



Employment Promotion Programme

Needs-Oriented Qualification for Youth

Context

One of the lasting impacts of the 11-year-long civil war in Sierra Leone is the disruption it brought to education and skills development in the country. About 60 per cent of Sierra Leonean adults cannot read and write, and a disproportionately high number of these are women. Very few people possess marketable skills and professional work experience. Providing young people with education and skills to meet the demand of the labour market remains a major challenge. Hence, to reduce youth unemployment and underemployment in Sierra Leone, the employability of young people must be improved through needs-oriented qualification.

Objectives

Expanding youth employment and developing the agricultural sector are among the top priorities of the Government of Sierra Leone. German International Cooperation (GIZ) supports needs-oriented qualification as one of the three main components of its Employment Promotion Programme (EPP). This is part of EPP's overall effort to improve the employment and income situation of young people in rural Sierra Leone. The needs-oriented qualification component of EPP is implemented by GOPA Consultants.

The component's objective is to respond to market demand and ensure that youths in EPP target districts can obtain the qualifications they need for employment or profitable self-employment. Special attention is given to the participation of women in the training activities. Finally, the component aims to advise and strengthen its institutional partners in Sierra Leone's

educational system, thus enabling them to offer their own functional literacy and vocational education and training.

Approach

To improve the knowledge, skills and abilities, and thus the employability of young people in Sierra Leone, EPP works in the following areas:

■ Functional literacy

Given the high rates of illiteracy, EPP and its partners have developed a non-formal functional literacy course in Krio, the lingua franca in Sierra Leone. This is a two-year course that combines literacy skills with a range of life skills and employment-related issues. In this way, the participants are given the foundation for lifelong learning and better employment opportunities. Literacy is also a prerequisite for subsequent vocational training.

■ Vocational education and training (VET)

To redress the low levels of skills among youth and provide them with what they need to qualify for employment, EPP supports modular vocational training courses that can be combined

to provide a comprehensive vocational education. To complement EPP interventions for local economic development, the component also organises



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short, demand-driven VET courses that accommodate specific needs. There have been VET courses in crucial trades to train, among others, carpenters, welders, brick-layers, electricians, auto mechanics, as well as tree crop and vegetable farmers.

■ Business start-up training

Motivated young people with an interest in starting their own businesses are encouraged to learn entrepreneurial skills that prepare them for self-employment.

■ Capacity development

To strengthen its institutional partners, EPP offers specific training courses to staff in its partner ministries, to district officials, local business associations, implementing partners from NGOs, as well as to artisans and instructors.

which led EPP to cease the training activities there and focus entirely on rural areas.

EPP also supported the “Business Bomba II”, a business plan development competition in which more than 500 people participated, 33 per cent of them female and almost half of them youths. Initiated by the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the competition is implemented by the African Foundation for Development in Sierra Leone (AFFORD). EPP helped train application advisors and judges for the competition, printed public relations materials and provided logistical support.

Institutional partners have been strengthened in joint steering committees, planning and evaluation workshops, as well as through sponsored study visits abroad.

Achievements



More than 1,500 youths have already graduated from the functional literacy courses in English, of which 66 per cent were young women. Under the new approach of functional literacy in Krio, 70

facilitators have been trained in the use of these new instructional materials. Over 1,800 students have already registered for the literacy courses in Krio.

Approximately 800 trainees graduated in the apprenticeship scheme that preceded the VET courses. These graduates were trained in six different trades and 38 per cent of the trainees were young women. Half a year after the graduation, a tracer study showed that a large majority of the trainees had found jobs. In peri-urban areas however, the results were disappointing,

A report from the field

“If it weren’t for GIZ, I would still be hanging around in the streets”, says Kefala. Together with his friend Amara, Kefala decided to try to improve his situation when he learned about a training course in metalworking, which was being offered in the Community Education Centre in Koidu.

Both Kefala and Amara would have preferred training in IT. However, their level of education was not advanced enough to join such a course. But they are immensely happy with their new skills and the job satisfaction and income they bring. “We are grateful that we got this chance,” Kefala says. “Our lives have changed. Today, we earn our own money in the repair shops, where we did our practical training. We are proud to be independent.”

Deutsche Gesellschaft für
Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

37 Frazer Street, off Wilkinson Road
Freetown
Sierra Leone

EPP Secretariat:
T +232 78 821 113
F koni.johnson@giz.de
I www.giz.de