

GENERATING SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT FOR MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES

Insights from the Underprivileged Children's Educational Programme (UCEP)



SANGAM CHALISE
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Dakchyata: TVET Practical Partnership project, funded by the EU and delivered by the British Council, is working to help establish new skills development models across the tourism, construction, and agriculture sectors as part of efforts to give new recruits the entry level skills demanded by employers.

To develop models to improve the labour market responsiveness of Nepal's TVET system, Dakchyata is supporting a series of ten Practical Partnerships Pilots which were launched in March 2020 to encourage closer relationships between public and private sector actors; test and capture TVET methodologies across the agriculture and food production, construction, and tourism sectors; improve TVET students' access to technical and soft skillsets and embed shared sectoral intelligence, learning, and innovation about what works in TVET.

This Dakchyata Grantee Interview captures the insights and experiences of one of the ten PPP grantees and is based on an interview with Sangam Chalise, Project Manager of the Underprivileged Children's Educational Programme (UCEP), Nepal.

What is UCEP's project aiming to achieve?

"We are working in two districts and focusing on a different sector in each. In the Bajhang district, we are working to train young people on new areas of agriculture through a field-based apprenticeship model designed to create employment and income generating opportunities. In Bardiya, we are working in the construction sector to develop a semi-apprenticeship model for training young people."

What prompted you to focus on these particular projects?

"We conducted a rapid market assessment and we learned was that the majority of youths lack skills and are not able to get jobs in their hometowns. As a result, they tend to go to India where they can get work without any particular skills.

During our survey we saw major construction work being carried out in Bardiya district and thought that it might help keep local youths in the area if they could learn construction skills. In Bajhang, we noticed that work was focused on agriculture, but it was all very traditional types of farming."

Can you tell us more about the approaches used in each district?

"In Bardiya, we are using a semi-employment/semi-apprenticeship model which is new, and we are planning to make sure that we engage employers from the very beginning. This helps them understand the nature of what we are doing, and we better understand the nature of the local job market and what we need to teach beyond the CTEVT curriculum.

In Bajhang, we are trying to use land that is already owned by our trainees as much as possible and working with local employers to give our trainees the basics of packaging and branding so they can get the nearest market to sell their products."

How does the employer engagement work?

"Employers are a key part of the project throughout, particularly during training delivery. One of the main mechanisms for engaging them is the appointment of an assistant from the local employer so we can address market needs in our training and develop the kind of cordial relationships that we need with employers so that our beneficiaries can get jobs in the right areas in the future."

What kind of lessons have you learned so far?

"One of the major challenges we have found has been the lack of knowledge amongst employers about CTEVT. We asked them how they are getting the manpower they need, and they say they are recruiting raw people without training and then training them in the field. We are introducing employers to CTVET through workshops, and they will also get a better understanding through their roles with us as assistant trainers."

To get interest in training we have been advertising on local FM stations but one of the other issues we faced was that we wanted young women to enrol but the construction industry is regarded as a non-traditional area of work for women in Nepal. Tackling this has been challenging but we have been working with local government and with parents to help address this.

COVID-19 has obviously presented challenges in terms of the constraints imposed by safety precautions and maintaining physical distance."

Have there been any other issues in generating interest in the training courses offered?

"We know there is a lack of interest in some areas of construction training, for example, carpentry, and we have been working with local employers and government to help explain the importance of this training and we are waiting to find out whether interest has improved as a result of our efforts."

What do you see as your greatest successes so far, beyond the challenges you have outlined?

"One of the biggest achievements has been building understanding and positive relationships with stakeholders such as employers and local government at a time when they were inevitably distracted by COVID. It is true to say that we are much closer to them than we were before."

Right now, we are coordinating with local employers and they have been getting involved with us so that we can understand the kind of trainees that they need to be trained and so we know the kind of materials and tools that we will need for the training.

Media have also been very positive by making the point that certain skills are needed in the area in order to become self-employed or get waged employment.

In the coming days we will be working with local government to explain the need to make the training sustainable by insisting that they make some budget provision for it in their annual work plans."

Talking of sustainability, what do you expect to be left behind after you have finished?

"I think that after we have finished, the model we have developed should be able to be replicated by other like-minded organisations – even local government if they have the budget."

How will you gauge the success of the project?

"We will measure the overall impact of the project in terms of how well marginalised communities are able to access vocational training and, from that, gain employment, and ultimately live dignified lives."

Dakchyata: TVET Practical Partnership is a skills development programme designed to strengthen the implementation of more effective policy in the Technical and Vocational Education and Training sector in Nepal. Dakchyata is part of the overarching TVET PP programme funded by the European Union and managed by the British Council under the leadership of Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) in partnership with the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT)'s Sakchyamta project in Nepal. dakchyata-nepal.org