



A TREE grows in Cabo Delgado: How skills training builds rural economic empowerment

In a remote area of Mozambique, rural populations face a daunting path out of extreme poverty and vulnerability. With the support of the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), the ILO is implementing its “TREE” programme aimed at promoting decent work and inclusive growth.

The rural people of Mozambique’s Cabo Delgado province, located in the north, are among the poorest and most vulnerable in the country. Despite relatively strong economic growth in Mozambique through the first decade of this century, in this region poverty and illiteracy remain widespread and present huge challenges for training and skills.

“Most of them do not have any kind of qualification or training,” says Ana Cristina Paulo, the ILO’s Chief Technical Officer of the project in Mozambique. Moreover, the level of illiterate young and adult population aged 15-60 years and above remains among sub-Saharan Africa’s highest. “They often do not speak Portuguese (the National language), just the local dialects, and they live in very remote areas with no access to power or even potable water.”

Given the broad consensus that training in skills is one of the most direct paths to promote decent work and encourage inclusive growth in high and low income economies alike, in 2014 the ILO, with the support of KOICA, began implementing the [“Skills for employment and productivity in low income countries”](#) programme in selected districts of Cabo Delgado.

The project adapts elements of the [G20 Training Strategy](#) developed by the ILO, in partnership with other international, regional and national organizations and employers’ and workers’ representatives, to support the transition between education, training and work.

A central part of the effort is the TREE programme being implemented by the ILO, in collaboration with the government of Mozambique. Short for [Training for Rural Economic Empowerment](#), TREE has grown from deprived communities in Bangladesh and Pakistan to provide a model for liaising with the community it aims to help in structuring training design and implementation. It is especially effective in environments with poor opportunities for education and formal technical training.

The first step in the TREE programme is to go into the community and look to understand the local economy and the level of skills already present: “We made a diagnosis of the economic opportunities that could easily create jobs,” says (Ms.) Paulo. “We have decided to deliver training now in 20 areas such as carpentry, fisheries, photovoltaic energy, crafts ... a wide range,” including some 1,100 youth who are currently completing the first stage of training in the TREE methodology.



A key characteristic of TREE is the use of local professionals/crafts persons in its implementation. In this region there is little by way of training facilities or equipment, so the programme relies on local trainers to deliver the modules. “It really is community based training...we do not take the young people out of their environment. We deliver our training with what we call ‘local masters’ to whom we give technical and psychological training before they begin teaching. And, of course, they can speak the local languages. Everything is tailor made to make the training really effective,” added Cristina Paulo. “These local trainers previously received pedagogical and technical training to ensure the best possible quality in training delivery.”

The programme had to adapt to other realities on the ground. The ILO found that offering small and direct incentives, such as a daily meal, helped draw in and retain participants. The issue of gender is also sensitive. The team worked with local religious leaders and other people with influence in the community to convince the women and their families of the value in accessing the training. In addition, the project uses gender focal points in the most important project district, Palma.

A third vital component of the TREE programme is teaching trainees in basic business management, including how to manage a small, informal enterprise; how to form associations and cooperatives; and how best to develop linkages to the market which Paulo says is the “principal driver of development” in these regions.

Ultimately, the aim is that the majority of the trainees improve their livelihoods, start their own business or join youth associations and cooperatives, and move from the informal to the formal economy.

The programme was implemented with the support of the government and public training agencies. According to Joao Massingue of the National Institute for TVET and Labour Studies in Cabo Delgado, the project’s main implementing partner in Mozambique, the lessons learned from the programme have been incorporated into the national employment policy and in the training strategies and practices of the Institute.

He told delegates to a recent [inter-regional Forum on skills](#) the advantage of the TREE methodology is that “it starts with an analysis of the economic potential that exists in the rural communities ... and it highlights and gives weight to the knowledge that is already there among the people.”