

State of **SKILLS**



International
Labour
Organization

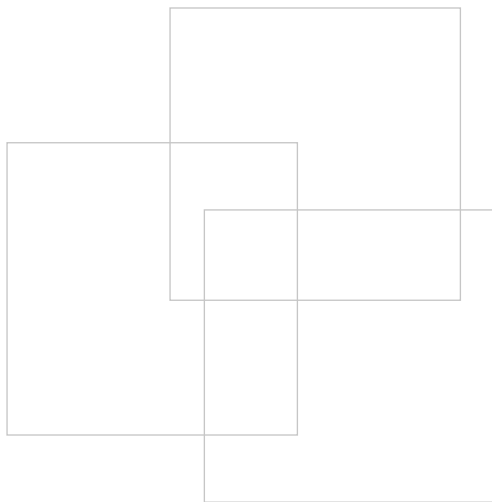
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1919-2019



Mali

State of

SKILLS



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The socio-economic context

A Sahelian country situated in a fragile part of West Africa currently undergoing profound turmoil, Mali's socio-economic situation has experienced a marked deterioration since 2011 due to a weakening of central government, together with a rise in security tensions in the northern and central parts of the country, and the proliferation of inter-community conflicts. The systemic crisis affecting one of the world's poorest countries (ranking 182nd in the UN's global classification) has unleashed a range of negative repercussions on the well-being of the population and its capacity to respond to its principal development challenges.

Mali is in the initial phase of its demographic transition.

With an average of 6.06 children per woman, Mali has one of the highest birth rates in the world. In the past twenty years the population of Mali has more than doubled, reaching 18.54 million in 2017. The country's demographic structure and dependency ratio are highly skewed. More than half of the population is younger than 20 years (average age = 18.5 years); this growth brings in its wake substantial requirements in terms of basic infrastructure, to meet the needs of the rapidly expanding population (education, health, water, electricity, communications). Addressing the expectations of these young people is crucial in order to mitigate the impact of the rural exodus, as well as the lure of jihadism and/or irregular migration.

A modest recovery of Mali's economy.

Mali has been able to gradually emerge from a period of economic recession (2011-2012) caused by a change of regime in 2011, coupled with social and security tensions in the northern part of the country. However, this growth in GDP, which averaged 5.3 per cent in the period 2013-2017, remains inadequate to contain the effects of the demographic explosion (+3.3 per cent per year) and to lift the country out of underdevelopment. Mali's economy, oriented towards the agriculture sector (cotton, cereals) and the extraction of raw minerals (gold), remains highly dependent on rainfall and price fluctuations for raw materials. Despite growth of 5.4 per cent in 2017, the tertiary sector is still poorly developed, and the process of economic diversification is still at an embryonic stage.

Difficulties in accessing the labour market are of major concern for the country's economy.

Mali has a relatively low labour force participation rate among its working-age population (62 per cent). This poor access to employment is far more pronounced in the case of women (employment rate = 49.9 per cent) and young people under 25 (44 per cent), who face additional economic, social and cultural constraints that pose significant obstacles to obtaining a first work experience.

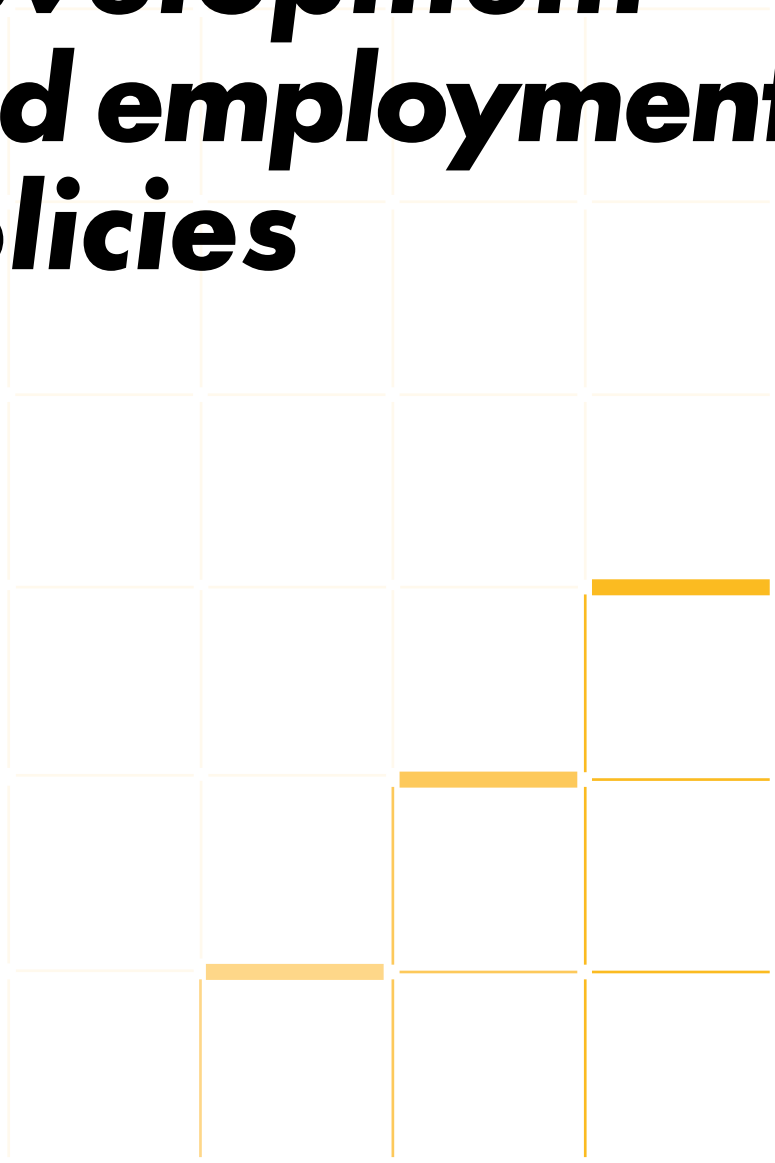
A growing trend in Mali's labour market is the prevalence of insecure working conditions.

96.4 per cent of Mali's labour market accounted for by the informal sector (ONEF, 2017). The business fabric, dominated by self-employed activities and micro-entreprises operating outside the legal framework, is unable to supply sufficient decent jobs for the young cohorts arriving each year on the labour market. In 95 per cent of cases, these youths head for the informal sector to support themselves.

Education levels of the working-age population are very low.

Almost 68.2 per cent of this group has received no formal education, and only 11.2 per cent has gone on to study beyond primary school (Keita, 2018). Despite efforts made in the area of basic education, this low level of cultural capital damages the productivity of economic actors and their capacity to access decent and well paid work. In terms of education, girls are severely disadvantaged, as their gross enrolment rate (62.7 per cent) remains 11.2 per cent lower than that of boys, and many rural families are still reluctant to educate their female children.

Development and employment policies



To address the country's principal social and demographic challenges and revitalize the economy, in May 2019 Mali adopted the Strategic Framework for Economic Recovery and Sustainable Development (CREDD 2019-2023). Implemented over a four-year period, this strategy contains, in pillars 3 and 5, specific provisions aimed at promoting inclusive growth and the development of human capital. To encourage the creation of value and jobs, priority is given to diversifying the economy and developing agricultural value chains through increased industrial processing of local products. To complement this overall strategy, in 2015 Mali adopted a National Employment Policy (NEP), which defines the strategic context that underpins all national and/or multilateral initiatives aimed at creating jobs.

This employment policy, together with its operational plan of action, was adopted in December 2015 and is still in force today. It aims to address three main challenges: (i) the structural inadequacy of decent job opportunities; (ii) the poor level of human capital and the reduced employability of the labour force; and (iii) lack of information on the labour market caused by the limited reach of employment and job promotion agencies. The PNE recognizes the importance of education in general, and more particularly vocational training, which is an essential prerequisite for the insertion of young people into the labour market.

Several support projects (PROCEJ, FIER, EJOM) specifically target the issue of vocational training as a lever for integrating young people into agricultural value chains, the crafts sector in both urban and rural settings, and careers in the secondary sector, all of which face a shortage of qualified labour (mines, construction, agro-processing).

The migration component is fully integrated into the PNE since lack of job opportunities, especially for youth, is one of the principal drivers of irregular migration. In order to combat this mass exodus of the working population, the PNE aims to (i) improve labour market intermediation mechanisms, taking account of migrant populations; (ii) improve vocational training so that it more closely aligns with the quantitative and qualitative requirements of the labour market; (iii) support the reintegration of returning migrants. A number of initiatives implemented by the National Employment Agency (ANPE) and the Agency for Youth Employment (APEJ), in partnership with the Ministry of Malians Living Abroad, are seeking to support returning migrants through access to local jobs in order to prevent them from leaving again for the Schengen Area countries.



“Education, instruction, formation, work, housing, leisure, health, and social protection shall constitute recognized rights.”





– Constitution of the Republic of Mali

Article 17

The skills system in Mali

Mali's education system is based on two policy documents: the Ten-Year Education Development and Training Programme (PRODEC 2 2019-2028) for general education, and the National Strategy for Vocational Training (SNFP), which was adopted in 2009 for Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET).

Weak institutional and regulatory anchoring of TVET:

It was not until 2015 that a plan of action was developed (PRODEFPE)¹ for implementation of the SNFP. Mali's first law on vocational training was only issued in 2016² and is still not fully operational, since it has not yet been followed up with decrees that more precisely define the role and responsibilities of the various actors within TVET. In the absence of these regulatory provisions, many TVET prerogatives (supervisory body, assessment and certification committee, arrangement for public-private partnerships) have yet to be clearly assigned.

Multi-stakeholder and decentralized management of TVET, which remains divided between two ministries. The technical and vocational training diploma course is managed by the Ministry of National Education (MEN) which, besides general education, has responsibility for managing the technical and vocational sectors. Training in these two areas is added onto general education, with a well established plan that leads to the Certificate of Professional Competence (CAP, 2 years), the Technician Certificate (CAP + 2 years) and the technical high school diploma. As for vocational skills training, this is managed by the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training (MEFP) in partnership with local authorities

¹ Ten-Year Programme for the Development of Vocational Training for Employment, which was adopted for the period 2015-2017 and has not yet been renewed.

² Law N°2016-26 of 14 June 2016 issued by the President of the Republic supplemented by the enforcement decree dated 12 June 2017.

tasked with managing vocational training centres. Within the MEFP, the National Directorate of Vocational Training (DNFP) handles overall supervision of the four main training systems, namely dual apprenticeship, modular learning, tutored training and training by mobile facilities. At decentralized level, regional councils have responsibility for developing Vocational Training Master Plans, which cover all TVET initiatives and programmes.

There is limited inclusion of social partners in governance of TVET due to the low level of public-private dialogue, lack of an institutionalized dialogue mechanism (i.e. non-existent regulatory framework) and weak structuring of the private sector. This low level of involvement of employer organizations and trade union confederations in developing benchmarks, collaborating with training centres and actively participating in the process of assessment/certification compromises the overall quality of the training provided, and its alignment with the labour market. However, positive initiatives are being conducted in the field of craft trades, where the presence of well-structured professional organizations (FENAM) has enabled the introduction of dual training and tutored training through the close involvement of endogenous trainers (master craftsmen).

Weak public spending on TVET is partly offset by support projects conducted by technical and financial partners (TFPs): Technical and vocational training (formal and non-formal training) receives only 6.8 per cent of the total budget allocated to the education sector in Mali (UNICEF, 2017). In relative terms (purchasing power parity), this declined during the period 2011-2019 due to the priority given to issues of security and the building of productive infrastructures. The low level of public spending allocated to TVET is exacerbated by the behaviour of the TFPs, which now fund training programmes directly, without going through the DNFP. As a result, the Directorate has very limited material and financial resources with which to undertake its many responsibilities. This streamlining approach threatens efforts to strengthen the DNFP, contributing to disorder in the vocational training sector and the proliferation of private training centres seeking to capture a share of this new financial manna. In addition, businesses are called upon to provide funding for vocational training through the levying of the Vocational Training Tax (TPE). This tax, which represents 2 per cent of company payrolls, contributes to the Support Fund for Vocational Training and Apprenticeship (FAFPA), the principal funding mechanism for lifelong training.

Skills anticipation

In Mali, the process of identifying and anticipating future skills demands is undertaken on several levels, according to the TVET principles of decentralization set in place since the early 2000s.

The National Employment and Training Observatory (ONEF), set up in 2013, is the national institution of reference for ensuring that linkages are made between identification of the skills needs of businesses and the supply of appropriate vocational training. The observatory has a labour market information system that is fed by annual household surveys (EMOP), statistics produced and passed on by other national agencies working in the field of employment promotion (ANPE, APEJ) and vocational training (DNFP), and prospective sectoral studies conducted by ONEF. The Ten-Year Programme for the Development of Vocational Training for Employment (PRODEFPE) used these statistics as a basis for drawing up general objectives (number of people to train over the next 5 years), as well as targets that are specific to each training area (distribution of manpower by growth occupations).

The private sector does not have its own system for identifying skills needs since it is generally guided by the main employer and professional organizations (CNPM, Chamber of Commerce, Chamber of Trades, FENAM). As a result, most companies use their own internal tools to identify skills needs and their recruitment and retention policies, with staff mainly hired through private employment agencies. There is therefore no shared effort to identify the growth occupations within the different trade sectors and/or professional branches.



The general regional councils are tasked with identifying local skills needs, and for this purpose they have a customized planning tool: Regional Master Plans of Vocational Training for Employment (SDRFPE). This innovative and decentralized system for identifying skills needs has been introduced in 9 of the country's regions since 2010.



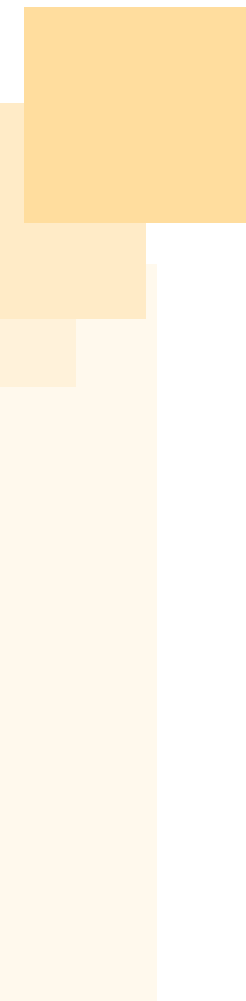
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The most advanced regions (Sikasso, Ségou, Bamako) are now on the second generation master plan, which makes it possible to conduct a five-year assessment of skills needs within the various administrative bodies. The inclusive and participatory process of developing the master plans helps to ensure that these take good account of the skills needs of local businesses in growth sectors.

Occupations in agro-sylvo-pastoral sectors continue to have the greatest skills needs, and these are taken into account in overall development strategies (CREDD 2019-2023) or the vocational training development plan (PRODEFPE). Of the 51 training programmes considered to be a priority at national level, one-third centre around primary occupations, and the training structures of reference are the Agricultural Training Centres (CFPA). Identifying skills needs for agricultural occupations is crucial to support the professionalization of these sectors, and to improve their competitiveness and spur a knock-on effect onto related occupations (agricultural machinery, agro-processing, input production, transport, trade).

Skills development

The skills development system in Mali is based on three complementary levels: formal vocational training leading to a recognized qualification, non-formal vocational skills training, and non-formal education, each of which has its own course of action, mechanism, target audience and separate professional qualifications.



Vocational training leading to a diploma is the most developed and structured level, based on 41 technical education establishments and 590 vocational educational establishments, located in 7 of the country's 9 administrative regions. The number of private establishments is greater (605), and these account for about 70 per cent of educational provision in the area of vocational education and training (VET). Together, these establishments hosted some 120,000 trainees in 2018, the majority in the vocational education sector (113,500) and a smaller number engaged in technical training (6,500). Girls are in the minority, representing just 39.5 per cent of those involved in technical training and 35.16 per cent of those engaged in vocational training. These figures reflect the communication and awareness-raising efforts that still need to be made in order to promote equal access for girls to TVET.

The provision of vocational skills training is diverse and flexible, but poorly structured as the great majority of training provided is in private centres that collaborate directly with international programmes to support vocational training. Indeed, according to figures from DNFP 2016, only four public vocational skills training centres are operating throughout the country, hosting a combined total of 461 trainees. The resulting fragmentation of vocational skills training between a multitude of private centres makes it difficult to make a reliable assessment of their contribution to skills development.

Improving the supervision of these private training providers remains a priority for the DNFP, so as to ensure their full contribution to achieving the quantitative, and above all the qualitative objectives of the skills development system.

Non-formal education programmes are well established and reach a mainly unschooled and female public through functional literacy aimed at out-of-school or unschooled children, to prepare them for entry into the labour market. These large-scale training programmes, conducted in 4,411 centres, reach nearly 93,730 people each year. Numbers of attendees are down in certain northern regions (Gao, Tombouctou, Kidal)³ and in the centre (Mopti) due to the climate of insecurity and the threats/violence suffered by trainers. The inclusive nature of these centres is critical in order to promote the strengthening of cultural skills in vulnerable populations, and promote their close integration into the labour market.

³ Gao experienced a decline of 41.7 per cent in the number of trainees between 2014 and 2018, Tombouctou saw a reduction of 19.2 per cent, and Kidal now only has one non-formal education centre in operation.

Skills recognition and quality assurance

In Mali, there is a clear need for mechanisms aimed at skills recognition to be developed and strengthened, so as to ensure better supervision of the various actors in the system, and the quality of the vocational training provided. This is particularly true in the case of vocational skills training, which remains much less well-equipped than vocational training leading to a diploma.

Regulatory and institutional clarification of the certification process is essential, since the body with responsibility for this at the level of the MEFP is a division of the DNFP,⁴ which has no sufficiently well-established prerogatives to fulfil this function. The 2016 law on vocational training stipulated that an independent commission should be tasked with the certification process, but decrees defining the role, course of action and the composition of this commission have yet to be issued. For the time being, the certification process is reduced to a trickle, dependant on the weak human, financial and material resources of the DCVAE.

⁴ Division of Certification and Recognition of Prior Learning (DCVAE).

Credentials of professional qualifications have limited reach and recognition due to a combination of structural constraints affecting different stages of the certification process (development of training benchmarks, supervision of training centres, and effectiveness of the assessment of skills acquired). Most vocational skills training results in the awarding of a simple training certificate, or at best an end-of-apprenticeship certificate (CFA). Credentials of professional qualifications to demonstrate the acquisition of skills specific to different occupations and levels of training (worker, skilled worker, etc.) are only issued in a limited number of classic training establishments (sewing, hairdressing, carpentry, etc.) and at the initial level (CQP). The low priority set on issuing training credentials, especially for more advanced grades (BQP, BPT, BPTS), compromises the appeal of the vocational skills training in the eyes of young people, while also devaluing the training in the eyes of potential recruiters (private sector).

Mechanisms for evaluation and quality control of the vocational training centres are currently being strengthened through the DNFP, whose task is to conduct regular checks on public and private training centres, so as to ascertain that the content and quality of the training provided matches the ministry's requirements.

In practice, given its very limited operating budget⁵ and the proliferation of private training centres, the DNFP is unable to fulfil this task and to conduct regular control visits. As a result, the quality of the training supplied by these private centres is highly uneven, and this is hampering the development of an all encompassing certification mechanism and an understanding of the real value of the skills obtained by those who complete a training course.

The involvement of craft organizations in promoting VAE is another factor that is helping to foster recognition of skills acquired, while also helping trainees to further develop those skills and bring them up to date through complementary training. In 2016, 1,688 workers in Mali benefited from the VAE, marking a substantial rise on figures for 2015 (+62.7 per cent). Sewing/hairdressing accounted for 61.3 per cent of the certificates delivered, followed by car mechanics (13.8 per cent) and metal construction (12.1 per cent). With support from the main TFPs (AFD, LuxDev, DDC, GIZ) the DNFP is now working to expand the VAE's area of intervention to include other occupations and increase the number of beneficiaries.

⁵ The operating budget for the DNFP was 233 million FCFA in 2016, or 0.1 per cent of public spending on education for that year (UNICEF, 2017)

Social inclusion

TVET in general, and vocational skills training in particular, represent an alternative to the classic general teaching system, offering accelerated training in a trade that can lead to good employment prospects for graduates. For this reason, the inclusive nature of the training is a core objective that should be considered, based on the type, region and the socio-demographic profile of the trainees.



Accessing skills development

Women have more limited access to TVET and certain sectors remain clearly reserved for men. Women only account for 35.16 per cent of total vocational trainees, and too often they are restricted to so-called female training sectors (beauticians/hairdressers, sewing, etc.) which have lower social status and economic value. Despite awareness-raising campaigns, women remain largely absent from more demanding training sectors, such as construction, metal construction and car mechanics, which are economically more rewarding.

There are growing regional disparities in access to TVET which have been amplified as a result of the climate of insecurity in northern and central Mali and the closure of a large number of establishments. Increasingly, vocational training is concentrated in the most secure regions, which are also the most prosperous. This inequality is reinforced by the actions of the TFPs, which focus on the regions that are easiest to access and which already have a well-developed infrastructure for vocational training.

The prohibitive costs of vocational training compared with general training

significantly restricts its reach and compromises its access for populations who are socio-economically vulnerable. A UNICEF study in 2017 estimated the average cost of TVET training to be 108,000 CFA (USD 200) per year, which is twice the level general education. In more exacting sectors that require more substantial equipment (construction, metal construction) these training costs are even higher, and are beyond the reach of vulnerable populations without the timely support of development agencies. Efforts must be made to ensure the financial sustainability and accessibility of all training sectors for vulnerable populations, who are the main target audience for this initiative.

Lifelong learning

To complement the initial training, TVET also seeks to promote continuous training for workers, so as to increase their productivity and guarantee their employability, and ultimately improve their employment conditions. Despite some welcome initiatives, continuous training remains embryonic in Mali, both in terms of reach (number of people trained each year) and the occupations covered.

The FAFPA is a benchmark financial instrument for continuous training since it allows resources to be leveraged from the private sector and allocated to vocational training. The FAFPA has received a substantial increase in its operating budget, which rose from 1,168 billion FCFA in 2012 (~ USD 2.12 million) to 3,183 billion FCFA in 2016 (~ USD 5.78 million). This budgetary increase, made possible by more effective levying of the Vocational Training Tax (TPF), has enabled the FAFPA to work with 341 accredited training centres and to cover a growing number of occupations.



Key challenges

TVET has long been the poor relation of Mali's education system, and does not have access to the same institutional, financial and human resources as general education. In an effort to address the challenges faced by youth in finding their first job, and the problem of the mismatch between general training and the needs of the labour market, in recent years the Government of Mali has attempted to revitalize vocational training by developing an ambitious plan of action (PRODEFPE), as well as adopting, in 2016, a law on the organization of vocational training and an increase in training projects supported by TFPs. However, despite these recent initiatives, the system in Mali faces the following challenges:

1 The low social status accorded to TVET in Mali.

Mali is considered inferior to general education by society as a whole, from decision-makers to ordinary citizens. This perception of low-quality training has negative repercussions on the importance of promoting TVET and on its budgetary allocation, which is patently inadequate when compared with the sums invested in general education. In addition, this low consideration makes vocational training unappealing to prospective trainees, as well as to employers, who doubt the capacities of TVET to respond to the quantitative and qualitative needs of the labour market.

2 The unclear and ineffective definition of the role and responsibilities of the different levels of actors involved in the governance of TVET.

The 2016 law has made some progress in defining organizational procedures for vocational training, but the regulatory mechanism needs to be clarified, by adopting decrees for implementation that define the structure and composition of organizations tasked with developing training benchmarks, supervising the uniform provision of training and management of the process of assessment/certification of trainees.

3 The incomplete process of decentralizing the regional management of vocational training provision.

Law N°2017-051 of 2 October 2017 defines the tasks assigned to regional councils concerning vocational training. However, this law does not specify which resources the regional councils should draw on to fulfil their responsibilities in managing public training centres and in supervising private centres. The current socio-political context means that a large number of regions (in north and central Mali) do not have the resources to fulfil these tasks, and this contributes to exacerbating regional disparities in accessing TVET.

4 The high cost of TVET makes social inclusion more difficult to achieve for vulnerable populations with scarce resources.

The low intake capacity of public vocational training centres (30 per cent) and the lack of supervision of private centres (70 per cent) causes an increase in the price of technical and vocational training, whose costs are, on average, twice as high as those of general education (UNICEF, 2017). This financial barrier threatens the social inclusion of low-income populations, or those living in impoverished regions.

5 The inadequate understanding of the importance of vocational training.

The low level of understanding on the part of the private sector and umbrella organizations of the importance of vocational training, is a direct result of weak structuring and governance. This shortcoming is particularly evident in growth sectors such as secondary occupations (mining, construction). Greater inclusion of the private sector in consultation frameworks for planning of vocational training is a key priority; this would enable improvements to be made to the training system, so as to align it more closely with the current and future needs of the labour market.

6 The low absorption capacity by the private sector in Mali of trainees who complete the TVET system.

The characteristics of the local business fabric, which is dominated by self-employed activities and informal micro-entreprises constrains the employment prospects of TVET graduates, who have a limited labour market insertion rate (43 per cent after 2 years). Furthermore, the weak structuring of Mali's private sector also compromises the dual nature of vocational training and the possibility of establishing a link between the theoretical training provided at the centres and its practical application in a company setting.

These cumulative constraints, whose intensity varies according to the occupational sector, the audience targeted and the regions concerned, require concrete solutions designed to improve the overall performance of TVET in Mali.

The way forward

All stakeholders concur with findings on the shortcomings of the TVET system and the need to introduce a number of reforms and measures in order to improve its capacity to provide a quantitative and qualitative response to the requirements of the labour market. The need to promote TVET is even more imperative given the employment challenges faced by youth, as well as the rise in inter-community tension and religious extremism, and the growing trend of irregular migration. In order to strengthen TVET, a number of solutions may be considered:



1

Strengthen the institutional and regulatory system for TVET.

As well as define courses of action for the national commission for assessment and certification, public-private consultation platforms and the supervisory body of the public and private training centres. According to the DNFP, 14 decrees have been drawn up and are now in the process of being adopted, which should lead to a significant improvement in governance of the system.

2

Improve the governance of support programmes for vocational training conducted at both national and local level.

This will ensure the optimal allocation of resources and an equitable distribution of areas of intervention. This improved supervision/coordination of public and private actors working in the field of vocational training would also make it possible to harmonize training programmes, while facilitating the assessment and certification process and allowing for the capitalization of successful initiatives, with a view to replication.

3 Strengthen course design (INIFORP) so as to modernize training benchmarks.

Also, make them compatible with the needs of the private sector. To be effective, this process of consolidating existing benchmarks and developing new ones should be carried out in direct partnership with the employer organizations representing the different industries/trade sectors. This collaborative work will result in vocational training acquiring higher status in the eyes of employers, leading to their increased participation in the the practical aspect of training.





4

Promote training modules on setting up a business and simplified management.

This will encourage self-employment for graduates of the TVET system. Furthermore, to improve labour market insertion rates it is important to provide post-training follow-up, and support former trainees in the process of setting up a business and/or looking for their first paid job.

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Skills and Employability Branch

Employment Policy Department
International Labour Office
4, route des Morillons
CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland
Website: www.ilo.org/skills



Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs

