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# EFFECTIVE POLICIES FOR INCREASING FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN EMPLOYMENT THROUGH VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN JORDAN

PRIME



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# **EFFECTIVE POLICIES FOR INCREASING FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN EMPLOYMENT THROUGH VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN JORDAN**

**A SUMMARY OF RESULTS FROM PRIME (PROJECTING REFORM  
IMPACT IN VET) – PHASES 2 AND 3**

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# OVERVIEW

The objective of PRIME in Jordan was to carry out an ex-ante assessment of options for policies in support of increasing female participation in the labour market, in particular by improving transition from education and training to employment, and from inactivity to employment through better, more relevant VET. Ex-ante impact assessment represents an attempt to provide an analysis of the reasoning behind policy actions and to assess their foreseeable effects in advance of undertaking them<sup>1</sup>.

The PRIME implementation was split into three phases: Phase 1 (problem analysis and scenario building – completed in 2014); Phase 2 (assessment of impact); and Phase 3 (operationalisation). This summary presents the results of Phases 2 and 3.

The objective in the impact assessment phase was to perform an ex-ante impact assessment of the policy options developed during the problem analysis and scenario-building phase, and to facilitate an informed choice of action by authorities, beneficiaries and stakeholders. The impact assessment was complemented with field visits for interviews with purposefully selected stakeholder groups. The purpose was to contextualise the judgements about impact and test-run the conclusions with those who will be affected by the policy actions.

The objective of the third and last phase of PRIME was to assess the impact of operationalisation of the policy options defined in the exercise. Following a request by the Jordanian authorities, the focus in that phase was limited to analysis of implications of policy action on the funding and financing of VET. The conclusions were validated at the end of the PRIME project in December 2015.

## SUMMARY OF PRIME PHASE 2: IMPACT

### The policy options under assessment

The PRIME stakeholder group<sup>2</sup> defined policy options that share a common, long-term goal to address major shortcomings in female transition to and from the labour market. The options also share a pragmatic limitation: they are focused primarily on the potential contribution of VET in solving the transition challenges. Transition here is understood as transition from education and training to employment, from inactivity to employment, and from employment to inactivity.

The first policy option comprises actions for improving the quality of skills provision through VET. The target group of this policy option are young graduates looking for first-time employment. The second policy option aims at facilitating transition from inactivity to work particularly for the benefit of inactive women not in employment or education.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information see the Impact Assessment Guidelines of the European Commission at [http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/impact/commission\\_guidelines/docs/iaq\\_2009\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/impact/commission_guidelines/docs/iaq_2009_en.pdf) and a briefing of the European Parliament's Directorate for Impact Assessment and European Added Value at [www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/528809/EPRS\\_BRI\(2015\)528809\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/528809/EPRS_BRI(2015)528809_EN.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The stakeholder group (including those who participated in the site visits) comprised representatives from line ministries (labour, education), the ETBET Council, civil society, VET provider institutions from Amman and governorates, regional authorities, VET students and graduates, long-term unemployed females, as well as representatives of the donor community (EU delegation, USAID and UN agencies).

## Option 1. Invest in developing and implementing a package of measures to overhaul the supply of skills through the network of initial TVET providers, to favour women better

The option to improve skill supply evolved from the logical insight that the careers and engagement of women in the labour force are shaped by the field of study they choose and the quality of education delivered there. Recommendations are made for investment to develop and implement a package of measures that will overhaul the supply of skills through the network of initial TVET providers, and ultimately favour women. The specific target group for policy option 1 is identified as young graduates seeking first-time employment. This general objective is divided into specific interventions for the target group. The following interventions were identified as those most suited to the overall goals of option 1:

- 1.1 diversification and improvement of the course offer ('choice and flexibility' intervention);
- 1.2 improvement in quality of TVET provision ('relevance and support' intervention);
- 1.3 improvement in attitudes of female students, families and society towards VET ('culture' intervention).

## Option 2. Develop measures to support the reintegration of women back into the labour market, and retain them in employment

The (re)integration of the vast number of inactive women into the labour force, and helping them to keep their jobs instead of letting them move into unemployment and inactivity, has the potential to stimulate the Jordanian economy and bring further benefits to families and society. However, long-term inactivity can render education credentials and work-related skills outdated: an effect similar to the one observable in the long-term unemployed. Measures that aim to prevent this from happening also protect against a deterioration in the overall quality of human capital in the country. The target group for this policy is inactive women (not in employment or education).

This group of women is assumed to be diverse and to require, therefore, diversified approaches to match their different life circumstances and family situations. Hence, option 2 calls for specific actions, which include mapping of target group needs, development of tailored training offer according to needs, recognition of informal learning, building support and guidance systems, and awareness raising for employers and staff. These actions are grouped into two interventions:

- 2.1 enhance women's working and learning through special measures in both learning, on-the-job learning and work ('outreach' intervention);
- 2.2 design specific TVET offer and support systems for inactive women ('reintegration' intervention).

## The results of impact assessment<sup>3</sup>

### Assessment criteria

In preparation for the assessment, the PRIME consultations helped to define three assessment criteria: effectiveness of action, political acceptance of action, social acceptance of action, and financial and funding implications of action (presented in the next section).

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<sup>3</sup> The impact assessment was performed with the help of the consultative multi-criteria analysis (CMCA) – a modified version of the multi-criteria analysis approach applied for the assessment of European Commission's proposals for action. For its deliverables, a CMCA relies on guided consultations in a heterogeneous group of VET professionals and beneficiaries chosen for their professional experience, expertise and official function. The CMCA helps to tap into the collective analytical potential of the group through structured, face-to-face

TABLE 1 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Assessment criteria	Description
Effectiveness	<p><b>Definition:</b> The extent to which, all other things being equal, the proposed policy action will achieve the goals.</p> <p><b>Lead question:</b> If implemented, how will the proposed policy and intervention fare in terms of effectiveness?</p>
Political acceptance	<p><b>Definition:</b> The likelihood that the intervention under assessment will be accepted and owned by the government, the national and regional authorities.</p> <p><b>Lead question:</b> If implemented, how will the proposed policy and intervention fare in terms of political acceptance?</p>
Social acceptance	<p><b>Definition:</b> The likelihood that the intervention under assessment will be accepted and owned by VET professionals and beneficiaries (the society).</p> <p><b>Lead question:</b> If implemented, how will the proposed policy and intervention fare in terms of social acceptance?</p>

### Assessment results for policy option 1

FIGURE 1 COMBINED IMPACT SCORE (OVERALL FEASIBILITY) OF INTERVENTIONS IN POLICY OPTION 1



The PRIME consultation group considered that efforts to improve the quality of VET (intervention 1.2 – ‘relevance and support’) will be highly **effective** in motivating higher female enrolment in VET, especially if this is implemented in combination with strengthened support services for women, such as career guidance, the provision of transportation, and an improved offer of labour market relevant skills alongside tertiary level qualifications. Measures in this respect will be of direct, visible benefit to young women already in VET. Actions in this respect are therefore likely to be **socially acceptable** as well. However, some doubt was expressed as to the readiness and ability of the authorities (**political acceptance**) to introduce support measures and to revise existing programmes sufficiently to make a difference for a critical proportion of the young women in VET. Content revision would also be reliant on improved teacher capacity. Hence, the overall impact score of intervention 1.2 is 0.96.

Intervention 1.1 – diversification of VET offer or ‘choice and flexibility’ as presented in **FIGURE 1** – is expected to fall short of full effectiveness. The focus groups in both the governorates of Tafileh and Irbid expressed scepticism that there is sufficient capacity and commitment to introduce new courses, and suggested that young female graduates might see greater benefits from prioritisation of improvements to what is already in place instead, as was partially envisaged in the intervention. This scepticism is mirrored also in the assessment of anticipated acceptance on political level, where expected capacity limitations on the side of authorities were giving reason for concern.

consultations, and mobilises this for ex-ante judgements. The CMCA approach is applied also in the development of a set of criteria to assess the anticipated impact of action towards the set objectives.

Perhaps the biggest challenge with this intervention is, however, in the domain of social acceptance. Widespread gender-based prejudice about the suitability of programmes exclusively for either boys or girls raises expectations that the opening of non-traditional VET programmes will be met with resistance or ignorance by parents, community members, employers, political leaders and even the students themselves. A committed awareness-raising effort will be needed for this intervention to become socially acceptable.

Finally, the PRIME stakeholder group considered intervention 1.3 – to improve attitudes and reshape beliefs or ‘culture’ – as the most likely to have maximum effect, and to be socially and politically acceptable. While the results for effectiveness and political acceptance might not come as a big surprise, the outcome of assessment against the criteria of social acceptance was unexpected even for some members of the stakeholder group. Subsequent discussions clarified that the difficult economic and labour market situation in Jordan has started to change attitudes towards female employment, as increasing numbers of families realise that they cannot afford to rely on the male as the sole breadwinner anymore. The times might be favourable for resuming efforts to change traditional attitudes towards female employment.

## Assessment results for policy option 2

**FIGURE 2 COMBINED IMPACT SCORE (OVERALL FEASIBILITY) OF INTERVENTIONS IN POLICY OPTION 2**



Overall, both interventions in option 2 are expected to be effective as they take into account the particular situation of women in their specific target group. However, for both interventions the PRIME stakeholders were wary of anticipating maximum impact because of the challenge posed by disparities in regional development and differences in labour market needs. The remedy for this risk is to complement the action with an informed, focused and needs-sensitive approach that helps to assess the supply and demand aspects of this policy option. The extent of success is expected to be dependent upon regular consultations and the facilitation of dialogue on labour market needs in the regions, the needs of the inactive women, and the building of guidance and social support systems. A proxy for success will be discernible in any positive change in economic activity rate, quality of education and training provision, or the employability of women in the different regions.

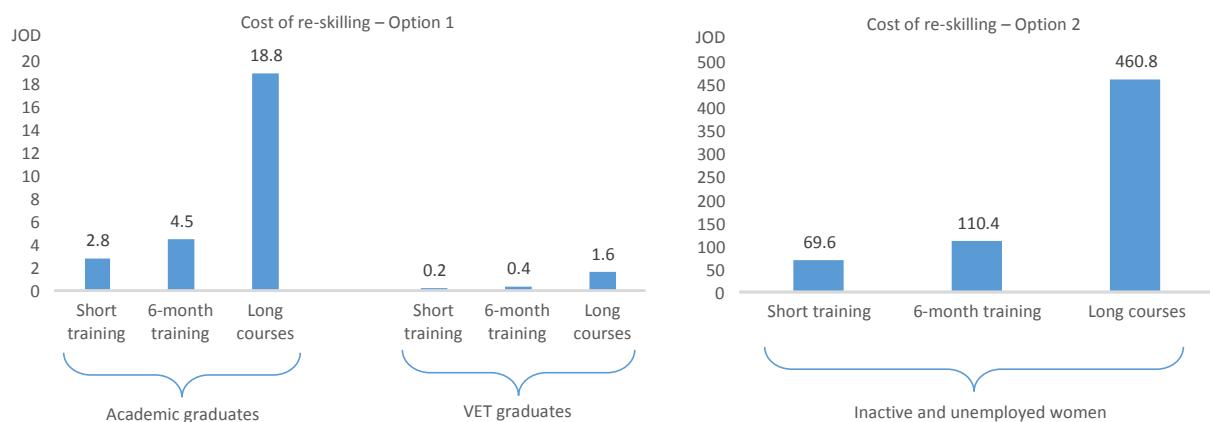
In terms of political acceptance, the ‘reintegration’ option is likely to fare better as most of the actions called for can be taken unilaterally by the responsible ministry or official body. These cover the development of tailored internships/traineeships/apprenticeships, including the recognition of prior learning in TVET; the establishment of learning centres and workshops for the upgrading of skills; and the development of individual study plans, etc. Intervention 2.1 was deemed more challenging as it requires action that would be seen as more intrusive from the point of view of the private sector. Such actions include challenging tasks involving the adjustment of employment conditions and the enforcement of employment regulations; just exactly the type of areas highlighted in site visits as

being subject to regular violations to the disadvantage of working women<sup>4</sup>. In other words, the public sector will need to reach out with incentives and concessions to the private sector in order to achieve the agreements necessary for intervention 2.1 to work. This will not be an easy task.

Participants at the validation workshop confirmed that the first interventions and their actions are more consistent with the social acceptance criterion. This intervention focuses on reviewing the legislation for working conditions and financial support for inactive women.

## SUMMARY OF PRIME PHASE 3: FINANCING AND FUNDING

**FIGURE 3 COST PROJECTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY OPTIONS 1 AND 2 THROUGH RE-SKILLING IN THE VET SYSTEM IN COURSES OF DIFFERENT DURATION (MILLION)**



Notes: (1) Assumed age group for inactive and unemployed women: 25–45. (2) For the sake of comparison, the distribution of enrolment in courses of different duration is assumed to be the same for all target groups of females: 48% in long courses; 23% in six-month training; 29% in short training. The shares are calculated based on graduation rates from the academic and VET streams in 2014.

Source of data for cost per trainee: Ministry of Education and ETVET Council.

The first outcome of the financial analysis established the cost per trainee in the VET system and the potential number of females from various target groups that will be able to benefit from re-skilling under each of the proposed policy options. **FIGURE 3** presents the results of the simulation. Less surprisingly, the costliest aspect of re-skilling will apply to the group of inactive and unemployed women. Depending on the duration of the courses chosen, their training might require up to JOD 460 million. The maximum cost of retraining academic graduates could be up to JOD 18.8 million, and of VET graduates up to JOD 1.6 million<sup>5</sup>. While the simulation is necessarily based on assumptions and simplifications, Figure 3 nevertheless provides an idea of the possible difference in cost of actions targeting different groups of potential beneficiaries.

The financial analysis concludes that the implementation of either of the two options (or parts thereof) will require an overhaul of the financing and funding system. As financing and funding represent a

<sup>4</sup> For example, opening a day care centre for the children of working mothers is very costly for employers, so most investors and employers hesitate to do this. The problem is particularly acute in remote areas and cases have even been known in Amman, as confirmed by the Ministry of Labour. The women in Irbid, Amman and Tafitha explicitly asked the impact assessment teams to pass on a message to the authorities, asking for them to ensure that employers comply with the labour law, particularly in terms of wages, working hours, social allowances, etc.

<sup>5</sup> The actual cost is likely to be considerably higher. The simulation does not factor in additional expenses, such as the cost of adjusting existing content or developing new courses.

structural and procedural challenge in both scenarios, there is a strong argument for the decisions about implementation to be taken independently of the financial implications. The effort of factoring in these implications is comparable for both options 1 and 2.

The assessment report concludes with proposals that offer the potential for adjustment of the financing and funding system and closing of the gaps. Indeed, from a financial point of view, any action taken will call for a certain amount of innovation and adjustment. Failure to consider some necessary adjustments of the VET financing system will mean that implementation will be hindered by the lack of financial means and capacity to undertake all of the changes proposed in the options for action.

Plans are in place to establish training facilities based on public-private partnership especially in the high-tech projects that would attract the private sector. Discussions in the PRIME stakeholder group suggest that the effectiveness of this proposal will depend on the expected rate of returns. There is a public-private partnership unit at the Ministry of Finance, ready to study the viability of potential projects.

Tax exemptions can be granted to encourage private sector participation in covering the cost of extending the range of facilities and training on offer at the government training institutions. It is likely that this proposal will raise the interest of the private sector as it operates in the form of a tax incentive while offering opportunities beneficial to the corporate image with the public. However, there is a chance that the authorities would prefer not to forego the income from taxes.

Greater financial autonomy can be awarded to the VET institutions (Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) and vocational schools). This proposal means that providers should be released from rigid government bylaws and regulations especially in hiring and tendering which could result in a more efficient management of resources. More autonomy should be accompanied by the establishment of efficient units of internal audit and internal control to guarantee the government willingness in extending autonomy to these institutions. The VTC should work on strengthening the internal financial system and the audit unit to win the trust of the Audit Bureau. While the public is likely to support this proposal, the general perception of government units (institutions with autonomy) is rather negative as they are believed to operate with inadequate government supervision.

Finally, support can be offered from the Governorate Development Fund, especially once the draft law on decentralisation has been passed by parliament. The decentralisation process will bring resource allocation closer to the local communities and will mean funds are better distributed. When the new decentralisation law is in effect, it will be more reasonable for the VTC to follow this trend in harmony with the broader process.

Complementary measures can also be provided to support the efficiency of the financial system and enhance resource use. The purpose is to invest in a deliberate effort to narrow and close the financing gap. These could comprise:

1. reform legislations to strengthen coordination among VET institutions and review the E-TVET law to assure greater coordination – creating a national umbrella entity would help encourage cooperation;
2. minimise wastage by concentrating on improving the quality and attractiveness of training programmes;
3. enhance the monitoring and evaluation system, audit and accountability;
4. support awareness campaigns and civil lobbying groups to attract attention and raise private sector support for the VET sector, strengthening corporate social responsibility.

# CONCLUSIONS FOR ACTION

The problem under discussion in Jordan calls for comprehensive action on several fronts to address the needs of various groups of women, i.e. young graduates and long-term unemployed/inactive women. While these groups are all seemingly experiencing the same difficulties with transition to and from employment, the actual reasons for their difficulties are specific to their particular group, calling for carefully tailored action.

Thus, unlike a classical impact assessment, which concludes with an overview of trade-offs in support of selecting one option, the PRIME results argue for a complementary approach. In such a scenario, partial implementation (the implementation of selected actions from both options) will render better results than selecting one option over the other. Giving a preference to only one option would mean selecting one group of females in need of support over another, which is unlikely to bring the desired large-scale change. Selecting the most feasible interventions in both policy options is a good starting point. For option 1, this would be investment in raising the standing of VET as a viable pathway to employment through a better, i.e. more relevant and gender-sensitive, course offer. For option 2, this would be the mobilisation of TVET and associated support systems to reintegrate inactive women into the labour market.

An additional argument for this complementary approach (selective implementation of both options) is that the two share some key features. They both consider the wider role of women in families and communities and argue in favour of effective guidance, social and financial (start-up loans) support systems capable of benefitting young graduates and the inactive/long-term unemployed alike. Both options also rely on the degree to which VET supplies the skills that are in demand, and on its capacity to encourage females to embark on the path of job creation by fostering their entrepreneurial thinking and capacity. Finally, both options call for a proper mapping of new occupational areas and opportunities for women (e.g. ICT, agri-business). Whatever the path chosen, the funding implications for both policy options are a reminder that policy makers must make serious decisions related to investment.

The PRIME stakeholder group therefore recommends proposing both policy options to the Minister of Labour, Dr Nidal Katamine. Implementation should take into account also the limited capability of government to augment the funding allocations, meaning that there should be a particular focus on efforts to adjust the financing model for VET.

Further information on ETF activities can be found on the website:

[www.etf.europa.eu](http://www.etf.europa.eu)

For additional information please contact:

European Training Foundation  
Villa Gualino  
Viale Settimio Severo 65  
I - 10133 Torino

[info@etf.europa.eu](mailto:info@etf.europa.eu)

