need to provide equitable access to skills training for women and girls and people living with disabilities which non-formal training can help to address.

The term non-formal training refers to learning opportunities delivered by institutions in a structured and planned manner which complements the formal training system. In Malawi, there is a diverse group of institutions including private training centres, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and community support centres which offer a broad range of non-formal technical and vocational skills training. The training is often specialised in certain skills, targeted those most in need of support, and rooted in the needs of the community. From a centre training women in solar panel installation to an organisation dedicated to getting children off the streets and into skilled employment, these training organisations vary widely in their approaches but what they share is the passion of the people driving them, people dedicated to improving lives through specialised skills training.

They reach communities and trainees who cannot access the formal apprenticeship training, often through short and flexible courses in hard to reach rural areas. They complement formal training and help bridge the gap between the high demand for skills training and a low supply of courses and work placements.



Holding all-women training programmes is an approach to ensure women access quality education and build their self-confidence. Zayed Solar Academy has run two all-women solar technician programmes.

# Training Centre Management

## 2.1 What strategies can training centres delivering non-formal training use to achieve financial sustainability?

### Solutions and lessons learnt:

1. Training centres delivering non-formal training charge a wide range of tuition fees, from those offering free courses to those charging market rates, however even those centres charging market rates have found the fees are not enough to cover running costs and other sources of funding are required. Many of the centres previously offering free courses have experienced high drop-out rates due to a low level of commitment from trainees. They found that trainees were not valuing the training so they have instead moved to a model where trainees pay a nominal commitment fee, which has improved trainee graduation rates.
2. Training centres can use their physical assets for income-generating activities. This can range from hiring out the whole training centre for workshops and events to hiring out rooms, equipment, vehicles, graduation gowns, and any other assets.
3. Training centres can run their training workshops as income-generating businesses. Examples include bakeries, farms, restaurants, and mechanics, construction, and carpentry workshops all making and selling products and services that can add to the income of the training centre. The benefit of this model is that trainees get to learn and practise practical and entrepreneurial skills throughout their course. The challenge of this model is finding a way of calculating and sharing business profits that is acceptable for all parties involved. Different centres have different approaches to share profits from these businesses. Some centres retain all profits, arguing these are required to cover the training expenses and keep fees low. Others work out a profit-sharing model with trainers and others with staff as well as trainees. Almost all ensure all capital costs are paid for from the income. Another challenge is ensuring the quality of the training remains paramount and staff do not prioritise business activities over teaching. One centre addresses this by hiring separate staff to manage the income-generating businesses so teaching staff do not have this extra responsibility and can focus on teaching.
4. Donors, grants, and benefactors provide funding.
5. Efficient spending and cost-saving are also important. Some centres have strict procurement processes to achieve cost savings and procurement plans are reviewed and approved by procurement committees.
6. One centre has a novel approach to reduce staffing costs, using a franchise model for apprenticeship training. The centre provides workshops and equipment to craftspeople in exchange for them training their trainees as apprentices.



## 2.2 How can training centres identify, hire, train and retain staff?

### Challenges:

- Many training centres have experienced challenges with attracting the best staff and high staff turnover. When staff leave during a course and there is a delay in finding a replacement and the quality of the training can be affected.
- Centres have experienced delays from the technical, entrepreneurial, and vocational education and training authority (TEVETA) in supplying or recommending qualified instructors.
- Poor staff misconduct and inappropriate behaviour is another challenge. One training centre had an incident where an instructor that had been selected by TEVETA had a relationship with a trainee. This was quickly discovered and the instructor was fired.

### Solutions / lessons learnt:

1. Offering competitive salaries.
2. Offering training and progression opportunities.
3. Monitoring staff performance and rewarding good performance with recognition and monetary rewards.
4. In cases where TEVETA is obliged to identify instructors, ensure that the training centre is also involved in the hiring process.
5. Conducting police checks of all potential instructors.
6. To prevent staff and trainee misconduct, it is necessary to have a clear code of conduct for all staff and trainees and to offer training to staff and trainees on the codes of conduct. The Ministry of Labour, Skills, and Innovation has developed TEVET codes of conduct that can be used by training centres delivering non-formal training <https://www.stepmalawi.com/resources/orientation-toolkit/>

## 2.3 How can training centres running non-formal training effectively identify trainees?

### Challenges:

- The centres have diverse criteria for identifying and selecting trainees, which is often decided in agreement with the funders of the training. Unlike the formal apprenticeship-training scheme, which aims to recruit the most qualified trainees, many of the non-formal training service providers target beneficiaries that meet certain social and economic criteria. This creates a unique set of challenges in identifying the trainees who match their criteria and in identifying those most in need.
- There is a high demand for skills training resulting in a high number of applications for training courses.
- Marketing the courses and offering an open application process can result in uncommitted applicants who later drop out.
- Trainees from some social and economic groups, for example, women and people living with disabilities, have not been able to utilise their skills after graduation due to restrictive social norms and stereotypes.
- Identifying vulnerable trainees through stakeholders in the community (local leaders, teachers) is problematic as they can select trainees who do not meet the criteria of vulnerable and instead select friends and family.

### Solutions / Lessons learnt:

1. There is no one size fits all approach for identifying trainees. Training centres need to adapt to the situation in their area and network with local organisations, NGOs, schools, government social welfare, chiefs, and village or area development committees. However, centres should aim to mitigate any bias and nepotism in recommendations by not relying only on one source of information but triangulating recommendations from a variety of sources.
2. School outreach workers can help to identify trainees who meet the criteria. School administration offices or principals will often have good insight into which trainees fit an organisation's criteria and can help identify the most vulnerable, dropouts, or orphans.
3. Some centres have experienced applicants lying on the application forms in order to fit the selection criteria. To prevent this, they no longer openly communicate the selection criteria. Another solution is to request copies of the applicants' national ID cards as proof of age.
4. Some centres have found it beneficial to not disclose any course benefits (e.g. grants, kits, loans) to avoid trainees signing up for only the benefits and not the training.
5. Some centres have experienced perpetual trainees – who apply for and complete multiple courses without utilising the skills. Centres recommend asking applicants about their past training on applications to identify those most in need of the training. Applicants will often list previous training, seeing the extra experience as a positive, but this can help eliminate perpetual trainees.
6. An alternative approach to identifying and shortlisting trainees is to instead open the training to all applicants. Some centres have found the uncommitted trainees will often drop out in the early phase of the course.
7. Training centres can address social blockages and gender stereotypes by engaging with families and communities, outreach work, and using positive role models.
8. Training centres should challenge donor selection criteria if it they feel it does not fit the local context.

Training centres need to adapt to the situation in their area and network with local organisations, NGOs, schools, government social welfare, chiefs, and village or area development committees.



## Trainees

### 3.1 How can access and equity be ensured in the application process?

#### Solutions / Lessons learnt:

1. Increase the number of trainee placements for under-represented groups.
2. Targeted outreach to under-represented social groups: e.g. through school outreach, outreach at markets, outreach events, etc. One organisation that targets training to street children finds peer-to-peer outreach the most successful approach. Skills demonstrations at outreach events are another useful tool for informing applicants of the skills outcomes. It is also recommended to inform applicants if the training will be suitable for those with low literacy levels so illiterate applicants are not deterred from applying.
3. Galvanise the gatekeepers: Secure family and community support for under-represented social groups to apply for the training, e.g. women and people living with disabilities. Suggestions for this include: hosting sensitisation and awareness sessions in rural communities, involving local chiefs and families in the application process, using role models to challenge gender stereotypes, and behavioural change communications (e.g. the Za'thu Pa Wailesi radio drama featured storyline where a female character enters TEVET training).
4. Make the training accessible: It is difficult for some groups of people to attend training during normal working hours; offering part-time courses or courses with evening, weekend or flexible hours can make the training more accessible. Another suggestion is to offer community-based or outreach training. A further suggestion is to offer bridging programmes – supporting trainees to secure their high school certificate (MSCE in Malawi) first before starting or after completing their course.
5. Assist applicants with the application process: e.g. assisting applicants with the TEVETA application at outreach events – e.g. through taking photos for trainees to attach to their applications. Another suggestion is to use practical exercises in the interview process. It is also suggested to use multiple stakeholders to design the application process and to process applications to avoid any inherent bias.

### 3.2 How can the safety and well-being of trainees be ensured during the training process?

#### Solutions / Lessons learnt:

1. Training centres should have a clear code of conduct for staff and trainees that includes a policy on the prevention of sexual violence. The Ministry of Labour, Skills, and Innovation has developed TEVET codes of conduct that can be used by training centres: <https://www.stepmalawi.com/resources/orientation-toolkit/>
2. Training centres should provide an orientation for trainees and for staff that informs them of the codes of conduct and sexual violence policy. The Ministry of Labour, Skills, and Innovation has developed a TEVET orientation programme that can be used by training centres: <https://www.stepmalawi.com/resources/orientation-toolkit/>
3. The safety of trainees on attachment placements is also a concern. Training centres can sign memorandums of understanding with organisations and businesses offering attachment placements and ensure they contain adequate codes of conduct and health and safety

policies. Centres can also conduct site visits to check the safety of attachment placements, e.g. to check if the codes of conduct and health and safety policies are adhered to and to check the provision of toilets, quality of accommodation, equipment, and safety clothing, etc. Another recommendation is to provide allowances to trainees on attachments to avoid making trainees vulnerable to exploitation.

4. Training centres can provide pastoral care and support trainees with psychosocial issues, addictions, life skills training, sexual and reproductive health (SRH) training, and HIV prevention. If they do not have the appropriate professional background in this area, it is possible to request organizations such as Marie Stopes (Banja La Mtsogolo in Malawi) or Population Services International (PSI) to run the comprehensive sexuality education programmes.
5. The training centres should have a health and safety policy and follow it. This should include fire safety training, the provision of first aid kits and protective wear e.g. work suits and boots, check on the safety of buildings (e.g. doors should open to the outside, etc.)
6. Training centres can hire matrons for female boarding facilities.
7. Training centres can provide sanitary products to female trainees. This will help ensure the attendance of trainees.
8. Training centres should provide access for persons with physical disabilities.



Supporting trainees to gain practical experiences in a business supports them in applying their learned skills and obtaining employment. Kurya Ndiko Uko bakery programme includes an attachment at the local bakery for a one-month period.



## Skills and Entrepreneurship Training

### 4.1 What are the different training approaches used to successfully deliver skills training to vulnerable populations?

#### Challenges:

- People living with disabilities face numerous challenges of mobility, financial means, and discrimination. Unique approaches are required to ensure they have access to skills training
- Although the TEVET policy calls for an increase in women's access to skills training, challenges that limit women's access remain. These include the required MSCE certificate to enter formal skills training, domestic chores that limit the time that women have, lack of access to transport, lack of information on training options, discrimination, and the burden of caring for children, elderly, community members, and the ill.

#### Solutions

1. Training centres have tried various approaches to reach vulnerable populations taking their life circumstances into consideration.
2. Outreach training is used by one training centre where skills instructors travel twice weekly to a remote village to run training for women to be solar technicians. This allows women to manage their homes and families without the requirement of travel or having to leave to a larger centre to attain the training.
3. A training centre that supports persons with disabilities runs an apprenticeship model in the local area. An accomplished skilled or craftsperson is identified to pair with a student. The student works at the business centre with the craftsperson and learns the skills first-hand. At the same time, the TEVETA approved curriculum is followed. This is a positive model because it allows the student to stay in the community.
4. Women-only skills training is offered by one centre. This model supports women to gain confidence and build their self-esteem. It also reduces opportunities for sexual exploitation, harassment, and assault.
5. Part-time skills training can allow students to continue businesses they have already started. Some training centres run training twice weekly during the week while others use the weekend at formal training centres to deliver the training.

### 4.2 How can training centres identify the appropriate skills to train in their geographical area?

#### Solutions / Lessons learnt:

1. Centres can conduct a market needs assessment to identify the skills demanded and required in the communities and then assess the level of interest of community members to learn those skills.
2. Centres can conduct baseline studies to identify what skills are demanded amongst the trainees and the trainees' baseline abilities and literacy levels. They can then design training programmes that are appropriate to the needs and baseline abilities of the trainees. However, some training centres warn that the skills trainees want to learn do not always match those needed in the communities. Often trainees will only identify a skill they have

seen or heard of. Training centres should encourage trainees to learn the skills demanded in their communities to maximise the trainee's chances of success after graduation.

3. Centres need to monitor and track skills training conducted in the past. Good monitoring will ensure there is not an oversaturation of certain skills in a geographical area.

#### 4.3 How can training centres incorporate entrepreneurship skills into their overall training programmes?

##### **Solutions / Lessons learnt:**

1. Training centres can integrate entrepreneurial skills into practical training. E.g. calculating the costs of the materials needed to make a finished product.
2. Training centres can have a dedicated entrepreneurship-training course or component.
3. Training centres can encourage trainees to practise market research during their training.
4. Training centres can train their instructors in entrepreneurship training.
5. Training centres can identify a trainer to specifically take charge of the entrepreneurship component.
6. Training centres can advise TEVETA to change its curriculum to focus more on entrepreneurial skills.
7. Training centres can facilitate savings and loans clubs amongst trainees.

#### 4.4 How can training centres improve the assessment and certification process of trainees?

##### **Challenges:**

- Many training centres have experienced delays in TEVETA assessing trainees.
- Many training centres have experienced delays in certification from TEVETA.
- Some training centres have found TEVETA assessors do not have the necessary background in the sector that is being assessed.
- There are reports of some employers not recognising or valuing non-formal TEVETA accredited certificates.
- There is limited availability of quality attachment placements, especially for the short attachments necessary for many non-formal training courses.
- Some training centres report gender imbalance in attachment placements with a lack of placements for female trainees. For example, one training centre experienced difficulty in finding placements for female trainees at bakeries as most of the large bakeries in Malawi employ only males.

##### **Solutions / Lessons learnt**

1. Many training centres provide testimonials for graduates whose record of achievement/certificates are delayed. The trainees can use these testimonials for job applications whilst they await their official certificates.
2. Training centres can sensitise the industry on non-formal TEVET and certification. The industry can be engaged in the curriculum and assessment development, training delivery, and attachments.

3. Training centres, donors and stakeholders can lobby TEVETA for a unified assessment and certification of trainees encompassing all formal and non-formal training.
4. Training centres, donors and stakeholders can lobby TEVETA to prioritize the assessment and certification of student process to ensure a swift and professional process.
5. Many training centres report improved service delivery from TEVETA if they maintain close dialogue and engagement with them.



Training centres can have some additional income by selling the products produced during the classes. Sam's Village trainees in tinsmith showcase some of the products that are ready for purchase by the community.

## Monitoring of Alumni and Evaluation of Training Programmes

### 5.1 How can centres monitor trainees who have completed training courses?

#### Challenges:

- Keeping in contact with graduates for monitoring can be a challenge. Graduates move, young women especially will often re-locate after getting married, and many trainees do not have phones or access to phones.
- Without phone contact, face-to-face monitoring is often the only option but this is costly and time-consuming.
- It can be difficult for graduates to give open and honest feedback during home visits when family members are present.

#### Solutions / Lessons learnt:

1. The training centres use Facebook and WhatsApp for monitoring when graduates have phone/internet access but as phone access is limited other communication methods are necessary.
2. Home visits with graduates can be costly and difficult to coordinate. One training centre instead conducts monthly group visits at a set location. Another uses locally based committees to arrange home visits or to observe businesses in the trading centres. Other suggestions include seeking community feedback and employer or attachment placement feedback.
3. One training centre tackled the issue of graduates not giving honest feedback when friends and family are present at home visits by requesting private meetings with graduates. When necessary they will politely ask family members to leave so the graduate can speak at ease.
4. As monitoring can be very time consuming, training centres engage many different members of staff to assist with the workload, including interns, monitoring and evaluation officers, instructors, and social welfare officers.

### 5.2 What can training centres learn from the monitoring of trainees and graduates process?

#### Solutions / Lessons learnt:

1. Monitoring can help centres to identify failings in their training and where they need to improve.
2. Monitoring can help training centres to identify graduates who are struggling and might need more support or to return to the centre for further training. One training centre found graduates who do not progress often suffer from low self-esteem or social problems.
3. Monitoring has helped some training centres to identify why some trainees fail to succeed and use their skills after graduation. These include a mismatch between trainee preferences for courses and community skill needs, trainees not valuing free training, trainees changing their courses regularly, isolated graduates in rural locations not finding enough demand for their skills, unplanned and unwanted pregnancy amongst female trainees and graduates, graduates spending business start-up grants on other needs, e.g. emergencies.



The centres can then identify solutions to some of these problems. These include:

- a. Partnering isolated graduates with graduates based in trading centres to share work orders.
- b. Trialling different options for delivery of start-up kits/funds to identify the most successful model for the context.
- c. Changing the course timetable to allow young mothers to access training.
- d. Sourcing funding to build a women and girls' hostel to allow women and girls to complete their training with not having to travel or to do the expected chores at the household.
- e. Ensuring skills training remains relevant to community needs.
- f. Asking trainees to contribute a small fee for the training so they commit to complete the training.
- g. Need for selective targeting and affirmative action to reach some underrepresented groups with training.

### 5.3 What key factors are indicators of success for the trainees who have started businesses or gained employment?

#### Solutions / Lessons learnt:

1. Training centres can improve the employment options for their graduates by establishing good relationships with prospective employers in their local areas.
2. Building a strong reputation and increasing the visibility of the training centre is also important in increasing opportunities for graduates. Visibility of the training centre is also important amongst their wider communities. One organisation that focuses on training street children found the community more accepting of their graduates after they raised awareness of the issues street children face and the work of the training centre through media articles.
3. Graduates having access to finance for their business start-up costs is another important factor. Training centres have trialled multiple options for loans and grants to varying degrees of success and implementation challenges. This topic is discussed in depth in section 6 of this document.
4. The motivation, self-confidence, and determination of the trainees are also important factors. Training centres can motivate trainees by providing them with role models, for example by inviting successful alumni back to give a talk to the trainees. The Ministry of Labour, Skills, and Innovation has developed a pamphlet and a poster featuring TEVET role models which can be downloaded and printed: <https://www.stepmalawi.com/resources/orientation-toolkit/>
5. Career guidance, entrepreneurship training, and life skills training are also important in improving the confidence of trainees. Training centres should at the least provide guidance to trainees on interview techniques and the importance of being presentable.
6. Another important factor in the success of graduates is their location. Many training centres have found graduates located near trading centres tend to be more successful due to greater employment and entrepreneurship opportunities compared to isolated graduates in rural communities.
7. The quality of training attachments is another important factor in the success of trainees after graduation.
8. One training centre uses a franchise teaching model and credits this model with greater rates of employment amongst its graduates. Instead of hiring trainers, the centre provides workshop space to established local businesses and tradespeople and in exchange they train the centre's trainees. The businesses and tradespeople will often take the trainees on as staff when they graduate.

## Purchase and Distribution of Business Start-Up Kits

### 6.1 What are the challenges, solutions, and lessons learned in purchasing and distributing business start-up kits?

#### Challenges / Solutions / Lessons learnt:

1. One major challenge in procuring start-up kits is the lack of availability and a wide range of prices and quality for the equipment.
2. Some training centres have resorted to importing some equipment but this is often an expensive option if training centres have to pay the import taxes. A suggested solution to this is to seek VAT exception from the Malawi Revenue Authority. EU funded programmes can seek support from the National Authorising Office with this process.
3. Some organisations have directives from donors to only use certain VAT free suppliers, however, the selected suppliers can often be more expensive than the open market. A suggested solution is to challenge donors' directives by writing to them to explain the problem and propose alternatives. Another solution for larger quantities is to import duty-free or source items direct from suppliers.
4. Many centres have found their graduates sell their kits after graduation. A suggested solution to this is to issue the kits at the start of the course so the tools are used during the training. The trainees learn how to use and maintain the tools and will appreciate their importance to their trade. They can also use their tools for piecework/entrepreneurship to earn start-up capital. Also, as the tools are used they are devalued and so selling them becomes a less desirable option.

### 6.2 How can training centres identify what is needed in business start-up kit?

#### Solutions/Lessons learnt:

1. Training centres should conduct market assessments to assess what tools and equipment are available.
2. Training centres should consult franchisers and trainers on what tools and equipment they recommend for their respective trades.
3. Training centres should consult trainees on what tools and equipment they would prefer. Some training centres have found it beneficial to engage their trainees in researching, testing and purchasing tools. They have found trainees value the tools more if they are engaged in their procurement.
4. Training centres should consult qualified and established tradespeople/entrepreneurs in the relevant fields and try to match their equipment.
5. Training centres can establish a procurement process to make cost savings.
6. TEVETA Service Centres provide a list of required tools and materials for training as well as business start-up kits. It was found that these are often larger than is necessary and the cost of these tools is beyond the means of the training centres.

## Transition to Work

### 7.1 How can training centres best support graduates to be successful after graduation?

#### **Solutions / Lessons learnt:**

Training centres have trialled multiple options for postgraduate support with differing results:

1. **Loans:** Centres have trialled offering business start-up loans to graduates but the main problem with this approach is graduates failing to pay back the loans. A suggested solution is to provide affordable, low-interest loans and to offer a grace period of 2-6 months before graduates have to start repayments. However it is unlikely this will significantly reduce the number of graduates defaulting on their loans. There is also a challenge in the complexity and workload involved in the centres managing the loans. A suggestion is for centres to instead help facilitate loans from expert external suppliers, either through connecting graduates with banks/ financial centres or the training centres putting up collateral for graduate's loans. Another suggestion is to direct trainees to village savings and loan groups to source loans or assist trainees to establish their own village savings and loans groups.
2. **Grants:** Some centres have accepted that loans are unlikely to be repaid so instead now offer smaller grants, ranging from 20,000 to 50,000 MWK. The risk in this approach is the graduates using the grant for other financial needs instead of establishing a business. One solution offered to this issue is for the graduates to write a business plan during their course with a detailed list of equipment, materials, and costs. The training centre can then procure the equipment on behalf of the graduate. Another is to delay the issuing of grants until 6 months after graduation and only issue them on the condition the graduate has started a business.
3. **Equipment / start-up kits:** Some training centres purchase equipment or start-up kits instead of loans or grants but this option also has some challenges as listed above.
4. **Gifting products:** Some training centres gift some of the items trainees produce during their course to the trainees. The trainees can use these items as examples of their work or they can sell them to generate business start-up funds.
5. **Living support:** Some donor-funded courses provide a living allowance to trainees. There is an option for training centres to withhold a small proportion to build a start-up capital fund for trainees after they graduate.
6. **Outside sources:** Another suggestion is for centres to support trainees with applications for external grants/loans/competitions etc. and for centres to lobby grant providers to include TEVET graduates. One organisation successfully lobbied Mzuzu Entrepreneurship Hub to provide seed capital for TEVET graduates. Another centre supported trainees with their applications for the Jobs for Youth programme.
7. **Provide a comprehensive life skills course to complement the skills training.** Topics such as sexual and reproductive health, parenting, nutrition, career counselling, CV writing, interviewing are all areas trainees need to be successful after graduation.

## 7.2 How can training centres help graduates transition to decent work?

### Challenges:

- Poor communication networks, low mobile phone penetration, and high youth mobility make it difficult for training centres to maintain contact with graduates and assist them in finding work.
- Graduates are held back from applying for jobs when their certificates from TEVETA are delayed.
- The lack of labour rights training (rights at work, social security, social dialogue, minimum wage) at most TEVET centres leaves graduates unaware of their rights in the workplace and ill-equipped to distinguish if their work qualifies as decent.
- There is an additional challenge for female TEVET graduates in securing decent work in trades that are traditionally seen as male.

### Solutions:

1. Training centres should equip trainees with the skills necessary in the work-place through a strong curriculum designed to meet industry needs.
2. Training centres should aim to have their courses and assessments accredited so the industry recognises and respects their graduates' certificates and qualifications.
3. Training centres should facilitate safe, quality attachments for trainees to gain experience and work-based competencies.
4. Training centres should use monitoring and evaluation to facilitate evidence-based decision-making and continuously work to improve their courses and services. Training centres have found their monitoring and evaluation is more effective when there is regular follow up with graduates and when all training centre staff are involved and accountable.
5. Training centres can introduce labour rights and trade union training.
6. As employment opportunities are low in Malawi, training centres should deliver entrepreneurship training to all trainees and encourage them to start businesses after graduation.
7. Training centres can provide careers guidance and job mentorship to trainees and graduates.
8. Training centres should aim to combat the negative gender stereotypes that block female graduates from utilising their skills or entering the workplace in trades that are traditionally seen as male. They can use communication platforms, female role models, outreach events and activities to sensitise communities on gender equality in the TEVET sector.
9. Training centres can encourage local companies to adopt a positive bias recruitment policy and allocate a certain amount of jobs for women and people living with disabilities.
10. Training centres can link trainees and graduates with existing networks and youth networks that can assist them in finding work.
11. Training centres can lobby TEVETA to improve their support to the non-formal training sector and to allow non-formal trainees and graduates access to their employer database (Labour Market Information System – LMIS.)
12. Training centres can provide Internet and digital access to trainees so they can access job-seeking websites.



13. Training centres can create WhatsApp groups to share job opportunities with graduates.
14. Training centre can create a database of graduates and share it with the district labour office so they can disseminate any relevant job opportunities.
15. Training centres can organise job fairs and invite local employers to meet trainees and graduates.
16. Training centres that focus their training on certain groups of people can advocate for government policy change on issues that block those groups from securing decent work. One training centre advocated for government policy change on rules that prevented ex-offenders from working for 7 years after their release.
17. Training centres should look to provide training in industries that will be in high demand in the future, e.g. green building techniques.

#### **Lessons learnt:**

1. Training centres have found needs assessments essential in deciding which courses will have the most potential for graduate success.
2. Training centres have found career counselling for trainees and their guardians to be beneficial when the graduates enter the labour market.
3. Training centres have found trainees and graduates prioritise employment even though there are few job opportunities. They should encourage trainees and graduates to consider entrepreneurship as a more viable alternative.
4. Training centres have found life skills training can provide positive coping mechanisms for graduates entering the labour market.
5. Training centres have found close engagement and regular follow up with TEVETA can improve the timings of their service delivery and provision of certificates for graduates.
6. Training centres can develop relationships with potential employers in their communities to link their graduates to job opportunities.

## Conclusion

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The non-formal TEVET sector plays an essential role in skills training in Malawi, reaching rural communities and those most in need and unable to access the formal training routes. Whilst non-formal training service providers face multiple challenges, they are also able to trial innovative approaches and find solutions that fit their unique situations. Their adaptability, commitment, and energy enable them to overcome obstacles and meet the needs of their trainees and communities.

There is no one-size-fits all approach to non-formal training in Malawi but there are some key lessons and approaches that are shared amongst many training centres. These include innovative approaches to financing that utilise the centres' existing assets, flexible approaches to training delivery that enable access to training for the most vulnerable groups, a holistic approach to trainee support that goes beyond core skills training and a commitment to continuous improvement of service delivery. Non-formal training service providers commitment to their trainees often goes beyond simply delivering training to supporting them in finding decent work, providing them with access to finance, supplying them with start-up kits, and supporting their integration into communities. Many service providers form close relationships with local tradespeople, business owners and employers and this should be encouraged to provide linkages to employment opportunities for graduates. However, the lack of formal employment opportunities in Malawi poses a big challenge, but one that can in part be addressed by training centres equipping their graduates with entrepreneurial skills and supporting them to start businesses. Training centres delivering non-formal training are firmly rooted in their communities and maintain engagement and dialogue with key community stakeholders. This should be continued, especially to sensitise communities on gender issues and eradicate the stereotypes that still hold women back from participating in TEVET training and trades.

The non-formal TEVET sector plays an essential role in skills training in Malawi, reaching rural communities and those most in need and unable to access the formal training routes.



## Annex 1: Learning Forum Participants

INSTITUTION	NAME	EU GRANTEE OR STEP BURSARY PARTNER	CONTACT
Bwalo Initiative	Harry Photo	EU Grantee Skills Training	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/Bwalo-Initiative-Organization-Bwalo-project-564251037064711/">https://www.facebook.com/Bwalo-Initiative-Organization-Bwalo-project-564251037064711/</a>
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Children's Fund/ Green Malawi	Chioniso Moyo	EU Grantee Constructing Jobs, Building Lives	<a href="https://www.childrensfundmalawi.com">https://www.childrensfundmalawi.com</a>
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Prison Fellowship	Rodrick Zalimba	EU Grantee Vocational skills development	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/Prison-Fellowship-Malawi-314822561964065/">https://www.facebook.com/Prison-Fellowship-Malawi-314822561964065/</a>
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Funded by the EU and partially implemented by UNESCO in collaboration with the Government of Malawi, the Skills and Technical Education Programme (STEP) is dedicated to reinforcing Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training (TEVET) in Malawi.

The programme will run from 2016-2020 and aims to improve TEVET at post-secondary level with a focus on equal access to enrolment, with particular emphasis on female learners, improving quality in the sector and the establishment of clear governance structures.

In the framework of the project, the STEP Report Series is aimed at documenting the highlights of meetings organized by STEP.

This report shares key points made during a Learning Forum of STEP partners implementing non-formal skills training. The forum was held in October 2019.

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