

Insights
Series

PRACTICAL
PARTNERSHIPS
PILOTS

QUARTERLY LEARNING REVIEW
LEARNING SUMMARY 1
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The Practical Partnerships Pilots

Technical and Vocational Education and Education (TVET) in Nepal has made great progress over recent years, and yet many employers find that new recruits do not have the skills and knowledge required for entry level positions.

Every year, 130,000 TVET graduates enter the employment market but, for Nepal's economy to grow sustainably, it is essential that the workforce has the relevant knowledge and skills to capably meet labour market needs.

Led by the Government of Nepal, the TVET sector is creating opportunities that develop new skills based on employers' needs, bridging the gap between theory and practice.

As part of these efforts, the *Dakchyata: TVET Practical Partnership project* is supporting a number of new skills development partnership models to be developed and piloted across the tourism, construction, and agriculture sectors. Known as Practical Partnerships Pilots and launched in March 2020, they aim to:

- Encourage closer engagement and relationships between public and private sector actors
- Test, codify, and refine TVET methodologies across the agriculture and food production, construction, and tourism sectors
- Improve TVET students' access to technical and soft skillsets which boost their enterprise and employment opportunities
- Embed shared sectoral intelligence, learning, and innovation about what works in TVET.

The Insights Series, of which this is the first, will regularly track and share the progress and learning being generated through the pilots. They are intended to draw together emerging findings from the Practical Partnership Pilots each quarter to provide an overview of how they are developing and implementing projects and adapting to these unprecedented times.

Pilot Profiles

In March 2020, four pilot projects joined the programme. Over the course of 18 months, these projects will spearhead the testing of new employer engagement models and share vital insights with the public and private sectors on what works in TVET.

Hamro Krishi Sahakari Sanstha Limited (HKSS)		National Environment and Equity Development Society	
	Project: Hamro Krishi Karyakram		Project: Promoting market led technical and vocational skills for employment
	Sector: Agriculture		  Sector: Cross cutting through all 3 sectors
	Geography: Sarlahi and Mohatari		
	Project Focus: Enhance the employability of rural youths by equipping them with practical hands-on commercial farming techniques which are required and endorsed by the private sector.		Project Focus: Improved employability for unskilled and semi-skilled youths on agriculture, tourism, and construction sectors through increased cooperation of public and private sector and market-relevant training approaches.
Sajha Byawasaya Sip Bikas (SBSB)		TRACE Private Limited	
	Project: Skills for Agro-Enterprise Project (SAEP)		Project: Skill and Rewarding Employment Project
	Sector: Agriculture		Sector: Construction
	Geography: Rautahat, Sarlahi, Mohatari and Dhanusa		Geography: Kanchanpur, Kailali
	Project Focus: Upgrade farmers' agro-enterprise knowledge and skills by partnering with government, training institutes, farmers' associations, cooperatives, and traders to improve the curriculum on the off-season vegetable farming, dairy products, and poultry.		Project Focus: Enhanced skills and employability for youths within the construction section through a semi-apprenticeship and employment model.

Progress & Insights

Pilots in Numbers:

**4 PILOTS
COMMENCED
in March 2020**

**3 NEW PILOTS
to commence
between June-
September 2020**

**126
STAKEHOLDERS
have been engaged
including 34 private
sector actors**

Pilot projects are using digital solutions to manage through the crisis. With national lockdown, all piloting organisations moved operations online. Whilst at first it appeared that operations may not be able to proceed the organisations found they were able to adapt many of their systems to integrate new digital communications approaches, such as Zoom, and develop new ways of working.

As Mr. Digambar Prasad Chaudhary, Team Leader, Skills for Agro-Enterprise Project (SAEP)- SBSB notes:

“Due to COVID, everybody began to work from home. At first, I found it very difficult to conduct meetings with team members, partners, and stakeholders and to share the information together in the forum. The most useful skill I have learned from British Council Dakchyata Project is how to conduct online virtual meeting as the project conducted virtual online meeting to orient the team members of the project partner organizations. This practice has enabled me and my team to conduct meetings online in this critical situation. Going online has helped us to plan for future activities and reflect o alternative ways of achieving our project goals.”

Through the pilot programme, these organisations have been supported by Dakchyata to effectively integrate digital solutions into their organisations. NEEDS has assessed that working remotely has yielded similar results to their normal operations. Digital responses have not only allowed the projects to respond to this crisis but have increased their long-term resilience.

In the medium-term, organisations and donors will need to explore the implicated costs and access issues related to digitalisation. Staff and students should not be left behind if they do not have access to the right technology or internet services. For students, this will disproportionately affect women and those in rural areas.

Adaptive management is being used to identify alternative delivery methods: Whilst the establishment and delivery of the training pilots have been significantly impacted by the global pandemic, with the Government of Nepal announcing a nationwide lockdown in mid-March, all pilot projects are adapting and innovating through the crisis. Whilst at the time of writing the national level lockdown continues, 41 out of 77 districts remain in full or partial lockdown which has severely affected commencement of the pilots.

Piloting organisations have responded and adapted their activities accordingly through contingency planning, moving operations online where possible, and continuing to assess the operating climate. Their plans identify alternative implementation routes, including revised intake targets taking account of social distancing measures, as well as specific procedures introduced to maintain a safe and appropriate training environment.

Additional development time has led to more robust project plans. All four pilots have invested significant time in project planning and set-up and development of contingency plans. As a result, they report having established much stronger and more robust plans, project governance structures, and systems than time would normally allow them.

The pilots are better prepared to make rapid adaptations or take challenging decisions if the context changes over the coming period. The additional set up time has also allowed for greater orientation on the pilot and increased understanding of the objectives, roles, and responsibilities, and identified the best ways to create local ownership.

Meaningful stakeholder engagement is already building strong local commitment which is likely to increase sustainability during lockdown,

the four pilot organisations have engaged 126 stakeholders, including 34 private sector actors. They have forged relationships with local government, municipalities, private sector actors, and civil society organisations to embed their projects into communities and increase support for approaches that adapt and respond to the COVID-19 context.

“In this critical situation, the municipality personnel are supportive by providing their valuable time for meeting and provide valuable suggestion for project for implementation... coordination with government agencies and getting feedback is essential for us to implement the project.” Trace Project Report.

Stakeholders have been engaged in project briefings and COVID-19 related adaptations, project steering committees, student selection criteria and processes, and technical modalities being used and their respective advantages. In the case of TRACE, local Mayors and Administrative Offices have advised on implementation and the need to address the disparity between practical and theoretical TVET skills and they have generally been responsive to calls for the pilot initiative to be integrated into municipality planning.

“I think the program will be fruitful for the district and we may support the program with directly or indirectly participating furthermore, we may work together with collaborating in such types of trainings.” - Official from the Dhangadi Sub Metropolitan

Building relationships and ownership within the local ecosystem has created energy amongst stakeholders for the pilots and secured support for implementation, which is vital in a context when rapid adaption of approaches may be required.

Pilot projects are developing new stronger TVET implementation models: To prepare for the commencement of trainings, pilot organisations including HKSSL, are investing in the adaption of curricula. These adaptations will ensure that trainings reflect the needs of employers and the market and give greater prominence to practical knowledge and skillsets. In many cases, these adaptations and new resources will innovate and push the existing TVET system forward.

NEEDS has begun development of an Employer Dialogue Forum (EDF) procedure which will increase the voices of stakeholders, especially private sector actors, within the TVET process and ensure that approaches respond to articulated needs.

“The Government of Nepal has a provision to develop Employer Dialogue Forum guidelines under article 47 of the Prime Minister’s Employment Operation Guidelines-2075. However, the procedures have not been prepared yet. So, it may create great opportunity for Dakchyata for such initiatives.”

NEEDS’ EDF procedure has been endorsed and recommended at a municipality level and they are now seeking to embed it within the municipal functions and planning.

These models will be tested throughout the project with key learning shared with public and private stakeholders for critical assessment of how they address the current gaps of TVET. It will be important for adequate time to be given to reflect on the success and challenges of these new approaches and adaptations and for the sector to create an engaging learning environment.

Projects are adjusting their focus to meet sector demands: Given the new circumstances affecting the economic sectors in which the pilot projects operate, all are reviewing what is required and what is useful so that their outputs continue to be responsive to labour market demand. The adaptations made within existing pilots highlight the ability of private sector driven approaches to respond to emerging contexts and challenges and capitalise on new emerging opportunities.

Tourism has been severely affected by COVID-19 with international travel unlikely to return to pre-COVID-19 figures in the immediate future. As the NEEDS pilot is working within the Tourism sector the reduced demand means that it has reduced its training capacity in this area to avoid adding workers to a dormant market.

In response to COVID-19, transportation limits and the resulting reduction of food imports, the Government of Nepal has pledged significant resources for agriculture in 2020-2021 to improve national food security. Hamro Krishi Kryakram, which is designed to enhance the employability of rural youths on commercial agriculture, is enthusiastic to capitalise on these developments by demonstrating the effectiveness of agro-based industries to produce diversified agricultural and animal-based products which support food security.

Projects are taking practical steps to prepare for physical and online training.

Piloting organisations are considering many different and competing factors as they approach commencement of training. Paramount is the health and safety of staff and students. Safety measures and procedures are being reviewed and integrated into plans, such as the inclusion of more sanitation facilities and reduced classroom sizes. The implication of these considerations in the short to medium term is that the TVET sector will be paying more to train fewer students.

Options for digital online TVET may be suitable for some components of theoretical teaching. However, piloting organisations are concerned that practical Farm-Based Apprenticeships and Semi-Apprentice Employment may not be suitable for online approaches due to their hands-on learning requirements. Piloting organisations need greater support on how they may approach practical training at a distance.

Next steps

Expansion of pilots: By the end of August 2020, Dakchyata look forward to welcoming three new pilots into programme. These pilots will expand our reach and scale and will extend our community of practitioners.

Consultation: Pivotal in the first period, pilots will continue to engage their stakeholders regularly to continue to build relationships and ownership. For example, NEEDS will be hosting dialogues with local governments on how to integrate market orientated TVET into local planning processes.

Resource Development: HKSS and SBSB will continue to adapt existing agriculture curriculums for off-season and off-farm production. SBSB will also, develop key materials and guidance for operationalising a Markey Information Sharing Forum.

Engagement with TVET recruits: Whilst trainings are unlikely to take place in this upcoming period, pilots will continue to prepare for them through outreach, engagement, and potentially selection of TVET students and recruitment and orientation to Trainers and instructors.

Digital Pathways: Digital platforms will continue to be utilised and developed over the coming period. Organisations may explore how elements of training could be conducted 'online' to minimise delays to training and reduce unnecessary interaction.

Responding safely to COVID-19: The health and safety of TVET students, staff, and all remain a primary concern of the pilot programme. Dakchyata and all grantees will continue to review the context and ensure activities are conducted safely and risk is minimised.

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Official from Dhangadi Sub Metropolitan

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